

"Upon this rock I will build my church"

Matthew 16:18

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THE CURRENT MANIA

INTRODUCTION

This lesson will help us to get a little closer to understanding things that are now current in religious discussions in light of the Bible. It will also help us to better answer those who are asking questions about the end time (1 Peter 3:15).

The cycle of doomsday preaching based on world events (wars, earthquakes, famine, "revivals," etc.) has been extremely popular for over a century in our land.

It has also produced many books, study Bibles, and now radio and television preaching that continually keep these issues before us.

The master key to the whole lesson comes from Revelation 19:10, which says, "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." There is a statement here that, when understood, will help us in all studies about prophecy. It is, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Thus, the things that relate to Jesus Christ (whether as a teacher or as the fulfillment of many prophecies) are the aids we need to use in order to understand prophetic writings. Jesus Christ unlocks these writings, sometimes by the events in His life which fulfilled prophecy, sometimes by teaching that a certain prophecy was fulfilled, sometimes by teaching how and when a prophecy would be fulfilled, and sometimes through the writings that He caused to be written by apostles and other inspired men (otherwise known as the New Testament).

This lesson covers three main areas:

- Evidences of the Mania.
- Written Answers to the Mania.
- Keys for the Current Mania.

DISCUSSION

I. EVIDENCES OF THE MANIA.

A. Early in the century (1900's).

1. The Schofield Reference Bible: This study Bible appeared on the scene in 1917. It inserted the doctrine of the seven dispensations into the Bible as a part of the study helps at the bottoms of the pages. We

have dealt with this in the lesson on “Dispensationalism” elsewhere in this lecture series.

2. Jehovah’s Witnesses.

a. The Harp of God: My personal copy of this book was printed in 1921. On the cover is the statement, “PROOF CONCLUSIVE THAT MILLIONS NOW LIVING WILL NEVER DIE.” Current editions of the book do not make this claim!

b. Revelation: Its Grand Climax At Hand!: This book, from 1984, is another of many attempts to make predictions about things they think are about to occur. So far, they have always been wrong.

3. Post-Millennialism and the Higher Critics: This book, by Andrew Johnson and L. O. Pickett (1923), is a pre-millennial response to the errors of post-millennialism. Its dedication is: “To all who look for and love His glorious personal and premillennial appearing” (Titus 2:13; 2 Timothy 4:8).

B. The sprouting of the current mania.

1. Herbert W. Armstrong: For more than half a century, this man and his followers (The Worldwide Church of God), have promoted their brand of millennialism. Their book, The United States and Britain in Prophecy, is their famous doctrinal statement.

2. Hal Lindsey: He is one of many who began to fill bookshelves with speculation about the relationship of current events and what they consider to be “end-time prophecies.” Some of his works are:

a. The Late Great Planet Earth (1970).

b. Satan Is Alive and Well on Planet Earth (1972).

c. There’s A New World Coming (1973).

d. The Liberation of Planet Earth (1974).

e. The Terminal Generation (1976).

C. The mania in full bloom.

1. Jack Van Impe: He is one of the most commonly seen of the TV evangelists (with his wife, Rexella). His main method is to give a long list of Bible references to support his views. He sounds impressive, but he rarely uses any of the references correctly. A recent book, The Great Escape (Preparing for the Rapture, the Next Event on God’s Prophetic Clock), is a question and answer approach to 35 questions about the rapture.

2. John F. Walvoord: He is nationally known as one of the best scholars in premillennialism. His book, “End Times,” is a great example of how weak the case for this doctrine really is. He truly makes almost no attempt to prove what he believes. He merely says it is so—over and over again.

3. John Hagee: This man is one of the most vigorous proponents of the state of Israel and a wild premillennial agenda. He is forceful, authoritative, and nearly always wrong. He is one of the most offensive writers (Final Dawn Over Jerusalem), a writer who also links current events to abused scriptures (Beginning of the End; The Assassination of Yitzak Rabin and the Coming Antichrist), and an author who has now come out with a book teaching that the seven Jewish feasts of the Old Testament are also prophecies of various things, including “end times” (His Glory Revealed). He even addresses some of his material to people who may be reading it after the rapture!

4. Grant P. Jeffrey: He is one of the authors who has decided to tie the Y2K computer crisis to Bible prophecy with the book, The Millennium Meltdown. One of his claims is that “The Y2K crisis is unique among all of the disasters that have afflicted humanity through the centuries because it is the first catastrophe in history that will arrive precisely on schedule—on January 1, 2000.” My response to Grant is that no one will know if this is a disaster until it happens—IF it happens. Also, what about the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the destruction of Jerusalem? Did they not all arrive precisely on schedule? Beyond that, Grant does NOT know that it will happen, that it will be a disaster, OR that Jesus might come BEFORE then!!

5. Tim LaHaye: This author wrote good books on men, women, and family in the past. But he is now also a frequent writer on prophecy—and he is one of the worst. A recent title is “Rapture Under Attack” dealing in part with errors that he thinks are made by other millennial writers (They use terms like “Mid-Trib,” “Post-Trib,” and “Pre-Trib”). But even worse is a series of novels that he and Jerry B. Jenkins are writing about Pre-millennialism. Four are finished and at least one more is coming (August 1999)—if, of course, they aren’t raptured before then. The claim is that more than 4 million books have already been sold.

D. “In the Bible.”

1. The New Schofield Reference Bible. Copyrighted in 1967, this Bible is advertised far more frequently now than it was 15 or 20 years ago, as the dispensational premillennial agenda gets pushed more and more.

2. The MacArthur Study Bible. This attractive, eye-catching, well-bound addition to the religious material market is premillennial through and through. One of the significant things to note about it is that it is recommended (on the dust jacket) by Max Lucado. Brethren, we had

better get ready for the premillennial onslaught (that is here) to attack and conquer some of us!

I. WRITTEN ANSWERS TO THE MANIA.

A. By faithful Christians.

1. Two lectureships, including books and tapes, have now been produced by the church at Duluth, Georgia, for the very purpose of equipping ourselves to be able to address this powerful enemy of the cross: premillennialism.
2. Prophecy Foretold, Prophecy Fulfilled, by E. R. Harper, privately published.
3. Did You Miss The Rapture?, by Mack Lyon, Publishing Designs, Inc., P.O. Box 3241, Huntsville, AL 35810.
4. The Millennial Mania, by Rod Rutherford, 5911 Southbend Lane, Olive Branch, MS 38654.
5. Truth, The Millennium, and The Battle of Armageddon, by Leslie G. Thomas, Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville, TN.
6. God's Prophetic Word, by Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Publications.
7. The Kingdom of Promise and Prophecy, by Robertson L. Whiteside, published by Miss Inys Whiteside, The Manney Company, 1041 Isbell Road, Fort Worth, TX.
8. Premillennialism, True or False?, edited by Wendell Winkler, Winkler Publications, Montgomery, AL.

B. By denominational writers.

1. The Millennium, by Loraine Boettner, The Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., Philadelphia, PA.
2. Approaching the New Millennium, by Paul T. Butler, College Press Pub. Co., Joplin, MO.
3. The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views, edited by Robert G. Clouse, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 60515.
4. The Gospel of the Kingdom, by Philip Mauro, Reiner Publications, Swengel, PA 17880.
5. Millennial Studies, by George L. Murray, Baker Book House, Grand

Rapids, MI.

II. KEYS FOR THE CURRENT MANIA.

A. Is “doomsday” near?

The word “doomsday” was intentionally chosen as the heading of this point so that we could comment on it at this time. “Doomsday” has become a way of life for many people, but the end of the world ought not to be under such a heading! The last day is supposed to be a day of VICTORY (1 Corinthians 15).

The very subjects that have raised their doomsday fervor are not even Bible subjects! Themes such as a future rapture, tribulation, battle of Armageddon (a literal earthly war), and a millennium on earth are not even in the Bible!

So if we can help people see the truth about these things, maybe the judgment day won't be such a doomsday event for them!

We must not let this concentration on “doomsday” rob us of our joy in Christ and our mission to our generation!

There is a great difference in the “doomsday” attitude and the teaching of Jesus that an abundant, joyful life is available to us right now.

B. We need to learn the Bible doctrine on final things.

This earth and universe will come to an end! But how will it take place? What does the Bible say will take place at the end of time?

There will be a second coming of Christ (Hebrews 9:28). There will be a resurrection of the just and the unjust in the same hour (John 5:28,29). There will be a judgment at which all people who ever lived will be present (Acts 17:31; Romans 14:10-12). All will receive a sentence of heaven or hell (Matthew 24:36-25:46).

This will take place in the “twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15), when God sends Jesus back (Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:9-11).

C. Are there any signs of the second coming?

We hear so much said about this. Men “see” signs of it from such passages as Matthew 24:1-33, but they conveniently skip or pervert verse 34, which proves that the list of signs in the previous verses has nothing to do with the end of time—but rather, the topic was the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place 40 years later, fulfilling every detail of Jesus' prediction.

Thus, there are no signs of the end in this passage, since Jesus said it

was for that generation.

So, are there any signs of the second coming? First, the Bible describes it as the coming of a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5; 2 Peter 3), or as a woman going into labor (1 Thessalonians 5). This indicates that date picking would be very difficult (to say the least). Second, Jesus, in Matthew 24:36, makes it clear that no one knows! There are no signs. The Father knows—but He has not told us anything about the date except that it is certain to come. Thus, if the way to learn the date of the second coming is to use Daniel (as some want to do) then, why didn't Christ do it right here in Matthew 24? Good question!

We can be certain about this key—there are not any signs of the second coming! We KNOW that He is coming. But we also KNOW that no one KNOWS when it will be!

This key will help us with other things, too. For example, “Are the current wars, weather patterns, social upheavals, etc. signs that the end is near?” Well, if there are NO signs of the second coming, then the answer is “NO,” isn't it?

D. Let us challenge/confront people who are in error on these things.

Our purpose in challenging and confronting people is not to win an argument or debate, but to open hearts to the gospel.

God gave us the truth about the end so that we could get ready for it. In Matthew 24:36-25:46, Jesus Christ exhorted people to get ready and stay ready! Let us not waste our time guessing and speculating. Let us confront and challenge people so they too can get ready and stay ready for Jesus' return.

There are ways by which we can do this without having to know every shade of error that everyone says about the errors that are popular today. As a matter of fact, I would warn us to be careful about how much error we study in our efforts to combat it.

Let us first study and learn the truth. Let us be very, very cautious about how deep we get into the study of error.

Then, when someone comes along and says, “It just looks to me like the kingdom of God is going to be established soon,” we can say, “What about this verse? In Mark 9:1, Jesus said something here that tells me the kingdom was to be established then, not now.” Why can't we confront them? They want us to believe their doctrines—and they are wrong!

Ask them if what they say or believe is in the Bible. We might be surprised how seldom they can find anything that has even a remote connection with what they are talking about. Most know very little

about the Bible.

Remember what is at stake: somebody's soul—somebody's eternity!
And I guarantee you that when they take their last breath and cross over to where there is not even a drop of water to cool their tongue, they'll wish that we had spoken up! And so will we.

E. Learn how to use specific passages.

(The Lectures in this book and last year's book will provide you with good explanations of many passages that are abused within the ranks of premillennialism. All of those lessons are also available on tape.)

CONCLUSION

This mania has begun and is growing as a result of several ingredients:

- Biblical ignorance.
- Easy access to people through mass media.
- The upcoming changing of a century and millennium.
- The idea that we are about to enter (according to them) the seventh millennium (B.C. = 4000 years; A.D. = 2000 years; total = 6000 years).
- It is popular; many preachers and people love to talk about this and promote it.
- Lack of opposition on the part of those who believe and know the truth.

As the true Israel of God, we must conduct ourselves according to the principles and commandments of Jesus Christ. Let us be good soldiers (2 Timothy 2:3,4), rightly divide the word (2 Timothy 2:14-18), and march into battle against the soul-killing evil of premillennialism (Ephesians 6:10-20).

Skip Andrews

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