

PREMILLENNIALISM, GOD'S PLAN OF THE AGES – REVIEW

[C] Premillennialism: The Rapture

Many of the things asserted in premillennial teaching are baseless conjectures. These things are not explicitly taught or implied from the Scriptures but rather are the work of men's speculation.

I. [C] *Preliminary Problems in the Chart*

I want to address a few problems in this tract before I talk about the rapture doctrine. The article reads,

“There are 7 dispensations in the outworking of God's overall eternal purpose (Eph. 1:9, 10). In each man is given a specific test or responsibility; each ends in failure and this brings judgment. The overall revelation of the dispensation tests show that man is utterly *sinful and lost* (Rom. 3:10, 23).”

[C] *Inherited Depravity*. The article promotes *Total Hereditary Depravity* and wants us to believe that all men are so *utterly sinful* that they are incapable of choosing good unless God directly works to enable him. This is of course, false. *All* men in Romans 3:23 are accountable men, not babies. Paul is not saying that all men are *born* in sin but rather that they *turn* and *become* sinners (cf. Rom. 3:12ff).

Was Noah utterly sinful and lost? He lived faith. How so? Was his faith something that God gave to Noah through the direct operation of the Spirit? Not at all. He was divinely warned and was moved with godly fear (Heb. 11:7). It does not say that Noah was so utterly *sinful and lost* that God *moved Noah to fear* and build an ark, but rather that he moved with godly fear!

[c] *The Dispersion and Regathering of Israel* (Ezek. 36:16-38). This is a text of Scripture that explains why God sent Israel into captivity and it also predicts their return to the Land. Yet, this tract wrongly places the dispersion and regathering after the cross. Israel was dispersed to the nations and then partook of a regathering to the Land during the Old Testament, during the Law of Moses! Ezekiel himself was taken captive when he was 25 years old in 597 BC. He was 17 years old when Daniel was taken captive in 605 BC.

[C] There were three deportations of Israel under Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. 605 BC (Daniel). 597 BC (Ezekiel with 10,000 were taken, 2 Kin. 24:14). 587 BC which corresponds with Zedekiah. After which the temple was burnt. What is written in Ezekiel 36:24 is as old of news as the Old Testament is old. It has already happened, that ship has already sailed.

[C] As there were three deportations, likewise there were three returns to Palestine.

1. The first return was in 536 BC led by *Sheshbazzar* and *Zerubbabel* (who may be the same person). Just under 50,000 people returned during this time (see Ezra 2:64, 65). These people would eventually rebuild the temple and it was completed in 516 BC (Ezr. 6:15). Haggai and Zechariah prophesied during this time.
2. Years later, in about 457 BC, a second but significantly smaller group returned to Palestine under the leadership of Ezra (Ezr. 7, 8). Ezra was a skilled scribe who restored the law to the people.
3. A third group was led by Nehemiah to Palestine in 445 BC. We do not know the number who went with him but his mission was to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. So the temple, the law, and the protective walls of Jerusalem were all rebuilt. This is not something going to happen, it already happened (see Neh. 6:15).

[C] *Dispensations*. The Bible speaks of the major divisions of time beginning with Adam to Moses (Rom. 5:14). This is what is meant by the “patriarchal” time because the father of the house served as a priest to the family. Next, it speaks of Moses and the prophets (Acts 3:21-25). This has been referred to as the Mosaic or Jewish dispensation. Moses was the lawgiver and the exodus from Egyptian slavery was accomplished through him. The third era begins with the one who would be *like Moses* (Acts 3:22). Jesus is the fulfillment. The Christian era began with Christ the Son of God coming from the Father to live as a man. The Old Covenant was taken away and was replaced with the New Covenant (Acts 3:26; 1 Cor. 3:6-11; Col. 2:14-16; Heb. 8:7-13; etc.). The Old Testament is like the shadow and the New Testament is the substance. This era is often referred to as “the last days” in Scripture (see, Heb. 1:1, 2). It began effectively with Christ's first coming and will end in His second coming.

II. [C] *The Bible doesn't speak of a Rapture.*

The rapture doctrine is at the heart of premillennial thought. The concept that God will rapture or take away those in Christ before a seven-year tribulation is not found in the Holy Scriptures. The Bible student will have as much success finding the rapture doctrine in Scripture as he will in finding Christmas, the Pope, and infant baptism. It exists only in the imagination of man.

The article reads, "He will first return in the clouds to resurrect the DEAD IN CHRIST, to change the LIVING IN CHRIST and RAPTURE or receive them up together to Himself (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17). This event may be SOON..." (emp. his).

- A. [C] John 14:1-3 mentions Jesus coming to receive His own. But the emphasis is the "PLACE" that the Lord is preparing for them. That place is not found on this world or in this universe. How much sense does it make for the Lord to comfort these disciples by preparing them a place that they will only live for seven years and then they will have to return to this place? What would be the sense of talking about it?
- B. [C] 1 Thessalonians 4 also shows the Lord descending to take His own (4:16, 17). The living and the dead in Christ rise to meet Him in the air.
 1. This is not an *invisible, silent, and secretive* coming. Name three audible features from 1 Thess. 4:16. The Lord descends with a shout. He descends with the voice of the archangel. He descends with the trumpet of God. What is silent about a shout and a trumpet? Is the trumpet broken?
 2. It is visible because the dead in Christ rise from their graves. Christ appears not as air, but in the air! See also "appears" and "appear" in Col. 3:4; 2 Tim. 4:1.
 3. Those who are alive when Christ comes will ascend to meet the Lord and the dead in the clouds. This is NOT for only seven years, but rather forever. The Scripture says, "AND THUS WE SHALL ALWAYS BE WITH THE LORD" (4:17).
 4. What Leon Bates calls the "RAPTURE OF THE SAVED," Paul calls it the "coming of the Lord" (4:15). It is not only the dead going to be with the Lord, but the Lord's second coming.
 - a. [c] Notice "the Lord HIMSELF will DESCEND from Heaven" (4:16). "Himself" is a *personal* intensifier for His *personal* return!
 - b. The apostle wrote a second letter to this church and gave more information for these brethren to know about the coming of the Lord (see 2 Thess. 2:1, 2). It is the "day of Christ." Paul has the coming of our Lord on his mind as he is writing these brethren. Now he mentions that something else will happen when the Lord comes (reveals Himself) in 2 Thess. 1:6-10. When the faithful receive *rest*, there is also repayment of tribulation to the troublers of the church. This is not a seven-year earthly tribulation, but the flaming fiery vengeance of hell, and its duration is *everlasting destruction*!
 - c. There is no secretive rapture in the coming of our Lord but a shout and trumpet. There is no seven-year tribulation to follow but the *everlasting* judgment upon the wicked.
 5. [C X2] 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 is speaking of the same event, the same return of Jesus as 1 Thessalonians. Here are two charts to compare things from the two letters of the same event—the second coming, the resurrection, and the judgment.

Conclusion:

1. One person described the meaning of the Bible as Jesus is coming; Jesus has come; Jesus will come back! See Acts 1:9-11. It matters what we have believed and obeyed when the Lord comes back. Peter asked, "...what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:17). Paul answers that in our text. Those who have not obeyed the gospel are assured everlasting hot, punishing misery far and away from the presence of the Lord.
2. Rather than *vengeance*, those who have obeyed the gospel will be given *rest* (2 Thess. 1:7). They will be glorified when Jesus comes (1:10). Why? Because they glorified Him in the life they lived (1:11, 12). Paul's prayer is good for us to pray.
3. In the Lord's prayer, He said, "I am glorified in them" (Jn. 17:10). Who were these? They were those who received His word (Jn. 17:8). They have kept His word (17:6). [C] John 17:24 gives an abridged statement of our study.
4. [C] Will you glorify His name today in obeying the gospel 1 Peter 3:21, 22? If angels must submit to Him, so must you. Your future can never be brighter and your hope never surer than when you trust and obey the risen Savior.