

# Left Behind!

Lesson 2

## 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.



In this second lesson we want to look in more detail at the doctrine of premillennialism - the doctrinal end time view that is the basis for the Left Behind series.

### What is Premillennialism?

Many believe that premillennialism is just an interpretation of a few verses in Revelation 20. Nothing could be further from the truth. Premillennialism affects how you view practically all of predictive prophecy from Genesis to Revelation. It also radically changes how you view the scheme of redemption and God's success in working out His plan.

These are many varying views of millennial theory but the most prevalent today is dispensational premillennialism. We want to discuss its basic tenets and show how they contradict plain biblical statements and teaching.

### Roots of the Premillennial Theory

In my study of this doctrine it seems that someone concluded that Revelation 20 taught that Christ was going to return to earth in the future and set up a throne in Jerusalem and reign for 1000 years. Having concluded that, it became necessary to develop a theory that would support that idea. The result is the roots of the theory now go all the way back to the promises made to Abraham in



Genesis 12:1-7. (*See chart 1 - The Premillennial View*). These promises included that 1) a land would be given to Abraham's descendants, 2) his descendants would become a great nation and 3) all nations would be blessed through his seed. Dispensational Premillennialists believe these promises have never been completely fulfilled. They will be fulfilled upon

Christ's return after the "Rapture" when He sets up His earthly kingdom. Then, the Jews will fully possess the land of Israel God promised to Abraham, and all nations will serve Christ under Jewish rule.

Also, premillennialists believe that Christ originally intended to establish his kingdom during his life on earth. However, the Jews rejected Him forcing Him to change eternity's plans and insert an unplanned "church age" that would continue until he returned again to set up His kingdom at the end of the "Rapture" and the "7 Years Tribulation." (Paul said the church was part of God's eternal purpose, not an afterthought - Eph. 3:10,11) They see the church and the kingdom as two different entities and one precedes the other. Finally, premillennialists believe that the book of

Revelation gives a detailed description of what will happen at the end time including the “Great Tribulation” and the setting up of Christ’s kingdom. Do these ideas fit biblical teaching?

## The Promises to Abraham

What does the Bible say about the promises to Abraham? Did the Israelites fail to possess the land God promised to Abraham? This is a key matter because if the Bible teaches that the land promise was fulfilled to Abraham’s descendants in the Bible, then there is no reason to expect a future fulfillment of the literal land promise and a return of all Jews to Israel. What does the Bible say?

First, the Bible clearly teaches that the Land Promise made to Abraham was completely fulfilled. Several witnesses testify to this fact:

1. Joshua said Israel possessed all the land God had promised - Joshua 21:43-45; 23:14,16.
2. Solomon reigned over all the land - 1 Kgs. 4:21. (Compare Gen. 15:18).
3. Nehemiah said God fulfilled his promise concerning the land - Neh. 9:7-9.
4. The Psalmist said God kept His Word to Abraham regarding the land - Psa. 105:42-44.
5. Israel was promised 6 cities of refuge (3 on each side of the Jordan river) *if* God keeps His promise to give you all the land promised the fathers (Deut. 19:7-9; see also Numbers 35:9-15). Six cities are named in Joshua 20:7-9. Thus God must have kept His promise to give them all the land promised to *the fathers*.

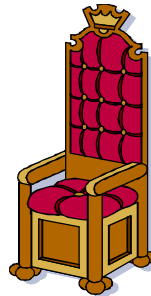
Second, the Bible clearly teaches that Abraham’s descendants became an innumerable host. See Exodus 1:7; 1st Kings 3:8; 4:20; Compare Acts 7:17). Thus, the “great nation” promise was fulfilled.

Third, the promise that “in thy (Abraham’s) seed all nations of the earth will be blessed” is fulfilled in Jesus Christ’s coming to earth (See Galatians

3:15-18). Jesus fulfilled the seed promise and all nations are blessed in His sacrificial death.

We see then that Abraham’s promises have already been fulfilled. When someone tries to interpret Biblical prophecy to indicate a future fulfillment of these promises, they are doing so in spite of plain biblical statements to the contrary.

## Christ on David’s Throne



Another key element in millennial theory is that Christ will one day sit on David’s literal throne in Jerusalem and rule over an earthly kingdom. They believe all prophecies related to Christ sitting and ruling on the throne of David are unfulfilled. The key passage is 2nd Samuel 7:12-16. All agree this passage has a twofold fulfillment - first in Solomon and, secondly, in Jesus. Premillennialists believe the promise of Jesus sitting on David’s throne is yet to be fulfilled. Note what the scriptures say.

1. “Throne” is used interchangeably with the ideal of “rule.” Solomon sitting on his father David’s throne has reference to his ruling as a descendant of David. He was “sitting” on his father David’s throne whether he was in the throne room or on a horse in southern Judah. It is not a reference to a specific piece of furniture where David sat but a figurative reference to his rule.
2. The Bible teaches that after Jeconiah (or Coniah) ruled as king on David’s throne, that no descendant of his would prosper, “sitting upon the throne of David and ruling in Judah.” (Jeremiah 22:30).
3. Jesus is a descendant of Jeconiah - Matt.1:11.
4. Jesus cannot sit on a throne in Jerusalem and rule because that would make Jeremiah a false prophet.
5. Jesus does rule on David’s throne (that is, as David’s descendant). It is just not in Jerusalem. In Acts 2 Peter proclaims Jesus as ruling in fulfillment of the promise made to David (in 2nd Samuel 7:12-16). He “set one

upon his throne” in fulfillment of prophecy and Peter proclaimed it fulfilled in Christ ruling at the right hand of God.

6. Christ rules as a descendant of David *today* and is figuratively on David’s throne *today* at the right hand of God.

## Where does this leave Revelation 20?

We need to see Revelation 20 in its context and be careful not to read more into the passage than is there. A more detailed look at Revelation 20 will be included in the final lesson. But for now read the passage and see what it does not say.

### **Revelation 20 does not mention:**

1. The 2nd coming of Christ.
2. A bodily resurrection.
3. A reign of Christ on earth.
4. A literal throne of David.
5. The Jerusalem of Palestine.
6. Us.
7. Christ on earth.

All of these things are read into the passage to make it fit millennial theory. But, put in its context, none of these things are found in the passage. Revelation 20 is a picture of the martyred saints rejoicing before the throne of God after their death has been avenged. They had cried out for such judgement earlier in the book (See Rev. 6:9-11). That judgement has already happened and is pictured in chapter 20.

So much more could be said about this theory that shows its great inaccuracies. These, along with the first lesson’s discussion of the nature of Jesus’ kingdom, should help any truth seeker to question millennial doctrine.

We must see kingdom prophecy for what it was intended - prophecy of the coming rule of God in Christ which was accomplished when Jesus ascended back to heaven to sit and rule “*far above all rule and authority, and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come, and he put all things in subjection under his feet and gave him to be head over all things to the church,*



*which is His body, the fulness of him that fills all in all” - Ephesians 1:20-23. Jesus rule is not future. It is now! His kingdom is not future. It is now! We are to submit as citizens of His kingdom now! We are in the 1000 year reign of Christ now! When He returns there is going to be no second chance. He will return to judge all - and that*

*judgement will be final (Hebrews 9:27,28). Let us prepare for the day of judgement now and not be led astray by misunderstandings of His great Kingdom.*

**Next Week:** *“The Day of the Lord will come...”* Will there be a rapture? How many resurrections will there be? We want to see what will really happen when the Lord returns according to scripture.