

Is the “Rapture” a Scriptural Doctrine?

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Introduction

1. The doctrine of premillennialism is a popular doctrine which has had a wide effect, not only on religion, but politics and culture.
 2. Of the many facets of the convoluted error of premillennialism is the doctrine of the rapture – a silent and secret catching away of the saints to be with Christ until He comes to establish His kingdom.
 3. This doctrine appeals to the text of **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** as proof – is this what the text teaches?
 4. Is the “Rapture” a scriptural doctrine? Is premillennialism a scriptural doctrine?
- I. The Doctrine of Premillennialism
 - A. The Term
 - a. Pre – before
 - b. Millennial – 1,000 years
 - c. Ism – belief.
 - d. Premillennialism is a doctrine stating that Christ will come again to establish a physical kingdom on earth and reign for 1,000 literal years.
 - i. Thus, premillennialism – Christ comes in order to establish His kingdom, thus, before His 1,000 year reign.
 - B. The Sequence of Events
 - a. NOTE: There are varying views on premillennialism, especially the sequence of the supposed events that are to take place. The following is a general summation of the widely held views.
 - b. Christ originally came to establish the kingdom of prophecy – a physical kingdom in Israel.
 - c. The Jews rejected Christ.
 - d. The church, unknown to prophecy, was established instead of the kingdom until Christ comes again.
 - e. There will be a secret and silent coming of Christ where the righteous dead are raised and are “raptured” or caught away with the living righteous.
 - f. There will be seven years of tribulation on the earth.
 - g. Christ will come again visibly with the raptured righteous, and there will be the physical battle of Armageddon – good vs evil.
 - h. Christ will reign on a physical throne in Jerusalem for 1,000 years.
 - i. Finally, there will be a resurrection of the wicked, and judgment followed by heaven or hell.
 - II. The Nature of the Kingdom
 - A. The Kingdom in Prophecy
 - a. **Circumstance – Psalm 2**

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- i. (vv. 1-3) – nations, people, kings, rulers oppose God to thwart His will – cf. Acts 4:24-28 – Herod, Pontius Pilate, Gentiles, Israel – to do what God purposed.
 - ii. (vv. 4-9) – God laughs at the attempt and sets Christ on the throne anyway.
 - b. Time – Isaiah 2:2 (Mountain – Daniel 2:28, 44-45 – kingdom, during Rome – Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece, Rome); Joel 2:28, 32
 - i. “latter days” – “afterward” (Acts 2:16-17 – “last days”).
 - c. Nature – Isaiah 2:3-4 (Teach us, walk in paths, the law, word of the Lord – PERTAINING TO RULE IN TRUTH)
- B. The Kingdom at Hand
 - a. Circumstance – Matthew 16:13-19, 21 – Jesus challenges the disciples with His identity.
 - i. On the truth of Peter’s confession Christ would build His church/kingdom (vv. 18-19).
 - ii. “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (v. 18)
 - 1. Hades – Acts 2:27, 29, 31 (quoting from Psalm 16 about Christ) – dead, buried, tomb, Hades – death and the grave.
 - 2. The very nature of Christ’s kingdom was understood by Him to spring from His victory over death – as they rejected Him.
 - iii. (v. 21) – He MUST
 - b. Time – Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1 – some standing here won’t see death.
 - i. “kingdom of God present” (Mark 9:1)
 - ii. During Roman rule – last days.
 - c. Nature – John 6:14-15, 26-27, 63, 66; 18:33-37
 - i. John 6 – He perceived they wanted to make Him physical king – known by their focus on physical food, and rejection of spiritual words.
 - ii. John 18 – Jesus’ kingdom is one of a reign in truth – spiritual (cf. Isaiah 2:3-4)
- C. The Kingdom Has Come
 - a. Circumstance – Matthew 21:38-44; 1 Peter 2:6-10 – parable of wicked vinedressers, and fulfillment.
 - i. Matthew 21:28-29 – the son is Jesus.
 - ii. Matthew 21:42-44 – Psalm 118:22-23 quoted, rejected = killed, kingdom given to another nation.
 - iii. 1 Peter 2:6-8 – Psalm 118:22 quoted (v. 7), those who are disobedient – includes Jews, “holy nation” = nation bearing fruit – kingdom received.
 - iv. I.e., just as Jesus said, though He was rejected and killed He established His kingdom.
 - b. Time – Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9 – the kingdom is present then during Roman rule (“last days”), as it is eternal it is present now.

- c. **Nature** – **Hebrews 12:18, 22-24, 27-28** – not touched, heavenly, registered in heaven, new covenant, blood of sprinkling, shaken = made, kingdom not shaken – it is spiritual.
- III. The Second Coming of Christ
- A. If the kingdom is established, what is the second coming of Christ going to be about? What will it be like?
 - B. His Coming and Kingdom
 - a. His second coming cannot be before His kingdom in order to establish it – premillennialism – since He has already established it.
 - b. **Hebrews 9:27-28** – Christ’s second appearance/coming is apart from sin.
 - i. I.e. His second coming won’t be to address sin, or defeat sin.
 - 1. First coming on account of sin – **(v. 26)** – put away sin by His sacrifice.
 - 2. First coming to redeem by blood, establish kingdom – **Colossians 1:13-14**
 - ii. Premillennialism states that at His second coming there will be the physical battle of Armageddon to vanquish evil – then He will reign in righteousness.
 - c. **1 Corinthians 15:22-24** – at Christ’s second coming He will deliver the kingdom to God, not establish it.
 - C. His Coming and the Resurrection and Judgment
 - a. Premillennialism – There will be a secret and silent coming of Christ where the righteous dead are raised and are “raptured” or caught away with the living righteous.
 - b. Proof text – **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**
 - i. **(vv. 13-14)** – information to encourage Christians about those who have passed away.
 - ii. **(vv. 16-17)** – does this teach the rapture?
 - 1. **“with a shout...voice of an archangel...trumpet of God”** – is this silent or secret?
 - 2. **“we shall always be with the Lord”** – is this for 7 years until the final coming of Jesus to set up the kingdom on earth?
 - a. There will be a secret and silent coming of Christ where the righteous dead are raised and are “raptured” or caught away with the living righteous.
 - b. There will be seven years of tribulation on the earth.
 - c. Christ will come again visibly with the raptured righteous, and there will be the physical battle of Armageddon – good vs evil.
 - 3. **Is this the 2nd of 3 comings of Christ?**

- iii. **(v. 16)** – does this teach the resurrection of the righteous first, i.e. before the final resurrection of the wicked 1,000 years later?
 1. What does **“first”** answer to?
 2. **(v. 15)** – **“will by no means precede those who are asleep”**
 3. **(v. 17)** – **“we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them”** – i.e. not separated by time.
 4. **“First”** – is not in contrast to the wicked being raised, but to the living preceding the dead in being caught up with the Lord.
- c. Christ’s coming will effect one resurrection of two qualities:
 - i. **Jonn 5:28-29** – ALL, done good – life, done evil – condemnation.
 - ii. **Acts 24:15** – Paul understood there to be a resurrection (singular) of the just and unjust.
 - iii. **1 Corinthians 15:21-24** – resurrection at Christ’s coming, then comes the end – not another resurrection 1,000 years later. (While the focus is on the righteous in the passage, the time includes the resurrection of all.)
- d. Christ’s coming will be for universal judgment – **2 Corinthians 5:10-11** (all); **2 Thessalonians 1:6-10**
- e. **His Second coming is His final coming** – **Hebrews 9:28; 1 Corinthians 15:24**

Conclusion

1. The Bible teaches very simply, and very clearly that Christ accomplished what He intended at His first coming and will only come one more time for a universal resurrection and judgment.
2. There will be no silent and secret rapture of the saints. Such is a fantastical figment of man’s devising.
3. Let us be prepared for Christ’s return.