Inexcusable Excuses

By Terry R. Townsend
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Have you ever thought about what folks might say to God at judgment for their failure to obey him? It's sobering, isn't it, to know there's a coming judgment – a day in which all men will give account of themselves to the Lord! Paul writes, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Let's consider a few inexcusable excuses.

Without question, millions of people will blame their lack of obedience on preachers. Unfortunately, millions today put more faith in mortal man than they do God. Yet, the Bible is abundantly clear that one must be a doer of the word and not a hearer only (James 1:21-25). False teachers are deceiving millions into thinking they have "peace and safety," when in reality they're on a collision course with destruction (1 Thess. 5:1-3; 2 Pet. 2:1-3). Thus, it behooves us to test the spirits (1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11). Blaming false teachers at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

There will be many on the Day of Judgment blaming the weather for their lack of involvement in the Lord's work. When asked why they fail to participate in spiritual activities, many blame mother nature – too hot in summer, too cold in winter, too wet in spring, too windy in fall, etc. If truth be told, people will do whatever their hearts so desire! Inclement weather does not negate one's responsibility to serve God (1 Cor. 15:58). Blaming the weather at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

Undoubtedly, millions will blame their parents at Judgment for their failure to do God's will. How often have I heard non-

members say the following in a Bible study, “I see what you’re saying, but if what I believe was good enough for dad and mom, it’s good enough for me!” But what if dad and mom were wrong? Will God still grant you entrance into Heaven despite your failure to obey that which you knew to be true? The Bible says that one must obey Christ above all else, including family (cf. Luke 9:57-62; 14:26-35). In matters of faith, who should we ultimately listen to? Parents or Christ? Obviously, the answer is Jesus (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-3). Putting the blame on parents for your lack of obedience will be an inexcusable excuse.

Others at Judgment will use the excuse of profession for their failing to do the Father’s Will. I’m sure some will say, “I would have obeyed and served you Lord, but my job wouldn’t allow it.” Truth be told, millions are more interested in money than they are in God. Paul had it right when he penned, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Tim. 6:9-10 ESV). Jesus said that we’re to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). To blame one’s profession at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

I’m sure that on Judgment Day some will use their lack of earthly substance (poverty) as an excuse for their failing to do the will of God. Some will probably say, “Lord, I wasn’t as blessed as others; thus, I didn’t do all I could.” I wonder if God will have standing beside Him the widow who gave two mites as an example to those making such excuses (cf. Mark 12:41-44)? The Lord expects us to do what we can with what we have (Matt. 25:14 ff). Blaming our lack of service on poverty will be an inexcusable excuse.

Another excuse many will make at Judgment will be that of

persecution. I can hear some now, “Lord, I would’ve served You, but I didn’t because I feared persecution.” But didn’t he tell us in his word that Christians would be mistreated on occasion (cf John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12). Didn’t he assure us his presence, protection, and panoply to help us overcome (cf. Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-6; Eph. 6:10 ff)? Jesus said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). Thus, fear of persecution as a defense for failing to obey God will be an inexcusable excuse on Judgment Day.

Finally, millions will offer unto God the excuse of procrastination; that is, many will say, “I wanted to obey You Lord, but I simply ran out of time!” I wonder if Felix will be among the masses who will make such an excuse (Acts 24:25)? The Lord is patient, and he gives men ample time to obey (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9-14); thus, to use procrastination as a reason for failing to obey will be an inexcusable excuse on Judgment Day.

Simply put, we can make all the excuses we want to as to why we fail to do God’s Will; however, on the Day of Judgment, God’s answer to such excuses will be this:

“Depart from me, ye that work iniquity!”

What About the Rapture?

by Joe E. Galloway
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The rapture is a widely accepted denominational doctrine. Popular TV and radio evangelists teach this idea. Several best-selling religious books deal with this subject. Hal

Lindsey's book, The Late Great Planet Earth, became a Hollywood movie. This book, first printed in 1970, was so popular that by 1976 it had gone through forty-two printings!

The result of this blitz of teaching is alarming. The news media mentioned the War in the Persian Gulf as maybe connected with Armageddon. Many people are using the term "the rapture" as if it was a commonly known and established future event, but the word "rapture" is not in any credible translation of the Bible.

The denominational idea of a coming rapture confuses folk and makes it difficult for them to understand and accept the truth. It is necessary to combat this false teaching before we can begin successfully to teach basic Bible truth. Some members of the church have accepted the teaching as Biblical. Brethren, we must teach the truth on "end times" and answer this false doctrine.

This incorrect view of "the rapture" says that Christ will soon appear and take the saved away from the earth for a seven-year rapture, leaving the unsaved on the earth to suffer. Most of us have read articles or heard hair-raising stories on what these people say will occur when Christ raptures the saved.

The anecdotes tell of men waking up and finding their wives and children mysteriously gone. Others, at work, abruptly disappear from their machines and desks. Drivers and pilots suddenly vanish, causing crippling crashes.

Those not raptured panic, not knowing what has happened. The phone lines are jammed as people call the police, the newspaper office, the radio station. Disorder is rampant. Finally, some slowly realize the "rapture" has taken place, and they, not ready, were left behind. Meanwhile, the saved have inexpressible bliss.

TOO NEW TO BE BIBLICAL

Few people seem to know this unbiblical teaching is somewhat new. Although the false doctrine of premillennialism has been around for a while, dispensational premillennialism (from which comes the rapture idea) is dated from about 1830, beginning with John N. Darby and the start of the Plymouth Brethren movement.

One writer claims the two-stage idea of Christ's coming commenced with Miss Margaret MacDonald in Port Glasgow, Scotland a few years earlier. No one can trace it back before the 1800's. This shows the doctrine to be unscriptural. It started 1700 years too late to be from God!

THE DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIAL THEORY EXPLAINED

Dispensationalists, generally, teach that all human history falls into seven divisions. They disagree on the designations and the exact periods covered in the first five dispensations, but all agree we are now living in the sixth period, called, by them, the Dispensation of Grace. They expect the seventh dispensation to last one thousand years and call it, The Millennium.

Most say the Dispensation of Grace will soon end with the reputed rapture. The living righteous will be caught up to meet Christ in the air to be judged and rewarded. The rapture lasts seven years (the "final week" of Daniel's prophesy – Daniel 9:27)

On earth, during this seven-year period, is The Great

Tribulation. During the first part of this period, the Jews in Palestine make a covenant with Antichrist. They rebuild the temple, renew its sacrifices, and convert many to Judaism.

In the middle of this seven-year period the Antichrist breaks covenant with the Jews and demands to be worshiped. Multitudes are slaughtered in a great persecution.

After seven years, Christ comes back to earth with the raptured saints. Dispensational premillennialists call this The Revelation. The battle of Armageddon is fought and the Antichrist is destroyed in the war.

The righteous dead are, at last, remembered and resurrected. All the nations are judged. The millennium begins. Christ rules the world from earthly Jerusalem, sitting on David's literal throne. After the thousand years, Satan is loosed for a little while. After Satan's last fling, the wicked dead are resurrected and judged in "The Great White Throne Judgment."

A PROOF TEXT

Teachers of dispensational premillennialism claim First Thessalonians teaches their speculation about a rapture and tribulation and millennial reign of Jesus on earth. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).

The verse does mention the living saved, along with the resurrected saved, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, however the passage speaks of what occurs after all the dead are raised and judged and says nothing of a secret rapture. The passage also indicates the redeemed in Hades are resurrected and the saved on earth are transformed simultaneously.

The book of First Thessalonians does not teach a clandestine

return and rapture but says, “he (Jesus) shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thess. 4:16). This is one of the noisiest verses in the Bible! The verse says, “the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

Verse 17 says the saved of earth shall, with the sainted dead, be caught up “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” The word “so,” most people know, is an adverb of manner, and means “in this manner,” that is, “in the air,” shall we ever be with the Lord.

The rapture notion teaches, instead, that only the living righteous will be caught up in the air to be with Christ for seven years. Then they are to return to earth with him in The Revelation.

The advocates of a covert coming of Christ and the rapture say the Bible pictures the final coming Jesus as like a thief. So, they think, he will sneak in and snatch the saved from the earth secretly, like a thief doing his work.

The Bible does not teach the act of Christ’s coming to be as a thief, but says “the day” comes like a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2). This does not teach that Christ will be sneaking in and out but shows we cannot know when Christ is coming.

CONTRARY TO BIBLICAL TEACHING

Many things in this fanciful doctrine contradict Bible truth! The word “rapture” is not Biblical. Hal Lindsey says it is not in the Bible and tells us not to look for It (The Late Great Planet Earth, page 126). Consider some discrepancies of this doctrine with God’s revealed truth.

First Discrepancy

The idea that the saved are to be taken from the world, while the lost remain, violates Bible teaching. The parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24-30; Matt. 13:38-43) disproves this notion. The wheat and the tares grow together “until the harvest” (13:30). Jesus tells us “the good seed are the children of the kingdom” and “the tares are the children of the wicked one” (13:38). “The harvest is the end of the world” (13:39). The sacred scriptures say the good and the bad will “grow together” until the “end of the world.” In the final harvest the householder will command, “Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in the bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (verse 30). Jesus’ interpretation of the parable says, “The Son of man shall send forth his angles, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun” (verses 41-43). The impress of the passage is a simultaneous judgment of the saved and the lost. The parable says the lost are to be cast into the fires of hell at the same time the saved go to their heavenly mansions.

Second Discrepancy

Dispensational millenarians teach separate resurrections of the good and evil. According to them, the transformed righteous of earth are swept away to a seven-year ecstasy. After the seven years, the sainted dead are resurrected to take part in a victorious 1,000 year earthly kingdom. After this, the wicked are resurrected. This makes different resurrections separated by at least 1,000 years.

Jesus said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the

resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29).

Some try to dodge the force of this by saying that "all" simply refers to the saved. Jesus takes care of this quibble- "they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." The ransomed and the dammed are raised the same hour.

Third Discrepancy

The rapture theory demands a secret coming of Christ. In discussing the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus told his disciples not to believe it if some said, "Lo, here is Christ, or there" (Matt. 24:23-26). Jesus explained, "For as the lightening cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:27).

Just as all see the flash of lightening, so Christ's ultimate coming will be open and public. It will not be an event so secret that most of mankind will not even realize Christ has returned until many hours afterward. Acts 1:11 tells us, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." When he comes again, "every eye shall see him" (Rev. 1:7).

Fourth Discrepancy

The rapture speculation of millennial dispensationalists demands two future, literal returns of Christ. They call one return "the rapture" and the other return "the revelation." Jesus promised, "I will come again" (John 14:3). He did not say, "I will come again and again." Hebrews 9:28 tells us that "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." A third literal coming of Jesus is not promised in the holy scripture.

Dispensationalists downplay what the Bible says about a second literal coming by calling it the first and second “phase” of his second coming. This does not remove the fact they teach he is coming two more times, with seven years between his second and third coming. The Bible teaches one, still future, literal coming of Christ!

Fifth Discrepancy

A seven-year period of great tribulation on earth triggered by the second, literal coming of Jesus is not in the Bible. Matthew 24:21 mentions “great tribulation” at the destruction of Jerusalem – not after this age and the destruction of the earth.

The great tribulation of Matthew 24 cannot refer to Jesus’ last coming. The passage tells his followers not to return to their houses for possessions and speaks of the difficulty of being pregnant or nursing a baby and of the inconvenience of fleeing during the winter or on the Sabbath, all of which is meaningless, unless he is speaking of Jerusalem’s destruction, and not of his second, final coming. If Jesus is coming again to steal, like a thief, the good folk from the earth, it is pointless to tell them not to pack their clothes nor urge them to pray nor to have babies, nor that it is winter, nor the Sabbath day when he comes to zing them into rhapsody.

Revelation 7:14 speaks of victorious saints who suffered “great tribulation” on earth, who are rewarded by the Lord in heaven. There is no passage in all the Bible that speaks of a great tribulation after the Christian age. The Bible speaks instead of great comfort for the redeemed at the end of this period.

Sixth Discrepancy

The antichrist concept of millennialism is foreign to the

scriptures. Antichrist simply means a person who is against Christ. The term is never used in the Bible to designate a leader of the forces of evil at the end of time.

1 John 2:18 helps answer this false emphasis. John said, “even now are many antichrists.” The antichrists of John’s day disprove the claim that one antichrist will appear after this age.

A list of those identified as the antichrist is amusing – Napoleon, Wilhelm, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Henry Kissinger, and Ronald Reagan. Soon someone will add Suddam Hussein to the roll. The prophets for dispensationalism are obviously wide of the mark, but that does not seem to bother their followers. They commonly ignore Deuteronomy 18:22! The prophets of the rapture, who teach lies, are the tail (Isa. 9:15)

Seventh Discrepancy

The battle of Armageddon, according to dispensational millenialists, is a war between the forces of the antichrist and those of Jesus at his literal, second coming. Revelation 16:14 mentions a “battle” and Revelation 16:16 mentions a place called “Armageddon.” Neither the antichrist nor Christ’s last coming is mentioned in this passage.

Pre-millennialists say prophetic statements should be accepted in an unqualified sense. The battle of Armageddon is therefore a verbatim, carnal warfare. Some claim the carnage will be so great blood will really flow to the depth of the horse’s bits – horses will be swimming in human blood.

Will they accept as literal “three unclean spirits like frogs” coming “out of the mouth of the dragon” to gather the kings to battle? The war of Revelation 16 is no more literal than is the instigator a literal frog who comes out of the mouth of a literal dragon.

Eighth Discrepancy

Advocates of the rapture say the earthly phase of the kingdom of heaven is to begin when Christ comes a second time unto salvation. The bible says the earthly phase of the kingdom of God now exists and will end when Jesus appears a final time.

The kingdom of heaven, which John the Baptist said was at hand, began on the Pentecost of Acts 2, during the Roman empire as foretold in Daniel 2:44. First century saints were in it (Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 12:28). At Jesus' last coming he will deliver an already established kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:23-25).

Ninth Discrepancy

Dispensationalists list as many as seven separate days of judgment. All such false teachers list at least three days of judgment – one at the claimed rapture of the saints, another for the nations after the assumed seven-year tribulation, and a third at the end of the so-called millennium.

The Bible teaches one day of judgment. Near the end of the gospel of Matthew we read of the day of judgment at least four times (Matt. 10:15; Matt. 11:22-24; Matt. 12:36), and "judgment" (singular) at least two more times (Matt. 12:41-42). "He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world" (Acts 17:31). The idea of various days of judgment for various groups of people is alien to the Bible.

"As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:27-28).

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