**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?
5. The Doctrine of Premillennialism
6. The Term
	1. Pre – before
	2. Millennial – 1,000 years
	3. Ism – belief.
	4. Premillennialism is a doctrine stating that Christ will come again to establish a physical kingdom on earth and reign for 1,000 literal years.
		1. Thus, premillennialism – Christ comes in order to establish His kingdom, thus, before His 1,000 year reign.
7. The Sequence of Events
	1. 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.
	2. Christ originally came to establish the kingdom of prophecy – a physical kingdom in Israel.
	3. The Jews rejected Christ.
	4. The church, unknown to prophecy, was established instead of the kingdom until Christ comes again.
	5. 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.
	6. There will be seven years of tribulation on the earth.
	7. Christ will come again visibly with the raptured righteous, and there will be the physical battle of Armageddon – good vs evil.
	8. Christ will reign on a physical throne in Jerusalem for 1,000 years.
	9. Finally, there will be a resurrection of the wicked, and judgment followed by heaven or hell.
8. The Nature of the Kingdom
9. The Kingdom in Prophecy
	1. **Circumstance** – **Psalm 2**
		1. (**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.
		2. **(vv. 4-9)** – God laughs at the attempt and sets Christ on the throne anyway.
	2. **Time** – **Isaiah 2:2** (Mountain – **Daniel 2:28, 44-45** – kingdom, during Rome – Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece, Rome); **Joel 2:28, 32**
		1. ***“latter days”*** – ***“afterward”*** (**Acts 2:16-17** – ***“last days”***).
	3. **Nature** – **Isaiah 2:3-4** (Teach us, walk in paths, the law, word of the Lord – PERTAINING TO RULE IN TRUTH)
10. The Kingdom at Hand
	1. **Circumstance** – **Matthew 16:13-19, 21** – Jesus challenges the disciples with His identity.
		1. On the truth of Peter’s confession Christ would build His church/kingdom (**vv. 18-19**).
		2. ***“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.
		3. **(v. 21)** – He MUST
	2. **Time** – **Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1** – some standing here won’t see death.
		1. ***“kingdom of God present” (Mark 9:1)***
		2. ***During Roman rule – last days.***
	3. **Nature** – **John 6:14-15, 26-27, 63, 66; 18:33-37**
		1. **John 6** – He perceived they wanted to make Him physical king – known by their focus on physical food, and rejection of spiritual words.
		2. **John 18** – Jesus’ kingdom is one of a reign in truth – spiritual (**cf. Isaiah 2:3-4**)
11. The Kingdom Has Come
	1. **Circumstance** – **Matthew 21:38-44; 1 Peter 2:6-10** – parable of wicked vinedressers, and fulfillment.
		1. **Matthew 21:28-29** – the son is Jesus.
		2. **Matthew 21:42-44** – **Psalm 118:22-23** quoted, rejected = killed, kingdom given to another nation.
		3. **1 Peter 2:6-8** – **Psalm 118:22** quoted **(v. 7),** those who are disobedient – includes Jews, ***“holy nation”*** = nation bearing fruit – kingdom received.
		4. I.e., just as Jesus said, though He was rejected and killed He established His kingdom.
	2. **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.
	3. **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.
12. The Second Coming of Christ
13. If the kingdom is established, what is the second coming of Christ going to be about? What will it be like?
14. His Coming and Kingdom
	1. His second coming cannot be before His kingdom in order to establish it – premillennialism – since He has already established it.
	2. **Hebrews 9:27-28** – Christ’s second appearance/coming is apart from sin.
		1. 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**
		2. Premillennialism states that at His second coming their will be the physical battle of Armageddon to vanquish evil – then He will reign in righteousness.
	3. **1 Corinthians 15:22-24** – at Christ’s second coming He will deliver the kingdom to God, not establish it.
15. His Coming and the Resurrection and Judgment
	1. 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.
	2. Proof text – **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**
		1. **(vv. 13-14)** – information to encourage Christians about those who have passed away.
		2. **(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?
				1. 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.
				2. There will be seven years of tribulation on the earth.
				3. 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?**
		3. **(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.
	3. Christ’s coming will effect one resurrection of two qualities:
		1. **John 5:28-29** – ALL, done good – life, done evil – condemnation.
		2. **Acts 24:15** – Paul understood there to be a resurrection (singular) of the just and unjust.
		3. **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.)
	4. Christ’s coming will be for universal judgment – **2 Corinthians 5:10-11** (all); **2 Thessalonians 1:6-10**
	5. **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.