

Sunday, November 28, 2021 pm

A STUDY OF PREMILLENNIALISM (8)

The Antichrist, Armageddon, etc.

Tonight, we continue our study of the theory of premillennialism. We have noted that this is a theory that is contrary to the teachings of scripture. It is based first upon apocalyptic texts and then other passages to “fill in the blanks” that have been created.

Thus far we have noted that premillennialism is a doctrine that believes we are living in the age PRIOR to the Lord’s second coming at which time, He will come to earth and establish His kingdom and reign for 1000 years in Jerusalem. Many believe this was the intent of the Lord when He came the first time, but Israel was not ready to receive Him so the church was set up until He returns and this time He will succeed. (?) The return will be preceded by the rapture of the righteous, and then a 7 year period of tribulation that consists of 3½ of worldly chaos of all sorts (disasters, economic turmoil, wars, plagues, etc.) and then 3½ years of intense persecutions of converted Jews who finally acknowledge Jesus is (was) the Messiahs they were looking for AND Gentiles who were “left behind” and converted. Following this persecution, the 2nd coming occurs – the Lord returns to earth with His righteous army and confronts the forces of the antichrist who has arisen before they can ultimately destroy Jerusalem. This time Jesus wins and then reigns for 1000 years on the earth – a time of eutopia while Satan is bound for that period. There are lots of other details that we cannot explore because of time constraints, but this is the gist of this false doctrine. Tonight, we want to notice the rise of the antichrist and the battle of Armageddon, as well as mention some other factors mostly in Revelation.

I. By way of reminder – Apocalyptic literature and the book of Revelation

- I. Last week we talked about apocalyptic literature and noted that it is a type of literature with a hidden message portrayed in symbolic language. We noted this type of literature was prevalent during the 1st century and before in Jewish communities. The message of such literature was to encourage an oppressed people to endure because in the end, God will win. The apocalyptic literature of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC was not inspired, but Revelation is. Revelation is an apocalyptic book
- II. Concerning our approach to revelation, we need to remember the following factors:
 - i. Its descriptions are primarily symbolic – figurative and representative of something.
 - ii. It had to have relevance for the original audience – the 7 churches of Asia, and it was to be fulfilled in the near future (“the time is near” – Revelation 1:7)
 - iii. An understanding of the historical background when it was written is necessary – IF 95AD, then Christians were being persecuted by Domitian of Rome, the first of several empire wide Roman persecutions which would occur until the time of Constantine in ~312 AD. We noted how they were PART of “the great tribulation” of Revelation 7:14.
 - iv. The audience to whom it was written likely had “the key”, including its extensive use of the Old Testament. We do NOT have the same key they had.
 - v. If this be true, then the majority of the teachings of Revelation have already been fulfilled. We know that the persecuted saints have been vindicated and Rome is no longer a ruling empire.
 - vi. Keep in mind the OVERALL message of the book and various visions – they are symbolic of TYPES of event and individuals, but we may not know exactly who they had in mind.
 - vii. The overall message of the books, “**God wins**” or “**Jesus wins**”. And if we are on His side, we win too!
 - viii. If we keep these factors in mind, we will see that premillennialism is a false system of hyper speculation that changes from generation to generation because most supporter of this doctrine believe we are in the final days before this process begins.

II. The rise of the antichrist – during this time the antichrist arises

- I. The premillennial view of the antichrist is a specific individual will arise during the tribulation. He will become a world ruler (Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye [Left Behind series] believed he would be from a united Europe that would consist of a league of nations [10 – Lindsey, which he named]). In time, he will outlaw the Christian faith because they would not bow to Him. This would lead to severe persecutions, as the faithful would refuse to bear his mark and thus they would be unable to buy food, conduct commerce, etc.
- II. Passages associated with the antichrist. There are too many to examine in this lesson, but here I mention.
 - i. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 – The man of sin
 - ii. Revelation 13:1-10 – a beast rising out of the sea with 7 heads and 10 horns with crowns, and a blasphemous name. He has a deadly wound and is healed causing the world to marvel and follow him. He speaks blasphemy and has authority for 42 months. He blasphemes God and makes war with the saints (the great tribulation according to premillennialism)
 - iii. Revelation 17:3, a harlot is riding on the beast, called, “BABYLON THE GREAT”.
 - iv. Matthew 24:24 – false christs and prophets – many would come with signs and wonders to deceive.
 - v. 1 John 2:18, 22, 4:3, 2 John 7 – the ONLY passages that mention antichrist by name.
- III. The Bible and antichrist & the man of sin.
 - i. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12
 1. Context Paul is dealing with misconceptions about when the Lord would return.
 2. There are 3 terms to describe him - the man of sin, son of perdition, the lawless one (8)
 3. Numerous descriptions of his actions: 1) A falling away first (it was not immediate); 2) He opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or worshipped – he claims deity or professes false worship; 3) Sits as God in the temple – thus making up his own rules and religion; 4) the working of Satan with power, signs and lying wonders and unrighteous deception among those who did not receive the love of the truth (gullible, not truly obedient, and caught up in immorality, etc.)
 4. NOTE: There is no indication in the text this has to be a world leader – it could be an apostate Christian. NOTE: Judas in John 17:12 was called “*the son of perdition*”
 5. The Lord will consume him with the breath of His mouth when He comes.
 6. This could be either a specific person, or even a false office (such as the office of pope), etc.
 - ii. Revelation 13:1-10, & 17:3 – remember the above information about revelation. It is symbolic – could be a specific person or office.
 - iii. 1 John - Many leave out 1 John which will become apparent when we examine the texts. Consider these texts:
 1. NOTE: This is the ONLY book that mentions antichrist, yet that is term assigned to the other texts mentioned.
 2. 1 John 2:18 – Antichrist is coming, now there are many antichrists
 3. 1 John 2:22, 4:3 – He who denies that Jesus is the Christ and has come in the flesh.
 4. 2 John 7 – also denies Christ came in the flesh.
 5. Here we have the antichrist described
- IV. Who is the antichrist?
 - i. According to John, antichrist is one who denies who Jesus really is. This is someone who rejects Jesus as taught in scripture. MANY fit into that category throughout ALL ages. We must keep this in mind.

- ii. The “man of sin” of 2 Thessalonians 2 as noted could be a specific person or an office. Some have tied this to the papacy (I see this as plausible, though I would not limit it to that “office”, but ANY office of that character – TT). It could be a Roman emperor, leader of the persecuting empire that eventually was defeated. Many later emperors expected to be treated as Gods
- iii. Revelation 13 & 17 are best descriptive of Roman emperors and their false worship (the land beast of Revelation 13).
- iv. ALL of these passages could be reference to false doctrine and their influential teachers in various circumstances, and throughout all time until the Lord returns. There will always be resistance to the truth.

III. **At the end of the tribulation, the Lord returns with His saints** – This is recorded in Revelation 19:11-16 where John sees heaven opened and the Lord on a white horse (called Faithful and True). He comes to wage war against the beast. **NOTE: There is NO mention of Him coming to earth!**

IV. **The battle of Armageddon**

- I. As much as we hear about this, you would think it is a major theme in the Bible. But consider the following:
 - II. Armageddon is mentioned only once in the Bible – **Revelation 16:16**. In the order of visions in Revelation, this is the 6th bowl of wrath. The earth has already been devastated with plagues and disasters (Bowls of wrath 1-5 – Revelation 16:1-11 – loathsome sores, sea and waters to blood, men scorched by great heat, darkness and pain). The 6th angel pours out his bowl and the river Euphrates dries up, 3 unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, beast and false prophet. They gather at a place called Armageddon (in Hebrew). This is not the battle, but preparation for the Battle. The actual battle is recorded in Revelation 19:19-21.
- III. Concerning this, recall how history is important to interpret revelation – both relevant to the audience AND background. Consider the valley of Megiddo in OT History.
 - i. First, the word Armageddon lit. means the valley or hills of Megiddo. It is reference to a valley (the valley of Jezreel, Mt. Gilboa, etc.) in Northern Israel with dimensions of about 20 miles by 14 miles.
 - 1. This is significant because in this world battle, there are supposed to be 200 million (cf. Revelation 9:16) horsemen (the valley is NOT large enough!
 - 2. The battle is so severe that there is a river of blood ~200 miles long with blood flowing up to the bride of horses (Revelation 14:20)
 - 3. Politically, this location was also important as it was a junction between 3 continents. Conquerors needed that piece of land for strategy.
 - ii. In OT history this was a famous battlefield. In that valley,
 - 1. Deborah and Barak gained victory over the Canaanites – Judges 4 & 5 (esp. 5:19)
 - 2. Gideon defeated the Midianites - Judges 6-7, (6:33)
 - 3. Saul fell to the Philistines at Mount Gilboa - 1 Samuel 31 (31:8)
 - 4. Ahaziah, an evil king of Judah dies at the hand of Jehu (in judgment against the house of Omri-Ahab) – 2 Kings 9 (9:27)
 - 5. Josiah was killed in battle by Pharaoh Necho (2 Kings 23:29). He was a good king slain by Pharaoh, which ended righteous reign in Judah.
 - 6. These were spectacular battles between forces of good and evil, with the hand of God at work. **Remember symbolism in the book of Revelation.**
- IV. Consider also the overall picture.
 - i. While premillennialism wants the place literal and number of soldiers literal (taken from a different text), they will readily admit other parts are symbolic – frogs, dragons and beasts – representative of nations and individuals. AGAIN, there is inconsistency.

- ii. WHY cannot the place ALSO be symbolic? There are examples in scripture of places being symbolic.
 1. **Gehenna** – a valley near Jerusalem which history showed to be a place of idolatry and child sacrifice. The valley was finally defiled by Josiah. In the time of Jesus it was the garbage dump of Jerusalem. Jesus used that place to illustrate the horrors of hell.
 2. In Revelation, **Zion** (14:1) and **Jerusalem** (21:2) are symbolic of God’s spiritual city – the place where His people dwell. (NOTE: In times past, I have noted that reference to Zion typically had this spiritual connotation, though it was a name of Jerusalem.)
 3. **Babylon** (14:8), was long gone, but representative of apostasy and all that is opposed to God.
 4. **Sodom and Egypt** (11:8) – the text says it is a spiritual designation. What do you think of when Sodom is mentioned? Gross immorality, and Egypt was the oppressor of Israel.
 5. **WHY does Armageddon have to be a literal place?** Why can it not TOO be symbolic, like the REST of the text where it is mentioned?
- V. NOTE that Revelation 16 says NOTHING about the actual battle. The battle doesn’t occur until 19:11-16. It pictures Christ on a white horse with His army following Him (the righteous who had been martyred) – He returns with His saints. 19:19-21 – armies are gathered, the beast is captured, and the rest killed with the sword. That is it!
- VI. Based on my understanding of scripture, the battle of Armageddon manifests either:
 - i. God’s judgment against the instigators of persecution against its original audience (Rome) and His ability to crush His enemies)
 - ii. OR a description of His coming judgment that will occur when the Lord DOES return at His second coming. But that coming will bring to an end the world, NOT the beginning of a materialistic kingdom (and view) for 1000 years on earth.
- VII. What lesson do we glean from this?
 - i. Just as God could crush His enemies (as continually recorded throughout Biblical history), He can crush our enemies as well. We have continually noted that WE ARE AT WAR with Satan. And at times (perhaps right now) it looks like Satan is winning. BUT, when the time comes God will take care of it.
 - ii. The overall picture of Armageddon is a battle between Satan and Christ, between the righteous and the ungodly. Evil will be defeated. In the end, Christ is going to win!

The Biblical picture of God’s judgment is terrifying. One of the prime lessons we can learn from Revelation is how terrible God’s wrath is. You DO NOT want to be on the side of His wrath. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 – warns that there is a judgment coming, and God will repay with tribulation those who are against Him and His people. Hebrews 10:31 tells us, *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* There is a future tribulation – the final judgment of God. And it will be meted out to all who have rejected Him. When He returns, where will you be standing? Are you ready for His judgment? Think about it!