

Is There Going To Be A Rapture?

Introduction. Everyone wants to know the future. This explains why in an educated and civilized society so-called fortune tellers and psychics have followers, and why someone can follow their astrology charts on Facebook. What if a man, though, uses the Bible and claims he has found prophecies which are soon to be fulfilled? He would be very popular, for many who doubt astrology charts could be easily persuaded if the claims are supposedly found in Bible.

The doctrine of Premillennialism has become popular mainly because it claims the Bible has foretold both current world events as well as those soon to occur. Although there is general indifference toward God, the Bible, and the church in our society, many preachers have discovered that a theme like this will arouse interest. People need to be stirred up for the Lord and urged to prepare for His second coming, but to do so by playing biblical hopscotch will ultimately result in far more harm than good.

I. ***What Is The Basic Theory Of Premillennialism?***

- A. The word itself means "Pre" (before); "Millennial" (1,000 year reign).
 1. This doctrine states that we are now living in a period before the 1,000 year reign of Christ. The basic claims of this theory are as follows:
 - a) Christ originally came to establish His kingdom.
 - b) However, the world was too wicked, thus He was crucified.
 - c) The church was established as a parenthesis until He comes again.
 - d) A rapture of the saints will occur at His coming.
 - e) Seven years of tribulation on earth will be caused by the Antichrist.
 - f) The battle of Armageddon will be the time Christ puts down all evil.
 - g) He will then establish His physical kingdom and reign for 1,000 years.
 - h) Finally, there will be judgment which is followed by heaven and hell.
 2. The fact that there is a lot of disagreement among advocates of this theory is evidence that the Bible does not deal plainly with these topics.
 - a) For example, some disagree as to when the rapture will occur, whether it will be post-mid-pre/tribulation.
 - b) Others disagree about where Christ will return to reign, because the Mormons say it will be in Independence, Missouri, yet the majority say it will be in Jerusalem.

- B. Is there going to be a rapture?
1. This lesson could also appropriately be titled, "What does the Bible say about the rapture?" However, if it were, nothing else would follow. The word is not even found in the Bible!
 2. However, the "rapture" is a vital link in Premillennial thought. If the rapture is not supported by the scriptures, other suppositions involved are at least suspect.
 3. It is often referred to as though it is a clear Bible subject. I am sure you have seen messages like, "In case of rapture, somebody grab the wheel," or "In case of rapture this car will be unmanned" on car bumper stickers. What does it really mean?
 4. Actually, Premillennialists use the word "rapture" (which is the Old Latin word for "caught up," 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) to describe a secret catching away of the church, both resurrected and living saints, who are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Some use the term "translation" of the saints.

II. ***Does 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 Support The Rapture Theory?***

- A. If so, the rapture will not be silent.
1. Although 1 Thessalonians 4:17 uses the expression "caught up," it talks about a time when the Lord shall come "shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (vs. 16).
 2. Paul described the second coming of the Lord in 1 Corinthians 15:52 as being "at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound ..."
 3. Peter described the second coming as being "with a great noise" (2 Peter 3:10).
- B. If so, the rapture is not a secret.
1. Christ will come "with His mighty angels, in flaming fire ..." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).
 2. John said, "Every eye will see Him ..." (Revelation 1:7).
- C. If so, the rapture will not be for only seven years.
1. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, "And thus we shall always be with the Lord."
 2. The resurrection and the judgment will occur at the "last day" (John 6:39-44; 12:48).
 3. Hebrews 1:1-3 states that we are now living in the "last days," which contrasts our time with earlier dispensations. If there is going to be a 1,000 year reign, should it be called the "last-er days?"
 4. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:23-24, "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end ..."

- D. If so, there will not be two comings of Christ.
 1. In order to get a "secret" coming, Premillennialists emphasize two Greek words: *parousia* in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 and *epiphania* in 1 Timothy 6:14 and say that they are two different events.
 2. However, 2 Thessalonians 2:8 uses both words to speak of the same occasion as it describes "the brightness (*epiphania*) of His coming (*parousia*)."
- E. If so, there will not be three resurrections.
 1. This theory demands one at the rapture, one at the end of the tribulation, and another at the end of the 1,000 year reign.
 2. John 5:28-29 describes both the wicked and righteous being raised at the same time.
 3. Blessing and punishment both occur at His coming (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).
 4. Judgment will be both of the just and the unjust at the same time (Acts 24:14-15).
 5. The sheep and goats will be divided at the judgment (Matthew 25:31-32).

III. **Undesirable Consequences Of The Theory Of Premillennialism**

- A. The kingdom prophecies are made void.
 1. Daniel 2:31-45 declared that the kingdom would be established during the time of the Roman Empire.
 2. Isaiah 2:2-4 predicted the "mountain of the Lord's house" (God's rule) would be established in the "last days." Peter said he was in that time period (Acts 2:16-17).
- B. God's power is limited.
 1. Premillennialists say the reason the kingdom was not established was because the world was not ready. What will keep the same from happening at His second coming? Jesus said in reference to His kingdom, "The time is fulfilled" (Mark 1:14-15).
 2. Jesus said the kingdom would come with power in the lifetime of some then living (Mark 9:1). Power would come with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Therefore, when the Spirit came on Pentecost, power came and with Him, and the kingdom was established (Acts 2:4).
- C. Christ is dethroned.
 1. Zechariah 6:12-13 prophesied that Christ would sit and rule as king and priest. But if He is not yet king, neither could He be our priest!
 2. However, multiple passages declare that He is now ruling on His throne (Acts 2:29-36; Ephesians 1:20-23; Hebrews 8:1).

- D. A material kingdom is sought.
 - 1. Premillennialists make the same mistake the Jews made in expecting an earthly kingdom. Jesus said it was not "with observation" (Luke 17:20-21).
 - 2. In John 18:36-38, Jesus declared that He reigns in a spiritual kingdom that is not of this world.
- E. The church is made a substitute.
 - 1. Premillennialists believe the church is a "parenthesis" of God until the kingdom can finally be established. It makes the church an afterthought of God.
 - 2. Ephesians 3:10-11 declares the church was in God's eternal plan.
 - 3. In Matthew 16:16-18, Jesus speaks of the church and the kingdom in the same breath as though they are one and the same (cf. Hebrews 12:23, 28).
- F. The New Testament writers sound confused.
 - 1. If the kingdom is not already established the apostles did not know it, for the brethren at Colossae were described as being in the kingdom (Colossians 1:13).
 - 2. The apostle John thought he was in the kingdom (Revelation 1:9).
 - 3. John furthermore described those purchased by the blood of Christ as being made a "kingdom and priests" in Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10.
- G. The plan and purpose of Christ's death is ignored.
 - 1. One cannot teach it both ways! The death of Christ was not because Satan was stronger than God, but rather it was by "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23; cf Isaiah 53; Psalm 22). Had Christ not died, we could not have the hope of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:17-22).
 - 2. However, Premillennialists want to teach it both ways, for when talking about the kingdom, they say He was crucified because the world was not ready to receive Him as king yet. Which is it? Was He crucified by God's predetermined plan or by one made up as an afterthought?

Conclusion. The theory of Premillennialism has too many contradictions with plain and simple passages of the Bible. Not only must the rapture theory be rejected because it is unsupported by the Bible, but also the doctrine with which it is associated.

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