

# Biblical Forensics ©

## “What Did Jesus Christ Say About the Pre-Tribulation Rapture?” Part 1

The title for this series might sound like a ‘no-brainer’, but again, perhaps not! What did Jesus say about a Rapture? If He said anything at all to address this controversial subject, was it first-hand or second-hand knowledge?

When we listen to the so-called experts, they posit that the Lord Jesus Christ said absolutely nothing at all and to listen to their rhetoric, the case is settled and closed. The opinion of dispensational theologians and prophecy scholars is that the Apostle Paul was the first to reveal the promise of the Rapture, and that Jesus never mentions it. But is that true?

If the reader will bear with me for a moment, there are statements Jesus Christ Himself made that have been overlooked because of our assumptions and understanding of Scripture. Far too many suppositions have been made based upon the mere turn or twist of a single word or phrase has become the basis for errant doctrine such as **“Peter, upon this rock”**. -(Matthew 16:18).

Whether learned by listening or by reading, much of what is understood is grasped indirectly, by inference, particularly if it is from a conclusion based on assumptions. Listening involves complex combinations of hearing words, analyzing sentence structure, and attempting to find meaning within the context of the given situation.

The situation with the written word is no different. A text does not contain a meaning. Readers construct meaning by what they understand the words to mean and how they process sentences to draw their meaning. The reader draw on their knowledge of the language and of conventions of social communication. Readers also draw on other factors, such as knowledge of the author, the occasion, or the audience. They infer or conclude unstated meanings based on social conventions, shared knowledge, shared experience, or shared values and they make sense of remarks by recognizing implications and drawing conclusions. But how much of this process is based on solid evidence or facts? What part is opinion and what part is information?

Readers read ideas more than words, and thus infer or perceive meaning based on reason or assumption, rather than to find accurate meaning. This is something that is even more problematic when reading the Bible. Consider the next statement. The following story is often presented as a brain twister, but in fact, it is a reading exercise.

A man and his son are driving in a car. The car crashes into a tree, killing the father and seriously injuring his son. At the hospital, the boy needs to have surgery. Upon looking at the boy, the doctor says (telling the truth), "I cannot operate on him. He is my son."

How can this be? Decide on your answer before reading further.

Whether this passage is a brain twister or a reading passage, readers must assume that any lack of understanding is not due to the story, but due to their own failure of grasping and this is particularly related to the circumstances and details about the story. Consequently, an inference based on the information revealed within the story could lead to an incorrect assumption. We must work harder to think about how the story might make sense given the details presented in the story.

We quickly see that we have to explain how a doctor can have a son ("I cannot operate on him. He is my son") when at the same time the father is dead ("The car crashes into a tree, killing the father"). The answer: The doctor is the boy's mother. Many readers are blinded to this meaning by the assumption that the doctor must be a male.

What are the implications for reading? All reading is an active, reflective, problem-solving process. We do not simply read words; we read ideas and thoughts that spring from the relationships of various assertions. The concept of inference equations is particularly powerful in this regard.

Consider the following statement.

- The stock market fell. Burger King laid off 1,000 workers.

We have two separate assertions: That the stock market fell and that Burger King laid off 1,000 workers. But watch what happens when the ideas are related in specific ways.

- The stock market fell, after Burger King laid off 1,000 workers.
- The stock market fell, because Burger King laid off 1,000 workers.
- The stock market fell, therefore Burger King laid off 1,000 workers.
- The stock market fell, but Burger King laid off 1,000 workers.

Readers can use the notion of inference equations to test whether their ingredients for given inferences are indeed present. With each set of assertions, we draw inferences based on the relationship of the ideas.

- Burger King's layoffs might have been the cause of the stock market's drop.

- Burger King's layoffs caused the drop in the stock market.
- Burger King laid off workers because of a drop in the stock market.
- The stock market drop did not affect Burger King's laying off workers.

The overall meaning is conveyed not only in the individual assertions, the content, but also by how the elements of the content are related to one another within the sentence structure. We identify the nature and relationship of parts, and infer underlying or unspoken meanings.

To show lying, for example, a text must show that someone made a statement they knew to be incorrect and that they also made that assertion with the specific purpose to deceive. If they did not know it was wrong at the time, it is an error and not a lie. If they did not make the statement for the specific purpose of deceiving, we can conclude that it was a mis-statement and not a lie.

Consider these two examples in the Bible - one is a deliberate lie with the intent to deceive and the other is a mis-statement and not a lie:

Genesis 3:1b-5 - ***“Is it so that God has said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die. And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die, for God knows that in the day you eat of it, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil.”***

- Satan took God’s positive command -(Genesis 2:16-17) and re-phrased it in a negative way: *“God won’t let you eat of every tree.”* - Laying the groundwork - an assertion with a specific purpose to deceive.
- Eve’s knowledge of what she should not do is partially correct, but what she doesn’t seem to know (the name of the tree) makes her more vulnerable to deception. Eve only calls it the tree “in the midst of the garden”, instead of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” -(Genesis 2:17).
- Eve misquoted God’s command to Adam. Her words, ***“you shall not eat it”*** and ***“lest you die”*** are close enough, but she added to the command and put words in God’s mouth when she said, ***“nor shall you touch it.”*** Of course, it was a good idea to completely avoid the temptation; no good could come from massaging the fruit you’re not

supposed to eat. But it is a dangerous thing to teach the doctrines of man as if they are the commandments of God -(Matthew 15:9). - We can conclude that this was more like a mis-statement and not an intentional lie meant to deceive.

- Satan effectively laid the foundation. He drew Eve into a discussion with him and planted the seed of doubt about God's Word, and he exposed Eve's incomplete understanding of God's Word. Now he moves in for the kill, with an outright contradiction of what God said.
- In Satan's direct challenge, he tries to get Eve to doubt the goodness of God. If God lies to her, how can He be good?
  - Satan can only persuasively work when he has established a foothold. No one falls like Adam and Eve will fall, "suddenly." A foundation has been laid.
  - Satan first wanted Eve to forget all about what God said about the consequences of sin. When we know, and remember the consequences of sin, we are more likely to give up the passing pleasures of sin -(Hebrews 11:25).
  - Satan wants us to see sin as something good and that a bad God doesn't want us to have fun. His main lie to us is "sin is not bad and God is not good."
  - The final enticement is the most powerful, because it was how Satan himself fell, by wanting to be equal with God. Eve tried to become a god herself by her rebellion against God.

The notion of inference equations is equally useful to writing. Writers must assure that the ingredients of the equation are present and clear, and that the desired relationships are signaled in a clear and effective way. For openers, you must say something. Whether you start with an observation, a statement of belief, or simply a thought, you must say something and we call that content.

Having decided on something to say, you then must decide how to phrase your remark. What words will you use? Different terminology, after all, can change the meaning of a remark. Will you claim someone cheated, bent the rules, or committed a crime? We'll call that a choice of language.

Finally, you cannot simply rattle off disconnected remarks. They would have little meaning. The remarks must be related to one another, from sentence to the next sentence and within the discussion. We call that structure.

As writers, we must:

1. Be aware that our readers will interpret our thoughts.

2. Strive to make our meaning as clear as possible.
3. Provide sufficient examples to make our ideas clear, as well as to short-circuit undesired interpretations.
4. Recognize and identify what evidence is necessary and sufficient for our purpose, and assure that it is included.
5. Choose our terms carefully for accuracy and clarity of meaning, and spell out our exact thoughts in as much detail as possible.
6. Recognize our readers' biases and what they might bring to the text so that we can explain and support our evidence as much as our conclusions.

Charles Sanders Peirce was a 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, logician, and mathematician. He was recognized as the father of pragmatism and his work was required reading in university level courses in philosophy and logic. He taught that inferences are steps in reasoning, and they move from premises to conclusions. Peirce divided inference into three classifications:

- 1. Deductive** - Deductive/deduction is inference deriving logical conclusions from premises known or assumed to be true, with the laws of valid inference being studied in logic.
- 2. Inductive** - Inductive/induction is inference from a particular premise to a universal conclusion.
- 3. Abduction** - Abduction is inference to the best explanation.

Theologians, academicians, seminarians, and Bible college students disagree with regards to the proper way to study the Biblical text. Some say it should be studied by using either the deductive or by using the inductive approach. To be honest, when it comes to actual practice, nothing is purely inductive or deductive, but instead they are both used to serve and support each other. Used correctly, the two methods prove to be helpful; however, each has its special uses and abuses.

How does this information benefit the reader? My objective here is to provide the groundwork to assist the reader in making better conclusions and assumptions that can be tested for truth and accuracy. A syllogism ("conclusion, inference") is a kind of logical argument that applies deductive reasoning to arrive at a conclusion based on two or more propositions that are asserted or assumed to be true. Greek philosophers defined a variety of syllogisms to correct the assertion of three-part assumptions which can be used as building blocks for more complex reasoning. Bear with me for a moment while I present some basic lesson examples:

- All humans are mortal.
- All Greeks are humans.
- Therefore, all Greeks are mortal.

- The reader can check that the premises and conclusion is true, but logic is concerned with inference: does the truth of the conclusion follow from that of the assumption?
- The validity of an inference depends on the form of the inference. That is, the word “valid” does not refer to the truth of the premises or the conclusion, but rather to the structural form of the inference. An inference can be valid even if the parts are false, and can be invalid even if some parts are true. But a valid form with true premises will always have a true conclusion.

For example, consider the structure of the following symbolical line of reasoning:

1. All meat comes from animals.
2. All beef is meat.
3. Therefore, all beef comes from animals.
  - If the assertions are true, then the conclusion is necessarily true too.

Now, let’s turn to an invalid form of inference:

1. All A are B
2. Some C are B
3. Therefore, Some C are A

To show that the following form is invalid, we demonstrate how it can lead from true suppositions to a false conclusion:

1. All apples are fruit. (Correct)
2. All bananas are fruit. (Correct)
3. Therefore, all bananas are apples. (Wrong)

A valid argument with a false assumption may lead to an incorrect conclusion, (this and the following examples do not follow the Greek use of syllogism):

1. All tall people are French. (Wrong)
2. John Lennon was tall. (True)
3. Therefore, John Lennon was French. (Wrong)
  - When a valid argument (John Lennon is tall) is used to obtain a false conclusion from a false argument, (all tall people are French) the inference is valid because it follows the form of a correct inference.

A valid argument can also be used to derive a true and correct conclusion from a false assertion:

1. All tall people are musicians (Wrong- false assertion)
2. John Lennon was tall (Right, Valid)
3. Therefore, John Lennon was a musician (Right)
  - In this case, we have one false premise (all tall people are musicians) and one true premise (John Lennon was tall) where a true conclusion has been deduced from evidence and reasoning rather than from explicit statements.

- An incorrect inference (not deduced from evidence and reasoning) is known as a fallacy. Philosophers who study informal logic have completed large lists of them, and cognitive psychologists have documented many biases in human reasoning that favor incorrect reasoning.

Examples of incorrect inference are:

- ♦ Making a fast judgement and finding out you were wrong.
- ♦ Maybe you inferred that someone was ignoring you when they were just shy.
- ♦ Maybe you decided a teacher was unkind because of a decision they made, and then you found out they were not unkind but fair and just.

By now you are probably asking yourself: What does this have to do with the question concerning whether Jesus Christ mentioned anything about the Rapture? If you have any academic training in Logic, Bayesian statistics and probability logic, Reasoning, Computer programming, Statistical Inference or even medical diagnosis, you are already equipped to be a good student when it comes to interpreting the Bible.

I believe a Pre-Tribulation Rapture is the only time the Rapture can occur if a Dispensational approach to understanding of Scripture is used as a literal hermeneutic. In other words, whenever possible the Bible is to be interpreted literally. In the past, all Bible prophecy was fulfilled literally, so in the future we expect Bible prophecy will continue to be fulfilled literally. This is a valid argument, (Pre-Tribulation Rapture is the only time it can occur if using Dispensational understanding) based on a premise that is true and correct (Scripture is interpreted literally). Therefore, the conclusion or inference follows that the conclusion is a literal outcome. (fulfillment of prophecy - past and future).

The primary benefit of using Dispensational theology is in a literal reading of the text to define specific time periods where God has dealt differently with humans, while He Himself never changes. Therefore, when

one dispensation ends, another begins. This, prohibits any overlap of dispensations (identified time periods). Since the Rapture marks the end of the Church Age (or Age of Grace) dispensation, you can't have part of the Tribulation at the end of the Church Age. If the Dispensational hermeneutic approach is confusing, the Lord Jesus Christ, quite clearly, gave us a model to determine when the Rapture occurs.

The Lord Himself, stated: ***“For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.”*** -(Matthew 24:37-39). The underscored statement is an affirmation of a literal interpretation. There is nothing there that indicates it should be “spiritually” or “allegorically” interpreted

This is a perfect and exact template for determining the timing of the Rapture. We know that Jesus' statement can't be referring to the time of the Second Coming because the end portion of time relates to the Tribulation and is an exceedingly devastating period. Whereas the passage likens the coming of the Son of Man to the days just prior to the flood when it explicitly states by indicating the time will be characterized by “business as usual” and the Tribulation, is anything but, “business as usual.”

So, this statement could only be referring to the time for the Rapture to occur when life is still operating with some semblance of order and where there is an economy, food, drink, and social events continuing as normal or usual. The template Jesus gave us shows Noah was building his Ark in normal times; whereas people were experiencing being locked out of their only escape when God shuts the door on the Ark. Only after the door is shut, the rain begins and the Ark floats up, above the destruction, then later to return to earth once the waters have receded, and the rains have ceased. It is at this point a new dispensation begins. Jesus said the same situation (***“eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage”***) would exist on earth just prior to the Rapture (***“until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came.”***) People will be living in normal times with plenty of food, drink, and social events. Then the Rapture occurs (God shuts the door - Jesus is the door). Jesus stated twice in John 10:7, 9, that ***“He was the door to life”***. That same imagery is noted in Paul's writings -(1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:9; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3) and Jesus repeats that point in the book of Revelation 3:20.

Those Raptured are taken up (out of harm's way just as Noah was), above the Tribulation below, and return to the earth to begin a new dispensation (Millennial reign of 1000 years). Jesus said that just as Noah's lifesaving experience was pre-flood, so we can conclude that the Rapture will be Pre-Tribulational. We can conclude from evidence and reasoning rather



than from an explicit statement that the Rapture is not Mid-flood, not Mid-Tribulation or Post-flood and not Post-Tribulation. Jesus confirms the Rapture is Pre-Tribulational.

I could end this discussion right here by what I have shared from the lips of the Master Himself, Christ Jesus. In that passage quoted in Matthew, Jesus used a little four letter word **“like”**. This word in English can be used as a preposition, a conjunction, a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. The word **“like”** in this specific passage translated from the Greek Textus Receptus is used as a conjunction.

Note below the definitional uses of the word **“like”**.

### **1. PREPOSITION**

- having the same characteristics or qualities as; similar to:
  - "there were other suits like mine in the shop"
  - "they were like brothers"
  - "she looked nothing like Audrey Hepburn"

**synonyms:** similar to; the same as; identical to

- in the manner of; in the same way or to the same degree as:
  - "he was screaming like a banshee"
  - "you must run like the wind"

**synonyms:** in the same way as; in the same manner as; in the manner of; in a similar way to

- in a way appropriate to:
  - "students were angry at being treated like children"
- such as one might expect from; characteristic of:
  - "just like you to put a damper on people's enjoyment"

**synonyms:** characteristic of; typical of; in character with

- used in questions to ask about the characteristics or nature of someone or something:
  - "What is it like to be a tuna fisherman?"
  - "What's she like?"
- used to draw attention to the nature of an action or event:
  - "I apologize for coming over unannounced like this"
  - "why are you talking about me like that?"
- such as; for example:
  - "the cautionary vision of works like Animal Farm and 1984"

**synonyms:** such as; for example; for instance; in particular; namely

## 2. **CONJUNCTION**

- Informal - in the same way that; as:
  - "people who change countries like they change clothes"
- as though; as if:
  - "I felt like I'd been kicked by a camel"

## 3. **NOUN**

- used with reference to a person or thing of the same kind as another:
  - "the quotations could be arranged to put like with like" ·
  - "I know him—him and his like"
  - (the like)
- a thing or things of the same kind (often used to express surprise or for emphasis):
  - "did you ever hear the like?" ·
  - "a church interior the like of which he had never seen before"

**synonyms:** equal; match; equivalent; counterpart; twin; parallel; compeer

## 4. **ADJECTIVE**

- (of a person or thing) having similar qualities or characteristics to another person or thing:
  - "I responded in like manner"
  - "the grouping of children of like ability together"

**synonyms:** similar; comparable; corresponding; resembling; alike; analogous; parallel; equivalent; cognate related; kindred; identical; same; matching; much the same

**antonyms:** dissimilar

- BRITISH
- (of a portrait or other image) having a faithful resemblance to the original:
  - "Who painted the dog's picture? It looks very much like the dog."

## 5. **ADVERB**

- Informal - used in speech as a meaningless filler or to signify the speaker's uncertainty about an expression just used:
  - "there was this funny smell—sort of dusty like"
- Informal - used to convey a person's reported attitude or feelings in the form of direct speech (whether or not representing an actual quotation):
  - "so, she comes into the room and she's like "Where is everybody?""
- Archaic - (like as/to) in the manner of:
  - "like as a ship with dreadful storm long tossed"

I have listed all the grammatical variations in the use of the word **"like"**. Would anyone disagree with Jesus' use of the word **"like"** when it comes to describing the circumstances of the Rapture? As I understand the hermeneutics and the grammatical meaning of the word **"like"** Jesus has told us a whole lot about the Rapture. He clearly described similar events just as an earlier, historic and recognizable point in time: **"the coming of the Son of Man will be just like (in the same way that) the days of Noah."** Surprisingly, many of those who say Jesus Christ never talked about the Rapture, have come from the ranks of those who believe as I do in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

It never ceases to amaze me when those speaking with some degree of authority at various websites about things they are ill-equipped to comment on in the first place. There are many sites today that attack the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. From them you can expect all forms of accusations to discredit the teaching. Recently, I viewed a former New Testament scholar and seminary professor who teaches where I earned my Masters of Divinity Degree, and he continues to teach the dis-information that a Scottish lass by the name of Margaret MacDonald is the originator of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture teaching. That is a total fabrication, and it is disingenuous to continue to propagate this untruthful information. He either has not read church history documents, or he has chosen to disregard the writings of dozens of church leaders going back to the days of the early Christian community.

It may be that the consensus of most theologians, prophecy scholars, and pastors today believe that Jesus Christ never said anything about the Pre-Tribulation Rapture, but as I have just demonstrated, Jesus Christ did teach about it indirectly using a conjunction and its inference. Let me expand on this point by stating, this is not the only place Jesus spoke about the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. I will cover more on this topic in Part 2.

Pastor Bob