

LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE

Pre-Trib or Post-Trib?

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"Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

Titus 2:13-14

There are several views on the time-frame of the rapture of the church -- pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation or post-tribulation. What are some of those views and what does the Bible teach?

PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE VIEWS

In the 1800's, both C.I. Scofield and J.N. Darby, the leader of the Plymouth Brethren in England were outstanding students of the Bible. They taught the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, based upon the clear teaching of the Scriptures. In the late 1800's there were a number of conferences held on prophecy and the second coming of the Lord. Outstanding Bible scholars gathered to research and discuss these vital issues. Out of these conferences came the Scofield Bible (KJV), which contributed greatly to the spread of the pre-tribulation rapture teach-

ing through the marginal notes. These notes were not the product of one man's thinking. A number of men contributed.

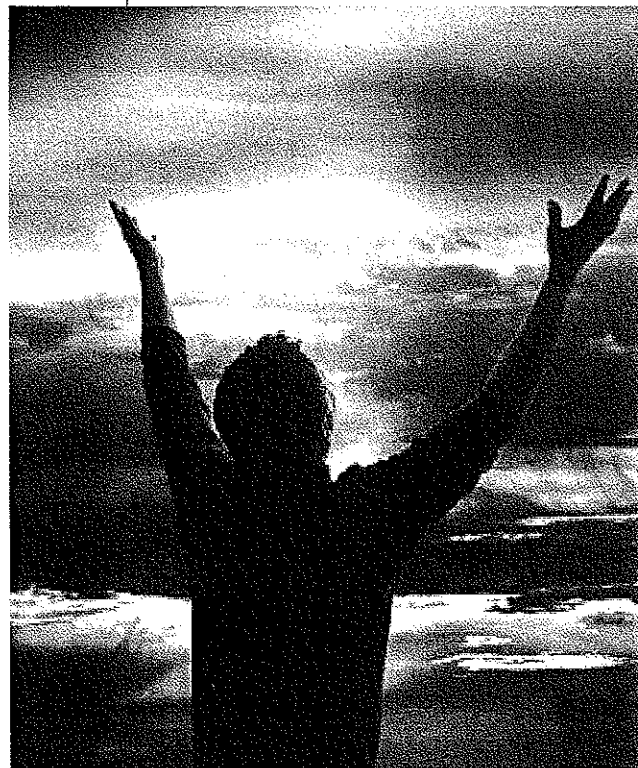
What is the alternative to the pre-tribulation rapture of the church? The alternative is post-tribulation rapture, which simply stated means the church will go through the time of great tribulation, which precedes the return of Christ to the earth. This is the time when the antichrist will reign. Indescribable judgments will come on the earth, and men will not be able to buy or sell without the mark of the beast.

But is this the blessed hope of the church? Did Jesus not really mean what he said in Luke 21:36, *"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man"*? What about I Thessalonians 5:9, *"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but obtain salvation (rescue, safety) by our Lord Jesus Christ?"* Continuing on, verse 11 states, *"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."*

How can this be a message of comfort if this verse indicates that we are to go through the tribulation (as taught by some)? The promise to the church in Revelation 3:10 is *to be kept from the hour of temptation* (tribulation), *which is to come upon all the world*. In Revelation 4 and 5, John was caught up to heaven and saw a multitude of people that had already been redeemed from the earth before the

tribulation judgments even began. This could only be the church, for they are *"redeemed out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation"*.

The failure to distinguish between God's program for national Israel and the church leads to the post-tribulation rapture view. God's purpose in the earth today is to *"gather out of the Gentiles a people for His name"*, the church (Acts



15:14). The primary purpose of the tribulation period is to prepare Israel to receive her Messiah, Jesus Christ, at his second coming, and to set up the millennial kingdom.

Clearly the scriptures teach that the church is to return with Christ at that event. The church began on the Day of

Pentecost with the sound of a rushing mighty wind. The next event to take place for the church is that it will be **caught up** at the sound of the trumpet to meet the Lord in the air. Following the rapture, the church will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. After that will be the marriage supper. Then the church will return with Christ to the earth to rule and reign with him during the millennial age. The Church indeed does have a blessed hope, but it does not include participation in the tribulation.

POST-TRIBULATION RAPTURE VIEWS

In the book, "**The Incredible Cover-Up**"¹ the author attempts to discredit the pre-tribulation rapture by trying to show that this idea started from a demon possessed woman named Margaret McDonald, who was a member of Edward Irving's church in Scotland in the 1830's. Margaret supposedly gave forth a prophetic utterance which indicated that certain people would escape the tribulation by being caught up to meet the Lord.

Edward Irving was a man ahead of the times. He believed in the apostolic gifts, and people spoke in tongues and were healed in his meetings. For this he was banned from the ministry. We who are Apostolic can understand that Margaret McDonald was not demon possessed, but rather was filled with the Holy Ghost. As such, it is very possible that the revelation she received was from God. That revelation opened up insight on the scriptures that had been hidden for centuries.

A similar event occurred at the worldwide Pentecostal camp meeting held in Arroyo Seco, California in 1913. The following is a quote from the book "**United We Stand**"², by Arthur L. Clanton, page 15: "In this camp meeting there was a man by the name of John G. Scheppe, who spent an entire night in prayer. During the night, God revealed to him the truth of Oneness and baptism in Jesus name. He ran through the camp, shouting to all what the Lord had shown him. This led many others to search the Scriptures, and the result was that they, too, saw that baptism must be administered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."² What Scheppe received was in the Scriptures all the time, but tradition and spiritual darkness had covered it up. The same is true with

the pre-tribulation rapture of the church.

An article entitled "**Spirit Of Deception**"³ refers to the statements in Matthew 24 where Jesus warned about deception. The author states that the spirit of deception is running rampant among Christians all over the world. He further states, "The scriptures are your safety net. Stick only with those things that have a solid scriptural basis and foundation."

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He then proceeds to list what he considers to be some of the 'major deceptive doctrines.' First on his list is, "Belief in a pre-tribulation rapture." Second is, "The Jews are Israel."³

I have read some of this man's material in the past, and his statements on prophecy and the Jews do not have a 'solid scriptural basis'. In fact, they follow the same lines as most others who attack the pre-tribulation rapture of the church. These attacks are not scripturally based or addressed, but an effort is made to tear down the testimony of those who supposedly brought this 'erroneous' view to the front. A further denial of the pre-tribulation rapture is based upon the so called '*silence of history*'. That is, none of the reformers or men of the dark ages believed in or taught the pre-tribulation rapture, therefore it must be wrong.

QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE POST-TRIBULATION THEORY

- Why have a rapture at all if it only entails a brief meeting of the Lord in the air, to immediately return with Him to the earth?
- If all of the saved (church) are raptured at the end of the tribulation, who are the

righteous that are left to populate the earth during the millennium?

- If Revelation 3:10 is not a promise to be raptured before the tribulation, but only a promise of protection through it, then who are the saints who are martyred? (See Revelation 6:9-11; 7:9; 13:7; 14; 20:4)
- If God has two programs during the tribulation, one for the church and one for Israel, how can this be reconciled with the fact that the church is made up of both Jew and Gentile? Any Jew that would believe in Christ during the tribulation would automatically be in the church, if the church is still on the earth.
- Why is the word 'church' (*ekklesia*) not found in the Book of Revelation between chapters 6 and 20, when the judgments are being poured out upon the earth?
- If the rapture actually takes place at the Second Advent itself, why is it called a '*mystery*' (I Corinthians 15:51,52)? The Second Advent itself is no mystery. It is spoken of in both the Old and New Testaments.
- If the coming of the Lord for the church is at the end of the tribulation, it naturally follows that His coming would not be something to look forward to. It would seem logical that we should pray for Him to delay his coming as long as possible, for in so doing it would delay the judgments that await the church.

The coming rapture of the church is still the glorious event that awaits the saints. The original Apostolic church lived with that hope in their hearts, even as the church does today. God, who cannot lie, will in His time, cause it to happen. Paul's admonition to the saints at Thessalonica is still good today: "... *and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come*" (I Thessalonians 1:9,10)."

References

1. MacPherson, Dave, **The Incredible Cover-Up** (Plainfield, New Jersey, Logos International, 1975).
2. Clanton, Arthur L., **United We Stand** (Hazelwood, Missouri, The Pentecostal Publishing House, 1970).
3. McKeever, James, **End-Times News Digest** Issue 128; P.O. Box 1788, Medford, Oregon