

PREFACE

Many of the expressions we have grown accustomed to when reading the Bible are associated with themes we have heard repeated throughout our religious experience. These expressions usually evoke predictable responses without the qualification of analytical thinking. The purpose of this book is to chart a new investigative approach in the study of the resurrection. This study will not be an exhaustive effort on the subject; however, I do pray that our efforts here will thoroughly challenge the preconceived notions that have brought so much confusion to this crucial topic.

Misunderstanding the nature of the resurrection places the believer in an untenable position because the resurrection is foundational to our faith. If one does not understand the fundamental principles of the Bible, it is impossible to go on to perfection or maturity. The Word is unequivocally clear on the matter. The writer of Hebrews addressed his epistle to Jewish believers who desired to either remain or return to the practice of the age-old approach to God through the Law of Moses. They were in

effect abandoning some foundational principles that were essential to their future growth and success in the kingdom of God, one of which was evidently repentance from dead works of the Law.

In the following scripture, the writer chides his audience as a teacher to his pupils when they miss an obvious point in the classroom. He also cautions them that the lack of this important foundational understanding will eventually render them unskillful – incapable of understanding the deeper principles of Godly living. The writer signals both hope and a warning with this comment. “And this will we do, if God permit”.

Hebrews 5:12-6:3

12 For when for the time *ye ought to be teachers*, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; *and are become such as have need of milk*, and not of strong meat.

13 For every one that useth milk is *unskilful* in the word of righteousness: for he is a *babe*.

14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Hebrews 6:1

6:1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, *let us go on unto perfection*; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

3 And this will we do, **if God permit**.

The point that I am attempting to make here is that God has not permitted the Church to develop and mature for same reasons the writer of Hebrews gave in the first century. Ignorance of foundational biblical principles will inhibit future maturity and development. God will not permit any- one a promotion based on ignorance. We must, as the Bible teaches, study to show ourselves approved unto God. A fundamental obstacle in our view of scripture is

our failure to understand the true biblical teachings on eternal judgment. The current teachings on the resurrection – its timing, nature, and implementation – have fostered many extra-biblical doctrines.

A primary example of such extra-biblical doctrine is the “rapture” of the Church. The doctrine of the *rapture* is an illegitimate teaching birthed out of a philosophy of carnal reasoning. Much of this reasoning resorts to an excessive literal interpretation of the scriptures. In addition, the doctrine of the rapture has been propagated by a strong oral tradition that has been handed down throughout Christendom. I have dubbed this practice the “Oral Tradition of the Christian Elders”. This oral tradition and its devotion to commentary are akin to how the Jews have utilized the Talmud for the study of the Torah. The Talmud is a system of rabbinic commentaries that in time have evolved to become the supreme “biblical” authority for the Jews. It inadvertently displaced the Torah as guiding light for religious study. In other words, the commentary became holy writ. In all honesty, the Jews do not revere the Torah as

they do their commentaries. Unfortunately, Christians are guilty of similar practices.

Many doctrines related to the rapture defy common sense or proper biblical hermeneutics. Christians today believe that their eternal destiny is secured through the rapture of the Church. When asked to provide Biblical documentation for this belief most vaguely refer to I Thessalonians 4 or I Corinthians 15 for their position. One would think a teaching of this importance would have more than two feeble scriptures to support such a view. I contend that there is no legitimate, systematic biblical teaching that confirms that the Church will disappear from the planet. Not only does the false expectation of the Church's disappearance from the planet appear irrational, such a false expectation also engenders an immaturity in its adherents.

The rapture promotes a very selfish, shortsighted worldview for its adherents. A sense of escapism prevails among those who desire to abandon ministries, friends, loved ones, and the obligations of this life behind. As a result, our ecclesiastical institutions have been relegated to a mere vapor that appears for a

short period only to be displaced by fear, loathing, and a strong desire to leave this world. The notion of Church legacy is almost a foreign concept among most evangelicals today. The Gospel of the rapture has left us little hope to chart the future of our families or to plan for a future generation of believers. In effect, it has hindered as well as debilitated the Church and its important message of salvation. In effect, the teaching of the rapture has discredited its own message along with those who have promoted its fiction-based philosophy.

In general, our lack of scholarship in the pursuit of true biblical understanding is paltry at best. We have allowed the denominational world to define our biblical perception with countless volumes written in the tradition of the Greek philosophers blended with a Talmudic twist of gobbledygook. Instead of challenging these false teachings, our preachers have parroted these positions to their own detriment. We have in effect abdicated our rightful position to define the parameters of the Word because of a gross misinterpretation of the resurrection. Thus, we have become the tail by abdicating headship to the purveyors of the “Left Behind”

movement; the teachings of the rapture have unwittingly paralyzed the Church. The greater deception is that the Church has assumed that it is ready for this event in the face of its wretched condition.

The continued promotion of this view will also further increase the already straitened path for returning to the reality of God's word. As a people, we will make that painful trek because it has become abundantly clear for all that we have taken a wrong turn on our way to God.

The doctrine of the rapture is only one of many teachings that have robbed the Church of its position and its legacy. By the grace of God, we intend to address these issues and other issues related to the distorted views of present day Christianity concerning the resurrection.



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