



A Publication of CJF Ministries and Messianic Perspectives Radio Network

# Messianic Perspectives<sup>®</sup>

*God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.*

The background is a black and white photograph of a tunnel. People are sitting on the floor, some looking towards the camera. The tunnel has a grid-like structure on the walls. A large, hand-drawn red cloud shape is overlaid on the image, containing the main title and author information.

## THE RAPTURE: PRE- OR POST-TRIB?

PART 1

BY DR. GARY HEORICK

Our founder, Charles Halff, was an avowed pre-Tribber. For the uninitiated, that means he believed the Rapture of the Church will happen sometime before the start of the end-time Tribulation Period.<sup>1</sup> He preached and taught the pre-Trib Rapture for more than half a century. But what distinguished him from many other pre-Tribbers was that he wasn't interested in arguing about it.

One evening in the early 1990s, Charles and I had been working late. We were relaxing in his office when one of his preacher friends called from California. He put the phone on speaker so I could hear both sides of the conversation. This preacher was doing his best to enlist Charles' help in a dispute with a mutual friend who had recently "defected" over to the post-Trib camp.<sup>2</sup> Charles listened patiently for a few minutes before finally saying, calmly yet firmly, "You know, dear brother, you should just leave that poor man alone. No matter what position we take on the Rapture, we're all within seven years of each other—and in light of eternity, that's just not worth fighting over." With that, the conversation quickly ended.

That was how Charles felt about it. He chose his battles carefully—and the Tribulation controversy wasn't one of them. If you needed his help fighting the anti-Semites, or defending the Virgin Birth, the inerrancy of Scripture, the deity of the Messiah, or any other cardinal point of faith—then yes, he was ready to strap on his armor and go to war. He wouldn't back down from anyone on those important points. Nonetheless, he didn't want to argue about the timing of the Rapture, not only because he knew good people on both sides, but also because he considered it a poor investment of precious time.

However, that didn't prevent our founder from watching the "Rapture wars" from the sidelines and finding the ongoing spectacle endlessly entertaining. He understood that it's a serious issue, of course; but he also thought it was laughable that some people were so intent on attacking anyone and everyone who disagreed with them about the Rapture. He seemed to be particularly amused by notorious post-Tribbers like the late James McKeever,<sup>3</sup> who cranked out a steady stream of anti-Rapture literature over his long career. Charles would occasionally hand me one of Jim's newsletters, or a copy of his latest book, and say, with a mischievous smile, "Read this and Brother McKeever will straighten you out!"

No one should assume, though, that our tolerance of other views means we're ambivalent on the issue. Far from it! We have a very definite position on the Rapture, even though we don't consider it an essential point of doctrine.<sup>4</sup> We are (and have been for almost 70 years now) pre-Trib.

## A Brief Primer on the Rapture

The "Rapture" is a future, eschatological event described in the Bible.<sup>5</sup> When it happens, the Lord Yeshua will descend from the heavens and catch His people up (both the living and the dead, whose bodies will be resurrected) to be with Him in the clouds. Once we're all assembled

somewhere in the troposphere (clouds), He will lead us from there to a place He has prepared for us. Here's how Paul describes it:

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16-17).*

*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [in death], but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-52).*

A biblical "mystery," of course, is something that wasn't discernible in the OT but has been revealed in the NT. Paul says the Rapture of the Church is one such mystery (v. 51). It makes perfect sense that God would use Paul to reveal this previously undisclosed event since he is the primary teacher of Church-related truth in the Bible. After all, the pre-Trib Rapture is for the Church.<sup>6</sup>

There are three main views about the timing of this remarkable event:

- Pre-Trib—The Rapture takes place prior to the seven-year Tribulation.
- Post-Trib—The Rapture takes place at the conclusion of the Tribulation.
- Mid-Trib—The Rapture takes place after the first 3½ years of the Tribulation.<sup>7</sup>

Other views include:

- Partial Rapture—Only believers who are prepared and "prayed up" will be taken in the Rapture. The rest will go through the Tribulation.
- Pre-Wrath Rapture—Believers will be raptured prior to the unleashing of God's judicial wrath near the end of the Tribulation (see sidebar).

The Bible doesn't bother to defend the teaching of the Rapture. It just states it as a fact. However, Western minds are preoccupied with mechanics—that is, how would something like this be accomplished? Is it enough simply to say that it's miraculous, and we shouldn't worry about how God will do it? Or will the Rapture incorporate natural forces of quantum mechanics that we haven't yet learned to harness?

In the fictional *Star Trek* universe, for instance, a "transporter" disassembles bodies or objects on the molecular level, moves the dematerialized energy along a focused data stream to another location, and then rematerializes them there. It sure looks easy on TV! But is something like this really possible? Or will the Rapture be accomplished in some other way? We do not know.<sup>8</sup> But we do know it will happen.

## Messianic Perspectives®

Dr. Gary Hedrick, *Editor in Chief*  
Erastos Leiloglou, *Creative Director*



*Messianic Perspectives* is published bimonthly by CJF Ministries, P.O. Box 345, San Antonio, Texas 78292-0345, a 501(c)3 Texas nonprofit corporation: Dr. Gary Hedrick, President; Brian Nowotny, Director of Communications; Erastos Leiloglou, Creative Director. Subscription price: \$10 per year. The publication of articles by other authors does not necessarily imply full agreement with all the views expressed therein. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). Visit us online at [cjfm.org](http://cjfm.org). Toll-free OrderLine: (800) 926-5397.  
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## Can Both Sides Be Right?

Here at the outset, we should point out that in a certain sense, both post-Tribbers and pre-Tribbers are right. It all depends on one's perspective. For those of us who are alive when the first phase of the Second Coming occurs, the Rapture will be pre-Trib. However, for the masses who will come to faith later, during the seven-year Tribulation (Rev. 7:9-10, 13-14), the Lord's return will be post-Trib.

And yes, in case you're wondering, this means there will be at least two Rapture events—one for the Church (i.e., the Bride of Messiah) prior to the Tribulation and another

one for the Tribulation saints (those who have come to faith during the Tribulation) when the Lord returns in glory seven years later.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, a number of the verses cited by post-Tribbers actually apply to Tribulation saints rather than to the Church. This has been a major source of confusion in the Rapture debates.

So our post-Trib friends aren't wrong about there being a Rapture after the Tribulation. There will be! Their error is in saying there won't be one *before* the Tribulation, as well.

# WHAT ABOUT THE PRE-WRATH RAPTURE VIEW?

In the early 1990s, a Jewish believer named Marvin Rosenthal wrote a book entitled *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990). Charles Halff, our founder, held Marvin in high regard but disagreed with his thesis in the book. Charles, who died in 2000, never got around to reviewing Marvin's book in writing; however, his friend John Walvoord reviewed Paul Karleen's book *\*The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church: Is It Biblical?* (Langhorne, PA: BF Press, 1991) in the January-March 1992 issue of *Bibliotheca Sacra*, the theological journal from Dallas Seminary as follows:

This work is a carefully crafted answer to Marvin Rosenthal's *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*, a recently published book advocating a form of posttribulationism. More than usual attention has been paid to Rosenthal's work for a number of reasons. The book was widely circulated with free copies available; the author was a former well-known pretribulationist who participated in many prophetic conferences and was known for his pretribulationist stance; and many readers who were pretribulationist apparently have not fully understood the reasons for their position. Therefore, Rosenthal's book has raised questions in the minds of many as to when the Rapture of the Church will occur.

As Karleen points out, Rosenthal's point of view varies slightly from posttribulationism because he places the Rapture late in the Great Tribulation but before the Second Coming of Christ. Generally speaking, it is a variation of the posttribulationist point of view.

Karleen's careful analysis takes apart the arguments of Rosenthal's book with surgical skill. He challenges Rosenthal's statements that there is no biblical evidence for the imminent return of Christ, and that the restrainer of Second Thessalonians is the Archangel Michael. Karleen also refutes

the concept, quite familiar to many posttribulationists, that the Rapture and the Second Advent are combined, with the Rapture somehow being before the Second Coming and yet being a part of it. This analysis of Rosenthal's book demonstrates that the book violates many exegetical considerations, that it is often not logical, and that many of Rosenthal's dogmatic statements are not supported by evidence.

Though Rosenthal claims to have read widely in the literature of the field, he shows no awareness of many arguments that could be marshalled against his position. Karleen points out that Rosenthal's view—that the wrath of God will not occur until toward the end of the Great Tribulation—is not supported by the Scriptures.

That it will begin in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is clearly indicated by Christ's words recorded in Matthew 24:15 and by the evidence of wrath as early as the seal judgments in Revelation 6.

Few people understand that posttribulationism is not a system, but is a negation, and that this point of view can be divided into different types. Among these are (1) the idea that the Tribulation is completely past and therefore the Second Coming is imminent; (2) the idea that the Tribulation is not nearly as serious or literal as the Book of Revelation and other passages make it; and (3) the current, more literal view of posttribulationism that the Great Tribulation is a difficult, still future time. Rosenthal's argument that the terrible catastrophes of a fourth of the world being destroyed (Rev. 6:8) and a third of mankind being destroyed (9:15) will occur before the wrath of God is imposed on the earth, is a position that obviously is untenable.

For those who want a careful exposé of the errors of Rosenthal's book, Karleen has performed a great service.

\*Karleen's book is no longer in print.

## Will the Most Incurable Sensationalists Please Stand Up?

Pre-Tribbers are often criticized for excessive commercialism and sensationalism. After all, Hal Lindsey launched pre-Trib teaching into the religious mainstream with the publication of his book *The Late Great Planet Earth* in 1970. Since that time, it's been translated into 54 languages and has sold roughly 35 million copies. Due to its remarkable success, *LGPE* was the first major Christian book to be picked up by a secular publisher (Bantam Books).

While Lindsey has always insisted that he's not a date-setter, he argued persuasively in *LGPE* that the Rapture "could take place" within one biblical generation (i.e., 33 prophetic years of 360 days each, or 11,880 days) of the budding of "the fig tree" (the establishing of the modern State of Israel in 1948).<sup>10</sup>

In the wake of *LGPE*'s publication, a cottage industry sprang up with dozens of other preachers riding Lindsey's coattails to lesser degrees of fame and fortune. Edgar Whisenant's booklet *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*—in which he predicted that the Rapture would take place during *Rosh HaShanah* (the Jewish New Year) in September of 1988—reportedly sold over four million copies. And this turned out to be just the tip of the iceberg when prophetic teaching exploded in the late 1980s.

In the mid-90s, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins began their collaboration on what turned out to be 16 books of their fictional, pre-Trib *Left Behind* series, selling (so far) roughly 60 million copies worldwide.<sup>11</sup>

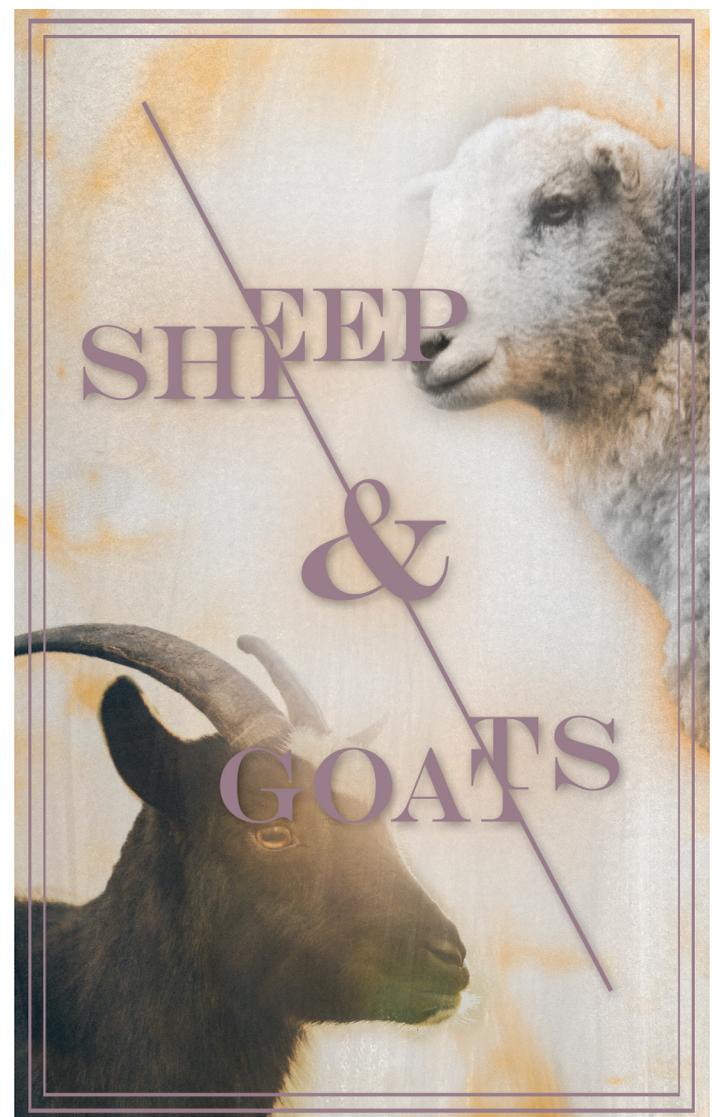
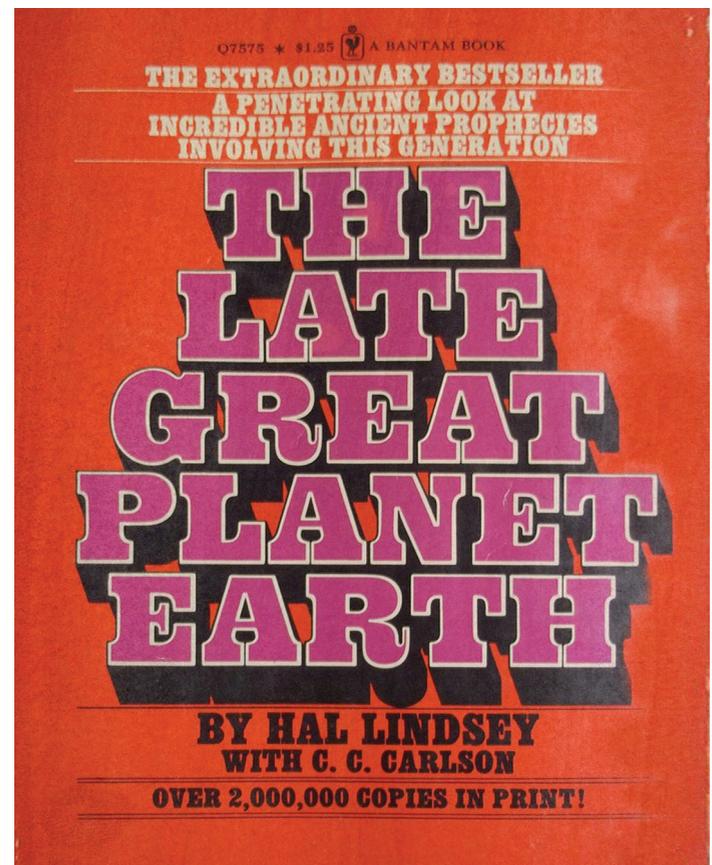
So it's true that pre-Trib materials have been sold far and wide since the 1970s. However, the commercial success of pre-Trib products pales in comparison to the creative output of the burgeoning post-Trib "prepper" industry. These folks are frightening Christians with warnings that they must prepare to go through the Tribulation, when believers worldwide will suffer unspeakable persecution at the hands of the Antichrist.<sup>12</sup>

## Is the Tribulation Survivable?

Interpreting the biblical data regarding the Tribulation requires careful and diligent study because the Bible's statements, while pointing us to literal realities, are nonetheless couched in symbolic and apocalyptic language. The Bible describes the Tribulation as a time of horrific natural disasters (Rev. 8:7), pollution of water and air (8:8-11; 9:2), plagues (6:8), and much more. Also, the Antichrist will go on a rampage and kill countless believers (6:9-11).

All of this begs the question: Can anyone survive the Tribulation? The answer is yes, they can—and many will. In fact, the Bible infers that there will be multitudes of survivors, despite the carnage and destruction that will engulf the world during that terrible time.

At the Sheep and Goat Judgment (Matt. 25:31ff.), the vast multitude of survivors will be divided into two groups: those who are saved (sheep) and those who are lost (goats). The text indicates that the main criterion applied in this judgment will be their relations with the Jewish people during the Holocaust-like persecution of the Tribulation (vv. 32-46).<sup>13</sup> Did they defend the Jewish people or did they join in (or support) the attacks? That's the determinative factor. This doesn't mean that salvation is by works, but rather that a heart truly transformed by the grace of God cannot be anti-Semitic. It's just a simple and basic fact. The People of Israel are the apple of God's eye (see Zech. 2:8); so He loves them and has had an ages-long relationship with them. The sheep love the things God loves, and the goats despise those same things. Following this judgment, the sheep will enter the Kingdom while the goats are consigned to "everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46).



## Post-Trib Preppers

Tune in to any one of a number of “Christian” TV channels and there’s a good chance you’ll find a prepper or two selling just about anything you might need to make it through the Tribulation: power generators, freeze-dried foods, battery-powered radios, water filtration systems, air purifiers, solar-powered flashlights (yes, you read that right), and all kinds of weaponry.

Wealthy post-Tribbers can even arrange for accommodations in plush underground bunkers equipped with all the comforts of home. Here they believe they can wait out the seven years of the Tribulation and emerge in time to enter the Kingdom.

*Doomsday Preppers* was a reality show on the National Geographic Channel that ran for four seasons (2011–2014), offering its viewers an inside perspective of the survivalist movement. The program’s sponsors included companies like Dräger Equipment (gas masks, night vision, personal protection),<sup>14</sup> Wise Food Storage Company (offering long-term “food kits” to feed a family for years, among an impressive array of other survivalist products),<sup>15</sup> and the United States Gold Bureau (an Austin-based company catering to preppers and other investors who see precious metals as a hedge against a possible collapse of the world economy).<sup>16</sup>

There are only so many ways you can scare people, though, so the show’s target audience eventually became bored, and *Doomsday Preppers* went off the air in 2014. But the survivalist movement continues and has succeeded in pulling some Christian fringe groups into its orbit. When 21st-century secular survivalism meets an evangelical post-Trib mindset, it’s a nearly perfect match! As a group, evangelicals tend to be trusting and good-hearted souls. It’s hard for some of us to see that there are charlatans out there—even some who claim to be Christians—who enrich themselves by frightening and fleecing the sheep (Matt. 7:15).

One evangelical prepper talk show host interviewed the author of a book defending the post-Trib Rapture theory. The host asked his guest what will happen to believers if the pre-Trib Rapture turns out not to be true. Here was his answer:

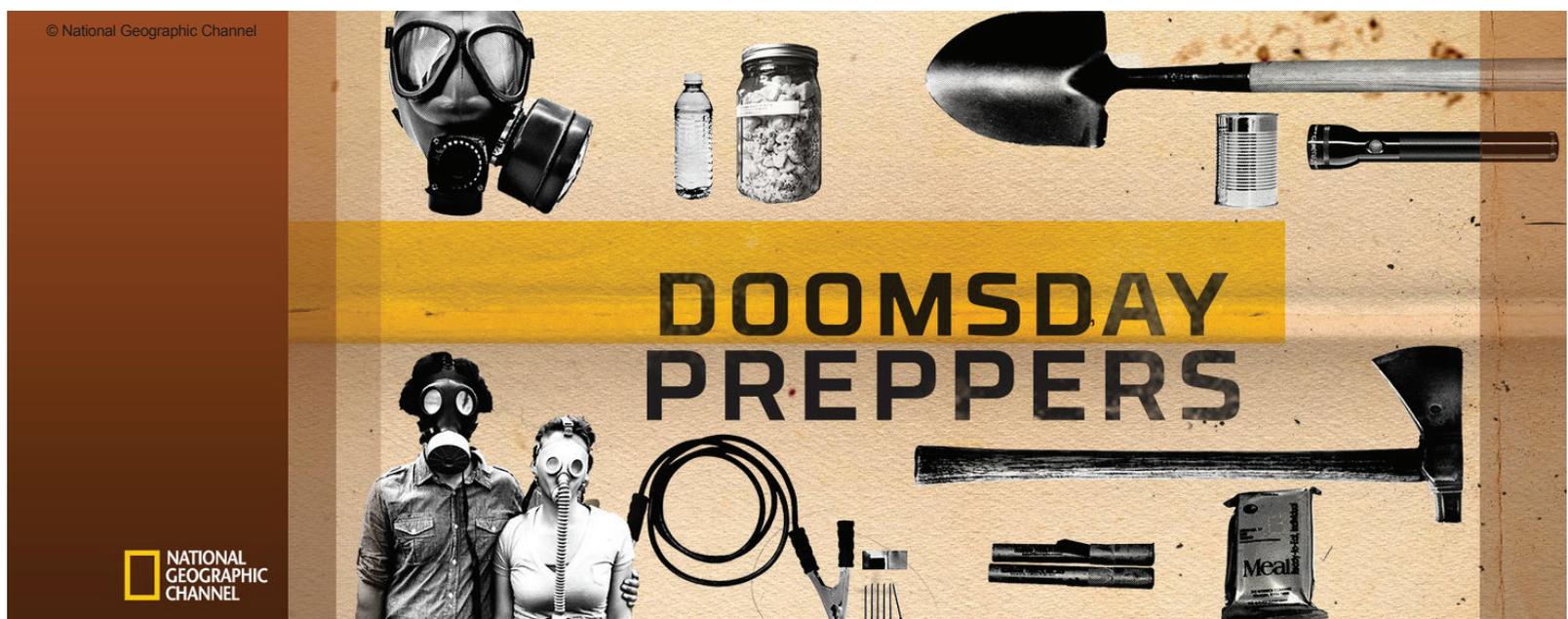
Well, number one, [when the Tribulation begins] they’re not going to have food and supplies . . . stored up, so immediately they’re going to be in trouble because they’re going to have shortages of food: “Where’s our water?”, “Where’s our supplies?”, “What do we do, pastor?” So people are going to be almost instantly hurting because they were told, “We’re never going to have to go [through] anything, we’re not going to be hurting.” . . . But then also, as time moves along, and it becomes exceedingly clear that no Rapture happened [and] no Rapture is coming, people are going to get angry. . . . And they’re going to be looking for their pastors, their church leaders, [and] the experts who told them these things [about the Rapture], and they’re going to say, “Why did you lie to us? Why didn’t you tell us what was coming?” . . . So a lot of these churches are going to go under. A lot of these pastors and leaders, they’re going to go into hiding [rather than face their angry church members].<sup>17</sup>

So they’re claiming that pre-Trib preachers will go into hiding to avoid irate parishioners when the Rapture doesn’t happen. Curiously, though, we have an actual, historical precedent that favors the opposite scenario; that is, the post-Trib preppers, rather than the pre-Tribbers, are the ones who are more likely to flee once they’re discredited!

The precedent I’m talking about is the Y2K (Year 2000) scare in the late 90s. A computer glitch was going to bring an end to civilization as we have known it, according to the doomsayers. Post-Tribbers jumped on the bandwagon and began making preparations for the Tribulation.<sup>18</sup> In 1998 and 1999, Michael Hyatt (former chairman of Thomas Nelson Publishers) churned out a series of misleading Y2K tomes and sold tens of thousands of copies to frightened Christians who were desperate to learn how to survive the coming calamity that Hyatt and others were predicting.<sup>19</sup>

When January 1, 2000, came and went uneventfully, many merchants of Y2K survivalist equipment and supplies vanished virtually overnight.<sup>20</sup> Even some who had offered money-back guarantees if their dire predictions didn’t come to pass were nowhere to be found. Their victims were left holding the bag. They were stuck with basements and garages piled high with survivalist equipment and overpriced supplies—and no way to get their money back.<sup>21</sup>

The point here is that when the Apocalypse didn’t happen on that first day of 2000, the post-Trib merchants of fear and paranoia were the ones who went into hiding. It wasn’t the pre-Tribbers!



## Corrie's Survival Advice

In 1974, the late Corrie ten Boom, a well-known Christian author and Gentile Holocaust survivor from Holland (who was a post-Tribber), wrote a letter entitled "How to Prepare for Tribulation." Here's her advice:

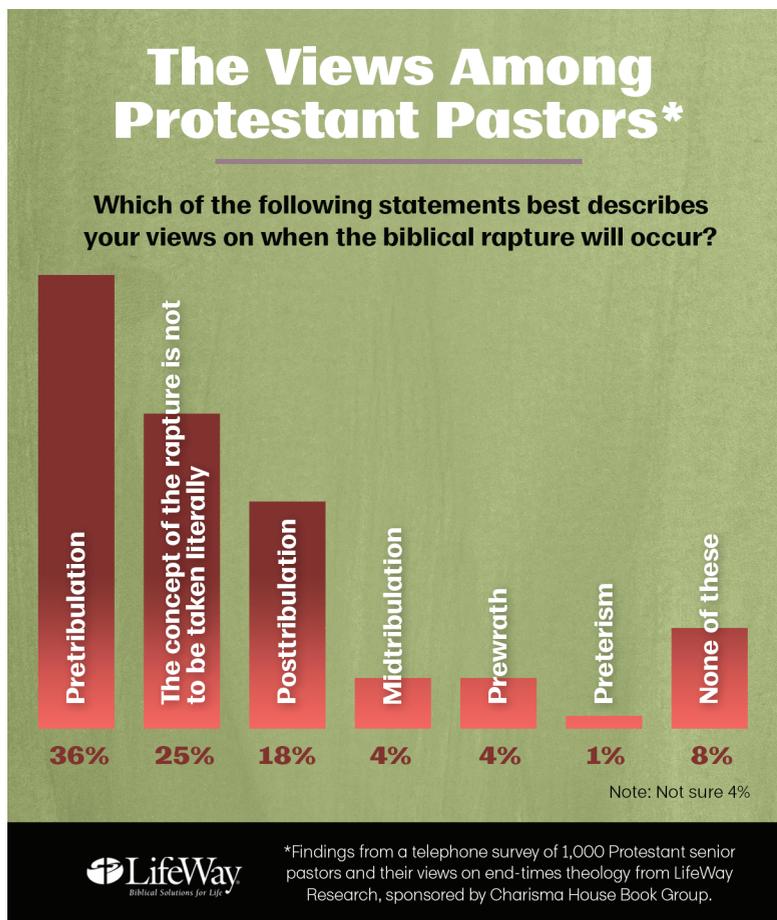
1. Feed on the Word of God.
2. Develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
3. Be filled with the Spirit of God.
4. Be ready to help and encourage one another as believers.

Note that this sweet woman said nothing about spending a fortune on survivalist preparations. No underground bunkers. No flak jackets or grenade launchers. She said nothing to engender fear or paranoia. On the contrary, here's how Corrie closed her letter:

No, you will not be strong in yourself when the tribulation comes. Rather, you will be strong in the power of Him who will not forsake you. For seventy-six years I have known the Lord Jesus and not once has He ever left me, or let me down. Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him, for I know that to all who overcome, He shall give the crown of life. Hallelujah!<sup>22</sup>

If I were a post-Tribber, this would be my approach. I'd be with Corrie! My focus would be on Christ, not the Antichrist: *Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ* (Titus 2:13).

As God's people, we shouldn't give in to fear and paranoia when we're hit with pain and persecution. The Bible says, *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind* (2 Tim. 1:7). As Corrie so eloquently said, we are "strong in the power of Him who will not forsake" us!



## Responding to Some Post-Trib Arguments

1. *The NT tells us at least 45 times that believers will go through tribulation.*

Of course it does. For instance, it says Paul and Barnabas were *strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14:22). However, "many tribulations" (plural) isn't the same as "the" Tribulation (singular). This is perhaps the most common error made by post-Tribbers. They fail to distinguish between the trials and tribulations believers have been experiencing for the past 2,000 years—up to and including martyrdom—and the final, singular, end-time Tribulation.

2. *The pre-Trib Rapture is a dangerous doctrine because it lulls Christians into a false sense of safety and security.*

This is patently ridiculous. The pre-Trib position makes no claim that our lives will be free of tribulations or trials. If some believers are clinging to the pre-Trib position because they think it gives them an escape hatch from trouble or persecution in general, they'd better think again! The NT is very clear in its teaching that for many of us, trials and tribulations are a routine feature of the Christian life (see Rom. 5:3; cp. 8:35, and John 16:33).

Paul told Timothy, *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in [Messiah Yeshua] will suffer persecution* (2 Tim. 3:12). Thousands of Christians were martyred during the days of the ancient Roman Empire. Tertullian refers to the ancient howl of the Romans, "The Christians to the lion!"<sup>23</sup> The demented Emperor Nero reportedly soaked the corpses of murdered Christians with oil and used them to light his gardens at night.<sup>24</sup>

In the 20th century, many Jewish (and non-Jewish) believers in Yeshua perished in the Holocaust, along with six million other Jewish people.<sup>25</sup> The list goes on and on. So yes, all believers should be prepared to suffer (and even die) for their faith if they're called upon to do so—just as countless thousands of believers have done during the past 2,000 years. But this is a separate issue from that of the end-time Tribulation.

It strikes me that only in our spoiled, shallow, self-indulgent Western culture would believers plant themselves in front of computer screens, peck out blog posts, and bicker over the timing of the Rapture! In other regions of the world, Christian brothers and sisters think they're already in the Tribulation! Despotic warlords in Africa are dragging Christian men into local town squares and making their wives and children watch while they're brutally beaten and finally stabbed to death or shot in the head. In the Middle East, Christians (along with other "infidels") are being lined up by the dozens and summarily beheaded by ISIS thugs covered with foreboding hoods and masks. There's really not much difference between what's happening to many persecuted believers today and what the Tribulation saints will suffer during the coming Time of Jacob's Trouble.

We talked about Corrie ten Boom earlier. She said she wondered if the Holocaust was the Tribulation. Corrie and her sister, Betsy, were imprisoned in the death camp at Ravensbrück, Germany, for their role in helping Jewish people escape Nazi persecution during the second World War. One night, Corrie and Betsy had prayed together

that their lives would be spared, but the very next day, Betsy (who had been ill and was very weak) died there in the camp. (Statistically speaking, fewer than 20 percent of the victims who entered Ravensbrück were still alive at the end of the war.) Her sister's death broke poor Corrie's heart. This experience prompted her to conclude that Christians are not destined to be delivered from tribulation. Here's what she said:

There are some among us teaching there will be no tribulation, that the Christians will be able to escape all this. These are the false teachers that Jesus was warning us to expect in the latter days. Most of them have little knowledge of what is already going on across the world. I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution.

In China, the Christians were told, "Don't worry, before the tribulation comes you will be translated, raptured." Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death.<sup>26</sup>

If it's true that the missionaries in post-war China came under the influence of teachers who said the pre-Trib Rapture meant they would be spared from persecution by the Communists, that was extremely regrettable because it's a gross misrepresentation of the pre-Trib position, and because it left these dear Christians unprepared for the trials to come. Again, with all due respect to our precious sister Corrie, the problem here is a failure to distinguish between (1) tribulations in general (which affect all believers to one extent or another) and (2) the eschatological, seven-year Tribulation (i.e., the 70th Week of Daniel) which targets specific groups of people and results in tragic collateral damage.

### 3. *The idea of a pre-Trib "secret Rapture" originated with the visions of a young mystic named Margaret MacDonald in the 1830s.*

The term "secret Rapture" is used by some people to refer to the first event in a two-stage Second Coming—i.e., the "snatching up" of the Church followed seven years later by the Messiah's coming in glory. Multi-stage prophetic fulfillments may seem a bit peculiar to Western minds, but the Jewish Scriptures have them aplenty. Even the coming of the Messiah isn't just one coming, but two! He came first as *Mashiach ben Yosef* (Messiah Son of Joseph), the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53; then He will come the second time as *Mashiach ben David* (Messiah Son of David), the ruling and reigning King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16).<sup>27</sup>

"Secret" isn't really a good term to describe the Rapture because when millions of people disappear all over the world, it won't be a secret for very long! The issue will quickly become how to explain it. Some people have suggested that one explanation for the mass disappearance might be to claim that it was some type of sinister alien abduction.<sup>28</sup>

Post-Tribbers used to allege that the pre-Trib Rapture originated with Margaret MacDonald in the 19th century—and some still believe this. They often say that a Plymouth Brethren preacher named John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) took the idea from MacDonald and ran with it. One critic, relying on outdated information, boldly asserts, "[The] Rapture doctrine did not exist before John Darby invented it in 1830 AD. Before it 'popped into John Darby's head,' no one had ever heard of a secret rapture doctrine."<sup>29</sup>

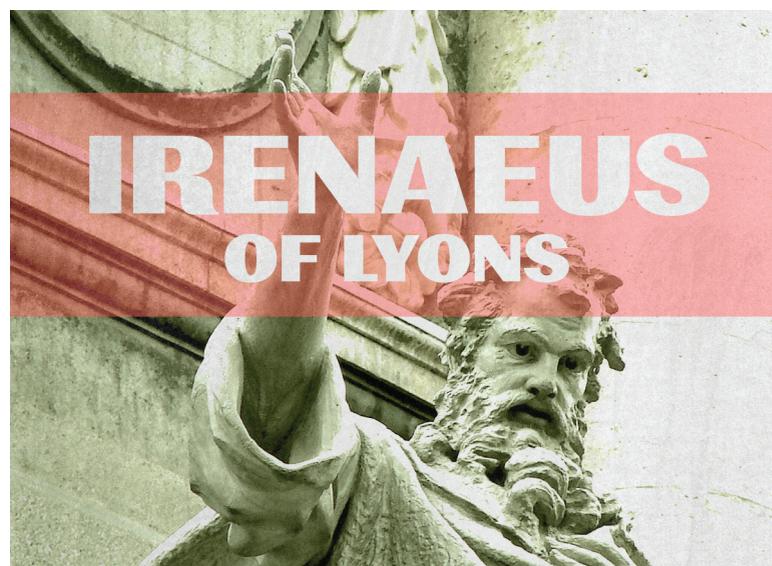
However, these people give both MacDonald and Darby far too much credit. Neither of them originated the pre-Trib

Rapture teaching. In fact, some very early Christian leaders taught that the Church would be spared from many of the judgments of the end times—especially those directed at Israel and the corrupt world system of "Babylon."<sup>30</sup> Additionally, centuries before Darby, many preachers and Bible teachers taught that the Church would be removed from the world scene prior to the eschatological Tribulation.

It's true that prophetic writings before Darby tend to be less systematized and detailed; however, their meaning is clear nonetheless. Some of these sources go back as far as the second century.

Irenaeus (AD 130-202), for instance, in *Against Heresies*, writes about God's fiery judgment on the nations at the end of the age:

And therefore, **when in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this**, it is said, "There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be." For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption (5.29).<sup>31</sup>



This statement by Irenaeus is especially notable because, according to tradition, he was a disciple of Polycarp, whose mentor was reported to be none other than the Apostle John, author of the Book of Revelation.

Other examples may be cited in more recent times. Nearly two centuries before Darby was born, we find Christian commentators espousing views that were very similar to those of dispensational Premillennialism. Michael Pocock, senior professor emeritus of world missions and intercultural studies at Dallas Theological Seminary names three:

There had been versions of an epochal, or dispensational, approach to the revelational development of Scripture in Pierre Poiret (1646–1719), John Edwards (1639–1716), and Isaac Watts (1674–1748), but Darby, an erudite man, was more systematic and prolific in his writings.<sup>32</sup>

The famous commentator Matthew Henry (1662–1714) referred to the Rapture in his observations on 1 Thessalonians 4:17:

Those that shall be found alive will then be changed. **They shall be caught up together with them in the clouds**, to meet the Lord in the air, v. 17. At, or immediately before, this **rapture** into the clouds, those who are alive will undergo a mighty change, which will be equivalent to dying. This change is so mysterious that we cannot comprehend it: we know little or nothing of it, 1 Cor. 15:51.<sup>33</sup>

John Gill (1697—1771), one of the 18th century's most prolific Bible expositors, also talked about the Rapture:

**Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up;** suddenly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and with force and power; by the power of Christ, and by the ministry and means of the holy angels; and to which **rapture** will contribute, the agility which the bodies both of the raised and changed saints will have: and this **rapture** of the living saints will be **together with them;** with the dead in Christ, that will then be raised; so that the one will not come before the other, or the one be sooner with Christ than the other; but the one being raised and the other changed, they will be joined in one company and general assembly, and be caught up together.<sup>34</sup>



## To be continued

*In the next installment, Gary explains why the Lord indicates in Matthew 24 that His followers will go through the Tribulation. He also answers questions like: Is the “last trump” of 1 Corinthians 15 the same as the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11? Should the Book of Revelation be interpreted chronologically? And do Jewish wedding customs suggest a pre-Trib timeline?*



*Dr. Gary Hedrick  
is president of  
CJF Ministries.*

<sup>1</sup>The Rapture is the “snatching up” of believers to join the Lord in Heaven near the end of this current age. We’ll be referring to this event throughout this article.

<sup>2</sup>The post-Trib position differs from the pre-Trib position in saying that the Rapture happens after the seven-year Tribulation rather than before it.

<sup>3</sup>Jim McKeever published his *End-Times News Digest* for many years with subscribers all over the world. In his book, *Christians Will Go Through the Tribulation: And How to Prepare for It* (Medford, OR: Alpha Omega Publishing Co., 1978), he based much of his post-Trib argument on an alleged connection between the “last trump” of 1 Corinthians 15:52 and the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15-19—something we will deal with later in this study. Jim also had some idiosyncratic views about economics and health issues (like the AIDS crisis in the 1980s). For more information, see “James McKeever” at rationalwiki.org. His wife Jeani has continued the ministry since his death in 1995 and has moved it more into the evangelical mainstream (the-cutting-edge.org).

<sup>4</sup>The pre-Trib Rapture isn’t part of our ministry doctrinal statement, although the premillennial return of the Messiah is. Our late founder, Charles Half, occasionally hired staff members who took either post-Trib or mid-Trib positions on the Rapture. As long as they were reasonable about it, Charles was fine with the diversity of opinions on the timing of the Rapture. His own pre-Trib viewpoint was spelled out clearly in his booklet *The Rapture: When and How?* (San Antonio, TX: The Christian Jew Foundation, 1975).

<sup>5</sup>The word “rapture” comes from the Latin Vulgate, a fourth-century Latin translation of the Bible, where the English “caught up” (ἁρπαγισόμεθα/harpagesometha in the Greek, from ἁρπάζω/harpazo) in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 is rendered *rapere* in Latin—and *rapere* morphs into “rapture” in English.

<sup>6</sup>However, the post-Trib Rapture isn’t for the Church. See Endnote 9 below.

<sup>7</sup>Mid-Tribbers see the “Great Tribulation” (Matt. 24:21) as the second half of the seven-year Time of Jacob’s Trouble. Since the first three and a half years are a time of relative peace and security (1 Thess. 5:3), they see little point in “catching up” the Church until just before the final three and a half years, which the Bible depicts as a time of intense conflict and persecution.

<sup>8</sup>See “Could the Star Trek Transporter Be Real? Quantum Teleportation Is Possible, Scientists Say” by Alessandria Masi in the *International Business Times* (May 29, 2014) at ibtimes.com.

<sup>9</sup>Some scholars suggest that the Old Testament saints will be resurrected along with the Tribulation martyrs at the close of the Tribulation and will be included in this post-Trib Rapture. Still another Rapture-like event is found in Revelation 11:12, where the two witnesses are caught up to Heaven after being raised from the dead during the Tribulation (v. 11). There are numerous Rapture events; however, only the pre-Trib Rapture is for the Church (i.e., the Bride of Messiah).

<sup>10</sup>*The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 54. Using Lindsey’s approach, one could count 11,880 days (33 years) from May 14, 1948, to arrive at a date of November 22, 1980, for the Rapture. The Lord would then return seven years later on November 17, 1987 (40 years after the founding of the modern State of Israel), to intervene at the climax of the Armageddon Campaign. Lindsey didn’t actually give these dates in LGPE, however.

<sup>11</sup>LaHaye and Jenkins have also been criticized for various alleged theological errors in the *Left Behind* series. However, they keep reminding their critics that the series is a work of fiction, representing their interpretation of what the biblical end-time scenario might look like. They are story-tellers and make no claim about their books being absolutely accurate in every detail.

<sup>12</sup>We’re not suggesting here that post-Trib rapture is responsible for the entire prepper (survivalist) industry. There are many secular survivalists who aren’t connected to any particular religious viewpoint.

<sup>13</sup>When the Jewish people have come under attack in the past, God has raised up non-Jewish people to come to their defense. In Jerusalem, the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center has a special area where “the Righteous Among the Nations” (non-Jews who saved Jewish people from the Nazis during the Holocaust) are recognized and honored (yadvashem.org). Non-Jews will also defend Jewish people during the future Tribulation (Matt. 25:31-46).

<sup>14</sup>draeger.com.

<sup>15</sup>wisefoodstorage.com.

<sup>16</sup>usgoldbureau.com. The stock market has consistently outperformed precious metals for decades, however—and it has done so by a significant margin. And although it’s true that the collapse of economic “Babylon” (prophesied in Revelation 18) may

portend a worldwide economic collapse someday, no one knows when that might happen. Some of us remember how doomsayers cashed in on the Y2K scare back in the late 1990s, and their gullible customers were left holding the bag on January 1, 2000—all because supposed “experts” claimed to know precisely when and how the collapse would take place. But the pundits were wrong. The truth is that the toppling of the end-time world system could be 25, 50, or even a hundred years or more from now—or the scenario could begin unfolding next Tuesday. We’re told that Sir Isaac Newton, the brilliant scientist, “was a passionate believer who took biblical prophecy seriously” and famously predicted that the Apocalypse would take place in 2060 (“Statement on the Date 2060” by Stephen Snobelen [June 2003] at isaac-newton.org). Since no one can say for sure who’s right, the best approach is to maintain readiness at all times—which, as it turns out, is what the Bible has been telling us all along (1 Thess. 5:1-11).

<sup>17</sup>“When Is the Rapture? (Day 2)” (Jim Bakker’s interview with Michael Snyder, author of *The Rapture Verdict*) at jimbakkershow.com/video/rapture-day-2.

<sup>18</sup>It’s true that some pre-Tribbers also jumped on the Y2K bandwagon, but they weren’t the ones marketing survival supplies and equipment.

<sup>19</sup>Hyatt’s Y2K books included *Y2K: The Day the World Shut Down*, *The Y2K Personal Survival Guide*, and *The Millennium Bug: How to Survive the Coming Chaos*. Popular Christian financial planner Larry Burkett also sounded the Y2K alarm in his book *Crisis Control for 2000 and Beyond: Boom or Bust?: Seven Key Principles to Surviving the Coming Economic Upheaval* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999). Virtually none of the doomsday predictions in any of these books came to pass.

<sup>20</sup>See “The Lessons of Y2K—1st Global Technological Meltdown Averted (#44)” by Alan F. Kay, PhD (Jan. 10, 2005) at alanfkay.com.

<sup>21</sup>The preppers who came through the Y2K scare smelling like a rose were the ones who had the foresight to purchase their survival gear from chain stores like Home Depot, Ace Hardware, Walmart, or Sears, which typically have 30-day return policies—sometimes with a modest restocking fee (“Stockpiles of Y2K Gear Head Back to the Stores” by Ray Gibson and David Heinzmann in the *Chicago Tribune* [Jan. 3, 2000] at articles.chicagotribune.com). Many of the suppliers who vanished almost overnight were Internet-based vendors who catered to a customer base of naive survivalists.

<sup>22</sup>*When Jesus Returns* by David Pawson (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003), 199.

<sup>23</sup>Tertullian (AD 155–240) writing in *Apologeticum* 40.

<sup>24</sup>*Nero* by Edward Champlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 36.

<sup>25</sup>See “Messianic Jews and the Holocaust” in *Issues: A Messianic Jewish Perspective* (Vol. 21/5), Susan Perlman, ed. (San Francisco: Jews for Jesus, 2016).

<sup>26</sup>Pawson, *Ibid*. Historians estimate that Mao Zedong was responsible for somewhere between 40 and 70 million deaths on mainland China during the 1940s and 50s.

<sup>27</sup>*Around the Shabbat Table: A Guide to Fulfilling and Meaningful Shabbat Table Conversations* by Aryeh ben David (Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 2000), 81.

<sup>28</sup>After all, SETI (the government-funded Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) has been knocking on the cosmic door since 1985 (seti.org). It’s not hard to imagine the masses being convinced that an alien race responded to our hails and came to our neighborhood to abduct millions of people for slave labor or other purposes.

<sup>29</sup>See “The Origin of Rapture False Doctrine: John Darby 1830 AD” at bible.ca.

<sup>30</sup>In the prophetic Scriptures, Jerusalem and Babylon are set in unmistakable juxtaposition. At the consummation of the age, the New Jerusalem towers over the earth while Babylon falls into a smoldering heap of ruins—an extension of the biblical contrast between good and evil, light and darkness, God and the devil, and the pure Bride of Messiah and the great harlot of Babylon (Rev. 18:2; 19:2).

<sup>31</sup>Some people parse this statement more finely and claim that Irenaeus is espousing a mid-Trib Rapture. That is, he says the Church will be suddenly “caught up” (raptured) not before the Tribulation in general, but (more specifically) before the Great Tribulation (i.e., the last three and a half years of the Tribulation; Matt. 24:21, Rev. 7:14).

<sup>32</sup>“The Influence of Premillennial Eschatology on Evangelical Missionary Theory and Praxis from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present” by Michael Pocock in *The International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33:3 (July 2009), 130.

<sup>33</sup>*Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2343. Emphasis ours.

<sup>34</sup>John Gill, *Exposition of the Whole Bible* (comments at 1 Thessalonians 4 downloaded from studylight.org). Emphasis ours.

# WALVOORD'S CASE FOR PRETRIBULATIONISM



Two presuppositions are essential to the pre-Trib position:

1. The definition of the Church as a separate body of saints distinct from saints of other ages; and
2. The doctrine of a future Tribulation of unprecedented severity;

If these two premises can be sustained, the following arguments follow logically and biblically:

1. The same literal form of interpretation of millennial passages which leads to premillennialism, if applied to passages on the Tribulation, tends to demonstrate that the Church could not be in this time of wrath.
2. There is no evidence that the Church is in the Tribulation Period as no distinctive term is ever used connecting saints in the period with the Church.
3. Further, the Tribulation concerns promised deliverance from the time of unprecedented tribulation (1 Thess. 5:9; cf. Rev. 6:17; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; Rev. 3:10).
4. The Rapture is presented as an imminent event with no intervening prophecies and as such is offered as a ground of comfort (1 Thess. 4:18) and a basis of exhortation (1 Thess. 5:6; Titus 2:13; 1 John 3:1-3).
5. The work of the Holy Spirit as the restrainer of sin cannot be terminated until the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way (2 Thess. 2:7). This would be impossible unless

the Church was also raptured (since the Holy Spirit lives in believers), and requires a pretribulational chronology.

6. Important events must occur between the Rapture of the Church and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom such as the judgment seat of Messiah (i.e., the *Bema* judgment; 2 Cor. 5:10), the union of Messiah and the Church in the marriage relationship (Eph. 5:27), and the necessity of a program of salvation over a period of time to provide saints to dwell on the earth during the Millennium who are not raptured but enter the Millennium in their natural bodies (Isa. 65:20-25). This is further confirmed by the fact that the separation of the saved from the unsaved of those living on the earth at the time of the millennial return of Messiah is accomplished in a judgment of God upon Israel (Ezek. 20:34-38) and a judgment of the Gentiles (Matt. 25:31-46), judgments which would be unnecessary and out of chronological order if the Rapture had already separated all the saved from the unsaved at the end of the Tribulation. A post-Trib Rapture would leave no saints in their natural bodies to dwell upon the earth and fulfill millennial predictions.
7. The translation of the Church (Messiah's coming *for* His Bride) and the events connected with the return of the Messiah to establish His Kingdom (His coming *with* His Bride) are contrasted in Scripture. This contrast is difficult to explain if the Rapture and the Second Coming happen simultaneously.

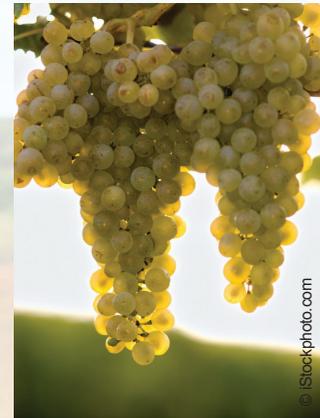


Adapted from *The Millennial Kingdom* by John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 252-53.

**JOHN F. WALVOORD (1910–2002)** was not only one of the premiere premillennial theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but he was also a friend of CJF Ministries and was a guest on our radio program, *Messianic Perspectives*, on several occasions in the 1990s. He was a graduate of Wheaton College (AB and DD), Texas Christian University (AM in philosophy), and Dallas Theological Seminary (ThB, ThM, and ThD in systematic theology). He became president of Dallas Seminary when Lewis Sperry Chafer died in 1952 and served in that capacity until his retirement in 1986. Dr. Walvoord authored dozens of books on biblical prophecy, several of which are widely regarded today as classics.

# Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



## Living Water

**Richard Hill, CJFM Representative (Las Vegas) and pastor of Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation** enjoys fellowship and “catching up” whenever visiting family members in San Jose. What a blessing that some family members have prayed to receive Jesus over the years. During this most recent visit, Rich and Oanh had opportunities to share with two more family members. Rich also had a surprising experience when he offered to pick up water for his mother-in-law at the Vietnamese water store. There he encountered an elderly Vietnamese woman passing out Jehovah Witness tracts. He initiated a conversation with her and “shared the *real* Gospel of Jesus encouraging her to receive the *real* Jesus!” Although she spoke broken English, many others in the store heard Rich share the Good News. He asks that we please pray “that God would use His Word to His glory with this elderly lady and with all the onlookers too.”

How ironic that Rich shared the Gospel message in a water store in view of what Jesus said to the woman of Samaria: “*Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life*” (John 4:13-14).

## Stunned and Amazed!

**Michelle Beadle, CJFM Southeast Representative (New Orleans)** writes the following: “I have been meeting with a Jewish woman in a nursing home for Bible study. I recently asked her, ‘Is there anything really bothering you that I can pray about?’ She related that she was very concerned about her son who had not called her in at least a year. She asked that I pray that he would call her. We prayed together out loud and I prayed in the name of Yeshua. The next week she told me that her son had called her and has been speaking with her every day by phone. Although she was very happy, she was still skeptical that this was an answer to prayer. Two weeks later, I asked her once again, ‘Is there something I can pray about for you?’ She said that she felt like the nursing home staff had no compassion. They never said hello to her or acknowledged her when she passed by. We prayed about the situation and the next week as we met again, she told me how wonderful it was that all the staff at the nursing home had started to speak with her and ask her how she was doing. She had forgotten our prayer from the week before and was stunned when she remembered it. It is truly amazing to see G-d answer her prayers.”

## Seeds Planted in Toronto

**CJF Ministries Canada** held their annual Passover Seder in Toronto, led by Rob Styler, CJFM Director of Missions. It was attended by over 150 people, many of whom had never been to a Passover Seder, or had never been to a Messianic one. **Jenya Drazman, CJFM Representative (Toronto)** summarized the results of the event: “We are still receiving positive comments from people about how much they learned at the Seder. We also invited several unsaved Jewish people, some of whom were recent contacts. One of them, an elderly Jewish man, came and stayed for almost the whole evening. He left a little early, and I was concerned that he may have been unhappy about something. I ‘happened’ to see him a couple days later at a coffee shop. He was with a Jewish friend who had also been invited to the Seder but who had declined. His friend was born in a concentration camp during the Holocaust. Our Seder guest expressed his gratitude for being invited, while his friend (a cantor at a local synagogue) expressed concern that I wasn’t attending a synagogue. We had a very open and honest conversation about Messiah and parted with best wishes and a promise to meet together again soon to read the *Tanakh*. Our other new contact is a retired teacher who is battling cancer and who has gladly accepted a complete Bible from us. She is looking forward to meeting with us again as she has questions. Please pray for our continued work among our Jewish people in Toronto.”

## Holocaust Survivors

**CJFM Representative, Pastor Yossi, Kehilat Haderech (The Way Congregation—Israel)** and his congregation have been praying for an opportunity to reach out to Karmiel’s community. Recently, they were approached by an organization of Russian-speaking Holocaust survivors and veterans from Karmiel who asked if the congregation could, in some way help them. It was an answer to prayer. *Kehilat Haderech* has begun building a relationship with them by engaging in joint activities, and assessing how best to meet the Holocaust survivors’ daily needs. Pastor Yossi asks, “Please remember this important ministry in your prayers as we pour out Messiah’s love on them. Every survivor has a fascinating and rich life story that receives new and powerful meaning—especially in light of the rise in the hatred of Israel and the Jews in the world lately.” *Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things* (Hebrews 13:18 NASB).

# Bible Questions AND Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

## Have a Bible question?

Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at [garyh@cjfm.org](mailto:garyh@cjfm.org), or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

You may see your question addressed in a future issue of *Messianic Perspectives*.

**QUESTION:** *I'm a longtime supporter of CJFM and appreciate very much the work you do. With all due respect, however, I have some difficulty with your teaching about the pre-Trib Rapture, which requires a "two-stage" Second Coming. I honestly believe your "two-stage" distinction comes off as artificial and contrived. For example, you say 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 describes the Lord's coming for His saints at the Rapture (rather than coming with them at the Second Coming). Yet Verse 14 clearly says the saints will come with Him at that time, rather than Him coming for them—and by your own admission, he's talking here about the Rapture! What does this do to the "two-stage" theory?*

**ANSWER:** Actually, nothing. This is one of the arguments Professor Douglas J. Moo presents in "The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position," Chapter 4 of *Three Views on the Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulation*, Stanley Gundry and Gleason Archer, Eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996). He writes, ". . . It is important to note that 1 Thessalonians 4:14-15 presents saints as coming 'with Jesus' at the time of the Rapture" (177).

Moo is a brilliant theologian, so I hope he will be gentle with me if I dare to disagree with him. Let's begin by taking a look at the key verses in context:

*But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.*

*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*

*For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.*

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

*Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:13-18).*

This tells us that the topic Paul is discussing is "those (believers) who have fallen asleep." "Sleep" is a term the Bible sometimes uses for physical death, which we understand to be the separation of the spirit from the body. At the moment of death, then, the spirit departs to be with the Lord (Phil. 1:21-24) while the physical body "sleeps" in the grave and eventually returns to dust (Dan. 12:2). Evidently, some believers at Thessalonica were afraid that their believing friends who had died might miss the Lord's return! So Paul takes a few verses to explain why this isn't the case.

Here's the sequence of events he presents:

1. When the Lord returns for His Church, the spirits of the believing dead of the last 2,000 years (i.e., those whose bodies "sleep in Yeshua") come with Him (1 Thess. 4:14). They have been in Heaven (most likely the New Jerusalem, wherever it is now) in a disembodied state. Paul may have been referring to this disembodied state in 2 Corinthians 5:3, where he said he preferred not to be found "naked" (i.e., without a body or a "tent" in which his spirit can dwell; v. 4).
2. The Lord descends from heaven with a shout, voice, and trumpet (shofar) blast (1 Thess. 4:16).
3. The bodies of the believing dead are raised from their graves, transformed (immortalized), and reunited with their spirits (v. 16).
4. After this, those of us who are alive at the time will be "caught up together with" our newly-resurrected brothers and sisters to meet the Lord in the air (v. 17). So the believing dead aren't overlooked; in fact, it's precisely the opposite—they are raptured even before we are!
5. We're "with the Lord" from that point on—always and forever (v. 17). When He returns to the New Jerusalem (i.e., the place He has prepared for us) after this glorious gathering "in the air," we go with him (John 14:2-3). Seven earth-years later, when He returns and descends on the Middle East, we are with Him (Rev. 19:11-14; cp. 17:14). When He establishes His earthly Kingdom (20:1-4), we are there.
6. Sticking with the context here for just another moment, note that the next chapter launches into a discussion of the Day of the LORD (1 Thess. 5:2), which is the Day of God's judgment during the Tribulation (and perhaps extending even into the Millennium). So if there's any logical order here, whatever happened at the end of Chapter 4 took place *before* the Tribulation comes up in Chapter 5.

Yes, this outline makes some sanctified assumptions; however, it's the best way I've seen so far to account for all of the biblical data.

So getting back to your original question, when Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:14 that Yeshua will bring the believing dead "with Him" at the Rapture, he's talking about their spirits. Then those spirits will be reunited with their risen, glorified (and if necessary, reconstituted) bodies. None of this creates any difficulty whatsoever for the teaching of a two-stage Second Coming; in fact, it helps to confirm it!

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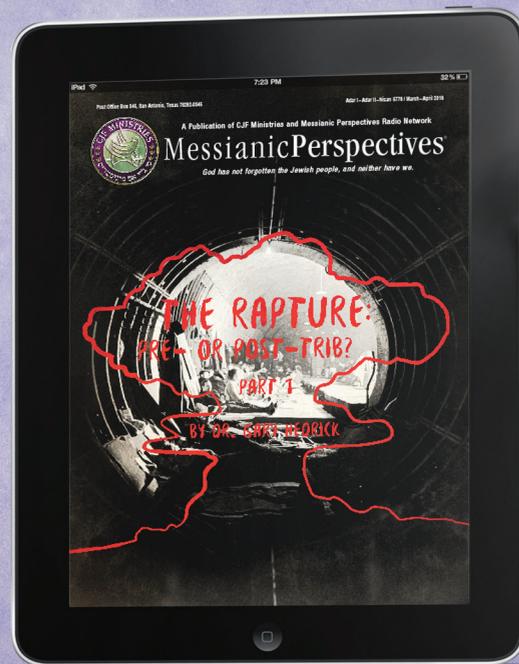
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