

The Truth Behind the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Position

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray.

Matthew 24:3-4

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The Truth Behind the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Position

Currently within the United States there is a prevailing view of eschatology (study of end time events). It is popularly called the “Pre-trib Rapture” (This eschatological view is actually futuristic – pre-millennial – with a pre-tribulation rapture. It is opposed to the Church’s historic position, which is futuristic - pre-millennial – with a post-tribulation rapture.) and arises from a system of theology known as Dispensationalism. The Dispensational system of theology began to be developed by John Nelson Darby of England in 1827. He inserted a pre-tribulation rapture view of eschatology after hearing a prophecy given by Margaret Macdonald in the spring of 1830. Darby’s dispensational views gained ground in the United States when C.I. Scofield included it in his reference Bible of 1917. After that, it began to be taught at Dallas Theological Seminary and one of its students; Hal Lindsey made it popular with his book, The Late Great Planet Earth (1970).

Four major components of the Pre-tribulation Rapture position are:

1. That Christians will be raptured (caught up to meet the Lord in the air) before a seven-year tribulation period.
2. That the rapture occurs before the second coming of Jesus Christ.
3. That the rapture is “secret”. (It will not be visible to anyone. Those who remain are either Jews or unbelievers and they will discover that all the Christians have disappeared in the twinkling of an eye.)
4. That the rapture is imminent. (It can occur at any time. No signs have to precede its occurrence.)

Based on the Pre-tribulation Rapture position as stated above please answer the following questions.

1. If Jesus’ return was imminent (could occur at any time)
 - o Why didn’t He say so?
 - o Why did He bother to tell His disciples about specific future events?
 - o Why did He caution them not to be misled?
 - o Why did He issue specific commands to the disciples when they observed the events happening?
 - o Since according to this scheme no signs are required to precede the Rapture, why did the Apostle Paul say that our gathering together to Jesus would not occur until after the apostasy and the man of lawlessness was revealed?

2. Jesus commanded His disciples to be alert.
 - Why?
 - What difference does it make if a believer is alert or not, since the rapture is a secret?
 - What are they to be alert for?
3. If the rapture of Christians occurs before Christ's coming why didn't Jesus or any of the apostles or prophets tell anyone or write it down?

Michael Gibson, Key2Changes.com

The Son of Man is Coming

Matthew 24:29-31, Mark 13:24-27, Luke 21:25-28

(Gospels forged together into one seamless story, in collaboration with New American Standard Bible,
authored by Michael Gibson, Founder of Spirit & Truth, dba Key 2 Changes: "Follow Me: A Message from God", a journey with Jesus)

"But immediately after the tribulation of those days there will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; 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, 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 fourth His angels with a great trumpet (key phrase number one) and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads (key phrase number two), because your redemption is drawing near."

***the moon will not give its light** – Isaiah 13:10, "For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light."; Joel 2:30-31, "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes."*

***Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky** – Daniel 7:13, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him."*

***they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other** – Isaiah 27:12-13, "In that day from the river Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt the Lord will thresh out the grain, and you will be gleaned one by one, O people of Israel. And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem."*

Strategy of Satan – Daniel 7:25

*"**He** will speak against the Most High and **oppress** his holy people and try to change the **set times** and the **laws**. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time."*

***He** – Satan*

***oppress** – ware out*

***set times** – dates/calendars*

***laws** – Feasts of the Lord (Sabbath, Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Weeks (Pentecost), Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles – ref. Gen. 1:14; Ex. 12; Lev. 23; Num. 28-29; 1 Thess. 5:1-2)*

Who is “The Thief in the Night”?

“Remember, I have told you ahead of time,” Matthew 24:25

“All this I have told you so that you will not fall away,” John 16:1

“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved,” Matthew 24:12-13

“At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other,” Matthew 24:10

Be warned. After reading this you will no longer have any excuse for not studying about the return of The Lord. Yeshua Himself TOLD us to watch, stay alert, and be ready.

Yeshua said He was coming back to rule and reign from Jerusalem and I believe Him. He came as a real person in history and He will return a real person in history. *“A Light for the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel.”* The natural branches will, and are, being grafted back in.

His first coming fulfilled the types and shadows of the Spring Feasts of the Lord: Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Feast of Weeks or Pentecost; and His second coming will be in accordance with the Fall Feasts of the Lord: Yom Teruah or Feast of Trumpets, Yom Kippur or Day of Atonement, and Sukkot or Feast of Tabernacles.

We’ve been duped. In 336 A.D. a council of men cut off the church from its natural ties to the Jewish nation with all her history and meaning. To our detriment, we lost the Jewishness of the faith.

According to scriptures, the lunar calendar is God’s method of calculating time. The lunar calendar (Jewish religious calendar) marks the seasons. In scripture, the word, “seasons” in Hebrew is “mo’ed” and means “appointed time”. This is referring to the “Appointed Times of The Lord” or “The Feasts of The Lord” (**Appointed Times: God’s Appointed Times when He will Appear to His People, in Fulfilling His Redemptive Plan of Salvation**).

1 Thessalonians 5:1, *“Now on the topic of times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you.”*

Okay, let’s stop right there. Times and Seasons. He’s referring to the lunar calendar and the Appointed Times of The Lord. They were Jewish believers (and Gentiles) who not only knew these feasts, but celebrated them.

1 Thessalonians 5:2, *“For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come in the same way as a thief in the night.”*

Remember that we are a kingdom and priests. I found out that according to Jewish history, the Captain of Temple was called “the thief in the night.” The priests and Levites were in charge of guarding the Temple, including keeping the fire of God going. If the Captain of the Guard came in at night and caught the one of them sleeping on the job, he would hit the man with a stick then take the torch he was carrying and light the sleeping man’s white priestly / Levitical garments on fire. The sorry fellow would wake up and have to tear the soiled, burning clothes from his body, exposing his nakedness. Shedding new light on these verses:

Revelation 16:15, *“Look! **I will come like a thief!** Blessed is the one who stays alert and does not lose his clothes so that he will not have to walk around naked and his shameful condition be seen.”*

Revelation 3:14, 18, *“This is the solemn pronouncement of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the originator of God’s creation, . . . **Buy from me white clothing so you can be clothed and your shameful nakedness will not be exposed, and calm to put on your eyes so you can see!**”*

“Priestly Guard”:

The captain of the guard saw that every man was alert, chastising a priest if found asleep at his post, and sometimes even punishing him by burning his shirt upon him, as a warning to others. (Mid. i. 1 – Jewish Encyclopedia)

The Captain of the Temple (the man of the Temple Mount) visited each guard, and burning torches were carried before him. And every guard which did not stand up (which was not standing), the Captain of the Temple said to him: “Peace be to thee.” If he observed that he slept, he smote him with his stick, and he had authority to burn his dress. And they said, “What is the noise

(voice) in the court?" "It is the noise of a Levite who is beaten, and his clothes are set on fire, because he slept upon his watch." (Perek I. – Mishnah-Middoth)

1 Thessalonians 5:3-10, ³ Now when they are saying, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction comes on them, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will surely not escape. ⁴ **But you, brothers and sisters, are not in the darkness for the day to overtake you like a thief would.** ⁵ For you all are sons of the light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness. ⁶ So then we must not sleep as the rest, but must stay alert and sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸ But since we are of the day, we must stay sober by putting on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet our hope for salvation. ⁹ For God did not destine us for wrath but for gaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us so that whether we are alert or asleep we will come to life together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, just as you are in fact doing.

The Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah) was known as the feast that "no one knew the day or the hour." Again, "YOU ARE NOT IN DARKNESS FOR THE DAY TO OVERTAKE YOU AS A THIEF!" **1 Thessalonians 5:4**

<http://fringers.org/2008/12/22/who-is-the-thief-in-the-night.aspx>

Paul's Teaching Against the Doctrine of Eminency **The Second Coming & The Rapture of the Church are One Simultaneous Event** **of One Bride (One Church).**

2 Thessalonians 2:1-9

The Man of Lawlessness

¹ Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect **that the day of the Lord has come.** ³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. ⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶ And you know what is **restraining him** now so that he may be revealed in his time. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only **he who now restrains** it will do so until he is out of the way. ⁸ And then **the lawless one** will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and **bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.** ⁹ The coming of **the lawless one** is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders.

Verse(s) Breakdown of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-9:

¹ Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers.

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together - Paul here is teaching against the doctrine of Eminency, *that Jesus can come at anytime*; and rather taught that the Second Coming and the Rapture are one simultaneous event that must follow several prior events, as listed in the continuing passage of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-9.

the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ – The Second Coming

our being gathered together – The Rapture; and the two, The Second Coming & The Rapture being as one simultaneous event.

One Simultaneous Event - Jesus said, "**Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man . . . and they will gather his elect from the four winds,**" **Matthew 24:29-31**

Revelation 6:12-17

¹² When he opened **the sixth seal**, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. ¹⁴ **The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up**, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from **the wrath of the Lamb**, ¹⁷ for **the great day of their wrath has come**, and who can stand?"

the sixth seal. I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, ¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth – The Signs that MUST preceding the Second Coming.

The Coming of the Son of Man – the sixth seal

²⁹ "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 heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man." **Matthew 24:29-31**

The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up – The Actual Second Coming of the Messiah.

the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come – The Wrath of God that follows the Messiah's (Jesus') Second Coming and Rapture of the People of God.

² **not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed**, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect **that the day of the Lord has come**.

not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed . . . that the day of the Lord has come – Again, Paul here reiterates the false teaching against the doctrine of Eminency, *that Jesus can come at anytime*; and rather continues his teaching that the Second Coming and the Rapture are one simultaneous event that must follow several prior events, as listed in this passage of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-9.

³ **Let no one deceive you in any way**. For **that day will not come, unless** the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

Let no one deceive you in any way – False Teachers, False Messiahs, False Prophets, found teaching in the Church, wolves in sheep's clothing.

“And Jesus answered them, “See that **no one** leads you astray.” **Matthew 24:4**

“For many will come in my name, saying, ‘**I am the Christ**,’ and they will lead many astray.” **Matthew 24:5**

“And many **false prophets** will arise and lead many astray.” **Matthew 24:11**

“Beware of false prophets, who **come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves**.” **Matthew 7:15**

that day will not come, unless – The Second Coming and the Rapture will not come until after 1) The Great Apostasy (Falling Away – the Breaking of Covenant of the Saints), 2) The man of lawlessness, the Anti-christ, is revealed, followed by him seating himself in the Third Temple, to be built, on the Temple Mount, proclaiming himself to be God.

the rebellion come first – “Then they will deliver you up to **tribulation** and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. **Matthew 24:9-10**

tribulation – (*The Coming of the Son of Man*)²⁹ “**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 heaven,

and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.³⁰ **Then will appear** in heaven the sign of the Son of Man.” **Matthew 24:29-30**

Immediately after the tribulation of those days – (*the Church is going to be here during the Great Tribulation*):

“As I looked, **this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them** (one Bride one Church).” **Daniel 7:21**

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “**These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb**.” **Revelation 7:13-14**

“And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!” . . .¹⁷ **Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus**.” **Revelation 12:11-17**

“Also **it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them**. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation.” **Revelation 13:7**

⁴ who opposes and exalts **himself** against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

himself – The man of lawlessness, the Anti-christ, is revealed, followed by him seating himself in the Third Temple, to be built, on the Temple Mount, proclaiming himself to be God – The Abomination of Desolation.

The Abomination of Desolation

¹⁵ “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.¹⁷ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,¹⁸ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.¹⁹ And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!²⁰ Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.²² And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.²³ Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it.²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand.²⁶ So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. **Matthew 24:15-27**

The abomination of desolation – (*The time of the End*) ¹¹ And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and **the abomination that makes desolate** is set up, there shall be **1,290 days** (Abomination to Messiah's Return). ¹² Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the **1,335 days** (Abomination to Kingdom of God on Earth). ¹³ But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days." **Daniel 12:1-13**

let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains – there were no Jews in Judaea until 1967, for nearly 2,000 years, and today there are nearly 450,000 Jews now occupy Judaea, not including those who have moved into East Jerusalem. Under the proposed "Trump Peace Plan", there will be a Palestinian State in Judaea, fulfillment of Jesus' Prophecy (Matthew 24:15-16: *flee*), that half way through the one-week covenant (Daniel 9:27: one-week = seven years) before Armageddon, Jews will be chased out of Judea following the Abomination of Desolation, as most of Judea will be under Palestinian rule, as proposed in the "Trump Peace Plan". In addition, as proposed in the Peace Plan, the Temple Mount will be under a shared arrangement as an International place of worship for all faiths, which is also prophesied in Revelation 11:1-2, that the Third Temple will be on the Temple Mount under shared arrangement, trodden outside of the Third Temple by the Gentiles (nations) for 42 months (3 ½ years) until the Battle of Armageddon.

fulfillment of Jesus' Prophecy – "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),¹⁶ then **let those who are in Judea flee** to the mountains." **Matthew 24:15-16**

one-week covenant – (mark of the final 7 years) – "And he shall confirm **the covenant with many for one week**: and **in the midst of the week** he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." **Daniel 9:27**

under shared arrangement – ¹ Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, 'Rise and measure the temple of God and the alter and those who worship there, ² but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for **it is given over to the Gentiles** (nations), and they **will trample the holy city for forty-two months** (3 ½ years). **Revelation 11:1-2**

not be in winter or on a Sabbath – during the Feast of Purim, the beginning of Spring.

⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

⁶ And you know what is **restraining him** now so that he may be revealed **in his time**.

restraining him – God's own timeline dictates it (in his time).

in his time – "But when the **fullness of time** had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law." **Galatians 4:4**

⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only **he who now restrains** it will do so until he is out of the way.

he who now restrains – God's own timeline dictates it.

⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and **bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming**.

bring to nothing by the appearance OF HIS COMING – The Second Coming.

OF HIS COMING – (and the Rapture, one more proof that the Rapture and the Second Coming are one big simultaneous event): Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for **the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure**" - for **the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints**. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to **the marriage supper of the Lamb**." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." **Revelation 19:7-9**

And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. **Revelation 19:20**

And the beast was captured – a time described at Jesus' Second Coming at the Atoning Sacrifice at the Feast of Atonement.

⁹ The coming of **the lawless one** is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders.

The lawless one – the Anti-christ, performing FALSE signs and wonders.

The Generation that see all these things shall not pass, until everything is fulfilled!

"Truly, I say to you, **this generation will not pass away until all these things take place**. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." **Matthew 24:34-35**

this generation will not pass away until all these things take place – *Which Generation?* The generation of "*The times of the Gentiles*" – "and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the **times of the Gentiles** be fulfilled," **Luke 21:24**.

times of the Gentiles – After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD, Jews were allowed to remain there until the Bar Kokhba Revolt (131-135 AD). They were expelled from the city of Jerusalem in 134 AD and it was renamed Aelia Capitolina. The city remained under foreign (Gentile) control until June 8, 1967 when it was liberated from Jordan in the Six Day War. In 1980, a proclamation was issued that declared Jerusalem a united city under Israeli sovereignty.

Why did Jesus give us these Prophecies? – to tell us, so that we might understand,
that we are the people of the end times.

The end time has now arrived, a time Jesus spoke of 2,000 years ago.

Caught Up/Rapture Word Study

726 *harpázō* – properly, seize by force; *snatch* up, suddenly and decisively – like someone seizing bounty (spoil, a prize); to take by an *open display* of force (i.e. *not* covertly or secretly). Used of divine power transferring a person marvelously and swiftly from one place to another, to snatch or catch away.

Acts 8:39

³⁹ And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord **carried (*harpázō*)** Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

2 Corinthians 12:2-4

² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was **caught up (*harpázō*)** to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. ³ And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows - ⁴ and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.

1 Thessalonians 4:17

¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be **caught up (*harpázō*)** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

Revelation 12:5

⁵ She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was **caught up (*harpázō*)** to God and to his throne.

Precedence of Rapture:

Genesis 6:9-9:17: Noah’s Ark (the sign that was given to Noah was the death of the Grand-Father Methuselah, meaning, “When He is Dead it shall be Sent”)

Exodus 8:22-23: Jacob’s Family Settle in Goshen – And Salvation During Plagues

Exodus 33:17-23: Moses in the Cleft of the Rock and the Glory of God

Acts 8:39: Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

2 Corinthians 12:2-4: Paul and the third heaven

Word Study by Ryan Roberts of Key 2 Changes

“This is the First Resurrection . . . The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended”

Revelation 20:4-6

The Thousand Years

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also *I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.* **They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** ⁵ *The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.* **This is the first resurrection.** ⁶ *Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection!* Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

This is the first resurrection – “the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God,” Revelation 20:4; “and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands,” Revelation 20:4; “*Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection!*” Revelation 20:6; “**They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years,**” Revelation 20:4; “Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.” Revelation 20:6.

“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar **the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God** and for the witness they had borne. *They cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’* Then they were each given a white robe and told to **rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been,**” Revelation 6:9-11

The rest of the dead (the second resurrection) – “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended,” Revelation 20:4; “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life,” Revelation 20:12.

Revelation 20:4-6

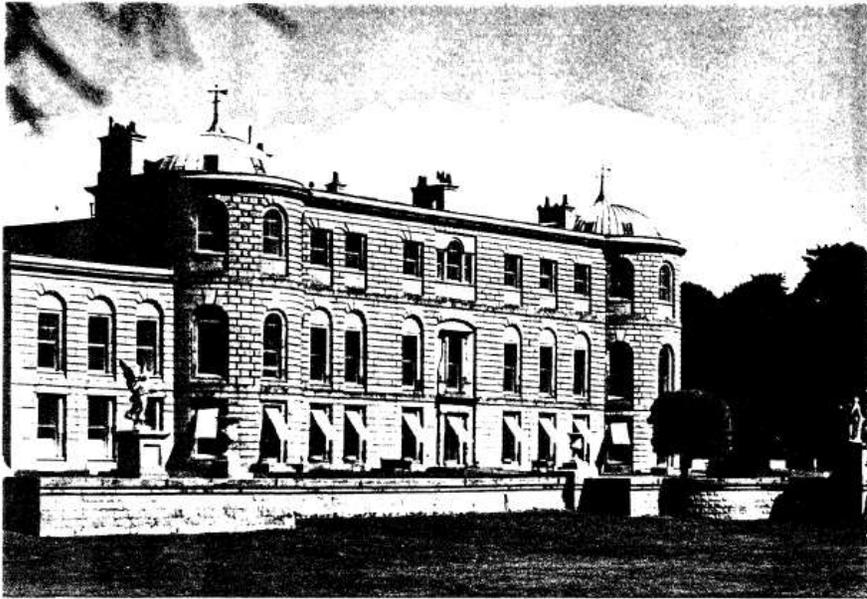
The Defeat of Satan

⁷ And **when the thousand years are ended**, Satan will be released from his prison⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.⁹ And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven¹⁰ and consumed them,¹⁰ and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

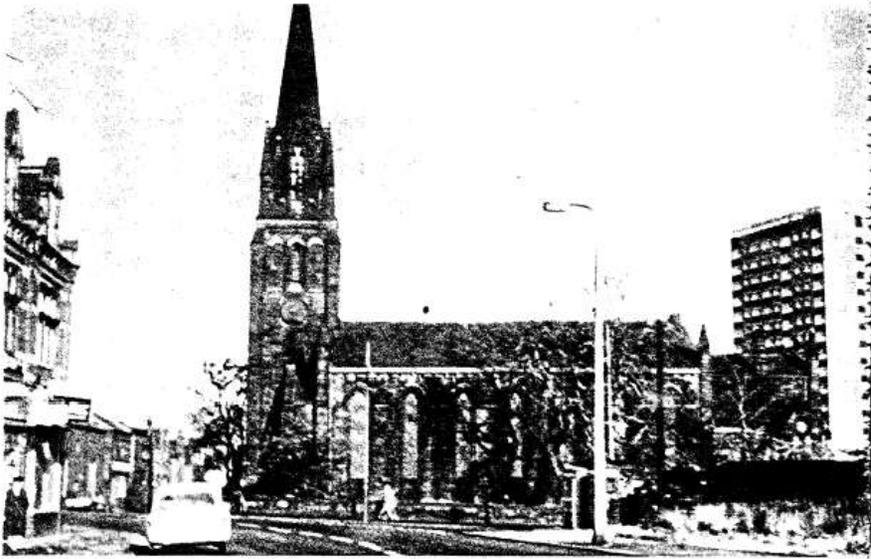
Judgment Before the Great White Throne

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened – ³¹ When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?’ ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?’ ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ ⁴¹ ‘Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶ **And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.**” Matthew 25:31-46 (*The Final Judgment*)



Ireland's Powerscourt House, designed in 1730, saw other prophetic conferences in the 1830s. Robert Norton was curate at St. Matthew's (below) in Holbeck, England, from 1846 to 1854. (Above photo by the Irish Tourist Board.)



Margaret Macdonald's Account

(John Darby's Pre-Tribulation Rapture view of Eschatology after Hearing this Prophecy given by Margaret Macdonald)

APPENDIX A

MARGARET MACDONALD'S ACCOUNT

[This is Margaret Macdonald's handwritten account of her 1830 Pre-Trib revelation, as included in Robert Norton's *Memoirs of James & George Macdonald, of Port-Glasgow* (1840), pp. 171-176. The italicized portions represent her account as it appears in shorter form in Norton's *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets; In the Catholic Apostolic Church* (1861), pp. 15-18.]

"It was first the awful state of the land that was pressed upon me.' I saw the blindness and infatuation of the people to be very great. I felt the cry of Liberty just to be the hiss of the serpent, to drown them in perdition. It was just 'no God.' I repeated the words, Now there is distress of nations, with perplexity, the seas and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear—now look out for the sign of the Son of man. Here I was made to stop and cry out, O it is not known what the sign of the Son of man is; the people of God think they are waiting, but they know not what it is. *I felt this needed to be revealed, and that there was great darkness and error about it; but suddenly what it was burst upon me with a glorious light. I saw it was just the Lord himself descending from Heaven with a shout, just the glorified man, even Jesus; but that all must, as Stephen was, be filled with the Holy Ghost, that they might look up, and see the brightness of the Father's glory. I saw the error to be, that men think that it will be something seen by the natural eye; but 'tis spiritual discernment that is needed, the eye of God in his people. Many passages were revealed, in a light in which I had not before seen them. I repeated, 'Now is the kingdom of Heaven like unto ten virgins, who went forth to meet the Bridegroom, five wise and five foolish; they that were foolish took*

their lamps, but took no oil with them; but they that were wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.' 'But be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is; and be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.' This was the oil the wise virgins took in their vessels—this is the light to be kept burning—the light of God—that we may discern that which cometh not with observation to the natural eye. Only those who have the light of God within them will see the sign of his appearance. No need to follow them who say, see here, or see there, for his day shall be as the lightning to those in whom the living Christ is. 'Tis Christ in us that will lift us up—he is the light—'tis only those that are alive in him that will be caught up to meet him in the air. I saw that we must be in the Spirit, that we might see spiritual things. John was in the Spirit, when he saw a throne set in Heaven.—But I saw that the glory of the ministration of the Spirit had not been known. I repeated frequently, but the spiritual temple must and shall be reared, and the fulness of Christ be poured into his body, and then shall we be caught up to meet him. Oh none will be counted worthy of this calling but his body, which is the church, and which must be a candlestick all of gold. I often said, Oh the glorious inbreaking of God which is now about to burst on this earth; Oh the glorious temple which is now about to be reared, the bride adorned for her husband; and Oh what a holy, holy bride she must be, to be prepared for such a glorious bridegroom. I said, Now shall the people of God have to do with realities—now shall the glorious mystery of God in our nature be known—now shall it be known what it is for man to be glorified. I felt that the revelation of Jesus Christ had yet to be opened up—it is not knowledge about God that it contains, but it is an entering into God—I saw that there was a glorious breaking in of God to be. I felt as Elijah, surrounded with chariots of fire. I saw as it were, the spiritual temple reared, and the Head Stone brought forth with shoutings of grace, grace, unto it. It was a glorious light above the brightness of the sun, that shone round about me. I felt that those who were filled with the Spirit could see spiritual things, and feel walking in the midst of them, while those who had not the Spirit could see nothing—so that two shall be in one bed, the one taken and the other left, because the one has the light of God within while the other cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven. I saw the people of God in an awfully dangerous situation, surrounded by nets and

entanglements, about to be tried, and many about to be deceived and fall. Now will THE WICKED be revealed, with all power and signs and lying wonders, so that if it were possible the very elect will be deceived.—This is the fiery trial which is to try us.—It will be for the purging and purifying of the real members of the body of Jesus; but Oh it will be a fiery trial. Every soul will be shaken to the very centre. The enemy will try to shake in every thing we have believed—but the trial of real faith will be found to honour and praise and glory. Nothing but what is of God will stand. The stony-ground hearers will be made manifest—the love of many will wax cold. I frequently said that night, and often since, now shall the awful sight of a false Christ be seen on this earth, and nothing but the living Christ in us can detect this awful attempt of the enemy to deceive—for it is with all deceivableness of unrighteousness he will work—he will have a counterpart for every part of God's truth, and an imitation for every work of the Spirit. The Spirit must and will be poured out on the church, that she may be purified and filled with God—and just in proportion as the Spirit of God works, so will he—when our Lord anoints men with power, so will he. This is particularly the nature of the trial, through which those are to pass who will be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man. There will be outward trial too, but 'tis principally temptation. It is brought on by the outpouring of the Spirit, and will just increase in proportion as the Spirit is poured out. The trial of the Church is from Antichrist. It is by being filled with the Spirit that we shall be kept. I frequently said, Oh be filled with the Spirit—have the light of God in you, that you may detect satan—be full of eyes within—be clay in the hands of the potter—submit to be filled, filled with God. This will build the temple. It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. This will fit us to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. I saw it to be the will of God that all should be filled. But what hindered the real life of God from being received by his people, was their turning from Jesus, who is the way to the Father. They were not entering in by the door. For he is faithful who hath said, by me if any man enter in he shall find pasture. They were passing the cross, through which every drop of the Spirit of God flows to us. All power that comes not through the blood of Christ is not of God. When I say, they are looking from the cross, I feel that there is much in it—they turn from the blood of the Lamb, by which we overcome, and in

which our robes are washed and made white. There are low views of God's holiness, and a ceasing to condemn sin in the flesh, and a looking from him who humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation. *Oh! it is needed, much needed at present, a leading back to the cross. I saw that night, and often since, that there will be an outpouring of the Spirit on the body, such as has not been, a baptism of fire, that all the dross may be put away.* Oh there must and will be such an indwelling of the living God as has not been—the servants of God sealed in their foreheads—great conformity to Jesus—his holy holy image seen in his people—just the bride made comely, by his comeliness put upon her. This is what we are at present made to pray much for, that speedily we may all be made ready to meet our Lord in the air—and it will be. *Jesus wants his bride. His desire is toward us. He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.* Amen and Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus.”

Several observations are in order:

First of all, she evidently did not believe in imminence; she thought that “the fulness of Christ” (Spirit-filling) was first necessary—“and then shall we be caught up to meet him.” She said that the catching up (or Rapture) would be seen only by Spirit-filled believers—a secret coming.

She equated the “sign of the Son of man” (which is in a Post-Trib setting in Matt. 24:30) with “the Lord himself descending from Heaven with a shout” (I Thess. 4:16). Either her Tribulation occurs in a short space at the very end of the age (highly unlikely considering the fiery trial that would purge those in the church “who had not the Spirit”), or else she thought that the sign of the Son of man, though unseen by the world, will be seen by Spirit-filled believers before “THE WICKED be revealed”; she apparently believed the latter interpretation.

When she spoke of “one taken and the other left” it was not a separation of believers and unbelievers but rather Spirit-filled believers taken while believers not filled with the Spirit are left. But the point is this: some are to be taken (in a Rapture) before “THE WICKED” (or Antichrist) is re-

vealed; when she used the term “Now” in her expression “Now will THE WICKED be revealed,” she meant “later” or “after this” and was using this term sequentially. (J. N. Darby used the same word in the same way in his quote in the fifth chapter of this book: “Now He was Himself manifested. . . .”)

Margaret believed that a select group of believers would be raptured from the earth before the days of Antichrist, but also saw other believers enduring the Tribulation; she divided up the last generation of believers while Darby at least kept the church intact—but exempted all of the church from the Tribulation. In footnote 5 in chapter 5, Robert Norton elaborated on the doctrine that sprang from Margaret’s revelation, and in chapter 6 he declared that Margaret’s statement was the *first* instance of two-stage teaching.

The above evidence in published form has been shared in recent months with evangelical scholars around the world. In his book *The Church and the Tribulation*, Westmont College professor Robert H. Gundry originally leaned towards Edward Irving as the pre-trib originator. (His latest printing, however, deleted all of his Irving support and substituted the facts about Margaret Macdonald as found in this book.)

Later on J. Barton Payne described our evidence, in an *Evangelical Theological Society Journal* review, as “the most in-depth study yet to be made available on the historical origins of pretribulationism.” *The Witness*, oldest and largest Darbyist Brethren magazine in England, admitted in a review last year that the above evidence “succeeds in establishing that the view outlined was first stated by a certain Margaret Macdonald”—despite those who still say that the Apostle Paul was first. And F. F. Bruce recently summed up our discoveries in *The Evangelical Quarterly* as a “valuable and racy narrative, which students of nineteenth-century prophetic interpretation are bound to take seriously.”

Since Margaret Macdonald was the first person to teach a

coming of Christ that would precede the days of Antichrist, it necessarily follows that Darby—back to whom pre-tribism can easily be traced—was at least second or third or even farther on down the line. To date no solid evidence has been found that proves that anyone other than this young Scottish lassie was the first person to teach a future coming of Christ before the days of Antichrist. Before 1830 Christians had always believed in a single future coming, that the catching up of I Thess. 4 will take place after the Great Tribulation of Matthew 24 at the glorious coming of the Son of man when He shall send His angels to gather together all of His elect.

Whether she realized it or not, Margaret did her part to pave the way for doctrine that would demand separate waiting rooms at the end of this age—one for the church and another one for Israel!

Finally, to charge that Darby could never have been influenced by Margaret's pre-Antichrist rapture, with the knowledge of her revelation and his whereabouts in 1830 now out in the open, is practically the same as saying that a man found with a smoking revolver in hand and standing over a freshly killed victim in the middle of a lonely desert could not possibly be a suspect!

NOTES

1. At the end of this first sentence Norton adds a footnote which is explained at the bottom of p. 171: "I think I ought not to omit stating that in the course of the memorable evening of which the above paper is a very incomplete outline, one individual was expressly mentioned by name as the future desolator of this land, who at the time (nine years ago) was not at all pre-eminent as the leader of infidelity, but who has since so notoriously and awfully become so—Mr. Owen." The Owen referred to was Robert Owen (1771–1858), described by Friedrich Engels in his *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880) as one of the leading socialists of the early nineteenth century. A lengthy article on the editorial page of the January 10, 1973, *Kansas City Star* entitled "Tracing the History of Communes" says Owen established a number

of communities that were Communistic in nature. He set up communes in Ireland and Britain; his best-known commune, however, was his American community at New Harmony, Indiana. Margaret, on the same evening she had her pre-trib revelation, mentioned Owen as the future desolator, or Antichrist.

Darby's Credited Originating Theories

Darby is noted in the theological world as the father of "**dispensationalism**", whose eschatology was adopted and later made popular in the United States by Cyrus Scofield's Scofield Reference Bible.

Darby has been credited with originating the *pre-tribulation rapture theory* wherein Christ will suddenly remove His bride, the Church, from this world to its heavenly destiny before the judgments of the tribulation. Thus the prophetic program resumes with Israel's earthly destiny. Dispensationalist beliefs about the fate of the Jews and the re-establishment of the Kingdom of Israel put dispensationalists at the forefront of Christian Zionism, because "God is able to graft them in again," and they believe that in His grace he will do so according to their understanding of Old Testament prophecy. They believe that, while the ways of God may change, His purposes to bless Israel will never be forgotten, just as He has shown unmerited favour to the Church, He will do so to a remnant of Israel to fulfill all the promises made to the genetic seed of Abraham. In 1829 he predicted the rebirth of a nation Israel over 100 years before it happened, just by reading the Bible (pgs. 141–160. Prophetic No. 1 Vol. 2. J. N. Darby. Stow Hill Bible & Tract Depot. Kingston-On-Thames 1829)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Nelson_Darby#:~:text=John%20Nelson%20Darby%20%2818%20November%201800%20-%201829,be%20the%20father%20of%20modern%20Dispensationalism%20and%20Futurism.

While Darby helped shape the Cessationist view (*Cessationism is a doctrine that spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing ceased with the Apostolic Age. Reformers such as John Calvin originated this view*) that many hold today, his concern was more regarding the fact that the gifts were inappropriate for the times. This conclusion stems from his theology of dispensationalism. Unlike Cessationists today, Darby did not spend his energy defending a theology of the gifts. He rather separated himself from those who practiced them, and he maintained a focus on purity. Darby instead promoted dispensationalist theology and the viewpoint that the gifts were only signs to confirm the new dispensation. Since the desolated church in his time was neither in a new dispensation or perfect, he thought God should not confirm her with signs and wonders. Clarke quotes Darby's own words to explain his viewpoint:

If God were to exhibit His power now in the church by giving it the gifts it once had, He would be acting inconsistently with His own righteousness in identifying Himself with that which has lost its moral character; for surely it is not now the exhibition of what Christ was in the world. But, on the other hand, if the Lord did not now minister the gifts mentioned in the Ephesians, He would fail in maintaining the blessedness of His character, and the steadfastness of His love to the church.

<https://jbwm.org/part-3-historical-paper/>

Note: In spite of Darby's Cessationism views (the father of "dispensationalism"), that the gifts are no longer for today, he built his theory of pre-tribulation rapture from a prophetess' (Margaret Macdonald) prophecy highlighted above.