

# DOES THE BIBLE TEACH A PRE-TRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE?

*A Free Report*

By Gary DeMar

The most popular end-time event is the rapture. The rapture, in its most basic form, is the belief that the church will be taken off the earth sometime before, during, or after a future Great Tribulation. Actually, there are five rapture positions: pre-tribulational, post-tribulational, mid-tribulational, partial, and pre-wrath. The pre-tribulational rapture is the most popular expression of the doctrine. The *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins capitalizes on the belief that the church will be taken off the earth “in the twinkling of an eye” at the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period, thus avoiding its horrors.

The doctrine has been criticized since its inception in the early part of the nineteenth century when it was first taught. As you consider some of the texts used to support the doctrine, ask yourself this question: Is it self-evident from the following “rapture texts” that they teach a “taking away of the church” prior to a future seven-year period of unprecedented tribulation? The arguments used by adherents of the pre-tribulational rapture position are complex, since no single verse actually teaches the doctrine. The complexity of these arguments requires that we consider the strongest texts used to support the position.

It should be kept in mind that the entire pre-tribulational scheme is based on a unique interpretation of Daniel 9:24–27. The dispensationalist maintains that the last seven years (the seventieth “week”) is still future and that the rapture will inaugurate this final week (seven years) of the seventy weeks (490 years). This supposedly will give God the opportunity to deal exclusively with Israel as a nation again. Of course, even a cursory reading of Daniel 9:24–27 will show that nothing is mentioned about the church being taken away in a rapture prior to the opening of the 70th week, that is, seven years.

### *Revelation 4:1*

Let’s begin our study of the pre-tribulational rapture doctrine by taking a close look at Revelation 4:1:

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*After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.’”*

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John Walvoord, an ardent believer in the pre-tribulational rapture, imports an already-constructed pre-tribulational rapture theory into texts that say nothing about the church being taken to heaven. His exposition of Revelation 4:1 is evidence of this:

It is clear from the context that this is not an explicit reference to the Rapture of the church, as John was not actually translated [raptured]; in fact he was still in his natural body on the island of Patmos. He was translated into scenes of heaven only temporarily. Though there is no authority for connecting the Rapture with this expression, there does seem to be a typical representation of the order of events, namely, the church age first, then the Rapture, then the church in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

If one takes Walvoord’s position, then Rosenthal is correct: There is no verse that explicitly teaches the doctrine!<sup>2</sup> *All* of the texts used to support the rapture theory *presuppose* the validity of the theory, a theory that does not have a single text to support it. The doctrine has been constructed before texts have been evaluated.

This unsound approach to Bible interpretation has done little to dissuade the adherents of the various rapture theories. Grant R. Jeffrey, for example, begins with Revelation 4:1 as one of the “*five definitive indications* supporting the pretribulation Rapture.”<sup>3</sup> Here’s how the argument goes for those who see the rapture of the church in this verse:

- The voice that John heard was “like the sound of a trumpet speaking.”
- When Jesus returns to rapture His church, He will do so “with the trumpet of God” (1 Thess. 4:16).
- Since a trumpet is used just prior to the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, we should assume that a rapture is in view when “a door [is] standing open in heaven,” presumably to receive the raptured church (Rev. 4:1–2).
- The church is no longer mentioned in Revelation; therefore, the church must have been raptured.
- John’s being directed to “Come up here” is a depiction of the rapture in the same way that the church will be “caught up” at the time of the pre-tribulational rapture. Jeffrey writes, “When John was *‘in the Spirit’* ... he was ‘Raptured up’ to Heaven....”<sup>4</sup>

This approach stretches the Bible to fit an already developed theory of the rapture. The doctrine is read into the text.<sup>5</sup>

As has been noted, the pre-tribulational rapture doctrine assumes that the seventieth week of Daniel is separated from the sixty-ninth week and is yet to be fulfilled. The dispensational interpretation also assumes that Revelation was written about a time period in the remote future rather than for the people for whom events were to happen “shortly” (Rev. 1:1). For the readers of the prophecy in the first century, “the time is near” (1:3). Revelation was written before A.D. 70. Its purpose was to describe events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem. The evidence for a pre-A.D. 70 date is overwhelming.<sup>6</sup> For one thing, the temple was still standing when John received the Revelation and wrote it down for the “seven churches” (Rev. 11:1–2), churches that were in existence in John’s day. Jesus assured the first readers of Revelation that He would be coming “quickly” (2:16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). Those who claim to hold a literal interpretation want to avoid the obvious conclusion of these verses—the prophecy is describing events that

refer to the first-century church. This does not mean that Revelation has no meaning for today's church. The crucifixion occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and no one claims that Christ's death has no meaning for today. Numerous events in the Old Testament are history, but they have meaning and application for our day as well: "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for *our instruction*, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor. 10:11).

But let's get back to the supposed evidence for a pre-tribulational rapture in Revelation 4:1. First, John didn't hear a trumpet. He heard a *voice* "like the *sound* of a trumpet speaking." Second, it is fallacious to argue that the absence of a reference to the church indicates its rapture (absence from the earth). Hal Lindsey states, "Since the Church is mentioned nineteen times in the first three chapters under divine outline of 'the things which are,' and since the Church is not mentioned or implied as being on earth even once after the statement 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place *after these things*,' I conclude that it is the end of the Church age that is meant here, and that the Church is in heaven thereafter until it returns as the bride of Christ in Revelation 19:7–14."<sup>7</sup> Notice that no text states this. These are Lindsey's conclusions.

Let's test Lindsey's hypothesis. The first three chapters of Revelation deal with churches, assemblies of saints in Asia Minor in the first century: the church *in* Ephesus (2:1), the church *in* Smyrna (2:8), the church *in* Pergamum (2:12), the church *in* Thyatira (2:18), the church *in* Sardis (3:1), the church *in* Philadelphia (3:7), and the church *in* Laodicea (3:14). After chapter three, Jesus (1:1) deals with those who make up the church—the "saints" (5:8; 8:3, 4; 11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:8). In the first three chapters, local churches are addressed, not the church generally. After chapter three the "saints," individuals who make up the seven churches in Asia Minor and elsewhere, are referred to. Is there exegetical evidence for this interpretation? Yes. "To the *church of God which is at Corinth*, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, *saints by calling*, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2; cf. 6:1–6; 14:33; 2 Cor. 2:1). Is Paul describing two groups of people? No! The saints constitute the church.

It takes amazing hermeneutical manipulation to create a doctrine where none exists. Lindsey's view must be read into the text. He begins with his pretribulational rapture theology (still not documented by arguments from

Scripture) and forces it on a verse that must be twisted to prove what he claims it teaches. Nothing like what Lindsey believes can be found in Revelation 4:1.

Let's continue by applying Lindsey's hermeneutical logic to other passages. The words *church* and *churches* appear just once in Hebrews (12:23) and twice in 2 Corinthians (1:1 and 2:14): "The church is not mentioned as such in Mark, Luke, John, 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, or Jude, and not until chapter 16 of Romans. Unless we are prepared to relegate large chunks of the NT to a limbo of irrelevance to the Church, we cannot make the mention or omission of the term 'church' a criterion for determining the applicability of a passage to saints of the present age."<sup>8</sup>

Is Bible interpretation based on word counts? The same reasoning process has been taken with the book of Esther by liberal scholars: "There can be no doubt that the historicity and canonicity of Esther has been the most debated of all the Old Testament books. Even some Jewish scholars questioned its inclusion in the Old Testament because of the absence of God's name."<sup>9</sup> If word counts are to be so heavily relied upon then Lindsey refutes his own argument. He finds the antichrist all over Revelation, but the word is nowhere to be found.

If chapters 4–19 are not about the church, then what group of people would Jesus as the true author of Revelation have in mind? The dispensationalist believes that these passages describe the time of the great tribulation, when Israel, not the church, is in view. But word-count exegesis leaves us in something of a dilemma since the word *Israel* only appears once after the supposed rapture of the church, and not until Revelation 7:4! One would think that if the church is in view in the first three chapters because the words *church* and *churches* are used nineteen times, then shouldn't we expect to find the word *Israel* used more than once after chapter three if this entire seven-year period is about Israel? The word *Israel* does appear in 21:12, but the word *churches* appears in 22:16. Revelation 22:16 demonstrates that the entire book is "for the churches," not just the first three chapters.

A glaring inconsistency can be found in Tim LaHaye's defense of an any-moment rapture based on Revelation 4:1. He states that the "first-century church believed in the imminent return of Christ, possibly during their lifetime."<sup>10</sup> He means by this that first-century Christians and Christians thereafter believed that Jesus could come at any moment. But later in the same book he writes, "Chapter 1 is the introduction; chapters 2 and 3 [of Revelation] cover the church age, using seven historical churches to describe

the entire age. (For example, the church in Ephesus is the only one that refers to apostles because the first-century church alone included apostles.)”<sup>11</sup> Chuck Smith, another popular prophecy writer, pushes the same idea while maintaining that Jesus’ coming is always imminent, that is, that He could come at any moment. But like LaHaye, he contradicts himself when he writes that “each of these seven churches . . . represents a particular period of Church history. For instance, the church at Smyrna represents the Church of the second through fourth centuries—a time when persecution was horrible and as many as six million Christians were executed for their faith. The church at Pergamum represents the beginning of the church-state system that developed under Constantine. And so on.”<sup>12</sup>

How could Christians believe that Jesus could come at any moment and also believe that He would not come until the last of the seven representative churches (Laodicea) appeared? This destroys the dispensationalist’s doctrine of imminency, the any-moment rapture of the church. It also destroys literalism since the seven churches are purported to *represent* seven distinct periods of the church age, not individual churches. William Hendriksen comments on the seven churches/seven ages view:

The notion that these seven churches describe seven successive periods of Church history hardly needs refutation. To say nothing about the humorous—if it were not so deplorable—exegesis which, for example, makes the church of Sardis, which was dead, refer to the glorious age of the Reformation; it should be clear to every student of Scripture that there is not one atom of evidence in all the sacred writings which in any way corroborates this thoroughly arbitrary method of cutting up the history of the Church and assigning the resulting pieces to the respective epistles of Revelation 2 and 3.<sup>13</sup>

According to dispensationalists, the rapture is a two-stage event: Jesus comes *for* His saints before the seven-year tribulation period and *with* His saints at the end of the tribulation period to defeat antichrist and set up the millennial kingdom (Rev. 19). But there is no mention of the church in Revelation 19 following Jesus on His “white horse” (19:11). The “armies of heaven,” not the church, follow Jesus on their “white horses” (19:14). If dispensationalists maintain that the “armies of heaven” are the church or saints, then this only shows that the word church does not have to appear

for it to be present. A final point needs to be made. Dispensationalists teach that Jesus coming on “a white horse” in Revelation 19 is the second coming. Robert L. Thomas is a representative of this popular position:

This picture climaxes the NT emphasis on the second coming of Christ as the fulfillment and vindication of the Christian hope (e.g., Matt. 13:41–42; 25:41; Rom. 2:5; 2 Thess. 1:7–8, 9–10; 2:8) . . . It answers specifically to the theme verse of Rev. 1:7 which tells of the worldwide audience this event will have (cf. Matt. 24:27–31). . . . In fact, this is the only event in Revelation that corresponds to that coming narrowly construed to refer to Christ’s personal coming.<sup>14</sup>

In Acts 1:9–11 we are told that “a cloud received Him out of their sight” (1:9). No horse was involved. “This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, *will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven*” (1:11). Jesus did not go into heaven on a horse, and He will not return on a horse.

Like the dispensational hermeneutical methodology in general, the pre-tribulational rapture doctrine is a gigantic hoax. Because the pretribulational rapture is a pillar of the dispensational system, we should expect to find proof of its existence in clear texts. Even one text would suffice. There is not a single passage that clearly and dogmatically supports a pretribulational rapture. If so many people believe the pre-tribulational rapture doctrine, why is it that no verse can be appealed to that explicitly teaches it? Most pre-tribulationists have never been challenged to produce a verse.

### *1 Thessalonians 4:16–17*

In a debate on eschatology with Dave Hunt, I challenged him to point to one verse that explicitly taught a pre-tribulational rapture. He immediately appealed to 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17. Read it for yourself. The idea of a pre-tribulational rapture must be *assumed* by the reader and imposed on the text. Sound biblical interpretation, however, requires textual proof before a doctrine can be formulated.

Historically, the church understood 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 to refer to the general resurrection of the saints. The text simply describes the raising of those who are “in Christ.” No mention is made of the church being raptured either before or after a tribulation period. Nothing in the text even points

to a tribulation period. Anthony Hoekema, an amillennialist, rejects the idea that the Apostle Paul was teaching a pre-tribulational rapture:

What this passage clearly teaches is that at the time of the Lord's return all the believing dead (the "dead in Christ") will be raised, and all believers who are still alive will be transformed and glorified (see 1 Corinthians 15:51–52); then these two groups will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. What these words do not teach is that after this meeting in the air the Lord will reverse his direction and go back to heaven, taking the raised and transformed members of the church with him. The passage does not breathe a word of this. To be sure, verse 17 ends with the words, "and so we shall always be with the Lord." But Paul does not say *where* we shall always be with the Lord. The idea that after meeting the Lord in the air we shall be with him for seven years in heaven and later for a thousand years in the air above the earth is pure inference and nothing more. Everlasting oneness with Christ in glory is the clear teaching of this passage, not a pretribulational Rapture.<sup>15</sup>

Non-premillennialists do not deny the rapture as such (even though the word is not found in Scripture); they only deny the dispensationalists' version of it. Not only is the Bible on the side of those who view the rapture as the general resurrection, so are eighteen hundred years of church history: "As an established view, it can be traced back to J.N. Darby and the Plymouth Brethren in the year 1830. Some scholars, seeking to prove error by association, have attempted (perhaps unfairly) to trace its origin back two years earlier to a charismatic, visionary woman named Margaret MacDonald."<sup>16</sup> Even pre-tribulational dispensationalists admit the novelty of the position:

It is scarcely to be found in a single book or sermon through the period of 1600 years! If any doubt this statement, let them search ... the remarks of the so-called Fathers, both pre and post Nicene, the theological treatises of the scholastic divines, Roman Catholic writers of all shades of thought, the literature of the Reformation, the sermons and expositions of the Puritans, and the general theological works of the day. He will find the "mystery" conspicuous by its absence.<sup>17</sup>

Here is a dispensationalist admitting that there is "scarcely" any historical evidence to support the position. He's too generous. There is *no* evidence. So



where does a dispensationalist get this doctrine? Tommy Ice, a fervent proponent of dispensationalism, writes that the theory is based on “deduction”:

A certain theological climate needed to be created before premillennialism would restore the Biblical doctrine of the pretrib Rapture. Sufficient development did not take place until after the French Revolution. The factor of the Rapture has been clearly known by the church all along; therefore, the issue is the *timing* of the event. Since *neither pre nor posttribs have a proof text for the time of the Rapture* (unless the promise made to the church in Rev. 3:10 is an exception which promises deliverance—the Rapture—from the future tribulation before the seven-year period begins),<sup>18</sup> then it is clear that this issue is the product of a deduction from one’s overall system of theology, *both for pre and posttribbers*.<sup>19</sup>

What an admission! A pillar doctrine of dispensationalism does not have a single text to prove it.<sup>20</sup> Dispensationalism’s process of “deducing” the rapture theory is this: First, create the system; second, create the doctrines to make the system work; third, claim to have restored “the Biblical doctrine of the pretrib Rapture,” which is based on a “deduction from one’s overall system of theology” because there are no verses that teach it; fourth, imply that the early church, the “apostles of the apostles,” knew nothing of this foundational doctrine. Bizarre. Millions of Christians today hold to a system of interpretation (dispensationalism) that does not have one verse to prove one of its foundational doctrines, the pre-tribulational rapture of the church, the concept that makes dispensationalism dispensational. This system of interpretation is a theological house of cards.

Hoping to seek historical validation for the pre-tribulation rapture, dispensationalists have turned to an obscure and questionable source, Pseudo-Ephraem (probably a seventh-century composition). While the sermon *On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World* claims to be authored by Ephraem of Nisibis (306–373), no one really knows who wrote it or when it was written. Even so, pre-tribulationists believe that it contains “two proto-rapture statements.”<sup>21</sup> An appeal to Pseudo-Ephraem is an act of desperation by those in need of historical support since they have no biblical support for their position.

*Titus 2:13*

Dave Hunt, in *How Close Are We?*, maintains that “Paul called the Rapture ‘that blessed hope’” (Titus 2:13).<sup>22</sup> There is no mention of a rapture, either pre-, mid-, or post-tribulational in this passage. Hunt, as a pre-tribulationist, asserts that “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior” is a description of Jesus’ coming at the end of the seven-year tribulation period while the “blessed hope” is the rapture of the church prior to the tribulation period. The belief that Titus 2:13 describes two comings must be read into the passage. Paul was “awaiting our blessed hope” *which was* “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Even John Walvoord believes that Titus 2:13 describes only one event.<sup>23</sup>

What is this “blessed hope”? It was the “appearing of the glory” of Jesus. We have come across this language before in Matthew 16:27: “For the Son of Man is going to *come in the glory of His Father* with His angels...” (Matt. 16:27; cf. Mark 8:38). When did this happen? “Truly I say to you, there are some of those standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” (Matt. 16:28). Jesus had His generation in mind, not a distant generation.

Notice that Titus 2:13 describes the “appearing of *the glory* of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Paul does not say that Jesus will appear, only that “the glory” will appear. There is a significant difference in meaning. Peter writes in a similar fashion:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that at the *revelation of His glory*, you may rejoice with exultation (1 Peter 4:12–13).

First, Peter writes that his readers were personally involved in a “fiery ordeal.” This was not some future event. Second, not only were they experiencing a “fiery ordeal,” but they would “rejoice with exultation” at the “revelation of His glory.” There is no indication that a long period of time exists between their “fiery ordeal” and the “revelation of His glory.” In this same chapter Peter writes that “the end of all things is *at hand*” (1 Peter 4:7), at hand for those reading his letter in the first century. What was this “end” that was “at hand”? Jay Adams’ comments summarize the argument:

[First] Peter was written before A.D. 70 (when the destruction of Jerusalem took place)... The persecution (and martyrdom) that these (largely) Jewish Christians had been experiencing up until now stemmed principally from unconverted Jews (indeed, his readers had found refuge among **Gentiles** as resident aliens)... [H]e refers to the severe trials that came upon Christians who had fled Palestine under attack from their unconverted fellow Jews. **The end of all things** (that had brought this exile about) was **near**.

In six or seven years from the time of writing, the overthrow of Jerusalem, with all its tragic stories, as foretold in Revelation and in the Olivet Discourse upon which that part is based, would take place. Titus and Vespasian would wipe out the old order once and for all. All those forces that led to the persecution and exile of these Christians in Asia Minor—the temple ceremonies (outdated by Christ’s death), Pharisaism (with its distortion of O.T. law into a system of works-righteousness) and the political stance of Palestinian Jewry toward Rome—would be erased. The Roman armies would wipe Jewish opposition from the face of the land. Those who survived the holocaust of A.D. 70 would themselves be dispersed around the Mediterranean world. “So,” says Peter, “hold on; the end is near.” The full **end** of the O.T. order (already made defunct by the cross and the empty tomb) was about to occur.<sup>24</sup>

Third, if the “revelation of His glory” were a depiction of a pre-tribulational rapture that is yet to occur, how would this distant event comfort those who were involved in a “fiery ordeal” nearly two thousand years ago? In death they saw Jesus “face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Cor. 5:8). Did they not behold the *fullness* of His glory at that time? In another context, the Apostle Paul writes, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the *glory* that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18). The New American Standard translation does not catch the full meaning of this passage. Following Robert Young’s *Literal Translation of the Bible*, we read, “For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the *glory about to be revealed in us.*” Whatever the glory is, it was “about to be revealed” (see Rev. 2:10; 3:2, 10; 10:4; 12:4; 17:8). Peter tells his readers that the “Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Peter 4:14). This was a *present* condition, not something that the people in Peter’s day would have to wait for in a future rapture.

If the “appearing of *the glory* of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13) is neither a distant event nor the bodily return of Christ, then what is it? The “appearing of the glory” is the coming of the fullness of the New Covenant promises as outlined in the gospel. The Old Covenant came with glory “which fades away” (1 Cor. 3:7, 10–11, 13). The New Covenant has come with even more glory (3:8). “For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it. For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory” (3:9–11).

With the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 the Old Covenant that had faded in glory was obliterated. The gospel is the new glory which those who are still attached to the fading glory of the Old Covenant do not see. “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world [lit., *age*] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, *that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*” (2 Cor. 4:3–4).

The blessed hope, therefore, is the coming of the fullness of the gospel in the “glory of Christ.” This fullness was accomplished with the obliteration of the symbols of the Old Covenant: the temple, priesthood, and sacrificial system.

### *1 Corinthians 15*

This section of Scripture falls into the same category as 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17. Again, no one denies that Christians are going to be raised; the dispute is over when the event happens. The passage makes no mention of a “secret rapture,” or Jesus coming “for His saints” before a future great tribulation and then later returning “with His saints” after the great tribulation. Nowhere in 1 Corinthians 15 will you find a discussion of the great tribulation or an earthly millennial reign of Christ. The pre-tribulational rapture must be read into 1 Corinthians 15. The chapter deals with resurrection not rapture: first, the resurrection of Jesus; second, the resurrection of Christians. Without the resurrection of Jesus there will be no resurrection of Christians. The resurrection of believers comes just before the end: “But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and

power” (15:23–24). This “resurrection of the dead” occurs *after* the period of the kingdom (there must be something to deliver up) and just before “the end.”

How do premillennialists fit an earthly millennium into these two verses? You guessed it. There are gaps inserted to divide the passage into three events: the pre-tribulational rapture, the coming of Christ seven years later, and the resurrection of unbelievers at the end of the Millennium. Again, these “gaps” or “intervals” must be read into the text. John 5:28–29 states very clearly that believers and unbelievers will be raised at the same time, not separated by a thousand years.

Christians must refuse to be guided by the latest interpretive trends or to be swayed by current events. The Bible is the Christian’s guide, not the conjectures of self-appointed prophecy “experts,” the latest newspaper headlines, or the movements of national boundaries. The Bible is our starting point regardless of what we think is going on in the world.

The only question is *whether* the *Bible* actually teaches these things. If it does, then “let God be true but every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4). The newspaper has no prerogative to challenge God’s word of truth. Nor do those who read the newspapers. As faithful disciples of Christ, we are to trust God as the sovereign controller over human history, “who works all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:1), declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, “My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose” (Isa. 46:10), so that “none can stay his hand” (Dan. 4:35). With the Psalmist we should declare, “Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth” (115:3).<sup>25</sup>

Returning to a true understanding of the Bible and its application to presentday conditions will bring about great revival and reformation to a world languishing in the pit of despair and darkness. Jesus is the answer. It is in the world that God calls sinners to Himself.

## NOTES

1. John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1966) 103.
2. For a critique of Walvoord's position of John's "translation" as a type of rapture, see Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), 68–9.
3. Grant Jeffrey, *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny* (Toronto: Frontier Research, 1988), 135.
4. Jeffrey, *Armageddon*, 136.
5. See Hal Lindsey, *The Rapture* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 88–91.
6. See Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, GA: American Vision, 1999).
7. Hal Lindsey, *The Rapture*, 90.
8. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 78. Also see Gundry's *First the Antichrist* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1997), 84–87.
9. Edward G. Dobson, "Esther," *Liberty Bible Commentary*, eds. Edward E. Hindson and Woodrow M. Kroll (Lynchburg, VA: The Old-Time Gospel Hour, 1982), 909.
10. Tim LaHaye, *No Fear of the Storm: Why Christians Will Escape All the Tribulation* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Press, 1992), 65.
11. LaHaye, *No Fear of the Storm*, 74.
12. Chuck Smith with David Wimbish, *Dateline Earth: Countdown to Eternity* (Old Tappan, NJ: Chosen Books, 1989), 28–29.
13. William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, [1940] 1982), 60. In his *Dateline Earth*, Chuck Smith identifies the Church of Sardis with the Protestant Reformation because the Protestant Church celebrated Christmas. "Should Christians stop celebrating on December 25?" Smith asks. "Not at all. We enjoy glorious liberty as children of God to celebrate or not to celebrate, as we choose" (33). So why wasn't this true for those who started celebrating Christmas on December 25?
14. Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 382.
15. Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 168.
16. Marvin Rosenthal, *Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church: A New Understanding of the Rapture, the Tribulation, and the Second Coming* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson,

- 1990), 54. For a study on the preDarbyite source of the pre-tribulational rapture, see Dave MacPherson, *The Incredible Cover-Up* (Medford, OR: Omega, [1975] 1980) and *The Rapture Plot* (Simpsonville, SC: Millennium III Publishers, 1995). John L. Bray disputes the Darbyite and MacDonald sources. He has traced its origin to Morgan Edwards, *Two Academical Exercises on Subjects Bearing the Following Titles: Millennium, and Last-Novelties* (Philadelphia, PA: Dobson and Lang, 1788). See Bray's *Morgan Edwards and the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Teaching (1788)*, Lakeland, FL: John L. Bray Ministries, 1995) for documentation on this theory.
17. H.A. Ironside, *The Mysteries of God* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1908), 50.
  18. Notice what Revelation 3:10 says: "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour *which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*" This passage was written nearly two thousand years ago. The "hour of testing" was "about to come upon the whole world [Greek, *oikoumene. the inhabited earth*]." This means not long after the time it was spoken. That hour of testing was the conflagration leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the tribulation period from which Christians were warned to "flee," which they did (Matt. 24:16).
  19. Thomas D. Ice, "The Origin of the Pretrib Rapture: Part II," *Biblical Perspectives* (March/April 1989), 5. Emphasis added.
  20. Ice and Demy attempt to get around this admission in *The Truth About the Rapture* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1996).
  21. Timothy J. Demy, "Pseudo-Ephraem," *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, gen. ed. Mal Couch (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1996), 329. Also see Demy and Thomas D. Ice, "The Rapture and an Early Medieval Citation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July/September 1995), 306–17 and Grant R. Jeffrey, "A Pretrib Rapture Statement in the Early Medieval Church," gen. eds. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, *When the Trumpet Sounds* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995), 105–125. For a refutation of Demy, Ice, and Jeffrey, see Gundry, "'Pseudo-Ephraem' on Pretrib Preparation for a Posttrib Meeting with the Lord" in *First The Antichrist*, 161–88.
  22. Hunt, *How Close Are We?*, 199.
  23. John F. Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook: All the Prophecies of Scripture Explained in One Volume* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990), 496–97.
  24. Jay E. Adams, *Trust and Obedience: A Practical Commentary on First Peter* (Phillipsburg,

- NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978), 129–30.
25. Greg L. Bahnsen, “The *Prima Facie* Acceptability of Postmillennialism,” *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, Symposium on the Millennium, ed. Gary North, 3:2 (Winter 1976–77), 54.

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