

## Biblical Forensics©

### “The Problems with the Post-Tribulation Rapture”

#### Part 2

For those of us who hold to the Pre-Tribulation Rapture have specific reasons why we are convinced of this teaching. I have been a Pre-Tribulation Rapture believer for a half-century. In fact, I was a Pre-Tribulation Rapture believer before I knew it! Let me be clear; I attended and graduated from four academic institutions of higher learning, none of which taught either Dispensationalism, or the Pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine. These institutions were all of the school of Covenant/Reformed Theology, where Amillennialism and Post-Tribulationalism are foundational doctrine.

I share that knowledge as confirmation that I was not trained or educated by Pre-Tribulation Rapture faculty at Dallas Theological Seminary, or any other Bible college or seminary for that matter. To be blunt about it, I wish I had gone to Dallas Theological Seminary. I would have saved myself significant amount of time and money. Yes, I was a Pre-Tribber long before the term became fashionable in theological circles. This view is the most logical and sensible position to take after working through and reconciling the hundreds of conflicting passages which exist in the Bible and which can only be resolved through a Dispensational understanding of the entire Word of God.

Hal Lindsey did not come out with his book, *‘The Late Great Planet Earth’* until 1970. In the late 1960’s, I met weekly with a group of eight or ten Pre-Ministry majors who continuously engaged in mind-games trying to make sense out of conflicting passages that were contradictory to one another. Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, a United Presbyterian institution, was not much help in our frustrating academics. Many seminary students were enrolled in a dual-degree program that students could earn a Masters of Divinity in conjunction with a Masters in Social Work offered at the University of Pittsburgh where I had formerly been a Civil Engineering major before I transferred to Waynesburg College as a Pre-Ministry student. Many of my classmates at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary left pastoral ministry and went into other careers. As I recall, the drop-out rate among Pre-Ministry majors was quite high back then. As a bi-vocational pastor, I chose to serve smaller churches that could not afford the UMC required minimum salary for a full-time ordained pastor. My wife had been diagnosed with a terminal brain disorder known as “Huntingdon’s Disease”, and with small children, it was always important to have health insurance. I always had a love for the smaller church and for twenty-five years I served smaller churches.

As noted, I was a Pre-Tribber long before the term was known or considered fashionable. Although serving smaller churches, I kept up with my academic requirements anticipating a time when I could go to full-time ministry. I also taught at a Bible college for ten years until the death of my wife. The Pre-Tribulation doctrine made sense to me and was discovered through intense study of the Bible where I came to see the literal, historical, grammatical understanding of the

New Testament. I've held to the opinion that the view that what I believed in my heart had to also make sense in my head. It was like driving on a long journey in rain and fog, and then suddenly one day, I came out into the clearing where the sun began to shine. I was assigned to teach a two-semester course on the Apostle Paul, where I taught day and evening classes. It is a fact that one cannot study the Apostle Paul's life and ministry and hold to any other view than Dispensationalism and the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. It was quite obvious that the Postmillennial view had far too many questions and issues for it to really be considered a viable doctrinal consideration. It didn't hold up under close scrutiny. This view has far too many problems to be taken serious as part of God's Master Plan.

I came through the catharsis once I was able to differentiate the striking differences between Covenant/Reformed theology and Dispensational theology as I was able to find closure in this dilemma that has so many folks confused today. Of all the different eschatological positions, Dispensationalism has the fewest problematic questions. Dr. H. Wayne House has laid out the different views on the Rapture and Tribulation where he lays out the pros and cons in an excellent book titled '*Charts on Bible Prophecy*', co-authored with Dr. Randall Price. The book is more than a cursory overview; it confronts the major issues of all the competing views.

Dr. Ron Rhodes, a Dallas Seminary guy, is one of my favorite speakers. Dr. Ron is not afraid to venture into the deep end of the pool with the types of questions that Dr. H. Wayne House addresses in his books. I came across Dr. Ron's remarks in a post that I am sharing from Dr. Rhodes site. As Scripture states, God is not the God of Confusion and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:33 affirms this point: ***"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints"***. So many today seem to hold to the Post-Tribulationist view without the proper preparation needed to grasp a true or clear understanding: ***"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*** - (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:13). I would hope and pray that these folks would be able to cast off the shackles that came with their RCC background and/or the major cults today that have so rattled the thinking of their followers and filled their brains with fear and legalism. It is with great pleasure and honor that I share Dr. Ron Rhodes summary with readers:

## **Summary of Problems with Post-Tribulationism by Ron Rhodes**

### **The Problem of Imminency**

The problem with the Post-tribulationist view is that all the Rapture passages seem to indicate an imminent Rapture, while the Second Coming is preceded by specific events. The difficulty is in reconciling these two distinct events into one single event. Post-tribulationists try to resolve this problem by redefining imminence claiming that it merely indicates that Christ will return soon, so they argue against the idea that the Rapture could occur at any moment.

It should be noted that in several instances, Paul exhorted believers on the basis of the imminency of the Lord's return without even the slightest warning of an impending great tribulation (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-58). Every passage that clearly refers to the Rapture has this unusual feature of exhortation which is based on the imminency of the rapture and the absence of any warning of an intervening great tribulation.

### **The Problem of the Comforting Hope**

The problem here is in harmonizing the comforting hope of 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4 with a literal great tribulation. The hope of the Rapture was extended to the Thessalonian Christians as a comfort. Paul did not warn them of a coming great tribulation.

Obviously, the Thessalonians would not have experienced much 'comfort' or 'hope' if they had to go through the great tribulation before being translated. Post-tribulationists generally try to get around this by minimizing the sufferings of the saints, and somehow insulating themselves from the judgments of the great tribulation.

### **The Problem of the Restrainer**

Post-tribulationists have not adequately dealt with the restrainer in 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2. They usually argue from silence by stating that Paul surely would have asserted Pre-tribulationism if it were an established truth. Their logic seems to be: 'Since Paul didn't come right out and say that there would be a Pre-tribulation Rapture, Post-tribulationism (by the process of elimination) must be correct.' However, if the restrainer is the Holy Spirit, as Pre-tribulationists believe, then Paul in fact did argue for a Pre-tribulation Rapture.

### **The Problem of the Wheat and the Tares**

Post-tribulationists support their view by citing Matthew 13:30, where the tares are taken up first before the wheat. However, this contradicts the post-tribbers' sequence of events. In their view, the wicked are not dealt with finally before the rapture. Subsequently, Matthew 13:30 does not support Post-tribulationism.

### **The Problem of Intervening Events on Earth**

The tribulation is a period of preparation for the Millennium. Since all believers are translated at the Rapture, this period of time is necessary to make possible a new generation of believers who will populate the Millennium in their mortal bodies.

### **The Problem of the Judgment of the Nations**

The unbelievers (goats) are cast into everlasting fire by means of physical death whereas believers (sheep) enter the kingdom prepared for them - the Millennial Kingdom. The judgment

of the nations is an individual judgment. It results in the purging of unbelievers out from among believers and leaves believers untouched. (Note that no one is translated or resurrected).

If there had been a Post-tribulational Rapture, then believers would already be separated from unbelievers. This judgment would then be unnecessary.

### **The Problem of the "First Resurrection"**

Post-tribulationists call attention to the expression "first resurrection" in Revelation 20:4-6 in support of their argument. They ask how a Post-tribulational resurrection could be 'first' if a Rapture had actually taken place before the tribulation? The answer is that the resurrection mentioned in Rev. 20:4-6 actually occurs after the second coming of Christ and therefore contradicts the idea that the Rapture (in the Post-tribulational view) is a part of the second coming of Christ from heaven to earth. Even a Post-tribulationist would have to recognize that in his order of events, the resurrection of Rev. 20:4-6 is not 'first.'

### **The Problem of Terminology**

Similar terminology is used for the Rapture and the Second Coming. Post-tribbers thus conclude that these two events must be one. They use nontechnical terms like coming, appearing, and revelation in a technical way.

The answer to this is simply that the context must always be taken into consideration in determining how these words are to be interpreted. It is faulty logic to assume that a word must always be used in exactly the same way whenever it is used.

### **The Problem of the Book of Revelation**

Post-tribulationists have no uniform interpretation of this book. Most Post-tribulationists spiritualize the great judgments in Revelation 6-19. The widely conflicting and contradictory interpretations that Post-tribbers hold to in regard to this book is ample testimony to their inadequate hermeneutics.

### **The Problem of Transition from the Tribulation to the Millennium**

This problem has been touched on earlier. The basic problem is: How can saints go into the Millennium in their natural bodies if, in fact, they were raptured while Christ was coming from heaven to earth? Their bodies would have already been glorified. Additional Problems which are the Result of an Incorrect and Inconsistent Hermeneutic: Disagreement on the Millennium.

Post-tribbers do not agree as to whether Pre-millennialism, Post-millennialism, or Amillennialism is the correct view. Thus Post-tribulationism does not lend itself to a single eschatological system of interpretation.

### **Disagreement on the Nature of the Judgments at the Second Coming of Christ**

The main disagreement among Post-tribulationists is in regard to the time and the order of these judgments. Gundry holds that the judgment of the nations and the judgment seat of Christ take place at the end of the Millennium. However, Post-tribbers usually lump the various judgments together at the Second Coming. If they are Pre-millennialists, they place the judgments before the Millennium.

### **Disagreement as to a Specific Order of Events at the Time of the Second Coming.**

Post-tribulationists rarely offer a specific sequence of events in connection with the Second Coming of Christ. What little order they do give, they disagree with one another (e.g., compare classic, semi-classic, futurist, and dispensational Post-tribulational interpretations).

### **The Problem of Classic Post-tribulationism**

The problem here is the impossibility of explaining all the predicted events leading up to the Second Coming of Christ as either past or contemporaneous.

### **The Problems of Semi-classic Post-tribulationism**

Those who hold to this view are not agreed as to how far to interpret prophecy literally. Those who hold to this view have failed in attempting to affirm any reasonable sequence of events relating to the Second Coming.

### **The Problems of Dispensational Post-tribulationism**

Gundry regards the tribulation as a time of satanic wrath but not a time of divine wrath. However, Revelation 6:16 says it is a time of the "wrath of the lamb."

Gundry places the judgments at the end of the Millennium. The motivation for this seems to be that it is impossible to have a judgment of the sheep and the goats following the Second Coming of Christ if, as a matter of fact, the Rapture has taken place shortly before at the Second Advent itself.

### **The Problem of the Distinction between the Church and Israel**

Most post-tribbers include in the church the saints of all ages. They must spiritualize scripture to accomplish this. They argue that since "saints" are in the great tribulation, the church must apparently go through it.

Gundry is the exception to this in that he attempts to distinguish between the church and Israel. (Cf. separate handout on Gundry).

### **The Problem of Daniel**

Post-tribulationism destroys the unity of Daniel's seventieth week, and also confuses Israel's program with that of the church.

### **The Problem of Titus 2:13**

Post-tribulationists have not adequately dealt with this passage where believers are exhorted to look for "the glorious appearing" of Christ to His own. If the Rapture follows the Tribulation, believers would then look for signs instead of His coming.

### **The Problem of Purification**

Believers are exhorted to purify themselves (1<sup>st</sup> John. 3:2, 3) in light of the fact that the Lord could appear at "any moment." It would not make sense for a believer to purify himself for the tribulation (which would be the case if Post-tribulationism were correct).

### **The Problem of John 14:1-3**

At the Rapture, the church goes to the Father's house, and not back to earth again as post-tribulationists hold.

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