

Biblical Forensics©

“Unbelief! The Point of Reckoning” Part 1

Previously, I noted that Lucifer (Satan) hates the Pre-Tribulation doctrine, but at this point, I had not prepared an exegetical study of Scripture to understand why Satan hates this doctrine. "Biblical exegesis" is used for greater specificity to distinguish it from any other broader critical text explanation.⁽¹⁾ Most Christians who believe in the Pre-Tribulation doctrine are themselves at a loss to explain why this is so. Some time ago, I conducted a quick survey of some twenty Christians to see if anyone could answer this question, and not a single Christian could offer a rebuttal in defense of the reason why Satan hates this doctrine. That caused concern to my way of thinking in a grand way.

It is commonly understood that most mainline Protestant churches do not believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. They are amillennial, meaning they do not believe in a millennium, or the 1,000 year reign of Christ Jesus and those who rule and reign with Him. In fact, they reject the literalness of Revelation 20, where we are told **6X** times that we will live and reign with Christ Jesus for 1,000 years. The Internet is loaded with websites that attack the Pre-Tribulation doctrine. It turns out that there are far more of these types of websites and blogs than those who teach the Pre-Tribulation doctrine. This phenomenon has been associated with the church since the days of Hal Lindsey's book, *'The Late Great Planet Earth'*.

I am going to hypothesize here by stating that those who reject the Pre-Millennial Rapture will get exactly what they believe, and they will end up having to go through the Seven-year Tribulation. In years past, I suspected that might be the case for them but for one reason or another I have neglected to teach expressly about it and why that would be the outcome for them.

There are so many topics that one can preach and teach on. I once had a colleague in the United Methodist Church who never stayed at one church longer than four years. His reason were that he did not have enough sermons prepared for his weekly services. Four years is the equivalent of roughly 200 sermons if you only preach at Sunday morning services. Here in Kentucky, pastors need twice that many since most churches have Sunday evening services as well. I easily had 5,000 sermon topics to draw upon but still neglected this key point. My former colleague, now retired, and living in Florida, as it turned out, never served a single church for longer than four years.

Back in May of 2016, I purchased a book from Amazon, entitled *'The Rapture Verdict'* by Michael Snyder. Since then I have written a critical review of the book, giving it just one star. The book is a disaster for many reasons, but mostly for its misrepresentation of the Biblical message, which makes a clear distinction between Israel and the Church. In August, 2016, Gary Stearman of

“Prophecy Watchers”, a prophecy site on both the Internet and television gave focus to my review on his blog site, sharing that my review was right on. His Facebook page had in a matter of a few days generated nearly 400 ‘likes’.

Others, possibly friends of the author, took me to task, but there was an absence of substance other than to attack me personally. When people can’t debate the merits of a book with substance they resort to name calling and personal attacks. In other words: When you can’t attack the message, then attack the messenger! It has been relatively easy to disarm and refute this book, for it distorts the origin of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture while misrepresenting the history of the Church Fathers by claiming the Pre-Tribulation doctrine was invented in the early 1800’s. The author Michael Snyder, an armchair Bible student, is not a Bible scholar, nor is he trained in the Biblical Languages/Church History or equipped to discuss the basic theological nuances of Scripture, and the book offers many other untruths and misinterpretations related to the truth of this teaching, and referred to by the Apostle Paul as a “Mystery” in the New Testament.

For your knowledge, the teaching originated with the Apostle Paul. He was given the teaching when he was being mentored by the Lord Himself in the Arabian wilderness. In my review on Amazon, I pointed out that the beloved Roman Catholic Saint Augustine opposed the doctrine during the period around 350-370 A.D.⁽²⁾ Catholicism snuffed out dissent of any kind when it came to theological doctrine, and for the next 1,200 years, the clergy followed the Roman doctrine or faced persecution or even worse if they dissented. It wasn’t until the Reformation in 1517, that the teaching of the Pre-Tribulation doctrine resurfaced and steadily gained a foothold in the Church. However, most of the daughter churches that came out of Roman Catholicism continued to follow and perpetuate the Amillennial doctrine which teaches there would be no Rapture, and no Millennium, but this doctrine is contrary to Scripture.

The author of this book that I have taken to task is a regular guest on the Jim Bakker television program which airs from his compound in the Ozark Mountains near Branson, Missouri. Since his book favors a Post-Tribulation view, his position benefits support for survival foods and prepper supplies that both he and the Jim Bakker Show promotes. In addition, the author hosts a couple websites on the Economic Collapse of America. Not once in four years has Mr. Snyder ever noted that the real problem in the global economy stems from ‘fractional reserve’ banking⁽³⁾ and the Rothschild central banks of the world, including our own Federal Reserve System, which is owned through stock ownership and controlled by the Vatican and coupled with the Rothschild’s global banking interests. The House of Rothschild has been the Vatican’s “Fiduciary Agent” since 1823-24, at which time the Jesuit-controlled Vatican commissioned the House of Rothschild to manage the Vatican’s billions, today it would be in the trillions!⁽⁴⁾

Getting back to our topic at hand, I will repeat my premise that those who reject the Pre-Tribulation Rapture doctrine **will ultimately receive their wish**. By that I am suggesting that if a believer does not believe in the Pre-Tribulation

Rapture, they will not be 'caught up' with the dead in Christ and those remaining alive when the Trumpet of God is blown from the heavens to come up hither. **It all boils down to a matter of belief!** The converse of that statement is **a matter of unbelief!** Believers like Michael Snyder and Jim Bakker of Morning Side will need all their extended food storage supplies and their survival gear that they are encouraging others to purchase and store because they believe they will be going through the Tribulation.

The reason that Lucifer or Satan wants to discourage those from believing in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture has to do with their belief or should I say their unbelief. In other words, there is a conditional consequence linked to belief on this issue.

Follow along with me as we proceed with the reasoning that supports my Bible based argument. The Greek word for "unbelief" is "**Apistia**" and it means unfaithfulness, distrust, a state of unbelief. Its opposite is "belief" or in Greek "**Pisteuo**". "**Apistia**" appears **12X** times in the New Testament in four different grammatical forms. The application through both classical and ecclesiastical usage of the noun "**Apistia**" suggests that it carries two basic definitions: 1. "distrust"; 2. "unfaithfulness" or "disbelief" in both a religious and non-religious sense. Naturally, its cognates are the verb "**Apisteo**", meaning "disbelieve", and the adjective "**Apistos**", meaning "unbelieving, unfaithful". All forms are from the negating *alpha* plus the '*pist*'-stem.

Obviously, from the Septuagint record of "**apistia**" and its cognates, these terms assumed no formal role as religious technical terms in the canonical writings ("**apistos**", found only in Proverbs 28:25; 28:26; Isaiah 17:10), although it is expressly applied to man's relationship to God in the Proverbs. The tendency to associate "**apistia**" and its relatives with "faith in God" seems to have developed later during the post-exilic period of Judaism (the period of Jewish history between the end of the exile in Babylon in 538 B.C. and 1 A.D.) - see Wisdom of Solomon 1:2; 10:7; 12:17. We begin to see how the New Testament uses the word "**Apistia**", which occurs **12X** times in the New Testament. Each of the Gospel writers was familiar with the concept. In the Gospels "**apistia**" exclusively refers to a response to Jesus and His ministry. This is most important!

- **Mark 6:6** "**And He marveled because of their unbelief. And He went around the villages, in a circuit, teaching.**" That Jesus couldn't do any mighty miracles in Nazareth does not mean a restriction on his power. Rather, Jesus could have done greater miracles in Nazareth, but **he chose not to** because of the people's unbelief—unbelief which amazed him.^(a)
- **Mark 9:24** "**And immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.**" Contrary to the patterns of confusion and unbelief the disciples had displayed, this father modeled the faith required of true discipleship. The father immediately understood Jesus' meaning. He had not meant to doubt the Master. The father instantly replied, "I do believe," declaring his faith in Jesus power.

Then he added honestly and humbly, "Help me not to doubt!" At the feet of the Master, the man cried out with tears, **confessing both his faith and its weakness.**^(a)

- **Matthew 13:58** *"And He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief."* Jesus could have done greater miracles in Nazareth, but He chose not to do so because of the people's unbelief. **Unbelief blinds people to the truth and robs them of hope.** These people missed the Messiah. When Jesus performed mighty works, his goal was to further the Kingdom of God, not to try to convince a group of stubborn people who had already thoroughly rejected him. To do miracles in Nazareth would be of no value because the people did not accept his message or believe that he was from God. Therefore, Jesus looked elsewhere, seeking those who would respond to his miracles and message.^(a)
- **Luke 9:41** *"And answering, Jesus said, O unbelieving generation, one having been perverted, how long shall I be with you and endure you? Bring your son here."* Jesus saw the failure of the disciples to cast out this demon as merely one more indication of the stubbornness and faithlessness surrounding him. The disciples were not singled out for rebuke, but they reflected an attitude prevalent in their society. Jesus would not stay with them forever; one day he would leave and the Spirit would come. The Spirit could help soften stubborn hearts. In the meantime, Jesus would battle this unbelief, but he would not leave this young boy in his horrible condition, so Jesus told the father to bring his son.^(a)
- **Luke 12:46** *"the lord of that servant will come in a day when he does not expect, and at an hour when he does not know. And he will cut him apart, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."* However, with the master gone, a slave might think to himself that he can do as he likes, taking advantage of his position of authority. The master would return unannounced, catch him in the act, and banish him for being irresponsible to his task in the master's absence. The words with the unfaithful probably pictures the end-time judgment, wherein the faithful enter God's Kingdom and the unfaithful are sent away (Matthew 25:31-46).^(a)
- **John 20:27** *"Then He said to Thomas, Reach your finger here and behold My hands; and reach your hand here and thrust it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."* Jesus spoke directly to Thomas, supernaturally knowing of Thomas's doubt and what he needed in order to be convinced. Jesus told him to touch and see his hands and side. When he saw Jesus, "doubting" Thomas became believing Thomas. His response rings through the ages as the response of many doubters **who finally see the truth,** "My Lord and my God!" This is a clear affirmation of Jesus' deity.^(a)

Other examples and experiences related to unbelief are described in Paul's writings:

- Paul saw **“apistia”** as counter to the actions of the faithful: **“He did not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God,”**-(Romans 4:20), i.e., those who “trust” God. Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise because he was able to take God at his word. Abraham persisted in believing; thus, his faith grew stronger. He was able to trust in God to do what seemed humanly impossible, and even to glorify God before the results were apparent.

In spite of all this, Abraham was clearly human and imperfect. He had his weaknesses (fears) and bad habits (lying under pressure). The Bible describes Abraham with all his flaws, but **as a man of faith**. Thus, Abraham’s faith could not have been anything but simple trust in God. Yet God honored that. Abraham is a model not just for the Jews, but for all people as a person of faith who realized he was **totally dependent on his Creator for all things, even life itself.**^(a)

- **“Apistia”** contributed to the “breaking off” of Israel: **“Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be high-minded, but fear.”**-(Romans 11:20). The apostle admits that the statement is partially true. Jewish branches were broken off, and the Gentiles were grafted in. But it was because of the unbelief of Israel and not because the Gentiles had any special claim on God. The Gentiles were grafted in because, as a people, they stood by faith. The only way in which the Gentiles stood by faith was that, comparatively speaking, they demonstrated more faith than the Jews did. Thus, Jesus said to a Gentile centurion, **“I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel”** - (Luke 7:9). And Paul later said to the Jews at Rome, **“Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!”** -(Acts 28:28). Notice, **“they will hear it.”** As a people they are more receptive to the gospel today than Israel. To stand here is the opposite of to fall. Israel had fallen from its place of privilege. The Gentiles had been grafted into that place. But let him who stands beware lest he fall. Gentiles should not be puffed up with pride but should rather fear.^(b)
- Paul envisioned his former life as a life of **“apistia”**: It was openly antagonistic to God. Despite this, God had mercy because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief **“the one who before was a blasphemer and a persecutor and insolent. But I obtained mercy, because being ignorant, I did it in unbelief.”**-(1st Timothy 1:13). As a blasphemer, he spoke evil concerning the Christians and their Leader, Jesus. As a persecutor, he sought to put Christians to death because he felt that this new sect posed a threat to Judaism. In carrying out his evil plan, he took delight in committing insolent, violent, and outrageous acts against the believers. Although it is not as obvious from the English words, there is an ascending scale of wickedness in the three words blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent. The first sin is **a matter of words only**. The second describes

suffering inflicted on others for their religious beliefs. The third includes the idea of **cruelty and abuse**.

But Paul obtained mercy. He did not receive the punishment he deserved because he did these things ignorantly in unbelief. In persecuting Christians, he thought he was doing God's service. Since his parents' religion taught the worship of the true God, he could only conclude that the Christian faith was opposed to the Jehovah of the Old Testament. With all the zeal and energy he possessed, he sought to defend the honor of God by killing the Christians. Paul's example shows that zeal is not enough. In fact, if a man is wrong, his zeal only makes the wrong more intense. The more zeal he has, the more damage he does!^(b)

- **“Apistia”** must be exchanged for **“pistis”**: **“And those also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in. For God is able to graft them in again.”** –(Romans 11:23). Israel's severance need not be final. If they abandon their national unbelief, there is no reason why God cannot put them back into their original place of privilege. It would not be impossible for God to do this.^(b)

Belief is a central component to a Christian's faith, as presented and preached in the New Testament. A Christian is called a “believer” - one who believes in Jesus Christ. Conversely, not to be a Christian is an “unbeliever” or one who does not possess this faith in the redemptive gift that Jesus has given to all mankind.

Absence of faith does not put man in a neutral position regarding Christianity. On the contrary, a lack of faith is considered to be something actively evil and the central sin of mankind. Therefore, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit shall reprove the world **“of sin, because they believe not on me”** - (John 16:8-9). After His Resurrection, Jesus commanded His disciples to go into the entire world and preach the gospel. He said clearly that just as it is the means of salvation to believe the gospel, **not to believe the gospel is the reason for damnation** –(Mark 16:16).

On various occasions, Jesus used the word ‘unbelief’ when He was speaking in conversation with the disciples. This was either in connection with their lack of faith in the power of God to help in different situations of life or their doubt concerning the resurrection of Jesus.

Pastor Bob

Notes:

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exegesis>
2. <https://bible.org/seriespage/millennial-series-part-4-amillennialism-augustine-modern-times>
3. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fractional-reserve_banking
4. http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/sociopolitica/sociopol_globalelite177.htm

Commentaries:

- a. Life Application New Testament Commentary
- b. Believer's Bible Commentary