

PREMILLENNIALISM & THE RAPTURE

Handout for Lesson 16 of *Thought Provoking Questions*

PREMILLENNIALISM IS PERNICIOUS

It confuses people about their hope in Jesus Christ.

It confuses people about their need to obey the gospel today.

It distracts people from how they must live today.

It makes people believe that the word of God changes with the day's headlines.

It has consequences that strike at the very heart of the gospel.

TERMINOLOGY

Dispensationalism: The belief that all history is divided into seven ages or dispensations that supposedly correspond to the seven days of the creation week.

Premillennialism: The belief that Jesus will return to earth and then reign here on earth for 1000 years. It teaches that:

- » Jesus came to establish a visible rule on earth.
- » The Jews did not accept Christ so the offer to rule was withdrawn.
- » The establishment of the kingdom was postponed until his return.
- » The church was established for the interim period. The church is a parenthesis in history and is not a fulfillment of any Old Testament prophecy.
- » The church age will end with a "rapture" in which all believers will meet Christ in the air. This is the first stage of the second advent.
- » During the next seven years, the antichrist will rule the earth, the Jews will be restored to Palestine, the temple will be rebuilt, and the sacrificial system will be reinstated. Those saved during this time are called tribulation saints.
- » The Antichrist will break a covenant with the Jews after 3.5 years and a terrible persecution will follow.
- » After another 3.5 years Christ will appear, defeat the Antichrist, and rule on earth for 1000 years.

Postmillennialism: The belief that Christ will return after the millennium period.

Amillennialism: The belief that there will be no literal millennial period either before or after the return of Christ.

"This work shall be devoted to the destruction of sectarianism, infidelity, and anti-Christian doctrine and practice. It shall have for its object the development and introduction of that political and religious order of society called the millennium, which will be the consummation of that ultimate society proposed in the Christian scripture." (Alexander Campbell)

Rapture: The word "rapture" is derived from the Latin word "rapio," which means to seize or to snatch. The rapture is purported by premillennialists to be a silent, secret return of Christ that will proceed his visible return a few years later to set up his millennial kingdom.

Antichrist: He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

Armageddon: The earth's most famous battlefield. J. L. Hurlbut said that "more battles have been fought on this plane than on any other in the world." Armageddon was a code word for hope and victory in the face of seemingly hopeless odds!

DOES ANY OF THIS MATTER?

Does it make any difference what we believe about premillennialism? Is it all just a matter of opinion? Should we make an issue out of it?

To answer that question, let's turn to John Walvoord, who is perhaps the leading *proponent* of premillennialism. Here is what he has to say about its importance:

"If premillennialism is only a dispute about what will happen in a future age which is quite removed from present issues, that is one thing. If, however, premillennialism is a system of interpretation which involves the meaning and significance of the entire Bible, defines the meaning and course of the present age, determines the present purpose of God, and gives both material and method to theology, that is something else. It is the growing realization that premillennialism is more than a dispute about Revelation 20. It is not too much to say that millennialism is a determining factor in Biblical interpretation of comparable importance to the doctrines of verbal inspiration, the deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, and bodily resurrection."

Premillennialism comes with consequences that run directly counter to the gospel of Jesus Christ. **To accept premillennialism is to reject Christ as King and Savior.**

CONSEQUENCES OF PREMILLENNIALISM

Premillennialism falsely states that Jesus failed to accomplish his mission.

Premillennialism falsely states that the church is a "Plan B" that came about as a result of Jesus' failure to perform "Plan A."

Premillennialism falsely states that Jesus is not presently reigning as King.

Premillennialism falsely states that the Old Covenant will again be in effect.

Premillennialists teach that the Levitical Priesthood will be restored.

Premillennialists teach that the sacrificial system will be restored.

Premillennialists teach that the New Covenant is not in effect now.

Premillennialists teach that God's land promises to Israel have not yet been fulfilled.

THE PARABLE THAT DEMOLISHES PREMILLENNIALISM

LUKE 19:11-27 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12 He said therefore, **A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.** 13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. 15 **And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom,** then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. ... 27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

The details of this parable are strikingly different from premillennialism.

- » The kingdom was received in heaven rather than on earth.
- » The reign of Christ is from heaven rather than from earth.
- » The return of Christ is after the reception of the kingdom rather than prior to it.