

THE THOUSAND-YEAR REIGN

In developing this study I used the text from a “Track”, prepared by, W. N. Jackson, with the title: “Have You Wondered About The Thousand-Year Reign?” The date of Brother Jackson’s track was, 1978. I began this study effort in October 2004. And I have been blessed by doing it. My position is the same as that of my brother in the Lord, W. N. Jackson.

“Perhaps many who read this will not be familiar with the word “Premillennialism,” but they will be familiar with the doctrines thus identified. Indeed, most in the Protestant religious world are exposed to premillennial teaching, and the great majority of the men who occupy the pulpits in the sectarian world are evangelists for premillennialism. We hope, in this brief treatment to define the term and to give Bible references for the refutation of the doctrine.

THE DOCTRINE OF PREMILLENNIALISM

This system has to do with teaching about the next coming of our Lord, and in particular with the establishment of His kingdom upon this earth. The word “premillennialism” is made up thusly: “pre” means “before”; and “ism” refers to “doctrine” or “system.” Hence the doctrine that teaches that the Lord will return to this earth before the establishment of His kingdom, upon this planet.

Proponents of this teaching insist that the Lord will return to this earth, set up His kingdom, and rule with His saints in a thousand-year era of bliss. While the Bible teaches us that the Lord will appear one day, and that the Lord has a kingdom, and that the saints are citizens in that kingdom, the system known as premillennialism takes these truths and creates a man-made doctrine in conflict with plain Bible teaching. This is not surprising, since it has ever been Satan’s tactics to handle the Word of God deceitfully. (2 Corinthians 4:2).

MANY BIBLE REFERENCES TO THE KINGDOM

The nation of Israel was, of course, familiar with the system of kings and kingdoms. All during the latter part of the Old Testament, God’s prophets pointed to the coming of the Savior, and identified Him as a King who would set up His kingdom and rule over it. Isaiah promised that He would be a Governor and that the nature of His kingdom would be that of peace (Isaiah9: 6,7).

As the New Testament opens, John came with the message that the kingdom “*is at hand*,” (Matthew 3:2) and Jesus began His ministry with the same message (Mark 1:15). Called the “*King of the Jews*,” (Matthew 2:2), Jesus acknowledged this fact before Pilate (John 18:37). He had just made the point that His kingdom was not of a worldly sort, but spiritual (v. 36).

This is a vital point, for the truth on the matter of the return of Christ, the establishment of the kingdom, the thousand-year period, and the disposition of the saints during the extent of the kingdom hinges on the **nature of that kingdom**.

THE IDENTITY OF THE KINGDOM

As we just saw, both John and Jesus spoke of the kingdom being “*at hand*”. Our Lord told some of his own generation that they would not see death until they also saw the kingdom come with power (Mark 9:1). This certainly told them that the kingdom, in whatever form, would come in that generation. In Matthew 16:18,19 Jesus used the terms “*kingdom*” and “*church*” interchangeably. He stated that He would build the church, and that Peter would be given the keys of the kingdom. We follow Peter through the gospel record, and note that when He preached the message of the resurrected Lord in Acts 2, those who obeyed the gospel were saved, added to the church. (V. 47).

We can also follow the word “*power*,” which would be a mark of the coming kingdom. The Lord promised that the kingdom would come with power. The apostles were told, before the Lord’s ascension, that they were to wait in Jerusalem until they received *power* from on high (Luke 24:49).

Luke reminds us of that promise, identifying that power as the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5, 8), whereby these apostles would be witnesses of the Lord unto all the earth. We note that the power came on the Day of Pentecost, (Acts 2:1-4) and that the church was the institution established on that occasion (V. 47). The kingdom was to come with power, and the power made possible the message, which resulted in the establishment of the church!

(Think about it)! Surely this truth is reinforced by Paul’s declaration that there is just **one body** (Ephesians 4:4), and he had earlier identified that body as the church (Ephesians 1:22, 23). Paul and the members of the church at Colosse were in the kingdom (Colossians 1:13), and so were John and those who received the Revelation epistle (Revelation 1:9).

We might also note that among those with John in the kingdom were members of seven different congregations of the church of the Lord. (Revelation, chapters 2 and 3). Indeed, there is one body, the church; that church is the kingdom that Jesus promised to build, and it came into being 2,000 years ago, as recorded in Acts 2. It therefore is not future, as premillennial teachings has it. Since the kingdom is identified as the church, and since the church is the Lord’s body (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23), a spiritual institution, there is no justification for men taking promises concerning the kingdom and looking for actual fulfillment by events upon this earth.

REGARDING PREMILLENNIALISM POINTS

1). *Unfulfilled Old Testament prophecies*. Jesus said, “*Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill*”

(Matthew 5:17). As He fulfilled the prophecies concerning Himself, so the kingdom or church fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. This is so, even though we might not be able to see the fulfillment in the most minute detail. Remembering that the church is a spiritual institution, we see that premillennialism error is in expecting literal, earthly fulfillment.

2). *New heavens, new earth.* Premillennialists' cite 2 Peter 3:13, where this language is used, and then look for a renewed planet Earth as fulfillment. The Greek word for "earth" here is used of "earth, land, ground, country and world," and more would have to be given than just the word "earth" to denote this planet. But the Lord had promised that His own would be with Him in "the Father's house," (John 14:2, 3); Paul stated that *we will, at the end, rise to ever be with the Lord "in the air,"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17); Peter says *that our inheritance is reserved for us in heaven* (1 Peter 1:4), and He *also states that this earth, and all things therein are to be burned up, dissolved* (2 Peter 3:10, 11). Clearly, then, we see that the Lord and the righteous will not be upon this earth after His next appearing.

3). *Revelation Chapter 20.* This is a favorite text of the Premillennialists', yet it contains no point peculiar to that doctrine. They cite this passage to make the point that the Lord's own will reign with Him a thousand years, verse 4, but they have to misuse the verse to get their point across. Note verse 4 carefully: John saw not all the righteous, but the souls of those beheaded...the martyrs. In the same verse, and of these martyrs, John said he saw them living and reigning with Christ a thousand years. He is simply saying that during this Christian dispensation, he saw the martyrs elevated to reign with Christ, and thus of us yet here in this age can be encouraged that our labor is not in vain. We have hope of one day being with Christ, and we are buoyed up in this by the fact that John saw the martyrs with the Lord. There is no indication at all that the reigning was upon the earth. They were with Christ!

PREMILLENNIALISM ABUSES THE CHURCH

The doctrine of premillennialism simply makes the church an after-thought and a substitute arrangement brought in by God as men await the real kingdom. But Paul said that the church is to make known the manifold wisdom of God according to the **eternal purpose**, which He purposed in Christ (Ephesians 3:10, 11). One must believe the Bible, or the premillennial theory: both cannot be right!

Again, premillennialism takes kingship away from the Lord. By that doctrine, He is not king, since He has no kingdom as yet. This contradicts that which is the clearest proof in the New Testament to the effect that the Lord now reigns as king over his kingdom. It is found in 1 Corinthians 15:24-25. There, the apostle speaks of the end, and the fact that the kingdom will then be **given to the father** (v. 24)...not established then, but given to the Father. It was already in existence before His coming, then. Paul continues, showing that the Lord reigns until all enemies are subdued, and the last enemy He will destroy is death. Note;

He **reigns** until death is no more! Then, while death is in existence, the Lord reigns. The proof we have, everyday that the Lord reigns over His kingdom is the fact that men die, that morticians are still in business, and that daily journeys are still being made to cemeteries.

(Premillennialism, regardless of the sincerity of its adherents, is a system of infidelity. Its hermeneutic is to argue for literalness while ignoring consistency. Its appeal is little more than fanciful sensationalism. Not a one of the peculiarities can be sustained by a single passage. Certainly there is no biblical basis for two future advents. Yes, Christ is coming again. Hebrews 9:28 shows that He came once to be our sin offering and that He will come “the second time,” but the scriptures make no allowance for a third coming nor for His second coming to be divided into “stages.”)

Friend, please study this matter carefully. Note that the Old Testament pointed to the King and His Kingdom, and that the New Testament shows the fulfillment of all this in the church Jesus purchased with his own blood. Those who obey the gospel were added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47); another way of stating that, they entered into citizenship in the kingdom of God. Men look and wait in vain for an earthly kingdom upon this planet. When the Lord next appears, it will not be to set up His kingdom, but to give the existing kingdom to the Father. What a tragedy if you're not in the kingdom! Make it sure by obeying the gospel today, and live faithfully until the end.

I have enclosed a 4-page document that will help in the understanding of the subject. May God bless us all in the understanding of HIS promise and His will.

Thank you for studying with me on this subject.

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ATTACHMENT

REPUDIATION OF THE “RAPTURE”

By: Dave Miller, Ph.D.

The average American is aware of the periodic claim that “the end is near.” When Y2K was approaching, outcries of doom, global disruption, and Armageddon were widespread. Hal Lindsey achieved nationwide attention over thirty years ago with his national bestseller *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970). A more recent repackaging of the dispensational brand of premillennialism is the popular *Left Behind* book series (see “The Official...”).

Every so often, a religious figure captures national attention, announcing the impending return of Jesus—even to the point of setting a date—only to fade into the anonymity from which he arose when his claim falls flat, but having achieved his “fifteen minutes of fame” (see Whisenant and Brewer, 1989). The sensationalism sells well and tweaks the curiosity of large numbers of people. Incredibly, this pattern has been repeating itself literally for **centuries!**

Such is the case with the alleged “Rapture.” It comes from the Latin word “*rapere*,” which means, “to seize, snatch out, take away.” Dispensationalists apply this word to the idea that Christ will come suddenly and secretly in the air to snatch away from the Earth the living saints and the resurrected bodies of those saints already deceased. This rapture is supposed to occur just prior to the seven-year Tribulation period, which, in turn, will be followed by the Millennium.

Proponents claim that the Rapture will be secretive. We are told that families will be shocked by the strange disappearance of a mother, father, or child. Driverless cars will collide in the streets (thus the bumper sticker: “In case of rapture, this vehicle will be unmanned”). A man and wife will be in bed; she hears a noise, turns her head, and finds him gone. Planes will crash with no pilots found. These sensational and dramatic examples illustrate the view that the Rapture will be an **invisible** coming of the Lord **for** His saints, leaving **visible results** of chaos and confusion among the remaining unbelievers.

In reality, the word “rapture” is not found in the Bible, though it is claimed to be the Latin equivalent of *harpadzo* translated “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NKJV). Lindsey admitted, “[i]t is not found in the Bible” (1970, p. 126), and noted that the word “translation” is just as suitable. Yet the word “translation” does occur in the New Testament. Paul referred to the fact that God “has delivered us from the power of darkness and **translated** us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:13, emp. added). So when an unbeliever obeys the Gospel, receives forgiveness of sins, and

is added to the church of Christ, he is taken out of the world and transferred to Christ’s kingdom. This use of the term is certainly a far cry from the idea that it refers to Christians being **raptured** from the physical Earth to meet Jesus in the air.

The New Testament uses three terms to refer to Christ’s return. First, *parousia* is translated “coming, presence, or advent.” Second, *epiphaneia* is translated “appearing, manifestation, or brightness.” Third, *apokalupsis* is translated “revelation.”

Dispensationalism holds that *parousia* (“coming”) refers to the “Rapture” that occurs seven years before the *epiphaneia* (“appearing”) or *apokalupsis* (“revelation).” Accordingly, at the “Rapture,” it is claimed that Jesus will come **for** the church only, while at the “Revelation,” Jesus will return **with** the church, and put an end to the “Tribulation” and “Armageddon.”

The primary passage used to support the idea of a “rapture” is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. But this passage was not actually given to deal with the return of Christ. Its purpose was twofold. First, it was designed to reassure Christians that their deceased loved ones would be able to share in the Lord’s return. Second, it informed Christians that those who are still living when Christ returns will have no precedence or advantage over those who have already died. This dual function of the text constitutes a very different emphasis from the one imposed upon it by dispensationalists.

The dispensational distinctions made between the three New Testament terms that refer to Christ’s return are simply untenable (see Boettner, 1957, pp. 163-164). For example, dispensationalists assert that the “coming” (*parousia*) in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1 refers to the “Rapture.” Yet the same word is used in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 to speak of Jesus coming **with** His saints, thereby coinciding with the dispensational concept of the “Appearing” or “Revelation” seven years **after** the “Rapture.” Dispensationalists apply 2 Thessalonians 2:8 to the “Antichrist,” and therefore must understand this as a reference to the “Appearing” seven years **after** the “Rapture.” Yet the verse uses the expression “the **manifestation** (i.e., “brightness”—*epiphaneia*) of His **coming** (*parousia*).” Thus the term “coming” is used in the New Testament to refer to **both** dispensational concepts of the “Rapture” and the “Appearing,” and the two expressions are, in fact, **combined** in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 to refer to **one and the same event**.

The term “Revelation” (*apokalupsis*) in 1 Corinthians 1:7 is descriptive of what the dispensationalists call the “Rapture,” since Christians await it. But in 2 Thessalonians 1:7, it clearly refers to the “Appearing.” The term “Appearing” (*epiphaneia*) is used in 1 Timothy 6:14 as the event that terminates Christian activity on Earth, and thus fits the “Rapture” concept. But in 2 Timothy 4:1,8, the references to judgment fit the “Appearing.”

In view of these considerations, the sincere Bible student is forced to conclude that the three words relating to Christ’s return in the New Testament are used **synonymously and interchangeably**. The New Testament simply makes no distinction between the coming of the Lord **for** His saints (“Rapture”) and the coming of the Lord **with** His saints (“Appearing” or “Revelation”). The dispensational dichotomy is in direct conflict with New Testament terminology.

Additionally, if Christians are to be removed seven years **before** the “Revelation” or “Coming” of Christ, then no passage should speak of Christians remaining on Earth **until** the “Revelation.” However, many passages do just that (see Boettner, pp. 165-166). For example, in Titus 2:13, Paul referred to the “blessed hope” and the “appearing” as one and the same event, i.e., Christ’s coming. In the original language, the two substantives, “hope” and “appearing” (*epiphaneia*) are closely linked by the common article. They are not two separate events, as if to be read: “Looking for the blessed hope and the

appearing.” Rather, the text is saying, “looking for the blessed hope and appearing.” The one explains the other. The “blessed hope” of Christians **is** “the glorious appearing” of Christ. Other examples would be 1 Peter 1:13 and 4:13, where the grace on which the Christian is to set his hope is to be received at the “revelation” (*apokalupsei*) of Christ, at which time the Christian may rejoice. But, according to dispensationalism, the Christian should rejoice seven years **earlier** at the rapture.

Further, the use of the word “end” comes from a word that refers to “full end” and, in the New Testament, always refers to the end of the world, i.e., the Judgment day (see Boettner, p. 168-169). In Matthew 28:20, Jesus promised to be with the disseminators of the Gospel message to the very “end.” This means the church will remain on the Earth, preaching the Gospel, until the Judgment Day. But if the church is “raptured away” seven years **before** the end, she cannot fulfill what Christ **commanded** her to do! In Matthew 13:39-40, there is no removal of the saints before the “full end.” The righteous and the wicked grow **together** until the very end. The separation of the two comes at **the end** (not seven years **before** the end). The dispensationalist claims that the righteous will be taken out from among the wicked. But the Bible says **just the opposite**: the wicked will be taken out from among the righteous (Matthew 13:39-40).

The doctrine of the “Rapture” asserts that believers will be raised seven years before the “Revelation,” and 1,007 years before the end of the “Millennium.” But in four separate verses, Jesus Himself said believers will be raised “at the last day” (John 6:39,40,44,54). There can be no other days **after** the **last** day. So the believers cannot be raised at an alleged “Rapture” **before** the last day.

Finally, the Second Coming of Christ is nowhere depicted as **secret**, as the “Rapture” advocates affirm. In fact, just the opposite is true. Christ’s coming will be accompanied by “blazing fire” (2 Thessalonians 1:7), the sound of a trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:52), a

“shout,” the “voice of the archangel,” and the “trump of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). In fact, “every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7). These passages show that **all persons everywhere** will see and hear this event. In fact, the very passage upon which the doctrine of the “Rapture” is founded (i.e., 1 Thessalonians 4:16), far from describing a quiet and secretive event, is about the noisiest verse in the Bible!

When one is willing to remove from the mind all preconceived, complex, and sensational theological concoctions, and simply let the Bible present its own portrait of the end of time and the Second Coming of Christ, the dispensational viewpoint of a postulated “Rapture” is seen to be totally unfounded.

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