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The Pretrib Rapture Refuted



When Shall These Things Be? - Steve Gregg

In this presentation, Steve Gregg challenges the belief in the pre-tribulation rapture by presenting counterarguments from Scripture. He emphasizes the importance of examining the Bible closely and not relying on popularly taught beliefs within the Evangelical Church. Gregg questions the assumption that the church will be spared from the tribulation and suggests that Christians may have to endure it. He also critiques the interpretation of the book of Revelation and the use of the term "church" in the context of the end times.

Transcript

In our last session, I sought to go through all of the arguments that I know of for a pre-tribulation rapture. It's possible that those arguments did not hit you during that session as strongly as they affected me when I first heard them. The reason being that when I gave them to you just now, you already knew that I don't believe that those arguments are conclusive and that I hold a different view.

Even if you were unable to know what was wrong with those arguments, you knew that at least I think there's something wrong with them. There's something deficient in those arguments. Therefore, you would have at least reserved judgment rather than just say, oh yeah, that's a strong argument.

You probably thought, well, maybe that sounds kind of like a strong argument, but there must be another side to it. Steve wouldn't be telling us this if he's not going to tell us the other side. So you may have been a little more suspicious than I was.

When I first heard the teaching of a pre-tribulation rapture, I was not really aware that any evangelical Christians had another view, except there were, I mean, my pastor did mention on occasion post-tribulations, but it seemed to me like these people must be simply people who haven't examined the scripture and obviously have not heard these arguments because these arguments were presented as really the only thing the Bible could be understood to teach. I don't feel that that is true anymore. I'll tell you when I first began to get suspicious.

I was teaching in Orange County for many years before I moved north, and I had a fairly sizable group of people that came through a home Bible study twice a week, started out with five guys asking me or seven guys asking me to come and teach them on the gifts of the Holy Spirit in their home by the Baptist that I had grown up with. I moved away and became filled with the Spirit when I was back in the area, and they wanted me to come teach on the gifts of the Spirit in their home, in the home of one of them. And so I did.

By the second week, instead of seven, there were like fifteen, and by the third week there were more like thirty, and by the end of the first month there were fifty people in there. When I finished teaching about the gifts of the Spirit, it seemed like the movement had some momentum, so we decided to just keep going and teach some other things too. So I taught these people for two years, and in the course of that time I taught them dispensational eschatology as well as other things, because I was a dispensationalist.

At the end of that time, the group began to break up a bit because they started going to college and getting married and going places, moving out of the area and so forth, and we eventually disbanded the group. It actually officially disbanded when I moved out of Orange County and went to Santa Cruz. But one of the guys who I grew up with in the Baptist church and who sat under my teaching there in that study for the whole two years, he went off to college, a Christian college, but he was studying under a professor who did not believe in a pre-tribulation rapture.

His professor believed in a post-tribulation rapture and required that the class read a book called *The Blessed Hope* by the late professor George Alden Ladd. In his book *The Blessed Hope*, Dr. Ladd basically sought to prove that the pre-tribulation rapture was never believed any time in church history prior to 1830, and that's principally what the book was documenting. My friend in this class was having trouble because he did believe in a pre-trib rapture because I had taught him to believe that, and he might have believed it from other sources as well, since that was the most popular view and is still today represented in the popular Christian media.

But he wasn't quite sure how to answer his professor on these points. So he came to me once, his name was Ken, and he said, Steve, I've got this problem with my professor. He doesn't believe a pre-trib rapture.

I really want to show him what the Bible says on this. Could you give me arguments for a pre-trib rapture? I was very glad that he'd come to me about this because I always like a bit of an argument, if it's civil and if it's biblical. So I was ready to give him all the arguments, and I had a full loaded gun of arguments for the pre-trib rapture, and they were essentially the arguments that we just went through in our last session.

And he took those arguments back to his professor, and because I shortly after that moved away, I don't know what ever became of it. I don't know if he convinced his

professor. I don't even know if I fully convinced him.

That man today may not be a pre-tribulationist anymore, but I haven't heard. I'll tell you what happened to me. I had for years taught this doctrine and believed it, but I had not ever been in a position to be equipping another person with arguments for a specific confrontation where I knew there was going to be a college professor disputing the point, which means that as I looked at these arguments again, I asked myself, how will a skeptical college professor view this? I had always taught it to people who either had no opinion or had a favorable opinion to this.

I had never really addressed a hostile audience, especially not one that could analyze scripture at a college level or whatever, like a college professor at a Christian college. And so I was still convinced the arguments were valid, but as I looked at them, as I gave them to this young man, Ken, one at a time, I turned them to each passage and said, now here's what it says, here's what it means, and so forth. I began, in my own mind, although I didn't verbalize this to my friend, I began to think, how will this skeptical college professor view this argument? And I realized, I began to realize the weakness of each argument if it was not viewed through a sympathetic lens.

That is, if the person looking at the argument was not already convinced of a dispensational framework or of a pre-tribulational viewpoint. Or even if, especially if they were not only not convinced of it, but if they were convinced against it or hostile toward the view, I was beginning to realize that each of these arguments, though they seemed adequate to me because I believed the viewpoint, if looked at through skeptical eyes, might not be quite as strong as I had really thought they were. Because I occasionally do this, I try to do this all the time, but sometimes it takes a while to get around to it, but I try to look at my own views on any subject through the lens of somebody who holds a contrary view from Scripture and see what flaws they might find in my views.

And I've always been this way, although as I said, I hadn't really gotten around to it on this issue until this point in time. And I went through point by point each argument for the preacher of Rapture's guide, he wrote down the Scriptures and I showed him, I explained to him how that proved the point. And I didn't tell him, but in my own heart I was thinking, but that doesn't really say that, does it? You know, I just, I began to see it through new eyes.

And I kept thinking, okay, there is a better argument than this one we're looking at right now. Let's go through these. And each time I turned to one and looked at it, I realized if I were not already convinced of pre-tribulational rapture, this argument would not in any sense prove it to me, because it didn't say so.

The passage did not say so. It was a, I imported the idea of a pre-tribulational rapture into the passage and then it worked fine. It never had occurred to me the same passage might work equally well without the importing of a pre-trib rapture presupposition.

It had never crossed my mind that the passage could mean something else. And as I look at it now, I realize that this skeptical professor might see them differently, these very passages, and he might not see in them a clear proof of the pre-trib rapture. And I kept thinking in my mind, without saying it to this man, I kept thinking, okay, one of these, one of these arguments we're coming to is going to say it clearly.

I forget which one it is, but it's going to be one that's going to clearly say it. And I went through the whole gamut, including my two favorites, which I thought were the very best, which was Revelation 3.10, because you've kept the word of my patience. I also will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming to test those that dwell on the earth, coming on all the world to test those who dwell on the earth.

And the other one that I thought was the best, besides that one, was 2 Thessalonians 2, about that which hinders or restrains must be taken out of the way, and then the man of sin can be revealed. But even as I looked at those verses again, I realized that, well, you know, honestly, I don't say there's a pre-trib rapture. The 2 Thessalonians passage is particularly vague, and Revelation 3.10 conceivably might be understood differently than to insist on a pre-trib rapture.

And I came out of that encounter, although I wasn't unconvinced of pre-tribulationism by any means. I remained a pre-tribulationist for probably a year or two longer than that, but I was less convinced of my views. I spoke with less conviction when I preached the pre-trib rapture.

And when I moved to Santa Cruz from Orange County — now, Orange County was the hotbed of dispensational teaching at that time — I moved to Santa Cruz where there was very little Bible teaching going on. The Jesus movement had not really come there yet, and there wasn't much Bible teaching of any sort available. And I was forced to just read my Bible for myself.

And I would run into people who weren't already convinced of a pre-trib rapture, and in discussions with them, I had to admit that they had perhaps some validity to their rejection of the view. I still felt it was a true view. I still felt it was the best way to answer all these arguments, to just say, well, maybe no individual one of these arguments proves the point, but taken together, certainly nineteen or twenty arguments, they've got to count for something.

Those arguments could not be all made unless the view was true, I thought. And yet I began to be more and more disillusioned, and much of it came from my own reading of my Bible in a town where I wasn't being spoon-fed theology like I had been in Orange County. Day by day, I was spoon-fed what I should believe about these passages.

When I got away from that spoon-feeding and began to read the Bible myself, without Schofield's notes, or even though Schofield's notes were still there, I just began to pay

more attention to the Bible than to the notes. And one thing that I've always done to my detriment is compare Scripture to Scripture. I say to my detriment, not because I don't think it's the right thing to do, I think it is the right thing to do, but it's to my detriment because by comparing Scripture to Scripture, I have again and again convinced myself of views that are not popular.

And I've ended up having to take positions that are different than that which is popularly taught in the evangelical church, and not because I've ever had any interest in being controversial. I honestly, I mean, if you know all the things I teach and how many of them differ from the popular views out there on different subjects, you might think, well, Steve just loves controversy. Well, I love an argument in the sense I love an exchange, an intelligent exchange of Scripture with Scripture, or iron sharpening iron.

I like that. I like to assess arguments. I like to search for truth together with other people who don't have the same view.

That I do find enjoyable. But I don't like being a controversialist. I really wish that I could have all these arguments and me be on the side of the majority.

I really wish that I could be the defender of orthodoxy, as it were. I mean, I like arguments, but I'd rather argue on the side of the masses, and have them view me as the hero, the champion of orthodox view, rather than them seeing me as the intruder, the offender, the guy who'd really better prove his point or he's going to be labeled. And frankly, I just have not been able to reach my views based on my preferences.

And many of the views I hold that are not the more popular views, I have reached against my will, almost. I mean, just because I've compared Scripture with Scripture, I say, wait a minute, hold on here. Doesn't this Scripture say that this Scripture means something different than what I've always been taught that it says? And this just went on, because I've read my Bible through carefully for years, eventually one thing after another changed my views.

One of those things to eventually go down was my belief in the preacher of rapture. Now, when I decided that the Bible did not teach the preacher of rapture, I still believed that the Bible taught a seven-year tribulation. And therefore, I believed that there would be a post-tribulation rapture.

And therefore, for quite a long time, I was post-tribulational. My own research led me even further. For instance, my friend Danny Lehman, who's an elder in the Calvary Chapel in Honolulu, and a leader of the Y-Land base there, he and I were talking once on the beach in Santa Cruz, and he said, Steve, what Scriptures do we use anyway to prove that there's a seven-year tribulation? And at that time, I had never seriously questioned it, that there was one.

And he hadn't either, and I don't think to this day, I think he still believes in one. But he was just saying, you know, I was just trying to think the other day, what are the Scriptures in favor of that? And I searched my mind and racked my brain, and I scanned through the Scriptures in my mind, and I came up with only two possible answers. One is the 70th week of Daniel, and the other is Revelation, with its many references to three and a half years.

Apart from that, I couldn't think of anything in the Bible that spoke of a seven-year tribulation. And even then, I didn't reject the view, though I began to re-examine it and see if those passages really did say what I had always thought they said. And so my views on that subject began to gradually undergo change as well.

So I've been on a long journey. It's not a journey with any interest in changing my views. As a matter of fact, I'm a very conservative person.

I like to hold on to what I used to teach. I'd rather say I've taught the same thing for 25 years and sound very stable than say, well, I have to take back what I said there a few years ago. I was wrong about that.

And yet I've had to do that many times. I've had to say, well, you know, I know I taught this, but it seems to me now, my station of Scripture has led me to believe that I was mistaken. And I have to say, I have to go on record as saying I was wrong.

It's not the easiest thing to do when you're a teacher. But fortunately, I'm not a very well-known teacher, and so the huge audiences aren't there to throw eggs at me when I tell them I was told the wrong thing. Only small audiences are.

And I imagine it would be very much more difficult for someone who's famous. I often thought, well, what would Hal Lindsay do, who sold 20 million copies of his book, *The Late Great Prophets*, if he began to see the Scriptures through non-dispensational lenses? Could he possibly allow himself to write another book and say, you know, I realize I've published six books on dispensational eschatology, but you know what? I have to admit, it's not in the Bible. Now, I would think very highly of the man if he did that, but I really don't know if he'd be able to.

And I thank God that I never was very well-known. Frankly, I'm still not very well-known, and as far as I'm concerned, I can stay that way. I have no eagerness to be well-known, but I'm glad that when I had to change my views each time, it was only a small group of people I had to confess to, you know, that I was wrong.

Anyway, pride may keep some people from ever admitting that they were wrong, especially if they've gone on the record to the masses that they had believed a certain thing. I really suspect that many can never see those Scriptures through any other lens than the one that they've adopted, because it's too painful, too painful to suggest that

they've been wrong all this time. And yet, if a person looks honestly at the argument, supporting a preacher of rapture, for example, all it takes is honesty.

It doesn't take a desire for controversy. It doesn't take an agenda. It doesn't take anything but just honesty and perceptiveness, just looking at the passage, taking its natural meaning, you know, the literal interpretation, and seeing it in its context.

I mean, just anyone with average intelligence, it doesn't take special illumination, doesn't take a revelation from God. It doesn't take a university degree. It just takes somebody with average intelligence looking at the passage in context, saying, what does it say? What does it not say? And the conclusion will be reached that there's not one of these arguments for a preacher of rapture that really is biblical.

There's not one that really presents a biblical case. Now, that was not easy for me to come to, but eventually I had to come to that because, frankly, I was more interested in being honest than retaining my dogmatic stand. Okay, let's look at these arguments again.

First, we have the arguments based on the interpretation of Revelation. Remember the argument that the whole church age is encompassed in chapters 2 and 3, in the seven letters of the seven churches, that these represent seven portions of the church age. This is an important suggestion to the dispensationalists because if this is not true, then there's no reason why the rapture of the church should be seen at Revelation 4.1. If we have the whole church age from John's day to the rapture transpiring in chapters 2 and 3, then we naturally expect the rapture to occur at the end of that time, in chapter 4, verse 1. However, I would simply point out, and this took me a long time to realize, it's amazing how long it took me to realize this, guess what? It doesn't say that.

It doesn't say that in Revelation. It doesn't say that in any other book of the Bible. It does not say that these seven letters represent anything.

They are written to seven actual churches. Those churches are known to have existed. If we are committed to a literal interpretation of Scripture, then we must say that the letter to Ephesus applies to the church of Ephesus.

The letter to Smyrna applies to the church of Smyrna, a real church existing in those days. By the way, none of these churches are there anymore with the possible exception of Philadelphia and possibly Smyrna, but the cities are largely gone, and the churches in them are largely gone. These churches existed, and for the most part don't exist anymore.

To say that they aren't really playing themselves in the drama, but they're doing something else, they're actually symbolic of something other than what they really are, is to import into the text, exegesis is where you draw from the text what's there, out of

it. Ex in Greek means out of. Eisegesis, or eisegesis we might anglicize it, is to read into the text.

Eise is the Greek word for into. Eisegesis is where you read into the text something. Well, certainly if we're going to say the seven churches represent seven segments of church history, we have to resort to eisegesis, not exegesis.

It is not found in the text, it is not found in any text, it is not even hinted at in the text. As a matter of fact, the only arguments for it come from knowing some things about church history and saying, in retrospect, there were some periods in church history that had some of these traits, but to say that the whole church worldwide was like each of these churches at different times in history is too sweeping. There were different kinds of congregations all the time.

With the possible exception of the medieval times, where the Roman Catholic church was very dominant, then of course there was a fair standardization of the church at large, although there was also the Eastern church that was not subject to the Pope. In other words, it is too simplistic to say the whole church during such and such centuries was a certain way. No, maybe the dominant church, maybe the most famous movements in the church, maybe the most famous people in the church that we know of can be seen to have some correspondence to these things.

But to say that the whole church was that way is simply a leap that will not bear historic examination. But even if it did, it does not prove that that is what was intended in the giving of the seven letters. That is what we call newspaper exegesis, or in this case, history book exegesis.

Using current events or events of a previous time should tell us what the scripture meant, when in fact the scripture itself tells us what it means. Take, for example, the seven churches of Asia. He gives their names to these churches.

I have to write, this is the message to the angel of the Ephesus. This is the message to the angel of the church in Smyrna. Why don't we just take it literally? Why don't we just say these are letters to seven churches, just like it says they are.

It says nothing more. It implies nothing more. If it implies something more, it is mystical, hidden, allegorical, spiritual.

We don't want to lapse into that kind of error. Now, what about this business of the rapture of John being like the rapture of the church? John is caught up in Revelation 4.1. He is caught up into heaven. We will be caught up also into heaven.

Therefore, the suggestion seems to be that John's movement heavenward here represents the church's movement heavenward at the rapture. Now, one of the problems with this particular identification is that John later is on earth again, and then later still in

heaven again, and then on earth again. For example, he is on earth measuring the temple in chapter 11.

He is in heaven again later on in chapters 14 and 15. Then in chapter 17, he is on earth again in a wilderness. John is going up and down.

We might even say like a yo-yo. I wouldn't say like a yo-yo. But anyway, the fact of the matter is that John's venue in Revelation changes many times, sometimes in heaven, now in heaven, now back on earth, now back in heaven.

If we say that John being caught up into heaven, moving from earth to heaven in this venue, in this scene in Revelation 4 represents the church's movement, would not consistency require that he is coming back to earth and then going back up and down and up, that these two would correspond with change in the church's venue? Why would it be only here? Now, they say, well, look, there's this business of the trumpet sounding. The rapture has a trumpet sound, a voice like a trumpet. Well, guess what? There was a voice like a trumpet back in chapter 1 also.

Verse 10, chapter 1, verse 10, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a loud voice as of a trumpet. But no one has ever suggested that that loud voice like a trumpet must be the rapture and the trumpet God and so forth. So why would the voice like a trumpet in Revelation 4.1 have to connect with 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians, but no one suggests that the exact same expression, the voice like a trumpet in chapter 1, verse 10, doesn't? It seems to me rather artificial and it's an interpretation of convenience.

But what about the fact that the word church is found 19 times in the first three chapters and the church is not seen again on earth after chapter 4, but rather it is seen in heaven, and the saints on earth are Jewish saints. These are arguments number three and four of the arguments we went through before. Well, let me just say this.

The term church, as we use it when we say something like the church age, is not found in Revelation at all. You will not find the word church in Revelation at all, even in the first three chapters, used in any sense like we use it when we say the church age. What you do find is the seven churches mentioned a number of times.

These are not the church at large. These are seven congregations. We have references to the church in Ephesus, the church in Smyrna, the church in Pergamos, the church in Thyatira, but you never have any reference to the church in the world.

You have, in other words, reference to individual congregations, seven of them to be exact, but you never find the word church used in Revelation in the sense that we are told we're supposed to see it in these chapters. Supposedly we're supposed to see the whole church in chapters 2 and 3 and the whole church's rapture in chapter 4 verse 1,

but we never find the word church in any part of Revelation used that way. The word church in Revelation uniformly means a congregation of a particular place.

It does not ever mean the whole church worldwide, therefore its use or non-use in the book of Revelation is rather irrelevant. So what that it appears 19 times in the first three chapters? Seven of those times are to the angel of the church in, fill in the blank, seven times that's how church is used, to the angel of the church in this city. Seven more times, bringing the number up to 14, you have he that has an ear to hear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches.

That's part of the 19 times too. So 14 out of the 19 times are simply in the opening and closing of seven different letters. And then you have additional times that says, take a letter to the seven churches, to the church in so and so and the church in so and so and so and so.

But again, it's never with reference to the worldwide church. John never gives an indication in these letters that he has anything in view but a few churches in a little narrow place in Turkey, and to suggest that these represent the whole church is to import tremendous things into what is not implied in any passage in scripture. Now, is the church seen after Revelation 4? Well, not by the word church.

But when they say, well, the church is not seen on earth, but it's seen in heaven after chapter four, I say, well, you don't even find the word church in heaven in Revelation 4. The word church simply doesn't occur in chapter four, but you do have, or following it, but you do have reference to saints, some in heaven and some on earth. Do the 24 elders in chapter four represent the church in heaven? Could be, but it doesn't necessarily mean that the whole church is in heaven. I would remind you that there's a great portion of the church already there, and there was already in John's day.

There were Christians who had died, and they were in heaven. Yes, John goes up in heaven, sure enough, he sees Christians there. Not surprisingly, there have always been Christians there ever since Stephen was stoned.

There's always been Christians in heaven, and there are now many multitudes of them. For John to go up to heaven and see Christians is not too surprising, because that's where Christians go when they die. But Christians are also seen on earth during the tribulation, so-called.

Look at Revelation 7. In Revelation 7, verse 9 says, After these things I looked, and behold a great multitude, which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. Presumably this means in heaven, since John has previously seen the throne in heaven. And here are great multi-ethnic multitudes standing in heaven before God.

They are the church in heaven, are they not? And yet, in verse 13, one of the elders answered, saying to me, Who are these people arrayed in white robes, etc.? John said, Sir, I don't know, you know. So he said to me, Look, verse 14, These are the ones who come, or literally in the Greek, who are coming out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb. Now, how did they get out of there? Apparently they died.

They're in heaven now. They have been in the great tribulation, because you can't come out of the tribulation unless you've been there. You can't come out of a room unless you've been in the room.

And therefore, coming out of the great tribulation, he sees this multitude. Now, we have this quote I gave you earlier from John Waldworth, and Waldworth said, The godly remnants of the tribulation are pictured as Israelites, not members of the church. I find that an amazing statement, because this group that is in heaven, coming out of the great tribulation, are distinctly said not to be Israelites.

They are from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues. The fact that Waldworth could say they are distinctly Israelites means that he must wear dispensational lenses when he reads Revelation, and only see the parts that seem to confirm what dispensationalists are supposed to believe. But they cannot see what it says, because they're not allowed to.

It is not orthodox to agree with what Revelation says. It is now orthodox to believe what dispensationalists say it's supposed to say. And I'm not trying to be caustic or mean.

That is simply how it works. I know, because I used to wear those lenses myself. Thank God I decided to not wear them anymore and just read the Bible, let it speak for itself, take a more literal approach.

Now, what about the saints in Revelation 13? Are these Jews who get saved after the rapture, or are they the church? It says of the beast in Revelation 13, it says it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. Also, in the same chapter, Revelation 13, verse 10, it says, He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity, and the end of that says, Here is the patience and faith of the saints. Obviously, the beast is persecuting somebody, and they're called the saints.

According to dispensationalism, these cannot be the church, because the church was raptured before the beast ever appeared. These saints must not be the church, they must be Jewish saints, the Jewish remnant that gets converted after the rapture of the church. However, one might say, on what basis can we say this? Remember, Dromachie said, I quoted him earlier, he said, there is the mention of saints in this context.

These saints, however, are those who got saved during the seven years after the true

church had been taken into heaven. So, clearly, they're not the church, they are tribulation saints, but not the church. But let me ask, how do we know this? What is it in the book of Revelation or elsewhere in the Scripture that tells us this? The answer to that will be a thundering silence.

There is nothing in the book of Revelation or elsewhere in the Scripture that tells us this. This is an imported assumption. If you would simply get out a concordance and look up the word saint, as it occurs in the New Testament, you will find something probably significant, namely, that it never means anything except Christians in the New Testament, unless this is an exception.

This might be the only exception. If these are not Christians, if these are not people part of the church, then this provides the only occurrence in the New Testament of the word saints in which it does not mean the church. The word saints is the normal New Testament word for members of the body of Christ, the church.

The saints in Rome, the saints in Ephesus are addressed, the saints in Philippi, these are simply the constituency of the church. Now, someone is arguing, many people are arguing, that saints now suddenly has a new meaning. In Revelation 13, though saints is always in the New Testament meant the church, in this case we can't allow it.

Why? The constraints of eschatology won't allow it. There is nothing in the passage that says these saints are not Christians. Does it say they are Israelites? I don't see anything that says so.

Now, there are mentions of Israelites in the book of Revelation. In chapter 7 and chapter 14, we do read about 144,000 Jews who are sealed, but it does not in any sense say that they are the sum total of all saints. And it does not indicate in chapter 13 that the saints he persecuted are restricted to these people.

The word saints generally has a much broader meaning in Scripture, but does it in Revelation? That's the question. In Revelation, are the saints, the Jewish saints who do not belong to the church, who are converted during the tribulation, or are the saints in Revelation the church as elsewhere in Scripture? Well, fortunately, we can answer that question from the book of Revelation itself, if you look at chapter 19. In Revelation 19, verses 7 and 8, we read, Let us be glad and rejoice and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready.

Who is the wife of the Lamb? Who is the bride of Christ? I can tell from New Testament that's the church. The church has made herself ready, his bride. Read on, verse 8. And to her, that is to the bride of the Lamb, the church, it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

The saints? You mean the saints in Revelation are the church? Of all things, imagine

being able to interpret a word like that in the book of Revelation the same way it's interpreted throughout Scripture. Well, as a matter of fact, it is so. The book of Revelation itself tells us so.

The wife of the Lamb is the church, and the church is arrayed in what? The good deeds of the saints. Well, why would the church be arrayed with the good deeds of the Jewish people who aren't even part of the church? It's obvious John is saying here, the saints are clothed in their own righteous deeds. That's what it says there.

And they are the wife of the Lamb, which is the church. Anyone who wishes to argue another proposition is going way up a steep slope without any equipment. I mean, there's no biblical warrant for making the saints in Revelation anything other than what the saints are elsewhere throughout the New Testament.

In fact, the book of Revelation confirms that even in Revelation, the saints are the same people who are the saints elsewhere in Scripture. Only a blinding commitment to a human system of interpretation imposed on Revelation can really cause someone to fail to see this, it seems to me now. What about Revelation 3.10, though? Isn't that one of the strongest arguments for the Pre-Trib Rapture? I really still think it is one of the strongest, but I'm no longer convinced that it is, in fact, an argument for the Pre-Trib Rapture at all.

It says there, because you have kept my command to persevere, the New Testament also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. Now, there's two things we need to ask about this passage. A. Is the tribulation mentioned in this passage? Is a future seven-year tribulation mentioned here? It is thought to be mentioned when Jesus says, the hour of trial which is coming upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth.

Is that hour of trial a reference to the seven-year tribulation? That's the first question we have to ask and answer before we can decide whether this verse is relevant to the question of a Pre-Trib Rapture. The second question we have to ask is, supposing it is a reference to the tribulation, is there a promise here of a rapture, of taking the church away to heaven before such a tribulation? That's the second question we have to ask. He says, I will keep you from that hour of trial.

Is that the same thing as saying, I will take you out of the earth, is the question. Let's answer both those questions, because they're both relevant. First of all, I do not personally believe that the seven-year tribulation is mentioned in this passage.

I realize that it does say that it's referring to an hour of trial that will come on the whole world, but I would point out to you that the whole world is a scriptural term in the New Testament that often applies to nothing more than the Roman Empire. Now, this is not some kind of liberal attack on the inspiration of scripture. It's just a recognition of biblical

usage.

In Luke 2, for example, and we could find others if we had time, this will suffice. In Luke 2, verse 1, it says, It came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. All the world.

The Caesar was going to register all the world. Well, who did the Caesar really expect to register? Did he expect to register the barbarians whom he hadn't conquered yet up in the northern parts of Europe? I see how he could. He'd have to do it in their sleep because they'd kill him if he got close to them.

Did he plan to register the Indian people, that is, in India, or the Chinese people, who had already, their existence was already known in those days? No, I don't think he did. What about the people of Central Africa? No, he didn't have any authority to number them. The whole world in this context simply means the whole portion of the world that was under his dominion.

The whole Roman Empire, the whole Mediterranean world, we could say. The point is that it is not unthinkable for the biblical writers living during the time of the Roman Empire to speak of that empire as the whole world. They knew, of course, there were parts of the world that were not conquered, but that was irrelevant.

It's a matter of usage. It's a matter of just how the terms were used. And so we know for a fact that the Bible is not shy about using the term all the world, meaning something that is really nothing more than the Roman Empire.

Therefore, a promise to keep you from a trial that's coming on the whole world might conceivably, I'm not saying it has to, but it could certainly conceivably mean something that's going to affect the whole Roman Empire, which was the only world these readers knew, and it would not be a problem. It would agree with usage elsewhere in Scripture. What about to test those who dwell on the earth? The word earth in the Greek is ge, g-e, or gamma, eta.

And it is the exact equivalent of a Hebrew word in the Old Testament, eretz, e-r-e-t-s. These words are used thousands of times in the Bible. In the New Testament, ge, in the Old Testament, eretz, the Hebrew equivalent, are used many, many times.

They are sometimes translated earth, sometimes translated land. In fact, every time you find the word land in the Bible, if it's in the Old Testament, it's from the word eretz. Likewise, every time you find the word earth in the Old Testament, it's the word eretz.

It's the same word. They only have one word in Hebrew for land and earth. Likewise in the Greek.

Any time in the New Testament you find the word land, or any time you find the word

earth, in both cases you're going to find the word ge as the Greek word behind it, which means that this Greek word can mean land or earth. Now, it's a toss-up as far as the lexical meaning of the word is, but context often provides insight as to which is intended in a given place. Here, the context doesn't make it all that clear.

It could be the time of trial is going to test those who dwell on the earth, and we think of the earth as the whole planet earth, but it could also be translated with equal justice to try those who dwell on the land. And the term the land is a common expression for Israel in Scripture. Very common.

Thus, to speak of an hour of trial that's coming on all the world to test those who dwell on the land could simply mean that there's going to be an empire-wide crisis which will particularly provide trials for those who dwell in Israel. I'm not saying this has to be the meaning of the words. I'm saying it is equally possible without any twisting at all.

What I'm saying is there's no necessity of saying the hour of trial here must be a future global tribulation period. It might be or it might not be. So it is not essential to see it that way, and therefore that pulls the rug out of this verse somewhat as an absolute proof text for a preacher of rapture.

But let us suppose for the moment that the hour of trial is in fact a reference to a future seven year tribulation. Let's allow this for the sake of argument and see whether this, even with that assumption, whether we have a proof of preacher of rapture here. Well, what did Jesus promise to do? He said, I will keep you from the hour of trial.

Well, what does it mean to keep someone from something? The Greek expression keep from are two Greek words, ek, which means out of or from, and tereo, which means to guard or to keep. To keep or to guard. To guard from or to keep from.

Ek tereo. Now the word ek occurs thousands of times in scripture, and the word tereo occurs many times in scripture too. But together ek tereo, to keep from, is an expression found only twice in scripture.

Here and in one other place. Now we'll look at that other place in a moment, but let me just say this. If I told you I'm going to keep you from some particular danger, is there not more than one possible thing I might mean by that? Of course it might mean that before the danger hits, I'm going to extricate you from the situation, geographically remove you, so that when the danger hits, you'll be nowhere around, and I will thus have kept you out of it.

But is it also not possible that if I had the power to do so, I could provide protection for you in the very same place where the crisis occurs? In a time of great crisis, there are always people who have their insulated fortresses, who remain secure, even though crisis is all around. Is it not possible for people to be kept from some crisis without being

removed out of the planet earth? It has often been pointed out that when the Jews were in Egypt, and God sent the plagues on Egypt, that by the way resemble very much the plagues in Revelation, that the Jews, although they were later taken out of Egypt, they were not taken out of Egypt before the plagues were sent. The plagues were sent while they were still there.

But the Bible distinctly says that God kept the Jews from experiencing those plagues. God is able to discriminate. If he sends wrath, if he sends judgment, if he sends plagues, he knows how to discriminate between a believer and an unbeliever.

By the way, it says in Psalm 91, verse numbers I forget, around verse 9 or so, you can look up if you want, but it says, a thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not come nigh you. Only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked. It actually speaks of God being able to judge the wicked who are standing right next to you without touching you.

A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, but it not touch you. Why? Because God's a good aim. God knows how to swing his sword discriminately, to shoot his arrows and hit the target he wants and miss the target he doesn't want to hit.

If God wishes to judge the world as he judges Egypt, he can do so with the Christians present, if he wishes. Let's put it that way. He could still keep the Christians from the tribulation horrors without taking them out of the planet earth to do so.

That is simple reasoning and certainly doesn't contradict anything in Scripture. The other occurrence of this expression, *ecterio*, is found in one other place in Scripture, and that's John 17. When we ask ourselves, what does it mean that Jesus will keep people from something, does it necessarily mean, or does it even suggest, that they will be taken out of the world? Well, there's a good way to test that question and answer it, and by looking at the only other place where that verb preposition is found together elsewhere, and that is in John 17, verse 15.

Jesus prays for his church. He says, I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from. That's *ecterio*, the evil one.

Now, I cannot say that this verse teaches us that Christians won't be raptured, although it's interesting that Jesus did pray. He said, I don't pray that you'll take them out of the world. Why not? I want to be taken out of the world, but Jesus didn't pray for that.

But he did pray that I'd be kept from the dangers, spiritual dangers in the world. You can be kept from some harm without being taken out of the world. I mean, it's made as plain as could be here.

I don't ask you to take them out of the world, just keep them from the wicked one. Now,

if that is true here, then in the only other occurrence of the words in the Bible, which are in Revelation 3.10, it can mean it there too. Again, I'm not saying that I am using Revelation 3.10 to disprove the preacher of rapture.

I'm simply saying it doesn't in any sense prove it. You would have to have stronger stuff than that to prove a preacher of rapture. In fact, there's a very good case to be made that no rapture at all is mentioned in Revelation 3.10 and that no tribulation is mentioned in Revelation 3.10. It may be entirely a different scenario and a different kind of promise and the wording would fit equally well.

So as I said, you have to import a preacher of rapture to the passage before you get one in the passage. It doesn't sound there. It must be brought there by the interpreter.

And I don't think that's a very safe way to interpret scripture on any subject. You don't bring your interpretations and impose them. It's better to read from the passage what it says.

And if it doesn't insist on a particular meaning, you don't assume that meaning. Let's look at the next page. What about the arguments about the inappropriateness? How about this one? 1 Thessalonians 5.9, God has not appointed us to wrath.

Okay, well, the argument is that the great tribulation is the time of God's wrath poured out. And therefore, we should not be here because God's not appointed us for wrath. But I've already suggested that it's possible for Christians to be present even while God's wrath is being poured out and still not be recipients of his wrath.

Even if Paul was speaking here about the tribulation, which I do not believe he is, when he says God's wrath, even if he was talking about that, he is not saying anything about whether we'll be here or be somewhere else. He's just saying that we will not be recipients of God's wrath. It's entirely possible to be on the planet at a time when God is judging sinners and still not be appointed to wrath, still not receive wrath.

It's quite simple. The verse doesn't prove anything contrary to this. Now, I'd also like to suggest that the wrath there is extremely artificial to suggest that the tribulation is in view there.

The term wrath is found many, many times in scripture, and most of the time it has nothing to do with a seven-year period of tribulation. Most of the time it has to do with God's anger generically and his judgment. And in this case, it seems to mean God's judgment and anger generally, rather than a seven-year tribulation, because he says God has not appointed us to wrath, but what? To be raptured before the tribulation? No, but to salvation.

God has appointed us to salvation. The opposite of wrath, the opposite of receiving God's wrath is not being raptured before the tribulation. In this passage, the opposite of wrath

is being saved.

Saved people are in one category. Lost people receive God's wrath. And that's true whether they live in the last seven years of history or any other history.

God's people can always expect to be saved. God's enemies can always expect his wrath. There's not a reason in the world to take Paul's words and artificially focus them on a particular time frame where believers of a certain generation escape a certain period of time.

Again, I never expect to experience the wrath of God. That's a given. I don't have the slightest concern that I'll ever experience the wrath of God.

The blood of Jesus Christ has covered my sins. But that doesn't mean that I can't be around when God judges America. I mean, God judged Babylon in the past.

God judged Jerusalem. God has judged Assyria. God has judged Egypt.

This never required all the believers being removed from the world. Why should it require it if he judged the whole world? If he poured his wrath out on the whole world, why does it have to be removed for that? I mean, it's okay if he does remove me. I'm not saying I want to be here.

If God does that, I'm just saying, why should he have to? There's nothing in the passage that requires a pre-tribulation rapture or even necessarily suggest anything about a tribulation or a rapture. What about this one? The time of Jacob's trouble. If the tribulation is the time of Jacob's, that is Israel's trouble.

Then obviously it's not the time of the church's trouble and we don't need to be here. Once again, there's more than one wrong assumption in this argument. First of all, one wrong assumption is that if God wants to bring trouble on Israel, the church can't be on the planet at the same time.

Is there any reason why this must necessarily be so? Why could not God judge Israel if he wished and the church still be on the planet, but simply not being receiving of his judgment? What's wrong with this possibility? Frankly, one would have to admit, unless they've got an agenda to ignore what the Bible says or impose upon it, meanings that it doesn't give, we'd have to admit, well, yeah, I suppose God could judge Israel and the church still be on the planet. After all, God did judge Israel in 70 AD and the church was on the planet then. Why couldn't he do it again if he wished to? And it could be the time of Jacob's trouble if he wants it to be.

That doesn't mean the church isn't here. God's versatile. He can do two things at once.

He can judge Israel and save the church. He can do both at the same time if he wishes.

He's not clumsy and he's not uncoordinated and he's not limited.

The church could be here and it'd still be the time of Jacob's trouble. But the other wrong assumption in this argument is the assumption that the great tribulation of the future is in fact the time of Jacob's trouble. This is a given, almost taken for granted by all dispensations.

Oh yeah, time of Jacob's trouble, great tribulation, seven years, 70th week of Daniel. There is not a reason in the world to apply this expression to a future seven year tribulation. It occurs only once in the Bible.

It occurs in Jeremiah 30 verse 7. In the context of Jeremiah 30, it is a prediction of the Babylonian exile where the Jews were carried away for 70 years in Babylon. It was troublesome to them and Jeremiah calls it the time of Jacob's trouble. But it says that he, Jacob, will be delivered out of it.

That happened. They were 70 years in trouble in Babylon and God delivered them out and brought them back to Jerusalem again. This all happened over 500 years before the time of Christ.

Jeremiah's predictions were true, came true, and ceased to be futuristic long before Jesus ever came on the scene. In other words, there's no biblical reference to a future seven year tribulation that calls it a time of Jacob's trouble. So this argument lacks any foundation whatsoever.

So we'll move along to another. What about Jesus telling us that we should pray to escape all these things? Well, what are all these things? Look at the chapter 21 of Luke. At the end of that, he says, watch and pray that you'll escape all these things and be able to stand before the Son of Man.

Well, what are these things? Well, we don't have time to go in detail on it, but we will later when we talk about the tribulation. But usually it is assumed by the same people that Luke 21 is about a future seven year tribulation. One thing you'll find if you read Luke 21 is that any reference to a seven year period is conspicuous by its absence and that there is not a reference to a future tribulation here.

As a matter of fact, Jesus specifically says that the things he's talking about will occur within the generation that was hearing him speak. Furthermore, I mean, check out how it all begins. It says in verse five of Luke 21, then as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, he said, as for these things, which you see, the days will come in which not one stone will be left upon another that shall not be thrown down.

This was fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Jesus predicted it 40 years in advance. Verse seven, and they asked him, saying, teacher, but when will these

things be? What are these things? What he just predicted.

He just said, not one stone in the temple will be left on another. Well, when will that be? When will this destruction of the temple take place, they asked. They have another question.

And what sign will there be when these things are about to take the same things? These things refer to what Jesus predicted, the destruction of the temple. We know in retrospect, this happened in 70 AD. They didn't know because they lived 40 years before the event.

They didn't know when that would happen. It came as a surprise to them. They said, Lord, well, when's that going to be? What sign will it be that this is about to happen? And then he gives a description.

Oh, there's a lot of indicators. There's going to be wars and rumors of wars, false cries, persecution of Christians, all kinds of terrible things happening. But the worst of it is in verse 20, when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, which was Roman, then know that it's desolation is near.

Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains. OK, so he tells them what sign will there be that this is about to happen? Well, you'll see Jerusalem surrounded by armies. What are we supposed to do about that? Get out of there.

Get out of Jerusalem. Its days are numbered. It is doomed.

Get away. Get away. Escape all these things, which he describes.

Did they? Actually, they did. According to Eusebius, all the Christians fled from Jerusalem. All the Christians that were in Jerusalem fled from Jerusalem in 70 AD, when they saw the Romans coming in, they all escaped.

Just as Jesus said they should pray that they would, they did. Now, to make this something else than what Jesus said it is, is to not take it literally. And I frankly think we should take this more literally.

When Jesus said pray that you could escape all these things. Now, by the way, if we argued and insisted that this is indeed talking about a future tribulation, even so, when Jesus said pray that you might escape these things, you can escape the effects of the tribulation by hiding in a cave or by going into the woods or by being raptured in heaven or by any number of ways. Jesus does not say how the escape takes place.

And if this is the great tribulation, it does not mean that the escape must necessarily be a rapture of the church into heaven. Although I do anticipate a rapture of the church when Jesus comes back into heaven, it is not necessary that that rapture must occur in

order for me to escape from certain particular earthly events. There are always people who manage to escape from different crises.

And Jesus could be saying, well, pray that you'll escape from this one. But actually, in the context, he's not talking about a future tribulation at all. There's not a hint of a future tribulation in this passage, in this chapter.

Therefore, to import one is not taking it literally. What about that one shall be taken and the other left argument? We looked at this before, so I won't waste too much time on it now just because we talked about it when we were talking about the resurrection. And actually, it was just a couple of days, a couple of sessions ago, we were talking about the rapture and when it occurs.

Those passages in Matthew 24 and in Luke 17, to say one shall be taken and the other left, one shall be taken and the other left. In the context, we saw that this is not talking about one being raptured and the other being left here for the tribulation. It's talking about judgment.

The one who is taken is taken in judgment, not raptured, but killed. It's just like Psalm 91, a thousand fall at your side, but it doesn't touch you. There's two in one bed.

One's touched, the other is untouched. One is killed in the judgment of God at the second coming. One is left alive.

There's no need, certainly, and in fact, it's very difficult to try to prove from the passage in context that those who are taken are the class of the righteous taken out of the world. Hardly, especially in Matthew 24 when the previous verse says, it'll be like the days of Noah when the people ate and drank and were given in marriage until the flood came and took them all away. It's clear that the ones taken are the wicked.

And they were taken away, not by a rapture. They were taken away by judgment where they died on the planet because of the judgment of God. It says in 2 Thessalonians 1:8, that Jesus will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that do not know God and those that do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, when he comes, he comes in judgment. This will be a selective judgment. It will be a discriminating judgment.

It is so much so that if there's two, a Christian and non-Christian in a married couple, sleep in the same bed, the non-Christian can be judged by that coming and the Christian left untouched. That is certainly the context. And the way that taken is used in that context to suggest otherwise is to import ideas that are not in the context.

There's no rapture of the church there. Okay. What about this argument? How could the rapture occur at the same time as the actual second coming when that would involve

sort of an elevator ride or a yo-yo scene? You know, I mean, here's how LeHay put it.

He said, it becomes the great elevator escape. We zip up to the father's house, take a quick peek and zip right back down moments later with Christ in his glorious appearance. Such a reading is ludicrous.

I would have to agree such a reading is ludicrous, but he's the one making that reading, not me. I never suggested we're going to zip up and take a peek in the father's house. And then just for a second later, come running down again.

In fact, I never found anything in the Bible that says we're going to be taken up to the father's house at all, because as we know, he is referring to only one passage and that's John 14. And as I showed you the other day to compare scripture with scripture and the wording in that passage with the only other place that the word Monet appears in the Bible, it's clear that the father's house is in that passage, what the father's house is in every passage in the New Testament. The church.

We don't have to be taken up to the father's house. We're already in the father's house. We don't have to look forward to those mansions.

We are those abiding places. Jesus said, if anyone loves me and keeps my commandments, my father will love him and I will love him. We will come to him and make our Monet with him.

Same word is translated mansions in verse two or three there. And therefore the Monet, the abiding places in his house in the church are the people, the individuals. We don't have to go up and zip up to the father's house.

We don't have to go anywhere to get there. We're already there. Don't even have to go up to heaven at the rapture.

The Bible only says we'll meet the Lord in the air. It doesn't say we'll go on beyond that. He's going to turn around and go back and take us up further.

He could do that without coming down to me as he could just call us all the way up there, just like the father called him up there once, but or called John up there, you know, in the revelation. We don't have to, uh, or, or Paul, Paul was caught up in the third heaven. He doesn't know whether in the body or not, but Jesus didn't have to come down to clouds to do it.

If it's a matter of us going to heaven at this point, Jesus wouldn't even have to come down. That makes Jesus more like a yo-yo who comes down and goes right back up. It makes Jesus on the elevator ride.

I mean, you either have Jesus on an elevator ride or us on an elevator ride. I don't really

think that either is a shameful concept, but the question is what is depicted in scripture. It says in first Thessalonians four, verse 17, we who are alive and remain to meet the Lord in the air.

This word to meet is used many times in the, in the new Testament, uh, reasonably common Greek word, but at least in some instances, it means exactly what I would suggest. And that is that we rise to meet the Lord in the air in order to be like a welcoming committee and go back, finish the trip with him. We have this exact meaning of the word in Matthew 25, one, where it says the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to 10 virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Well, by the wedding customs at the time, the bridegroom, uh, the bridesmaids, the virgins would go out and meet the bridegroom as he was coming to the bride's house. And when they met him, he didn't turn around and go back. They turned around and accompanied him the remainder of his trip.

They went out to meet him as he was coming and to accompany him on the final leg of his trip. The same Greek word is used here as is used in first Thessalonians of our rising to meet the Lord in the air. I'm not saying it's the only thing that the word meet can mean, but it certainly can mean that.

And it does mean that in some places in Acts chapter 28, we have the same word again being used. Um, Acts 28 in verse 15, it says, and from there, while Paul was approaching Rome, it says, when the brethren in Rome heard about us, they came to meet us. The word meet is the same as in first Thessalonians one 17, as far as the API forum in the three ends.

When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. Now what is this? Paul's coming to Rome on foot. The Christians in Rome hear of his coming.

They go out to meet him. What did they do then? Indecisive beings that they were, they turned right around and went back to where they came from immediately with Paul, just like a yo-yo. In other words, they went out to meet him in order to greet him before he arrived and to accompany him on the remainder of the trip.

Common customs in ancient times, if a dignitary or nobleman was coming to a town, they would not only go to meet him, they'd pave a road for him. They'd get advance notice for years in advance and pave the road because they knew the emperor was coming or some other important person. They'd remove the obstacles, pave the road.

And then when they needed to go out to meet him, so they'd be like a welcoming committee, the most noble citizens forgot to meet him so that he wouldn't have to arrive in their town alone. He could come with them. That is the same image that Christians throughout history thought Paul is employing when he says, we will rise to meet the Lord

near.

He's coming here. Remember, we're not going somewhere else. He never said he's going to take us to heaven.

No, John 14 doesn't say he's going to take us to heaven. He says he's going to come again and receive us unto himself. But he says there and elsewhere that he's coming here.

So we go up to meet him so that we can accompany him on the final leg of his trip. Is this absurd? Is this ludicrous? Well, if one thinks so, then they have to believe in a pre-trib rapture. But if one does think that's ludicrous, I think they are too easily amused.

Okay, how about these next arguments, next page? The arguments from the impossibility. How about this? This argument is that the passages that describe the rapture and the passages that describe the judgment coming of Christ have such different details that they can't be the same event. Well, by that reasoning, Jesus must have been born on earth twice, because the details of his birth in Matthew 2 and the details of his birth in Luke 2 are certainly different.

In fact, there's hardly any overlapping. Therefore, since one account tells us of wise men coming, and another account tells us nothing of wise men coming, but tells of shepherds coming, I think we would have assumed there must have been two births of Jesus on planet earth at different times, because the details are not the same in the two accounts. Furthermore, we would have said that Jesus rose from the dead at least four different times, because four Gospels recorded, and they all give different details.

So the idea that Jesus was born on earth and resurrected once each would have to be out the window, because in the different accounts of the birth of Jesus, they're not the same, they don't give the same details, and there's two different accounts. In the case of the resurrection, there's four different accounts, and they certainly don't give the same details. So on this reasoning, the rapture cannot occur at the same time as the judgment coming of Christ, but then Jesus had to be born twice and resurrected four times on earth, and you could extend illustrations like that indefinitely.

The point is, it's an absurdity to argue this way. Everybody knows that a complex event, when being discussed, does not have to have every aspect of its complexity discussed in every time it's discussed. A passage, an event that involves the rapture of the saints, the resurrection of the dead, the judging of the world, and all this stuff, depending on when it is mentioned and what the purpose of mentioning is, doesn't have to mention all the details every time, and therefore you'll find some passages with different details, but consider this.

These quotes I gave you in the last lecture, Paul Feinberg says, there is no clear,

indisputable reference to the rapture in any second advent passage. Wow! What a statement. There is no clear reference to the rapture in any second advent passage.

Has this man ever noticed 1 Thessalonians 4, I wonder, where it says, we who are alive and are in until the coming of the Lord, is that not the second advent, the parousia? That sounds like a second advent passage to me. And then a few verses later he says, and we who are alive and are in shall be caught up to meet the Lord. That sounds like a rapture to me.

In fact, it's the only passage that mentions the rapture as a catching up. It's in a parousia passage, a second advent passage. But this just shows how much presuppositions from a human system, imposed on a person before he reads the Bible, so that he reads the Bible only through his glasses, can make him not see what's there.

There is no clear reference to the rapture in any second advent passage. Wow! That is an astonishing thing. And Wallabord said, and I quoted him last time, he said, no passage dealing with the resurrection of saints at the second coming in either testament ever mentions translation of living saints at the same time.

Oh my goodness! No passage in the Bible that speaks of the resurrection of the saints talks in the same place about the translation of the living saints. What about, again, 1 Thessalonians 4, the dead in Christ shall rise first. Isn't that the resurrection of the saints? And the next verse, and we who are alive and remain shall be caught up.

Isn't that the translation of the saints? Or how about 1 Corinthians chapter 15, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the Lord shall come and the trump shall sound and what happens? The dead in Christ rise and we shall be changed. That's the rapture and the resurrection.

The fact of the matter is the rapture is never mentioned in the Bible apart from the resurrection of the saints. The only two passages that mention the rapture in the same context, the immediate context, the very same sentences practically, mention the resurrection of the saints. For a man like Walbert to say, no passage dealing with the resurrection of the saints at the second coming in either testament ever mentions the translation of the living saints at the same time, it's an astonishing statement.

And this man is a leading Bible scholar and was for many years the chancellor and head honcho at Dallas Theological Center. And this man is not aware that the only passages in the Bible that mention the rapture also mention the resurrection of the saints. Not one passage that mentions them both together.

But this is nonetheless an argument that is made. What about this one? The Bible says he's going to come with the saints, so he must first come for the saints. Is that reasonable? Well, yes and no.

I mean, on one hand, first of all, the Bible does speak frequently of Jesus coming with his saints. There is no reference to Jesus coming for his saints. That expression is not used.

You would expect there to be some scriptures speaking about Jesus coming for his saints and some others with him coming with his saints. And these are different comings. But actually, you never find expressions say he's going to come for his saints.

You only find him coming with his saints. Now, in order to do so, what has to occur first? Before Jesus could come with his saints, what has to occur first? Nothing. Why? Because his saints are already with him.

Many tens of thousands of millions of them. If you read the book of Revelation, John was caught up into heaven. He saw them innumerable, innumerable company of saints in heaven with Jesus.

When he comes here, he can bring them with him, can he not? In fact, it says in 1 Thessalonians 4.14, he's going to. It says in 1 Thessalonians 4.14, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then those who sleep in Jesus, he will bring with him. Okay, fair enough.

He's going to come back with 10,000 of his saints. They're already there. You don't need an additional rapture to arrange for him to come with 10,000 of his saints.

He can come today without a prior rapture and do that. However, he is going to rapture the church at the time of his coming. And when he does, then all the saints will be in the sky with him and they will return to earth with him.

Yes, we could say that in order for all the saints to come with him, he has to rapture them first. But why does it have to be more than a moment before so? I mean, there's certainly no seven years beforehand. There's no proof of a pre-trib rapture here at all.

Now, how about this second Thessalonians 2? This is the biggie. The man of sin cannot rise until that which hinders or restrains is taken out of the way. Very important passage.

First of all, I might note with you that Paul does not say what it is that restrains the man of sin from rising. Therefore, to suggest that that restraining force is the church or the Holy Spirit in the church is only an educated guess. It may be a right one or a wrong one, but we have to admit it really amounts to speculation.

Since Paul is unclear and does not state what it is, he specifically avoids stating what it is. He says, you know what it is. When I was with you, I talked to you about these things, you know, but I'm not mentioning it.

Therefore, it might be the church. It might be the Holy Spirit in the church, but it might be something else. I mean, we have to allow that possibility.

And therefore, when he says that which restrains must be taken out of the way, it doesn't necessarily mean that the church must be raptured. Now, there have been many views in history as to what it was that restrained. Some people believe, compared with Daniel 12, 1, that it must be Michael the archangel is restraining and he'll step out of the way.

Others have just assumed that it's just God himself is restraining. You know who's restraining? God. And when he steps out of the way and lets the man of sin come up, he'll come up.

It doesn't have to be the church. It could be. But you know, the argument that says it is the church bases it on this.

It says with the presence of the church in the world, Satan could never rise to the kind of power that we read of the Antichrist possessing. Really? There was a church in Germany when Hitler rose. There was a church in Italy when Mussolini rose.

There was a church in Rome when Nero and Domitian and Diocletian rose. These men were as anti-Christ and as hard on the church and as deceptive in the regions where they lived as the church generally, as the Antichrist is hoped to be for in the whole world. I mean, if the presence of the church in a geographical area makes it impossible for satanic, Christ-hating, deceptive, persecuting dictators to rise, then how is it that so many have risen? Right when the church was even present.

To me, I do not see any validity to the argument that the man of sin could never rise with the church present. It's happened many times that such people have risen with the church present. And to say, well, the Antichrist, that's an exception.

He couldn't rise without the church present. I'd say, really? Why do I? Am I supposed to believe that? Because you say so? I mean, where does it say so in the Bible? Where do we get this argument? We get it out of thin air because we need it if we're going to prove a preacher of rapture. Ah, it's the church.

Now, let me ask you this. Does Paul allow that it is the church? He doesn't say what it is. He leaves open several possibilities.

But is the church one of the possibilities? Could Paul be saying that the church has to be taken away before the man of sin is revealed? Well, earlier in the chapter, in verse 1, he says, Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him, which expression, our gathering together unto him, sounds like he might be referring to the rapture. It kind of sounds strongly like that. We ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

Let no one deceive you by any means. That day, what day? The day of Christ's coming

and our gathering together to him. That day will not come unless a falling away comes first and the man of sin be revealed.

What does this tell you? It means the man of sin has to be revealed before we can be gathered away in the rapture. In other words, the rise of the man of sin must be before the rapture. Would Paul turn around in the very next verses and say the opposite? And now I want to tell you the church has to be taken away before the man of sin is revealed.

He has just said in clear language, in verses 1 through 3, that the church will not be gathered to the Lord until the man of sin has been revealed. He would not say in an unclear passage just the opposite. His meaning in the following verses must be something other than what dispensationalists have imposed on it.

Or else Paul contradicts himself within the space of about two or three verses. What about the idea that the falling away is the rapture, the departure? Well, it is in one sense true that apostasia does mean a going away or a departure, but its use in the Bible generally means a departure from orthodoxy or from a certain doctrine. For example, the word is used elsewhere in the Bible only in Acts 21, 21, and it speaks there of the Jews falling away from Moses, that is, departing from the orthodoxy of Mosaic religion.

Therefore, apostasia, because this is the only other usage in the New Testament, is taken to mean a falling away from the faith or from true religion rather than a departure from earth. Therefore, it is not likely that Paul means the rapture when he says the departure, and besides, it would contradict what he just said. We cannot be gathered to him until the apostasia happens first.

It would make no sense for him to say we cannot be gathered to him until the rapture occurs first and then the man of sin will be revealed. Then we can be gathered to him. That would be, of course, nonsensical.

What we have to say about 2 Thessalonians 2 is that Paul is deliberately vague and ambiguous, which means we cannot be too dogmatic about what we say he is meaning when he says that, which restrains, but we can be fairly sure of what he isn't meaning, because to say that he means the church or the Holy Spirit in the church would require that he contradict what he just said a few verses earlier. That is not likely to be what Paul meant to do. So I am not going to agree with the notion that this passage teaches a preacher of rapture or even implies it or even could be pressed into the service of that doctrine without making Paul a contradictor of himself.

What about this? The days of Noah and the days of Lot. Noah went into the ark. Enoch was raptured before the flood.

Lot went out of Sodom before the judgment came on Sodom. If you want to look again at the passage, if you have time, in Luke 17, where all this came from, I will simply point

out to you that the destruction of the world with the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone are not compared with a seven-year tribulation. They are compared with the day that Jesus returns.

It specifically says so. Luke 17, verse 26. And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man.

They ate, drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, as it was also in the days of Lot, they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted. But on the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven.

Verse 30, even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. Okay, the raining of fire and brimstone on Sodom, the day that that happened and the day that the flood came, it'll be like that on the day that Jesus is revealed. It does not say that it'll be like that for seven years.

In other words, the judgment of the flood and the judgment on Sodom are not pictured as types of the tribulation. They're pictured as types of the day that Jesus comes back and judges the world. Therefore, Lot's escape and Noah's escape from this judgment is a picture of Christians who are not appointed to wrath, but when Jesus returns will be protected as Noah was, as Lot was.

In fact, the Christians would be taken right out of the world to meet the Lord in the air on that day when the Son of Man is revealed. So there's not a reference here to a pre-trib rapture. There's just a reference to the fact that before God judges the world as he did with the flood and as he judged Sodom, the saints will be protected.

Now what about Enoch? Oh, that's a very tempting picture of the rapture, Enoch being raptured before the flood. However, the problem with that is Jesus doesn't mention Enoch here. We have the important information from Genesis 5 to make that significant.

And Enoch actually was raptured, if we want to call it that, over 600 years before the flood. He would have died of old age before the flood if he had not been caught up into heaven as he was without seeing death. Therefore, no one can argue that God took Enoch out of the world so he could escape the flood.

As I said, he would have to have lived longer than Methuselah to even survive until the flood. And for that reason, it does not seem that that is a relevant picture, although some like to make it one. What about this business of Tim LaHaye about the blessed hope isn't blessed if we have to go through the tribulation? Remember what Tim LaHaye said, quote, it would take a masochist to look forward to the tribulation as a time of blessing.

Perhaps Tim LaHaye ought to consider that the passage he's referring to, Titus 2.13,

doesn't say that the tribulation is a time of blessing. It says that the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ is the blessed hope. A post-tribulationist does not say that going through the tribulation is the blessed hope.

The blessed hope is the glorious appearing of our Lord and Jesus Christ, according to Paul. This glorious appearing occurs at the end of time, according to all passages on the subject in scripture that tell us anything about its timing, and therefore, if there is a seven-year tribulation, it occurs at the end of the tribulation. If Christians are here during the tribulation, would the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ be a blessed hope? I dare say the more the trouble we have here, the more blessed is the hope of his coming.

As a matter of fact, many Christians today in relative comfort don't have much hope or don't see it as a blessing. I've heard Christians say, you know, my life is just getting started. I just got married.

We've got a new house, got a new car, things are going well. I hope Jesus doesn't come too soon. In times of prosperity and comfort, Christians do not long as much for the coming of the Lord as they do when they are under persecution and hardship.

Yes, the rapture, the second coming of Christ, would be a tremendously blessed hope to those who are in the tribulation, if that is the case. But whether it is or not, no one is suggesting that the tribulation is the blessed hope. And to do this is to set up a man of straw because the pre-tribulations cannot knock down the real man.

No one ever said that we have the masochistic attitude of looking forward to the tribulation as a time of blessing. He says if Christ does not rapture his church before the tribulation begins, much of the hope is destroyed and thus it becomes a blessed hope. I disagree, Mr. LaHaye.

I just think that the coming of the Lord is a tribulation or in comfort. The true Christian is going to look forward to the coming of the Lord with great longing and it will be a blessed hope and remains a blessed hope to Christians in all circumstances, including those in the tribulation. LaHaye is living in America.

He has never known any tribulation. He forgets that the New Testament was written by Christians who were in tribulation. They were in persecution.

They were hated. They were poor. They were uncomfortable.

They were driven from town to town. They were killed. And yes, it was truly a blessed hope.

Paul, when he even wrote to Titus about it, was in prison facing the death penalty, which later took his head. And he had been once delivered from the line, but is now arrested again when he wrote Titus. And yes, he was in tribulation.

He was in prison. He faced death and he died shortly after he wrote the book. And yes, it was a blessed hope to look forward to the coming of Jesus.

Mr. LaHaye lives in a bubble called American culture where Christians have never known any trouble of any significance and can't imagine still loving the appearing of Christ if he has to go through some trouble first. Apparently, I hate to be unkind, but that seems to be what he's saying. I'll judge him by his own words.

Jesus said to be judged by your words. Now let's go to the last page. What about this business that we're looking for and watching and waiting for? Jesus, it must be imminent.

He must come at any moment. Let me just say this. The Bible does not teach a doctrine of imminence.

The Bible does not teach anywhere that Jesus could come back in a moment. We just read a moment ago. Second Thessalonians, Chapter two.

Paul said, Don't let anyone flee. Don't let him tell you the day of Christ is at hand or has come. It's not that can't happen until some other things happen first.

Didn't Paul say that? Didn't he say that day cannot come until the man of sin is revealed in the following way? Paul said it can't happen right now. There's some things got to happen first. Now we might argue, well, those things have now happened.

It could happen now. Maybe, maybe not. But the point is, Paul did not teach a doctrine of imminency.

He did not say Christians must sit around expecting that Jesus could come at any moment. Rather, the Bible indicates we should hasten the coming of the Lord by doing what God wants to get done before he returns. Jesus has a plan and that plan is not just to rapture the church.

The plan has to do with him evangelizing the world, bringing the saints to maturity and doing a number of things that haven't happened yet. And if he wants to come now, that's fine with me. I say, come Lord Jesus.

But I suspect, and the Bible gives me every reason to suspect, that some things need to happen first. Jesus said in Matthew 24, 14, this gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations and then shall the end come. Sounds like that's not an imminency doctrine.

As long as you live in a time where the gospel has not been preached all the world, apparently Jesus is saying the end cannot come yet. That's not a doctrine of any moment second coming in the Bible. In fact, when Jesus told his disciples to watch and wait and so forth, did he mean that from the moment he gave those instructions, they were

suspect any moment now Jesus might return? That's ridiculous.

He hadn't even left yet. How could they expect his second coming at any moment when he was still there with them and hadn't left yet? Obviously he could tell them to wait and look for and watch for something, even if some things have to happen first. I'm looking forward to Christmas, but I don't expect it today.

It says in Hebrews chapter 11 that Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker is God. That city came into existence with the coming of Christ, but Abraham didn't expect it to happen at any moment. He knew that he had to have a son.

His son had to grow up. His son had to have children. He knew things had to happen, but he still looked for it.

To say that our focus is set, we're looking for the glorious appearing of our great God and savior, Jesus Christ. We're looking for a new heavens and new earth. According to second Peter chapter three and verse 13, we look according to his promise, we look for a new heaven, new earth.

The dispensationalist isn't expecting a new heaven, new earth anytime soon. He believes there's going to be a tribulation first, a millennium first, and then a new heaven, new earth. And yet the scripture says we're looking for a new earth.

Does that not mean even to the dispensationalist that we can look for things that we don't expect any moment? Just because we're told to watch, wait, and look does not mean that we're told that it might happen now. It means we're supposed to keep our sights set on this goal, and that's all it means. And Christians do and always have, whether or not they believed in an imminent second coming, which Christians have not always believed in.

The idea that Jesus must come as a thief does not mean that he can come in a moment, but it does mean that when he does come, it will be unannounced. And so we need to be ready all the time just because we don't know when it might be. That no one knows the day or the hour, likewise, no big deal, unless you are trying to calculate days from the 42 months of Daniel or Revelation, you're never going to know the day or the hour of his coming.

The person who denies a preacher of rapture doesn't necessarily say that we can't know the day or the hour of his coming. The opposite is true. I don't know the day or the hour.

I will never even predict it or guess it. I don't have any interest in doing so. I'm ready to meet Jesus.

The last argument we have to consider, I'm sorry to go so fast, we have three minutes left, is the incentive. The rapture, any moment rapture, provides a necessary incentive to

holy living and an incentive to evangelism. What's interesting that Peter said in 2 Peter 3, that the incentive to holy living is the new heavens and new earth.

He said, therefore, since all these things must be dissolved, meaning at the end of the dispensation of things at the end of the millennium, what manner then ought we to be in all holy living and so forth? The holy living is motivated by the fact that we know there's going to be a judgment, a passing of this order, and we're made for a new order. We live and we prepare ourselves. We purify ourselves, looking forward to coming to the Lord.

That doesn't mean we have to believe it's going to be any moment. Likewise, in evangelism, should we tell people Jesus might come at any moment? Haven't we already lost enough credibility? I was told Jesus would come back at any moment in 1970. He didn't.

I still believe he's going to come back, and it may be reasonably soon. I don't know. But I will say this, that many people fell away because they got saved on the notion, or they responded to an obstacle on the notion, that Jesus is coming soon and they better get ready now.

They were wrong. He didn't come soon. And someday, of course, he will, but not perhaps until the church has cried wolf again and again and again and again and again and again and there was no wolf.

And there's a little story about that in Esau's fables that you probably all know. When the wolf finally came and someone cried wolf, no one believed him anymore. Isn't it interesting that the church has cried wolf? The coming Lord is near.

They set date, set date, set date, set date. Didn't show. No show.

No show. No show. One of these days, he's really going to come, but no one's going to be listening anymore to the church.

The church has lost credibility by lying or speculating in the name of preaching the gospel. The fact of the matter is the Bible does not tell us Jesus will come back at any moment, but it does tell us this, we might die at any moment. And you know what? If Christians had preached the gospel on that basis, not if you don't get saved tonight, Jesus might come and you might be in the tribulation because you didn't make the rapture, that kind of goofy stuff, which isn't said in the Bible.

We, we wouldn't lose so much credibility if the same preacher said, you know what? If you don't get saved tonight, you might die tonight and go to hell. That would be absolutely true. The Bible teaches that the Bible indicates that the fact that we're going to die and face God someday is a motivation A to live a holy life and B to tell others about Christ, because we don't know if they will live to see Jesus come.

We don't know if he's going to come in their lifetime, but you know what? They're going to die in this lifetime. I don't know if Jesus is going to come in this generation, but he's going to come for me in this generation because I'm going to die. And that is a fact.

His coming in this generation is not a known fact, but his coming for me in death is a known fact that is sufficient motivator to any reasonable person to live a whole life day by day and to motivate others to do likewise. I'm sorry to end so abruptly, but we've run out of time. We will go on to other subjects next time.

We will examine our next lectures, whether or not the Bible teaches a seven-year tribulation.