

"LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED"

Gary McDade

The changes in the world since September Eleventh have given pause to think about elements of safety and security. A moment to reflect on the words of Jesus yields a welcomed level of tranquility. Just prior to his passion to those closest to him he said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. . . . Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:1-3, 27).

The Lord made the point that he was leaving in order to prepare a place for them to which he would take them upon his return. He did not even intimate that upon his return he would reside on earth with them for a thousand years or any other length of time for that matter. He wanted them to be comforted by the promise that he would return for them to take them to that prepared place the Bible calls heaven.

The apostle Paul encouraged Christians in the first century, "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand" (II Thess. 2:2). The context shows that "the day of Christ" to which Paul referred is the second coming of Christ. Apparently, there were those leading the Christians to believe that Christ's return was imminent. The word from which the King James Version renders "at hand" appears elsewhere in the New Testament where it is translated "present" (e.g., Rom. 8:38; I Cor. 7:26; Gal. 1:4). One thought which troubled these Christians was Christ may have already returned, and they had missed out on being taken back to heaven with him. The Thessalonian correspondence reassured Christians that no one, especially not the Christians who had already died (I Thess. 4:13-18), would be overlooked at the Lord's return. Any spirit, word, or letter that caused them to be "shaken in mind" or "troubled" about the details of the second coming of Christ and the end of the world did not express the will of Christ concerning them.

Furthermore, of particular interest to many in this connection is the book of Revelation. This beautiful book which graphically symbolizes the ultimate victory of Christ over every foe has been misapplied by false teachers ostensibly for the purpose of frightening some into serving God. Remember that Paul taught there

would be no letter forthcoming that would have the design of "troubling" or "shaking the mind" of the Christian about the return of Christ. The theme of Revelation along with the symbols it employs to convey that theme are grossly distorted by a widely held dogma called premillennialism. This is the false belief that there is yet to be a thousand year era in which Christ will dwell on earth and which will be preceded by a nightmare of horrific proportions called the tribulation period of seven years. The impetus behind the dogma is that a secret return of Christ is imminent. They call it the Rapture.

However, a careful study of the book of Revelation will dispel the potentially faith shattering theory of premillennialism. The study of one particular word will illustrate. Take the Greek word *taxu* for example. It is an adverb meaning quickly. It appears six times in Revelation. Five of the six times it emerges in a statement Jesus made, "I come quickly" (Rev. 2:16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). While premillennialists teach that Jesus is referring to his second coming, the book of Revelation teaches otherwise for four reasons:

1) Nineteen hundred years have passed since John wrote Revelation in AD 96. That proves Jesus did not mean his return was imminent when he said, "I come quickly."

2) Christ promised to come in judgment upon those who did not repent in the first reference (Rev. 2:16). His coming was in judgment or chastisement, not personally to destroy the whole world.

3) Christ promised to come in preservation of the faithful in the second reference (Rev. 3:11). Therefore, in the letters to the seven churches Christ could not possibly have referred to his second coming. He was coming to judge or chastise some and preserve others at an hour of temptation that was to come on all the world (Rev. 3:10).

4) The last three references to *taxu* emphasize the manner of Christ's coming, that is, suddenly, not the time of his coming. An authority of no less prestige than Walter Bauer (translated by Arndt and Gingrich) define *taxu* as "without delay, quickly, at once" and list Revelation 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:7, 12, 22 as examples of that meaning in contrast to "soon" or "in a short time" (pp. 814-815).

Therefore, "Let not your heart be troubled."