

## Biblical Forensics ©

### “Deliverance before Judgment” Part 7

For several years, I wrote and posted over 200 articles on Bible Prophecy at a Christian blog website. Because of the criticism and verbal attacks levied by haters who spoke out against the Pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine, I chose to discontinue writing and posting. Not long ago, out of curiosity, I checked Google for the specific article titles. In so doing, I discover that the articles have been read by millions on the Internet. One of these articles listed over 55-million hits or views. Other articles ranged in the hundreds of thousands to millions of hits. This result is by far a better result than I could have ever hoped for when compared to the numbers reached through pastoral ministry at any local church.

Hatred for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is targeted by more than a couple websites, which reflected the mentality of those obsessed with the idea that making unfounded accusations against the Pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine can somehow topple its Biblical underpinnings. Dr. David Reagan’s program on Christian television has remarked a number of times about the hate mail he receives. I suppose it comes with the territory. This ought to be expected, since Satan hates the Pre-Tribulation Rapture and wants to divert people away from reading anything about the “Blessed Hope”.

The wealth of evidence previously shared conclusively favors and supports the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Despite the naysayers, the God of the Bible has provided us substantial proof that His Word is Truth. God has even made a challenge to readers of the Bible. Proverbs 25:2, ***“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honor of kings is to search out a matter”***. What does this text mean? God has hidden “diamonds and nuggets” within the entirety of Biblical text. That which is the chief glory of God is his mysteriousness, the unfathomable character of his nature and attributes and doings. The more we search into these matters, the more completely we find ourselves unable to equal God’s intelligence; finite faculties are utterly unable to comprehend the infinite; they can embrace merely what God chooses to reveal. “Secret things belong unto the Lord our God” -(Deuteronomy 29:29), and the great prophet, favored with Divine revelations, can only confess, ***“Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself”*** -(Isaiah 45:15; comp. Ecclesiastics 8:17; Romans 11:33).

The contrast between the glory of God and that of the king lies in this— that whereas both God and the king desire man’s welfare, the former promotes this by helping him realize his ignorance and smallness and his entire dependence upon this mysterious Being whose nature and designs mere mortals cannot understand; the latter advances the good of his

subjects by giving them confidence in his zeal and power to discover truth, and using his knowledge for their benefit.

Paul councils in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:15, ***“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*** Verse 16 adds, ***“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness”***. The word “study” here is broader than the meaning of the word as it relates to book learning. It means literally *“to be eager, be zealous, be diligent, make every effort, and do your utmost”*. This letter was very likely Paul’s last letter penned. He knew his days were numbered, and because of that fact, he needed to pass the mantle of leadership to others. It became essential to impart truth about the Word being handed off to the young Timothy. The word ***“rightly dividing”*** (***“orthotomounta”***) means to literally *“straight cutting”*. The likely metaphor behind the phrase lies in the idea suggesting straight ahead, not veering to the right or to the left. Another meaning is *“correctly handling”* and refers to Timothy’s call to the correct exegesis of God’s Word. He must not twist or change the truth. The two verses noted are part of a larger context that reiterates the need to be diligent about protecting the Truth. There are some basic principles of good exegesis which serious students of the Bible will follow:

1. **The Grammatical Principle:** The Bible was written in human language, and language has a certain structure and follows certain rules. Therefore, we must interpret the Bible in a manner consistent with the basic rules of language.

Usually, an examination of a passage begins by defining the words in it. Definitions are basic to understanding the passage as a whole, and it is important that the words be defined according to their original intent and not according to modern usage. To ensure accuracy, one would use a precise English translation with Greek and Hebrew dictionaries.

Next, one examines the syntax, or the grammatical relationships of the words in the passage. He finds parallels and determines which ideas are primary and which are subordinate. Further, he discovers actions, subjects, and their modifiers. He may even diagram a verse or two.

2. **The Literal Principle:** We assume that each word in a passage has a normal, literal meaning, unless there is good reason to view it as a figure of speech. The exegete does not go out of his way to spiritualize or allegorize. Words mean what words mean.

So, if the Bible mentions a “horse,” it means “a horse.” When the Bible speaks of the Promised Land, it means a literal land given to Israel and should not be interpreted as a reference to heaven.

3. **The Historical Principle:** As time passes, culture changes, points of view change, language changes. We must guard against interpreting Scripture according to how our culture views things; we must always place scripture in its historical context.

The diligent Bible student will consider the geography, the customs, the current events, and even the politics of the time when a passage was written. An understanding of ancient Jewish culture can greatly aid an understanding of Scripture. To do research, it is helpful to use Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and books on history.

4. **The Synthesis Principle:** The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself. We must examine a passage in relation to its immediate context (the verses surrounding it), its wider context (the book it's found in), and its complete context (the Bible as a whole). The Bible does not contradict itself. Any theological statement in one verse can and should be harmonized with theological statements in other parts of Scripture. Good Bible interpretation relates any one passage to the total content of Scripture.

5. **The Practical Principle:** Once we've properly examined the passage to understand its meaning, we have the responsibility to apply it to our own lives. To "rightly divide the word of truth" is more than an intellectual exercise; it is a life-changing event.

I want to share the work of the late Dr. John Walvoord. Until his death a few years ago, he was one of the foremost Bible scholars. He resides today in God's heavenly mezzanine. In one of his books, he gave an interesting list of 50 facts with evidence supporting the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. His facts were organized under six categories.

## **Historical Doctrine of Imminancy**

1. The early church believed in the imminancy of the Lord's return. There is a consistency in the early church on imminancy despite the fact that it can be debated which church father said what. This doctrine is essential in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture position and is in opposition to some other positions. A vital (but neglected) doctrine of the Christian faith (taught by Jesus and affirmed by the apostles) is that the Return of Jesus Christ is imminent - that is: He could come AT ANY TIME. The Church is told to look for and live in the light of His imminent Coming to translate us into His Presence. This means He could come soon. Therefore, we are to live in constant expectancy, readiness and hope, watching, waiting and looking for His arrival. This **'blessed hope'** is designed to motivate us to holy living and evangelism -(Titus 2:11-14; 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3:12,13, 5:23; 1<sup>st</sup> John 3:1-3; Colossians 3:1-4; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:7-8, 15:51-58; and Jude 24).

2. The Pre-Tribulation position is the ONLY one which truly teaches imminency.
3. The fact that there is a greater development of the doctrine in recent centuries does not preclude it from the early centuries of the church. In the very early years of the church, you see the development of great fundamentals - doctrine of the Trinity, Deity of Jesus Christ, God-man, the canon of Scripture, etc. Following those early church councils is a time of decline in the corporate church and into great apostasy. The teachings of that time are built on many of the heresies of Augustine. When the Reformation came along, there was a period of reestablishing the foundational doctrines of salvation. Now, in these days, there is both an ability and a need in the church to better understand the doctrines of eschatology, and the Spirit is continuing His ministry of guiding the church in all truth.
4. The exhortation to be comforted by the **“coming of the Lord”** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:18) is valid only in the context of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view.
5. We are exhorted to look for the **“Glorious Appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”**. -(Titus 2:13). If there are any prophetic events (i.e., Tribulation) to come first, then this passage is nonsensical. In other words, the next event on the prophetic calendar is the Rapture.
6. Again, we are to **“purify ourselves”** in view of His Coming -(1<sup>st</sup> John 3:2-3). To be pure means to be morally and ethically free from the corruption of sin. This is an ongoing cleansing process, beginning at rebirth and continuing until the day Jesus returns. The more pure his people become, the clearer will be their view of Jesus, who is pure through and through. God also purifies Christians, but they must take steps to remain morally fit (see 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:22; James 4:8; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:22). If His coming is not imminent, then the passage is meaningless.
7. The Church is told “only” to look for the Coming of Christ. See 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:9, Hebrews 9:28, and Titus 2:13. It is Israel and the Tribulation saints that are told to look for signs. There is not a single verse of Scripture in the New Testament that instructs the born-again believer to be preparing for the Great Tribulation.

### **Nature of the Church**

8. Those who do not understand the nature of the Church as unique in the program of God will continually be confused about the nature of His coming for the Church. Basic to this idea is the point that the Church is not mentioned in the New Testament until the last half of Matthew, in

chapter 16:18. This is then presented for the first time in the Acts of the Apostles in Acts 2.

9. The 'translation' of the church is never mentioned in any context dealing with the Second Coming of Christ Jesus at the end of the Tribulation. In Chapter 14 of John, in the very shadow of the cross, Christ reveals an amazing new revelation which He had not tried to teach them before, that is, that there was another purpose of God to be fulfilled first before bringing in the millennial kingdom. Christ told the disciples that He was going to leave them and go to heaven, that He would prepare a place for them in heaven, and that He would come back to receive them unto Himself. In other words, He revealed to them that **before He fulfilled His purpose to bring in a kingdom on earth** He was going to take them home to glory first. He would come back for them and take them to dwell with Him in the Father's house in heaven before His return to the earth. This truth, of course, was not completely understood by the early Christians, just as it is not completely understood by many Christians today, but it inspired a daily expectancy of His return. They were looking for Christ to come and take them home to glory. This was not death, though of course when a Christian dies we believe that he is "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord." **They were looking for Christ to come and take them home to glory without dying.**
10. The Church is ***"not appointed to wrath"*** -(Romans 5:9; 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1:9-10). The Church cannot enter into the ***"great day of their wrath."***
11. The Church will not be ***"overtaken by the Day of the Lord"*** -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:1-9). The Day of the Lord is another term for the Great Tribulation.
12. The Church will be ***"kept from the hour of testing that shall come upon all the world."*** -(Revelation 3:10).
13. The believer will escape the Great Tribulation. -(Luke 21:36). There is nothing demeaning in the use of the word "escape", it is simply a fact of the Rapture! With what occurs during the Great Tribulation, one should desire to be part of the event.
14. It is the character of God to "deliver" His own from the greatest time of trial. Examples include Lot, Rahab, Israel, Noah, etc.
15. It is clear that there is a time interval between the 'translation' of the Church and the Return or Second Coming of Jesus Christ. -(John 14:3). These are two separate events separated by a period of 'seven' years, which completes the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel's prophecy.
16. Only the Pre-Tribulation Rapture position does not divide the Body of Christ on a works principle as the Partial Rapture position so clearly does,

and others to a lesser extent. It becomes a climactic finale to the grand plan of salvation by grace alone. A Partial Rapture ignores the many passages that state the term “All” or that refer to the Bride (Church) in its entirety. When looking at the whole counsel of God’s Word, the Partial Rapture is inconsistent with the idea of a single event.

There are some believers who hold that only faithful Christians will be taken in the rapture, with unfaithful Christians left on earth to suffer through the tribulation. The problem is that the Bible does not support such a concept. The passages which describe the rapture (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:50-57; 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:13-18) definitely seem to apply universally to ALL Christians, mature and immature, faithful and disobedient. Verses like Romans 8:1 and 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:9 tell us that **God does not pour out His wrath on Christians**. There is no biblical evidence whatsoever for a partial rapture. Every believer will be taken to heaven in the rapture.

Jesus’ parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 has been for some the “proof” of a partial rapture. However, the five virgins whose lamps did not have any oil are not symbolic of believers being left behind; rather, **it is describing unbelievers being left behind**. The key is verse 12 where Jesus says to those left behind, “Truly I say to you, I do not know you.” Those whom Jesus knows are believers in Him, **whether vigilant or not**. The essential element in the parable is the oil in the lamps, **oil being symbolic of the Holy Spirit**. Those who have the Holy Spirit living in their hearts will be taken in the rapture because they are truly Christians. **Those who profess faith in Christ, but who do not possess His Spirit, will be left behind**. The entire Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25) speaks specifically of the Tribulation period and thus, this parable does not support a Partial Rapture. There is nothing in the Greek text to leave this impression, but rather it accentuates the need for urgency and to be vigilant in anticipation of the rapture.

The lesson for us is to be always ready because Christ is coming again for His own, but He will come as a “thief in the night” -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:4) —suddenly, unexpectedly and unannounced. Only those whose lamps (hearts) contain the oil (the Holy Spirit) will be taken The rest, regardless of their professions, will be left behind. Jesus knows His own, and when He calls us, we will respond. To the rest He will say, “I never knew you.

- 17.** The Scriptures are adamant that the Church is undivided. In this age, the Church is divided by the continuing old nature in the believers. When we are glorified at the coming of Jesus Christ, the Church is no longer divided.
- 18.** The godly remnant of the Great Tribulation has the attributes seen in Old Testament Israel and not the Church. The Church is not present in the prophecies of Revelation.

- 19.** Unlike the Post-Tribulation view, the Pre-Tribulation view, does not confuse terms like elect and saints, which apply only to those who are the body of Christ in this age. ELECT and its various cognates appear **17X** times.

The word is a Greek adjective and is spelled "**eklektos**". It means "chosen, select, elect". In the New Testament the word "election" is used four primary ways:

- God's election of Israel as His "chosen people", with privileges and responsibilities.
- The election or choosing of certain individuals for particular services.
- The choice which God made in Christ to provide mankind with salvation.
- **The church as an elect body.**

There is and continues to be confusion of this issue regarding whether Paul's presentation in Romans 9 is concerned with election unto salvation or whether it is merely a question of the fulfillment of God's salvation and judgment in salvation history. Regardless of how this passage is understood, it serves as a fundamental text for understanding the basic principles of God's election. The apostles demonstrated that the issue at hand here is an election that **does not have its origin in the privileges which come by virtue of one's birth or descent**. - (Romans 9:7).

Similarly, this election does not take place on the basis of works, but it occurs before the individual has done either good or evil -(Romans 9:11). It rests not in the will of the person but is based in the grace and will of God which is revealed to whom God desires -(Romans 9:15) and for which God cannot be called to account by man. -(Romans 9:19, 20).

Presently the 'Saints' are those saved during the church age. Historically, the saints were the "righteous" followers of God. That never changes, despite the terminology given. The terminology does not change during the Tribulation, and the only difference is that they did not come to Christ until after the Rapture.

Dispensationalism does not change the terminology, words, phrases, etc. The chief difference in Dispensationalism is to order the time line or chronology in the Bible. The 'seven' ages or dispensations virtually correspond with the major covenants of the Bible. Amillennialism views the Bible through a two-covenant concept, i.e., Old Covenant and New Covenant. This is a gross over-simplification and inconsistent with the Bible's ascribed time line, which identifies basically "seven" specific covenants, in which God deals with man.

In the following segment of this series, I will cover the 50 points that supports a Pre-Tribulation Rapture taught by the late theologian Dr. John Walvoord, Professor and President of Dallas Theological Seminary. Dr. Walvoord went to be with the Lord in December of 2002. He was a major voice who spoke on behalf and in support of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture position.

Pastor Bob