

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary

Research Project: Pretribulation Rapture

A Paper  
Submitted to Dr. Dennis McDonald  
In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Course  
Problems and Issues in Eschatology  
THEO 630

By  
David W. Tack

7 October 2012

## CONTENTS

Introduction . . . . .	1
Historical Data . . . . .	2
Origin of False Pretribulation Rapture Theories . . . . .	2
Historical Defense of an Early Pretribulation Rapture Belief . . . . .	2
Continued Historical Development of the Pretribulation Rapture . . . . .	3
Biblical Proofs . . . . .	3
John 14:1-3 . . . . .	4
The Thessalonian Epistles . . . . .	5
1 Corinthians 15:51-58 . . . . .	8
Theological Proofs . . . . .	9
The Nature of the Church . . . . .	9
Imminency Characterizations . . . . .	10
The Nature of the Tribulation . . . . .	11
Holy Spirit . . . . .	12
The Necessary Interval between Events: Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ . . . . .	13
The Judgment Seat of Christ . . . . .	13
The Marriage of the Lamb . . . . .	14
Conclusion . . . . .	15
Bibliography . . . . .	16

## Introduction

In John 14:1-3, Jesus spoke these comforting words to His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.”<sup>1</sup> Notice in verse three that Jesus stated, “I will come again, and receive you to myself.”

The return of Jesus Christ is one of the most intriguing eschatological questions facing today's believer. When will Jesus actually come? In what manner will Jesus return? The three primary views, though each has offshoots (i.e. partial and prewrath), revolve around what is known as the tribulation period. The tribulation period, considered by many to be an actual seven year period, is deeply interwoven into Old Testament and New Testament: prophetic, narrative, epistolary, and apocalyptic genres.

For mid-tribulationists, believers are raptured (snatched out) in the *middle* of the tribulation period and ultimately return with Christ at the end. For the posttribulationist, Christ returns only one time at the *end* of the tribulation period. The pretribulationist believes the church is raptured out at the *beginning* of the seven year tribulation period and ultimately returns with Christ at His second coming. This paper endeavors to provide a logical sequence of proofs in support of the pretribulationist position with the intent of clarifying the obligation of a pretribulation rapture. Topics in this paper include: historical data, biblical proofs, and theological proofs. The question of the rapture is a subject that many scholarly men have devoted a great portion of their lives attempting to understand. It is to these men in which this student is humbly indebted. More so, it is to the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit of God to which this student is forever dependent upon for illumination.

---

<sup>1</sup> All Scripture is from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

## Historical Data

One calculated petition against a pretribulation rapture comes in the form of presumed historical scarcities. The attack is generally two-fold, utilizing one of these arguments, “the great rapture hoax” or the “lost and found model.”<sup>2</sup>

### Origin of False Pretribulation Rapture Theories

The most longstanding false theory, the “great rapture hoax,” implies the pretribulation rapture was an early nineteenth century invention, originating through unlikely connections and popularized by John Darby, one of the founding English Plymouth Brethren.<sup>3</sup> The highly improbable conjectural trail goes like this: “an 1812 Spanish publication of Immanuel Lacunza, a Roman Catholic Jesuit,” authored a pretribulation idea that was “picked up in England by Edward Irving”; then in the 1820’s, Irving “translated Lacunza’s book into English,” allowing “thirteen year old Margaret Macdonald” to hear of it and ultimately convince John Darby of its validity.”<sup>4</sup> The second theory, the “lost and found model,” championed the idea that earlier pretribulation thinking was lost after the historical development of the New Testament only to be regained in the nineteenth century when John Darby “was enlightened by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>5</sup>

### Historical Defense of an Early Pretribulation Rapture Belief

Both of these theories have recently been abated through recent discoveries. Several early historical texts corroborate the idea of an early and consistent pretribulation rapture mindset. Some of the more striking discoveries include:

---

<sup>2</sup> Francis Gumerlock, “A Rapture Citation in the Fourteenth Century,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* BSAC 159:635 (July 2002): 349-350.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Gumerlock, *A Rapture Citation in the Fourteenth Century*, 349-350.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 349-350.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

Grant Jeffrey's discovery of a pre-seventh century "sermon by pseudo-Ephraem, entitled *On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World*"; Marotta and Bray's discovery of "the pretribulation rapture teaching of Morgan Edwards, a Baptist theologian of the 1700s"; and the fourteenth century text called "The History of Brother Dolcino." This fourteenth century text was "composed in 1316 by an anonymous notary of the diocese of Vercelli in northern Italy, this short Latin treatise gives a firsthand account of the deeds and beliefs of a religious order called the Apostolic Brethren."<sup>6</sup>

### Continued Historical Development of the Pretribulation Rapture

Although the Medieval Era was dominated by Origen and Augustine's symbolically idealistic amillennialism; pretribulationism was kept alive through underground movements and eventually resurfaced in the writings of various church fathers. Not only did these fathers promote pretribulation characteristics but an imminent return of Christ was also advocated. Crutchfield adds, "Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, The Didache, The Epistle of Barnabas, and The Shepherd of Hermas all speak of imminency."<sup>7</sup> Historically, from the Apostolic Fathers to twenty-first century there has always been an abundance of Bible believers in support of an imminent pretribulation rapture. Some notable early twentieth century defenders include: "Arno Gaebelein, C.I Scofield, A.J. Gordon, James M. Gray, R.A. Torrey, Harry Ironside, and Lewis S. Chafer."<sup>8</sup> The pretribulation rapture has always had a strong voice and will continue in like manner, because it is biblically based.

### Biblical Proofs

The biblical proofs for a pretribulation rapture are abundant and contextually seen throughout the Bible from beginning to end. It would be impossible to consider all of these passages;

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 351-353.

<sup>7</sup> Larry V. Crutchfield, "The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation in the Apostolic Fathers" in Thomas Ice & Timothy Demy, editors, *When The Trumpet Sounds* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995), 103.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Ice, "The Rapture, John 14, And Myths," *Conservative Theological Journal* CTJ 05:14 (March 2001): 41.

therefore, this paper will examine only five of the foundational New Testament texts: John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Thessalonians Chapter 5; 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2; and 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. The golden rule of hermeneutics must be emphasized before proceeding: “When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise.”<sup>9</sup> Keeping this rule in mind, Walvoord states, “Pretribulation is the only view that allows literal interpretation of all Old Testament and New Testament passages on the Great Tribulation.”<sup>10</sup>

#### John 14:1-3

As aforementioned, in John 14:3 Jesus promises His return, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.” Heaven is a real place where Jesus is currently seated on the right hand of God with promise to return for the church “in like manner” (Acts 1:11). Many scholars attempt to correlate Jesus’ return as taking place at the time of each individual believer’s physical death. Ice refutes such a notion, “John 14:3, where Christ tells His disciples, ‘I will come again, and receive you to Myself,’ is an expression that is never used of death in the whole Bible . . . Yet, many times, various Biblical texts speak of Christ coming in reference to His Second Advent (Matt. 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 42–44, 46; 25:31; John 21:23; Acts 1:9–11; 1 Thess. 4:15; 2 Thess. 1:10; 2:1, 8, etc.).”<sup>11</sup> Ice, when referring to the remarkable comparative likenesses between the biblical texts

---

<sup>9</sup> David L. Cooper, Messianic Association Congregations. *Hermeneutics: The Science of Interpreting the Scriptures*. <http://www.messianicassociation.org/ezone19-dc.hermeneutics.htm>. Accessed October 4, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*. Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 270.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Ice, *The Rapture, John 14, And Myths*, 29.

of John 14:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 made in J.B. Smith's *A Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, states: "How else does one explain the progression of eight specific words/phrases in exactly the same order, in two different passages, by two different spokesmen? It is clear that these passages refer to a single future event—the Rapture of the church."<sup>12</sup> Keeping the golden rule for hermeneutics in mind, John 14:1-3 should be taken as literal when other foundational texts such as 1 Corinthians 15: 51-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 reinforce its content with similar words.

### The Thessalonian Epistles

The second set of biblical texts, essential to the pretribulation rapture, are the Thessalonian Epistles (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Thess. 5; 2 Thess. 2). The Church of Thessalonica was founded by the Apostle Paul. In these Thessalonian Epistles, Paul is clarifying some misconceptions about eschatological events such as the rapture and second coming of Christ. In these texts, Paul explicitly teaches the rapture will come *before* the day of the Lord which *follows* the tribulation period. Therefore, it must be marked, the texts of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Thessalonians Chapter 5 are addressing eschatological questions of a similar nature; yet, they are characterizing two separate and distinctive events. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 the rapture is in view and in 1 Thessalonians Chapter 5:1-9, the day of the Lord, preceded by the tribulation period, is being addressed. Weirsbe simply characterizes the difference between the two chapters as, "a difference between believers who are looking for the Lord's return [1 Thess. 4:13-18] and the people of the world" [1 Thess. Chapter 5].<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>13</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament: Chapter Eight: Don't Walk in Your Sleep (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)*. n.d. e-Sword, Version 10.0.5.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, it is worthy to note, Paul is teaching the order of the rapture to mostly Greek congregants that were nurtured within a heathenistic culture. The Thessalonian believers wrestled with difficult questions partly as a result of not fully understanding the “mystery” of the rapture. The Thessalonians were concerned about family and friends who had physically died prior to Christ’s return. Would the kingdom be missed? How would this affect the resurrection experience of the living believers? It is here that Paul taught in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.” Paul continues, “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” (1 Thess. 4:17). In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul is giving the Thessalonian believers the reassurance of an eschatological event called the rapture, where the dead and living saints were immediately reunited, and forever with the Lord!

Before proceeding to the following text, 1 Thessalonians Chapter 5, a crucial grammatical distinction must be noted. The Greek conjunctive word *de*, translated into the English word “but” [1 Thess. 5:1] could be taken as a continuation of the preceding subject of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (the rapture). This is not necessarily the case here. Walvoord explains, “Normally *de* indicates a change in subject, but not necessarily an entirely new subject. Here the contrast seems to be between the certainty of the fact and details of the Rapture revealed in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 with the fact that the time of the Rapture is uncertain.”<sup>14</sup> Keeping this in mind, Paul continues “the times and the seasons” . . . “for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:1-2). Notice the transition from the eschatological event of the rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18) to the eschatological event called, “the day of the Lord” (1 Thess. 5:2). Moreover, mark the contrasts: In 1 Thessalonians 5:1 the “times and

---

<sup>14</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, 211.



season” were “known perfectly” and the day is introduced “as a thief in the night.” Back in 1 Thess. 4:13-18 they were “ignorant” and the Lord was descending “from heaven” with “a shout, voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God.” As Walvoord remarks, “While some interpreters hold that this paragraph is simply a continuation of the discussion in 4:13-18, it seems clear that a new aspect of the *parousia* is now to be considered” [1 Thess. 5:2].<sup>15</sup> To the early church the day of the Lord was always equated with God’s dealings with Israel, not the church. In this particular time of history the church had just received the newly revealed Pauline “mystery” of the rapture (1 Cor. 15:51). Paul provides a good biblical definition for the biblical mystery in Romans 16:25c-26: “according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.” The remainder of 1 Thessalonians 5 can be delineated into two sections. In 1 Thessalonians 5:5-9, Paul is providing vivid imagery regarding the pending tribulation period for those in darkness (1 Thess. 5:5). In 1 Thessalonians 5:10- 28, Paul is encouraging “the children of light” (1 Thess. 5:5), the severely persecuted Thessalonian believers, to wait for the return of Christ with encouraging patience.

With regards to 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2 it is noted, this chapter is describing the time of the tribulation period and it should not be interpreted as a pre-rapture type period. The purpose for this text is to relieve the Thessalonian believers of the anxieties they were experiencing as a result of false teachings that they were “in” the day of the Lord (2 Thess. 2:3). Two of the Pauline reasons (found in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12) as to why day of the Lord could not be

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 211-212.

happening are found in the absence of: (1) “the rapture of the church” (2 Th. 2:1, 2 Th. 2:6-7) and the “revelation of Antichrist” (2 Th. 2:3-5, 2 Th. 2:8).<sup>16</sup>

#### 1 Corinthians 15:51-58

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul provides the Church of Corinth with one the most detailed descriptions of the new resurrection body. Within this text, again, the New Testament Pauline rapture “mystery” is described. In 1 Corinthians 15:51, Paul states, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” Pentecost notes, “The Old Testament had already taught the truth of the resurrection of the body” [Job 19:25; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2] as did Jesus Christ [John 5:28, 29].<sup>17</sup> Pentecost continues, “What then was the mystery? It was that some believers will be translated into God’s presence without experiencing death and resurrection.”<sup>18</sup> It is for this mystery, the Bible texts of 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 are foundationally essential for the pretribulation rapture position.

Another significant event found in 1 Corinthians 15: 52 is the sounding of a trumpet. 1 Corinthians 15:52 states, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” This is the same trumpet noted in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, “and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” Erroneously, many scholars try to identify the trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52 with either the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11 or the trumpet found in Matthew 24:31. This is an attempt to place the church into the tribulation period. Walvoord notes:

The great trumpet of Matthew 24:31 deals with the saints of all ages who are

---

<sup>16</sup> Warren Wiersbe. *Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament: Chapter Two: God’s Timetable (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12)*. n.d. e-Sword, Version 10.0.5.

<sup>17</sup> Dwight J. Pentecost, *Prophecy for Today: God’s Purpose and Plan for Our Future* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1989), 27-28.

<sup>18</sup> Dwight J. Pentecost, *Prophecy for Today: God’s Purpose and Plan for Our Future*, 28.

assembled at the time of the second coming of Christ, but it says nothing of either resurrection or translation, though for some resurrection may be involved. In 1 Corinthians 15, the 'last trumpet' relates to believers only and is a trumpet of God that the context says results immediately and instantaneously in the resurrection and translation of the church.<sup>19</sup>

The trumpet instances in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:52 are church specific; whereas the trumpets in the Book of Revelation pertain to God's demonstration of wrath and judgment on unbelievers, having nothing to do with the already raptured church.

Taking these four biblical passages into account, with the added prophetic passage of Daniels Seventy Week Prophecy (Danl. 9:24-27), the pretribulational rapture position is biblically validated. Due to the scope of this paper a thorough examination of other pertinent pretribulation rapture texts, such as Daniels Seventy Week Prophecy and the Book of Revelation, are not included in the summarization.<sup>20</sup>

### **Theological Proofs**

The theological proofs for a pretribulational rapture are convincing. These proofs include: the nature of the church; imminency characterizations; the nature of the tribulation; and the necessary interval between the rapture and Second Coming. There are many other theological proofs but these were chosen due to the weightiness of the content.

#### **The Nature of the Church**

The church is another one of the biblical mysteries the Apostle Paul wrote about (Eph. 3:1-11; 5:28-32). It should be emphasized; this is reason why the New Testament Church (body of Christ) is not mentioned in Old Testament texts. The Old Testament concentrates primarily on

---

<sup>19</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, 249-250.

<sup>20</sup> For an in depth study of Daniel's Seventy Weeks see Robert Anderson's, *The Coming Prince* (1895; reprint. Grand Rapids: Kregel 1975). For an examination of Revelation 4 and the disappearance of the church and emergence of the tribulation period, see Henry Thiessen, *Will the Church Pass Through the Tribulation? Part 3,* " *Bibliotheca Sacra Journal* BSAC 092:367 (July 1935): 296-297.

God's chosen people, the nation of Israel. Feinberg explains, "As long as the Church is on earth, no Jew or Gentile can accept Christ without entering immediately the Body of Christ. If a saved remnant of Israel is in Jerusalem (Matt 24), and is still reckoned as of Israel, and if 144,000 (Rev 7) are saved (the seal of God is theirs), then why are they still of Israel, and not designated of the Church, if the Church be on earth? If the Church were on earth, they would be a part of it."<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, Walvoord points out the church will not be "appointed to wrath" (Rom 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 5:9); enter 'the great day of [his] wrath' (Rev. 6:17); or "be overtaken by the day of the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:1-9).<sup>22</sup> Taking Walvoord's three statements into consideration it would be difficult to believe the church, Jesus' bride, described as "not having spot or wrinkle" (Eph. 5:27), would have to endure the great tribulation period of God's divine wrath. Mayhue adds:

The common NT term for 'church' (ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*) is used nineteen times in Revelation 1–3 . . . . However, 'church' is then used only once more in the twenty-two chapter book and that at the very end (22:16) when John returns to addressing the first-century church. Most interesting is the fact that nowhere during the period of Daniel's seventieth week is the term for 'church' used for believers on earth (cf. Rev. 4–19).<sup>23</sup>

The church, by its very nature "is" and "never was" sovereignly destined to endure the great tribulation period, known as Jacob's time of trouble; no, this is reserved for unbelieving Jews [Israel] and Gentiles.

### Imminency Characterizations

The idea of the church being raptured [snatched] out carries the idea of suddenness, or imminency. The very word rapture is not found anywhere in the New Testament and this is an

---

<sup>21</sup> Charles Feinberg, "God's Message to Man through the Prophets- Part 4," *Grace Journal* GJ 05:2 (Spring 1964): 23.

<sup>22</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, 271.

<sup>23</sup> Richard L. Mayhue. "Why A Pretribulation Rapture," *Masters Seminary Journal* TMSJ 13:2 (Fall 2002): 244.

argument used frequently against the pretribulation rapture position. The English term for “rapture” is in fact a biblical term. Mayhue explains, “The Latin noun *raptura*/verb *rapio* which refers to the Greek word ἁρπάζω (*harpazo*) that is used 14 times in the NT . . . . It is used by the NT in reference to stealing/plundering (Matt 11:12; 12:29; 13:19; John 10:12, 28, 29) and removing (John 6:15; Acts 8:39; 23:10; Jude 23).”<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Wuest, in reference to the word “moment” found in 1 Corinthians 15:52, describes it as the Greek word “*atomos* from *temno* ‘to cut’ and alpha prefixed, namely ‘that which cannot be cut in two or divided.’ We get our word ‘atom’ from this Greek word.”<sup>25</sup> So the constant expectation that the Lord could imminently return at any time is adversarial to the second coming of Christ which is preceded by seven years of tribulation and catastrophic global signs.

#### The Nature of the Tribulation

Having examined the nature of the church and marking the imminent return of Christ, in God’s biblical timetable, the tribulation will follow. Walvoord identifies the tribulation periods distinctiveness by underscoring a lack of the churches mention in: Old Testament tribulation texts “(Deut. 4:29-30; Jer. 30:4-11; Dan. 8:24-27; 12:1-2)” and, in New Testament tribulation texts “(Matt. 13:30, 39-42, 48-50; 24:15-31; 1 Thess. 1:9-10, 5:4-9; 2 Thess. 2:1-11; Rev. 4-18).”<sup>26</sup> Thiessen emphasizes, the tribulation is in response to a “Christ rejecting Israel” (Jeremiah 30:6-7; Ezekiel 20:33-38; Zechariah 13:8-9) and denotes Matthew 27:25, “His blood be on us, and on our children,” in support of this premise.<sup>27</sup> Walvoord delineates the tribulation

---

<sup>24</sup> Richard L. Mayhue, “*Why A Pretribulation Rapture*, 242.

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies; Prophetic Light in the Present Darkness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 58.

<sup>26</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, 271.

<sup>27</sup> Henry C. Thiessen Henry, “*Will the Church Pass Through the Tribulation? Part 3*,” *Bibliotheca Sacra Journal* BSAC 092:367 (July 1935): 293-294.

period as designed “for Israel’s restoration” and not “to prepare the church for glory.”<sup>28</sup> Scofield adds, “The great tribulation is both judgment and wrath” and “the church is promised exemption from both” (Rev. 14:15, 16; 15:7, 8; 16:1-21; 1 Thess. 5:1-9; John 5:24).<sup>29</sup> Scofield continues, “And perhaps still more conclusively, in the portions of The Book Revelation which describes with curious minuteness the events which make up the great tribulation, the church is not once mentioned.”<sup>30</sup> The tribulation period has a specific purpose that is distinct from the church and unique to Israel; therefore, the teaching of a dispensational pretribulation rapture is the only position that allows for such diverging clarifications.

### The Holy Spirit

The most perplexing question, if the pretribulation rapture were hypothetically not true, is how could the Holy Spirit go through the divine wrath of God? Perhaps, a rash response would be that Christ experienced the wrath of God on the cross of Calvary. Yes, this is true; yet, let it be emphasized it was biblically prophesized throughout the Bible and it was for the redemptive atonement of humanity. These are good and valid reasons; yet, the idea of the Holy Spirit experiencing the tribulation period wrath of God in neither biblically supported nor necessary for redemption. Currently, in the church age, the Holy Spirit indwells the believing Christian (Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:22). Therefore, for an indwelt Christian to endure a tribulation period, of cosmic proportions, uniquely designed for rejecting Israel and unbelievers, does not make any rationale sense. Chambers adds, “The goal of the indwelling Holy Spirit is not just to unite us with God, but to do it in such a way that we will be one with the Father in exactly the same way Jesus

---

<sup>28</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, 271.

<sup>29</sup> C.I. Scofield, *What Do the Prophets Say* (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Union, 1918), 135-139.

<sup>30</sup> C.I. Scofield, *What Do the Prophets Say*, 135-139.

was.”<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the lawless one, the Antichrist, cannot have free reign until the restrainer, the Holy Spirit, is removed (2 Thess. 2:6-8). These concrete factors are certainly supportive of a pretribulation rapture where an army of indwelt believers would have to be removed prior to the free reigning world-wide catastrophic evils of Satan, the Anti-Christ, and the False Prophet are permitted to dominate the scene (Rev. 4-20).

#### The Necessary Interval between Events: Rapture and Second Coming of Christ

Posttribulationism teaches the Second Coming will come after the seven years tribulation and before the millennium begins; while amillennialism teaches the church is currently experiencing the millennium, followed by the Second Coming. The difficulty that both of these positions contend with, by overlooking the pretribulation rapture’s position, are the major events of the judgment [*bema*] seat of Christ and the Marriage of the Lamb. When do these events take place? It is the pretribulation position that is best suited to explain with any cohesiveness as to when these two events will unfold.

#### *The Judgment Seat of Christ*

The Pauline passage in 2 Corinthians 5:8–10 is the most explicit with regards to the judgment of the church, “We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord . . . For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.” The English word “judgment” in 2 Corinthians 5:10, is translated from the Greek word *bema*.<sup>32</sup> McGee describes the *bema* (judgment) seat as “the place where the judges of the city

---

<sup>31</sup> Oswald Chambers. *My Utmost for His Highest; His Commission to Us. —John 21:17- March 3 Devotional* (Grand Rapids MI: Discovery House Publishers: 1992).

<sup>32</sup> Archibald T Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament. 2 Corinthians 5:10*. n.d. e-Sword, Version 10.0.5.

would meet the citizens and would judge them for certain things—there was no question of life or death.”<sup>33</sup> This “*bema*” seat is the believers judgment for rewards (1 Cor. 3:11-15) and is distinct from the judgments mentioned in The Book of Revelation. The *bema* judgment of 2 Corinthians 5:10 is one of works (for the church); not of sin, the great white throne judgment, found in Revelation 20:11-15, is for unbelievers.<sup>34</sup>

### *The Marriage of the Lamb*

For the pretribulation position, it is paramount to stress the marriage supper, described in Revelation 19:1-10, precedes the second coming (19:11-16) of Christ. In Revelation 19:7 it states, “his wife hath made herself ready,” making reference to the church. Other biblical passages referring to the church as the bride of Christ are 2 Corinthians 11:2 and Ephesians 5:22-32. In Ephesians 5:27 it explicitly describes the church as “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” In addition, Walvoord describes a typical oriental pattern for marriage as involving: (1) “the legal union” consummated by parents and solidified through a “formal contract in which the dowry was paid”; (2) “marked by a procession of the bridegroom to the home of the bride” accompanied by his friends”; (3) by “the marriage feast held for the benefit of guests.”<sup>35</sup> Walvoord notes it is fulfilled when (1) a person “believes in Christ as his Savior”; (2) “at the rapture of the church” when Jesus (the Bridegroom) returns from “the Father’s house” . . . “to receive His bride” (the church), taking “her back to a place prepared for her” (John 14:1–3); (3) “following the rapture” and “in heaven,” or “on earth

---

<sup>33</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *1 Corinthians through Revelation, Thru the Bible, 5 vols* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 109.

<sup>34</sup> Another New Testament text that speaks of the “judgment seat of Christ” can be found in Romans 14:10.

<sup>35</sup> John F. Walvoord, “*The Future Work of Christ Part II: The Church in Heaven,*” *Bibliotheca Sacra Journal* BSAC 123:490 (April 1966): 102-103.



in connection with the second coming of Christ.”<sup>36</sup> So, even the typical pattern for an oriental marriage supports a pretribulation rapture.

### **Conclusion**

In Ogilvie’s commentary outline, he provides three questions the Thessalonian believers had: (1) “What happens to those who die before He comes?” (1 Th. 4:13-18). (2) “How can we know when He will come?” (1 Th. 5:1-3). (3) “How should we live while we await His coming?” (1 Th. 5:4-11).<sup>37</sup> Today, many believers and unbelievers are asking these very same questions. This student has labored to provide some answers. The pretribulation rapture position not only offers the greatest hope; but also it is the position taught in Old Testament, New Testament, prophetic, apocalyptic, Pauline, epistolary, Christocentric, and any other format or genre found within the pages of God’s Word, the Bible. The golden rule of interpretation is crucial and the pretribulation position advocates have painstakingly strived to maintain such a standard. The historical, biblical, and theological proofs support a pretribulation rapture. The Apostle Paul admonishes the church in Titus 2:13 to look “for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Is the church ready? Jesus stated, And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also” (John 14:3). Paul admonishes the church to “comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:18). What words? “So shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17).  
Amen!

---

<sup>36</sup> John F. Walvoord, “*The Future Work of Christ Part II: The Church in Heaven*, 102-103.

<sup>37</sup> Lloyd J Ogilvie, (ed). *The Preachers Commentary: 1 Thessalonians 5*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982-1992. e-Sword, Version 10.0.5.

## Bibliography

- Chambers, Oswald. *My Utmost for His Highest; His Commission to Us. —John 21:17- March 3 Devotional*. Grand Rapids MI: Discovery House Publishers: 1992.
- Cooper, David L. Messianic Association Congregations. *Hermeneutics: The Science of Interpreting the Scriptures*. <http://www.messianicassociation.org/ezone19-dc.hermeneutics.htm>. Accessed October 4, 2012.
- Crutchfield, Larry V. “*The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation in the Apostolic Fathers*” in Thomas Ice & Timothy Demy, editors, *When The Trumpet Sounds* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995), p. 103.
- Feinberg, Charles. “*God’s Message to Man through the Prophets- Part 4,*” *Grace Journal GJ* 05:2 (Spring 1964): 22-24.
- Gumerlock, Francis. “*A Rapture Citation in the Fourteenth Century,*” *Bibliotheca Sacra BSAC* 159:635 (July 2002): 350-362.
- Ice, Thomas. “*The Rapture, John 14, And Myths,*” *Conservative Theological Journal CTJ* 05:14 (March 2001): 29-54.
- Mayhue, Richard L. “*Why A Pretribulational Rapture,*” *Masters Seminary Journal TMSJ* 13:2 (Fall 2002): 242-253.
- McGee, J. Vernon, “1 Corinthians through Revelation,” *Thru the Bible, 5 vols.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983.
- Ogilvie, Lloyd J. (ed). *The Preachers Commentary: 1 Thessalonians 5*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982-1992. e-Sword, Version 10.0.5.
- Pentecost, Dwight J. *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1964.
- . *Prophecy for Today: God’s Purpose and Plan for Our Future*. Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1989.
- Robertson, Archibald Thomas. *Word Pictures in the New Testament. 2 Corinthians 5:10*. n.d. e-Sword, Version 10.0.5.
- Scotfield, C.I. *What Do the Prophets Say?* Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Union, 1918.
- Smith J. B. “*A Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation,*” (1961):312-313, quoted in Thomas Ice, “*The Rapture, John 14, And Myths.*” *Conservative Theological Journal,*” *CTJ* 05:14 (March 2001): 29-54.

Thiessen Henry C. “*Will the Church Pass Through the Tribulation? Part 3,*” *Bibliotheca Sacra Journal* BSAC 092:367 (July 1935): 294-314.

Walvoord John F. “*The Future Work of Christ Part II: The Church in Heaven,*” *Bibliotheca Sacra Journal* BSAC 123:490 (April 1966): 99-103.

———. *The Rapture Question*. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979.

Wiersbe, Warren. *Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament: Chapter Eight: Don't Walk in Your Sleep (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)*. n.d. e-Sword, Version 10.0.5.

———. *Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament: Chapter Two: God's Timetable (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12)*. n.d. e-Sword, Version 10.0.5.

Wuest, Kenneth S. *Wuest's Word Studies; Prophetic Light in the Present Darkness*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.