

Left Behind

I'm sitting here looking at one of the more absurd items to come across my desk in quite some time. It is a video game entitled, "Left Behind, Rise of the Antichrist." Based on the wildly popular but blatantly unscriptural "Left Behind" series of books and movies, the game's cover urges, "It's time to choose a side." A synopsis of the game says that one can use knowledge and influence to withstand spiritual attacks, take command of forces and battle demons and minions of the antichrist in the streets of New York.

Going to the "Left Behind" website, one finds that the roots of this video game are grounded in yet another attempt by men to identify signs of the "last times" and the second coming of Christ. Just like so many of their stripe have done in previous generations, the authors have looked around at current events and expressed their feelings that these are all indicators of the Lord's return.

"Left Behind" is nothing more than a rehashing of error that has been foisted upon mankind for generations. Granted, it has added a new twist by bringing the false doctrine into the electronic age. Perhaps that makes it even more disconcerting. Promoting unscriptural teaching via the pulpit is bad enough, but dressing it up as some sort of entertainment is even worse.

According to God's Word, trying to affix a date to the return of Christ is a futile effort. Speaking of the Lord's return, Paul wrote, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." (I Thessalonians 5:1-2). One letter later he wrote, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, or by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." (II Thessalonians 2:1-2). Jesus said, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." (Matthew 24:42).

One characteristic of each "date fixer" is the vagueness of his statements. I remember hearing a well known radio preacher in the late 1970s say that he had earlier in his lifetime figured Jesus would come in that decade, but that he had become convinced that the Lord would return in the 1980s and, if not then, sometime in the 1990s. The "Left Behind" authors follow suit. When asked, "Are we really living in the end times?", Tim LaHaye, one of the authors, replied, "We have more reason to believe that he will return in this generation than any other generation before us." Obviously, every second that ticks off the clock brings us that much closer to eternity (Romans 13:11). It doesn't take a scholar to come to that conclusion. To say, however, that there are signs of the imminence of Christ's coming is an abuse and contradiction of God's inspired Word.

Of course, all of this date fixing and misuse of the book of Revelation makes for great theater. Tie in another unscriptural doctrine known as the rapture, another known as the tribulation and yet another known as the millennial reign of Christ and an imaginative and creative mind can produce some compelling entertainment. Adhering to these doctrines won't bring one closer to God or prepare one for heaven because they are not grounded in the Bible. They will, however, make some mighty fine profit centers for those who can get people away from their Bibles and into these fantastic fictional portrayals of "the end times."

Make no mistake about it; the Lord is coming. As the apostles watched Jesus ascend to heaven, they were told by the angels, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? 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." (Acts 1:11). The written Word of God comes to a close with these words of Christ: "Surely I come quickly." (Revelation 22:20).

The Lord is coming and when He comes He will judge the world (John 12:48; Acts 17:30-31). Since we do not know the time and since we are promised no signs of His coming, we must daily be diligent in faithfulness. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." (I Thessalonians 5:6-8).

We have a choice. We can waste our precious moments in a fantasy world of misused Bible passages or we can wisely spend our time in examination of God's Word to learn what He requires of us. If anything should be left behind, it should be the books, movies and now the video game of this unholy series.

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