

Plain Speaking On The Rapture Question

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(This article was first published in 1945 by Rev. Orson P. Jones. Rev. Jones was pastor of Grace Baptist Church of San Diego, CA. for almost half a century!)

Does The Bible Teach Two Future Comings Of Christ?

When a preacher declares from the pulpit that Jesus is coming again, he is standing on the Rock of Ages, When he teaches that Jesus is coming AFTER the tribulation, he can rest on inspired scripture, (Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24; Luke 21:25-28). When he asserts that Jesus is coming BEFORE the tribulation, he is merely proclaiming an *ipsi dixit*. Ipse Dixit is a pointed Latin term meaning, "He, himself, says it." He cannot find in the New Testament the words, "before the tribulation," If he feels that he has good reasons for inferring that Jesus is coming twice from heaven, even though he cannot find an explicit statement in the Bible, he should be frank with his congregation, and say, "This idea rests on inferences, it is not stated in the Bible." Inferences, put forth with good motives, are not to be condemned until they begin to masquerade as Bible doctrine.

This doctrine, that there will be one coming before the tribulation, and another after the tribulation, has been established by constant repetition without a single clear statement of scripture to sustain it. It is bolstered by appeals to the names of successful, popular preachers who also established it by constant repetition. It can be planted in the minds of God's people, but it cannot be placed in the Bible. Great doctrines are not hidden between the lines of God's Word.

Two men in white apparel left a simple message: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," (Acts 1:11). This message has been corrupted into, "Jesus will come twice from heaven." Shall we believe angels? or men?

Is Christ Coming Before The Tribulation?

Did Jesus warn us to expect him BEFORE THE TRIBULATION? Did any apostle pen a line to the effect that Jesus would come BEFORE THE TRIBULATION? Chapter and verse! Please! If not a verse can be found stating that Jesus will come before the tribulation, why is it so widely taught? and seldom questioned?

In language impossible to misunderstand Jesus taught that he is coming AFTER the tribulation,

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," (Matt. 24:29, 30).

Jesus is coming AFTER the tribulation. A million Ipse Dixits and inferences cannot change a syllable of what he taught. Why do you believe that Jesus is coming BEFORE the tribulation? Are you willing to believe it because some popular preacher teaches it? Even though you cannot find a sentence in your Bible which says he is coming BEFORE the tribulation?

A Disillusioned Preacher

More than forty years ago this writer was the youthful pastor of a village church. He was an ardent Bible teacher (???), charting the seven dispensations, selling the Scofield Reference Bible, wishing he was rich enough to present copies of "Jesus Is Coming," by W. E. Blackstone, to all of his friends and convinced that the Moody Bible Institute was the only hope, and perhaps the last hope, of apostate America. And then he was asked a question:

"What verse teaches that the church will be caught away before the tribulation?"

He quoted several referring to the second coming of Christ. Following each came the question: "Does that say that the church will be caught away before the tribulation?"

He went to his room and searched the concordance. No help! He searched his bookshelves.

Popular authors constantly asserted that Jesus is coming, before the tribulation. None of them quoted a verse which taught it. Beautiful dispensational charts, but no verse. How stupid can men be! This writer professed to teach nothing without a "thus saith the Lord;" and yet he was unaware that there was no, "thus saith the Lord," to support this hub of prophetic doctrines, this rapture of the church before the tribulation. One question, without argument or persuasion, and against his own desires, revolutionized this writer's life. All of his interests and affections were on the rapture side of the question. It took years to think around this problem, and in those troubled years a pamphlet discussing this issue frankly would have been priceless.

The issue is not literalism, or spiritualizing, or Jewish features of the tribulation, or clear distinctions between church and Israel, or the fulfillment of Jewish kingdom promises, or modernism, or deploring a hopeless future,

We state the issue plainly: IS JESUS COMING ACCORDING TO HIS WORD IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRIBULATION? OR IS HS COMING ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF SOME EMINENT PREACHERS IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE TRIBULATION?

Literalists should be literal! Chapter and verse! Please!

Will The first Resurrection Occur Before The Tribulation?

According to our inspired Bible, Jesus is coming AFTER the tribulation, When Jesus comes his saints will be resurrected, "Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's AT HIS COMING," (1 Cor, 15:23). The time of Christ's coming is the time of the first resurrection.

Jesus taught that he is coming AFTER the tribulation. With equal simplicity we are told that the first resurrection will take place AFTER the tribulation, and will include the martyrs who refused to worship the beast during the tribulation. After the reign of the beast, after the tribulation, and after the binding of Satan, will come the first resurrection.

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them 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 worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years were finished, THIS IS THE FIRST RESURRECTION. Blessed and holy is he that hath

part in the first resurrection,” (Rev. 20:4-6).

Here in simple language is set forth the resurrection of the just. “There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust,” (Acts 24:15).

The Bible sets forth ONE COMING, immediately after the tribulation. This simple doctrine has been corrupted into two comings; one BEFORE, the other AFTER the tribulation. The Bible tells of ONE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST. This has been corrupted into two resurrections of the just: one before, the other after the tribulation. Only by a bold Ipse Dixit can men teach that the events of 1 Thessalonians 4:13 and 18 take place BEFORE the tribulation. If we believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, we should reject all uninspired Ipse Dixits.

Are “The Elect” And “The Saints” Of The Tribulation Period Jews?

“And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other,” (Matt. 24:31).

Men who teach two future returns of Christ assert that the angels will gather the Jewish remnant which has survived the time of Jacob’s trouble. They teach that the beast makes war with Jewish saints, (Rev. 13:7).

We have a picture of tribulation saints before the throne of God. They are not Jewish, but come from all kindreds, people, and tongues. They have the same testimony which you and I should have, They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” How can we consider seriously the idea that the “elect” and “the saints” of the tribulation period are Jews?

“After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,” (Rev. 7:9).

“These are they that have come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” (Rev. 7:14; ASV)

Does The Bible Teach That Jesus is Coming first For His Saints And later Coming With His Saints?

Men may profess to see two future comings of Christ hidden between the lines. They cannot find this idea in print. Nor can they show anything that would justify placing one of these comings before the tribulation, and the other after the tribulation. They cite 1 Thessalonians 4:13 and 18, and with a wave of the hand declare, “This is Christ coming *FOR* his saints.” In the heart of this passage we find the preposition “with.”

“Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring *WITH* him,” (1 Thess. 4:14).

An indignant preacher writes: “How can Christ come *WITH* his saints, unless he has first come *FOR* his saints?”

To which we reply: “His saints, whose bodies sleep, are *WITH* him now. They are not *HERE* but *THERE*.”

Paul wrote, “To die is gain.” “To depart and to be with Christ is far better,” (Phil. 1:21-23). Paul has long since departed and is with Christ. Some day Paul, the martyr, is coming back with his crucified Lord.

Sixty generations have fallen asleep in Christ since the first church assembled. One generation, perhaps less than two percent of the total church group, will be living when Jesus comes. Of this small fraction it might be said: "Jesus will come **FOR** his saints." The rest are **WITH** him when he comes.

Did Jesus Teach That His Kingdom Was Imminent?

Jesus taught that his kingdom would not be imminent until an eon had passed. An eon is not a generation, or even a century. Looking backward, we know that the eon of which Jesus taught would be more than nineteen hundred years long. Who would presume to say how much longer?

Tares and wheat are to grow together for an eon, and at the end tares are to be gathered first, (Matt. 13:39). Not until the end of an eon are bad fish to be sorted from good, (Matt. 13:49). Tares and wheat, good fish and bad, picture spiritual conditions which will continue until an eon has slowly passed away.

As Jesus neared Jerusalem for the last time he spake a parable because his disciples believed that the kingdom of God should immediately appear, (Luke 19:11-27). We should never lose our way in the details of a parable. The main point and purpose of that parable was to teach that the kingdom of God **WOULD NOT IMMEDIATELY APPEAR**. Whether earthly, or heavenly: whether literal, or spiritual; and whatever meaning might attach to the words, "The kingdom of God is at hand," that kingdom would not appear immediately. No! not until an eon of tares and wheat had reached its end!

After his resurrection came the so-called great commission by which he sent them out to teach all nations. An eon was set aside for this task, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the eon," (Matt. 28:20).

In spite of such plain teaching men shout from pulpits; "There has never been a day since Pentecost that might not have seen Jesus coming to rapture his church!"

The rapture of the church as usually taught would certainly mean the rapture of all the wheat, leaving a world of tares. Where is such teaching found in the Bible? How long is an eon?

Is The Word "imminent" Commonly Used In An improper Sense?

Yes! And much confusion has been created. Men who teach that the coming of Christ is imminent should be asked, "What do you mean by imminent? Within ten years? Fifty? A century?" Usually the answers will show that the word, "imminent," is used in a very vague sense. It is salt that has lost its savor.

None of us knows when death may strike us down. It might come today, And yet we do not speak of our death as imminent. We would shun a man in average health going about with downcast face, repeating, "My death is imminent!" And certainly we would not care to have him in our pulpit! Why should we accept the constant repetition of "The coming of Christ is imminent?"

When Christ is near, even at the doors; when our redemption draweth nigh; when the kingdom of God is near; the stars from heaven will announce that the coming, of Christ is imminent. Until the fig tree, and all the trees shoot forth, men should refrain from preaching that summer is nigh. Jesus taught his disciples that the kingdom of God would not immediately appear. He warned concerning the "future that men would preach: "The time draweth near." This prophecy has been fulfilled, and history records a constant recurrence of imminent coming teaching.

“And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ: and the time draweth near: GO YE NOT THEREFORE AFTER THEM,” (Luke 21:8).

“‘It Is Not For You To Know The Times Or The Seasons.’ Does This Mean, ‘Expect Me At Any Moment, Any Hour, Any Day’”

Not if read in its context!

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him saying, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth,” (Acts 1:6-8).

Would faithful apostles teach that Jesus might come at any moment before they had left Jerusalem? Before they had gone to Samaria? Before the gospel had reached Antioch? Before the men of Macedonia had been helped? According to the chronology of the Scofield Reference Bible, twenty years elapsed before Macedonia was reached. Men differ as to whether the gospel reached the uttermost part of the earth in apostolic times, or whether the uttermost part is still untouched; but we can be certain that no apostle would preach that Jesus might come at any moment until a testimony had been born to the uttermost part of the earth, We can also be certain that the apostles did not expect the coming of Christ in their time,

Did The Apostle Peter live In Daily Expectation Of The Coming Of Christ? Did He Expect To Be Caught Away Without Dying?

Peter did not expect the second coming of Christ in his own lifetime. He did not hope to be caught away without dying. He knew that he would grow old, and as an aged servant of the Lord he would be led away to be executed. Beside the sea of Galilee, after the resurrection, Jesus said to Peter:

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not,” (John 21:18).

Gestures may have illustrated the stretching forth of hands, the binding, and the carrying away. All who heard understood clearly. “This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God,” (John 21:19). Verily, verily, an aged Peter would be executed. Verily, verily, while Peter lived no man could preach that Jesus might come at any moment. Verily, verily, New Testament churches had no such expectation.

Did Peter Preach That Jesus Will Come Before The Tribulation?

Peter preached that Jesus is at the right hand of God exalted: (Acts 2:33); and that he will remain there until the times of restitution of all things. The times of restitution come after the tribulation--Not before!

“And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive UNTIL THE TIMES OF RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS, WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN,” (Acts 3:20, 21).

If Peter and all of the apostles were at this time in benighted ignorance of another coming from heaven

to rapture all faith from the earth before the tribulation, we desire to share with them their shame. This writer has never read it in the Bible; but he has heard it from the lips of uninspired preachers.

Did The Apostle Paul Live In Constant Expectation Of The Coming Of Christ And The Rapture Of The Church?

All of the brethren knew that Jesus would not return before an aged Peter died a martyr's death. There could be no preaching of an any-moment coming while Peter lived, If we can believe the tradition that Peter and Paul were executed at the same time, there could be no expectation of an any-moment coming while Paul lived.

Expecting to depart is the opposite of expecting Jesus to come. Paul expected bonds, affliction, and after that to depart. On his last journey to Jerusalem he met with the elders of the church at Ephesus, and told them that they would see his face no more, and taught them plainly about things which would follow his departure,

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock, also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them," (Acts 20:29, 30).

The elders wept because they knew that they would see his face no more. They also knew certainly that wolves and perverse men would take over. Neither Paul, nor these elders, were expecting Jesus to come at any moment.

Later, Paul wrote from Rome to these same Ephesians a letter addressed to their leader Timothy. There had been five years of affliction, mobs, trials, shipwreck, bands, and prison. Now Paul was waiting, even as Peter, for a martyr's death. Paul loved the day of Christ's appearing and would have all of us love that day; but he expected to be offered, and to depart before that day arrived.

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing, (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Some might ask, "Could this have been a last minute farewell after all reasonable hope of an any-moment coming of Christ had faded?"

The answer is found in the context. Timothy was far away in Ephesus. No airmail! It would take weeks for this letter to reach Timothy. Paul asked Timothy to come with haste to Rome. More weeks, if not months, must elapse before his arrival. Paul asked him to pick up a cloak at Troas, because winter was coming. He wanted books and parchments. Paul also wanted Mark because there was much work to be done before Paul's departure, and Mark was a useful man. Paul's departure was at hand, but not immediate. He planned with deliberation and took no account of a possible rapture.

Paul was awaiting execution. He had much work to do. He was not in despair. He had a hope, "To depart and to be with Christ, which is far better!" "To die is gain!" (Phil. 1:21-23). "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," (2 Cor. 5:8). Such hope has sustained God's servants through this eon, of patient waiting for Christ. Some tell us today that those who do not expect Jesus to come at any moment, perhaps tonight, lead a life of despair. What a corruption of the faith of our fathers!

Did The Apostle John Hope To Escape Death By The Coming Of Christ?

At the time when Peter heard by what death he should glorify God, he asked a question concerning his fellow disciple John; "What shall this man do?" Jesus answered: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me?" (John 21:22).

Such words could be wrested. Sixty years later, and perhaps twenty five years after the departure of Peter and Paul, the saying went abroad among the brethren that John would not die. John would tarry until the coming of Jesus. Of course that would mean that the coming of Christ was near. Exciting news for all! Men are inclined to love exciting news even if it be not true.

John rebukes this saying by repeating exactly what Jesus had said. Jesus had told Peter that what happened to John was no particular business of Peter. "What is that to thee?" The same meaning is conveyed by the words, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons." The only issue was: What did Jesus actually say? If men of our day would stick to what Jesus said, there would be no teaching of two future comings; or a coming before the tribulation; or a signless coming, or a phase of the first resurrection before the tribulation.

If John had lived in daily expectation of the coming of Christ, he would have said, "Certainly I am expecting Jesus to come before I die. I expect to tarry till he comes." If the brethren in apostolic times had thrilled with the expectation "Jesus may come today" there would have been no need of wresting the words of Jesus. They would have talked instead of "later truth," or "higher truth," or "deeper truth" revealed to Paul concerning secret, signless, any-moment coming of Christ to snatch away his church before the tribulation. They had no such teaching then, and no such teaching is found in our Bible today.

Is Jesus Coming As A Thief In The Night Before The Tribulation To Steal His Church?

Jesus is coming as a thief to Armageddon, an event which might well be called the end of the tribulation.

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." (Rev. 16:13-16).

"Behold I Come Quickly" What Does it Mean?

More than eighteen centuries have passed. Jesus has not yet come. An eon was in view when Jesus said, "Behold, I come quickly," An eon of tares and wheat! Good fish and bad! An eon of preaching the gospel to all nations! The eon of Matthew 13:39, 49; 28:20 is not nullified by the "quickly" of Revelation 22:7,12, 20.

Moses learned well the language of God. "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night," (Ps. 90:4). Once a young and impetuous Peter had expected the kingdom of God to appear immediately. As an old man ready to put off his tabernacle, he was concerned for the brethren who talked as though the Lord were slack concerning his promise. But, beloved, BE NOT IGNORANT OF THIS ONE THING, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slack-

ness,” (2 Pet, 3:8, 9). According to the reckoning of heaven, it is less than two short yesterdays since the promise, “Behold, I come quickly.”

Should We Accept The Doctrine Of Rightly Dividing The Word Of Truth?

This once popular doctrine has fallen into disrepute for lack of a supreme pope to decide what is “rightly.” Rightly dividing the word of truth should mean teaching according to the context. Concerning the day of the Lord Paul wrote: “But ye brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief and yet it will come upon ungodly men as a thief, as travail upon a woman, and they shall not escape, (1 Thess. 5:2-4). When men teach that the day of the Lord is coming as a thief upon godly believers of the Bible, **THEY ARE WRONGLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH.** As a thief to men in darkness, but not as a thief to men who walk in the light!

When men teach that a single sign would nullify the idea of a thief-like coming of Christ, **THEY ARE WRONGLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH.** After signs in heaven and earth so stupendous that men refuse to believe in literalness, Jesus is coming as a thief to Armageddon, (Rev. 16:15).

When believers are taught to expect Christ at any moment, suddenly, without warning, and are given the flood as an example, **SOMEONE IS WRONGLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH.** Noah, warned of God, prepared an ark while his neighbors went to weddings. The flood was not a surprise to Noah. Not till the ark was finished and filled with food; not till the animals had come for preservation; not till Noah had entered the ark, and not till the Lord had shut the door was there any danger from the flood. As for the ungodly, they believed not, even when confronted by the ark, one of the most sensational warnings ever set before wicked men. When our Lord is revealed from heaven, his servants will be ready and waiting, warned beforehand that he is even at the door.

“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh,” (Luke 21:28).

Would God Pour Out The Vials Of His Wrath While The Church Is On Earth?

The church has passed through great tribulations in the past. “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God,” (Acts 14:22).

Rapturists reply, “Tribulation that comes from wicked men is different from awful, supernatural wrath poured out by the Lord himself.”

Tut! tut! What about the elect whom the angels are going to gather when Jesus comes in glory? (Matt. 24:31). Have they survived in spite of vials of wrath? Are the elect of one era more precious in the sight of God than those of another era? Is it proper for Jewish elect to suffer from vials of wrath; but unthinkable for church elect? And yet Israel is graven on His palms, and the apple of His eye, (Isa. 44:15; Zech. 2:8).

We point out that the vials of God’s wrath are within the limits of human endurance, affect chiefly the enemies of God, and are similar to the judgments which fell upon Egypt. Out of such judgments the Hebrews walked in triumph; and those judgments came from God!

Turn to the sixteenth chapter of Revelation and read. From the first vial came a noisome and grievous sore upon men who had the mark of the beast. The elect will have no mark of the beast, and no sores.

As the second and third vials are poured out, seas, rivers, and fountains art turned to blood. Similar judgments fell on Egypt. We have heard no weeping for suffering Hebrews. Comes the fourth vial and

men are scorched by the heat of the sun. We would expect the saints to be prepared, (Luke 21:36).

With the fifth vial the kingdom of the beast is filled with darkness and they gnaw their tongues for pain. Even so it came to pass in Egypt and the Hebrews had light in their dwellings, (Ex. 10:23).

The sixth vial dries up the waters of the Euphrates that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared; even as Pharaoh was lured to destruction by the drying up of the Red sea.

With the seventh vial great Babylon drinks the cup of the fierceness of God's wrath; but God's people have been called out of Babylon, (Rev: 18:4).

Is The Rapture Of The Church Taught In Old Testament Types?

Doctrine is never to be DISCOVERED in types. No inspired apostle wrote of the church caught away before the tribulation. Therefore no inspired apostle could possibly have taught that Enoch's translation before the flood was a type of the church caught away before the tribulation. Uninspired men are attaching meanings to certain events for which they have not a syllable of inspired authority.

Are There Types And Symbols In The Bible?

Yes, many! Baptism and the Lord's supper are symbols. Jesus is the bread of life, the water of life, the way, the door, and the good shepherd. All of these and many more rest on the divine authority of the written word. They were not invented by modern preachers to support doctrines never stated in the Bible.

Are There Striking Resemblances To The Rapture In Some Events?

Enoch and Elijah were caught away as living men. No one who believes the Bible disputes this. Amillennialists and Postmillennialists believe, as much as any rapturist, that the living will be instantly changed and caught up to meet the Lord. Luther, Calvin, and other Reformers believed that the dead would be raised and the living changed at the end of the world. Such men as Spurgeon, the Bonars, George Muller of Bristol, Bishop Ryle, A. Saphir, David Baron, and B. W. Newton believed that this great event would take place after the tribulation and before the millennium. It is widely known that W. J. Erdman and W. G. Moorehead, listed as consulting editors of the Scofield Reference Bible, believed in a premillennial coming of Christ but rejected the teaching of a pre-tribulational coming. The names of many beloved preachers of our day are associated with the doctrine that all living saints will be caught up BEFORE THE TRIBULATION. The facts are not an issue; but godly men differ as to the time.

Do Not Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Lot Symbolize A Possible Escape From Tribulation?

Teaching from types is simply another term for spiritualizing.

Of the ten godly generations named in Genesis 5 only Adam was dead, and Noah was unborn, when Enoch was translated. Enoch was translated from the midst of his own sons and daughters whom he had begotten while walking with God; and from the midst of the godly patriarchs of his time. Is this a picture of the rapture of the church? Enoch was translated about six hundred and sixty-nine years before the flood. To make it realistic, imagine Enoch as having been translated in 1285 AD. It would now in 1454 be about the time for Noah to enter the ark. Is this an inspiring picture of the rapture?

Methuselah died the year of the flood. A leading radio preacher teaches that the flood waited until the death of Methuselah. He avers that the tribulation waits for the rapture of the church which is now overdue; and the world is living on borrowed time. We point out that the DEATH of Methuselah does not

picture the rapture of living saints. We read that the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, WHILE THE ARK WAS A PREPARING,” (1 Pet. 3:20).

As for Noah, he was in the ark and waiting when the flood came. Does this picture the Jew preparing for the tribulation? When Noah came out of the ark the earth was dry, Noah was out of the flood, not in it. It was not the day of Noah’s trouble. Nor does Noah’s family in the ark symbolize the 144,000 Jews carrying the gospel to the whole world.

Lot reluctantly withdrawing from Sodom, trying to persuade his sons-in-law to come with him, his wife changed to a pillar of salt does not present a very accurate picture of the rapture of the church. Lot and his daughters living in a cave do not symbolize the church caught away to the heavenly places. The almost instant destruction of everything that breathed in Sodom does not picture the tribulation.

We marvel at men who claim to be so impressed by these types that they are willing to believe in the rapture of the church before the tribulation even though they can not find a verse in the Bible that teaches it.

What Scriptures Are Supposed To Teach The Rapture Of The Church Before The Tribulation?

The term “rapture of the church,” and the phrase “before the tribulation” cannot be found in the New Testament. “Rapture” is an unscriptural word used in an obsolete sense--“a snatching away.” It is used to avoid such forth-right language as “second coming;” and “third coming.” This unscriptural word, “rapture,” is used to set forth an unscriptural doctrine.

Where in the entire Bible can you find a statement, or even a suggestion of the lifting out of this world of every living believer, leaving this ungodly world to pursue its business and pleasures? Passenger trains wrecked because the engineers have been translated! Empty caskets at funeral parlors! Children disappearing from school desks leaving only little heaps of clothes! If such a sensational, world-wide event might occur at an moment in the future, why would the apostles be silent? Why would such a stupendous affair be revealed only to men who can read between the lines? Men who teach this doctrine are positive that it is set forth in such passages as 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50-55; Philippians 3:20, 21; and Titus 2:12, 13. In none of these passages is there a syllable suggesting that these events will take place before the tribulation; or that business will continue as usual after they occur.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: We point out that this is a resurrection passage, beginning: “But I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep.” A resurrection should not be called a RAPTURE. A resurrection of the saints of all ages should not be called a CHURCH resurrection, or a CHURCH rapture. The glorious event described in Revelation 20:1-10 should be called by its proper name, THE FIRST RESURRECTION! and not by an unscriptural name, the rapture of the church. In a footnote under this passage, the Scofield Reference Bible says: “Not church saints only but all bodies of the saved of whatever dispensation, are included in the first resurrection as here described.”

Among the saved of all dispensations the prophet Daniel will surely appear. The twelfth chapter of Daniel is an end-time, tribulation chapter mentioning the “time, times, and an half,” also some mysterious periods, “a thousand two hundred and ninety days,” and “the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days,” And then the thirteenth verse, “But go thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot AT THE END OF THE DAYS.” Daniel will stand in his lot AFTER the tribulation,

1 Corinthians 15:50-55: This is from the greatest of all resurrection chapters and describes the moment in which this corruptible shall put on incorruption. Call it not a rapture!

Philippians 3:20, 21: Another resurrection passage! “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” We look for a resurrection, not for a rapture; for a resurrection of all saints, not church saints only; for a resurrection at the beginning of the thousand year reign of Christ; for a resurrection that will include the martyrs of the tribulation,

Titus 2:12, 13: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing.” Paul was not “looking for an any-moment coming, He expected to be offered, and to depart. He looked for perverse men and wolves who would prey upon the churches after his own departure. Paul’s blessed hope is the promise of eternal life to men justified by the grace of God. This is brought out in three verses. In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the eons began,” (Titus 1:2). “Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present eon looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” (Titus 2:12, 13). “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life,” (Titus 3:7).

Is The Twenty-first Chapter Of Luke For Us? Or For The Jewish Remnant Of The Tribulation Period?

Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13 are parallel chapters and can have no personal application to those who expect Jesus to come before the tribulation. They teach that the Olivet discourse is Jewish, and was given before there were any churches. Later came the church, and later still, special doctrines for the church, reaching their perfection in the prison epistles. The weakness of Ipe Dixits lies in the fact that any one can issue them; and extreme dispensationalists eliminate virtually everything but the prison epistles. The question is: Was Jesus teaching in the Olivet discourse concerning a third coming which lies beyond a second coming not to be revealed for twenty years?

Over such tortuous roads the human mind must travel in order to examine the rapture question. We wish to point out that the twenty-first chapter of Luke was prepared at the same time as the prison epistles and sent out to the same churches. This Gospel is as Pauline as anything penned by Paul himself, and might well be entitled, THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL’S BELOVED PHYSICIAN. Let it speak concerning the signs and tribulation which precede the coming of Christ.

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity: the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh,” (Luke 21:25-29).

According to the Scofield Reference Bible, Luke’s Gospel was prepared between A.D. 63 and 68; nine years after First Thessalonians. A.D. 63 is the time of Paul’s arrival at Rome as a prisoner. Here he dwelt two whole years in his own hired house and received all who came unto him, (Acts 28:26).

Who was Luke? Luke was not an apostle. He is not mentioned as a preacher, or as a leader, or as an authority among the brethren. His name is not mentioned in the two books ascribed to him, but Paul refers to him three times in the prison epistles, (2 Tim. 4:11; Col. 4:14; Philemon 24). He was a beloved

physician and companion during the last five years of Paul's recorded ministry. To Paul's hired house came Jewish leaders and men of all nations. There were searching questions about every event in the life and ministry of Jesus. Every event in Paul's own experience was under scrutiny. Luke the beloved physician, sat like a sponge in Paul's house and took it in; all of it. Luke heard as the apostle told the Jewish leaders: "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it," (Acts 28:28). These Gentiles needed to know the essential facts of our Lord's earthly ministry: and the background of the letters which Paul had written to churches. Luke wrote it in an orderly narrative in two parts covering about sixty-five years, from the birth of John the Baptist to Paul's hired house at Rome. Luke merely reflects the teachings of Paul. Luke sets before the Gentiles a detailed account of the teachings of Jesus regarding, his second coming. Not one word did he write about a rapture of the church before the tribulation. If in Paul's hired house men were exhorted to turn from what Jesus had taught on Olivet to a new revelation of a coming before the tribulation, Luke would certainly have recorded it.

Will The Church Go Through The Tribulation?

This is a tricky question like, "How long since you quit beating your wife?" It presupposes that the Bible states that the church will be caught away before the tribulation, and that some mulish person insists that the church will be here during the tribulation.

More fairly stated the question would be; "Will anyone, Jew, Gentile, or of the church of God, be caught away, or raised from the dead BEFORE THE TRIBULATION? Chapter and verse! Please! If a single verse teaches that the church will be gone before the tribulation, surely no one would argue that the church is here during the tribulation. But where is the missing verse?"

The idea of a churchless tribulation presents many problems. Imagine every preacher, every teacher of the Bible, every confessor of Christ, instantly caught away from the earth! Not a vestige of faith in all the world! Spiritual darkness such as reigns in pagan jungles! Our Lord said: "Go, teach all nations." Why should he suddenly withdraw all light from mankind?

And yet these men who teach the rapture agree that within seven years the gospel will reach the uttermost part of the earth, and men of every kindred, tribe, and tongue will wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, (Rev. 7:14). Beginning at zero with not a believer on earth, the great commission will be literally fulfilled within seven years, in spite of famine, pestilence and persecution--and the church which claims the great commission as its own not permitted to share in this missionary triumph of the ages!

What is A Premillennialist?

A Premillennialist believes that Jesus is coming "immediately after the tribulation," (Matt. 24:29). "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations, (Matt. 25:31, 32). Around him in glorious resurrection bodies will gather the saints of all ages, Men who have overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and who have loved not their lives unto the death, will reign with him over the earth for a thousand years, (Rev. 12:11; 20:1-10). The rest of the dead live not until the thousand years are finished! (Rev, 20:5).

It makes no difference whether we speak of Christ coming after the tribulation, or before the millennium. Before the millennium" and, "after the tribulation," are phrases describing the same point in the future of this world. A Premillennialist is a Posttribulationist.

Men who teach that Jesus is coming before the tribulation, who wait for that coming, and hope for that coming, should call themselves Pretribulationists. At least they should not confuse the minds of God's sheep by calling themselves Premillennialists. Premillennialism goes back to Mount Olivet. Pretribulationism began with John Darby and his associates in the Plymouth Brethren movement about 1830.

Search the pages of history for the name of any reputable teacher, or honorable sect, who taught two future comings of Christ, one before the tribulation, the other after the tribulation, prior to John Darby! Do not charge us with false statements until you have found them. If this writer errs it is through ignorance, not malice. All of us should be lovers of truth even though it hurts, (2 Thess. 2:12)

We have tried to speak plainly. We love many who sincerely teach the pretribulation rapture. We could almost hope that we might be wrong. One thing we confess--none of us has a monopoly on stupidity.

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END

End-notes:

1. This copy of Rev. Jones article is from the Dave Macpherson Papers collection at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC. Thanks to SEBTS Archivist Jim Lutzweiler and to Bill Youngmark for providing me a copy of this rare and hard to find document!
2. Formatted for the internet by [Theologue](#)