

Historical Evidence

Eschatology of the Post-Apostolic Church By Tim Warner - Copyright © December 2000

In our series of articles titled, *The Rapture is After the Tribulation*, we outlined the biblical basis for post-tribulationism. **Our basic thesis was that Jesus' teaching to His Apostles-in-training, with its post-trib rapture, formed the foundation for the eschatology of the early Church.** In contrast to this, the pre-trib theory claims that Paul taught a new eschatology featuring a pre-trib rapture which was quite different from Jesus' (Jewish) teaching.

The eschatology of the Early Church (after the deaths of the Apostles) was the direct result of the labor of the Apostles. One big advantage the Early Christians had over us is oral tradition. The Apostles not only wrote the New Testament books under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but they spent their lives teaching the Word of God to the next generation of Christians. A good illustration of the importance of oral tradition is found in 2 Thess. 2, where Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers about the "Restrainer," who was holding back the revelation of Antichrist. Paul wrote, "*remember ye not, that when I was with you I told you these things. And now ye know what withholdeth...*" [v. 5,6]. Unfortunately, Paul did not reveal the identity of the Restrainer in this passage, and we are left to guess just what he actually told the Thessalonians when he was with them.

The oral teaching of the Apostles, as well as the written Word of God, molded the thinking and theology of the earliest believers. And some of this personal instruction is reflected in the writings of the earliest of the Church Fathers, who either knew the Apostles personally, or were taught by those who were linked to the Apostles. For example, below we have quoted Irenaeus and Hippolytus rather extensively. Both of these men dealt with eschatology extensively, and both had a chain of linkage to the Apostle John who wrote Revelation. John personally discipled several men, including Papius, Ignatius, and Polycarp, the famous martyr. Polycarp was Bishop of the Church of Smyrna under John's leadership, and was most likely the one to whom the letter to Smyrna was addressed in Revelation. Polycarp in turn discipled Irenaeus, who later became Bishop of the Church at Lyons, Gaul (France). Irenaeus conveyed some very intriguing oral tradition that John passed down through Polycarp, and his other disciples, regarding the nature of the Millennium (including some sayings of Jesus). Irenaeus, in his work *Against Heresies, Book V*, was the earliest writer (who's works have survived) to deal with end-time prophecy in any depth. So, in Irenaeus we have both extensive treatment of eschatology, and a high degree of credibility due to his direct linkage to the Apostle John's oral teaching.

Hippolytus, bishop of Portus, was a disciple of Irenaeus, and carried on his work of refuting heresies after Irenaeus' martyrdom. Hippolytus' eschatological work is even more extensive than Irenaeus'. So, we see that there is an unbroken chain of men, who were directly influenced by the oral teaching of John, who had much to say about the end-times.

What better way to confirm our understanding of the **teachers** than to test their **students!** If our theory is correct, that a uniform rapture view can be traced from Jesus through the Epistles and Revelation, then we would expect to find the same continuity in the writings of the post-apostolic Church. On the other hand, if pre-tribbers are correct in their theory, that Paul was given a new prophetic scenario for the Church, we would expect the post-apostolic Church (especially Gentiles to whom Paul was sent) to embrace this alleged pre-trib scheme, and to distinguish their eschatology from what Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse. **If the post-apostolic Christians display the kind of post-trib expectancy consistent with Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse, then pre-tribbers would be forced to the awkward conclusion that the Apostles failed miserably in transmitting sound Christian teaching to the very next generation!**

We do not want to give the impression that the eschatology of the Early Church was uniform throughout. There was some controversy, mainly concerning whether the Millennium should be understood literally. Most of the writers understood the Millennium as the literal reign of Christ and the saints on earth for 1,000 years after the second coming. But, those who favored allegorical interpretation (spiritualizing the Millennium) thought the 70th week (but not the tribulation) was already fulfilled. These were exclusively North African writers, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Julius Africanus (all of which were connected with the heretical Alexandrian school). Tertullian, also of North Africa (Carthage), thought the 70th week was past. Yet, like the orthodox writers, he still believed in a future tribulation and Antichrist, and a literal Millennium.

However, despite the disagreement over the nature of the Millennium, and how to interpret Daniel 9:27, there was absolutely no controversy regarding the timing of the rapture. All saw a future tribulation, a literal Antichrist who would persecute the Church, and all were post-tribulationists, seeing only one future coming of Christ after the tribulation.

We do NOT claim independent authority for any Christian literature outside the Bible. Some of the writers we refer to carry greater weight than others, depending on their level of orthodoxy, and their linkage to Apostolic teaching. We present the following evidence only for its historical value, to illustrate how the next generations of Christians understood the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. Due to the natural tendency for error to creep in and compound over time, we have limited our evidence to the Ante-Nicene period (from the Apostles until A.D.325). Also, we have tried our best to be thorough. We have NOT selected only quotations that support our post-trib thesis, and ignored those that oppose us. The writings of the early Christians consistently support post-tribulationism, and give absolutely no hint of pre-tribulationism.

IMMINENCE or EXPECTANCY? One of the key elements of pre-trib thinking is the idea that Jesus could come at any moment, and no intervening prophetic events need occur prior to Jesus' coming. Some pre-trib authors have claimed the early Christians believed in the imminency of Jesus' coming. **THIS IS ABSOLUTELY NOT TRUE.** While there are passages in the Church Fathers that show they expected a soon return of Christ, we should not mistake this for belief in "imminence." The one thing that precludes an "any-moment" coming is their clear belief that **intervening events must occur prior to the coming of the Lord for His Church.** Yet, most were convinced the end-time scenario would unfold soon. Therefore, they had a healthy **EXPECTANCY** of the Lord's soon return, while NOT believing in "imminency."

Below is a quote from Irenaeus, Bishop of the Church at Lyons. In this excerpt, Irenaeus was speaking unapprovingly about a group of fellow believers who were enthusiastically trying to figure out the name of the Antichrist based on the value the Greek letters. (There were a few manuscripts of Revelation circulating that had an error in the number of the name of the Beast, 616 rather than 666). Their expectation was quite real, thinking that the end-time scenario — tribulation, Antichrist, second coming — would play out in the near future. But they were in error by using a corrupt manuscript with the erroneous number. In this section, Irenaeus was concerned both with this erroneous number, as well as their unhealthy eagerness to find a candidate whose name added up to the number of the Beast. Irenaeus' advice was to await the fulfillment of certain prophecies in Revelation, including the fall of the Roman Empire and rise of the ten kings, before they begin to speculate on who the Antichrist might be. Hence, it is obvious they did NOT believe the coming of the Lord was "imminent."

Irenaeus: (AD. 120-202) "Moreover, another danger, by no means trifling, shall overtake those who falsely presume that they know the name of Antichrist. For if these men assume one [number], **when this [Antichrist] shall come having another, they will be easily led away by him, as supposing him not to be the expected one, who must be guarded against.** These men, therefore, ought to learn [what really is the state of the case], and go back to the true number of the name, that they be not reckoned among false prophets. But, knowing the sure number declared by Scripture, that is, six hundred sixty and six, **let them await, in the first place, the division of the kingdom into ten; then, in the next place, when these kings are reigning, and beginning to set their affairs in order, and advance their kingdom, [let them learn] to acknowledge that he who shall come claiming the kingdom for himself, and shall terrify those men of whom we have been speaking, having a name containing the aforesaid number, is truly the abomination of desolation. ... It is therefore more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfillment of the prophecy, than to be making surmises,** and casting about for any names that may present themselves, inasmuch as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned; and the same question will, after all, remain unsolved. ... But he indicates the number of the name now, that **when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware who he is:** ... But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." [Irenaeus: Against Heresies, Book V, XXX]
[Click for more quotes showing non-imminency \(Non-Java Window\).](#)

PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH BY ANTICHRIST The early Christians unanimously believed the Antichrist would persecute the Church, and that the resurrection and gathering to Christ would occur at a single coming, after the tribulation.

Justin Martyr: (AD. 110-165) "[T]wo advents of Christ have been announced: the one, in which He is set forth as suffering, inglorious, dishonored, and crucified; but the other, **in which He shall come from heaven with glory, when the man of apostasy, who speaks strange things against the Most High, shall venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us the Christians.** ... Now it is evident that no one can terrify or subdue us who have believed in Jesus over all the world. For it is plain that, though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to wild beasts, and chains, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but the more such things happen, the more do others and in larger numbers become faithful, and worshippers of God through the name of Jesus." [Dialog with Trypho, CX]
[Click here for more quotes regarding post-trib \(Non-Java Window\).](#)

FUTURIST or HISTORICIST? The early Christians **did not** believe they were in the tribulation, as is claimed by some. They considered the revelation of Antichrist to be entirely future, as well as the appearance of the two witnesses. They believed the Antichrist would defile and rule from the Temple in Jerusalem. And remember, the Jews had been driven from Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed in AD. 70, and Roman law at the time forbid them from returning. These Church Fathers expected that Rome would fall and be replaced by the ten kings. Then Antichrist would arise and take over the kingdom, the Jews would be restored back to Jerusalem, and Antichrist would rebuild the Temple. Only afterward would the Antichrist commit the "abomination of desolation," and then persecute the Church. They held a literal "futurist" view of Revelation, just as pre-tribbers do today, minus the pre-trib rapture.

Hippolytus: (AD. 170-236) "**As these things, then, are in the future,** and as the ten toes of the image are equivalent to (so many) democracies, and the ten horns of the fourth beast are distributed over ten kingdoms, let us look at the subject a little more closely, and consider these matters as in the clear light of a personal survey. The golden head of the image and the lioness denoted the Babylonians; the shoulders and arms of silver, and the bear, represented the Persians and Medes; the belly and thighs of brass, and the leopard, meant the Greeks, who held the sovereignty from Alexander's time; the legs of iron, and the beast dreadful and terrible, expressed the Romans, who hold the sovereignty at present; the toes of the feet which were part clay and part iron, and the ten horns, were emblems of **the kingdoms that are yet to rise; the other little horn that grows up among them meant the Antichrist in their midst;** the stone that smites the earth and brings judgment upon the world was Christ." [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 27,28]
[Click here for more quotes on the future 70th week \(Non-Java Window\).](#)

Some pre-trib authors have implied that the reason the early Christians did not teach pre-tribulationism is because they were not as theologically sophisticated as modern scholars. They had not developed their doctrinal positions enough to realize a pre-trib rapture. They excuse this absurdity by claiming the early Christians were not really focused on prophecy. They allege the Church did not concern itself with eschatology until after the Reformation, when pre-tribulationism was "rediscovered."

This line of reasoning implies that correct theology comes from an evolutionary process. And, the Church is progressing and becoming more theologically sophisticated as time goes by. But, isn't the transmission of doctrinal truth from one generation to the

next supposed to be fixed? **Weren't the early Christians taught personally by the Apostles? Were the Apostles not as sophisticated theologically as today's scholars?** Perhaps we flatter ourselves too much if we think we have arrived at truths unseen by the early Church. Did the Apostles transmit a crude system of theology that needed to be refined by later generations? The whole concept of evolving theology is absolutely antibiblical. Acts records that new converts **continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine**, [Acts 2:42]. Paul told Timothy to **faithfully transmit** what he had been taught to other faithful men who could then be trusted to pass on pure doctrine to succeeding generations, [2 Tim. 2:1,2]. Paul also warned the Ephesian elders to guard what they had been taught because after the Apostles died, **error was bound to dilute the pure doctrine of Christ and the Apostles**, [Acts 20:28,29]. And Jude exhorted the brethren to **"earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered to the saints"** [Jude 3]. There was no eschatological vacuum in the early Church! And the extensive treatment of end-time prophecy by Irenaeus and Hippolytus demonstrate a well developed understanding right from the beginning. If there is any need to advance in theology today, it is to get back to what Christ and the Apostles taught. Aside from the Scriptures themselves, the best evidence is to examine what the disciples of the Apostles believed and taught. Obviously, just as Paul warned, as time went on, and new generations of Christians were taught by the preceding generation, a degrading of pure doctrine occurred. Men brought in their own ideas, intentionally and unintentionally, diluting the true teaching of the Apostles. This degrading process is clearly demonstrated in the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, where tradition upon tradition has been heaped up, with the modern teaching hardly resembling the Apostle's doctrine. Of course, those of us who hold only the Bible as our final authority are better anchored than Catholics. But, it cannot be denied that theology has evolved even among non-Catholics. People still bring their preconceived philosophical ideas to their interpretation of Scripture.

At times, the evolution of theology has been checked by a revolution. This was clearly demonstrated in the Reformation. Over a millennia of Roman Catholic tradition was thrown off and Christians again began to search the Scriptures. As the masses became familiar with the written Word of God, they began to shed the false and cumbersome doctrines they had been fed. Most of the "new" doctrines the Protestants embraced were explicitly taught in the Scriptures, and in the writings of the early Church, so were not actually "new," just rediscovered.

It is obvious, that the closer we can trace a doctrine back to the time of the Apostles, the more likely it is to actually be doctrine taught by the Apostles. This is especially true if a doctrine can be shown to be contiguous to the time of the Apostles. For example, widely accepted doctrines taught by Church leaders from the later decades of the first century, while the Apostle John was still alive and overseeing the local churches of Asia Minor, are more likely to have met with John's approval. If such doctrines can be shown to have been widely or universally accepted by faithful early Christian leaders who had ties to the Apostles, the likelihood is much greater that they are orthodox. Conversely, if a particular doctrine has no support in the early Church, and is even opposite the universally held view, then such doctrine is highly suspect! While we do not consider linkage to the early Church to be proof of a doctrine's correctness, it does provide weighty supporting evidence. The essence of the post-trib argument against pre-tribulationism on historical grounds is that **any new doctrine is false doctrine**. If it cannot be traced back to the inspired biblical writers, it is not *"the faith once delivered to the saints,"* and we should not be *"contending"* for it!

Of course, some false doctrines were developed even in the first century, and were then passed to succeeding generations, so that they can be traced very far back in Christian history. However, in the early Church, this could not, and did not, occur without a strong reaction from orthodox believers. When serious false doctrines were developed, the large number of orthodox believers trained by the Apostles were a natural deterrent to the spread of these false doctrines, and sounded the alarm against them. The writings of the early Christians display ferocious attacks on new and false doctrines, and valiant defenses of the orthodox Faith. The five books of Irenaeus *Against Heresies* are a catalogue of the false teachings of the day and Irenaeus' refutation of them, based on the teaching of Scripture, and oral tradition passed down by the Apostles. In fact, much of the writings of the early Ante-Nicene Fathers are refutations of heresies. One of Irenaeus' arguments against these early heresies was that they had no traceable linkage to the Apostles. Irenaeus argued that the orthodox Faith could be traced back through the succession of ordained local Bishops in the local churches founded by the Apostles. These local churches were entrusted with both the original New Testament manuscripts as well as the oral teaching of the Apostles who founded and originally pastored them.

Since the early Christians who knew both the Scriptures and the Apostolic oral tradition were unanimously post-trib, it seems difficult to believe that they all had departed from the teaching of the Apostles without a single writer challenging them! Furthermore, it seems almost impossible to imagine that if pre-tribulationism was indeed taught by the Apostles, there should be no trace of it left in the very next generation of believers! The claim, that these early Christians were not theologically sophisticated, is utter nonsense, as anyone who has read their discourses can easily see. They quoted Scripture extensively, and brought together a well developed eschatology that depended on a literal interpretation of prophecy, and was pre-millennial, futurist, and post-tribulationist.

History of Pre-Trib Development By Tim Warner - Copyright © December 2000

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The story of the development of pre-tribulationism is a tangled one. From its inception in the early 1800s, there has been a deliberate attempt to cover up its origins. This has been perpetrated along two lines of 'revisionism.' One was to hide the real origin of pre-tribulationism in 19th century Scotland, and attribute it to John Nelson Darby (NJ), and the **Plymouth Brethren**. The other has been a recent attempt to selectively quote and misrepresent ancient Christian documents to make it appear early Christians were pre-trib. The purpose of this article is to document a timeline of the major events in the development of this relatively new prophetic viewpoint.

THE EARLY CHURCH In our article, *Eschatology of the Early Church*, we demonstrated the fact that the early Church was unquestionably "post-tribulationist," seeing a single future coming of Christ to rescue the Church from Antichrist, judge the

wicked, and set up His earthly Kingdom. They were also "futurists," seeing the events of Revelation as being fulfilled within a short period of seven years at the end of this age.

THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH From the rise of Roman Catholicism (4th century), the predominant view was a-millennial. The Church not only allegorized the Old Testament prophecies of the Millennial Kingdom, but also began to allegorize the tribulation. Yet, they remained post-trib, seeing only a single future coming of Christ.

THE REFORMATION CHURCH During and after the Protestant Reformation (16th century), Protestant Christians held to what is called "**Historicism**," a view of prophecy that considers the events of Revelation as occurring all throughout the Church's history. This was accomplished by employing the "year-day" theory — that the 1260, 1290, & 1335 days mentioned in Daniel and Revelation should be interpreted as years. It was common for Protestants to identify the Roman Catholic Church with Mystery Babylon, and the papacy with the Antichrist. Since historicists considered the tribulation as encompassing most of the Church age, and viewed themselves as being in the tribulation, they were necessarily post-tribulationists. This view lent itself to a flurry of date-setting in the first half of the 19th century, where the 1260, 1290, & 1335 days (years) were calculated from the Roman Church's rise to supreme power under the Roman Emperors, until the second coming.

RETURN TO PRE-MILLENNIALISM Morgan Edwards Morgan Edwards was a Baptist minister in Pennsylvania in the mid-late 1700s. As a teenager and seminary student, Morgan wrote a hypothetical essay as part of his seminary training. Morgan was assigned the task, by his tutor, to write an essay on the Millennium using literal interpretation. In Morgan's hypothetical scenario, he separated the rapture from the second coming by at least 3.5 years. His work seems to be a mixture of "futurism" and "historicism." And, Morgan contradicted himself and made many obvious errors. Yet, his work appears to be the very first time the rapture was seen as a separate coming of Christ. Many years later (1788), Morgan published his essay in a book. While Morgan Edwards is sometimes cited as a pre-tribulationist, his work indicates that he did not wish to be seen as a "literalist;" he was content with the typical "historicist" view of the times; and that his work was hypothetical. Furthermore, there is no apparent connection between Morgan Edwards' essay and modern pre-tribulationism. And Morgan's other works do not display pre-trib thinking. We must look elsewhere for the origins of modern pre-tribulationism. For those interested in an in-depth analysis of Morgan Edwards' essay, see our article [*Morgan Edwards & the Pre-Trib Rapture*](#).

Father Manuel de Lacunza Fr. Manuel de Lacunza was a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest, born in Chili in 1731, and sent to Spain at the young age of 15 to become a Jesuit priest. When the Jesuits were expelled from Spain in 1767, Fr. de Lacunza moved to Italy. In 1790, he wrote a book on prophecy, called *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, which was published in Spain in 1812. Fr. de Lacunza wrote under the pen name, *Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra (a converted Jew)*, allegedly to avoid detection since his book ended up on Rome's banned books list.

Fr. de Lacunza's book promoted a return to the literal interpretation of prophecy, and the primitive "futurist" view of Revelation. He rejected the "year-day" theory of the historicists. Consequently, he saw a personal Antichrist and future tribulation of 1260 days, followed by the coming of the Lord. He did not espouse a pre-trib rapture, as has been claimed.

EDWARD IRVING In the 1820s, [Edward Irving \(NJ\)](#), pastored a Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) congregation in London. Irving became aware of Father de Lacunza's book, and was so impressed with it, he took it upon himself to translate it into English, adding a "preliminary discourse" of his own. Irving's English translation was published in 1827. Some of Irving's early prophetic views can be discerned from his "preliminary discourse," including, surprisingly, all the key elements of **dispensationalism** that later showed up in Darby's writings. Irving, in his "preliminary discourse," indicated that he had been teaching these things to his congregation beginning Christmas 1825, years before Darby is alleged to have arrived at his dispensational ideas [1]. [Click here to read excerpts from Irving's preliminary discourse \(NJ\)](#).

Irving had been preaching that God would restore Apostles and prophets to the Church, and a great Pentecostal outpouring would come just before the soon return of Jesus Christ. Right on schedule, rumors of healings, tongues, visions, and other manifestations began circulating in Port Glasgow, Scotland, from the home of James and George MacDonald, and their sister Margaret. People came from England, Ireland, and parts of Scotland to observe the supernatural manifestations in the "prayer meetings" held by the MacDonalds.

The "revival" soon spread to Irving's church, with "tongues" and other "manifestations" breaking out, especially among the women. Due to the strange goings on in Irving's church, and his heretical views on the person of Christ, Irving was eventually defrocked by the Church of Scotland, and moved his congregation to a rented hall, forming the **Catholic Apostolic Church**. (Irving taught that Jesus had a fallen sinful nature and only kept from sinning by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is similar to the teachings of some modern Charismatics, who see Jesus as the "proto-type Christian"). Not only were prophetic revelations and other alleged miracles occurring in Irving's congregation, but such "revelations" seemed to focus on end-time prophecy concerning the coming of the Lord.

February - June, 1830 Out of the spectacle of alleged latter-day Holy Spirit outpouring in Scotland and England, and the eschatological influence of de Lacunza's futurist/dispensationalism, emerged the very first documented evidence of a pre-tribulation rapture. This was first articulated in the form of a letter written by **Margaret MacDonald**, sister of James and George MacDonald of Port Glasgow. In March or April of 1830, after being ill and bed-ridden for about 18 months, Margaret claimed to have seen a series of visions of the coming of the Lord. She wrote down these visions and sent a copy to Edward Irving. A month later (June), [Irving claimed in a private letter \(NJ\)](#), that Margaret's visions had a huge impact on him. "*the substance of Mary Campbell's and Margaret MacDonald's visions or revelations, given in their papers, carry to me a spiritual conviction and a spiritual reproof which I cannot express.*"

The outstanding feature of Margaret's visions was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on a elite group within the Church, combined with a secret rapture **before the revealing of the Antichrist**. She saw only these "Spirit filled" Christians "taken" to be

with the Lord, while the rest of the Church without this experience would be left to be purged in the tribulation. [Click here to read Margaret's letter describing her vision \(NJ\)](#).

September, 1830 The official quarterly publication of the Irvingites, "*The Morning Watch*," had promoted a post-trib coming exclusively through mid-1830. But, the September 1830 issue featured part two of an article by "Fidus" describing the theory that the seven letters in Revelation actually describe seven consecutive "Church ages." In this article, "Fidus" clearly articulated the new idea of a partial pre-trib rapture. "Fidus" saw the Philedelphian church being raptured prior to the tribulation, and the Laodicean church representing the less fortunate Christians. [Click here to read the "Fidus" article \(NJ\)](#). This article in *The Morning Watch* is the first (known) publication of a pre-tribulation rapture in Great Britain, several years before Darby mentioned a pre-trib rapture.

June, 1831 In the June issue of *The Morning Watch*, Edward Irving made crystal clear his pre-trib teaching. The biblical basis of the Spirit-filled Church being raptured before the tribulation was the catching up of the "man-child" in Revelation 12. Irving argued that the body of Christ has been "*united to Him by regeneration of the Holy Ghost, 'born of God, sons of God,' (Rev. ii. 27; xii. 5). And therefore we with him are called Christ (1 Cor. xii. 12).*" Irving went on to say that, "*with this key [that the mention of 'Christ' includes Spirit-filled believers] the Old Testament prophecies which speak of Christ must be interpreted, ... and especially those prophecies which speak of the pregnant woman: to all which an explicit key is given to us in the xiith chapter of Revelation; where, though the child is spoken of as one (ver. 5), it is also described as many (ver. 11), who overcame the acuser; and when that number is accomplished, there are still a remnant of her seed, whom the dragon doth persecute and seek to destroy (ver. 17). This two-fold company -- the one gathered before, and the other after the travailing woman is cast out into the wilderness, ... -- do together constitute the New Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb, which cometh down from heaven.*" (The Morning Watch, June, 1831, pp. 301-302).

19th CENTURY INDEPENDENT WITNESSES CONFIRM MacDONALD/IRVINGITE ORIGIN **The Morning Watch (1832)** An anonymous writer, in the December 1832 (p. 249) issue of *The Morning Watch*, likely referred to Margaret MacDonald's letters (and probably her friend Mary Campbell & Emily Cardale of London) with the following words; "*The Spirit of God has caused several young women, in different parts of Great Britain, to condense into a few broken sentences more and deeper theology than ever Vaughan, Chalmers, or Irving uttered in their longest sermons; and therefore more than all the rest of the Evangelical pulpits ever put forth in the whole course of their existence.*"

Robert Baxter (1833) British Lawyer, Robert Baxter, was an early member of the Irvingites. Baxter had previously been post-trib, but eventually adopted the pre-trib rapture views of Irving. He was involved with the supernatural manifestations, even giving his own prophecies. He later became disillusioned with the whole movement, and abandoned Irvingism (and pre-tribulationism). Upon his departure, he wrote an expose of Irvingism, called "*Narrative of Facts, Characterizing the Supernatural Manifestations in Members of Mr. Irving's Congregation*" (1833) (NJ). In this book, Baxter spoke of Irving's early pre-trib teachings. "*An opinion had been advanced in some of Mr. Irving's writings, that before the second coming of Christ, and before the setting in upon the world of the day of vengeance, emphatically so called in the Scriptures, the saints would be caught up to heaven like Enoch and Elijah; and would be thus saved from the destruction of this world, as Noah was saved in the ark, and Lot was saved from Sodom.*" Baxter wrote that the coming of the Lord was the main topic of the prophetic utterances in Irving's congregation. Looking back, he thought they had all been deceived by lying spirits pretending to be the Holy Ghost.

Robert Norton (1861) Robert Norton was the author of "*The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets; In the Catholic Apostolic Church*" (1861). Norton took a favorable view of the Irvingite movement, writing in the preface that his book was offered "*as proofs or illustrations of its heavenly origin and character.*" [Norton credited Margaret MacDonald \(NJ\)](#) as the first to proclaim the "new doctrine" of a pre-trib rapture, which was picked up by Edward Irving.

Samuel P. Tregelles (1855/1864) Samuel P. Tregelles was the most eminent Plymouth Brethren scholar of the 19th century. After Darby borrowed and modified the pre-trib concept from the Irvingites, Tregelles openly opposed Darby's emphatic pre-trib stance. In an 1855 article in *The Christian Annotator*, Tregelles wrote that the true Christian hope is the final "*advent*" and "*not some secret advent, or secret rapture to the Lord, as Judaizers supposed might be the case...*" [2]. Nine years later, Tregelles published "*The Hope of Christ's Second Coming.*" Here he identified the "Judaizers" who first taught the pre-trib view. "*The theory of a secret coming...first brought forward...an utterance in Mr. Irving's Church...about the year 1832*" [3]. A later Plymouth Brethren writer, William Kelly, also identified the Irvingites as "Judaizers." He defined "Judaizing" as Christians adopting "Jewish elements." Kelly added, "*nowhere is this so patent as in Irvingism*" [4].

JOHN NELSON DARBY & THE PLYMOUTH BRETHERN The Irish preacher, [John Nelson Darby \(NJ\)](#), one of the founders of the Plymouth Brethren, wrote [his first prophecy paper \(NJ\)](#) in 1829 [5]. In this paper, Darby argued that unfulfilled Old Testament prophecy concerning the restoration of Israel should be applied to the Church. He also placed the Church on earth until the Revelation 19 coming at Armageddon. While he may have hinted at some dispensational ideas, such ideas were already fully developed in Irving's 1826 "preliminary discourse." Furthermore, on pages 6-10 & 19-21, Darby referred to Irving, de Lacunza, *The Morning Watch*, and even quoted some of Irving's works, including his "preliminary discourse!" So, while dispensationalism may have been evolving in Darby's own mind, clearly, these ideas were not original with him! He was reading them in Irving's and de Lacunza's works!

In 1830, Darby was still defending "historicism" against "futurism" three months after the clear pre-trib "Fidus" article appeared in *The Morning Watch*. In the December 1830 issue of *The Christian Herald*, Darby published an article entitled, "*On 'Days' Signifying 'Years' in Prophetic Language*" (NJ) [6]. Darby defended the standard "historicist" view, that the 1260 day tribulation meant 1260 years. Consequently, he saw the tribulation as largely past, and could not possibly have been expecting a pre-trib rapture, which requires a "futurist" viewpoint.

In 1830, J. N. Darby also visited the MacDonald's in Port Glasgow, and observed the "manifestations" in their prayer meetings, as Darby later recalled. Darby described the sequence of events — who prayed, who spoke in tongues, etc. [7]. But, while he noted Margaret's speaking, he failed to mention the subject of her prophesying. However, John Cardale, who was also present, wrote that Margaret "*commenced also speaking ... gave testimony to the judgments coming on the earth; but also directed the church to the coming of the Lord as her hope of deliverance,*" and was heard speaking in a loud voice "*denouncing the coming judgments.*" [8]. Therefore, we can conclude that Darby was fully aware that the "pre-tribulation rapture" was a subject of the prophecies among the Irvingite Charismatics. It was nine more years before Darby clearly espoused a pre-trib rapture in his published works.

CONCLUDING REMARKS We have tried to be fair in this short article, attempting to avoid over-reaching the facts or drawing unwarranted conclusions. We should put to rest the rumor that the pre-trib rapture originated in an utterance of "tongues" in Irving's church. While, it appears that such utterances of prophetic revelation were common in Irving's church, the secret pre-trib rapture was first seen by Margaret MacDonald in her "visions," months before she spoke in tongues. It was published in the September 1830 issue of *The Morning Watch*, and only afterwards became the subject of the "prophetic utterances" in Irving's church. It is clear that Darby was fully aware of the goings on among the MacDonalds and Irvingites, as well as de Lacunza's and Irving's "dispensationalism." Darby cannot rightly be credited with either dispensationalism or pre-tribulationism.

This is not to imply that Darby's pre-trib development owes its existence exclusively to MacDonald, de Lacunza, or Irving. The evidence supports a connection between these, and that Darby was influenced (perhaps strongly) by the Irvingites. There may very well have been others who influenced Darby, too.

The Irvingite pre-trib (gathering of the elite) rapture was not as much the result of the outworkings of Irving's dispensational leanings, but rather grew out of alleged gifts of prophecy among Scottish / English Charismatics. Darby seems to have given the whole theory a facelift, and fine-tuned a theological system whereby a full pre-trib rapture could be sold to the public, who would naturally be skeptical of the excesses of the Irvingites. So, while Darby did not originate the pre-trib rapture idea, he gave it some respectability. As it turns out, Darby became its greatest salesman.

My thanks to Dave MacPherson, whose years of research turned up the original works quoted in this article, and who provided me with extensive photocopies of the source material. For more information on the Irvingite movement, see "[Irvingite Gifts](#)" by [Benjamin B. Warfield, 1918](#)

NOTES:

1. See: Dave MacPherson, *The Rapture Plot*, p. 94
2. Tregelles, Samuel P., *Premillennial Advent* (The Christian Annotator, June 16, 1855), p. 190.
3. Tregelles, Samuel P., *The Hope of Christ's Second Coming* (Ambassadors for Christ, n.d. 1864), pp. 34,35.
4. Kelly, William, *The Catholic Apostolic Body, or Irvingites* (The Bible Treasury, Dec. 1890), p. 191.
5. Darby, J. N., *Reflections* (1829), Prophetic No. 1, pp. 1-31.
6. Darby, J. N., *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Prophetic No. 1*, p. 40.
7. Darby, J. N., *The Irrationalism of Infidelity* (London: 1853), pp. 283-285.
8. Cardale, John B., *On the Extraordinary Manifestations in Port Glasgow*" (The Morning Watch, Dec. 1830) p. 870, 871, 873.

Morgan Edwards and the Pre-Trib Rapture By Tim Warner - Copyright © January 2001

It is a well know fact that John N. Darby is responsible for the spread of the modern theory of pre-tribulationism. However, this does not mean Darby originated this idea, only that he popularized it.

In our article entitled, "[The History of Pre-Trib Development](#)," we have given hard evidence that:

- a) Edward Irving taught all of the essentials of dispensationalism in 1825
- b) the Irvingites taught a secret rapture in 1830
- c) Darby was exposed to both Irving's "dispensationalism" and the secret rapture ideas (from Margaret MacDonald's visions and articles appearing in Irving's quarterly, *The Morning Watch*), long before he embraced either dispensationalism or pre-tribulationism.

Pre-tribbers in the past have been content to trace the origins of pre-tribulationism to Darby. However, with the research of Dave MacPherson exposing the pre-trib connection to the Irvingites, with their heresies, false prophecies, and failed date setting, modern pre-tribbers have been frantically trying to come up with "pre-Irving" evidence of pre-tribulationism to deflect the stigma of "Irvingism." The search for earlier pre-trib evidence has not been totally unsuccessful. A 1788 book by Baptist Minister, Morgan Edwards, displays a very crude form of pre-tribulationism.

The appearance of pre-tribulationism relatively late in Church history substantially weakens the probability that it was actually taught by the Apostles. Whether Morgan Edwards (1788) or Edward Irving (1830) was the first to publish this theory is inconsequential, both being removed from Apostolic times by more than seventeen centuries. The fact is, there is no trace of pre-tribulationism in the early Church, or prior to the Reformation. This fact is devastating to pre-trib.

However, the problem of a late date for pre-tribulationism is bad enough without the connection to the Irvingites, with their weird goings-on. Such bizarre origins casts serious doubt on its viability as something engineered by the Holy Ghost! So, pre-tribbers have felt compelled to distance themselves and their secret rapture as far from Irving as possible! By successfully showing that Morgan Edwards wrote of a pre-trib rapture before Irving, they at least are saved the embarrassment of Irvingite Charismatics, Margaret MacDonald's visions, and association with heresy. ... Or are they?

Even the discovery of Morgan Edwards' book does not eliminate the ghost of Edward Irving for pre-tribbers. There is a clear traceable history back-tracking the development of modern pre-tribulationism through dispensational seminaries (like Dallas Seminary), the Scofield Bible, early pre-trib prophecy conferences, the Plymouth Brethren, J. N. Darby, and finally the Irvingites, and even Margaret MacDonald's visions. However, despite the earlier date (32 years earlier), there is no apparent connection between Morgan Edwards' (1788) "Millennium" book and modern pre-tribulationism. So, if Morgan Edwards' theory did not take hold in some group, or if his book did not fall into the hands of Irving or Darby, then he might as well have developed his theory on Mars! Because, it had no impact at all on modern pre-trib development.

Thomas Ice, in his article on Morgan Edwards, claimed that pre-tribulationism is derived from the literal interpretation of the Bible, and points to Edwards and Darby as evidence of this, claiming they **independently** arrived at their conclusions from a study of the Scriptures. But, as we have already shown, Darby's ideas were borrowed from the Irvingites. He had plenty of outside help in forming his ideas, besides a literal interpretation of the Scripture. Contemporaries of Darby, like Samuel Tregelles, held to literalism and pre-millennialism, but strongly opposed the pre-trib rapture theory. Furthermore, while Darby did interpret Old Testament prophecy related to Israel literally, he relied **exclusively** on symbolism and inference (NOT LITERALISM) to justify the pre-trib rapture [1], seeing it allegorically in the "man-child" who was caught up to heaven in Rev. 12! [2]. Even modern pre-tribbers, who publicly pride themselves on their "literalism," are also forced to resort to symbolism, finding support in John's being caught up to heaven in Rev. 4, or the 24 elders as representing the raptured Church in heaven. So much for "literalism!" Ice's implication that literalism automatically leads to pre-tribulationism is simply nonsense! Certainly it leads to pre-millennialism. But, there is nothing in the Bible that, when taken literally, indicates a pre-trib rapture! It is excessive **dispensationalism** that leads to "pre-tribulationism," not consistent literalism.

Pre-tribbers may be disappointed to discover that while Morgan Edwards' conclusions regarding the Millennium were based on literal interpretation, he gave no (literal) biblical reason for separating the rapture from the second coming. His only justification for this separation was his belief that it provided a necessary interval for the judgment of believers.

Morgan Edwards' Book In 1788, Morgan Edwards published two essays that he had written while a student, titled, "*Two Academical Exercises on Subjects Bearing the Following Titles; Millennium, Last-Novelties.*" The "Millennium" section dealt with the tribulation, second coming, and Millennium. The "Last-Novelties" section dealt with the end of the Millennium, New Heaven and New Earth, etc.

Before we proceed, we need to understand that Morgan's academic essays are not well developed eschatological treatise. As a young (20-24 years old) seminary student, he was assigned the task of writing an essay on the Millennium by his professor. While it is apparent that young Morgan had a pretty good handle on Scripture, he made several glaring errors and contradictions, as we shall see. Three things should be noted before examining Edward's essay.

1. Morgan Edwards apparently did not rely on other works. In fact, while he occasionally referred to others, he wrote in opposition to the historicist / a-millennialism of the times. Not once did he refer to another writer to support his rapture theory (although he did appeal to the Church Fathers in support of his literal Millennium). That he considered his theory "new" and novel, is clear from the verse he chose to put on the title page:

*"May we know what **this new doctrine**, whereof thou speakest, is? for thou bringest **certain strange things** to our ears: We would know, therefore, what these things mean. ACTS xvii. 19. 20"*

2. The opening statement in his essay indicates his total lack of confidence in his new theory. And, it shows that Morgan was simply writing his essay following the instruction of his professor, to use the LITERAL method in all cases except where that would lead to absurd conclusions. This was contrary to the accepted Protestant way of treating prophecy at the time. Morgan also stated that his following the literal hermeneutic was strictly for this exercise alone, and that he did not wish to be seen as a literalist. In other words, this whole essay was **hypothetical!**

*"And is it come to my lot to treat of the Millennium, or Christ's thousand years reign on earth? Thousand pities, sir, that you had not allotted the task to one of these older and abler students! But, since it is your pleasure, I will do my possible: and **in the attempt will work by a rule you have often recommended, viz. "to take the scriptures in a literal sense, except when that leads to contradiction or absurdity."** I need say no more to inform you, sir, that **I wish to be understood as a minister of the letter only while I treat of the said Millennium.** Very able men have already handled the subject in a mystical, or allegorical, or spiritual way: and **could I rest satisfied with their sentiments, and deliver them perhaps with applause; as that would show my reading,** - and at the same time, free a novice from the affectation of singularity and taking too much upon him, **like another son of Levi.**"*

His statement, "*I wish to be understood as a minister of the letter **only** while I treat of the said Millennium,*" indicates his apparent discomfort with the literal method he was required to use by his professor! Historicists of his day saw literal interpretation as a "Jewish" thing. Paul wrote that "*the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*" It was common for a-millennialists to use this verse to justify "spiritual" interpretation. Hence, Morgan equated literal interpretation with "*the sons of Levi.*" Later in the discourse, after apparently months of studying his topic, young Morgan seemed to be much more comfortable with "literalism."

3. Morgan's professor's reaction to his work is very telling. Following is the closing statement of his "Millennium" essay, followed by his professor's assessment.

Morgan: "*I wonder, Sir, if your patience be not exhausted with the length, and perhaps, **nonsense** of my sermon?"*

Professor: "*You finished your discourse with a supposition that the length and **nonsense** of it had tried my patience. If you used lightness you are to blame. But as I hope you are always in earnest when you study the things of God, I have to assure you that **the novelty and ingenuity of your attempt have entertained me not a little.** And when you are more master of time than at present, I advise you to study your subject closely, and you will see cause to alter some parts of your plan, and correct errors of*

others.- You also dropped a hint or two touching the New Heaven and the New Earth, which sounded a little strange. Let us hear what you have to say on those subjects, when it comes your turn to appear in that desk again."

Morgan shortly thereafter was assigned the task of developing the "last-novelties" (New Heaven & New Earth & New Jerusalem), which he did using the same "literal" method. This is the second part of the book. When Morgan published his book containing both works, the publisher added a note immediately after the professor's remarks quoted above, (on the last page of the first "Millennium" section).

*"Let me tell thee, gentle reader, that the tutor's advice was taken by the composer of the Millennium; and that it has undergone several alterations and corrections since the protograph was exhibited in the said desk. Let me tell thee further, that the other advice, or rather command of the tutor was attended to; and a discourse delivered in the same desk, on the New Heaven and New Earth. A copy of which follows under the title, Last Novelties. **And if thou like it half as well as I do, thou wilt not begrudge the eleven-penny bit it cost thee."***

It seems Morgan's work was published partly for its novelty and entertainment value rather than its weight as a theological discourse! And, one is not disappointed with the second section, where Morgan speculated that the lake of fire is in the moon, and that all the other planets in our solar system are inhabited!

"Nor will the moon be useless though it will have no sea to govern; because, (as many suppose) the lake of fire and brimstone is in the moon:" [p. 51]

"What sense is there in taking the sons of one globe into another, when all globes have their own inhabitants?" [p. 52]

"I cannot help felicitating the present age on account of the knowledge they have of those heavens, by means of modern astronomy: ... and partly because it enables us to form a comparison between our world and the other worlds in our sight; and consequently between ourselves and our neighbors, who inhabit those worlds." [p. 53]

Below are what we consider the most important quotations from Edwards' essay on the Millennium. Several things are worth noting: Among them, on pages 16 & 21 Morgan equated the "elect" in Matt. 24 with the Jewish nation. He seems rather confused on the length of the tribulation. On pages 19-23 he laid out a scenario where the two witnesses prophesy for 42 months, followed by their being killed, followed by Antichrist's reigning for 42 more months, making a total of seven years. On page 21 he put the rapture 42 months BEFORE the witnesses are killed, making it a full seven years between the rapture and Millennium. However, on pages 7 & 53 he claimed that the rapture is 3.5 years before the Millennium. Another observation worth noting is his use of literal "days" rather than the common "year-day" theory of the historicists. On page 20, he saw the Antichrist's being revealed in the future, although he saw the "mystery of iniquity" historically, as largely the papacy, with the "Antichrist" being the last pope. But in a footnote on the same page, he seems to contradict himself, calling the Antichrist (the Man of Sin) a "succession of persons," implying a "historicist" perspective. He wrote that the two witnesses will be literal men, Elijah and John the Apostle, seemingly forseeing a "futurist" scheme. But, on page 14, he viewed the Ottoman/Turkish empire, that was presently occupying the Holy Land, as the second Beast of Revelation 13. This may imply a "historicist" perspective. He definitely did not hold to "imminence" (according to the pre-trib definition) because he saw the 2 witnesses appearance and prophesying "out of sackcloth" prior to their 42 month stint "in sackcloth" (which he placed before the "abomination of desolation"). In his scheme, one would see the witnesses prophesying prior to the rapture. He also held to the "six day theory," where the Millennium would begin 6000 years from creation. According to Morgan's calculations given on pages 19,33,34, the Millennium would begin in 1996 (far from being imminent in his day). Unlike modern pre-tribbers, he saw the seals, trumpets, and vials, as recapping and synchronous, each series concluding with Christ's reign on earth.

Comparison	Morgan's Hypothesis	Pre-Trib Pre-Mill	Historicist A-Mill	Post-Trib Pre-Mill
Imminence	NO	YES	YES	NO
Literal "1260" Days	YES	YES	NO	YES
Revelation Sequential	NO	YES	YES/NO	NO
Separate Rapture	YES	YES	NO	NO
Future Anti-christ	YES/NO	YES	NO	YES
Matt. 24 "Elect" = Israel	YES	YES	NO	NO

While some might conclude that Morgan Edwards was the first to proclaim a pre-trib rapture (depending on how one defines the terminology), his view was a far cry from modern pre-trib. The hypothetical nature of his discourse indicates that Morgan himself was neither a pre-tribulationist, nor a futurist, but only hypothesized this scenario to humor his professor! And even in his attempt to display a literal hermeneutic, he sometimes allowed the contemporary "historicist" view to blend with his hypothetical scenario. A "historicist" cannot be pre-trib, since he views some of the tribulation as past. So, I think it is a bit of a stretch for Thomas Ice to claim Morgan Edwards as "another pre-Darby pretribulationist."

[Click here](#) for the entire text of Morgan Edwards' "Millennium" essay - transcribed by Tim Warner.

NOTES:

1. In Darby's 1830 article, he wrote: "*First, in prophecy, when the Jewish church or nation (exclusive of the Gentile parenthesis in their history) is concerned, i.e., when the address is directly to the Jews, there we may look for a plain and direct testimony, because earthly things were the Jews' proper portion.*" "*And on the contrary, where the address is to the Gentiles...there we may look for symbol, because earthly things were not their portion... When therefore facts are addressed to the Jewish church as a subsisting body ... I look for a plain, common-sense, literal statement.... On the other hand, as the church was a system of grace and heavenly hopes...it is...symbolized by analogous agencies.*" [p. 35]. (J. N. Darby, On Days Signifying Years in Prophetic Language, Prophetic No. 1, The Collected writings of JND, p. 35. First appeared in The Christian Herald {Dec. 1830}, Dublin, Ireland)

2. J. N. Darby, *The Rapture of the Saints* (1850-65), Prop. No. 4, p. 163, "*the timeless rapture of the man-child, for the Church is one with Christ...*"; J. N. Darby, *Lectures on the Second Coming* (1865), Prop. No. 4, p. 246, "*I have no doubt that the man-child ... includes the Church as well as Christ.*" J. N. Darby, Synopsis, Rev. 12 "*But Satan, as the open infidel enemy of God and God's power in Christ, sought to devour the child as soon as born, who was to have the rule of the earth from God. But the child, Christ, and the assembly with Christ, is caught away to God and His throne.... Christ and the assembly are all one. But the woman-the Jews, after this fly into the wilderness, where God has prepared a place for them, for the half-week. The assembly, or heavenly saints, (as Christ, note,) go up to heaven to be out of the way. The Jews, or earthly ones, are protected by providential care upon earth.... The child that is to have power, in and from heaven, is previously taken up there.... The historical course of events is now pursued, the child being supposed to be already caught up. There is war in heaven; and the devil and his angels are cast out, and have no more place there. This brings out yet more clearly the distinction of the heavenly saints and the Jewish remnant.*"

Dallas Doctors' Departure Distortions

Walvoord's & Pentecost's Myth

Rumors of the Early Church's "Imminent" Departure have been Greatly Exaggerated

By Tim Warner - Copyright © January 2001

One of the tactics used by some pre-trib authors, to offset the embarrassing dearth of pre-trib belief for the first 1700 years of Christianity, is to simply revise history! One would hope Christians (especially those in high places) would refrain from such tactics. But, alas, it is common among modern pre-tribulationists. Even the big names at Dallas Theological Seminary are no exception. We are not going to judge their motives. We are simply going to expose what has been going on. Whether these men intentionally meant to deceive, whether they were deceived themselves, or whether they were simply repeating what they had read from others, we cannot say. But the result is the same. They have grossly misrepresented historical documents in an attempt to give the impression that pre-tribulationism or its essential elements were taught in the Early Church.

Dr. John Walvoord, former president of Dallas Theological Seminary and author of several pre-trib books, has repeatedly claimed that while the early Christians were post-trib, they were not "futurists." They believed they were already in the tribulation and therefore were looking for an imminent rapture. The implication of this claim is that the early Christians were taught by the Apostles to expect the rapture at any moment. But, they were confused about the tribulation events. Thus, it is easy to discredit and dismiss their strong post-trib stance. Walvoord implied that the Apostles actually taught "pre-trib," since they passed on the idea of "imminence." And, the early Christians were simply too stupid to keep the tribulation events in the future, as they had allegedly been taught by the Apostles.

Dr. Dwight Pentecost, also of Dallas Seminary, made similar statements in his classic pre-trib textbook, *Things to Come*. Below are two quotes from Walvoord and one from Pentecost that indicate this line of reasoning.

"Unquestionably, the majority view as far as the rapture is concerned is the posttribulationist view, namely, that Christ will come for His church in connection with His second coming to the earth. This is the view advocated by the amillenarians and postmillenarians and by some premillenarians. They contend that to divide the rapture from the second coming to the earth by a period of at least seven years is to bifurcate what the Scriptures intend to be a single event.

Posttribulationists who have written on this subject usually attack the pretribulationist view, rather than support their own position. Arguments gleaned from their writings in favor of the posttribulationist position may be itemized as follows:

1. The argument from history. Posttribulationists appeal to the fact that the early church fathers were posttribulationist and conclude that, therefore, the pretribulationist position is new and novel. Pretribulationists reply by noting that **modern posttribulationism with its doctrine of tribulation first and then the rapture is not what the early church fathers believed at all, for the early church held the any-moment view of the Lord's return, thinking erroneously that they were already in the great tribulation.** The modern form of posttribulationism which places the tribulation still future and to be followed by the rapture is in some respects more recent than pretribulationism as it is taught today." [Walvoord, *Future Work of Christ-Part I: The Coming of Christ for His Church — BibSac Vol 123 #489*] (Emphasis mine)

"[I]n the early church fathers there was no clear agreement that a specific seven year period as is indicated in Daniel 9:27 had to occur before the Lord could return. Generally speaking, the early church fathers, as well as the Protestant Reformers, tended to identify contemporary events with the events of the Great Tribulation and because of this **could look for the imminent return of Christ.**" [Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, p. 51.] (Emphasis mine)

"The Early Church lived in the light of the belief in the imminent return of Christ. Their expectation was that Christ might return at any time. Pretribulationism is the only position consistent with this doctrine of imminence. If an argument from silence be followed, the weight of evidence favors the pre-tribulation view." [Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 166]

Dr. Walvoord's claim, that "*in the early church fathers there was no clear agreement that a specific seven year period as is indicated in Daniel 9:27 had to occur before the Lord could return*" is very misleading. If he means that they were not unanimous in their agreement, well, who is today? There was a dispute in the early Church over whether the Millennial hope was literal. Those inclined toward allegorical interpretation also thought the 70th week was past. These were Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Julius Africanus. All were affiliated with the North African Alexandrian school, known for its allegorical interpretation, unorthodox views, and combining Christianity with Greek and Eastern philosophy. The other exception was Tertullian of Carthage (North Africa). While Tertullian viewed Daniel 9:27 as past, he was still a "futurist," looking for a literal "tribulation," and the persecution of the Church by Antichrist just prior to the Lord's coming. Unfortunately, Tertullian was involved in the Montanist heresy.

In the orthodox (pre-millennial) writers, there is clear agreement. Irenaeus and Hippolytus taught that the 70th week would be **the last seven years of this age** in which the two witnesses would prophesy for the first 42 months, the "abomination of desolation" being in the middle, and the Beast would persecute the Church for the last 42 months, then Christ would return (a clear "seven year" tribulation with a post-trib rapture). Other early writers, including Barnabas, Justin, Hermas, Cyprian, Lactantius, and Victorinus, did not refer to Daniel 9:27, and so no specific mention is made of the tribulation being "seven years." But it is clear that they were expecting a future tribulation at the end of the age, and a literal Antichrist who would persecute the Church. These writers saw the Antichrist's reign as 3.5 years. And the ministry of the two witnesses as also 3.5 years. This implies a seven year tribulation.

Walvoord's claim that they thought they were in the tribulation, is equally false. The early Church Fathers consistently placed the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist, and the 2 witnesses in the future. Not one believed the tribulation was in progress. Some thought that the beginning of the tribulation was imminent, expecting the Antichrist to be revealed in their lifetimes. But Walvoord completely misrepresents the Church Fathers when he says they did not understand the 70th week, or thought it was in progress.

Both Walvoord and Pentecost are wrong when they claim the Early Christians expected an "any moment" coming of Christ. The Early Church Fathers looked for intervening events to take place before Christ would return. In the following quotations we will prove decisively that the *Dallas Doctors' Departure Distortions* have no basis in fact, and totally misrepresented the writings of the Church Fathers.

We will demonstrate that the orthodox Early Church Fathers:

1. Understood the 70th week as future, and would be literally seven years
2. Understood that the tribulation events of Revelation would occur within the 70th week, just prior to Christ's coming
3. Certain intervening events must come before Antichrist would appear. Therefore they did NOT hold to the idea that Jesus' coming was 'imminent.' Rather, they expected the entire sequence of events - tribulation, Antichrist, second coming - to occur soon.

And let's not forget that this is exactly what post-trib / pre-mills teach today, and is the position of **The Last Trumpet** website. So, Walvoord's claim above, that modern post-tribbers do not hold to the same basic scenario as the Early Church Fathers, is another misrepresentation of the facts.

Irenaeus, while reproving certain Christians for too much speculation, by trying to figure out the name of Antichrist based on the Greek letters for the number 666, wrote that believers **should wait for the Roman empire to break up into ten regions ruled by ten kings, then Antichrist would be made known, and Christians could recognize him by the number 666.**

Irenaeus: (AD. 120-202) "Moreover, another danger, by no means trifling, shall overtake those who falsely presume that they know the name of Antichrist. For if these men assume one [number], **when this [Antichrist] shall come having another, they will be easily led away by him, as supposing him not to be the expected one, who must be guarded against.** These men, therefore, ought to learn [what really is the state of the case], and go back to the true number of the name, that they be not reckoned among false prophets. But, knowing the sure number declared by Scripture, that is, six hundred sixty and six, **let them await, in the first place, the division of the kingdom into ten; then, in the next place, when these kings are reigning, and beginning to set their affairs in order, and advance their kingdom, [let them learn] to acknowledge that he who shall come claiming the kingdom for himself, and shall terrify those men of whom we have been speaking, having a name containing the aforesaid number, is truly the abomination of desolation. ... It is therefore more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfillment of the prophecy, than to be making surmises,** and casting about for any names that may present themselves, inasmuch as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned; and the same question will, after all, remain unsolved. ... But he indicates the number of the name now, that **when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware who he is:** ... But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." [Irenaeus: *Against Heresies*, Book V, XXX]

Irenaeus instructed believers to wait for the fulfillment of distinct prophetic events that would precede the coming of Christ. The division of the Roman Empire into ten regions, in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy, and the appearance of Antichrist, must occur before Christians could expect to see the return of Christ. This is not a belief in "imminence" by any stretch of the imagination. Nor is it a belief that they were presently in the tribulation. Here is another quote from Irenaeus.

Irenaeus: (AD. 120-202) "In a still clearer light has John, in the Apocalypse, indicated to the Lord's disciples **what shall happen in the last times**, and concerning the ten kings **who shall then arise**, among whom the empire which now rules [the earth] **shall be** partitioned. ... And **they shall lay Babylon waste, and burn her with fire, and shall give their kingdom to the beast, and put the Church to flight**. After that they shall be destroyed by the coming of our Lord." [Against Heresies, Book V, XXVI]

[Click here for more quotes showing non-imminency \(Non-Java Window\).](#)

Notice, Irenaeus used the future tense throughout when speaking of the tribulation events. All of these things were in the future from his perspective.

The orthodox Early Christians also had a clear understanding of the 70th week, that it consisted of the last seven years before Christ's second coming, and that it was entirely future. And, they placed the ministry of the two witnesses, as well as the Antichrist, within the 70th week.

Hippolytus: "**As these things, then, are in the future**, and as the ten toes of the image are equivalent to (so many) democracies, and the ten horns of the fourth beast are distributed over ten kingdoms, let us look at the subject a little more closely, and consider these matters as in the clear light of a personal survey. The golden head of the image and the lioness denoted the Babylonians; the shoulders and arms of silver, and the bear, represented the Persians and Medes; the belly and thighs of brass, and the leopard, meant the Greeks, who held the sovereignty from Alexander's time; the legs of iron, and the beast dreadful and terrible, expressed the Romans, who hold the sovereignty at present; the toes of the feet which were part clay and part iron, and the ten horns, were emblems of **the kingdoms that are yet to rise; the other little horn that grows up among them meant the Antichrist in their midst**; the stone that smites the earth and brings judgment upon the world was Christ." [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 27,28]

"For when Daniel said, "I shall make my covenant for one week," **he indicated seven years; and the one half of the week is for the preaching of the prophets, and for the other half of the week — that is to say, for three years and a half — Antichrist will reign upon the earth**. And after this his kingdom and his glory shall be taken away." [Appendix to the Works of Hippolytus, XXV]

[Click here for more quotes showing a future 70th week \(Non-Java Window\).](#)

Had Dr. Walvoord simply mischaracterized the early Christians, one might suppose that he was just misinformed. But, there are also examples of his quoting excerpts from these documents, and omitting certain statements in the immediate context which show that the early Christians could not possibly have held to imminence! Robert Gundry, in his 1973 book, *The Church and the Tribulation* [p. 175], illustrated this with the following quote from the first century "Didache" [The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles].

The Didache Chapter XVI "Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ye ready, for ye know not the hour in which the Lord cometh." [Here Walvoord, Stanton, and Pentecost[1], break off the quotation in an endeavor to make the passage establish a belief in imminence by the early Church] "... for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if ye be not made perfect in the last time.... then shall appear the world-deceiver as Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders.... Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and perish; but they that endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself."

1. Walvoord, *BibSac*, 111:200; Stanton, 221; Pentecost, 169.

Grant Jeffrey's 'Apocalypse' Debacle The 'Mac-Daddy' of Pre-Trib 'Revisionism' By Tim Warner - Copyright © January 2001

In his 1992 book "Apocalypse," Grant Jeffrey made the astounding claim that some Early Church writers clearly taught an imminent pre-trib rapture. He then selectively quoted several Early Church authors in an attempt to bolster his claim. For many years, post-trib authors have quoted these very same authors to illustrate that the Early Church was post-trib! Other pre-trib authors and scholars have even acknowledged that the Early Church was entirely post-trib. Grant Jeffrey is the first to my knowledge to make the outrageous claim that the Early Church Fathers taught an imminent pre-trib rapture.

Jeffrey's 'revisionism' technique was to selectively quote short excerpts that allow him to apply a pre-trib "spin," while omitting sentences in the immediate context that show belief in a post-trib rapture/resurrection. I have tried to give the man the benefit of the doubt. But, I am at a loss to explain how he could not have known he was misrepresenting these ancient witnesses. In chapter four, Jeffrey stated the following.

The Early Church's Belief in an Imminent Rapture

Some of the early Church writers wrote about the persecution of the tribulation as if the saints will be present. However, a number of early Christian commentaries suggested that the Church will be delivered supernaturally before the Great Tribulation. Some posttribulation writers declare that the hope of a pretribulation Rapture and deliverance from the Great Tribulation was never taught until the Plymouth Brethren began to emphasize this around 1820. As this chapter will show, there is a great deal of evidence to illustrate that some writers in the first few centuries of the Church believed in Christ rapturing the saints to deliver them from this coming Tribulation. The doctrine of the imminent Rapture was clearly taught in the New Testament and by some writers in the first centuries of the early Church. There was a difference of opinion within the early Church about the timing of the Rapture just as we find today. However, the hope of the imminent Rapture clearly existed in the writings of the early Church. [Apocalypse, pp. 86,87]

The above statements by Jeffrey are dead wrong. None of the early Christian writers indicated a belief in an imminent pre-trib rapture. There is no evidence whatever of a debate in the Early Church regarding the timing of the rapture! Post-tribulationism was the only rapture view espoused by any of the writers of the Ante-Nicene period [from the Apostles until the council of Nicea in 325AD]. The only debate that developed was regarding the Millennium, and whether the blessings associated with it were to be literally understood. They believed in a future, literal 70th week, a literal Antichrist, and a single coming of Jesus after the tribulation to raise the dead saints, rapture the living saints, and destroy the Antichrist. Jeffrey boldly manipulated these authors in an attempt to portray them as "pre-tribbers!" His treatment of this issue is the most blatant pre-trib "revisionism" I have ever seen.

The Didache [1st or Early 2nd Century] On page 87, Grant Jeffrey commented on the "Didache," an anonymous Christian document. We saw in the article on Walvoord's revisionism, that Walvoord also quoted an excerpt from this same chapter to support his "imminence" claim. Walvoord simply stopped quoting just before the part that shows Christians in the tribulation. But, Jeffrey was far more cunning, by actually quoting most of the chapter, but omitting key sentences which show the author of the Didache was not teaching a pre-trib rapture at all. The way Grant Jeffrey presents his quote, it appears to imply a pre-trib rapture. But, if you include the parts he omitted, it is quite clear that the author of the Didache was not pre-trib, but was warning Christians about their testing in the tribulation. Below is the quote from page 87 of Jeffrey's 'Apocalypse.' Following that, I have included the same quote, but with the words Jeffrey omitted re-inserted in blue type.

A Church manual from approximately A.D. 110, called the "Didache," confirms the belief of these Christians in the imminent return of Christ for believers. This was written less than fifteen years after John wrote the Revelation.

In the Didache 16, we find the following instructions. *"I Be ye watchful for your life! Let not your lamps be extinguished, nor your loins ungirded, but be ye ready! For ye know not the hour in which your Lord cometh. 2. Assemble yourselves frequently, seeking what is fitting for your souls. For the whole time of your faith will not be profitable to you, if you are not made perfect in the last time...then the world deceiver shall appear as a son of god and shall work signs and wonders... 6. And then shall the signs of the truth appear, first the sign of a rift in heaven; then the sign of the sound of a trumpet, and the thirdly, a resurrection of the dead. 7. But not of all, but as it was said, 'The Lord will come and all His saints with Him. 8. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.'"*...

After warning Christians to prepare for "the hour in which your Lord cometh," the Didache said, "Then, the world-deceiver shall appear." This order of events suggests the Rapture will precede the appearance of the world-deceiver, the Antichrist. [Apocalypse, p. 87]

In Jeffrey's truncated version of the Didache, and his analysis of it, the illusion of a secret rapture is developed from the exhortation to "watch" for the coming of the Lord (if one supposes, as Jeffrey does, that "watching" automatically implies an "any-moment" advent). Jeffrey points out that the "watching" is prior to the appearance of Antichrist, and so infers a pre-trib rapture, even though the passage never mentions a pre-trib coming. Now, here is the same quote, with the omitted words re-inserted in blue type.

*"Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ye ready, for ye know not the hour in which our Lord cometh. But often shall ye come together, seeking the things which are befitting to your souls: for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if ye be not made perfect in the last time. **For in the last days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; for when lawlessness increaseth, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another, and then shall appear the world-deceiver as Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall do iniquitous things which have never yet come to pass since the beginning. Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and shall perish; but they that endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself.** And then shall appear the signs of the truth; first, the sign of an out-spreading in heaven; then the sign of the sound of the trumpet; and the third, the resurrection of the dead; yet not of all, but as it is said: The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven."*

I find the first omission very interesting. Notice, the word "for" beginning the omitted part. When the author of the Didache wrote, "... the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if ye be not made perfect in the last time. **For, in the last days** ..." he was explaining the preceding phrase, "the last time," during which Christians would be "made perfect." Obviously, he was saying that Christians will encounter what he calls "the last time." Then he gave an explanation of what he meant by "the last time." The omitted portion is a paraphrase of Matthew 24:9-15, where Jesus warned of the coming tribulation. The author of the Didache was saying that Christian's faith will be tested during "the last time," which he derived from Matthew 24's tribulation.

The second omission is just as bad because the last sentence shows that those whom the author was exhorting to "watch" will indeed encounter this period of persecution under Antichrist. "They that endure in their faith" during the persecution of Antichrist are the same ones he exhorted to be "watching" for the coming of the Lord, and who would be "made perfect in the last time" (which consists of the events of the tribulation that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24)! Also, notice in the last sentence that the author of the Didache placed the trumpet sound, and the resurrection of believers, **after** the time of Antichrist. Yet, Jeffrey thinks nothing of claiming the author of the Didache as a "pre-tribber!"

His use of the words "for ye know not the hour in which our Lord cometh" to imply an imminent pre-trib rapture is an old pre-trib trick. The author's paraphrase of Matthew 24:9-15 shows that he was following the Olivet Discourse. And this quote from which Jeffrey derives his pre-trib rapture comes from the same passage. Jesus said, "but of that day and hour knoweth no man" [Matt. 24:36]. The question is, WHAT "day or hour" was Jesus (and the Didache) referring to? The answer is found in verses 29-31, "immediately after the tribulation ... they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Jesus clearly had His POST-TRIB coming in view when He said that no one knows the "day or hour." So, when the author of the Didache quoted these words, there is no reason to assume that he meant something other than what Jesus said! Jeffrey interpreted these words of Jesus as modern pre-tribbers do, rather than in their context. By injecting the modern pre-trib concept of "any moment" imminence into this statement (which cannot possibly teach pre-trib imminence), and omitting the parts that expose his scheme, Jeffrey was able to give an illusion of a pre-trib rapture for his unsuspecting readers!

The Epistle of Barnabas [2nd Century] In the same chapter, Jeffrey also claimed the Epistle of Barnabas teaches an imminent, pre-trib rapture. True to form, he omitted the sentences that show the writer expected Christians to go through the tribulation, giving the appearance of an "imminent" rapture. As before, the words Jeffrey omitted I have re-inserted in blue type.

This epistle clearly conveys the writers hope of the imminent return of Christ to take the saints to heaven.

"The final stumbling-block approaches, concerning which it is written, as Enoch says, 'For this end the Lord has cut short the times and the days that His Beloved may hasten; and He will come to the inheritance. And the prophet also speaks thus: "Ten kingdoms shall reign upon the earth, and a little king shall rise up after them, who shall subdue under one three of the kings." In the like manner Daniel says concerning the same, "And I beheld the fourth beast, wicked and powerful, and the more savage than all the beasts of the earth and how from it sprang up ten horns, and out of them a little budding horn, and how it subdued under one three of the ten horns. ... We take earnest heed in these last days; for the whole time of your faith will profit you nothing, unless now in this wicked time we also withstand coming sources of danger, as becometh sons of God. That the Black One may find no means of entrance, let us flee from every vanity, let us utterly hate the works of the way of wickedness." [Apocalypse, p. 92]

Notice that Grant Jeffrey omitted the part that clearly speaks of the tribulation, the ten kings, and the Antichrist. The sentence following, which Jeffrey included, is actually referring to the tribulation just described, which Jeffrey omitted. *"We take earnest heed in these last days; for the whole [past] time of your faith will profit you nothing, unless now in this wicked time we also withstand coming sources of danger..."* In context we see that Barnabas was warning Christians about withstanding the onslaught of the Antichrist, which later he calls *"the Black One."* The whole force and intended meaning of Barnabas' warning is lost because of Grant Jeffrey's omissions. His editing job leaves the impression that *"this wicked time"* meant the days they were living in. When in reality, it referred to the tribulation Barnabas had just described (but omitted by Jeffrey)! By omitting this description of the tribulational trial of the Church, Jeffrey again gives the illusion that Barnabas was indicating an imminent pre-trib rapture which they could expect at any moment. Yet, in context we see that Barnabas was doing nothing of the kind. Rather, he was exhorting the believers to be watchful, because the whole tribulation scenario could unfold soon. And like Jesus' exhortation in Matthew 24, Christians should be WATCHING for His POST-TRIB coming with their lamps trimmed! [Matt. 24:29-33 & 25:1-13].

The Shepherd of Hermas [2nd Century] On page 90 of his book, "Apocalypse," Grant Jeffrey claimed the Shepherd of Hermas teaches a pre-trib rapture. He quoted the following passage from the Shepherd of Hermas to prove his point, and then gave his assessment.

"Thou hast escaped a great tribulation because thou hast believed and at the sight of such a huge beast hast not doubted. Go therefore and declare to the Elect of the Lord His mighty deeds and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation which is to come. If ye therefore prepare yourselves and with your whole heart turn to the Lord in repentance, then shall ye be able to escape it, if your heart is pure and blameless."

After explaining to him that *"the golden colour stands for you who have escaped from the world,"* the virgin concluded her message with, *"Now ye know the symbol of the great tribulation to come. But if ye are willing, it shall be nothing."* Despite the unusual details of this so-called vision, it clearly conveys the understanding of this early Christian writer that the faithful Church is promised a supernatural escape from the great tribulation." [Apocalypse, pg. 90]

Jeffrey's out of context quotation may fool the average unsuspecting reader. But, for those who bother to look up and read the entire vision of Hermas, something entirely different awaits. It is quite apparent that Hermas did not mean total exemption or removal from the tribulation when he used the word *"escape."* Instead he meant survival, making it through the tribulation without succumbing to Satan's deception and attack, and without denying the Lord.

Consider Jeffrey's quote of Hermas in it's context. The following are excerpts from the end of the Third Vision, and the Fourth Vision. Jeffrey's quotations are in black type, and the parts he omitted I have again inserted in blue type.

[Third Vision] ***"Happy ye who endure the great tribulation that is coming on,*** and happy they who shall not deny their own life. For the Lord hath sworn by His Son, that those who denied their Lord have abandoned their life in despair, for even now these are to deny Him in the days that are coming."

[Fourth Vision] *"Has nothing crossed your path? I say, I was met by a beast of such a size that it could destroy peoples, but through the power of the Lord and His great mercy I escaped from it. Well did you escape from it, says she, because you cast your care on God, and opened your heart to the Lord, believing that you can be saved by no other than by His great and glorious name. On this account the Lord has sent His angel, who has rule over the beasts, and whose name is Thegri, **and has shut up its mouth, so that it cannot tear you.** You have escaped from great tribulation on account of your faith, and because you did not doubt in the presence of such a beast. Go, therefore, and tell the elect of the Lord His mighty deeds, and say to them that this beast is a type of the great tribulation that is coming. If then ye prepare yourselves, and repent with all your heart, and turn to the Lord, it will be possible for you to escape it, if your heart be pure and spotless, and ye spend the rest of the days of your life in serving the Lord blamelessly. ... I asked her about the four colors which the beast had on his head. And she answered, and said to me, Again you*

are inquisitive in regard to such matters. Yea, Lady, said I, make known to me what they are. Listen, said she: the black is the world in which we dwell: but the fiery and bloody points out that the world must perish through blood and fire: but the golden part are you who have escaped from this world. **For as gold is tested by fire, and thus becomes useful, so are you tested who dwell in it. Those, therefore, who continue steadfast, and are put through the fire, will be purified by means of it. For as gold casts away its dross, so also will ye cast away all sadness and straitness, and will be made pure** so as to fit into the building of the tower. ... This then is the type of the great tribulation that is to come. If ye wish it, it will be nothing."

[The Shepherd of Hermas, Vision III, IV]

I think it is obvious that Hermas did not teach a pre-trib rapture. Notice the beatitude, "Happy ye who endure the great tribulation that is coming on." In his vision he had to face the beast head on. Yet because of his faith, God did not allow the beast to harm him. Clearly then, to "escape" the great tribulation means emerging from it safely, not being removed prior to it.

Grant Jeffrey's use of this out-of-context quotation from the Shepherd of Hermas, to infer a pre-trib rapture, recklessly misrepresents this passage. The Shepherd of Hermas does not support a pre-trib rapture in the slightest.

Hippolytus

Grant Jeffrey briefly alluded to the writings of Hippolytus as well. Here is what he wrote in its entirety.

Hippolytus, who lived from A.D. 170 to 236, was the most brilliant of the early Church writers. Writing in his *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, (section 66) about the Rapture he quoted extensively and approvingly from Paul's writing in 1 Thessalonians 4:12: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." He reminds his readers of the hope of Christ's imminent return. He wrote that we should be "looking for that blessed hope and appearing of our God and Savior" when having raised the saints among us, He will rejoice with them glorifying the Father."

[Apocalypse, pg. 88]

The portion Jeffrey quoted above, in his attempt to make a pre-tribber out of Hippolytus, was the closing statement of a work which gave a great deal of information regarding the early Church's view of the rapture. It is unfortunate that Jeffrey only mentioned the closing statement. He incorrectly claimed that Hippolytus taught an "imminent" rapture. This is nowhere taught or implied in the writings of Hippolytus. Apparently, to Jeffrey, Hippolytus' quote of 1 Thessalonians four is an automatic indication that Hippolytus was pre-trib! But, this Church Father, which Jeffrey says "was the most brilliant of the early Church writers" was as strong a post-tribber as you can find today, and made probably the clearest defense of pre-millennial/post-tribulationism you can find in all the Early Church writings! Incidentally, while Jeffrey makes his claims about this writer's being pre-trib, his quotation does not support his claim one iota. There is nothing in Hippolytus' statement or quotation of 1 Thessalonians four that indicates he believed the rapture was pre-trib! Consider a few other quotes from Hippolytus.

*When the times are fulfilled, and the ten horns spring from the beast in the last (times), then Antichrist will appear among them. **When he makes war against the saints, and persecutes them, then may we expect the manifestation of the Lord from heaven.*** [Fragments from Commentaries, II, 7]

[I]t is proper that we take the Holy Scriptures themselves in hand, and find out from them what, and of what manner, the coming of Antichrist is; on what occasion and at what time that impious one shall be revealed; and whence and from what tribe (he shall come); and what his name is, which is indicated by the number in Scripture; and how he shall work error among the people, gathering them from the ends of the earth; **and (how) he shall stir up tribulation and persecution against the saints;** and how he shall glorify himself as God; and what his end shall be; and how the sudden appearing of the Lord shall be revealed from heaven; and what the conflagration of the whole world shall be; and what the glorious and heavenly kingdom of the saints is to be, when they reign together with Christ; and what the punishment of the wicked by fire. [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 5]

With respect to his name, it is not in our power to explain it exactly, as the blessed John understood it and was instructed about it, but only to give a conjectural account of it; **for when he appears, the blessed one will show us what we seek to know.** ... Wherefore we ought neither to give it out as if this were certainly his name, nor again ignore the fact that he may not otherwise be designated. But having the mystery of God in our heart, we ought in fear to keep faithfully what has been told us by blessed prophets, in order that **when those things come to pass, we may be prepared for them, and not be deceived.** For when the times advance, he too, of whom these things are said, will be manifest. [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 50]

Now concerning **the tribulation of the persecution which is to fall upon the Church from the adversary,** John also speaks thus, "And I saw a great and wondrous sign in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, ... And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." **That refers to the one thousand two hundred and threescore days (the half of the week) during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church....** These things then, being come to pass, beloved, and the one week being divided into two parts, and the abomination of desolation being manifested then, and the two prophets and forerunners of the Lord having finished their course, and the whole world finally approaching the consummation, **what remains but the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from heaven, for whom we have looked in hope,** [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 60, 61, 64]

One of the things that really bothered me about Jeffrey's "Apocalypse" book, was his comment at the end of the section where he quoted the Church Fathers. Here is what he wrote;

Note that none of the writers quoted here suggests that the Church will experience the Great Tribulation and Mark of the Beast system of Antichrist." [pg.91].

Anybody with one good eye can see that this statement is blatantly false. The quotes above from Hippolytus, as well as many others, prove this beyond dispute. Yet, Jeffrey's books continue to sell in large numbers, and unsuspecting Christians lap up the lies of the pre-trib propaganda machine as though they were "gospel."

Cyprian [3rd Century] Grant Jeffrey also attempts to use Cyprian's writings to bolster his claim that the Church Fathers believed in an imminent rapture. His comments, and a brief quote from Cyprian, are as follows.

Cyprian lived from A.D. 200 to 258, and wrote extensively on Christian doctrine. In his Epistle 55, chapter 7, he wrote about the belief in Christ's ability to deliver the Church from the Antichrist's tribulation. *"Nor let any one of you, beloved brethren, be so terrified by the fear of future persecution, or the coming of the threatening Antichrist, as not to be found armed for all things by the evangelical exhortations and precepts, and by the heavenly warnings. Antichrist is coming, but above him comes Christ also. The enemy goeth about and rageth, but immediately the Lord follows to avenge our sufferings and our wounds. The adversary is enraged and threatens, but there is One who can deliver us from his hands."* Cyprian's declaration that Christ "is One who can deliver us from his [Antichrist's] hands" suggests the possibility of the Church being raptured before the Tribulation period. It is significant that he did not write about enduring the persecution of the Antichrist. Rather, Cyprian promised that Christ "is One who can deliver us from his hands." [Apocalypse, pg. 88]

Jeffrey's brief quote, and his analysis of Cyprian's writings, show a blatant disregard for the context in which this passage is found. Not only does the entire passage refute Jeffrey's claims, but it proves beyond doubt that his statement; *"he did not write about enduring the persecution of the Antichrist. Rather, Cyprian promised that Christ is One who can deliver us from his hands"* is another gross misrepresentation. The *"delivering out of Antichrist's hands"* clearly **does not** mean a pre-trib rapture, but safely emerging from the time of tribulation, without denying the Lord. Consider the quote Jeffrey used, this time in it's context. As before, the parts Jeffrey quoted are in black, and the rest I have reinserted in blue. I have included Cyprian's remarks a few paragraphs before the passage in question because it clearly establishes the fact that he was speaking of the great tribulation. Please forgive the long quotation, but I think it is necessary to get the whole picture.

*"For you ought to know and to believe, and hold it for certain, that the day of affliction has begun to hang over our heads, and the end of the world and **the time of Antichrist to draw near, so that we must all stand prepared for the battle;** nor consider anything but the glory of life eternal, and the crown of the confession of the Lord; and not regard those things which are coming as being such as were those which have passed away. **A severer and a fiercer fight is now threatening, for which the soldiers of Christ ought to prepare themselves** with uncorrupted faith and robust courage, considering that they drink the cup of Christ's blood daily, for the reason that they themselves also may be able to shed their blood for Christ. For this is to wish to be found with Christ, to imitate that which Christ both taught and did, according to the Apostle John, who said, "He that saith he abideth in Christ, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked." Moreover, the blessed Apostle Paul exhorts and teaches, saying, "We are God's children; but if children, then heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."...*

*Nor let any one of you, beloved brethren, be so terrified by the fear of future persecution, or the coming of the threatening Antichrist, as not to be found armed for all things by the evangelical exhortations and precepts, and by the heavenly warnings. Antichrist is coming, but above him comes Christ also. The enemy goeth about and rageth, but immediately the Lord follows to avenge our sufferings and our wounds. The adversary is enraged and threatens, but there is One who can deliver us from his hands. He is to be feared whose anger no one can escape, as He Himself forewarns, and says: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." And again: "He that loveth his life, shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal." And in the Apocalypse He instructs and forewarns, saying, "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, mixed in the cup of His indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever; and they shall have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image." For the secular contest men are trained and prepared, and reckon it a great glory of their honor if it should happen to them to be crowned in the sight of the people, and in the presence of the emperor. Behold a lofty and great contest, glorious also with the reward of a heavenly crown, inasmuch as God looks upon us as we struggle, and, extending His view over those whom He has condescended to make His sons, He enjoys the spectacle of our contest. God looks upon us in the warfare, and fighting in the encounter of faith; His angels look on us, and Christ looks on us. How great is the dignity, and how great the happiness of the glory, to engage in the presence of God, and to be crowned, with Christ for a judge! **Let us be armed, beloved brethren, with our whole strength, and let us be prepared for the struggle with an uncorrupted mind, with a sound faith, with a devoted courage. Let the camp of God go forth to the battle- field which is appointed to us.** Let the sound ones be armed, lest he that is sound should lose the advantage of having lately stood; let the lapsed also be armed, that even the lapsed may regain what he has lost: let honor provoke the whole; let sorrow provoke the lapsed to the battle. The Apostle Paul teaches us to be armed and prepared, saying, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against powers, and the princes of this world and of this darkness, against spirits of wickedness in high places. Wherefore put on the whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand in the most evil day, that when ye have done all ye may stand; having your loins girt about with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; taking the shield of faith, wherewith*

ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one; and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Let us take these arms, let us fortify ourselves with these spiritual and heavenly safeguards, that **in the most evil day we may be able to withstand**, and to resist the threats of the devil: let us put on the breastplate of righteousness, that our breast may be fortified and safe against the darts of the enemy: let our feet be shod with evangelical teaching, and armed, so that when the serpent shall begin to be trodden and crushed by us, he may not be able to bite and trip us up: let us bravely bear the shield of faith, by the protection of which, whatever the enemy darts at us may be extinguished: let us take also for protection of our head the helmet of salvation, that our ears may be guarded from hearing the deadly edicts; that our eyes may be fortified, that they may not see the odious images; that our brow may be fortified, so as to keep safe the sign of God; that our mouth may be fortified, that the conquering tongue may confess Christ its Lord: let us also arm the right hand with sword of the Spirit, that it may bravely reject the deadly sacrifices; that, mindful of the Eucharist, the hand which has received the Lord's body may embrace the Lord Himself, hereafter to receive from the Lord the reward of heavenly crowns. **Oh, what and how great will that day be at its coming, beloved brethren, when the Lord shall begin to count up His people, and to recognize the deservings of each one by the inspection of His divine knowledge, to send the guilty to Gehenna, and to set on fire our persecutors with the perpetual burning of a penal fire, but to pay to us the reward of our faith and devotion!"** [The Epistles of Cyprian, LV, 1,7-10]

For the life of me, I can't understand how brother Jeffrey can get an "imminent" pre-trib rapture out of this passage. Even the short quote he provided does not suggest an imminent rapture, as Jeffrey claims. His riding roughshod over these ancient witnesses demonstrates a calloused disregard for context. The context is all about Christians being spiritually prepared to endure the tribulation.

Victorinus [3rd Century] Grant Jeffrey also claims that Victorinus' Commentary on Revelation supports a pre-trib rapture. Jeffrey's comments, from "Apocalypse" pg. 89, are as follows;

Victorinus, bishop of Petau, lived from A.D. 240 till his martyrdom during the last great persecution in A.D. 304. In His Commentary on the Apocalypse he interpreted chapter 6 of the Revelation to promise the deliverance of the Church from the tribulation period. "And the heaven withdrew as a scroll that is rolled up.' For the heaven to be rolled away, that is, that the Church shall be taken away. 'And the mountains and islands removed from their places; that is, that the good will be removed, seeking to avoid the persecution." In his comments on chapter 15, Victorinus wrote, "'And I saw another great and wonderful sign, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is completed the indignation of God.' For the wrath of God always strikes the obstinate people with seven plagues, that is, perfectly, as it is said in Leviticus; and these shall be in the last time, when the Church shall have gone out of the midst." These comments reveal that this second century pastor also understood that the saints would be "removed" to escape the wrath of God "when the Church shall have gone out of the midst" of the coming tribulation. [Apocalypse, pg. 90,91]

Like most post-tribbers today, Victorinus did not interpret the seals, trumpets, and vials, chronologically (as pre-tribbers do). He believed they overlapped, the last of each series converging on the coming of Christ. He believed the sixth seal would occur at the end of the tribulation.

"[A]lthough the same thing recurs in the phials [vials], still it is not said as if it occurred twice, but because what is decreed by the Lord to happen shall be once for all; for this cause it is said twice. What, therefore, He said too little in the trumpets, is here found in the phials [vials]. **We must not regard the order of what is said, because frequently the Holy Spirit, when He has traversed even to the end of the last times, returns again to the same times, and fills up what He had before failed to say. Nor must we look for order in the Apocalypse; but we must follow the meaning of those things which are prophesied.**" [Chapter 7]

The cosmic signs associated with this seal, the darkening of the sun and moon, are the same signs Jesus said would occur "immediately after the tribulation" [cf. Matt. 24:29 & Rev. 6:12-14]. So, when Victorinus wrote; "the Church shall be taken away," at the sixth seal, he is confirming what Jesus said in Matthew 24:29-31. When the sun and moon are darkened, Jesus will gather together "His elect." But, this is clearly in a post-trib context.

Below is the context of Jeffrey's quote. The part Jeffrey quoted is in black, and the parts he omitted are again in blue.

" 12. "And I saw, when he had opened the sixth seal, there was a great earthquake." In the sixth seal, then, was a great earthquake: **this is that very last persecution.**

"And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair." The sun becomes as sackcloth; that is, the brightness of doctrine will be obscured by unbelievers.

"And the entire moon became as blood." **By the moon of blood is set forth the Church of the saints as pouring out her blood for Christ.**

13. "And the stars fell to the earth." **The falling of the stars are the faithful who are troubled for Christ's sake.**

"Even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs." **The fig-tree, when shaken, loses its untimely figs — when men are separated from the Church by persecution.**

14. "And the heaven withdrew as a scroll that is rolled up." For the heaven to be rolled away, that is, that the Church shall be taken away.

"And every mountain and the islands were moved from their places." Mountains and islands removed from their places intimate that in the last persecution all men departed from their places; that is, that the good will be removed, seeking to avoid the persecution.

[Commentary on the Apocalypse, Chapter 6]

Victorinus was using a bit of allegorical interpretation in the above passage [something that began to be widespread in the fourth century - leading to a-millennialism]. But, it is clear that he did not expect the Church to be raptured before the tribulation.

He spoke of the persecution of the Church, pouring out her blood **during the tribulation**. I wonder why Grant Jeffrey omitted this part?

The final portion Jeffrey quoted from this author, deals with the bowls of wrath, which occur at the extreme end of the tribulation, just prior to Armageddon.

" 1. "And I saw another great and wonderful sign, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is completed the indignation of God." For the wrath of God always strikes the obstinate people with seven plagues, that is, perfectly, as it is said in *Leviticus*; and these shall be in the last time, when the Church shall have gone out of the midst." [Commentary on the Apocalypse, Chapter 15]

Unfortunately, the ancient manuscripts of Victorinus' commentary are missing the pages that follow this comment. So, it is impossible to place this quotation in a context. But, since Victorinus is clearly speaking about the bowls of wrath, which post-tribbers believe occur at the extreme end of the tribulation, perhaps covering only the last few days or hours, his comments could not in any way imply a pre-trib rapture. At best, they could support a "pre-wrath" rapture. But even that is a bit of a stretch, because Victorinus did not interpret the seals, trumpets, and vials sequentially, as both pre-tribbers and pre-wrathers do. He viewed them as overlapping, and converging at the second coming. So, even with the above statement that seems to imply that the Church would be removed during the vials, in no way can we get a pre-trib rapture from Victorinus! I think a few other quotes from this same commentary are in order, to show Victorinus' belief that the Church will go through the tribulation.

" *He speaks of Elias the prophet, who is the precursor of the times of Antichrist, for **the restoration and establishment of the churches from the great and intolerable persecution***. [Chapter 7]

*The woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and wearing a crown of twelve stars upon her head, and travailing in her pains, **is the ancient Church of fathers, and prophets, and saints, and apostles***" [Chapter 12]

*Moreover, he himself shall contrive that his servants and children should receive as a mark on their foreheads, or on their right hands, the number of his name, lest any one should buy or sell them.... [T]he Lord, admonishing **His churches concerning the last times** and their dangers, says: "But when ye shall see the contempt which is spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place, let him who readeth understand."* [Chapter 13]

*The little season signifies three years and six months, **in which with all his power the devil will avenge himself under Antichrist against the Church***. [Chapter 20]

The last quote, from chapter 20, shows that Victorinus did not interpret the Millennium literally. He apparently believed the 1,000 years spoken of in Rev. 20 meant the age in which we live. [This view is held by a-millennialists today, which was being developed about the time of Victorinus]. Nevertheless, Victorinus clearly indicated in this passage that he believed the Church would be persecuted by the Antichrist. Victorinus' words do not indicate a belief in a pre-trib rapture, as Jeffrey suggests.

On page 91, Jeffrey listed another quotation he said comes from "Lactantius' Commentary on the Apocalypse." He then proceeded to quote the very same passage he had previously attributed to "Victorinus' Commentary on the Apocalypse" on page 89! I don't know how this mistake was made, but, Lactantius did not write a commentary on Revelation. Was Jeffrey trying to make it appear that he had even more ancient "pre-trib" writers? One might suspect that this was just an editing error. But, Jeffrey made another identical major blunder, by listing the "Didache" on page 87, and his quote from it, and then on page 91, listing "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," and the very same quote again, but from a different translation! These are exactly the same document. [The word "Didache" is the Greek word for "Teaching" and is the abbreviated name for "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles"]. Jeffrey quoted both of these passages twice, both times using different names or titles, as though this added more to his pile of "pre-trib" evidence! Are these simply editing errors? Or, is there something more going on here?

What can we say in conclusion regarding all of this alleged evidence that the early Christians expected an imminent pre-trib rapture? I think it is fairly obvious, to the unbiased reader, that Grant Jeffrey has forced his own ideas into the writings of the Church Fathers. He was determined to find evidence that a pre-trib rapture was taught prior to the 19th century. Consider Jeffrey's statement in the Ice-Demy book, *When the Trumpet Sounds*.

"Over the last decade I came to the conclusion that the pretribulation rapture is taught so clearly in the New Testament that it is virtually impossible that no one ever taught this doctrine in the 18 centuries before 1830. [When the Trumpet Sounds, pg. 108].

I don't know about you, but it looks to me like Grant Jeffrey has manufactured his own evidence. At best, we could say his work in this area is heavily biased and extremely shoddy. At worst it is downright fraudulent. I do not wish to judge his motives. We'll leave that to the Lord. But we can certainly judge his work. His use of the Early Church Fathers to support an imminent pre-trib rapture is so obviously a total fabrication, one wonders why pre-trib scholars who have no doubt read his work have remained silent. I dare say that silence is collaboration.

I encourage the reader, who is confused by all the claims and counter claims, to obtain a copy of the Ante-Nicene Fathers and read these authors for yourself. You can look up the quotes being used, and read them in their larger context. This is the only way to really get a feel for their perspective. You can download the entire collection free from [this site](#). Or, you can look up passages on-line at [this site](#).

**"You shall know the TRUTH, and the TRUTH shall make you free!" [John 8:32]
"For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.
"If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." [Mark 4:22-23]**

Pseudo-Pseudo-Ephraem

Grant Jeffrey II, the Sequel!

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Grant Jeffrey's "Mission Impossible" Recently, Grant Jeffrey produced a translation of a sermon reportedly written by Ephraem of Syria in the fourth century. It is now heralded by other prominent pre-tribbers (including **Thomas Ice** of *The Pre-Trib Research Center*) as an "ancient pre-trib statement." This document contains a statement that Jeffrey claims is a clear reference to a pre-trib rapture. Jeffrey is demanding that post-tribulationists, in future printings of their books, recant their often stated theme, that post-tribulationism is ancient and pre-tribulationism is modern. He writes; "*A number of these [post-trib] authors will have to drastically revise the next edition of their books based on the discovery of new pretribulation rapture texts from the writings of the early church.*" His conclusion is as follows.

"I believe Ephraem the Syrian's A.D. 373 manuscript, *On the Last Times, the Antichrist and the End of the World*, fully meets the challenge of Dr. William Bell and Rev. John Bray's \$500.00 challenge. This new evidence clearly refutes the dogmatic declarations of many that there is no evidence that anyone ever taught the pretribulation rapture before A.D. 1830. The biblical truth of the glorious rapture of the church prior to the Tribulation was definitely taught in the early church. As I have shared in my earlier books, the truth of the pretribulation rapture is supported by the clear insistence on the imminent return of our Lord found throughout the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers. In addition, as I pointed out in my *Apocalypse* book, the apocalyptic fourth vision of The Shepherd of Hermas from A.D. 110 declared that the elect will escape the Great Tribulation. This finding of the pretribulation rapture in Ephraem's writings illustrates that the biblical truth of God's blessed hope and deliverance of the saints was upheld by a remnant of the faithful from the beginning of the church until today."

[When the Trumpet Sounds, pg. 125]

Apparently Grant Jeffrey is quite confident he has found the smoking gun. But he also claimed that the Didache, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, Hippolytus, Cyprian, and Victorinus, all taught an 'imminent' (pre-trib) rapture. As we demonstrated in our article *Grant Jeffrey's Apocalypse Debacle*, all of these claims are bogus! Jeffrey has been engaged in blatant 'revisionism' of the Church Fathers. We demonstrated from these very writings that the early Church did not believe in an imminent, pre-trib rapture, and that Jeffrey manipulated the texts, by omitting key sentences that clearly show they were post-trib, in an attempt to make them appear to support 'imminence.' So far, Jeffrey has grossly overstated his evidence. It is clear, from Grant Jeffrey's own words, that he was determined to find evidence of pre-tribulationism in the early Church no matter what.

"Over the last decade I came to the conclusion that the pretribulation rapture is taught so clearly in the New Testament that it is virtually impossible that no one ever taught this doctrine in the 18 centuries before 1830."

[When the Trumpet Sounds, pg. 108]

Usually, someone that determined to find his "evidence" will eventually find it.

Ephraem of Syria? or Pseudo-Ephraem? The quotation Jeffrey referred to is found in "Pseudo-Ephraem." The prefix "pseudo—" means "false" or "falsely ascribed to—." Scholars doubt this document is genuinely from the hand of Ephraem of Syria, or that it was written in the fourth century. It was most likely written much later by an anonymous author, who falsely ascribed it to Ephraem the Syrian. So, when Jeffrey wrote "*I believe Ephraem the Syrian's A.D. 373 manuscript, On the Last Times, the Antichrist and the End of the World...*", he has already mis-represented his evidence, and demonstrated the same kind of "spin" that is evident in his other claims. This sermon was neither written by *Ephraem the Syrian* nor was it written in A.D. 373! And Jeffrey knows this! Ephraem's genuine writings, contained in the Post-Nicene Fathers collection, display no hint of pre-tribulationism. Here is the allegedly pre-trib statement that Jeffrey provides from Pseudo-Ephraem.

"For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins."

This quote, even if not genuinely from Ephraem of Syria, seems impressive on the surface. But based on Jeffrey's track record, we should approach this with some healthy skepticism, and carefully consider the entire sermon, as well as Ephraem's known writings.

The Real Ephraem of Syria The well respected scholar, Dr. Robert H. Gundry, chairman of the Department of Religious studies at Westmont College and author of seminary textbooks and books on eschatology, has recently authored a book entitled, *First the Antichrist*. On pages 161-188, he gives several quotes from the real Ephraem of Syria which show that Ephraem believed the resurrection and translation of believers would occur after the tribulation. So, this alleged pre-trib statement, if it is indeed such, would directly contradict statements known to be genuinely from Ephraem of Syria who lived in the fourth century. (For further information regarding this aspect, see Dr. Gundry's book, *First the Antichrist*). Therefore, we should conclude that either the Pseudo-Ephraem sermon is not genuinely Ephraem's, or Pseudo-Ephraem did not mean to imply a pre-trib rapture, or both!

Pseudo-Ephraem's Sermon Now, lets consider the sermon to see if it consistently supports Jeffrey's claim. (The entire sermon appears at the bottom of this article for those who wish to examine it themselves).

In the first section, the author alluded to the condition of his times, seeing the corruption of the world as indicative of the end of the age.

"Dearly beloved brothers, believe the Holy Spirit who speaks in us. We have already told you that **the end of the world is near, the consummation remains**. Has not faith withered away among mankind? How many foolish things are seen among

youths, how many crimes among prelates, how many lies among priests, how many perjuries among deacons! There are evil deeds among the ministers, adulteries in the aged, wantonness in the youths--in mature women false faces, in virgins dangerous traces! In the midst of all this there are **the wars with the Persians, and we see struggles with diverse nations threatening and "kingdom rising against kingdom."** When the Roman empire begins to be consumed by the sword, **the coming of the Evil One is at hand.** It is necessary that the world come to an end at the completion of the Roman empire."

Notice the quotation from Matthew 24:7. **Also, notice what the author sees as being at hand, "the coming of the Evil One."** He anticipated that the Roman Empire was about to fall, and supposed that upon its fall, the kingdom of Antichrist would arise. He continues;

"...In those days many will rise up against Rome; the Jewish people will be her adversaries. **There will be stirrings of nations and evil reports, pestilences, famines, and earth quakes in various places. All nations will receive captives; there will be wars and rumors of wars.** From the rising to the setting of the sun the sword will devour much. The times will be so dangerous that in fear and trembling they will not permit thought of better things, because many will be the oppressions and desolations of regions that are to come."

Note again the allusion to Matthew 24. It is becoming clear that this author was using Matthew 24 as his backdrop for the sermon. Again, we have no hint as yet of a pre-trib rapture. He continues;

"We ought to understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, **what is imminent or overhanging.** **Already there have been hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord, they have already been fulfilled (consummated), and there is not other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one in the completion of the Roman kingdom.** Why therefore are we occupied with worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, **so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world?**"

Thus far, it appears that the author was not expecting a pre-trib rapture. He saw some of the signs Jesus gave in Matthew 24, hunger, plagues, violence among the nations, as already current and fulfilled. What he saw as "imminent" or "overhanging" was ONLY the arrival of the Antichrist, which Jesus spoke of in verse 15. Pseudo-Ephraem spoke as though Christians should expect the Antichrist's appearance at any time. "[T]here is not other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one..." This seems to rule out a pre-trib rapture. Had he taught a pre-trib rapture, one would expect that this would be "imminent" for the believers rather than the appearance of Antichrist. He then encouraged believers to reject their earthly cares and prepare themselves so that "*he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world.*" Some might suppose that this means a rapture to heaven. However, later we will see that Pseudo-Ephraem believed Christians would be sustained in remote locations on earth (the "woman" of Rev. 12 sustained "in the wilderness") while the rest of the world reeled under the tribulation. So, with this thought in mind, our forsaking worldly cares, and making preparation to be "drawn" away from the confusion to remote places where Christ will sustain us, is a logical inference from the above statement. Pseudo-Ephraem continues;

"Believe you me, dearest brother, because the coming of the Lord is nigh, believe you me, because the end of the world is at hand, believe me, because it is the very last time. Or do you not believe unless you **see with your eyes?** See to it that this sentence be not fulfilled among you of the prophet who declares: "Woe to those who desire to see the day of the Lord!" **For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins.**"

This is the statement that Jeffrey claims clearly teaches a pre-trib rapture. But, note that no rapture, no resurrection, and no coming of the Lord is mentioned. What is said is the elect are "*taken to the Lord*" prior to the tribulation for the purpose of avoiding the "confusion." Now, such terminology could fit with a pre-trib scenario. But, it does NOT require one. If Pseudo-Ephraem believed Christians would be preserved in remote earthly places, like Elijah was fed by the Lord, like the Israelites were protected in Goshen during the plagues, and fed in the wilderness with manna, and like the prophecy of Revelation 12, where the "woman" is fed by God "in the wilderness," then there is no reason to imagine a pre-trib rapture was meant! He continues;

"And so, brothers most dear to me, it is the eleventh hour, and the end of the world comes to the harvest, and angels, armed and prepared, hold sickles in their hands, awaiting the empire of the Lord. And we think that the earth exists with blind infidelity, arriving at its downfall early. Commotions are brought forth, wars of diverse peoples and battles and incursions of the barbarians threaten, and our regions shall be desolated, and we neither become very much afraid of the report nor of the appearance, in order that we may at least do penance; because they hurl fear at us, and we do not wish to be changed, although we at least stand in need of penance for our actions!"

True to his text, Pseudo-Ephraem alluded to the angels gathering the elect "*immediately after the tribulation*" [Matt. 24:29-31], and also seems to place this at the "*empire of the Lord*" (or Millennial Kingdom of God). He seems to be tying in the parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13, where the reapers (the angels) harvest the wheat immediately before the Kingdom of God, and after the tribulation, according to Matt. 24:29-31.

In section IV, while describing the horrors of the tribulation, our author made the following interesting statement; "*In those days people shall not be buried, **neither Christian, nor heretic, neither Jew, nor pagan, because of fear and dread there is not one who buries them; because all people, while they are fleeing, ignore them.***" He obviously believed Christians would still be present in the tribulation, perhaps not all prepared themselves, as he exhorted earlier, and so would not be taken to the Lord for protection in remote places.

Furthermore, his comment about dead people not being buried during the tribulation is clearly a reference to Isaiah 26. And this passage also refers to the elect being preserved from the tribulation ON EARTH!

Isaiah 26:20,21	Pseudo-Ephraem
<p>20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. 21 For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her her slain. (KJV)</p>	<p>"In those days people shall not be buried, neither Christian, nor heretic, neither Jew, nor pagan, because of fear and dread there is not one who buries them; because all people, while they are fleeing, ignore them."</p>

Since Pseudo-Ephraem referred to this passage, it is very likely that he also had in mind the preservation of the elect on earth during the tribulation, as is indicated in the immediate context.

In the following quote, we see clearly that Pseudo-Ephraem believed Christians would be preserved in remote places even while the rest of the world starved and went without water.

"Then gold and silver and precious clothing or precious stones shall lie along the streets, and also even every type of pearls along the thoroughfares and streets of the cities, but there is not one who may extend the hand and take or desire them, but they consider all things as good as nothing because of the extreme lack and famine of bread, because the earth is not protected by the rains of heaven, and there will be neither dew nor moisture of the air upon the earth. **But those who wander through the deserts, fleeing from the face of the serpent, bend their knees to God, just as lambs to the adders of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord, and while wandering in states of desertion, they eat herbs.**"

Clearly, these who flee from the "face of the serpent," who "bend their knees to God," who leave the cities, who are sustained by God as nursing lambs, and have herbs to eat, **are Christians**. These are the ones who were "taken to the Lord" so as not to witness the destruction of the world. And it is clear from this passage, that being "taken to the Lord" is NOT a rapture to heaven. It is fleeing the cities to places where the Lord will provide for their needs, as a nursing lamb depends on its mother!

Pseudo-Ephraem's eschatology is not all that different from the Ante-Nicene Fathers, who saw Christians on earth during the tribulation. They viewed the "woman" who fled into the wilderness in Revelation 12, as the Church. Pseudo-Ephraem simply made the logical deduction that the preservation in the wilderness applied to believers who prepared themselves. Notice in the following quotes, earlier writers viewed the "woman" as the Church.

Hippolytus

"Now concerning the tribulation of the persecution which is to fall **upon the Church** from the adversary, John also speaks thus, "And I saw a great and wondrous sign in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, ... And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." That refers to the one thousand two hundred and threescore days (the half of the week) during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church.... These things then, being come to pass, beloved, and the one week being divided into two parts, and the abomination of desolation being manifested then, and the two prophets and forerunners of the Lord having finished their course, and the whole world finally approaching the consummation, what remains but the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from heaven, for whom we have looked in hope." [Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 60, 61, 64]

Victorinus

"**The woman** clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and wearing the crown of twelve stars upon her head, and travailing in her pains, **is the ancient Church** of fathers, and prophets, and saints, and apostles,... "But the woman fled into the wilderness, and there were given to her two great eagle's wings." The aid of the great eagle's wings — to wit, the gift of prophets — was given to that Catholic Church, whence in the last times a hundred and forty-four thousands of men should believe on the preaching of Elias; but, moreover, he here says that the rest of the people should be found alive on the coming of the Lord. And the Lord says in the Gospel: "Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains;" that is, as many as should be gathered together in Judea, let them go to that place which they have ready, and let them be supported there for three years and six months from the presence of the devil. "Two great wings" are the two prophets — Elias, and the prophet who shall be with him." [Commentary on the Apocalypse, 12:1,6,14]

There is every reason to believe that Pseudo-Ephraem held a similar view of Revelation 12's "woman" referring to the Church. But, Pseudo-Ephraem seems to have picked up on and emphasized the **provision and protection** for the Woman "in the wilderness," while earlier writers seemed to focus on the "remnant of her seed" [vs. 17] who become the targets of the Antichrist's wrath.

Revelation 12:6,14	Pseudo-Ephraem
<p>6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.</p>	<p>"For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world</p>

14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might **fly into the wilderness**, into her place, **where she is nourished** for a time, and times, and half a time, **from the face of the serpent**.

because of our sins."

"But those who wander **through the deserts, fleeing from the face of the serpent**, bend their knees to God, **just as lambs to the adders of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord**, and while wandering in states of desertion, they eat herbs."

The phrase "*fleeing from the face of the serpent*" is a dead give-away that our author was referring to Revelation 12. And Rev. 12 certainly is not referring to a pre-trib rapture in anybody's eschatology! Pseudo-Ephraem was most likely referring to this very passage when he wrote that the elect are "*taken to the Lord*" prior to the tribulation (which he saw as 3.5 years), and "*as lambs to the adders of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord*." Our author continues:

"Then, when this inevitability has overwhelmed all people, **just and unjust, the just, so that they may be found good by their Lord**; and indeed the unjust, so that they may be damned forever with their author the Devil, and, as God beholds the human race in danger and being tossed about by the breath of the horrible dragon, he sends to them consolatory proclamation by his attendants, the prophets Enoch and Elijah, who, while not yet tasting death, are the servants for the heralding of the second coming of Christ,..."

Here it is quite clear that Pseudo-Ephraem saw Christians still on earth in the tribulation, and that this is partly a test of the just as well as the unjust. Our author concludes his sermon as follows;

"And **when the three and a half years have been completed, the time of the Antichrist, through which he will have seduced the world, after the resurrection of the two prophets, in the hour which the world does not know, and on the day which the enemy of son of perdition does not know, will come the sign of the Son of Man, and coming forward the Lord shall appear with great power and much majesty, with the sign of the wood of salvation going before him, and also even with all the powers of the heavens with the whole chorus of the saints, with those who bear the sign of the holy cross upon their shoulders, as the angelic trumpet precedes him, which shall sound and declare: Arise, O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his hour of judgment has come! Then Christ shall come and the enemy shall be thrown into confusion, and the Lord shall destroy him by the spirit of his mouth.** And he shall be bound and shall be plunged into the abyss of everlasting fire alive with his father Satan; and all people, who do his wishes, shall perish with him forever; **but the righteous ones shall inherit everlasting life with the Lord forever and ever.**"

Note that our author was still following Matthew 24. Here he alluded to verses 29-31, where the Lord appears in great glory. Notice he placed the trumpet blast here and the resurrection of those who sleep in Jesus! Since Matthew 24 does not mention the resurrection, we cannot avoid the conclusion that our author was tying in 1 Thess. 4:13-17 (which mentions the resurrection of the "*sleeping ones*" at the trumpet blast) with the second advent "*immediately after the tribulation*" mentioned in Matt. 24:29-31. He also placed obtaining "*eternal life*" with this advent of the Lord. This would hardly be appropriate had he held to pre-tribulationism.

It seems to me that the vigorous searching for some hint of pre-tribulationism has caused Grant Jeffrey to project modern concepts into ancient quotations that the author never intended. One out-of-context quote does not establish a belief in a pre-trib rapture, especially when the context supports a post-trib resurrection of the saints, Christians present on earth in the tribulation, and believers relying on the Lord for nourishment in remote places, as nursing lambs! The mistake made by Jeffrey (and Ice) is the assumption that "taken to the Lord" means a pre-trib rapture, while ignoring nearly everything else in this sermon that clearly indicates Pseudo-Ephraem was not pre-trib!

Pseudo-Alexander

The Pseudo-Ephraem sermon was found by Jeffrey in Paul Alexander's *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*. Both Grant Jeffrey and Thomas Ice have claimed that Paul Alexander believed Pseudo-Ephraem taught a pre-trib rapture. Here is one example.

Examining an Ancient Pre-Trib Rapture Statement by Thomas Ice

"Finally, the Byzantine scholar Paul Alexander clearly believed that Pseudo-Ephraem was teaching what we call today a pre-trib rapture. According to Alexander, most Byzantine apocalypses were concerned with how Christians would survive the time of severe persecution by Antichrist. The normal approach given by other apocalyptic texts was a shortening of the time to three and a half years, enabling the survival of some Christians.¹⁹ Unlike those texts, this sermon has Christians being removed from the time of tribulation. Alexander observed:

'It is probably no accident that Pseudo-Ephraem does not mention the shortening of the time intervals for the Antichrist's persecution, for if prior to it the Elect are 'taken to the Lord,' i.e., participate at least in some measure in beatitude, there is no need for further mitigating action on their behalf. The Gathering of the Elect according to Pseudo-Ephraem is an alternative to the shortening of the time intervals.'²⁰"

It seems that Jeffrey and Ice not only have misrepresented Pseudo-Ephraem's sermon, but they also misrepresented the Byzantine scholar, Paul Alexander! Yes, Alexander did make a note of the fact that Pseudo-Ephraem seems to emphasize being "*taken to the Lord*" i.e., *participate at least in some measure in beatitude*". But, Ice and Jeffrey are forcing a pre-trib rapture into this statement and assuming that 'taken to the Lord' means a pre-trib rapture. That is simply not so! Alexander saw Pseudo-Ephraem as a post-tribulationist! He was NOT making a distinction between other post-trib writers and a pre-trib Pseudo-Ephraem, as Jeffrey and Ice would have you believe! Rather, Paul Alexander distinguished between two different forms of **preservation** of believers through the tribulation until the second coming after the tribulation in Christian apocalyptic literature. Other Byzantine

writers saw the elect suffering in the tribulation, but their extinction would be prevented by the shortening of the days as per Matt. 24:22. Alexander's point was that Pseudo-Ephraem spoke of "some measure of beatitude" for the saints, (that is, being 'taken to the Lord' and sustained in remote places **on earth**), in accordance with Revelation 12's "woman" who fled from the face of the serpent, and was sustained by God "in the wilderness." This concept was apparently new in Byzantine eschatology.

A few pages after the quote provided above by Thomas Ice, Paul Alexander laid out his understanding of the sequence of events in Pseudo-Ephraem's sermon, and he did NOT include a pre-trib rapture! Here is Alexander's commentary on the sequence of events in Pseudo-Ephraem's eschatology.

"In Pseudo-Ephraem the sequence is as follows. After the attack of the *gentes nequissimae* or *bellicae* (1) there follows the surrender of the Christian Empire (2), the apparition of the Antichrist (3), an illusion to the blessings of Moses and Jacob on the tribe of Dan (4), then the division of the Antichrist's career into a period of adolescence before his seizure of imperial power and a second period, of maturity, when he will hold imperial power (5). Then comes his challenging God by sitting in the Jewish Temple at Jerusalem (6), the "great tribulation" of three and a half years (drought, famine, etc.:7) and during it the mission of Enoch and Elijah (8), and, finally, the Second Coming and punishment of the Antichrist (9). This schedule may be presented schematically as follows:

1. Attack of *gentes bellicae* or *nequissimae* 212.13-213.17
 2. Surrender of the Empire 214.1
 3. *apparebit ille nequissimus et abominabilis draco* 214.4
 4. Blessings of Moses and Jacob on Dan 214.6
 5. *adolescens ... antequam sumat imperium; factus legitimus sumet imperium* 216.2,11
 6. Sitting in the Jewish Temple 217.1
 7. *tribulatio magna* lasting three and a half years 217.14
 8. Mission of Enoch and Elijah 219.10
 9. Second Coming of Christ and punishment of the Antichrist 220.2"
- [Alexander, Paul J., *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Univ. of California Press, 1985), pp. 218,219]

Below is the text of Pseudo-Ephraem's sermon for your examination.

On the Last Times, the Anti-Christ, and the End of the World A Sermon by Pseudo-Ephraem

Section I

Dearly beloved brothers, believe the Holy Spirit who speaks in us. We have already told you that the end of the world is near, the consummation remains. Has not faith withered away among mankind? How many foolish things are seen among youths, how many crimes among prelates, how many lies among priests, how many perjuries among deacons! There are evil deeds among the ministers, adulteries in the aged, wantonness in the youths--in mature women false faces, in virgins dangerous traces! In the midst of all this there are the wars with the Persians, and we see struggles with diverse nations threatening and "kingdom rising against kingdom." When the Roman empire begins to be consumed by the sword, **the coming of the Evil One is at hand**. It is necessary that the world come to an end at the completion of the Roman empire.

In those days two brothers will come to the Roman empire who will rule with one mind; but because one will surpass the other, there will be a schism between them. And so the Adversary will be loosed and will stir up hatred between the Persian and Roman empires. In those days many will rise up against Rome; the Jewish people will be her adversaries. There will be stirrings of nations and evil reports, pestilences, famines, and earth quakes in various places. All nations will receive captives; there will be wars and rumors of wars. From the rising to the setting of the sun the sword will devour much. The times will be so dangerous that in fear and trembling they will not permit thought of better things, because many will be the oppressions and desolations of regions that are to come.

Section II

We ought to understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, **what is imminent or overhanging**. Already there have been hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord, they have already been fulfilled (consummated), and there is not other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one in the completion of the Roman kingdom. Why therefore are we occupied with worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world? Believe you me, dearest brother, because the coming (advent) of the Lord is nigh, believe you me, because the end of the world is at hand, believe me, because it is the very last time. Or do you not believe unless you see with your eyes? See to it that this sentence be not fulfilled among you of the prophet who declares: "Woe to those who desire to see the day of the Lord!" For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins. And so, brothers most dear to me, it is the eleventh hour, and the end of the world comes to the harvest, and angels, armed and prepared, hold sickles in their hands, awaiting the empire of the Lord. And we think that the earth exists with blind infidelity, arriving at its downfall early. Commotions are brought forth, wars of diverse peoples and battles and incursions of the barbarians threaten, and our regions shall be desolated, and we neither become very much afraid of the report nor of the appearance, in order that we may at least do penance; because they hurl fear at us, and we do not wish to be changed, although we at least stand in need of penance for our actions!

Section III

When therefore the end of the world comes, there arise diverse wars, commotions on all sides, horrible earthquakes, perturbations of nations, tempests throughout the lands, plagues, famine, drought throughout the thoroughfares, great danger throughout the sea and dry land, constant persecutions, slaughters and massacres everywhere, fear in the homes, panic in the cities, quaking in the thoroughfares, suspicions in the male, anxiety in the streets. In the desert people become senseless, spirits melt in the cities. A friend will not be grieved over a friend, neither a brother for a brother, nor parents for their children, nor a faithful servant for his master, but one inevitability shall overwhelm them all; neither is anyone able to be recovered in that time, who has not been made completely aware of the coming danger, but all people, who have been constricted by fear, are consumed because of the overhanging evils.

Section IV

Whenever therefore the earth is agitated by the nations, people will hide themselves from the wars in the mountains and rocks, by caves and caverns of the earth, by graves and memorials of the dead, and there, as they waste away gradually by fear, they draw breath, because there is not any place at all to flee, but there will be concession and intolerable pressure. And those who are in the east will flee to the west, and moreover, those who are in the west shall flee to the east, and there is not a safer place anywhere, because the world shall be overwhelmed by worthless nations, whose aspect appears to be of wild animals more than that of men. Because those very much horrible nations, most profane and most defiled, who do not spare lives, and shall destroy the living from the dead, shall consume the dead, they eat dead flesh, they drink the blood of beasts, they pollute the world, contaminate all things, and the one who is able to resist them is not there. In those days people shall not be buried, neither Christian, nor heretic, neither Jew, nor pagan, because of fear and dread there is not one who buries them; because all people, while they are fleeing, ignore them.

Section V

Whenever the days of the times of those nations have been fulfilled, after they have destroyed the earth, it shall rest; and now the kingdom of the Romans is removed from everyday life, and the empire of the Christians is handed down by God and Peter; and then the consummation comes, when the kingdom of the Romans begins to be fulfilled, and all dominions and powers have been fulfilled. Then that worthless and abominable dragon shall appear, he, whom Moses named in Deuteronomy, saying:-Dan is a young lion, reclining and leaping from Basan. Because he reclines in order that he may seize and destroy and slay. Indeed (he is) a young whelp of a lion not as the lion of the tribe of Judah, but roaring because of his wrath, that he may devour. "And he leaps out from Basan." "Basan" certainly is interpreted "confusion." He shall rise up from the confusion of his iniquity. The one who gathers together to himself a partridge the children of confusion, also shall call them, whom he has not brought forth, just as Jeremiah the prophet says. Also in the last day they shall relinquish him just as confused.

Section VI

When therefore the end of the world comes, that abominable, lying and murderous one is born from the tribe of Dan. He is conceived from the seed of a man and from an unclean or most vile virgin, mixed with an evil or worthless spirit. But that abominable corrupter, more of spirits than of bodies, while a youth, the crafty dragon appears under the appearance of righteousness, before he takes the kingdom. Because he will be craftily gentle to all people, not receiving gifts, not placed before another person, loving to all people, quiet to everyone, not desiring gifts, appearing friendly among close friends, so that men may bless him, saying;-he is a just man, not knowing that a wolf lies concealed under the appearance of a lamb, and that a greedy man is inside under the skin of a sheep.

Section VII

But when the time of the abomination of his desolation begins to approach, having been made legal, he takes the empire, and, just as it is said in the Psalm:-They have been made for the undertaking for the sons of Loth, the Moabites and the Ammanites shall meet him first as their king. Therefore, when he receives the kingdom, he orders the temple of God to be rebuilt for himself, which is in Jerusalem; who, after coming into it, he shall sit as God and order that he be adored by all nations, since he is carnal and filthy and mixed with worthless spirit and flesh. Then that eloquence shall be fulfilled of Daniel the prophet:-And he shall not know the God of their fathers, and he shall not know the desires of women. Because the very wicked serpent shall direct every worship to himself. Because he shall put forth an edict so that people may be circumcised according to the rite of the old law. Then the Jews shall congratulate him, because he gave them again the practice of the first covenant; then all people from everywhere shall flock together to him at the city of Jerusalem, and the holy city shall be trampled on by the nations for forty-two months, just as the holy apostle says in the Apocalypse, which become three and a half years, 1,260 days.

Section VIII

In these three years and a half the heaven shall suspend its dew; because there will be no rain upon the earth, and the clouds shall cease to pass through the air, and the stars shall be seen with difficulty in the sky because of the excessive dryness, which happens in the time of the very fierce dragon. Because all great rivers and very powerful fountains that overflow with themselves shall be dried up, torrents shall dry up their water-courses because of the intolerable age, and there will be a great tribulation, as there has not been, since people began to be upon the earth, and there will be famine and an insufferable thirst. And children shall waste away in the bosom of their mothers, and wives upon the knees of their husbands, by not having victuals to eat. Because there will be in those days lack of bread and water, and no one is able to sell or to buy of the grain of the fall harvest, unless he is one who has the serpentine sign on the forehead or on the hand. Then gold and silver and precious clothing or precious stones shall lie along the streets, and also even every type of pearls along the thoroughfares and streets of the cities, but there is not one who may extend the hand and take or desire them, but they consider all things as good as nothing because of the extreme lack and famine of

bread, because the earth is not protected by the rains of heaven, and there will be neither dew nor moisture of the air upon the earth. But those who wander through the deserts, fleeing from the face of the serpent, bend their knees to God, just as lambs to the adcers of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord, and while wandering in states of desertion, they eat herbs.

Section IX

Then, when this inevitability has overwhelmed all people, just and unjust, the just, so that they may be found good by their Lord; and indeed the unjust, so that they may be damned forever with their author the Devil, and, as God beholds the human race in danger and being tossed about by the breath of the horrible dragon, he sends to them consolatory proclamation by his attendants, the prophets Enoch and Elijah, who, while not yet tasting death, are the servants for the heralding of the second coming of Christ, and in order to accuse the enemy. And when those just ones have appeared, they confuse indeed the antagonistic serpent with his cleverness and they call back the faithful witnesses to God, in order to (free them) from his seduction ...

Section X

And when the three and a half years have been completed, the time of the Antichrist, through which he will have seduced the world, after the resurrection of the two prophets, in the hour which the world does not know, and on the day which the enemy of son of perdition does not know, will come the sign of the Son of Man, and coming forward the Lord shall appear with great power and much majesty, with the sign of the wood of salvation going before him, and also even with all the powers of the heavens with the whole chorus of the saints, with those who bear the sign of the holy cross upon their shoulders, as the angelic trumpet precedes him, which shall sound and declare: Arise, O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his hour of judgment has come! Then Christ shall come and the enemy shall be thrown into confusion, and the Lord shall destroy him by the spirit of his mouth. And he shall be bound and shall be plunged into the abyss of everlasting fire alive with his father Satan; and all people, who do his wishes, shall perish with him forever; but the righteous ones shall inherit everlasting life with the Lord forever and ever.

Baptist Pre-Trib Revisionism Dr. Ken Johnson's Revisionism of Baptist Writers By Tim Warner - Copyright © April 2003

At the 34th annual missions conference at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Lubbock Texas, March 13-15, 1995, the theme of the conference was "The Premillennial Second Coming Of Jesus Christ." Dr. Ken Johnson spoke on "**The Imminent Pre-Trib Coming of Christ.**" The entire printed text of the sermon can be found on the [Tabernacle Baptist Church website](#). It was published in tract form (#G-605), and may be ordered from Tabernacle Baptist Church, Lubbock, Texas.

Benjamin Keach (1640-1704) a Pre-Tribulationist? After denouncing the work of post-trib writers, who have traced the origin of the pre-trib rapture back to Margaret MacDonald and the Irvingites around 1830, Johnson attempted to show that Baptists were pre-trib before Edward Irving and Margaret MacDonald.

Johnson stated, "*History Will Show Baptists Are A Group These Writers Did Not Consult: Benjamin Keach plainly shows he preached and believed in a Pre-Trib Rapture though he believed in a historical application of Revelation and the second coming at the 7th trumpet.*" Johnson then provided the following quotes from Keach to support his claim that Keach was pre-trib. "(1) 'His second personal coming I judge will be at the beginning of the thousand years reign, when 'God will tabernacle with men,...' Rev. 21:3."

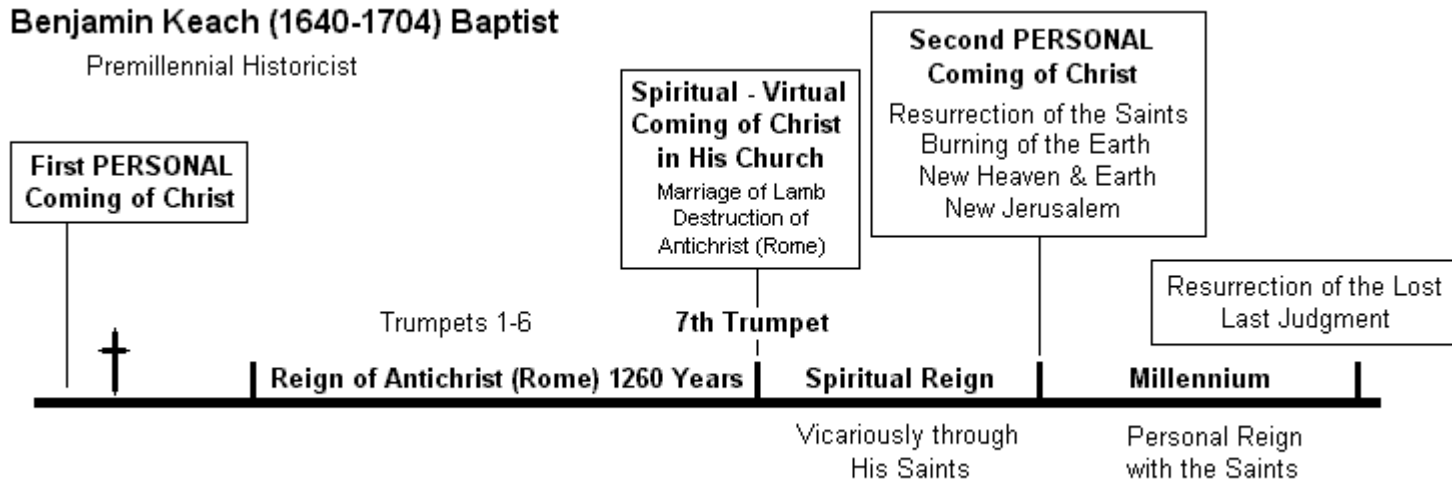
"(2) 'There is a precursory coming of our Lord, (as one notes) or a most glorious spiritual coming, to set up a more visible and universal kingdom in this world, which will precede his personal appearance; which I take to be the beginning of the latterday glory, and which will be at the sounding of the 'Seventh trumpet,' for then Jesus Christ will begin His spiritual and more visible and glorious kingdom; or 'when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ,' Rev. 11:15,18. One design of this coming of our Lord, is to destroy the son of perdition, and utterly to overthrow Mystery Babylon....Now it is partly this coming of Christ (I conclude) our Lord in the first place intends, though I will not exclude his personal appearance; for I see no reason to doubt, but that the precursory coming of the Lord Jesus is to prepare things for his personal appearance; when, (as a bridegroom) he will appear to celebrate the marriage with his beloved spouse. Yet his coming upon mystery Babylon, or by his bright appearance to destroy the son of perdition, may be distinguished from the coming last mentioned, though both may be comprehended, or included by the Bridegroom's coming." [Benjamin Keach, *Exposition Of The Parables*, p.643]." Then Johnson adds, "**THIS IS NEARLY 150 YEARS BEFORE THE 1830 DATE OF MARGARET MACDONALD.**" [bold and underline mine - TW, all caps - Johnson]

Ironically, while Johnson admits that Keach was a historicist, he also claims that he was a pre-tribulationist. This is an oxymoron. A historicist cannot be a pre-tribulationist, because historicists believe the tribulation began in the early Church period, and extends over many centuries of Church history, seeing most of Revelation already fulfilled. In order to also hold to a pre-trib rapture, a historicist would have to claim that the rapture occurred centuries ago!

Unfortunately, the quote Johnson provided, to support his claim that Benjamin Keach was a pre-tribulationist, proves no such thing. While Keach thought there was a "coming" of Christ between his first advent and His second coming to earth, he calls it a "spiritual" coming which will precede his "personal" appearance. By using the term "spiritual coming" in apposition to His "personal appearance," it is obvious that this prior "coming" is NOT a "personal" coming. Keach was speaking of an alleged work of Christ on earth through His Church as a "spiritual coming," which would mark "*the beginning of the latterday glory*" for the Church. Keach thought that this "spiritual coming" would be "*to set up a more visible and universal kingdom in this world, ... for then Jesus Christ will begin His spiritual and more visible and glorious kingdom.*" Keach thought that the "spiritual kingdom" was preparatory for the Millennium. It is clear from Keach's statement that the "spiritual coming" to establish a "spiritual kingdom" was a work wholly on earth, and had nothing to do with a bodily coming of Christ, physically taking the Church to heaven, or a resurrection of the dead in Christ. How Johnson gets a pre-trib rapture from Keach is anyone's guess.

Benjamin Keach (1640-1704) Baptist

Premillennial Historicist



Hansard

Knollys

(1598-1691)

a

Pre-Tribulationist?

Dr. Ken Johnson continues with another Baptist he claims was pre-trib. "Ivimey quotes Hansard Knollys, the date is 1689-1692, who states to the General Assemblies at Curriers-Hall Cripplegate which is pastored by Knollys: "As Mr. Knollys has been stigmatized as of Fifth-Monarchy principles, and as the sentiments of many godly ministers upon that subject are but little known, the following extract from one of his works will explain them: "That the next glorious appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, will be his virtual and spiritual coming [NOTE: Knollys is referring to the rapture as NEXT--KJ] in his saints and sanction (as the Bridegroom of his church) to marry her sons (Isa. 62:4,5) and by them to reign over the nations with power and great glory a thousand years here on earth, Dan. 7:27. There are but three special kinds and times of Christ's coming. 1. His coming in the form of a servant in the days of his flesh, Phil. 2:9. 2. His coming as judge at the last day, when he shall judge the quick and the dead, (II Tim. 4:1) called his appearance the second time, Heb. 9:29. Both these are his personal appearances, or his coming in his own person. [NOTE: Knollys separates these--KJ.] But between these two appearances, or comings of Christ in his own person, there is witnessed by the holy prophets and apostles, and recorded in the holy Scriptures of truth, another kind of Christ's coming at another time. And that is His coming as the Bridegroom, and as the only Potentate, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, (I Tim. 6:14,15. Rev. 19:16) which is his virtual, spiritual, powerful, and glorious coming in his saints and sanction, and by them to marry his Jerusalem, Isa. 62:4,5. So shall thy sons marry thee, and with them to reign over the nations and kingdoms of the world a thousand years on earth, Rev. 10:15-17." [bold and underline mine - TW]. Johnson would like to paint Knollys as a pre-tribulationist. But it is quite clear from this quote, as well as what immediately follows (not quoted by Johnson), that Knollys was a post-millennialist. Knollys goes on to say, "It is the Duty of all Virgin professors, especially sanctified Believers, who are wise Virgins, to go out and meet the Bridegroom, when he comes by his spiritual power and glory in his Saints and Sanctions, to set up his Kingdom and to reign on Earth. ... [T]he God of Heaven will set (up) this Kingdom of Christ and his Saints in (the) days of those Kings of the fourth Monarchy that oppose him and his Saints, Dan. 2:24. And give it unto Christ as he is the Son of David, Luke 1:32,33. ... [W]hen Christ comes to set up his Kingdom and to reign on Earth Virtually and Spiritually in his Saints and Sanction, with power and great glory, it's the duty of all Virgin-professors, especially sanctified Believers, who are wise Virgins to go out to meet the Bridegroom, verse 6."

Johnson also seems to have completely overlooked Ivimey's statement that the quotation of Knollys was given to explain the views of the "Fifth-Monarchy." The Fifth Monarchy Men were a radical political-religious group who attempted to replace the British Parliament and establish the rule of Christ on earth through political reform and even force if necessary. Their full story can be found [here](#). Fifth Monarchists were by no means pre-tribulationists, futurists, or even pre-millennialists! While they expected the "return of Christ" to rule the earth for 1000 years, it was a "spiritual, virtual coming" — an empowerment of the Church to radically reform the British Empire to establish Christ's virtual rule on earth through the Church. In other words, it was the British Protestant version of the Roman Catholic Church-state, supposedly with Christ's Kingdom overthrowing the Roman "Antichrist" and a Protestant Great Britain ruling the world — the Throne of David being in London. Fifth Monarchists were seen as traitors, and several leaders were executed. Fifth Monarchists by no means held to a personal coming of Christ prior to the Millennium, nor Christ's taking of the Church to heaven. And they certainly did not foresee any kind of personal coming prior to the "tribulation" or events of Revelation 4-19.

Knollys' "coming" prior to the "second coming" was not a physical coming of Christ. The "next" coming of Christ was not the rapture, as Johnson claims. Knollys said this was "his virtual and spiritual coming IN his saints." Yet Johnson interrupts Knollys' sentence with his bracketed statement claiming that this is the "rapture" according to Knollys! Furthermore, Knollys clearly contrasted "His personal appearances, or his coming in his own person" (first and second comings) with His "next" coming which was to be "another kind of Christ's coming." He defined this "coming" as Christ's "virtual, spiritual, powerful, and glorious coming IN his saints." Obviously, Knollys was not referring to a pre-trib rapture. Both Keach's and Knollys' view, of a "spiritual coming" of Christ "in his saints," was the empowerment of the (Protestant) Church to establish the Kingdom on earth immediately

after the fall of Rome's Church-state. This eschatology is much closer to the modern "Reconstructionist," "Joel's Army," and "Manifest Sons of God" post-millennial eschatology being promoted by some of the more radical Charismatic groups. It shares a similar view of the Kingdom with Roman Catholicism — the Church being the Kingdom without Christ's physical presence on earth.

Below is a lengthy excerpt from Hansard Knollys' Exposition of the Parable of the Ten Virgins (1674), more fully explaining his Baptist post-millennial eschatology.

"Introduction: The Lord Jesus Christ being asked by his Disciples what shall be the sign of his coming, chapter 24:3, answered and said, verse 12, Iniquity shall abound and the love of many shall wax cold, and verse 21, Then shall be great Tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. So the Apostle testified also, 2 Tim. 3:1. But saith our Savior verse 29, Immediately after the Tribulation of those days, verse 30, Then shall appear (not the person but) the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven --- And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with power and great Glory --- Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened to ten Virgins, chapter 25:1." ...

*"This is His Spiritual, Virtual, and Powerful Coming. I do believe and am persuaded that **the coming of Christ (spoken of in this Parable, verses 6 and 10) is not the coming of Christ in his own person upon the Earth** (though I do believe Christ will come the second time in his own person upon the Earth, Heb. 9:28, Zech. 3:4,5) but **this is his virtual, spiritual, powerful and glorious coming in his Saints** and Sanction as the Bridegroom of his Church, the new Jerusalem, who shall also come down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her husband. **This is our David's Mystical Kingdom on Earth among his Saints, when HE shall be King of all the Earth, and all the Kingdoms of this world shall be Christ's. And when the Lord's redeemed Ones, whom HE has made Kings and Priests to God, shall have the Kingdom and Dominion under the whole Heaven given to them, and they shall reign on Earth. And the reasons grounded on Scripture are as follows. 1. Negatively. 2. Affirmatively.***

*Negatively. That **the coming of Christ spoken of in the 6th and 10th verses of this Parable is not the coming of Christ in his own person upon the Earth.** First, because at the personal coming of Christ on Earth, (called his appearing the Second time, Heb. 9:28) all his Saints shall come with him. ... Secondly, Because at the personal coming of Christ on Earth, will be the Universal Physical Resurrection of all that are dead. ... Thirdly, Because when Christ comes virtually and spiritually as the Bridegroom, then will begin the times of the Restitution of all things.*

Objection: Does not this Opinion exempt and exclude Christ from Rule and Sovereignty in his Monarchical Kingdom on Earth, contrary to Rev. 20:4, They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years?

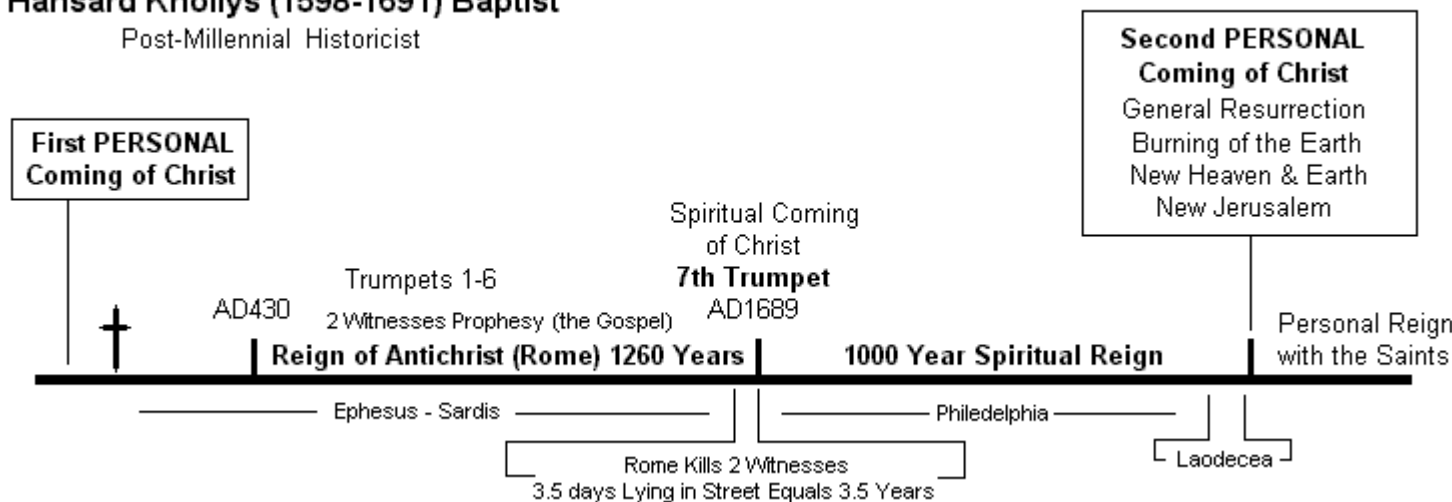
Answer: No. Consider first, Christ may be said to be with a person or people, and they with him virtually by his Spirit and power or his powerful spiritual presence. Isa. 57:15; 2 Cor. 6:16; Rev. 2:1; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12,13. As it is said, Jer. 8:9, Is not the LORD in Zion? Is not her King in Her? though not personally, but spiritually.

*Secondly, as **Christ is said to be in his Mystical Kingdom the Church of God here on Earth**, where his Laws, his Statutes and his Ordinances are dispensed in his Name, and by the power of his holy Spirit; even so will he be in his Monarchical Kingdom, the throne of his Father David here on Earth, Luke 1:32,33. And the Lord God shall give unto him the Throne of his Father David. And he shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever, and of his Kingdom there shall be no end; **not personally at the beginning of it, but virtually by his Laws, etc.**" [bold and underlining mine - TW]*

Knollys was a post-millennialist, placing the resurrection of believers (and all the dead) at a general resurrection after the Millennium. He held to the Reformed view of the tribulation (historicism), seeing the Roman Church-State as the reign of the Beast. Christ's Millennial Kingdom was the virtual reign of Christ on earth vicariously through the Protestant Church. Rome was represented by the rule of the Beast. The rule of the Protestant Church-state follows the overthrow of the Roman Beast at Christ's "virtual - spiritual" coming. Christ's physical "second coming" would occur at the end of the Millennium.

Hansard Knollys (1598-1691) Baptist

Post-Millennial Historiologist



[Click here](#) for Hansard Knollys "Exposition of the Parable of the Ten Virgins."

John Gill (1697-1771) a Pre-Tribulationist?

Next, Johnson attempted to connect Knollys' alleged "pre-tribulationism" to the famous Baptist scholar, John Gill. Johnson stated, "In Vol. II, p.358, Ivimey refers to Knollys and his pre-millennialism saying, '...It appears that his opinion on this subject was not different from that of Dr. Gill, and **OTHERS**' [emp. mine--KJ]. John Gill's (1697-1771) position is stated in his commentary in Vol. VI, p. 560 re. 1 Thes. 4:15: 'The apostle having something new and extraordinary to deliver, concerning the coming of Christ, the first resurrection, or the resurrection of the saints, the change of the living saints, and the rapture both of the raised and living in the clouds to meet Christ in the air, expresses himself in this manner...' Johnson then concludes by saying, "This commentary was written over 50 years before the supposed revelation of Margaret Macdonald."

However, nothing Johnson cites indicates Gill understood 1 Thess. 4:15 in a pre-trib context. Johnson has attempted to link John Gill to pre-tribulationism by first claiming that Knollys was pre-trib (which he was not), and then citing a brief comment by Ivimey that both shared a similar eschatology. John Gill was NOT a pre-tribulationist, as Johnson would have us believe. A brief look at Gill's comments on several end-times passages proves that Gill was a historicist, not a futurist, and was post-trib. Johnson should go back to the previous verse and look at Gill's note on 1 Thess. 4:14. Gill put the rapture and resurrection at the beginning of the Millennium. Gill writes, "And the dead in Christ shall rise first; the same with those that are asleep in Jesus, (1 Thessalonians 4:14) not only the martyrs that died for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel; nor merely those who die in the lively exercise of faith in Christ; but all that die interested in him, and in union with him: and these shall "rise", in consequence of their being his; being given to him, made his care and charge, and engaged for by him, and in virtue of their union to him; and shall rise to an entire conformity to his glorious body, and in order to enjoy eternal life and glory with him: and **these will rise "first", before the wicked, which is the first resurrection, (Revelation 20:5,6) even a thousand years before them;** the righteous will rise in the morning of the resurrection, and so will have the dominion in the morning, (Psalms 49:14) **even at the beginning of the thousand years, as soon as Christ will come;** but the wicked will not rise till the evening of that day, or till the close of the thousand years: and this agrees with the notions of the Jews, who thought that some will rise before others;" (John Gill, Commentary 1 Thess. 4:14). Gill goes on to explain the "shout" associated with the rapture in verse 16, connecting it with the coming of Christ's army in Revelation 19. Gill writes: "**with a shout; the word here used is observed by many to signify such a noise or shout as is made either by mariners, when they pull and row together; and shout to direct and encourage one another; or to an army with the general at the head of it, when about to undertake some considerable action, to enter on a battle, and make the onset; Christ will now appear as the King of kings, and Lord of lords, as the Judge of the whole earth, attended with the host, or armies of heaven, and the shout of a king will be among them: perhaps the same is intended, as by the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunderings upon the coming of Christ, the destruction of antichrist, and the marriage of the Lamb, in (Revelation 19:1,6,7,14,15).**" [bold and underlining mine - TW]

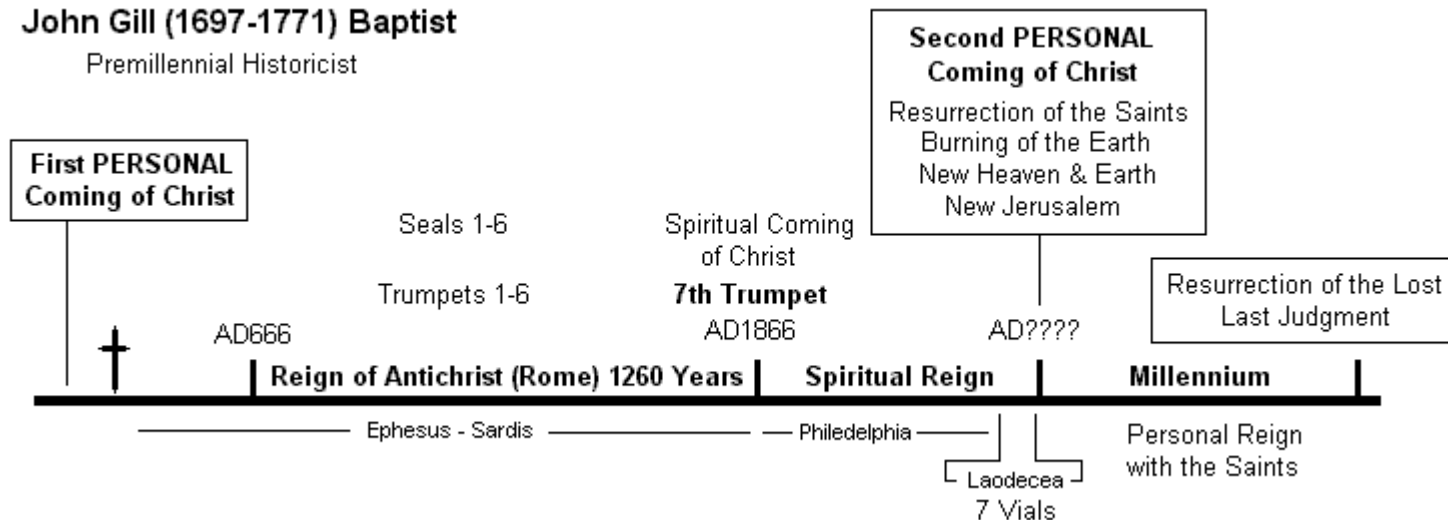
As we continue reading [John Gill's commentary](#), it becomes obvious that Gill thought Jesus and believers would rule from heaven during the Millennium. Regarding the phrase, "to meet the Lord in the air" in verse 17, Gill writes: "whither he will descend, and will then clear the regions of the air of Satan, and his posse of devils, which now rove about there, watching all opportunities, and taking all advantages to do mischief on earth; these shall then fall like lightning from heaven, and be bound and shut up in the bottomless pit, till the thousand years are ended: here Christ will stop, and will be visible to all, and as easily discerned by all, good and bad, as the body of the sun at noonday; as yet he will not descend on earth, because it is not fit to receive him; but when that and its works are burnt up, and it is purged and purified by fire, and become a new earth, he will descend upon it, and dwell with his saints in it: and this suggests another reason why he will stay in the air, and his saints shall meet him there, and whom he will take up with him into the third heaven, till the general conflagration and burning of the world is

over, and to preserve them from it; and then shall all the elect of God descend from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband, and he with them, and the tabernacle of God shall be with men; see (Revelation 21:1-3)." [bold mine - TW]

His comment on 2 Thess. 2:3 clearly indicates that Gill was a historicist regarding the tribulation, seeing the "Man of Sin" as the whole Roman Catholic hierarchy currently in power.

That Gill did not see the Church raptured out prior to any part of the tribulation is clear from his comment on Rev. 3:10. "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth; this hour seems to refer not to any of the vials which will be poured out on the antichristian states, but to some affliction and distress which will befall the reformed churches, and will light upon the outward court worshippers among them. It seems to be the last struggle of the beast of Rome, and to denote some violent and sharp persecution, such as what Daniel mentions, that never was before nor since; but it will be but short, but one hour, the twenty fourth part of a prophetic day or year, perhaps about a fortnight; yet it will be very extensive; it will reach all the world, the whole Roman empire, and all that dwell upon the earth, that are called by the name of Christians, and will try them, whether they are so or not; Christ will now have his fan in his hand, and purge his floor of all his formal professors and hypocrites; and it will be known who are his true churches, and pure members; and these he will keep close to himself, and preserve safe amidst all the distress and confusion the world will be in." It is quite clear that John Gill saw the Church on earth right up until the very end of the tribulation.

John Gill (1697-1771) Baptist
Premillennial Historicist



[Click here](#) for John Gill's "Of the Second Coming of Christ, and his Personal Appearance."

The bottom line is this: None of the Baptists cited by Dr. Ken Johnson were pre-tribulationists. Once again, pre-tribulationists have resorted to revisionism and misrepresentation of historical writers in order to distance pre-tribulationism from Edward Irving and the nineteenth century mystics of Great Britain. As usual, a closer examination of these writers proves that they were not pre-trib. It seems the harder they try to bypass Edward Irving and the Scotch - British proto-Charismatics, the larger their ghosts seem to loom.