

THINGS MOST DEARLY BELIEVED

Recognizing differences exist in what is termed "the Church" in the world today, we also recognize that if the teaching of Jesus is to mean anything at all any church must take positive stands on their understanding of what the Scriptures teach. We also recognize that good brothers in Christ may differ on interpretation and application of Biblical teaching and still remain in fellowship with one another because of Christ. The following represent our understanding and beliefs regarding portions of Scripture or teachings about which others may disagree with us but which we hold as convictions very dear to our personal lives and faith.

PRE—TRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE

The Scriptures teach that a period of time in which God will judge the world for its rejection of His authority, especially as found in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, will take place on the earth sometime in the future. This period of time is known to us as the Tribulation and is the seventieth week of Daniel as recorded in Daniel 9:24-27. This period is also a part of the time known as the Day of the Lord. It will be a time of God's wrath on the earth.

The Scriptures teach that God has determined to deliver His saints (the church) from this time of wrath, that they shall not be a part of it (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Thess. 5:9).

The manner in which our Lord intends to deliver His saints (the Church) is to instantaneously resurrect all dead saints since His Ascension and simultaneously change all living saints catching them away from the earth where they will be ever with Jesus. This event is known as the Rapture, a Latin word meaning to catch away or to be caught up. (I Thess. 4: 13- 18)

This Rapture will be preceded by a heavenly trumpet blast and the appearance of the resurrected and glorified Jesus in the air seen only by believers. The event will happen in an incredibly short instant of time described as the "twinkling of an eye". (I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:51-52)

Since our Lord has already predetermined to bring His wrath to earth; since He has predetermined to deliver His saints from this wrath; and since the Rapture removes the Church from the earth where this wrath will be focused, the Rapture is seen to be before the Tribulation and Pre-Tribulational. This coming of Jesus *for* His saints but not all the way back to the earth is known in the Scriptures as the hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." (Titus 2: 13)

THE MILLENIAL REIGN OF CHRIST

The Scriptures teach in a literal reign of the Messiah on earth for 1000 years known as the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:4-6). This Messiah is to be the promised King who would rule the earth being of the family line of David (Isaiah 9:6-7). He was to be the Son of God and rule the earth with a rod of iron (Psa. 2:6-12). The Scriptures teach Jesus is this Messiah.

The Scriptures teach Jesus the Christ will return to earth with His saints to rule a renovated earth for 1000 years after the 7 years of Judgment and wrath of God are completed (Revelation 19:11-20:10). This earthly kingdom will be characterized by the absence of Satan (Rev. 20: 1-3), changes in the animal kingdom (Isaiah 11:6-8), changes in the earth in order that it may produce bountifully, peace on earth with Justice, and changes regarding the knowledge of God in order that all those living and born in this kingdom will know God.

The earthly kingdom will be populated by those who have survived the tribulation period having believed in the Messiah and not receiving the mark of the Beast or Antichrist (Rev. 20:4; Matt. 25:31-46)

PRE-MILLENIAL COMING OF CHRIST

The Millennial (1000 year) reign of Christ is a blessed promise of Scripture especially to Israel, God's chosen nation for this earthly blessing. This Millennial kingdom cannot begin until Christ Himself comes to establish it. This coming of Christ *with* His saints to establish His kingdom is known as His Second Coming. Since this coming will happen *before* the Millennial Kingdom, it is referred to as being Pre-millennial. We believe in the Pre-millennial Coming of Christ. Christ will return literally and physically to earth to complete the Judgment of nations for their rejection of God and His Word and to establish His Kingdom (Rev. 19:11—20:6).

The Scriptures clearly teach when speaking to the matter of the endtimes that affairs on earth will get increasingly more violent, rebellious, self-centered, and God-hating before the coming of Christ. In the midst of this evil the Gospel will be faithfully preached in all the world. As the Gospel is pervasive in going into the whole world the Scriptures teach that the evil practitioners of that day and the messengers of the Gospel will ultimately clash resulting in the persecution and suffering of the believers of the Gospel. The evil spoken of here will get progressively worse culminating in the final Judgment of God known as the Tribulation, a part of the Day of the Lord.

Therefore, because of the clear teaching of Scripture, we reject as unbiblical any teaching the world will get better and better as Gospel preaching brings the nations into submission to Christ resulting in Christ's return to receive His kingdom.

DISPENSATIONALISM

The Word of God is not a systematic theology but a hook which reveals the way, wisdom, will and character of God. Believers united together in their common faith in Christ must have a system of interpretation with which to approach the Word of God in order to discern consistent teaching of the Scriptures and to find the ground of their common faith in Christ.

Believers guided by the Holy Spirit and following a simple and logical interpretative plan can arrive at the truths taught by the Word of God and can find the consistent pattern of those truths to see the big picture of God's plan for the universe.

We follow a simple and logical interpretative plan in approaching the Scriptures. First, God intended to communicate to His creatures (man) in words which could be understood by that creation. Using human authors, He superintended the selections of

the words used by those authors from their vocabulary to communicate His will, commands and wisdom to mankind within the setting of time they lived. From this we derive two principles of interpretation:

1) The Bible is to be understood literally as normal literature and its vehicles of expression allow.

2) Each passage must be understood from its historical and grammatical context. That is, the historical setting of the passage should be examined. The words, being superintended by God, should be examined in the original language for meaning(s), syntax and construction.

A third principle is answering the simple questions within the passage such as who? To whom? Where? How? When? What? Why?

Such a system of interpretation is found in dispensationalism. This system reveals these things about Scripture:

1) God has progressively revealed Himself and His will to man over the period of time since the creation culminating in the full revelation of Himself in Christ Jesus.

2) God has given men various stewardships or economics or dispensations under which he was to respond in faith to God.

3) God has clearly dealt with one nation on earth as the offspring of the man known in Scripture as the father of faith, Abraham. This nation is Israel and they are the ones through whom both the great body of Scripture (covenants, prophecies and revelations) and the Messiah have come.

4) The church is the new creation of God, the bride chosen by God for His Son, comprised of both Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles) who have trusted in Jesus as God's Son and the Christ. Upon trusting Christ, according to the Scriptures they cease to be either Jew or Gentile but the church.

5) There is a distinct Biblical differentiation made between Israel, Gentiles and the Church. The Church is not spiritual Israel and God is not finished with the nation of Israel. God has a plan for Israel and a plan for the church. What is written for Israel in the Bible is for Israel, not the church. What is written for the church is for the church, not Israel or the nations. God has a plan for the nations (Gentiles) as well. This distinction must be kept when understanding and interpreting Scripture.