

Sunday, October 17, 2021 pm

PREMILLENNIALISM (4)

Will There Be a Rapture?

Today we resume our study of premillennialism. In this lesson we will begin to examine the various elements of this theory and show some of the flaws of interpretation of various scriptures. We will start with the rapture.

Be reminded, basically, the elements of premillennialism are as follows (show chart).

We are presently in the “church age” (or week 69 ½ according to Daniel 9:24-27). At some time yet future, the Lord will return in the air and rapture His saints (the most popular theory – more later in this lesson). During this rapture the righteous dead will be raised and those living will be suddenly and silently caught up. After this there will be 7 years where great evil will abound, but it will also be a time of great turmoil on the earth, a one-world government will be established, and the anti-Christ will be revealed. Those who surrender to Christ during this time will face severe persecutions and many will die. At the end of this seven years, those martyred during this period of tribulation will be raised (2nd resurrection), the Lord will return and engage in battle with the anti-Christ and his forces and win and Satan will be bound. Then Jesus will reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem for 1000 years. There will be world peace and unity. After the 1000 years, Satan will be loosed for a short period of time after which there will be another battle. Satan will be defeated once and for all, the world will end and the judgment of the wicked (3rd resurrection) will take place.

This is a brief summary of the most popular view of this doctrine. There are many differences about what exactly will happen and when (some believe the rapture will come at the end or in the middle of the great tribulation), but all premillennialists believe the Lord will return and physically reign on earth for 1000 years.

Today, we will begin examining why these various elements are false beginning with the rapture.

I. What is the rapture?

- a. The word “**rapture**” – from the Latin, “*rapare*” means to “take away” or “snatch out.” It is a belief that at some point related to the tribulation of the last days (the tribulation being God’s wrath poured out on the ungodly world for 7 years) the righteous will be suddenly caught up to heaven to be with the Lord for a determined period of time (depending on when they believe it happens) until He returns to this earth to establish His kingdom.
- b. The theory of the silent rapture is fairly recent. It is attributed to John Darby around 1830. Attempts to predate his teaching are sparse to non-existent.
- c. Most teach that this rapture will be silent and will include the resurrection of the righteous dead. It is this belief that prompts the bumper stickers that say, “In case of rapture, this vehicle will be empty.”
- d. The doctrine of rapture also implies there will be 2 (or 3) resurrections – one at the rapture for the righteous, (some teach) another at the end of the years of tribulation, and then the final resurrection of the wicked after the reign of Christ on earth.
- e. There is a website for believers in this theory (<http://www.raptureletters.com>) where one can enter their name and the names of friends and family to receive an email after the rapture occurs explaining what happened to them. I also found a YouTube video designed to do the same thing.
- f. Verses used to promote this theory – NOTE: We will address these verses in a few moments.
 - i. The primary verse to advance this belief is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 where Paul speaks words of encouragement to the brethren concerning their loved ones who had died. In vs. 16-17 we noted that the Lord will descend and the dead in Christ will rise first, then “*we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...*” This is the rapture. They appeal to the phrase, “caught up” which is from the Greek word, ἀρπάζω (harpazō) and means to be snatched or seized.

- ii. 1 Thessalonians 3:13 speaks of the coming of the Lord with His saints. It is implied that for Him to come with His saints, they had to first be taken – hence the rapture.
- iii. 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 which speaks of us being changed, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...” This points to the instantaneity of the rapture.
- iv. Revelation 3:10, “I will keep you from the hour of trial”
- v. Some have referred to the sparing of Noah (Genesis 6) from the flood and Rahab from the destruction of Jericho (Joshua 6:22-27) as examples that God will “rapture” His righteous people before destruction comes.
- vi. John 14:3, where Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you, I will come back...”
- vii. SOME appeal to Matthew 24:40-41 which speaks of 2 being in a field or grinding in the mill – one taken and one is left. Luke 17:34-35 also gives a similar teaching. But I also read at least one pro premillennial source that rightly noted that this was dealing with one dying and the other not (see vs. 37).
- viii. There are numerous other passages that are often appealed to.

II. **Biblical problems with the theory of the rapture**

- a. When the Lord returns it will not be silent – even 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says that. See also 1 Corinthians 15:52 – the trumpet shall sound. 2 Peter 3:10 – a great noise
- b. It will not be secret – every eye will see Him. Revelation 1:7, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10
- c. The *catching away* of the saints will not be for just 7 years – 1 Thessalonians 4:17 – we will always be with the Lord.
- d. The Bible speaks of the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked at the same time – John 5:28-29. Many passages tie the judgment of the righteous and wicked together – Matthew 25:31-46, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-9, Revelation 20:11-15, etc.
- e. That judgment will be in the last days - John 12:48, John 6:39-44 speaks of being raised “at the last day”. Note also Hebrews 9:27 – it is appointed for men to die, then the judgment!

III. **Answering passages associated with the rapture theory**

- a. As you can see from these verses, they are a patchwork put together to advance their theory. This is truly an example of eisegesis (reading into the text what one intends for it to say) instead of exegesis (getting out of the text its intended meaning). E.g. – concerning the coming and judgment of the Lord, premillennialism, including the rapture, pick and chose which one belongs to which events. NO one passage ties together all the events.
- b. Also, consider that not every advocate of premillennialism or the rapture will interpret these verses the same. IOW, some will apply 1 verse to a certain part of the timeline and others will apply it to a different aspect of the timeline.
- c. Consider the verses mentioned above briefly:
 - i. **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** –
 - 1. First, consider the context. Paul is seeking to comfort brethren who have lost loved ones who are concerned about their state (vs. 13). That is what this text is about.
 - 2. The point Paul is driving home – their souls live on and are with Jesus. And when the Lord returns there will be a reunion.
 - 3. Of significance, is verse 17 – “and thus we shall ALWAYS be with the Lord.” Note we are caught up with Him in the air – NOTHING is said about Him ever returning to the earth.
 - 4. There is NOTHING in the text to indicate a distinction between the resurrection of the righteous and wicked in this text.
 - ii. **1 Thessalonians 3:13** – speaks of Him returning with all His saints.
 - 1. The word *saints* is a word that means “holy ones” (sanctified ones).
 - 2. While in NT the word overwhelmingly refers to saints, it can refer to angels, though most often a different word is used (cf. Jude 14, also several OT references in the

LXX). We know that the Lord will come with angels in judgment (Matthew 24:31, 25:31, 13:39).

3. While it can refer to saints consider that the verse says nothing about a rapture. It could simply note the redemption of the saved when He returns. You could say here that Paul is noting Jesus is coming to gather those who belong to Him (Matthew 25:31-32).

iii. **1 Corinthians 15:51-55.**

1. The entire chapter is devoted to the resurrection. He is challenging those who denied the resurrection – see vs. 12.
2. Paul is simply stating that when the Lord returns, we will be changed instantly. And he notes the NEED for that change so that we can live eternally with God in His eternal kingdom.
3. Note also 1 Corinthians 15:21-28 speaks of Christ now reigning (which defeats the major premise of premillennialism) and will do so until the end – 1 Corinthians 15:23–24. NOTE: Rapture proponents sometimes will say this proves the rapture by order – Christ first, then those who are His at His coming, then the end. AGAIN, the entire context is about the resurrection. There is NO need to make those who are Christ's a different event than the end.

iv. **Revelation 3:10**

1. Speaking to the faithful church at Philadelphia.
2. The Lord speaking to THEM (not to us) notes that He would protect THEM from further troubles. God can protect His people in many different ways – cf. 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Peter 2:9, etc.).
3. How does one read a rapture into that text?
4. NOTE: We have not yet discussed the nature of the book of Revelation. When we do we will notice it is filled with figurative language (Revelation 1:1), and that it was directed to those suffering then about events that would “shortly take place.” It is a message of encouragement to them that God will deal with the wicked, especially their persecutors.

v. **John 14:3**

1. Jesus, speaking to His apostles is simply making a promise that He will come again and that He will receive them into their eternal reward. The text is clearly about heaven.
2. Where is ANYTHING in this text that implies rapture or premillennialism?

vi. **Matthew 24:40-41, Luke 17:34-35 –**

1. I encourage you to read the context of these passages. In them Jesus is dealing primarily with the destruction of Jerusalem, but He could also be alluding to His final return – the various “days of the Lord” have similar qualities associated with them.
2. Luke 17:37 notes that the ones taken involve death (Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together). This is about the destruction of Jerusalem, which is a day of the Lord.
3. This part of Matthew could be a reference to the Lord's return, OR Jerusalem (cf. Matthew 24:1-2, 34 – that generation) – or both – again the various “days of the Lord” are similar.
4. Consider this: Even if it is the 2nd coming and some are taken and others left behind. Could this not simply be saying, judgment that makes a distinction? You find that clearly in Matthew 25 where Jesus illustrates 3 times His return with some caught unprepared, BUT they are judged.

- d. Concerning these passages – there is NO single passage to distinguish between the two comings of Christ or the various resurrections. NOTICE how to get a rapture out of any one of them, you HAVE TO read into the text something not clearly stated. That is always a problem.

And thus we can see that the rapture as described in premillennialism is NOT a Biblically true teaching. It is a doctrine that was invented to enhance this fanciful theory about the Lord's return. Do not be caught up in it. In our next lesson, we will continue to examine various aspects of premillennialism.