

TOPIC XXII

WHAT IS ALL THE FUSS AND ARGUMENT ABOUT - REGARDING THE COMING OF CHRIST, THE "RAPTURE" AND THE "GREAT TRIBULATION?"

INTRODUCTION

The question raised is, "Will Christians go through the tribulation? Many argue for the pre-trib rapture, but Noah lived through the flood and the Israelites were protected from the plagues cast upon Egypt..."

Yes, but is this a fair comparison to what Jesus spoke of? Well, this is one of those subjects where heated arguments take place. And a lot of it is just confusion over definitions and theological presuppositions. So, what is all the fuss about? Well, partly, it all depends on how one defines the phrase "the great tribulation." We will attempt to clarify the definition as well as see how the Bible itself defines the terms. We cannot address every nuance of this topic in this discussion, but will stay on point in answering the question as best we can. In so doing, we will have to discuss some matters that relate to the definition and timing of these events.

First of all, this theological doctrine refers to Christ's return and the specific timing and conditions of that return. The theological term for the study of this event (or events) is "Christian Eschatology."

Second, there are many various viewpoints about all of this. The interest in Christ's second return has been intense since the first century. It is often looked at as the "blessed hope," a phrase taken from Paul's letter to Titus 2:11-13,

11: For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12: instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13: looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus..."

Third, Jesus spoke of a difficult time near the end of the age and prior to His coming in Matthew 24:21, "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will." What is supposed to happen during this time is a part of the debate.

Fourth, the intense interest in Jesus' return has prompted theologians for centuries to attempt to define both what events will occur surrounding Jesus' return to establish His kingdom on earth, and when they will occur.

Fifth, these theologians are not able to agree on their conclusions and many conflicting ideas and camps have been formed, all believing they are right.

Sixth, many of the conclusions are drawn based on interpretations of many prophets, particularly Daniel. The Book of Revelation is also called upon, as are several statements by the apostles and of Jesus Himself, especially the Olivet discourse of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21.¹

Often these conclusions result in the prediction of a specific time period or date for the culmination of the age, but so far all who have made these predictions have been in error. We are talking nearly two-hundred years of erroneous conclusions with dozens, if not hundreds, of people taking a crack at this in published works. In addition, tens of thousands are teaching what their viewpoint is on the issue and all have been found to be in error and yet the same premises and conclusions are still sought after for the answers.

Seventh, the pre-dominant view of the coming of Christ here in the western world (in simple terms) is that Jesus comes before the "Great Tribulation" to receive (take away or "rapture") His "church", then the "Great Tribulation" takes place and Jesus returns a second time with those who had been previously raptured to receive those that have been saved during this time and then establishes His kingdom upon the earth.

Now, what are the problems with this viewpoint? Well, first, the definition of what "The Great Tribulation" consists of is in dispute. We will look at this in a moment. Second, there is no scriptural support for this viewpoint unless one interprets or distorts some specific passages to fit this theory.² Third, everyone who holds this view claims to be knowledgeable in prophetic interpretation and do often predict the time of Christ's return. All have been found in error. However, rather than question their own methodology, they persist in it and continue to draw erroneous conclusions over and over again.

¹ John does not relate any of this as, in His mind, the key events may have already taken place.

² Such as claiming that Revelation 4:1-2 describes the "rapture" of the church symbolically in the person of John. There are many problems with this viewpoint not the least of which is that John was "in the Spirit" in 17:3 and 21:10 as well.

Eighth, without thinking, all of these have adopted John Nelson Darby's³ approach to "rightly interpreting the scriptures" and have never questioned its validity. Some of these folks are big names such as, C. I. Scofield, Dwight L. Moody, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord (and Dallas theological Seminary), Henry Ironside, R.A. Torrey, J. Vernon McGee, and more contemporary teachers such as: John MacArthur, Franklin Graham and his sister Anne Graham Lotz, Chuck Smith, Tim LaHaye, Harold Camping (displayed billboards announcing the date of the return of Christ), Chuck Swindoll, David Jeremiah, Charles Stanley, John Hagee, Dave Hunt and most of all the pastors and teachers you have sat under or ever heard.

Ninth, names who oppose this view are also big; John Bunyan, John Calvin, Adam Clarke, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, Matthew Henry, John Huss, John Knox, Hugh Latimer, C.S. Lewis, Martin Luther, George Mueller, Sir Isaac Newton, John Newton, Charles Spurgeon, William Tyndale, Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, John Wesley, George Whitefield, William Wilberforce, John Wycliffe, and many others in the modern age as well such as Oswald Smith, Corrie Ten Boom, Chuck Missler, Ruth Graham, George Ladd,⁴ and most of Fuller Theological Seminary plus many others who do not have the big name recognition as those who promote the pre-tribulation viewpoint.⁵

There are a multitude of proponents and opponents to these views, most available on line. Hundreds of thousands of pages have been written on this subject. We, thankfully, will not look at them all. My question is, "Without a theological doctrine to refer to, what does the Bible actually teach?"

The question brought to this discussion was, "Will Christians go through the great tribulation?" I am a simple man. It seems to me that there are fundamental errors in even the definitions of the terms used in the discussion. For example, what does the "great tribulation" consist of? Well, there are ample definitions. Let's look at a couple.

One definition of that event is, "...a relatively short period of time where everyone will experience worldwide hardships, disasters, famine, war, pain, and suffering,

³ John Nelson Darby (18 November 1800 – 29 April 1882) was an Anglo-Irish Bible teacher, one of the influential figures among the original Plymouth Brethren and the founder of the Exclusive Brethren. He is considered to be the father of modern Dispensationalism and Futurism. Pre-tribulation rapture theology was popularized extensively in the 1830s by John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren, and further popularized in the United States in the early 20th century by the wide circulation of the Scofield Reference Bible.

⁴ Recommended is Ladd's book, "The Blessed Hope."

⁵ Please see the end of the study for several articles by those who also oppose this view.

which will wipe out more than 75% of all life on the earth before the Second Coming takes place. Some Pretribulationists believe that those who choose to follow God, will be raptured before the tribulation, and thus escape it."⁶ Normally, it is taught that this is a "secret rapture" where all of a sudden people disappear and all sorts of confusion and catastrophic events occur due to this such as planes crashing, cars wrecking along with all other shipping and passenger carrying machines, hospitals losing staff, and so on. We may look to see if this has any validity at all.

Another source defines it as, "The Tribulation is a future time period when the Lord will accomplish at least two aspects of His plan: 1) He will complete His discipline of the nation Israel (Daniel 9:24), and, 2) He will judge the unbelieving, godless inhabitants of the earth (Revelation 6 -18). The length of the Tribulation is seven years. This is determined by an understanding of the seventy weeks of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27). It is Christ Himself who used the phrase "Great Tribulation" with reference to the last half of the Tribulation in Matthew 24:21."⁷

So, there are various and numerous forms of these views and the debate rages. Let me address two of the statements above. First, "He will complete His discipline of the nation Israel (Daniel 9:24)." I believe Jesus' death on the cross took all the "discipline" away and second, Daniel 9:24-25 says nothing of the sort. So to make their theory fit, the scriptures have to be manipulated to support the particular viewpoint. Next, where in Matthew 2:21 does Jesus say that His comment only apply to the "last half of the tribulation?"

I propose that the definition of the "great tribulation" is in error in the view of those who teach that the church will be raptured prior to the great tribulation. Here is the problem as I see it. It appears to me that those who define the great tribulation (as we have read) mix two things together; first, the intensified persecution of the saints near the end of the age and second, the pouring out of the wrath of God upon the earth at the end of the age. This is not to mention the persecution of the saints from day one of the beginning of the church on the Day of Pentecost.

But let's see if these are really two distinct events and if the timing is the same as we have heard. Let's take the "tribulation" first.

⁶ Wikipedia on line, "The Great Tribulation."

⁷ "gotquestions.org "the Great Tribulation."

THE "TRIBULATION" AND "GREAT TRIBULATION" **AND THE CONTEXT**

The definition: The word "tribulation in the Greek is "thlipsis" and is used 43 times in the New Testament. In various contexts it is also translated "affliction," "distress," "persecution," and "anguish" in the NASB.

Matthew 24:21 is the most quoted verse used as a basis for the above viewpoint.

Mat 24:21 "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will."

Of course, hopefully, we have learned that context is everything. Let's see what leads up to this statement in verses 1-23, and the following, 25-31

1: "Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2: And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." 3: As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Some observations: There are two time frames to these verses, and two subjects. First, as Jesus is leaving the temple the disciples marvel at the building and Jesus responds in a cryptic manner (verses 1 and 2). Second, in verse 3, He is now on the Mount of Olives. It takes at least a half hour or more to walk from the temple to the Mount of Olives. Once there, His disciples ask another question with two parts. One, "When will these things happen" referring no doubt to the destruction of the temple, and two, "What will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?"

These questions reveal that the disciples anticipated a conclusion to the "age" fairly soon. But Jesus' answers do not support this view. In fact, He doesn't answer their questions directly at all. He has a lot to tell them about the future. Their expectation is that if the temple is destroyed, the end of the age must be at hand. Their view is based on the belief by the Jews in those days that the temple was indicative of God's presence in their midst. A doctrine called the "Inviolability of

Zion" emerged from the time of Isaiah when Sennacherib's army withdrew from Jerusalem and the Jews were saved from destruction (Isaiah 37). The account is found also in I Kings 18-19 and in II Chronicles 32. However, this dependence upon the temple as God's protective power was also decried by the Lord through Jeremiah when He said in 7:3-4, 8.

3: Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. 4: "Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'" 8: "Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail."

Jesus was quite familiar with this passage as in verse 11 the Lord says,

"Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," declares the LORD."

Jesus quoted this passage in Matthew 21:13.

Now, let's compare Matthew's account to Mark's account in chapter 13 of his gospel. Perhaps there might be more clarity as there are some differences.

1: "As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" 2: And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down." 3: As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning Him privately, 4: "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"

In Mark's record, once again, one can see that the disciples believe the two events are indicative of the end of the age.

Luke 21:5-7 is slightly different but essentially the same.

5: And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, 6: "As for these things which you are

looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down." 7: They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?"

Okay, so Jesus goes on in each account to answer the questions. But He doesn't answer them directly. This is very interesting and important. One can see that His first answer responds to the first question about the destruction of the temple. Let's look at that first. In all three gospels Jesus answers this and says, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."

Then on the Mount of Olives He expands His answer when asked about the "when" of this catastrophe and the end of the age. In Matthew this answer covers the content from verse 4 to at least verse 6.

4: "And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5: "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. 6: "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end."

So there will be some time before this takes place. The things that take place will not be a sign of the end of the age. Oh, and these are not people claiming Jesus to be the Christ, (Messiah) but themselves in that role.

Now, a little history of what took place. During the period between Christ's death, resurrection and the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 69-70 A.D. some thirty five years had passed. The writings of the New Testament were essentially complete and Jesus had not returned as yet. During this period, there were several men that rose up claiming to be the deliverer of Israel. The New Testament mentions two possibilities. Theudas (Acts 5:36) and Simon Magus (Acts 8:10).

Then, a general Jewish revolt led by the party of the Zealots against Roman taxation and control took place leading to the Roman invasion and destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 69-70 C. E.

Let's talk about the Zealots for a moment. The Zealots were founded by Judas of

Galilee (also called Judas of Gamala) in the year 6 against Quirinius' tax reform. This taxation is mentioned in Luke 2:1-2. Two of Judas sons, Jacob and Simon, were involved in a revolt and were executed by Tiberius Alexander, the procurator of the Judean province from 46 to 48. We know that one of Jesus' disciples was a zealot named Simon who is mentioned in the synoptic Gospels and Acts. But, later, the Zealots, led by John of Gischala initiated the rebellion against Rome causing the Roman response and destruction of Jerusalem.

Sixty-two years later in 132 C.E. a rebellion under the leadership of Simon Bar Kokhba took place. Bar Kokhba claimed messianic authority but was ultimately defeated and killed by the Romans. The Jewish state soon came to an end.⁸

So Jesus' statement in verses 4 and 5 of Matthew 24, were also accurate as they point to this occurrence.

Verses 7-12 could be a part of His answer to the first question but also a transition into the second. However, there may be another answer I will propose shortly. Here is 7-12.

(7: "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8: "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. 9: "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10: "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11: "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12: "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.)"

⁸ "After the Bar Kochba Revolt of 132-135 CE, the Romans engaged in mass executions, expulsions, and enslavement, destroying large numbers of Judean towns and forbidding Jews from settling in Jerusalem or its environs (Dio Cassius, Roman History 69.12-14); there was no further Jewish government or overarching legal system thereafter in Judaea; this effectively turned the expatriate Jews of the Diaspora into a permanently exiled people, deprived of their homeland. Restrictions (taxation, discrimination, social exclusions) further alienated and marginalized remaining Jews in the Negev and Galilee and favored the settlement of culturally pagan Syro-Phoenicians and others. It was at this time that Judaea became normatively known as Syria Palestina.

After this failed Jewish uprising, the majority of Jews in Israel were sold as slaves, killed or forced to seek refuge outside Palestine. In addition, Hadrian encouraged non-Jews to settle the land. Although some Jews maintained their presence in Syria-Palestina, they became a disposed and dispersed people. Memory of the Jewish exile was normative in medieval Jewish discourse, and also made its way into Christian and Islamic thought and discourse." Wikipedia online, "Jewish Diaspora"

In Mark 13 His first answer could go to verse 7, or verse 9, but also to verse 13.

5: "And Jesus began to say to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 6: "Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He!' and will mislead many. 7: "When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; those things must take place; but that is not yet the end."

Jesus' mentioning "the end" suggests that His teachings involve the upcoming future as well as the long term future. Again, I'll discuss that in a moment.

Let's continue with the remainder of the passage.

8: "For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. 9: "But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them.

10: "The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11: "When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. ⁹12: "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. 13: "You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."

So does this account apply to the upcoming Roman invasion, to a future "end time" period or both? And, what is the nature of this "great tribulation?" Who and what is involved?

At this juncture, I am going to suggest that Biblical prophecies often have more than one fulfillment. First, comes a prophecy, then a fulfillment (or a "pre-fulfillment" so to speak). Afterwards often years or centuries later, we see another more intense fulfillment and so on until the end of the age. I can't take the time here to illustrate how frequent this is in scripture, but we will look at one or two illustrations here. For example, John, who likely wrote in the 90's does not include any of these types of prophecies as, in my opinion, he concluded they had been

⁹ Reminiscent of Acts 7, the testimony and stoning of Stephen.

fulfilled at the time of the Roman invasion and destruction of the temple in 69-70 A.D. There is no question that Jesus words in Matthew 24:2, Mark 13:2 and Luke 21:6 were fulfilled at that time.

Then, we have the presentation of "The Abomination of Desolation" in both Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14.¹⁰ This is a reflection of Daniel 11:31 and 12:11. This referred to the events of 145 B.C. and will be discussed later. But the point is that though fulfilled then, Jesus speaks of it as a future event as well. We will see more of this in a moment in the key texts themselves.

Now, again, Jesus answered more than one question for His disciples. First was His comment about the temple. Second were His comments about their question regarding the end of the age.

But before we continue, we need to look at another point about Jesus style of teaching here. He employs a cyclical style meaning he describes an event then describes the same event again and again using new information. This style is reminiscent of the very common practice of the writers of scripture called "parallelism" prolific in the Book of Proverbs for example. So, in Matthew 24:9-14 he says,

9: "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10: "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11: "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12: "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13: "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. 14: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."

Then He continues in verse 15 with "therefore." Now He goes back to add in more information about the same matter He just taught.

15: "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16: then those who are in Judea must flee to the

¹⁰ This will be discussed shortly.

mountains. 17: "Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18: "Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19: "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20: "But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

He continues with more about the same period again from Matthew 24.

21: "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22: "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23: "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. 24: "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25: "Behold, I have told you in advance."

And so on. The events are concurrent. Tribulation, the "Abomination of Desolation" and the "great tribulation" are concurrent or at least sequential events.

Before we deal with the controversial "Abomination of Desolation" matter, we can see from the text that Jesus describes a terrible time, the nature of which is what? Several commentators have postulated that this can still be a description of the Roman invasion and destruction in 70 A.D. I can't disagree. It was a devastating period of time where tens of thousands of people were killed and the temple destroyed...forever. The nation of Israel never really recovered from this as we saw. But, what is involved who are the victims here? Luke 21:23-24 notes,

23: "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 24: and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

Again, does this account apply to the upcoming Roman invasion, to a future "end time" period or both?

Let's look again at the odd teaching in Matthew 24:23-27,

23: "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. 24: "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25: "Behold, I have told you in advance. 26: "So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them."

This could certainly apply to the near future we have discussed prior to the Roman invasion. In fact Jesus addresses them with the third person pronoun, "you." But then,

27: "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. "

Well, this isn't concurrent with the upcoming Roman invasion. Or could it be if indeed the previous account describes both the near future and the time near the end of the age? Perhaps periods of human history in between as well. From our point of view, we can see that these types of events have happened and still are occurring. For example, when we read verses 7-8 of Matthew 24, we have had these many times in our history to date, particularly in the Mid-East and Israel:

7: "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8: "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs."

Mark 13:28-31, note the statement in verse 30.

28: "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29: "Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. 30: "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 31: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

This passage corresponds with the previous verses, 24-27. We can see the correspondence as Jesus uses the fig tree an illustration as to when the end is drawing near.

Focusing on the "tribulation" passages specifically, let's see if we can determine what is going on and who is involved.

First, Matthew 24:9, "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name."

What is going on in this "tribulation" is that the disciples ("you") are being "delivered" by others to persecution and death. They are hated by all nations because of Jesus' name. In other words, those who are His and believers in Him will be delivered to this. Now, are we just talking about the disciples here or more? We will find out in a moment.

Next, Matthew 24:21-22, 21: "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22: "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short."

The previous context speaks of the Abomination of Desolation as a sign of impending disaster. Then, unprecedented persecution. Of who by whom? Well, people are being slaughtered, especially the "elect." By whom? Well, soon it will be the Romans, but it looks like Jesus also transcends that time into the future as He said in verses 13-14, 13: "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. 14: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."

And in verses 29-31, 29: "But immediately after the tribulation of those days **THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL** from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30: "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the **SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY** with power and great glory. 31: And He will send forth His angels with **A GREAT TRUMPET** and **THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER** His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other."

So the Roman invasion becomes a reality but is also a portrait of events leading to the end when Jesus returns in power and glory.

Mark 13:9-13 says the same thing a little differently, but makes it clear that believers will not pass through unscathed.

9: "But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. 10: "The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11: "When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit. 12: "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. 13: "You will be hated by all because of My name, but the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."

One can see both the events of the first century and transcendence into the future as well. So I propose a fulfillment of prophecy in many phases over time. Let's continue with this subject of "tribulation" and what and who is involved.

Verses 14-27 of mark 13 essentially repeat Matthew 24:29-31. Then in Luke 21:12-18, we have a little more information but again the picture is pretty clear.

12: "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. 13: "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. 14: "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; 15: for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. 16: "But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, 17: and you will be hated by all because of My name. 18: "Yet not a hair of your head will perish."

Verses 13-15 remind me of Stephen's testimony in Acts 7, as does Mark 13:11, "When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.'

Yet, Jesus goes on to describe the upcoming end and His return.

So, where is Christ's return mentioned before the tribulation, or great tribulation to take away His church? For half a century I have offered \$10,000.00 to anyone who can find a verse or passage even hinting at this scenario without distorting, manipulating or misinterpreting the scripture as is done in Revelation 4:1-2. So, again, where in the texts do we see Jesus returning for His people prior to these events? We don't. In fact, in two places in these Gospels (Matthew 24:29-31 and Mark 13:24-27) we have a clear statement of the timing of His return in relation to these events.

Now, to continue in Luke 21:20-24, we have, 20: "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. 21: "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; 22: because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. 23: "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 24: and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

This is dramatically illustrated in the Book of Revelation. This period is prophesied in Daniel 9:27 and 12:7 as well as alluded to in Isaiah 5:5, 63:18; Lamentations 1:15 that tell of different "trampling's" and "abominations" by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Greeks. Then comes the Romans and later another even more powerful force to come and do the same, such as the forces of Islam - whose Mosque of Omar (Dome of the Rock) has sat on the temple site for over 1,400 years, without much comment by all the commentators on this subject.

In verse 24, "...for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 24: and they will fall by the edge of the sword..." seems clear to me. The "times of the Gentiles" is the earthly rule by godless men. This describes the Roman invasion to a tee. Paul notes in Romans 11:25, "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;..."

But then this portrait in all three Gospels is followed by:

25: "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26: men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27: "Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. 28: "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Again, the events up to verse 25 are concurrent with what would come upon Jerusalem and the disciples. But verses 25 and following are not. So we look again at a teaching that includes both a present and upcoming reality and a future one just prior to His return.¹¹

The real lesson for the disciples and all of us is found in Luke 21:29-36,

29: "Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; 30: as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31: "So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. 32: "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. 33: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

34: "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; 35: for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. 36: "But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Now, in Mark 13:30, Matthew 23:36 and 24:34 and Luke 21:32 we read, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place."

EXCURSUS - "THIS GENERATION"

"This generation" throws a lot of people into a tizzy. But the explanation is simple and very Jewish. It relates to the solidarity of the family and its lineage. That is

¹¹ See again the comment on this on page 9.

the connection that most far and near-east have with both their ancestors and their descendants. We do not have a concept like this in the western world. This will take a moment and then we will make the point about Jesus' comment.

Okay, this involves the lineage of a person that is critical to the identity and purpose of the family. For example, if a person was descended from Judah, this gives them an identity. We see this in the genealogies in the Bible. They are extensive. For example, the validity of Jesus right to the throne of David comes from His linear connection to David.

A clear picture is also seen in Hebrews 7:4-10 that speaks of Melchizedek,

4: Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils. 5: And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham. 6: But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. 7: But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. 8: In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. 9: And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, 10: for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him."

Now for those who do not see the point, here it is. Levi, born several generations after Abraham (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi) is credited with paying tithes to Melchizedek even though he wouldn't be born for over a hundred years.

In Genesis chapters 5, 10 and 11 you have a series of "begats" in the KJV or the phrase in the NASB translated "became the father of". In Numbers, chapter 26 you have a series of statements describing "the sons of" and so on. This is to describe the lineage, identity and birthright of each of the families. This went on for thousands of years and is still an important matter to most far and near-east peoples.

In addition, there are 107 verses in the Bible that speak of the "generations of" someone. For example, Exodus 31:16 we read, 'So the sons of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to celebrate the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.'

The word "generations" in the Hebrew is "toledah" meaning "birth history, descent or family. It is also translated as "genealogies in I Chronicles 26:31,

"As for the Hebronites, Jerijah the chief (these Hebronites were investigated according to their genealogies and fathers' households, in the fortieth year of David's reign, and men of outstanding capability were found among them at Jazer of Gilead)"

This understanding is also carried into the New Testament in passages like Luke 1:48 where Mary says, "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed."

The N. T. word for "generation" is "genea" from the root "genos" meaning to be born. We get our English word "gene" from this root. When Jesus used the term "generation" in His statement, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" the word in the Greek is also "genea." In the Jewish grasp of this word, as we have seen, he is talking about both the present age and the descendants of those He is speaking to as well.

Thus, the transcending of His teaching is more readily understood. There is no mention of His disciples and other listeners to His teachings (all Jews) saying, "Huh?" And then trying to analyze the timing and content of the last days or the end time. No, they got the message.

END OF EXCURSUS

SOME PROBLEMS WITH THE PRETRIBULATION RAPTURE THEORY

This is why I cannot walk "arm and arm" with any particular or popular viewpoint on this subject or these passages. Here are a few reasons:

1. The texts in question are: A. Misunderstood and misinterpreted. B. Deliberately manipulated to support a particular viewpoint. C. Misleading and dangerous. D. They mix two concepts together that are clearly separate events: 1. The tribulation (and great tribulation) and, 2: The Day of the Lord (we will look at in a moment.)

2. The entire culture and literary style of the ancient Jewish authors is ignored in favor of a modern western approach to the literature. Mostly a false presupposition and premise.
3. There are too many false predictions regarding these events all of which have proven to be wrong. The events themselves, the attempt to set times and dates even though Jesus said quite clearly, "Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Mark 13:32, "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." The arrogance of these modern "prophets" is beyond description.
4. The "who" involved from among the Jews, Christians and Gentiles in all the end-time events is a chaotic mess among these "scholars."
5. Then there have been the pointing to many individuals in modern history as the "Antichrist" such as Hitler, Mussolini, the Pope, Henry Kissinger, Nixon, JFK, Juan Carlos of Spain and more. Of course, there is no such term describing an "Antichrist" in the Bible. The word is used in I John, but in a different context and meaning.
6. What the "Abomination of Desolation" consists of in the end times according to these teachers has been found to be in error every time.

The list goes on, but the evidence is that all of these teachers are in error in teaching these things. What is more, those that insist on a "pre-tribulation rapture" deceive their hearers in that; 1. They convince their hearers that God would never allow His people to be persecuted or undergo persecution. This is a flat out lie as we look at the disciples themselves not to mention God's own Son. 2. If those that insist on this do indeed suffer severe persecution or death to them or their loved ones, what becomes of their faith in God believing He would never allow this? 3. These teachers are not only confused about these matters but unwittingly or deliberately become those whom Jesus calls "false teachers and false prophets" whom the faithful must not believe. But some will be deceived as he points out in passages like Matthew 24:24.

Finally, when teaching these things the simple to understand passages where Jesus plainly says, "The after the tribulation of those days...." are skipped over every single time I have heard this doctrine taught. Not only that, but when challenged these proponents and believers will get hostile and nasty.

In one honest response to my challenge that this doctrine cannot be found in

scripture in any way, shape or form, he answered, "Yes, I know that, but I teach it anyway." He has a considerable following and even held a "second coming celebratory party for many of these followers as they awaited Jesus' return in 2012.

Though obviously in error, he still teaches the same doctrines today based on the same erroneous premises.

So I cannot in any way agree with any of the points of view of these teachers since they all have been proven to be in error over everything pertaining to these events.

THE TIMING OF ALL OF THIS

Now just a few words about this scenario and timing.

In II Thessalonians 1:6-9 and 2:1-12 we read,

1:6-9, 6: For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7: and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8: dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9: These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power..."

(Notice that the people of God are being afflicted. Not immune to that at all.)

Again, the timing.

2:1-12: "Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2: that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3: Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4: who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the

temple of God, displaying himself as being God."

8: "Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 9: that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10: and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11: For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, 12: in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness."

The point of this is to illustrate the timing and sequence of events. Note verses 1-2 of chapter 2.

1: Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2: that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come."

Returning to the massive heavenly signs Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:29, these signs of the end of the age are prophesied in many Old Testament passages such as: Isaiah 13:9-11, Isa 24; Joel 2:1-10, Joe 1 2:28-32, Joel 3:12-21; Amos 8; Zephaniah 1 Acts 2:14-21; Revelation 6:9-17. We will look at these verses later on when we get back to definitions.

THE "ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION"

In both Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14 we read, "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)..." The editorial comment is made ("let the reader understand" is presented as a clue to what this is.) Knowing that all the writers of the New Testament used the LXX as their quoted Bible, we find that word "abomination" in their writings to be "βδέλυγμα" (bd-el-ug-ma), the same word used in Daniel 9:27, 11:31 and 12: 11 that says, "From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days." This passage is referenced in Matthew 24:15.

Now Daniel's prophecy was specifically fulfilled 145 years prior to Jesus' birth in

the setting up of a statue of himself in the temple and profaning it by Antiochus IV, Epiphanes. In I Maccabees 1:54 it says,

" Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side;" (1 Maccabees 1:54)

The Jews went to war over this and soundly defeated the Greek forces. The celebration of Hanukkah commemorates this victory.

So how is it that Jesus sees it as a future event? Well, this was also fulfilled later by the Romans, who profaned the temple with their Roman eagle attached on it as well as what Josephus says in Wars of The Jews, Book vi. chap. 6 PP1, " And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator with the greatest acclamations of joy." This had followed a horrific destruction of the city and the temple along with the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in the aforementioned attack in 69-70 A.D. This attack was in retaliation for an open rebellion against Rome.

But, was that the entire fulfillment? Apparently not though many hold to that idea. Had Jesus stopped at verse 22 in Matthew 24, or at verse 23 in Mark 13 or at verse 24 in Luke 21, then we could all understand that it may have all been fulfilled then.

But, Jesus goes on.

In Matthew 24:29-31 He says,

29: "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30: "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. 31: "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other."

This hasn't happened yet as far as we can tell. Then, He goes on to say,

32: "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near;
33: so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. 34: "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place."

Well, in terms of the Roman invasion, the destruction of the temple and the massacre of thousands of lives, He was right on the money. But afterward, His statements are such that we haven't seen the complete fulfillment of them yet.

Continuing on in Matthew 24:15-25,

15: "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16: then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17: "Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18: "Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19: "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20: "But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. 21: "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22: "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23: "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. 24: "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25: "Behold, I have told you in advance."

(Mark 13:14-23 is nearly identical as is Luke 21, especially verses 5-24)

So, one, the return of Christ will not take place until after all these events. And two, we have multiple fulfillments of the prophecy regarding the Abomination of Desolation that includes, according to Luke 21:20, an invasion of Jerusalem and massive destruction once again. Rarely mentioned by prophetic teachers is that on the temple site right now, stands the Mosque of Omar, (The Dome of the Rock) and it has been standing there since 690 A.D., over 1,400 years. Yet little notice of this "abomination" is given by these "scholars" of prophecy because it doesn't fit in

with their theology - which is completely in error. Wow. Perhaps we are seeing what they cannot see. As the Scripture teaches over and over again about the blindness of false prophets, "For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, the seers." (Isaiah 29:10)

A SECRET RAPTURE?

Finally, a note about I Thessalonians 5:1-9, discussed by Paul for the benefit of the church at Thessalonica who were getting the impression that the time of the end was near.

1: "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2: For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night."

This is not a "secret" rapture at all. Those who teach this nonsense deliberately leave out the following verses not to mention Jesus' own description of the world shaking properties of His appearing.

3: While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. 4: But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;

How can a "sudden destruction" be "secret?" Paul's point is identical to Jesus'.

5: "...for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6: so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7: For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 8: But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9: For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,..."

It ought to be clear that God's children will indeed escape the wrath of God, but not the wrath of men. These are two distinct events in the scripture.

Jesus said it this way, "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other." Matthew 24:30-31

Does "...all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see..." sound secret? How about, "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET...?"

And,

1Corinthians 15:52, "... in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."

1 Thessalonians 4:16, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first."

Please!

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Now, having hopefully defined the "great tribulation" Biblically we will now see another aspect of the coming of Christ that is mixed or confused with the great tribulation. It is called clearly and specifically, "The Day of the Lord" and is spoken of many times in scripture. First, we will see it as describing the coming of Christ Himself.

1 Corinthians 5:5, "I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3, 9-10, 1: "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2: For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 2: While they

are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape." 9: "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10: who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him."

Now, as an aside, does this sound like a "secret rapture" where the world will have no idea what has happened?

Now we have New Testament verses that corresponds Christ's coming with the "Day of the Lord" and what that includes.

First, I Thessalonians 1:6-10,

6: "For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7: and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8: dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9: These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10: when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--for our testimony to you was believed."

II Thessalonians 2:1-2,

1: "Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2: that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come."

II Peter 3:10-12, 10: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11: Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12: looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!"

Revelation 16:13-15,

13: "And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; 14: for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. 15: ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.")

Now, what is this "Day of the Lord" or "the great day of God, the Almighty" and of what does it consist? Let's look at some Old Testament passages.

Isaiah 13:6-13, 6: "Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. 7: Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man's heart will melt. 8: They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of them; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame. 9: Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. 10: For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light. 11: Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. 12: I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold And mankind than the gold of Ophir. 13: Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the LORD of hosts In the day of His burning anger."

Ezekiel 30:2-3, 2: "Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Wail, 'Alas for the day!' 3: "For the day is near, Even the day of the LORD is near; It will be a day of clouds, A time of doom for the nations."

Joel 1:15, "Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty."

Joel 2:1: "Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near,"

Joel 2:11: "The LORD utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?"

Joel 2:31: "The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes."

Joel 3:11-16, 11: "Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, And gather yourselves there. Bring down, O LORD, Your mighty ones. 12: Let the nations be aroused And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, For there I will sit to judge All the surrounding nations. 13: Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. 14: Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. 15: The sun and moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness. 16: The LORD roars from Zion And utters His voice from Jerusalem, And the heavens and the earth tremble. But the LORD is a refuge for His people And a stronghold to the sons of Israel."

Amos 5:18-20, 18: "Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light; 19: As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall And a snake bites him. 20: Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it? "

Obadiah 1:15, "For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head."

Zephaniah 1:14, 18, 2:2-3, 1:4, "Near is the great day of the LORD Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly." 1:18, "Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD'S wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth."

2:2-3, 2: "Before the decree takes effect-- The day passes like the chaff-- Before the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you, Before the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you. 3: Seek the LORD, All you humble of the earth Who have carried out His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be

hidden In the day of the LORD'S anger."

Malachi 4:1-6,

1: "For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the LORD of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." 2: "But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. 3: "You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the LORD of hosts. 4: "Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. 5: "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6: "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

Acts 2:14-21, 14: But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. 15: "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; 16: but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 17: 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; 18: EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. 19: 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. 20: 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. 21: 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.'

Okay,

1. Do you see any differences in the description of "the great tribulation" and that

of "the day of the Lord?" If so, what are they?

2. In Peter's speech at Pentecost, did you notice in verses 19-20 that Peter quotes Joel but that the event described is also the same as that which is described at Christ's coming in Matthew 24:29-31, Mark 13:24-27 and Luke 21:25-27?

3. In I Thessalonians 4:16-17 we read, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17: Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord." Compare this with:

Matthew 24:31 "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other."

I Corinthians 15:51-55, 51: "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52: in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53: For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54: But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55: "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

And an interesting parallel,

Isaiah 27:12-13, 12: "In that day the LORD will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel. 13: It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem."

So, what appears to be the timing of events?

Now, two points: 1. Is it possible that all the inspired writers of the Bible just got it all wrong and only the modern day prophetic interpreters get it right? And,

2. Just where is the term "great tribulation" found in the Old Testament? Well, it's not.

The prophetic interpreters tell us that this is the same as the time of "Jacob's trouble" (or Jacob's distress) in the Book of Jeremiah, 30:7.

'Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress,...'

However, context is everything. Let's read the passage and ALL of verse 7. Jeremiah 30:1-7,

1: The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2: "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book. 3: 'For behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.' The LORD says, 'I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it.'"

4: Now these are the words which the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah: 5: "For thus says the LORD, 'I have heard a sound of terror, Of dread, and there is no peace. 6: 'Ask now, and see If a male can give birth. Why do I see every man With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? 7: 'Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, But he will be saved from it.

First, the time referenced is the Babylonian captivity. Second, this does not prophesy an end time event as neither the "day of the Lord" nor a "great tribulation" are spoken of.

Another passage of interest relating to the day of the lord is;

Isaiah 2:12-22,

"For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning Against everyone who is proud and lofty And against everyone who is lifted up, That he may be abased.

13: And it will be against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up, Against all the oaks of Bashan, 14: Against all the lofty mountains, Against all the

hills that are lifted up, 15: Against every high tower, Against every fortified wall, 16: Against all the ships of Tarshish And against all the beautiful craft. 17: The pride of man will be humbled And the loftiness of men will be abased; And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, 18: But the idols will completely vanish. 19: Men will go into caves of the rocks And into holes of the ground Before the terror of the LORD And the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble." (See Revelation 6:12-17 quoted in the footnote below and the context there.)¹² 20: In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats Their idols of silver and their idols of gold, Which they made for themselves to worship, 21: In order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs Before the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to make the earth tremble. 22: Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; For why should he be esteemed?"

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

We began with a question, "Will Christian's go through the tribulation? Many argue for the pre-trib rapture, but Noah lived through the flood and the Israelites were protected from the plagues cast upon Egypt..."

We should recognize that the question belies the fact that both the descriptions of the "great tribulation" and "The Day of the Lord" have been blended into simply "The great tribulation."

But if one notices, in the flood, the passengers on the Ark were saved from God's wrath, but subject to man's evils in the world. In the Egyptian account, the Israelites suffered in bondage and slavery but were spared from the plagues and the death during the Passover. During the Exodus the people passed through the Red Sea but were spared the destruction of Pharaoh's army. There are many examples of this pattern throughout the Bible.

¹² Revelation 6:12-17, 12: "I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13: and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14: The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15: Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16: and they *said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17: for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

God's people suffer, but during God's time of vengeance they are protected or removed from harm.

Thus I propose that the pattern is not disrupted at the end of the age in spite of the brilliant scholars and proclaimers who claim that it is. These are the same scholars who have been wrong 100% of the time in their predictions and who have never considered that the two events we have discussed are two separate events.

Why? Because of a faulty theological premise and position based in a theory grafted onto since the 19th century.

My presentation of the position I believe has accuracy, I have been excoriated, accused, preached at, complained about, and had people get up and storm out of the room when i object to the popular, dispensational, pre-trib rapture viewpoint.

Yet, none can answer my simple question...where in the Bible is this taught?

Bottom line, the "tribulation" or suffering of the saints of God has been going on since the crucifixion of God's Son and then into the early church and beyond even to our time. There have been occurrences of intensified persecution under the Jews, the Romans, The Gnostics, the Catholics, The Germans, The Communists - in the USSR, China and Africa, and the Muslims for 1400 years everywhere.

But when God decides to call an end to the age, and stops all of it with the return of Christ for His own, all His people will be removed and the remainder will suffer His great wrath during the period called "The Great and Terrible Day of The lord" by the prophets.

Here, the truth is plain. All those who are His own will never suffer His wrath.

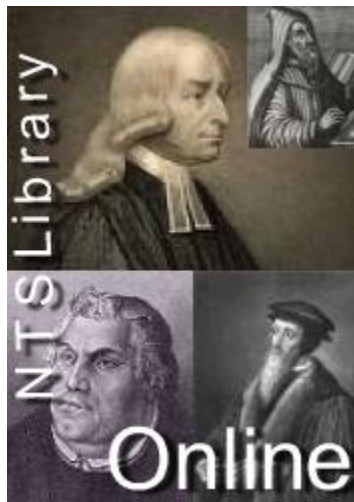
So, depending on how one defines the "great tribulation" or understands it, it is clear that the Lord will not impose His wrath upon those who are His. But this does not mean that man is prevented from doing so.

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The following articles represent many who argue against the popular view.

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The Rapture of the Church

by Michael Cordner

Introduction

In interpreting the prophetic teachings of the Scriptures, it is almost universally acknowledged by the Evangelical Church that at the close of this age, there will be a period of great tribulation, at which time the Church on earth will be raptured (or taken to heaven without suffering physical death) to be forever with the Lord, joining all those saints who have died in previous times. For almost 150 years now, the Church has debated just **when** the rapture will take place, before or after the Great Tribulation. In the present day Evangelical Church, the most commonly held belief is in a Pre-Tribulation rapture; however, very few Christians know anything of the history and background of this doctrine or of the foundation of the Post-Tribulation viewpoint.

It is the purpose of this paper to very briefly present something of this missing information and to compare and comment on the evidence. Thus, it is hoped to afford the reader an opportunity to consider the almost totally ignored "other side" of this issue. If the Pre-Tribulation view is correct, then the Great Tribulation is purely of academic interest to the Christian, and the whole issue is of little consequence. If, however, the Post-Tribulation view is correct, then the issue becomes of vital importance, as it means the Church has yet to enter the most extensive period of intense persecution and tribulation in its entire history. If the Church is going to face the onslaught of the Antichrist, and an all-out attempt to utterly destroy true Christianity, then we must be prepared! The Post-Tribulationist can afford to be wrong, but not the Pre-Tribulationist! His conscience should demand that he be very sure of his view.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Pre-Tribulationism was unknown to the early Church; in fact, no one has been able to show that this particular doctrine was held by any of the church Fathers or Biblical scholars before the early nineteenth century. It apparently originated at this time

during a great revival of interest in Biblical prophecy. In 1830, a young Scottish woman named Margaret McDonald claimed to have received a "revelation" that Christians would be raptured before the Great Tribulation. Shortly after this, the idea spread to London where it aroused much interest. In further "revelations" during this period, dates for the rapture were variously fixed between 1835 and 1847!

Pre-Tribulationism was first taught publicly at a series of prophetic meetings in Powerscourt House, Ireland. Here Plymouth Brethren organizer John Darby took hold of the idea and made it an essential element of his teachings, giving rise to what is now known as Darbyism, or Dispensationalism. (For a full account see "The Unbelievable Pre-Trib Origin" by Dave MacPherson.) However, not all of the Brethren accepted this teaching. It was rejected and opposed by such well known members as George Mueller and Samuel P. Tregelles (both of whom broke with the Brethren movement because of it). Among other men who opposed this "novel two-phased-second coming" teaching as being un-Scriptural was the Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon. In spite of the opposition of such men, this doctrine crossed denominational lines to spread throughout England. The greatest growth of this teaching, however, has been in the twentieth century mainly through the Modern Dispensational teachings of the Scofield Reference Bible.

The reader may be interested to know where some of the well known and influential church leaders and theologians have stood on this issue. As previously stated, in examining the teachings and writings from the first 1900 years of Christianity, we can find no Pre-Tribulation doctrine, or interpretation of the Scriptures! Consider for a moment some of the people of whom we are speaking: Polycarp, Barnabas, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Charles and John Wesley, Matthew Henry, William Tyndale, John Wycliffe, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, John Knox, and Charles Finney.

In more recent and present times, a few of the men who have rejected Pre-Tribulationism include: George Mueller, Samuel P. Tregelles, Charles Spurgeon, William Booth, G. Campbell Morgan, W.E. Blackstone (who changed from a leading Pre-Tribulation proponent), H.H. Halley, A.B. Simpson, C.T. Studd, Leon Morris, Oswald J. Smith, Francis Schaeffer, Peter Marshall, J.B. Phillips, A.W. Pink, Paul S. Rees. and C.S. Lovett.

Some of the well known and influential Pre-Tribulationists include: J.N. Darby, E.S. English, H.A. Ironside, J.D. Pentecost, J.R. Rice, C.I. Scofield, H.C. Thiessen. R.A. Torrey, and J.F. Walvoord.

While such a list does not, of course, prove or disprove any doctrine, it does illustrate that Pre-Tribulationism is a new doctrine, unknown by the church until the last century, and that this doctrine has not had universal acceptance.

THE TEACHINGS OF SCRIPTURE

The most reliable way to learn of the prophetic truths concerning the end of this age is to study the "straight" teachings of the Bible--completely unrationalized by the interpretations, reference notes, and additions of men. Such a study will reveal the following points:

(1) Christians will go through the Great Tribulation:

In the Olivet Discourse, given in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, Jesus presents to us a very simple, clear, and detailed account of what is going to happen in the final times. He tells the believers (the 'elect') who will be living in those times that they will go through the Tribulation, and proceeds to give them instructions for it (e.g. Matthew 24:9-26). We are told, in fact, that for the sake of the 'elect', the days of the Tribulation will be cut short (e.g., Matthew 24:22). Pre-Tribulationists do great violence to the meaning of the word 'elect' in this passage of Scripture to make it fit their doctrine. They claim that the 'elect' here refers to a Jewish remnant that will be saved during the Tribulation--a meaning that is not given (or claimed for) any of the other usages of the word in the New Testament, where in reference to the church, it is accepted without question as meaning the members of the body of Christ without distinction. This special interpretation of 'elect' is clearly against the Biblical teaching of such passages as Romans 10:12;

"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek (i.e., Gentile): for the same lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. "

and Galatians 3:18;

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. "

See also Romans 2:28, 29, and Colossians 3:11.

In Revelation, we also read of the saints who go through the Great Tribulation:

"And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or on their hands." Rev. 20:4 "And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Rev. 17:6

See also Rev. 7:9-14 .(2) Jesus describes only one 'rapture' and tells us when it will be.

In the Olivet Discourse, only one rapture is described and Jesus tells us clearly when this will take place:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds" (or "the uttermost parts of the earth"). Matt. 24:29-31, also Mark 13:24-27.

This is very clearly the one and only rapture described during the entire discourse. A Pre-Tribulation rapture is notably absent. In reading through the three Gospel accounts of the Olivet Discourse, **with all its explanation and detail** (Matt. 24:17-20, 23, 24, for example), **it is surely unbelievable that Jesus would omit any reference whatsoever to such a momentous event as the removal of His entire Church from the face of the earth!** Furthermore, Jesus made a clear statement during His discourse that precludes the possibility that He omitted any item of major importance. In Mark 13:23, He says;

*"But take ye heed: behold I have foretold you **all things**;" (or as the New American Standard Bible translates it: "...I have told you **everything** in advance.").*

Do we not imply then that our Lord was lying if we insist on an extra rapture of which He made absolutely no mention?

(3) Paul also tells us when the rapture will take place.

The teachings of the apostle Paul are in perfect accord with those of Jesus concerning the timing of the rapture. In I Corinthians 15:52, we read that we will be translated

"in the twinkling of an eye" and that this will take place "at the last trump" .

The book of Revelation tells us there will be seven trumpets sounded, and it can be clearly seen that the seventh (or **last**) is **after** the Tribulation. (Note the "great sound of a trumpet" announcing the Post Tribulation rapture of Matt. 24:31, and also referred to in describing the rapture in I Thessalonians 4:16-18).

In II Thes. 2:1-4, Paul talks again about the rapture ("our gathering together unto Him") and says:

"Let no man deceive you by any means: that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition ." II Thes. 1:3(4) Summary of passages that specifically give the timing of the rapture.

The translation of the living saints (the rapture) is mentioned categorically only six times in the New Testament. The timing of the rapture is given in four of these passages, namely:

Matthew 24:29-31 - ("immediately **after** the Tribulation")

Mark 13:24-27 - ("**after** that Tribulation")

I Corinthians 15:51-52 - ("at the **last** trump")

II Thessalonians 2:1-3 - ("shall not come **until** the man of sin is revealed")

The other two passages do not describe any timing: I Thessalonians 4:14-17 and John 14:1-4.

(5) Raptured saints will include martyrs from the Tribulation.

The Bible tells us that there will be two resurrections; the first resurrection is of the just unto life, and the second resurrection is of the unjust unto damnation (John 5:28, 29; Luke 14:14; Acts 25:14). We learn from I Cor. 15:51, 52, and I Thessalonians 4:16, 17 that the first resurrection and the rapture occur together when the dead in Christ shall be raised, given incorruptible bodies and translated into the clouds to meet the Lord, along with those who are alive in Christ. Consider now Revelation 20:4-6, where the apostle John tells us that those who are raised at the first resurrection will

reign with Christ for 1000 years, and they will **include** those saints beheaded during the Tribulation (for not worshiping the beast, or receiving his mark). Note this is clearly said to be the **first** resurrection (so there can be no preceding ones) and it **includes** those who were martyred during the Tribulation.

Very clearly then, if the first resurrection and the rapture occur simultaneously, and includes martyrs from the Tribulation, then the rapture/first resurrection must take place **after** the Great Tribulation! (George Mueller would ask in regards to the rapture, "Can there be any resurrection before the first one; and can there be another trump after this last one?" If not, then obviously, the rapture has been pinpointed in time.)

The Pre-Tribulation position on this matter is very unconvincing, putting one resurrection of the just before the Tribulation (to allow for a Pre-Tribulation rapture), then another one after the Tribulation (to account for Matt. 24:29-31 and Rev. 20:4, 5), and then calling them **both** the "first resurrection"! (To comply with Rev. 20:5b) This explanation can be seen in the Scofield Reference Bible notes on I Cor. 15:52, and completely ignores the fact that when the Scriptures refer to the "first resurrection", it always uses the singular form, not the plural.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRE-TRIBULATION VIEW

The Bible unmistakably states there will be a rapture after the Tribulation. This fact is not disputed. A serious problem arises, however, when one looks for any passage of Scripture that describes a rapture and unmistakably places it **before** the Tribulation. There are none to be found. This fact is also beyond dispute. The honest inquirer will quickly find that the Pre-Tribulation case depends entirely on **inference**. All the Scriptural passages used by Pre-Tribulationists to "prove" their case have to be interpreted to **infer** a Pre-Tribulation rapture--none of them positively describe such a rapture. (John Walvoord said on p. 148 of the first printing of "The Rapture Question" that Pre-Tribulationism is **not** "an explicit teaching of Scripture", a devastating admission for a leading Pre-Tribulation teacher! Later editions delete this admission!)

Let us briefly examine some of the "proof texts" and main points that form the foundation of the Pre-Tribulation case.

(1) In Revelation 3:10, Jesus says that:

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

There is nothing in the language of this passage that demands we believe that we will be kept from the hour of trial by bodily removal, or a rapture. This is indicated by the fact that the same Greek words for "keep thee from" are used by Jesus in John 17:15 when praying for His disciples, that God would "keep them from" evil. The Lord was not praying that we be removed from the world (in fact, He prayed specifically that we **not** be removed), but that we be kept from the power of evil (while living in its presence). See also Galatians 1:4. The same idea is expressed in the Lord's Prayer when we pray "deliver us from evil" in Matt. 6:13. (The Greek is a little different here, meaning literally "rescue us from evil".) In praying this, we do not ask to be physically removed from evil (as world dwellers we can't be), but we ask for power to live **through** it! The Bible abounds in proof that we can trust our wonderful God for **deliverance through any** tribulation. (Read Psalm 91, also Isaiah 43:2, Daniel 3:3-29, and 6:16-23)

(2) In Luke 21:36, we read:

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be counted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

Here we must ask to what does the phrase "all these things" apply. Let us examine this verse in context. In verses 25-28, Jesus speaks of the signs immediately preceding His second coming in glory. Men at this time will be filled with fear and distress over "the things which are coming on the earth" (verse 26). The context here makes it clear that this fear is caused by the expectation of God's divine judgement, "for the powers of heaven shall be shaken". The second coming of Christ, when He returns in glory, will be accompanied by judgment and punishment and restitution (I Thessalonians 1:7-10; Acts 3:20, 21). This, however, is not to be feared by the Church, for to us He has given the encouragement, "Now when these things begin to take place, look up and lift your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh" (verse 28). "The things to come" then clearly describe the events associated with the return of our Lord in glory, so feared by men, and **not** to the Tribulation.(3) In I Thessalonians, we read:

"... even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1:10) "For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:9)

Again, these passages say nothing about a rapture, only that the Church will not be subject to God's wrath. The wrath of God does **not** refer to the Tribulation (which is the sufferings resulting from the wrath of the ungodly against each other and against the true Church), but refers to the final judgment of God upon the wicked. In Romans 2:5, we read of:

"... the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

In Matthew 24:29-30, we read of the great heavenly signs that take place just **after** the Tribulation that precede the glorious second coming of Christ. In Revelation 6:13-17, we read again of these signs and the terrible fear of the ungodly who want to hide --

"... from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

The unconverted will not be ready for this day of wrath and judgment. Only those who have obtained "salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ".

(4) Another commonly quoted "proof" text considered to be referring to a secret Pre-Tribulation rapture is Matt. 24:40-41:

"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left."

This passage says nothing about a rapture, or who will be taken. The Bible, however, does not leave us in darkness as to what is going on here, Jesus gives us an **exact** meaning. In Matt.13:24-30, He gave the parable of the wheat and the tares (or weeds), and in verses 36-42, He gave the interpretation.

In this parable, starting with verse 24, we read that the Kingdom of God is likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field; and when he slept, an enemy came and planted tares (or weeds) among the good seed (or wheat), so that both weeds and wheat sprang up together. The servants of the householder asked him where the tares had come

from, and he replied that an enemy had done this. The servants then asked if they should not gather up the tares, but the householder said to leave them, lest the wheat be rooted up with them. They were both to be left until the harvest time when the reapers would first gather the tares, to be tied into bundles for burning, and then the wheat would be gathered into the barn.

In His interpretation of this parable, starting in verse 37, Jesus says:

"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; and the reapers are the angels." (verses 37-39)

We see that Christians and non-Christians will live alongside one another in the present age until the end of the world, when the tares are gathered and burned.

"As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be at the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels 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." (verses 40-42)

Let us go back to verse 30 in the parable for a moment, and see how it re-reads now that we have the key.

*"Let both (the saved and the unsaved) grow together until the harvest (at the end of this world) and in the time of harvest I (Jesus) will say to the reapers (the angels), Gather ye together **first** the tares (the children of the wicked one, or the unsaved) and bind them in bundles to burn them (in the furnace of fire where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth): but gather the wheat (the children of the kingdom or the saved) into my barn."*

Further on, in verse 49, we read, by way of summary:

*"So shall it be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth and **take the wicked from among the righteous**." (NAS) Jesus makes it very plain--**first** the unsaved will be gathered, **then** the saved!*

The Pre-Tribulation position on this point simply refutes the words of Jesus. In the Scofield Reference Bible notes on verse 24, we read: "The parable of the wheat and

tares is not a description of the world, but of that which professes to be the kingdom"; and then in the notes on verse 30, "At the end of this age the tares are set apart for burning, but first the wheat is gathered into the barn." However, Jesus says, "The field **is** the world" (verse 38) and "**So** shall it be in the end of the world" (verse 40); also, "Gather ye together **first** the tares" (verse 30).(5) Pre-Tribulationists also use the Old Testament to "prove" their case by the presentation of certain analogies. Special significance is placed on the translation of Enoch before the judgment of the Flood and the deliverance of Lot before the destruction of Sodom. Both are said to be "types of the Church" raptured to heaven without dying before the Tribulation. Noah who remained through the flood is said to be a "type of Israel" in the Tribulation. Why Noah would not make just as good a "type of the Church" being preserved through the Tribulation is not explained. Why could we not apply the "type of the Church" label to the Israelites that were wonderfully preserved through the plagues of Egypt, or to the three Hebrews who were preserved through Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace?

(6) Concerning the imminency of His return, Pre-Tribulationists believe the Bible teaches that the Lord could come at any moment, and could have done so at any point in Church history. This, in itself, is considered sufficient reason by many for holding to the Pre-Tribulation view. A great deal can be said on this point--we will just look at it briefly.

The rapture was not considered to be imminent in the sense of "any moment" by the apostles. Paul expected martyrdom, not rapture (II Timothy 4:6-8). He also said specifically that the rapture was **not** imminent (II Thessalonians 2:1-2). Peter knew that he would grow old and die (Jesus told him in John 21:18-19). All the apostles knew that the gospel must **first** be preached to every nation--to the uttermost parts of the earth. (Nearly 2000 years later, this still hasn't been done!)

Jesus Himself did not teach He was coming back at any moment. The parables of the Virgins and of the Talents in Matthew 25 show how we are to use the intervening time before the return of Christ. Verse 5 tells us the "bridegroom tarried". In verse 19, we read, "**After a long time**, the lord of those servants cometh."

Jesus also gave us signs and conditions that He said must come to pass before the Tribulation. The conditions of Matthew 24:15-21; Mark 13:10, 14-19, most certainly remain to be fulfilled. Paul likewise taught that the apostasy and the Antichrist **must** take place **before** the rapture (II Thessalonians 2:1-3). Jesus tells us that **when** we see

all these things come to pass, that the end is near. (Matthew 24:32-33; Mark 13:28-30; Luke 21:28, 31)

(7) Another claim made by Pre-Tribulationists is that the thought of an imminent, any moment rapture is an incentive for holy living; take away the Pre-Tribulation rapture, and you have removed this incentive, and Christians would find great difficulty in leading holy lives. The late Dr. M.R. DeHaan, popular radio Bible teacher for many years, made the following comment on radio, and also in his booklet "This Same Jesus" (Nov. 1962): "To place anything, any event, before our Lord's return is a terrible sin which will be severely judged. To state that anything must still happen before our Lord could come back is to destroy the imminency and power of the second coming; it takes away the incentive for holiness, for service, and for patience..."

However, piety that is motivated by anything other than supreme love of God and a singleness of purpose to serve and please Him, can never be called holiness. This right motivating purpose in life will bring forth the same blessed, victorious holy living, whether we expect His return next week, next month, or next century. Piety stemming from a fear of being caught "off base" when He returns, is not holiness, but hypocrisy.

(8) Some leading Pre-Tribulationists (notably Hal Lindsey and J.F. Walvoord) consider a period of time between the rapture and the second coming to be essential in order to make provision for the re-population of the earth with mortals for the Millennium. Hal Lindsey, in his popular book "The Late Great Planet Earth" (2 million copies in 2 years), considers this the strongest case for the Pre-Tribulation position! On page 143 he writes, "Here is the chief reason why we believe the rapture occurs before the Tribulation...If the rapture took place at the same time as the second coming, there would be no mortals left who would be believers; therefore, there would be no one left to go into the Kingdom and repopulate the earth." In answer to this, consider (i) At the revelation of Christ, a remnant of Jews will repent and be saved. These mortal Jews will apparently be around to populate the millennium (Zechariah 12-14), as indicated by Lindsey himself on page 54. (ii) At the revelation of Christ, there will be an entire generation of children who have not reached the age of accountability. They will certainly not be cast into hell, and they will not be raptured--that is clearly and specifically for the saints. They must enter the millennium as mortals.

(9) It has been claimed by Pre-Tribulationists that it is a terrible reflection on God's character to suggest He would allow His precious Church to suffer through the Tribulation. If so, then God is already indicted for allowing countless thousands of His precious saints to suffer the most agonizing deaths for His Name in the past, and even in the present day. God had no rapture for them! Perhaps the excuse is offered that they were not in the "Great Tribulation". Did this lessen their suffering any? Suffering can be no more intense than to cause death. The personal sufferings in the Great Tribulation cannot be any more intense than in the past (although the extent of such suffering certainly will be). After all, is there more intense suffering yet than to be burned alive, sawn into pieces, torn apart by wild animals, or any of the other diabolical forms of death suffered by martyred Christians?

The church of the Western World enjoys unprecedented ease and prosperity, with little idea what persecution really means, in spite of its great prevalence in other parts of the world. It has been estimated that more Christians have so far been martyred in the twentieth century than in all of the preceding years of the Christian era. How can we believe that we shall all be raptured out of harms way, removed by God to escape a time of testing (even unto death) that He has allowed countless others to suffer, even up to and including this very day? Are we so much better than they? It is surely inconsistent to believe that God allows Christians to suffer persecution and martyrdom as individuals and in groups of individuals, but not if the group gets big enough to include the whole church. It is also inconsistent if our teaching allows there to be a day in glory when those martyred saints from bygone times, who have counted it an unspeakable privilege to suffer and die for the name of Jesus, will join in fellowship with a raptured church that has considered it an unquestioned right to escape such a fate!

There is a consistent teaching throughout the New Testament that prepares God's children for suffering, and tells us that it is blessed to suffer for His sake. Nowhere are Christians told they can expect to escape tribulation.

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad." Matt. 5:11-12 (See also Luke 6:22, 23)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It is believed by many sincere Christians that any deviation from the popular PreTribulation teaching is un-Scriptural, and liberal (that is, a turning away from the historical fundamental viewpoint). Such a belief, however, will simply not stand up when viewed in the light of Biblical and historical fact. Scripture clearly defines only one translation, or rapture of the saints, and unmistakably places it after the Great Tribulation. A Pre-Tribulation rapture is nowhere described in Scripture, and the whole doctrine must depend on inferences which close examination will not substantiate. Further, the short history of Pre-Tribulationism denies it the stature of an historical, fundamental doctrine. In this regard, E.F. Sanders of Wheaton College has written: "Search the pages of Church history and literature, and you will not find one mention of the Lord coming **before** the Tribulation until after 1800. **No one** has ever cited any literature, writings, or quotes to the contrary! The implications of this truth are serious. **If** the Pre-Tribulation doctrine were true, it would mean that it was hidden from the church for 19 centuries. Not one of the brilliant theologians or Bible teachers of the pre-1830 period were able to find a Pre-Tribulation rapture and coming of the Lord on the pages of Holy Scripture---an incredulous improbability to say the least!"

There are at least two reasons why this issue deserves serious consideration.

Firstly, Pre-Tribulationism could be unwittingly contributing to the growth of the worldly, apostate church. This doctrine, when taught alongside the now commonly preached gospel of cheap-grace and easy-believism gives an easy-come-easy-go concept of Christianity that makes it palatable to the self-seeking who are more than willing to "accept Jesus" if it isn't going to cost them anything. This doctrine could also be a major reason why Christians have involved themselves so little in the 'worldly' issues of politics and the deteriorating national and world situation. A doctrine that will remove us from the scene when the situation gets **really** bad takes away a lot of incentive to do something about it.

Secondly, a time of great spiritual confusion and devastation would result if a Pre-Tribulation believing Church finds itself entering the Great Tribulation. It does not take much imagination to picture the shock, the doubt, the falling away of faith and love, the bitterness and confusion that could result. Certainly, the effectiveness of personal witness and ministry would be drastically impaired, and His precious name would not be glorified the way it could or should be. We have had a prelude to this in recent times with accounts of the spiritual devastation that resulted when the unprepared, Pre-Tribulation believing Evangelical Church in Russia thought the end-

time had come when they were all but wiped out by the Bolsheviks after the 1917 Revolution. The glorious effect of intense persecution on a prepared, Post-Tribulation believing church in the same circumstances can be read in the Foreward to missionary H.A. Baker's book "Through Tribulation", as he recounts what happened to his church in China in 1948.

Finally, the rapture question should not be applied as a test of orthodoxy, neither should it be a question on which Christian fellowship depends. However, Pre-Tribulationists are hereby exhorted in love to prayerfully study and consider the Post-Tribulation case, that we may all be prepared, if that time should come to us, to bring Him great glory through persecution and suffering, and become more closely conformed to His wonderful image.

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." (Philippians 1:29) "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also, with exceeding joy." (I Peter 4:12-13) "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Romans 8:35-37)

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THE RAPTURE — WHEN?

by Anthony Buzzard

We all believe in the "rapture" — the event by which living Christians will be caught up into the air ("raptured") to meet Christ as He descends to the earth at His Coming (I Thess. 4:13-18). However, in the 1830s a brand new view of the Second Coming arose. It was suggested by some of the Brethren (Plymouth Brethren) that the Second Coming will happen in two distinct stages:

- 1) Christ will arrive to take away (rapture) the church for seven years.
- 2) Christ will arrive seven years later with the church to punish the world and set up the Kingdom of God on earth.

From the start this new view of the Second Coming caused sharp division. Over the past 150 years it has created a great deal of conflict. The chief exponents of the so-called "pre-tribulation rapture" are the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary. The teaching has spread into many American fundamentalist churches.

A number of scholars have written books to refute the pre-trib rapture which they were taught as children. Since the question has to do with God's timetable, it is important. We are urged to speak with one mind on these issues (1 Cor. 1:10).

When the pre-trib rapture was introduced into the Brethren movement in England in the last century, it must not be supposed that all the Brethren accepted the new views. The following extract from the writings of George Muller, the "apostle" of faith and founder of orphanages in England, is significant. Asked shortly before his death whether Christians are to expect our Lord's return at any moment, or whether certain events must be fulfilled before He comes [again](#), Muller replied as follows:

"I know that on this subject there is great diversity of judgment, and I do not wish to force on other persons the light I have myself. The subject, however, is not new to me; for having been a careful, diligent [student](#) of the Bible for fifty years, my mind has long been settled on this point, and I have not the shadow of a doubt about it. The Scriptures declare plainly that the Lord Jesus will not come until the Apostasy shall have taken place and the Man of Sin (the Antichrist) shall have been revealed, as seen in II Thess. 2:1-5. Many other portions of the word of God distinctly teach that certain events are to be fulfilled before the Return of the Lord Jesus Christ" (cited in *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, by Alexander Reese, Grand Rapids: International Publications, p. 27).

A leading London preacher, G. Campbell Morgan, the "Dwight Moody" of England, was asked the following question during a course of public lectures:

"After your long study and extensive expositions of the Bible, Dr. Morgan, do you find any [warrant](#) for the distinctions which many Bible teachers draw between the second coming of the Lord for his own (The Rapture) and the coming of the Lord with his own (The Revelation), with a time period of three and a half or seven years between these two events?"

"Emphatically not!" Dr. Morgan replied. "I know that view very well, for in earlier years of my ministry I taught it and incorporated it into one of my books entitled *God's Method with Man*. But further study so convinced me of the error of this teaching that I actually went to the expense of buying the plates of that book from my own publisher and destroying them. The idea of a separate and secret coming of Christ to remove the church prior to his coming in [power](#) and glory is a vagary of prophetic interpretation *without any biblical basis whatever*" (*Background to Dispensationalism*, by Clarence Bass, Baker Book House, p. 17, emphasis added).

No student of Scripture need be in any doubt about the order of events described by Paul:

- 1) The Apostasy (falling away from the faith) (II Thess. 2:1-3).
- 2) The Man of Sin (Antichrist) revealed (II Thess. 2:1-3).
- 3) Christ arrives to gather the church (II Thess. 2:1, 8).

Contradicting Paul, Dispensationalism and the pre-trib rapture theory since 1830 teaches:

- 1) Christ arrives secretly to gather church.
- 2) Man of Sin is revealed.
- 3) Christ arrives publicly with the church.

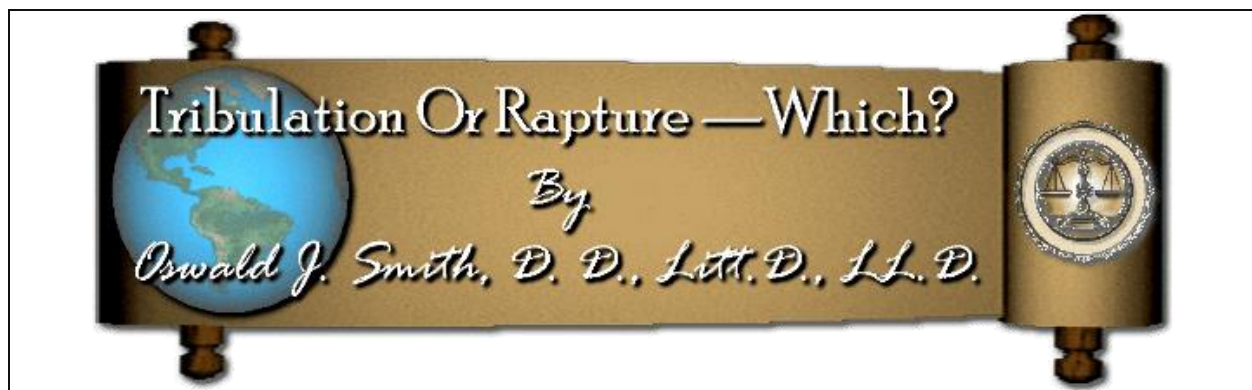
Paul specifically warned against teachers who promised that the Day of the Lord and our gathering together to Jesus would come before the Antichrist and the tribulation (see II Thess. 2:1-3). In the interests of a clear understanding of the Bible, the reader is urged to reread Matthew 24 and II Thessalonians 2:1-10:

First the Antichrist and the tribulation (Matt. 24:15ff.)

After the great tribulation, the arrival of Jesus to gather the saints (Matt. 24:31).

Note also: Christians will continue to undergo trouble until the public, spectacular arrival of Jesus to punish the world. Paul could hardly have written II Thessalonians 1:7 if he had believed

in a prior "coming." In that verse he states that Christians will be granted relief from suffering, "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not obey the Gospel." Until Christ comes in power to set up the Kingdom of God on earth, believers must endure the hardships which accompany life as a Christian. There is no relief from trouble seven years before the public arrival of Jesus.



Why did the Lord Jesus conceal the Secret Rapture in Matthew twenty-four? How are we to explain the silence of the Church for centuries concerning it? What about the passages that have been used to support it? Have we been lulling the Church into a false security? Are there any outstanding Christian leaders who believe that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation?

In my first book on Prophecy I asked the questions: "Will the Church pass through the Tribulation or be raptured out of it?" In answering I made this statement: "I have always held the view that the Rapture precedes the Revelation by some seven years, and that the Church, therefore, will not go through the Tribulation, but I do not want to be dogmatic about it and, if God should reveal the contrary to me, I will gladly accept it". Hence, you see, I did not approach the subject with my mind closed to new light and my heart already prejudiced. I was open to whatever God might reveal.

Now, after years of [study](#) and prayer, I am absolutely convinced that there will be no rapture *before* the Tribulation, but that the Church will undoubtedly be called upon to face the Antichrist, and that Christ will come at the [close](#) and not at the beginning of that awful period. I believed the other theory simply because I was taught it by W. E. Blackstone in his book "Jesus is Coming," the Scofield Reference Bible and Prophetic Conferences and Bible Schools; but when I began to search the Scriptures for myself I discovered that there is not a single verse in the Bible that upholds the pre-tribulation theory, but that the uniform teaching of the Word of God is of a post-tribulation Rapture: pre-millennial always. everywhere pre-millennial, but post-tribulation.

MY FIRST AWAKENING

My first awakening to this important truth came one day in 1925, when I was spending a few days in a cottage at Stoney Lake, Ontario. One of my neighbors, Frank Edmonds by name, simply made the suggestion to me. I opposed it at once. "Why," I exclaimed, "however could that be? What about the Scriptures? The teaching of a pre-tribulation Rapture is clear and indisputable." But he quietly affirmed that I was wrong and emphasized the truth concerning the Last Trump. Of course, I was not convinced. I almost ridiculed the very idea of such a possibility. And there the matter rested.

One day, in the early twenties, I began preaching on Prophecy. I had taken my people through Daniel without difficulty. Then came Mark 13, Luke 21, and Matthew 24 and 25. But, lo and behold, no sooner had I started on Matthew 24 than I got into trouble. I had announced that I would deal with Matthew 24 at the next service. Hundreds had gathered. I was in a maze, for I was perplexed. So I took a verse here and there through the chapter and thus satisfied the people for that hour at least. But now the next meeting was coming. What was I to say?

I need not point out that there is no pretribulation Rapture in Matthew 24. The Second Coming is unmistakably placed "immediately after the Tribulation" (verse 29), and I was forced to the conclusion that if the Rapture was to be "before" the Tribulation, the Lord Jesus Christ would certainly have given some hint of it at least. He was dealing with the End-Time of the Age. It is unthinkable that He would have spoken so minutely of the Tribulation without stating that the Church would escape. Instead, He purposely led His hearers to the belief that His followers would be in it. Hence, I was staggered, nor could I honestly defend my previous position.

So, when I again faced the people, I said sufficient to let them know that I questioned my former stand and saw evidence of a post-tribulation Rapture. For, as I read Matthew 24 and 25, I saw that many things, as prophesied by the Lord Jesus Christ, simply had to take place before Jesus could come, namely: "All these things" (verse 33), especially the prediction regarding the preaching of the Gospel. See Mark 13:10, and note the significance of the word "first". Thus, since God's future program could not be set aside, there could be no "any moment expectation" of Christ's Return. We are to watch, watch as prophecy after prophecy is fulfilled, ever looking forward to His Appearing; and, in the End-Time, to watch as never before, and to always be ready, for none can ever know how quickly the events predicted might come to pass and Christ return.

MY "ANY MOMENT" THEORY

Then followed the next step. There came into my hands a copy of a book by Dr. Henry W. Frost, then the Home Director of the China Inland Mission. It was entitled "Matthew 24 and the Revelation," a volume of over 300 pages. I fairly devoured it. Portions of it I read through twice. It was most conclusive in its arguments for a post-tribulation Rapture. About the same time I got hold of a book by James H. McConkey, called "The Book of Revelation," and another—perhaps the best of all—by Edmund Shackleton (England), entitled "Will the Church Escape the Great Tribulation?" Before I had read them through I was firmly convinced that there would be no Rapture before the Tribulation, and that I had done wrong in promising the Church an escape instead of preparing her for the terrible ordeal that must most surely be awaited. My "any moment" theory could not be sustained. In fact, the very first statement in the latter book, which was written about 1890, amazed me beyond measure and I was fairly staggered as I grasped its significance. Let me quote it verbatim:

All who held the pre-millennial Coming of Christ were, till about sixty years ago, of one mind on the subject. About that time a new view was promulgated that the Coming of Christ was not one

event, but that it was divided into stages, in fact, that Christ comes twice from heaven to earth, but the first time only as far as the air. This first descent, it is said, will be for the purpose of removing the Church from the world, and will occur before the Great Tribulation under Antichrist. This they call "The coming for His saints" or "Secret Rapture." The second part of the Coming is said to take place when Christ appears in glory and destroys the Antichrist. This they call "The coming with His saints."

Apart from the test of the Word, which is the only final one, there are certain reasons why this doctrine should be viewed with suspicion. It appears to be little more than sixty years old; and it seems highly improbable that, if scriptural it could have escaped the scrutiny of the many devoted Bible students whose writings have been preserved to us from the past. More especially in the writings of the early Christian fathers would we expect to find some notice of this doctrine, if it had been taught by the Apostles; but those who have their works declare that they betray no knowledge of a theory that the Church would escape the Tribulation under Antichrist, or that there would be any "coming" except that spoken of in Matthew 24, as occurring in manifest glory "after the Tribulation." This is all the more significant, because these writers bestowed much attention upon the subject of the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation. Augustine, referring to Daniel 7, wrote: "But he who reads this passage even half asleep cannot fail to see that the kingdom of Antichrist shall fiercely, though for a short time, assail the Church."

Then when I remembered that the death of Peter, his prediction of corruption and apostasy after his decease, the death of Paul, and many other events had to occur before the Rapture—especially the evangelization of the world (Mark 13:10 and Matt. 24:14)—my "any moment" theory took wings and fled.

Last of all, I ran across "The Great Tribulation—The Church's Supreme Test" by John B. Scruby, the most convincing; the most unanswerable of all. It deals with every point minutely and proves conclusively that the Tribulation precedes the Rapture.

Recently I got hold of that remarkable book "Tribulation to Glory" by H. A. Baker. in which he wrote: "For eighteen centuries the fundamental principle of tribulation to glory was the universal belief of the truly born-again members of the Church", and then he goes on to show that the new pre-tribulation rapture teaching was first proclaimed as a direct revelation by a woman in Edward Irving's church, and then taken up by John Nelson Darby (and the Scofield Reference Bible) in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Church for eighteen hundred years.

"Beginning with the Irvingite woman, then propagated by John N. Darby about 1830, this new 'spirit-inspired' doctrine during the last century has come down to us until it has become popular. George Muller opposed it; so did Benjamin Wills Newton; so did Dr. S. P. Tregelles and other Brethren, but all in vain." But now, thank God, large numbers of our leading Bible Teachers are coming back to the original position.

GOD'S WORD

I discovered that no time element is ever mentioned so far as the Rapture is concerned, except as it is related to the Resurrection. And that the Resurrection is always placed at the time of the sounding of the Last Trump (1 Cor. 15:51-54). This Trump, without doubt, closes the Tribulation. There is no eighth. The saints are rewarded (Rev. 11:18). The "mystery of God", is then finished, there is time (delay) no longer (Rev. 10:6 and 7), and the Resurrection, of course, immediately precedes the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16).

Naturally, I thought of 2 Thessalonians 2:7: "he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way". But then I learned from the Greek that the second "he" is the Antichrist, and that the Greek does not say "taken out of the way," but "revealed in the midst," or, "born out of the midst." In other words, lawlessness will be restrained until the appointed time for the lawless one, the Antichrist, to appear. There is no mention of the Holy Spirit at all. That is a Scofield Bible assumption. The Holy Spirit and the Church remain to the end of the Age.

Then, too. I thought of Luke 21:36 and of Revelation 3:10. But Noah, I remembered, "escaped" by preservation. Daniel "was kept" and protected in the lion's den. The three Hebrew children were "kept" though in a burning fiery furnace. None of them were taken out. Rather they were kept, preserved, protected while in, and thus they escaped. Why not the Church? Note that 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 finds the saints in trouble, in tribulation, and resting only at the close. In fact the first two chapters of 2 Thessalonians cannot be interpreted in any other way. Chapter two, verse one, is most explicit. "Now we beseech you, brethren", writes Paul, "by the coming (Revelation) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together (the Rapture) unto Him". There is here no separation between the Rapture and the Revelation. The Coming is the one and only Coming spoken of throughout the two chapters, the Coming described in chapter one, verses seven and eight.

I learned, too, that the word for "meet" in 1 Thessalonians 4: was only used in two other places, and, in both cases, it meant "returning with" and not "remaining at" the place of meeting. When the brethren from Rome met Paul, they immediately returned to the city with him. When the Virgins met the Bridegroom they accompanied Him back to the wedding. When the saints meet Christ in the Air, as He comes to judge the nations and establish His Kingdom on earth, they will return with Him. There is no Scripture that says they will remain for some seven years in the Air.

In 1 Thessalonians each chapter closes with a reference to the Second Coming, but no distinction is made. As Christ descends with His angels after the Tribulation, the saints ascend, and, meeting Him in the Air, turn and continue with Him back to the earth. How long He remains in the Air, following the meeting with the Church is nowhere revealed. "The Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (1 Thess. 3:13), is unquestionably the Revelation, after the Tribulation, simply because the words, "with all His saints" are added. But why infer another, a previous Coming, in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and 1:10, or 5:23? It is all one and the same. There is no Secret Rapture. That theory must be deliberately read into the passage. There is no Rapture in Revelation until chapter nineteen is reached.

I had been taught that the Greek word "*parousia*" always referred to the Rapture and that other words were used for the Coming of Christ in glory after the Tribulation. But I found that this is not true. *Parousia* is used for the latter, too. See 2 Thessalonians 2:1.

While it is clear that the Church must endure the wrath of the Antichrist, it is certain that the Church will not have to endure the wrath of God. When His judgments are poured out on the Antichrist and his followers, the Church will be divinely protected by God even as the Israelites were protected when His wrath was poured upon the Egyptians—not by being raptured, but by being kept.

We might go through all the writers of the New Testament, and we would fail to discover any indication of the so-called "two-stages" of our Lord's Coming. Peter, James and John tell the same story. There is no Scripture for a pre-tribulation rapture. That theory had to be invented by man. Search and see. There is no verse in the Bible that even mentions it.

I discovered that nearly all evangelical missionary leaders believe that there must be representatives in the Church of Christ from every tribe, kindred, tongue and nation, and not just from the so-called civilized world, and that, therefore, the only way to hasten the Coming of Christ is by evangelizing the remaining unreached peoples of earth. Jesus made it perfectly clear when He said, "the gospel must first be published among all nations" (Mark 13:10) "and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14). Hence, the greatest incentive to missionary work is the Second Coming of Christ.

SPIRITUAL PREPAREDNESS

I am sure that with the true child of God it is not a question of preference but of truth. Does God's Word say so? Why then rebel? Is not His plan best? Besides, what difference does it make so long as we are ready? "Spiritual Preparedness" is the only important factor after all.

I wonder if we have been lulling the Church into a false security? Can it be that we have been preaching an easy escape? Ought we to prepare the Church for the greatest of all ordeals? Should not our teaching harden her for the fires of the Tribulation? What kind of soldiers are we training? I am afraid that we have been very guilty and that God will certainly hold us responsible for the type of Christian our preaching is producing. We need men and women today of the martyr spirit. The test of the Inquisition is coming again and woe betide the pre-millennialists who are not ready. The Church must be purified in the fires of persecution.

VOICES OF OTHERS

Now if I were to go into the subject in detail and attempt to deal with the numerous passages, both for and against, I would simply be overlapping. Others have already done this most ably, far better than I can, and so, if you are really interested, I would suggest that you secure the books that have been written on the subject and study them prayerfully and with an open mind before taking sides. A great many have been written by men on both sides of the Atlantic. The

following are among the best that have been published in Great Britain and you may procure most of them from THE SOVEREIGN GRACE ADVENT TESTIMONY, I DONALD WAY, CHELMSFORD, ESSEX, CM2 9JB, the organization that publishes the Post-Tribulation magazine *Watching and Waiting*, edited by James Payne.

Here are the books:

Will the Church Escape the Great Tribulation? (by Edmund Shackleton); *Christ's Second Coming* (by S. P. Tregelles) [these two are scarce]; *Our Lord Cometh* (by W. J. Rowlands); *The Coming of the Son of Man* (by Rev. E. J. Poole-Connor); *The Second Advent of our Lord, Not Secret, but in Manifested Glory* (by B. W. Newton); *One Second Coming of Christ* (by W. J. Rowlands); *The First Resurrection* (by S. P. Tregelles); *Touching the Coming of the Lord* (by Dan Crawford); *The Saints' Rest and Rapture* (by Frank H. White); *The Second Coming of Christ* (by George Muller). Send for their catalogue.

The following have been published in North America: *The Blessed Hope* (by Professor George E. Ladd). Dr. Ladd teaches in Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena. It is a masterly volume and it goes into both the history and doctrine of both the Pre-Tribulation and the Post-Tribulation Advent. "*Will Christ's Coming be in two stages?*" (by Norman F. Douty).

I have a list of nearly seventy Bible Teachers who have proclaimed this view of the Return of Christ. Among them, in addition to those who have written the above books, there are such names as W. J. Erdman, Charles R. Erdman. Dr. Campbell Morgan, Bishop Frank Houghton, Dr. A. B. Simpson, Dr. J. W. Thirtle, Dr. Charles T. Cook, Alexander Reese, Dr. Horatius Bonar, Dr. Adolph Saphir, Henry Varley, Dr. Nathaniel West, David Baron, H. W. Soltau, Dr. Bergin, Dr. Harold J. Ockenga, and many others. To ignore the convictions of such spiritual leaders is impossible. Deference must be given to their views.

These views I would sum up by quoting from *Watching and Waiting*—"We believe that this was the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles. We believe it was held by the Early Church and by all in the Middle Ages who had any light on the Second Advent. We believe, too, that it was the teaching of the Early Brethren and that no other view was generally accepted among them until the Any Moment. Secret Rapture, Pre-Tribulation, or Two-Stage Coming theory was taught by Edward Irving, as a result of a vision received by a woman in his church. Thus Any Moment teaching is a 'novel' doctrine".

MY FINAL APPEAL

Beloved, the shadows are darkening. The day is drawing to a close. It is now Saturday night in the history of the Church. The times of the Gentiles have almost run their course. Events are fast shaping for the end. The Antichrist will soon be here.

One fact and one only is important—Christ is coming. Of that there can be no doubt. One question and one only is vital—Are we ready?

We may differ on minor details of prophecy. We may disagree as to the time of His Appearing. We may not see eye to eye regarding the order of prophetic events. But one thing is certain—He is coming. We will be with Him. The Millennium is at hand and soon now we shall know all. Therefore, let us love one another sincerely and labour together "till He Come".

If I am mistaken I will know it then. Hence, let us agree to disagree agreeably. God knows our hearts. He knows that we love Him and that is all that really matters. If I love Him and you love Him, we will love each other. Soon the day will break and all the shadows flee away. Meanwhile I am "looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2 :13).





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Revised:

Corrie ten Boom Warns Against Pre-Tribulation Rapture False Doctrine.

 Published April 14, 2011 |  By [womenof7](#)



Many Christians are unaware of the warning written in a letter by Corrie ten Boom where Miss ten Boom warns against a pre-tribulation rapture false doctrine. A Dutch Christian and a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust concentration camps. Corrie spearheaded a rescue operation in Holland that helped hundreds of Jews escape the Nazi extermination camps, and travelled all over the world as an ambassador for Christ telling her story. In her worldwide travels Miss ten Boom met with many Christians abroad. Many in the Suffering Church were enduring persecution just as she had. She met with Church leaders of the underground church in China. There she became aware of what had happened to the Chinese church in 1949. At that time Mao Tse Tung was bringing China into communism. The American missionaries had left the country. Chinese Christians entered into a time of intense persecution.

During that period the Pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine had been the accepted teaching. But there was a problem. And it turned out to be a serious one. This **Biblically unfounded** doctrine had not prepared the Chinese Church for witness under trial. Christian believers were interrogated and brutalized under the Red Guard. Many fell away from the faith in those times.

Corrie ten Boom's story is told through her book *The Hiding Place*, and the motion picture released by the same name in the 1970s.

Corrie ten Boom went home to be with her Lord April 15, 1983, but her inspiring testimony for Christ will endure.

[Following](#) is the letter Corrie left warning against a pre-tribulation rapture false doctrine that Christians all over the world, and especially in America need to take very seriously. In this capacity Corrie ten Boom has earned the right to be heard. She is eminently qualified to present this special word of warning to the Western Church:

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“The world is deathly ill. It is dying. The Great Physician has already signed [the death certificate](#). Yet there is still a great work for Christians to do. They are to be streams of living water, channels of mercy to those who are still in the world. It is possible for them to do this because they are overcomers.

Christians are ambassadors for Christ. They are representatives from Heaven to this dying world. And because of our presence here, things will change.

My sister, Betsy, and I were in the Nazi concentration camp at Ravensbruck because we committed the [crime](#) of loving Jews. Seven hundred of us from Holland, France, Russia, Poland and Belgium were herded into a room built for two hundred. As far as I knew, Betsy and I were the only two representatives of Heaven in that room.

We may have been the Lord’s only representatives in that place of hatred, yet because of our presence there, things changed. Jesus said, **“In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”** We too, are to be overcomers – bringing the light of Jesus into a world filled with darkness and hate.

Sometimes I get frightened as I read the Bible, and as I look in this world and see all of the tribulation and persecution promised by the Bible coming true. [Now](#) I can tell you, though, if you too are afraid, that I have just read the last pages. I can now come to shouting “Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” for I have found where it is written that Jesus said,

**“He that overcometh shall inherit all things and I will be His God, and he shall be My son.”**

This is the future and hope of this world. Not that the world will survive – but that we shall be overcomers in the midst of a dying world.

Betsy and I, in the concentration camp, prayed that God would heal Betsy who was so weak and sick.

“Yes, the Lord will heal me,” Betsy said with confidence.

She died the next day and I could not understand it. They laid her thin body on the concrete floor along with all the other corpses of the women who died that day.

It was hard for me to understand, to believe that God had a purpose for all that. Yet because of Betsy’s death, today I am traveling all over the world telling people about Jesus.

**There are some among us teaching there will be no tribulation that the Christians will be able to escape all this. These are the false teachers that Jesus was warning us to expect in**

**the latter days. Most of them have little knowledge of what is already going on across the world. I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution.**

In China, the Christians were told, "Don't worry, before the tribulation comes you will be translated- raptured." Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later, I heard a Bishop from China say, sadly,

**"We have failed.. We should have made the people strong for persecution, rather than telling them Jesus would come first. Tell the people to be strong in times of persecution, how to stand when the tribulation comes, to stand and not faint."**

I feel I have a divine mandate to go and tell the people of this world that it is possible to be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in training for the tribulation, but more than sixty percent of the Body of Christ across the world has already entered into the tribulation. There is no way to escape it. We are next.

Since I have already gone through prison for Jesus' sake, and since I met the Bishop in China, now every time I read a good Bible text I think, "Hey, I can use that in the time of tribulation." Then I write it down and learn it by heart.

When I was in the concentration camp, a camp where only twenty percent of the women came out alive, we tried to cheer each other up by saying, "Nothing could be any worse than today." But we would find the next day was even worse. During this time a Bible verse that I had committed to memory gave me great hope and joy.

"If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of the glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part evil is spoken of, but on your part He is glorified."  
I Peter 4:14"

I found myself saying, "Hallelujah!  
Because I am suffering, Jesus is glorified!"

In America, the churches sing, "Let the congregation escape tribulation", but in China and Africa the tribulation has already arrived. This last year alone more than two hundred thousand Christians were martyred in Africa. Now things like that never get into the newspapers because they cause bad political relations. But I know. I have been there. We need to think about that when we sit down in our nice houses with our nice clothes to eat our steak dinners. Many, many members of the Body of Christ are being tortured to death at this very moment, yet we continue right on as though we are all going to escape the tribulation.

Several years ago I was in Africa in a nation where a new government had come into power. The first night I was there some of the Christians were commanded to come to the police station to

register. When they arrived they were arrested and that same night they were executed. The next day the same thing happened with other Christians. The third day it was the same. All the Christians in the district were being systematically murdered.

The fourth day I was to speak in a little church. The people came, but they were filled with fear and tension. All during the service they were looking at each other, their eyes asking, “Will this one I am sitting beside be the next one killed? Will I be the next one?”

The room was hot and stuffy with insects that came through the screenless windows and swirled around the naked bulbs over the bare wooden benches. I told them a story out of my childhood.

“When I was a little girl, I said, I went to my father and said, “Daddy, I am afraid that I will never be strong enough to be a martyr for Jesus Christ.” “Tell me,” said Father, “When you take a train trip to Amsterdam, when do I give you the money for the ticket?” “Three weeks before?” “No Daddy, you give me the money for the ticket just before we get on the train.” “That’s is right,” my father said, “and so it is with God’s strength.” “Our Father in heaven knows when you need the strength to be a martyr for Jesus Christ.” “He will supply all you need just in time.” My African friends were nodding and smiling. Suddenly a spirit of joy descended upon that church and the people began singing, ” In the sweet, by and by, we shall meet on that beautiful shore.”

Later that week, half the congregation of that church was executed. I heard later that the other half was killed some months ago. But I must tell you something. I was so happy that the Lord used me to encourage these people, for unlike many of their leaders, I had the word of God. I had been to the Bible and discovered that Jesus said He had not only overcome the world, but to all those who remained faithful to the end, He would give a crown of life.

How can we get ready for the persecution?

First we need to feed on the Word of God, digest it, make it a part of our being. This will mean disciplined Bible study each day as we not only memorize long passages of scripture, but put the principles to work in our lives.

Next we need to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Not just the Jesus of yesterday, the Jesus of History, but the life-changing Jesus of today who is still alive and sitting at the right hand of God.

We must be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is no optional command of the Bible, it is absolutely necessary. Those earthly disciples could never have stood up under the persecution of the Jews and Romans had they not waited for Pentecost. Each of us needs our own personal Pentecost, the

baptism of the Holy Spirit. We will never be able to stand in the tribulation without it. In the coming persecution we must be ready to help each other and encourage each other.

But we must not wait until the tribulation comes before starting. The fruit of the Spirit should be the dominant force of every Christian's life. Many are fearful of the coming tribulation, they want to run. I, too, am a little bit afraid when I think that after all my eighty years, including the horrible Nazi concentration camp, that I might have to go through the tribulation also.

But then I read the Bible and I am glad. When I am weak, then I shall be strong, the Bible says. Betsy and I were prisoners for the Lord, we were so weak, but we got power because the Holy Spirit was on us. That mighty inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit helped us through. No, you will not be strong in yourself when the tribulation comes. Rather, you will be strong in the power of Him who will not forsake you. For seventy-six years I have known the Lord Jesus and not once has He ever left me, or let me down.

“Though He shall slay me, yet will I trust Him.” Job 13:15 for I know that to all who overcome, He shall give the crown of life. **Hallelujah!**” - Corrie Ten Boom – 1974

Dr. Ernest L. Martin, David Sielaff

## **The Rapture Theory - Its Surprising Origin**

Almost all Christians are interested in prophecy. This is especially true if the prophecies show what will happen to Christians themselves. There is nothing wrong in desiring such personal knowledge. Even our Lord gave a considerable amount of teaching about the circumstances to befall His people at the end of the age (Matthew 24:22–25). We all share a common concern in wanting to know about the participants, the chronology, and the [geography](#) of those prophecies. To comprehend the full knowledge of them it is obvious that all relevant statements of our Lord and His apostles must be properly interpreted and placed in a coherent order.

Many Christians have attempted to do this. As a consequence, the doctrine of the Rapture has arisen. So important has it become to many that the teaching is [now](#) sanctioned in some circles as the prime revelation from God to show what will happen to members of His *ekklesia* just before and during the Second Coming of Christ. Some of the greatest friends of the Holy Scriptures have accepted this teaching (and they teach this false doctrine even by mistranslating the phrase “**first resurrection**” as “the former resurrection” in Revelation 20:5). If one translates the word correctly as “*first*,” then it means the resurrection of Christians occurs after the Tribulation, and the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Theory is shown to be false. <sup>1</sup>

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture Theory, however, is a menacing doctrine that perverts the plain language of the text of the New Testament. Some preachers today look on the doctrine as the heart and core of present Christian expectations in regard to prophetic truth for the near future! Many believe this false teaching is the principle hope of the Body of Christ for their redemption and safety during the Great Tribulation. We need to look at this teaching carefully.

### ***The Doctrine of the Rapture***

First understand that the word “Rapture” is not found in the King James translation. There is also no single word used by biblical authors to describe the prophetic factors that comprise the doctrine. Its formulation came about by means of inductive reasoning. Certain biblical passages concerning the Second Coming, and the role Christians will [play](#) in that event, were blended together inductively to establish the teaching.

The modern expression “Rapture” has been invented to explain the overall teaching and the term suits the subject well. The basic tenets of the doctrine are simple. It purports that Christ will come back to this earth in two phases. He will first return secretly to

*rapture* His church away from this world so that they might escape the Great Tribulation to occur at the end of the age. Christ then returns in a visible advent to dispense His wrath on the world's nations. This is the general teaching.

Many details concerning these prime factors are hotly debated. There is especially much argument over the chronological features associated with it. Some think the time lapse between the two phases will be 3 ½ years, others say 7 years. Some feel that the Rapture of the *ekklesia* occurs before the Tribulation, others about mid-way through. Many suggest that the saints of God will be taken to heaven for protection, while others suggest a geographical area on this earth (as I have shown in various articles). <sup>2</sup> Some feel that only part of the *ekklesia* will escape, while others say all will be rescued.

These variations and others have multiplied the interpretations among those holding the belief. But all are unanimous on one point: the central theme of the "Rapture Theory" (as it is normally called in the theological world) shows that Christ will return to earth in two phases. They think Christ will come at first secretly for His saints and then He will come visibly with His saints returning with Him from heaven at the actual Second Advent. In this book, when I use the term "Rapture" standing alone, I always mean the "Rapture Theory" of the pre-tribulation theorists.

### ***The Newness of the Doctrine***

It may come as a surprise but the doctrine of the Rapture is not mentioned in any Christian writings, of which we have knowledge, until after the year 1830 C.E. Whether the early writers were Greek or Latin, Armenian or Coptic, Syrian or Ethiopian, English or German, orthodox or heretic, no one mentioned it before 1830 (though a sentence in *Pseudo-Dionysius* in about 500 C.E. could be so interpreted). Of course, those who feel the origin of the teaching is in the Bible would say that it ceased being taught for some unknown reason at the close of the apostolic age only to reappear in 1830. But if the doctrine were so clearly stated in Scripture, it seems incredible that no one should have referred to it before the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The lateness of the doctrine does not necessarily mean the teaching is wrong (only the plain statements of the Bible can reveal that). It does show that thousands of eminent scholars over seventeen centuries (including the most astute "Christian Fathers" and those of the Reformation and post-Reformation periods) must be considered prophetic dunces for not having understood so fundamental a teaching. This lapse of seventeen centuries when no one elaborated on the doctrine must be viewed as an obstacle to accepting its reliability.

### ***The Beginnings of the Doctrine***

The result of a careful investigation into the origin of the Rapture was published in 1976. This was in an excellent research book that deserves to be read by all people interested in the subject. Its title: *The Unbelievable Pre-Trib Origin* by Dave

MacPherson. <sup>3</sup> He catalogs a great deal of historical material that answers the doctrine's mysterious derivation. I wish to review the results of his research.

In the middle 1820's a religious environment began to be established among a few Christians in London, England which proved to be the catalyst from which the doctrine of the Rapture emerged. Expectations of the soon coming of our Lord were being voiced. This was no new thing, but what was unusual was the teaching by a Presbyterian minister named Edward Irving that there had to be a restoration of the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians chapters 12–14 just before Christ's Second Advent. To Irving, the time had come for those spiritual manifestations to occur. Among the expected gifts was the renewal of speaking in tongues and of prophetic utterances motivated by the spirit.

Irving began to propagate his beliefs. His oratorical skills and enthusiasm caused his congregation in London to grow. Then a number of people began to experience the "gifts." Once this happened, opposition from the organized churches set in. It resulted in Irving's dismissal from the Presbyterian Church in 1832. His group established themselves as the Catholic Apostolic Church and continued the teachings of Irving. These events were the beginnings of what some call present day Pentecostalism. Some church historians referred to Irving as "the father of modern Pentecostalism."

What does this have to do with the origin of the Rapture doctrine? Look at what happened in the year 1830 — two years before Irving's dismissal from the Presbyterian Church. In that year a revival of the "gifts" began to be manifested among some people living in the lowlands of Scotland. They experienced what they called the outpouring of the Spirit. It was accompanied with speaking in "tongues" and other charismatic phenomena. Irving preached that these things must occur and now they were.

On one particular evening, the power of the Holy Spirit was said to have rested on a Miss Margaret Macdonald while she was ill at home. She was dangerously sick and thought she was dying. In spite of this (or perhaps because she is supposed to have come under the "power" of the spirit) for several successive hours she experienced manifestations of **"mingled prophecy and vision."** She found her mind in an altered state and began to experience considerable visionary activity.

The message she received during this prophetic vision convinced her that Christ was going to appear in two stages at His Second Advent, and not a single occasion as most all people formerly believed. The spirit emanation revealed that Christ would first come in glory to those who look for Him and again later in a final stage when every eye would see Him. This visionary experience of Miss Macdonald represented the prime source of the modern Rapture doctrine as the historical evidence compiled by Mr. MacPherson reveals.

### ***The Influence of John Darby***

Many people have thought that John Darby, the founder of the Plymouth Brethren, was the originator of the Rapture doctrine. This is not the case. Darby was a brilliant theologian with outstanding scholarly abilities. Even those who disagreed with his teachings admit that he, and many associated with him, helped cause a revival in biblical learning throughout the evangelical world which has perpetuated down to the present day. All who love biblical research ought to be thankful for what Darby and especially his associates accomplished for biblical scholarship. These early men helped pave the way particularly for the renewal of modern lexical studies in the biblical languages.

This renewal of language studies was not the only thing they produced. The doctrine of "dispensationalism" was also a teaching they brought to the attention of the Protestant world. And then, there was this new doctrine termed the "Rapture." While many Christians long thought the Rapture doctrine originated with John Darby, it is now known that this was not true. Darby did popularize it. Scofield and others took it over. But Darby provided the intellectual mantle that helped make it respectable. Many of those in the evangelical sphere of Christianity today are so certain of its veracity that it is accepted as the absolute truth of God. The fact is, however, John Darby received the knowledge of the doctrine from someone else. His source was Margaret Macdonald.

The studies of Mr. MacPherson show that her sickness during which she received her visions and revelations occurred sometime between February 1 and April 14, 1830. By late spring and early summer of 1830, her belief in the two phases of Christ's coming was mentioned in praise and prayer meetings in several towns of western Scotland. In these meetings some people were speaking in "tongues" and other charismatic occurrences were in evidence. Modern "Pentecostalism" had its birth.

These extraordinary and strange events so attracted John Darby that he made a trip to the area to witness what was going on. Though he did not approve of the ecstatic episodes that he witnessed, it is nonetheless significant that Darby, after returning from Scotland, began to teach that Christ's Advent would occur in two phases. MacPherson shows good evidence that Darby even visited Miss Macdonald in her home. There can hardly be any doubt that the visions and spiritual experiences of Miss Macdonald are the source of the modern doctrine. But belief in such paranormal experiences is dangerous, especially when they are contrary to scriptural teachings.

### ***Visions and Dreams***

While it is possible that visionary revelations can come from God, it is always prudent to be cautious in such matters. Near the same time Miss Macdonald was receiving her visions, Joseph Smith in America was experiencing his apparitions that brought Mormon doctrines to the world. John Wilson also had his dreams that were the spark that started the false teaching of British-Israelism. Not long afterwards, Ellen G. White received her visions that resulted in many Seventh Day Adventist teachings. And remarkably, all these individuals received revelations of doctrines supposedly from God

that were much at variance with one another and contrary to biblical teachings. Such incidents bring to mind the warning that God gave to Moses.

**“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spoke unto you, saying, ‘let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them’; you shall not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord proves [tests] you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”**

- ***Deuteronomy 13:1–3***

In regard to the teachings of visionaries, recall what the apostle John commanded Christians.

**“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” <sup>4</sup>**

- ***1 John 4:1***

And though some refer to the prophecy of Daniel that **“knowledge shall be increased”** (Daniel 12:4) as proof that the revival of doctrinal truths will occur at the end of the age, this is not what Daniel meant. If you read the prophet carefully you will find Daniel was speaking that **“the knowledge”** of his prophecies will be increased, not the revival of general doctrines. In the original text of Daniel, the definite article occurs before the word **“knowledge.”** Daniel said **“THE knowledge will be increased,”** and the text shows he meant “the knowledge of his prophecies.” Daniel was in no way speaking about a renewing of doctrines at the Time of the End.

A further admonition is necessary concerning the origins of visionary teachings that might emerge near our own time. It is by the apostle Paul and we should pay close attention to it.

**“Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”**

- ***1 Timothy 4:1***

These warnings from God’s word are a reminder that we should exercise caution in accepting the truthfulness of visionary revelations, particularly those near the end of the age, and which are contradictory to one another and to the Bible. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture Theory is such a doctrine; a teaching with no scriptural warrant. After all, the Holy Scriptures makes it plain that the *first* resurrection (when Christians from the past have their resurrections and we are caught up to heaven with Christ)

occurs after the Tribulation is over (Revelation 20:5). And though a number of people within the Body of Christ have taken up with this false doctrine, it is time to jettison it from Christian belief.

# Ruth B. Graham on the Pre-Tribulation Rapture

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*RUTH B. GRAHAM, WIFE OF EVANGELIST BILLY GRAHAM, COMMENTS ON THE IDEA OF THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE IN A LETTER TO DAVE MACPHERSON, AUTHOR OF “LATE GREAT PRE-TRIB RAPTURE.” RUTH COMMENTS ON THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND ON A RAPTURE VIEW WHICH IS POPULAR TODAY.*

*MANY OF TODAY’S POPULAR PROPHECY TEACHERS ARE SIMILARLY FAILING TO PREPARE COMFORTABLE WESTERN CHRISTIANS FOR THE POSSIBILITY/LIKELIHOOD THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO ENDURE MUCH, EVEN MOST, OF THE COMING “TRIBULATION” AND “GREAT TRIBULATION” PERIODS. PREPARE OURSELVES TO GO THROUGH THE TRIBULATION AND NOT NECESSARILY TO EXPECT TO BE RAPTURED BEFORE IT OCCURS. SHE TELLS OF THE CHINESE CHRISTIANS’ NOT BEING PREPARED FOR THE TRIBULATION THEY WOULD UNDERGO.*

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## 1. FAMOUS RAPTURE WATCHERS – Addendum

by Dave MacPherson

(The statements in my “Famous Rapture Watchers” web article appeared in my 1983 book “The Great Rapture Hoax” and quoted only past leaders. Here are the other leaders who were quoted in that original printing.)

Oswald J. Smith: “...I am absolutely convinced that there will be no rapture before the Tribulation, but that the Church will undoubtedly be called upon to face the Antichrist...” (Tribulation or Rapture – Which?, p. 2).

Paul B. Smith: “You are perfectly free to quote me as believing rather emphatically in the post-tribulation teaching of the Bible” (letter dated June 9, 1976).

S. I. McMillen: “...Christians will suffer in the Great Tribulation” (Discern These Times, p. 55).

Norman F. Douty: “...all of the evidence of history runs one way – in favor of Post-tribulationism” (Has Christ’s Return Two Stages?, p. 113).

Leonard Ravenhill: “There is a cowardly Christianity which...still comforts its fainting heart with the hope that there will be a rapture – perhaps today – to catch us away from coming tribulation” (Sodom Had No Bible, p. 94).

William Hendriksen: “...the one and only second coming of Christ to judgment” (Israel in Prophecy, p. 29).

Loraine Boettner: “Hence we conclude that nowhere in Scripture does it teach a secret or pre-tribulation Rapture” (The Millennium, p. 168).

J. Sidlow Baxter: “...believers of the last days (there is only one small part of the total Church on earth at any given moment) will be on earth during the so-called ‘Great Tribulation’ ” (Explore the Book, Vol. 6, p. 345).

Merrill C. Tenney: “There is no convincing reason why the seer’s being ‘in the Spirit’ and being called into heaven [Revelation 4:1-2] typifies the rapture of the church...” (Interpreting Revelation, p. 141).

James R. Graham: “...there is not a line of the N.T. that declares a pre-tribulation rapture, so its advocates are compelled to read it into certain indeterminate texts...” (Watchman, What of the Night?, p. 79).

Ralph Earle: "The teaching of a pre-tribulation rapture seems first to have been emphasized widely about 100 years ago by John Darby of the Plymouth Brethren" (Behold, I Come, p. 74).

Clarence B. Bass: "...I most strongly believe dispensationalism to be a departure from the historic faith..." (Backgrounds to Dispensationalism, p. 155).

William C. Thomas: "The return of Jesus Christ, described by parousia, revelation, and epiphany, is one single, glorious, triumphant event for which we all wait with great eagerness!" (The Blessed Hope in the Thessalonian Epistles of Paul, p. 42).

Harold J. Ockenga: "No exegetical justification exists for the arbitrary separation of the 'coming of Christ' and the 'day of the Lord.' It is one 'day of the Lord Jesus Christ' " (Christian Life, February, 1955).

Duane Edward Spencer: "Paul makes it very clear that the Church will pass through the Great Tribulation" ("Rapture-Tribulation" cassette).

J. C. Maris: "Nowhere the Bible teaches that the Church of Jesus Christ is heading for world dominion. On the contrary – there will be no place for her, save in 'the wilderness,' where God will take care of her (Rev. 12:13-17)" (I.C.C.C. leaflet "The Danger of the Ecumenical Movement," p. 2).

F. F. Bruce: "To meet the Lord [I Thessalonians 4:17]...on the final stage of...[Christ's] journey...to the earth..." (New Bible Commentary: Revised, p. 1159).

G. Christian Weiss: "Some people say that this ['gospel of the kingdom' in Matthew 24:14] is not the gospel of grace but is a special aspect of the gospel to be preached some time in the future. But there is nothing in the context to indicate this" ("Back to the Bible" broadcast, February 9, 1976).

Pat Brooks: "Soon we, in the Body of Christ, will be confronted by millions of people disillusioned by such false teaching [Pre-Tribism]" (Hear, O Israel, p. 186).

Herman Hoeksema: "...the time of Antichrist, when days so terrible are still to arrive for the church..." (Behold, He Cometh!, p. 131).

Ray Summers: "Because they [Philadelphia] have been faithful, he promises his sustaining grace in the tribulation..." (Worthy Is the Lamb, p. 123).

George E. Ladd: "[Pretribulationism] may be guilty of the positive danger of leaving the Church unprepared for tribulation when Antichrist appears..." (The Blessed Hope, p. 164).

Peter Beyerhaus: "The Christian Church on earth [will face] the final, almost superhuman test of being confronted with the apocalyptic temptation by Antichrist" (Christianity Today, April 13, 1973).

Leon Morris: "The early Christians...looked for the Christ to come as Judge" (Apocalyptic, p. 84).

Dale Moody: "There is not a passage in the New Testament to support Scofield. The call to John to 'come up hither' has reference to mystical ecstasy, not to a pretribulation rapture" (Spirit of the Living God, p. 203).

John R. W. Stott: "He would not spare them from the suffering [Revelation 3:10]; but He would uphold them in it" (What Christ Thinks of the Church, p. 104).

G. R. Beasley-Murray: "...the woman, i.e., the Church...flees for refuge into the wilderness [Revelation 12:14]..." (The New Bible Commentary, p. 1184).

Bernard L. Ramm: "...as the Church moves to meet her Lord at the parousia world history is also moving to meet its Judge at the same parousia" (Leo Eddleman's Last Things, p. 41).

J. Barton Payne: "...the twentieth century has indeed witnessed a progressively rising revolt against pre-tribulationism" (The Imminent Appearing of Christ, p. 38).

Robert H. Gundry: "Divine wrath does not blanket the entire seventieth week...but concentrates at the close" (The Church and the Tribulation, p. 63).

C. S. Lovett: "Frankly I favor a post-trib rapture...I no longer teach Christians that they will NOT have to go through the tribulation" (PC, January, 1974).

Walter R. Martin: "Walter Martin finally said... 'Yes, I'm a post-trib' " (Lovett's PC, December, 1976).

Jay Adams: "Today's trend is...from pre- to posttribulationism" (The Time Is at Hand, p. 2).

Jim McKeever: "Nowhere do the Scriptures say that the Rapture will precede the Tribulation" (Christians Will Go Through the Tribulation, p. 55).

Arthur Katz: "I think it fair to tell you that I do not subscribe to the happy and convenient theology which says that God's people are going to be raptured and lifted up when a time of tribulation and trial comes" (Reality, p. 8).

Billy Graham: "Perhaps the Holy Spirit is getting His Church ready for a trial and tribulation such as the world has never known" (Sam Shoemaker's Under New Management, p. 72).

W. J. Grier: "The Scofield Bible makes a rather desperate effort...it tries to get in the 'rapture' of the saints before the appearing of Antichrist" (The Momentous Event, p. 58).

Pat Robertson: "Jesus Christ is going to come back to earth again to deliver Israel and at the same time to rapture His Church; it's going to be one moment, but it's going to be a glorious time" ("700 Club" telecast, May 14, 1975).

Ben Kinchlow: "Any wrath [during the Tribulation] that comes upon us – any difficulty – will not be induced by God, but it'll be like the people are saying, 'The cause of our problems are those Christians in our midst; we need to get rid of them' " ("700 Club" telecast, August 28, 1979).

Daniel P. Fuller: "It is thus concluded that Dispensationalism fails to pass the test of an adequate system of Biblical Interpretation" (The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism, p. 369).

Corrie ten Boom: "The Bible prophesies that the time will come when we cannot buy or sell, unless we bear the sign of the Antichrist..." (Tramp for the Lord, p. 187).

- [Adolfo Ricardo Ybarra](#) (outstanding post-tribulational Christian writer of Spanish language), [\*The Basis of the Post-tribulational Faith\*](#) (<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/91582190/Las-Bases-de-la-Fe-Postribulacional---Adolfo-Ricardo-Ybarra>)
- [Augustine of Hippo](#), [\*The City of God\*](#), Chapter 23.
- [Barnabas](#), [\*The Epistle of Barnabas\*](#), chapter 4
- [Caecilius Cyprianus](#) (Bishop of Carthage; Post-tribulationist) [Treatise 7.2]
- [Didache](#) (speaks of Jesus gathering the elect after the Tribulation)
- [Ephrem the Syrian](#) (Post-tribulationist)
- [George Müller](#) (19th Century Christian evangelist and orphanage coordinator)
- [Greg Koukl](#) (Evangelical Radio Host, Apologist, Author and Speaker for Stand to Reason)
- [Hermas](#), [\*The Shepherd of Hermas\*](#)
- [Hippolytus](#) (Writer of the early Christian Church; Speaks of the Antichrist's reign and persecution of the Church )
- [Irenaeus](#) (Post-tribulationist; Disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of John the apostle)

- [John Charles Ryle](#) (19th Century Anglican bishop and theologian)
- [Benjamin Wills Newton](#) (Evangelist, leader in the Plymouth Brethren, theological rival to John Nelson Darby.)
- [John Gill](#) (Held the view that the Church was not raptured out in any event prior the tribulation)
- [Justin Martyr](#) (Christian apologist and post-tribulationist)
- [Charles Spurgeon](#) (Christian English Baptist Preacher. Known as the "Prince of Preachers".)
- [James Montgomery Boice](#) (Former Pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, PA.)
- [John Piper](#) (Evangelical Calvinist, Pastor, Author) Article listed below.
- [Samuel Prideaux Tregelles](#) (19th Century Bible scholar)
- [Tertullian](#) (Father of the Latin Church; Post-tribulationist)
- [Victorinus](#) (third or fourth century; Book of Revelation first commentary writer)
- [Walter Ralston Martin](#) (20th Century American Apologist, Minister, Author, and Founder of Christian Research Institute)
- [George Eldon Ladd](#) (Baptist minister and Theologian. Taught at Fuller Theological Seminary.)
- [Gordon Clark](#) (Christian Philosopher and Theologian.)
- [Francis Schaeffer](#) (Christian Philosopher, Theologian, and Presbyterian Pastor.)
- [Wayne Grudem](#) (well known Christian theologian, author, and professor)