

THE RAPTURE AND TRIBULATION

Int.

1. Aim: To discuss these doctrines of premillennialism which are contrary to what the Bible teaches.
2. Matt. 24:36 "But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."
3. Men have made predictions about the second coming of Christ since the early years - over 220 predictions have been made about the time of his second coming. [See Library of Date Setters of the End of the World]
4. Today men are teaching the doctrine of premillennialism which has a false view about the coming of Christ. It involves these terms called the "Rapture" and "Tribulation".
 - a. Bumper stickers are seen that say: "In case of Rapture this car will be unoccupied."
 - b. The Rapture is a mass migration of living and dead, born-again Christians. Some believe that they will ascend through the air and meet Jesus Christ in the sky.
 - c. The word comes from the Latin word "Rapare" which means to take away or to snatch out.
 - d. This would be a remarkable event. Pilots would disappear from planes, truck drivers from their trucks; people from automobiles, etc. A family will be eating dinner, when some of the members rise from their seats, pass through the roof and keep rising through the air.

5. Origin of this doctrine

- a. Can be traced back to a Pentecostal movement in the early 1800's - A man by the name of Edward Irving - lived from 1792-1834.
- b. A young woman named Margaret McDonald of Glasgow Scotland first came up with the idea of a two state coming of Christ - Then others began to teach the same things.
- c. It developed into these doctrines of pre-millennialism.

6. Many religious people believe that The Rapture will occur at the time that Christ first returns towards earth. Most believe that Christ will not actually land or stay on earth at this time; the "real" second coming will occur later, when he returns with an army. Then he will come to reign for 1000 years on this earth with Jerusalem as his headquarters.

7. Summary - Rapture - Jesus will come and take the righteous, both living and the dead and they will be with Jesus in the air for 7 ½ years. There will be Tribulation on the earth for this 7 ½ years. At the end of this time Jesus will return to the earth. The battle of Armageddon will occur and the 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth will begin with headquarters in Jerusalem. All False. Not in the Bible

8. Recent developments

- a. Hal Lindsey's book "The Late Great Planet Earth"
- b. The "Left Behind" series of books by Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim LaHaye -

9. Let us notice the truth of the Bible about these matters....

Discussion

I. THE RAPTURE

- A. The word rapture is not even in the Scriptures and the doctrine with that name is unscriptural also.
1. The books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, read honestly in context, forever disprove such a notion.
 2. Both epistles were written to the same people and discuss one major point: **The Coming of the Lord.**
 3. Not one single time in the 8 chapters of the two books do we see any indication of more than one coming of the Savior.
 4. Doctrine of men not of God
- B. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18
1. This passage contains the main description that men use for the rapture
 - a. This passage was written by Paul about 51 AD, when he was living in Corinth.
 - b. It was addressed to the Christians at Thessalonica, capital of Macedonia. This was an early writing by Paul.
 - c. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul apparently is correcting a misunderstanding about the return of Christ.
 - d. It would seem that the Thessalonians were concerned that only those Christians who were alive at the second coming might share in the Kingdom of God at Christ's return.
 2. They held beliefs that Paul wanted to correct:
 - a. Some felt that their Christian friends and relatives who had died since Jesus' execution might not take part in the resurrection,

- b. Some felt that those who had recently died may have forfeited their salvation by the act of dying.
 - c. Some may have believed that through their baptism, that their fellow Christians should have become immune to death. They would have been concerned that their friends' and relatives' deaths might indicate that they had not been saved.
3. Paul refers to the dead euphemistically as "those who fall asleep."
- a. He tied their hope for salvation and a future life in heaven to their belief in the resurrection of Christ.
 - b. Paul was anxious to assure the Thessalonians that their beliefs were mistaken,
 - c. In 1 Thessalonians 4:15, Paul refers to "the Lord's own word" as the source of his teaching.
 - d. He comforts his readers by assuring them that the Christians who are still alive will "certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep." 1Thes.4:15 NKJV
- C. Summing up the Thessalonian letters on the Lord's coming, Paul taught them 6 major points:
- 1. Patiently wait for His coming. Many of them thought it would be immediate.
 - 2. He will come as a thief in the night. No-one knows the time. Christians should be comforted by the Lord's return. It will be a day of rejoicing.
 - 3. When He does come, both the ungodly and the righteous will be dealt with. No separated period.
 - 4. Those who have died in the Lord will be joined with the Christians still alive to meet the Lord in the air.

5. But, at the same time (Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; 2 Thess 1:4-10) the disobedient will be separated from the "presence of the Lord and the glory of his power."
 - a. ACTS 24:15. "And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."
 - b. JOHN 5:28-29 "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29. And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
6. Not one word is mentioned about 7 years of rapture for the saints and great tribulation for those remaining on the earth.

D. The dispensational premillennialist tries desperately to create a distinction between Christ's coming "for" the saints and His coming "with" the saints.

1. Their favorite verse for this is 1 Thes 3:13, but it just does not teach this. "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."
2. In Ecclesiastes 12:7 we learn that when we die our spirit goes to the Hadean realm, and our body returns to the dust.
 - a. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Eccl. 12:7
 - b. It is significant that both Daniel 12:2 and Matthew 27:52 inform us that the body sleeps in the grave -- not the spirit.

(1) DAN 12:2. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

(2) MATT 27:52. "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,"

3. Evidently, then, when we are raised (John 5:28-29) in the last day (John 12:48) our bodies will come forth from the grave and as we rise to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess 4:17) He shall meet us and our spirit will be joined with our body.

a. 1 THS 4:17. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

b. 1 Cor. 15:51-52 "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

E. The doctrine of the Rapture and Tribulation is a part of the Millennial doctrine...

1. RAPTURE - Dead Christians raised and living Christians transformed.
2. SEVEN-YEAR TRIBULATION - Calamities befall those left behind.
3. CHRIST'S RETURN - Earthly kingdom established.
4. THOUSAND-YEAR REIGN - Christ rules earthly kingdom from Jerusalem.
5. END - World ends; remaining dead raised, judged, and rewarded/punished.

F. According to this millennial theory the saints will be at peace while sinners are in great tribulation on earth.

1. We should carefully read the exciting lessons contained in the parables of the tares and the fishnet.
 - a. Mt. 13:24-30 - Mt. 13:36-43
 - b. Our Savior clearly stated the righteous and the ungodly would dwell side by side until separated for all eternity into either heaven or hell.
 - c. Mt. 13:47-50 parable of fish net - angels shall sever the wicked from among the just
 - d. There will be only ONE resurrection composed of both the good and the evil (Acts 24:15). "...that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."

G. Dr. Robert Strong gave this definition of the rapture: *"By the rapture is meant the sudden and possible secret coming of Christ in the air to catch away from the earth the resurrected bodies of those who have died in the faith and with them the living saints."*

H. At least two things wrong with the Rapture Doctrine

1. It will not be secret
 - a. However, according to Rev 1:7 we learn that EVERY EYE will see the Lord when He comes. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."
 - b. Tit. 2:13 "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;"
 - c. There will be nothing secret about the matter.

2. It will not be silent
 - a. It will not be quiet either.
 - b. In 2 Peter 3:10 and 1 Thess 4 and 2 Thess 1:4-10 we read of great noise, flaming fire and sound like a trumpet to accompany the Lord's coming.
 - (1) 2 PET 3:10. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."
 - (2) Great Noise - not quietly and in secret
 3. Dr. DeHaan of Michigan once wrote a dramatic account of what he expected to happen at the rapture.
 - a. He said that one morning men would awaken to find wives and children missing and highways would be filled with massive car wrecks because some parents, offspring and drivers would be suddenly caught up in the clouds while their sinful mates and co-workers would be left in great tribulation on the earth.
 - b. This is where the bumper sticker "**In case of rapture this car will no longer have a driver**" came from. Another one reads: "**The rapture; the only way to fly.**"
 - c. The rapture is called by men "The great Snatch" or "The Great Escape"
 4. The graphic wording and descriptive analysis of the Thessalonian epistle clearly show that the righteous are not taken away before the Judgment day but they are present with the wicked until the time the ungodly receive punishment at which time the righteous receive their reward (Rev 20:11-15).
- I. These doctrines are not found in the Bible, only in the imaginations of men.

II. THE TRIBULATION

- A. Now, let us turn our attention to the great tribulation.
1. John Darby, the father of dispensational teaching, cited four passages that he claimed had "unequaled tribulation," through which he said evil men will pass but from which the true church would be exempt.
 2. The verses Darby used were Jeremiah 30:7; Matthew 24:21; Daniel 12:1; and Mark 13:19.
- B. A careful study of these passages, however, ruins Darby's philosophy.
1. JER 30:7. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."
 - a. The verse in Jeremiah definitely identifies "the time of Jacob's trouble" as Babylonian captivity.
 - b. This is not referring to the end of time
 2. DAN 12:1. "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."
 - a. Daniel's reference to "a time of trouble" had to do with the evil Seleucidan domination 175 years before Christ when Antiochus defiled the temple in Jerusalem.
 - b. That's what the "abomination of desolation" means.
 - c. Defiling the Holy Place.
 - d. Not a reference to the end of time.

3. MATT 24:21. "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."
 - a. The passage concerning "great tribulation" was fulfilled in "that generation" (Matt 24:35) at the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - b. The reference to Mark 13:19 is a parallel verse to Matthew 24:21!
- C. 29 times in the New Testament Christ and the apostles use the word tribulation and refer it to the suffering, trials and persecutions in this life that will befall the faithful Christian.
1. In the familiar parable of the sower in Matthew 13:21 our Lord taught that some would "fall away" because of persecution and tribulation.
 2. In Acts 14:22, after being stoned at Lystra, Paul mentioned that entering the kingdom of the Master and "much tribulation" went together.
 3. In John 16:33 our Redeemer made it crystal clear that those disciples of His -- in the first century -- would have tribulation in the world of that day! "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."
 4. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:10-12) and in John 16 our Savior tied persecution and following Him inseparably together.
- D. This is the great tribulation the saints John viewed, according to Revelation 7:14 had come out of!
1. This is the way the Bible speaks of tribulation.

2. Nowhere in the Bible is the word "tribulation" used in connection with a seven year period at the end of the age, either while the church is still on the earth or after the church has been removed from the earth.
3. Instead, it is used to describe the sufferings of Christians, the sufferings inflicted upon worldly rejecters of Christ, and the sufferings especially prophesied for the Jewish nation at various times in its past history.

CONCLUSION

1. These two ideas of the Rapture and the Tribulation are part of a false system that is not taught in the Bible.
2. 1 Thess 4 does not say that the saints shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and "there shall we be for seven years." The Bible teaches in 1 Thess 4:17: "So shall we ever be with the Lord."
3. In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins we are taught in a most interesting way that when the Bridegroom comes the door is shut to the unprepared while the righteous are enjoying the marriage supper.
 - a. That is exactly the lesson in John 5:28-29.
 - b. Yes, when Jesus comes again ALL THAT ARE IN THE GRAVE shall come forth at that time.
 - c. It will be a moment of reward for the righteous and remorse for the wicked.
 - d. No seven year period will separate the judgment and certainly not a 1,000 year period.
 - e. Premillennialism, with all of its errors, the rapture and the tribulation, is not true. They have too many resurrections and comings of the Lord! There will be only one.

4. Christ's Kingdom is not future
 - a. It has been in existence for nearly 2000 years.
 - b. Jn. 18:36 Jesus said: "My kingdom is not of this world"
 - c. Mat. 16:18-19 Jesus promised Peter that he could open the doors of the kingdom and he did this on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2
 - d. John, the apostle, stated in Rev. 1:9 that he was "in the Kingdom"
 - e. Mark 9:1 says: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."

5. 2 Thess 1 boldly ruins the concept that when the Lord returns He will give sinners another chance to obey. The idea of the tribulation is that people during these 7 years will have a second chance to obey the Gospel.
 - a. Contrariwise, verses 7-9 inform us that the ungodly will then be punished!
 - b. II Thes. 1:7-9 "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"
 - c. Would you fall into that category now ?

6. It is a shame that so many honest and sincere folks have swallowed the Rapture, Tribulation doctrine associated with premillennialism. Let us do all we can to help our friends and neighbors learn the truth about these matters.

Bibliography

1. Much of this material was gathered from the "Search" TV program, and was written by Mac Lyon.
2. Files on Premillennialism
3. The Left Behind Series - by Wayne Jackson - Christian Courier Sept. 25, 2000

Sermon by Arthur Pigman -
Evans Church of Christ
515 Gibbs Road
Evans, Ga. 30809
706-855-1249
arthurpigman@cybrtyme.com