

Left Behind!

Lesson 1

Is This Book Series Biblically Accurate? Steve Patton

Left Behind - The Series

The best selling religious book series of all time began in the mid 90's and continues with the 11th book entitled Armageddon this spring. The final book in the series will be released next year. No popular religious book series has ever enjoyed such success. Authored by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins the series has sold millions of copies with each successive installment hitting the best seller lists immediately upon release.



What is behind this phenomenon? Even more importantly what is the basis for this supposed religious dramatization of the end of time? Is this an accurate portrayal of how all things will come to an end?

The Background for the Series

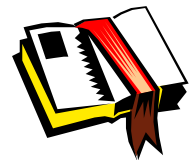
In the 1970's a best selling religious book entitled "The Late Great Planet Earth," authored by Hal Lindsey, detailed in a popular style what has become the dominant view of end time theology among what are usually termed fundamentalist churches. Its teaching is based on a particular variation of a doctrine called *pre-millennialism*. This particular view is called "dispensational premillennialism" and was popularized particularly by the staff of the Dallas Theological Seminary, a Baptist seminary in Texas. Though their particular interpretation of the end time is distinctive enough to be given its own unique name of "dispensational premillennialism" the theology is still rooted in similar views centering in a belief that after a

terrible period of 7 years of tribulation at the the end of time, which ends with a great battle called Armageddon, Jesus will return to earth and set up his kingdom and reign from Jerusalem for 1000 years. At the conclusion of this earthly millennial reign, all the faithful will go with Jesus to heaven to be with the Heavenly Father forever. The Left Behind Series dramatizes this last 7 years on earth beginning with what is referred to as "The Rapture" - a sudden disappearance from earth of all faithful Christians who have been instantaneously transported directly to the presence of God. All that remain must go through the 7 years of "Tribulation" and will, hopefully, be converted during this time. However, they will have to fight increasing Satanic activity, natural disasters and world domination by the Antichrist - an all powerful political figure who leads the world to the final great battle between the forces of good and evil - Armageddon.



Is This What the Bible Teaches?

There is little doubt that this dramatic finish to all things is compelling and makes for great reading as serialized in these books by LaHaye and Jenkins. A superficial examination of the bible passages used to substantiate such a view would seem to suggest their endtime scenario. However, a closer examination of Biblical teaching will call all this into question. The premillennial interpretation of scripture is not just a view of a few verses in the book of Revelation. It is a different view of all of prophetic scripture - Old and New Testaments. In this 3 lesson



series we intend to examine some of the fundamental teaching of premillennial doctrine and compare it to the Bible. We believe understanding biblical teaching on this matter is essential to a proper view of all of scripture, not just the end time.

“Thy Kingdom Come”

Jesus taught his disciples to pray for His coming kingdom. Millennialists believe the kingdom of God is yet in the future. Jesus will establish that promised kingdom when He returns to earth to triumph over Satan after the 7 Years Tribulation. Then He will rule for 1000 years in Jerusalem. This view is rooted primarily in a view of Revelation 20:1-6. Is Jesus’ kingdom yet in the future? Will it be an earthly universal kingdom in which converted Jews will hold the most prominent offices? Is it Jesus’ intention to rule as an earthly king for 1000 years?

We need to examine what the Bible says about the kingdom of God, particularly as taught by Jesus and his apostles in the New Testament. As we do it will become increasingly clear that Jesus has a decidedly different view of His kingdom than do today’s teachers of millennial theory.

The Kingdom of God

Material or Spiritual

Jesus teaching on the nature of His kingdom -

It is within you.

(Luke 17:20-21) “*Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; "nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.*” (NKJV)

It is not of this world.

(John 18:36) “*Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.*” (NKJV)

Jesus was falsely charged with wanting an earthly kingdom.

(Luke 23:1-2) “*Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.'*” (NKJV)

(John 19:12-13) “*From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, 'If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.' When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.*” (NKJV)

The Time of the Kingdom

Its beginning was eminent in the Gospels.

(Matthew 3:1-2) “*In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'*” (NKJV)

(Mark 1:14-15) “*Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.'*” (NKJV)

The kingdom would begin in “their lifetime.”

(Matthew 16:28) “*Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.*” (NKJV)

(Mark 9:1) “*And He said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.'*” (NKJV)

Apostles taught kingdom in existence in their lifetime.



(Colossians 1:13) *“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”* (NKJV)

(Revelation 1:6) *“...and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.*

Amen... 9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (NKJV)

Kingdom’s Beginning Coincided with Jesus’ Ascension to the Father.

The prophet Daniel saw in a vision of the ascension of Jesus to His throne - Daniel 7:13,14. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, preached that Jesus was already sitting on His throne and ruling at the right hand of God - Acts 2:32,36. Paul proclaimed Jesus rules now over all at the right hand of God - Ephesians 1:20-23.

Whatever the Kingdom of Jesus is, it is already in existence. He will rule over His kingdom until His return! When He returns, it will not be to establish His kingdom, but to give it up! 1st Corinthians 15:24-27.

What is the Kingdom Today?

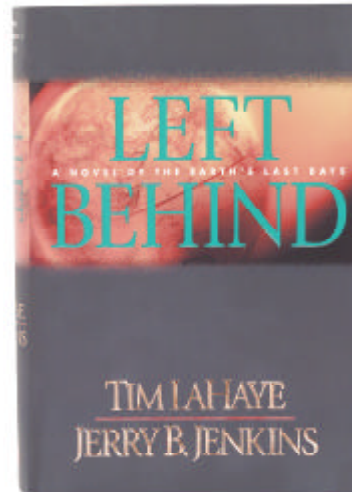
What constitutes a kingdom?

- ✍ A Ruler - Acts 2:36; Eph. 1:20
- ✍ A Law - Romans 3:27
- ✍ Citizens - 1st Peter 2:9
- ✍ A Realm - Eph. 2:6

The church is the citizenry of the Lord’s spiritual kingdom. They are subject to His Law. Jesus rules now for a figurative 1000 year period, a time which signifies a complete and full time of rule. Revelation 20 says nothing at all about Jesus ruling from earth or about his throne being on earth. In fact, there is not a passage anywhere in the Bible

that literally says Jesus will ever set foot on this earth again.

This lesson points out just one major fallacy in the premillennial view of scripture. Biblical teaching on the kingdom simply cannot be made to fit with this erroneous view. If one holds to this erroneous view he will misinterpret almost all of predictive scripture.



Next week: We will examine the theory of dispensational premillennialism in more detail and see its misuse of scripture and its distortion of prophecy. Then the third study will examine what the Bible says will really happen when Jesus returns.