

The BEACON

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Will There Be A Rapture? By Mike Thomas

I have been reading from the book Rapture Under Attack by Tim LaHaye, who is the coauthor of the highly popular Left Behind series. Since 1995, the LB series of 11 books (fictitious stories of what will happen when Christ returns) has sold over 60 million copies worldwide. While I have no interest in reading the novels or watching the movies, I do find it interesting to read LaHaye's explanation of the Rapture in Rapture Under Attack, written after the LB series. Though he is not the leading authority on this doctrine, LaHaye can be studied to get a good understanding of a premillennialist's reasoning.

The gist of the Rapture doctrine is that Christ will come to suddenly and mysteriously take away His saints just before a 7 year period of tribulation on earth. (See diagram A on page 3.) It will supposedly be similar to the way God took Enoch and Elijah, who both ascended to heaven without dying (**Heb. 11:5; 2 Ki. 2:11**). According to LaHaye, the Rapture will not be a secret event as is commonly believed, but rather will be seen by the world because "two hundred million people [will] suddenly depart this earth." This sudden change in population will be evidence the Rapture has occurred. He goes on to say:

A million conversations will end midsentence. A million phone receivers will suddenly go dead. A woman will reach for a man's hand in the dark...and no one will be there. A man will turn with a laugh to slap a colleague on the back and his hand will move through empty air. A basketball player will make a length-of-the-floor pass to a teammate streaking downcourt and find there is no one there to receive it. And no referee to call it out-of-bounds...Think of the countless homes where, 'in the twinkling of an eye,' only clothes will remain in the chair where a believer sat moments before. Consider the passengers aboard airplanes with a Christian crew. Many believe that the Rapture will result in titanic chaos as Christian auto and bus drivers, train engineers, pilots and other suddenly vanish. The Rapture just may create the greatest freeway gridlock in history! The world will somehow have to come to terms with millions of missing Christians. The ensuing outcry of sorrow, loss, and confusion will make the Rapture a well-publicized event, dominating the media for weeks and weeks. (p. 40)

What a troubling thought to consider regarding the earth's population. Then, supposedly, matters will only worsen as the earth will enter into 7 years of tribulation, after which the Lord will return again to establish His earthly kingdom for a millennium. There are a few things wrong with this doctrine that has sold 60 million copies.

Only One Return

The Bible says Jesus is only returning one other time (**Heb. 9:28**), "apart from sin, for salvation." The Bible says this will be His "second" return and will be the time He grants eternal life to God's faithful. Paul's account of this event reveals that Christ's descent will not be to the earth. Instead, the faithful children of God, both alive on the earth and buried in the graves, will rise up to meet the Lord in the air (**1 Thes. 4:17**). (See chart B on page 3.) There is no verse that says there is a third appearing of the Lord to the earth. That is a product of man's imagination.

Only One Resurrection

The Premillennial doctrine has three resurrections occurring: one at the Rapture (of the saints), one at the end of the Tribulation (of those converted in the Tribulation then martyred) and one at the end of the millennial reign (of the wicked). The Bible has only one resurrection occurring, which will take place when the Lord returns for His saints (**1 Cor. 15:52**). Paul said, "there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (**Ac. 24:15**). When will the just be raised? When Christ returns (**1 Thes. 4:17**). When will the unjust be raised? When Christ returns (**Jn. 5:28-29**). We all will be raised simultaneously because that will mark the end of time on earth and the beginning of judgment on all mankind.

LaHaye says we will know there will be a Rapture because of an absence of 200 million from the earth's population. The apostle Peter says we will know when the Lord returns because the earth will be destroyed (**2 Pet. 3:10**). We won't have to worry about buses driven by Christians causing "the greatest freeway gridlock in history" because there won't be any buses or freeways in existence. Once the saints have met the Lord in the air, "the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." Peter then wisely asks, "Therefore, since these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct" (**2 Pet. 3:11**). Why all the concern for holiness when the Lord returns? LaHaye says the sinner will have 7 years of tribulation to get his life right with God, then raised when Jesus comes a third time. So why get all worked up about Peter's warning to be ready for the Lord's second coming? Because there won't be any time left on earth. Everything will be destroyed and every opportunity to get right with God will have come to an end. Whose teaching will you place your eternal confidence in?

Conclusion

More will be said on Premillennialism in future articles, but hopefully we can see some of the reasons why God’s word does not teach the doctrine of the Rapture. People who believe this condemning doctrine are not placing their confidence in the one hope God promises (**Eph. 4:4**). Paul condemned individuals for teaching a false doctrine regarding the resurrection (**2 Tim. 2:18**). Today such teaching becomes an all-time bestseller of Christian fiction. May God’s people see the truth in this and avoid such lies.

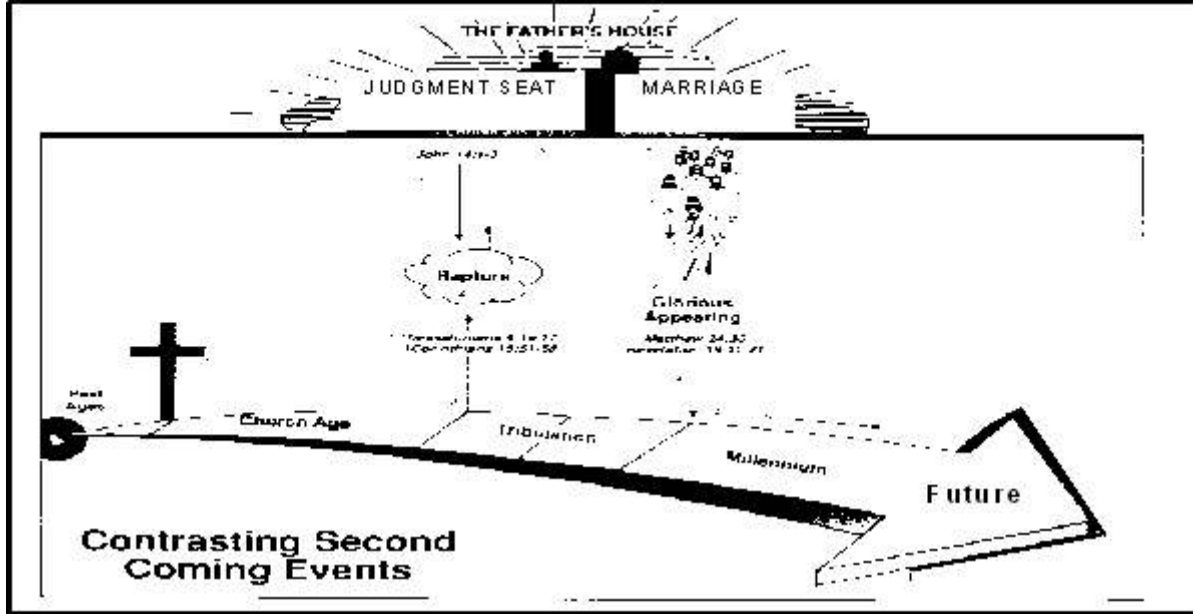
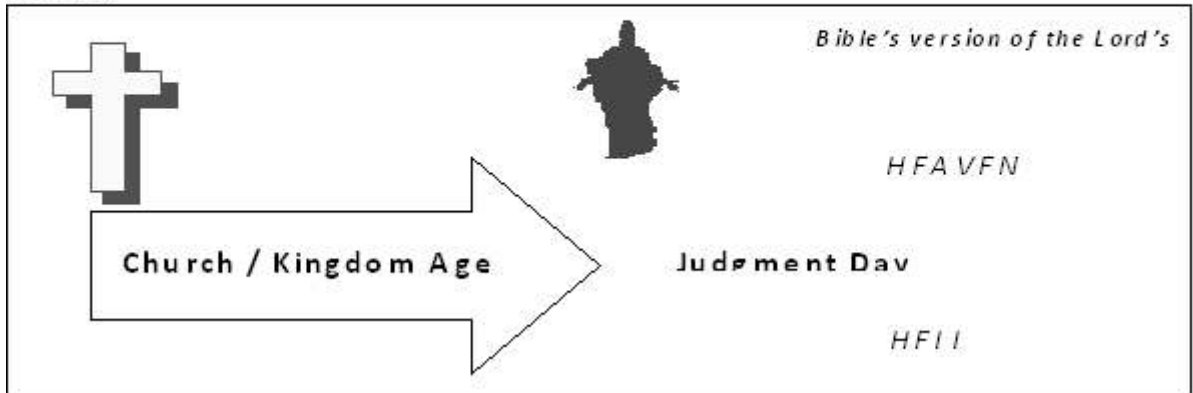


Chart A: Rapture Under Attack, p. 29



Bible Study.

History tells us that when Crowfoot, the chief of the Blackfoot nation in southern Alberta, gave the Canadian Pacific Railway permission to lay track from Medicine Hat to Calgary, he was given in exchange a lifetime railroad pass. Reportedly, Crowfoot put the pass in a leather pouch and wore it around his neck for the rest of his life -- but he never once availed himself of the rights and privileges it spelled out. What a tragedy it is when Christians do the same thing with the Word of God, using it as a decorative badge of Christianity, but never availing themselves of the wealth of access to God's thoughts it affords. (From Bible Illustrator, Topic: Bible).

Word of God Endures Forever.

In 1874 the Scriptures were under severe attack by critics, and John W. Haley published a defense entitled Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible. In the preface he wrote, "Finally, let it be remembered that the Bible is neither dependent upon nor affected by the success or failure of my book. Whatever may become of the latter, whatever may be the verdict passed upon it by an intelligent public, the Bible will stand. In the ages yet to be, when its present assailants and defenders are moldering in the dust, and when our very names are forgotten, (God's Word) will be, as it has been during the centuries past, the guide and solace of millions." How true! (See Matt. 24:34; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

CD REQUEST FOR March - May 2009

1. Can We know We Are Saved # 1
2. Can We Know We Are Saved # 2
3. It Is Well With My Soul
4. Lessons From Psalm 23 - How to Be Satisfied.
5. Pathway of Sin

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Cut out this form, write down the numbers of the tapes you want and mail to the **Newton church of Christ, P.O. Box 893, Newton, NC 28658.**

Limit: Two Selections per request.

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