

SOME PROBLEMS WITH POSTTRIBULATIONIS

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The purpose of this study is to identify, articulate, and illustrate some problems with posttribulationism. Thirteen "problems" are discussed. It is not intended that the list or the discussion be exhaustive. Nor are the problems presented in any particular order of importance. It is always easier to assail someone else's system of theology than to construct an unassailable system of one's own. Nevertheless, I offer the following criticisms of posttribulationism.

Posttribulationism holds that the church will remain on earth throughout the tribulation period until the time of Christ's second advent, at which time the church will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and will then accompany Him as He continues His descent to earth.

In placing the rapture at the end of the tribulation period, posttribulationism is confronted with a number of serious problems. Especially futurist or premillennial posttribulationism. Many of the problems addressed herein are endemic to posttribulationism in general. However, this study focuses primarily on posttribulationism of the premillennial variety.

Posttribulationism Does Not Adequately Explain the Purpose of the Rapture.

Posttribulationists usually explain the purpose of the rapture in one of two ways. According to one view, the church is raptured to remove it from earth before the outpouring of divine wrath which is confined to the very end of the tribulation (or after it).¹ The second view sees the church on earth during the outpouring of divine wrath, but divinely protected from its effects.² In this view the church is caught up at the second advent to meet the Lord in the air as a "delegation" to welcome Christ after the pattern of Hellenistic formal receptions of dignitaries and to accompany Him as He descends to earth.³

Gundry holds the first view and argues as well from Paul's use of *apantesis* in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 that the church also serves as a "delegation" to welcome and accompany Christ, the dignitary, back to earth, the delegation's point of origin.⁴ Neither of these theories however, adequately explain the purpose of the rapture.

First, in light of Michael Cosby's recent study,⁵ Paul's use of *papantesis* in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 cannot be invested with all the trappings of the Hellenistic formal reception of a dignitary. Not only are all the elements of Hellenistic receptions missing in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, but are in fact the opposite of what is found in this passage. The rapture cannot be understood as a "delegation" caught up to meet Christ for the purpose of welcoming Him with pomp and dignity and immediately escorting Him back to earth, the church's place of origin. The

clear teaching of John 14:1-3 is not that the church comes to receive Christ, but that Christ comes to receive the Church ("I will come again and receive you to Myself", Jn. 14:3).

That view, therefore, which sees the church on earth but divinely protected during the outpouring of God's wrath is left with no explanation for the purpose of the removal of the church from the earth at the end of the tribulation. If the church is protected on earth, why remove it from earth? It won't do to say that the rapture is to meet the church's expectations of deliverance from the persecutions of the tribulation. The return of Christ puts an end to it all that. This view offers no reasonable explanation for the purpose of the rapture.

Second, that posttrib view which sees the church removed from earth prior to the outpouring of God's wrath better explains the purpose of the rapture, but is freighted with logical, chronological and exegetical problems. Gundry's attempt to defend this view is actually a boon to pretribulationism. It is an amazing feat of exegetical gymnastics. On the one hand, Gundry sees the church raptured at Christ's second advent, but before divine wrath is poured out (this he places after the tribulation). On the other hand, he confines the wrath of God to the end of, but during, the tribulation period and sees the church divinely protected while on earth.⁶

These are conflicting views, if not mutually exclusive. I suppose one could argue that it is not impossible that God will exempt the church from His wrath by providing "protection within" while the church is still on earth, then before a final outburst of wrath, protect the church by also removing it from the earth. But what is the purpose of such a rapture? Not only is this view improbable, and unsupported by Scripture, it doesn't explain the purpose of the rapture.

Gundry further complicates his view when he populates the millennial kingdom with unsaved Gentiles and the 144,000 Jews who are not saved until after the tribulation period but at, or before, the second advent. This question of the population of the millennium constitutes a serious problem with posttribulationism and is therefore discussed below. Suffice it here to say that Gundry's view creates a "bottleneck" at the second advent, and still fails to explain the purpose of the rapture.⁷

Finally, posttribulationism (of either kind) fails to explain the corpus of biblical data which relates to the purpose of the rapture. Dr. Walvoord has stated that the "rapture of the church has one purpose: the removal of the church from the world."⁸ Clearly, this is the purpose of the rapture. But why does Christ snatch the church up from the earth to meet Him in the air? Scripture suggests a multi-faceted purpose which may be grouped around five motifs.

The Bride and Bridegroom

First there is the bride and Bridegroom motif. If the custom of the Jewish marriage and wedding ceremony is analogous to Christ's relationship to the church and His coming for His bride as some suggest,⁹ only a pretrib rapture would accomplish this purpose. Paul speaks of the church as betrothed to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2-3) and as yet to be presented to the Bridegroom. John 14:1-3 picture the church as the bride of Christ waiting expectantly for the Bridegroom to come leading the wedding procession to receive His bride; to return to His Father's house where he has prepared a place for her. There the marriage is consummated, she is dressed in fine linen (Rev.

19:8), and finally presented to the guests at the wedding supper. Revelation 19:8 shows the bride dressed for the wedding supper in language which clearly suggests that the church has already appeared before the judgment seat of Christ. All of this could hardly be said to be accomplished at a posttrib rapture.¹⁰

Translation from Mortality to Immortality

A second motif is the translation of the church from mortality to immortality (1 Cor. 15:50-53). A pretrib rapture would require such a change. The church could not inhabit heaven in mortal bodies. But if the church merely meets Christ in the air only to immediately return to earth with Him, what need is there that the church be "changed" (1 Cor. 15:51)? Why must the mortal put on immortality and the perishable put on imperishable (1 Cor. 15:53-54)?

The Commencement of Daniel's Seventieth Week

A third motif is the resuming of God's prophetic time-clock in regard to Israel. The tribulation period is the time of "Jacob's trouble." Its inception marks the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week. It is reasonable to expect the church to be absent from this time on earth. The church's absence during the first sixty-nine weeks of this prophecy does not necessarily require its absence during the seventieth week. But its presence seems contrary to God's purposes for Israel. Anyone saved during the tribulation would become part of the church. A posttrib rapture would remove all the saved from earth and leave none to propagate the kingdom.

The Wrath of God

A fourth motif is the wrath of God. Attempts to confine the wrath of God to the very end of the tribulation period simply do not stand up. The entire seventieth week must be understood as the time of God's wrath.¹¹ This being true, a posttribulational rapture is purposeless.

The Church's Promise of Exemption

A fifth motif is the church's promise of exemption not only from this wrath, but from the time of it (Rev. 3:10). This is harmonious with the removal of the restrainer (2 Thess. 2: 7), and in keeping with the church's expectation of a "blessed hope" (1 Thess. 1:9-10; 5:1-10; Rev. 3:10; Tit. 2:13). Posttribulationism voids this promise of any real meaning.

Thus, posttribulationism fails on several counts to explain the purpose of the rapture: (1) the Hellenistic formal reception of a dignitary based on *ccvtrjaiç* in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 cannot be maintained, (2) "protection within" rather than "removal from" makes a posttrib rapture pointless, (3) confining the wrath of God to the final moments of the tribulation period (or after it) creates insurmountable logical, theological, chronological, exegetical and logistical problems, and (4) posttribulationism does not satisfy Scripture's expressed multi-faceted purposes for the rapture. In his defense of posttribulationism, Moo states, "The fact that believers at a posttribulational Rapture would rise to meet the Lord in the air only to return immediately to earth with Him creates no difficulty, for the text [Jn. 14:1-31] does not state that believers will go directly to heaven, but only that they will always be with the Lord."¹² Archer responds:

On the contrary, we maintain that this yo-yo procedure of popping up and down presents a very great difficulty! At one moment the faithful followers of Christ are lifted up out of the revolting scene of the sin-cursed, evil-dominated earth in order to meet with the Lord Jesus in His kingly glory up in the clouds of heaven. But since this descent of Christ is identified by Dr. Moo with the return to earth for judgment described in Revelation 19:11-21, this means that He will descend mounted upon His white horse, followed by the hosts of heaven. If so, he would hardly be apt to check His course for any length of time as He makes His way down to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4) and to the battlefield of Armageddon. If anything, these upward-bobbing saints will only impede the momentum of His earthward charge as He rushes down to crush the rebellious hosts of the Beast and all his minions. The most that can be said of such a "Rapture" is that it is a rather secondary sideshow of minimal importance.¹³

Dr. LaHaye calls this "great elevator escape ludicrous!"¹⁴ Dr. Mayhue states that the rapture is rendered inconsequential if it is posttribulation. ¹⁵ And Dr. Walvoord concludes:

Posttribulationists... have never resolved the pressing question as to why there is a rapture at the second coming. If, as a matter of fact, the purpose of Christ is to establish His saints in the millennial kingdom, why would saints meet Christ in the air at the rapture if they are going to return immediately to the earth as the posttribulationists teach? Why would it not be preferable for the church to go into the millennium in their natural bodies as the Scriptures make clear other saints will do?¹⁶

These assessments are not overdrawn. Posttribulationism fails to explain the purpose of the rapture. In a posttrib scenario, the rapture is rendered superfluous.

Posttribulationism Minimizes the Nature of the Tribulation Period

Posttribulationists either (1) exclude the wrath of God entirely from the tribulation period, (2) confine it to a few brief moments at Christ's second advent, or (3) redefine it as the wrath of man, Antichrist, and Satan.¹⁷ Since they see the rapture occurring before the Day of the Lord, Posttribs place the terminus a quo of the Day of the Lord at the conclusion of the tribulation, the time of Christ's second advent.¹⁸ Thus, the wrath of God in the Day of the Lord described in Scripture as terrible and awesome, and at length in Revelation, is reduced to a few brief moments, or placed after the tribulation period. This is contrary to the evidence.

Scripture indicates that the entire tribulation period is a time of the outpouring of God's temporal judicial wrath throughout the seven years (Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1; 16:1; 19). It is described as God's judgment (Rev. 14:7; 15:4; 16:5-7; 19:2) and God's punishment (Isa. 24:21-22), and it involves the whole earth (Isa. 24:1-6; 34:2). The entire time involves Daniel's seventieth week, and is the "time of Jacob's trouble." It concerns the chastisement of God's covenant people Israel (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:24; 12:1). Years ago, H. A. Ironside stated:

Practically all futurist interpreters are agreed that in chapters 6 to 19 of Revelation we have the great tribulation period. It is then that the wrath of the Lamb and the wrath of God will be poured upon the habitable earth, and Satan will be cast down from the heavenlies, having great wrath, knowing that his time is short. These are the circumstances of the great tribulation and we are looking for Christ as our Deliverer from the wrath to come.¹⁹

In the ongoing debate since then, posttribs have failed exegetically to reduce or redefine the wrath of God. Pretribs have demonstrated, and continue to demonstrate, that the wrath of God is poured out during the entire tribulation period (Daniel's seventieth week), and that this period is part of the Day of the Lord. I do not propose to argue these points. Others have ably done so²⁰ and I have given my arguments elsewhere.²¹ Here, I merely point out that posttribs minimize the nature of the tribulation, and have yet to answer recent pretrib arguments on this issue of divine wrath and the Day of the Lord.

I do however, wish to briefly address two issues: one in connection with God's wrath, and the other in connection with the Day of the Lord. In respect to God's wrath, pretribs have sometimes argued that no believer will suffer divine wrath. And since the tribulation is a time of God's wrath, the rapture must be pretribulational. But this argument backfires. If we exempt the church from the tribulation on the grounds that no believer will suffer the wrath of God, then we are left to explain the presence of believers in the tribulation who do suffer the wrath of God. And if we claim that these saints are divinely protected we play into the hands of posttribulationism, and must explain why the church could not also be present in the tribulation but divinely protected.

Several things may be noted. First, careful distinctions should be made between the eternal retributive wrath of God which issues in damnation, and the temporal, judicial wrath of God which issues in physical calamity on the earth and which does sometimes fall on God's people. It is true no believer will ever suffer God's eternal retributive wrath (Jn. 3:36; 5:24; Rom. 8:1). This is true of all believers of all ages whether belonging to the church or not. It is not true however, that no saint will ever be subject to God's temporal judicial wrath.

After all, history is replete with the godly (analogous to tribulation saints) suffering along with the ungodly (analogous to "earthdwellers") under the temporal judgment of God against the wicked (e.g., Daniel and Ezekiel during the Babylonian captivity as just one example).²²

Moreover, one can hardly read the OT in light of the terms ("curses") of the Palestinian covenant (Deut. 28-30; Lev. 26) and miss the fact that God's temporal, judicial wrath not only fell indirectly on God's people, but frequently fell directly on His covenant people. The wrath of God resulted in famine, disease, infertility, death, cosmic calamities, affliction by their enemies, exile from the land, and domination by Gentile nations. This wrath continues today in Israel's incomplete possession of the land, and threat of Gentile domination, and shall continue "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24). It will culminate in the tribulation period with the commencement of Daniel's seventieth week, described by Daniel as "a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time" (Dan. 12:1), and by Jesus Christ as "a

great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall" (Matt. 24:2 1).

Both (thumos) and (orge) are used in the LXX of God's temporal, judicial wrath often directed against His own people. See for example, Psalm 87:7, 16 (LXX) where the psalmist speaks of both (thumos) and (orge) falling on himself; and Psalm 89:7, 9, 11 (LXX) where Moses includes himself among those who have been the object of God's wrath. According to Leviticus 26 (where Thumos is used), this chastisement, or wrath increases in intensity so long as God's covenant people fail to respond. This is in full accord with the intensity of the temporal wrath of God which will fall during the tribulation period and which is designed (1) to turn Israel to repentance, and (2) issue retribution on the "earthdwellers," the enemies of God.

Second, it should be noted that the promise of exemption from this eschatological, temporal, judicial wrath is (1) promised only to the church (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 3:10), not to believers in general, and (2) concerns the "hour" or time of this wrath (Rev. 3:10). This explains why the church must be removed from earth prior to the tribulation and why not all saints in the tribulation are immune to the wrath of God. God's protection of the saints from some of this wrath does not require or even suggest that the church be on earth. The church's "blessed hope" is uniquely hers in regard to exemption from the eschatological wrath to come.²³

Neither will it do to redefine the wrath of God as the wrath of man, Antichrist, or Satan. OT precedent shows clearly that God often used man and Satan as tools to administer His divine judgment on His own people! According to Daniel, God is the One who appoints and deposes kings (Dan. 4:25; 5:2 1). God used Nebuchadnezzar to chastise His covenant people, Israel (Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10). And the Assyrians' "wrath" against Israel, Isaiah identifies as God's wrath (Isa. 10:1-34; 12:3-4). It is the "horned Lamb" (arnean) who looses the seven-sealed scroll first identified in Revelation 5. This is the One to whom all judgment has been given (Jn. 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Matt. 28:18), and who alone is worthy to open the seals (Rev. 5:5); which when loosed are identified by the "earthdwellers" as proceeding from Him who sits on the throne, and the wrath of the lamb" (Rev. 6:16, 17). Posttribs may not see it, but even unbelieving "earthdwellers" will recognize the first six seals as the wrath of God! It is arbitrary to assign the wrath of the first six seals to man, Antichrist, and Satan, and disassociate it from the Lamb who looses these seals. These seals are the outpouring of the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:16, 17).

Now, in respect to the terminus a quo of the Day of the Lord, I suggest that Revelation 1:10 (1:10 with its reference to 'the Lord's day (te kuriake emera) should be understood not as a terminus technicus for Sunday, the day of worship, but as referring to the eschatological Day of the Lord. I have listed at least eleven reasons for this elsewhere.²⁴ Here, I briefly mention five. (1) The patristic documents which supposedly give evidence that te kuriake emera was used as a terminus technicus in John's day give no such evidence. (2) Context strongly favors the 'Day of the Lord' view for te kuriake emera. (3) John's every other reference to Sunday is I[T- I cFctPOa'To)v (contemporary to the writing of Revelation). (4) The NT consistently denotes Sunday as above, or prote sabbatou. (5) John's change in style may be attributed to a veiled but deliberate contrast to Roman Emperor's Day which was also referred to adjectivally. Thus John may be saying that the Roman emperor boasts "the day is his" (i.e., "Emperor's day" as it was called). But the real imperial day is the Lord's day; i.e., the Day of the Lord.

If it is asked why John addresses the churches immediately after a reference to the Day of the Lord, we suggest: (1) this may be explained by the fact that after mentioning the Day of the Lord (Rev. 1:10), and before he addresses the churches, John turns around (1:12) and in so doing, shifts his attention from the events of "that" day (i.e., Day of the Lord) to the messages to the churches of "this" day. (2) A second explanation, which is not necessarily mutually exclusive, may be that since Christ stands among the lampstands (the churches, 1:20) as judge, perhaps the Day of the Lord in some sense begins with the church. After all, in His messages to the seven churches Christ warns of judgment (which appears imminent) and their need to repent. Could it be that the Day of the Lord begins with Christ's separation of the true church from the false, by rapturing the true church and leaving on earth the false church to fall under the temporal wrath of God? Peter speaks of a time for "judgment to begin with the household of God" (1 Pet. 4:17). Perhaps this is His first act in the execution of His divine wrath as the Day of the Lord commences. If Revelation 1:10 is referring to the eschatological Day of the Lord, Moo is wrong when he says "no reference to the eschatological 'day' in the New Testament clearly includes a description of the Tribulation."²⁵ Revelation 6-19 clearly include a description of the tribulation. And the immediate context of Revelation 1:10 abounds with allusions to the Day of the Lord.

Posttribulationism Misconstrues the Purpose of the Tribulation Period

Not only does posttribulationism minimize the nature of the tribulation, but it misconstrues its purpose. Premillennial posttribs recognize the tribulation period as Daniel's seventieth week. But they seem to miss the import of this. Daniel's seventieth week is a time of divine temporal wrath decreed against Israel, God's covenant people who were (and are) in violation of the covenant (Dan. 9:24). This is the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7). This is not to say that God does not also direct His wrath at the nations. He does. Scripture is clear on this.

But posttribulationism of any variety does not give sufficient weight to the "Jewishness" of the tribulation period. By "Jewishness" I mean that Israel is the primary focus of the entire period. This is the time when God brings Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7) upon him (Israel). This is the yet missing week of Daniel's seventy weeks which were decreed against Daniel's people Israel and their holy city Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24-27). This is the judgment of which Zephaniah speaks which comes first on Jerusalem and Judah, and then the nations (cf. also Zech. 12:1-9; 14:1-8).

According to the terms of the Palestinian covenant, God cannot fulfill His promises to restore Israel to the land in blessing until they repent (Deut. 30:1-3). The "curses" of the covenant constitute divine discipline designed to bring Israel to repentance.

Moreover, Israel must be circumcised in heart, or spiritually regenerated (Deut. 30:6). God promised that Israel would possess the land forever (Gen. 13:15; 17:8). This promise cannot be fulfilled until God has a nation of Israelites who are forever eligible to possess the land. Only spiritual regeneration can accomplish this. Concerning this, the prophets are not silent. Israel will be regenerated and restored to the land in blessing, but not before they repent.

The purpose of the tribulation period then, is to purge Israel (Zech. 13:9), to bring them to repentance and spiritual regeneration (Zech. 12:10-14; Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 36:20-24; Isa.

66:8), and to deal with Israel's enemies, the Gentile nations. In short, to ready the earth for the millennial kingdom and the reign of the Davidic king, Jesus Christ.

The point is this: the presence of the church on earth during the tribulation period is not only unnecessary, it is incongruent with the purposes of the tribulation period. S. Maxwell Coder states:

Four-fifths of the Bible deals primarily with the history of the Jews. In this account of Jewish history is a great deal of information about the Gentiles as well. One-fifth is given to the church of Jesus Christ--its origin, nature, doctrines, and destiny. Scattered throughout the Scriptures are references to the coming of a great tribulation in the latter days. Some remarkable and little recognized facts emerge from a study of these passages. First, such prophecies speak of the Jews and the Gentiles, but there are no predictions about a time of tribulation for the church. Second, when these latter days are described, Jews and Gentiles are found present on the earth, but the church is never mentioned. Third, reasons can be found why God will send a time of distress to both the Jews and the Gentiles, but there are no reasons why the final generation of Christians should be subjected to divine wrath.²⁶

Coder then goes on to speak of reasons why the church will be excluded from this wrath. He concludes that the "nature of the church precludes its presence on the earth during the tribulation."²⁷

The church's presence on earth during the time of Daniel's seventieth week would interfere with the continuation of God's covenant program with Israel, because of the nature of the church. Both Jews and Gentiles saved during the tribulation would (under the present economy) become members of the church. A posttrib rapture would remove them. This negates saved Israel and saved Gentiles from entering, populating, and propagating the millennium. Speaking of the purpose of the tribulation period, William Kerr said:

One question to which I have never seen an answer in print is: "What is the purpose of the punishment during the period of the Tribulation?" As far as the Church is concerned the categorical answer can be only, None whatsoever! For the Church to pass through the Tribulation... serves no purpose in God's program, and God does nothing without a purpose.

But it is different in the case of Israel. Here, the Scriptures reveal at least two purposes for the Tribulation: (1) To punish past unbelief and sin; (2) To spur the remnant to turn to God and accept the Crucified Saviour [sic] as their Messiah and King (Ezek. 20:33-38; Rom. 11: 26).²⁸

The church has no place in the tribulation period. Both the nature and the purpose of the tribulation concern Israel and the Gentile nations, not the church. Thus, the church's presence in the tribulation period is not merely unnecessary; it is incongruent with the purposes of the tribulation, and counter to the covenant purposes of God relating to national Israel, and the Gentile nations.

Posttribulationism Does Not Adequately Provide an Explanation for the Population of the Millennium

Posttribulationists of a premillennial variety are confronted with a number of problems in connection with the population of the millennial kingdom. From a logical and logistical standpoint the population of the millennium is perhaps posttribulationism's biggest problem.

Most posttribs ignore this issue. To his credit, Gundry sees the need to have both Jews and Gentiles who survive the tribulation and who are not raptured at its end, but who enter the millennium in unresurrected bodies to become the progenitors of the kingdom population.

Pretribs have pointed out that if the rapture were to take place after the tribulation, all believers would be caught up and glorified, with the result that no "sheep" would remain to be present at the judgment of the nations or to populate the millennial earth.

Gundry answers that (1) the 144,000 which comprise the remnant of national Israel will not be saved until after the tribulation but before the second advent (or at the second advent) and will thus constitute the Jewish progenitors of the millennial earth, (2) the Gentile progenitors will consist of unbelievers who are those of Matthew 24:40, 41 (cf. Lk. 17:34, 35) that are "left" and probably only part of these, and (3) the judgment of the sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31-46) does not take place until after the millennial kingdom and is to be identified with the great white throne. Gundry rejects the idea of separate judgments and holds that there will be one general judgment at the end of the millennium at which both believers and unbelievers will be judged.²⁹

Gundry later changed his position on the 144,000 and proposed that they "represent the Jewish Palestinian segment of the church on earth during the tribulation, just as the innumerable multitude mentioned right after them in Revelation 7 come from the rest of the church, predominantly Gentile, during the tribulation."³⁰

This view is an improvement in that it recognizes the regenerate state of the 144,000 throughout the tribulation. But it still leaves Gundry with the problem of populating the millennial kingdom. What's more, it assumes what Gundry is trying to prove, namely, that the church goes through the tribulation.

Gundry also jettisons his dispensationalism here in failing to distinguish between Israel and the church and God's purposes for each. If the 144,000 represent the "Jewish segment of the church," (Palestinian segment at that!) who then, represents the nation Israel in the tribulation? And who, then, enters the millennial kingdom as saved Israel? Gundry is still left without a suitable explanation for saved Israel entering the millennium.

Gundry's suggestion that the Gentile progenitors of the kingdom will consist of "some of the wicked" who survive the tribulation and second coming of Christ is without appeal.³¹

His placement of the judgment of the nations after the millennium raises a number of problems. First, he is forced to interpret "nations" (Matt. 25:32) as men of all ages, both living

and dead, both Jew and Gentile; "kingdom" (Matt. 25:34) as referring to eternity; and "brothers of Mine" (Matt. 25:40) not as Israelites but as believers in general. Second, he has unsaved people entering the millennium, a concept nowhere supported in Scripture. Third, the "brothers" must be seen as persecuted, hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and imprisoned in the millennium! Fourth, contrary to the plain meaning of Matthew 25:31-46, which indicate the judgment of the nations (sheep and goats) takes place when the Son of Man comes, Gundry inserts a gap in Matthew 25:31 or between verses 31 and 32 (he's not sure which), of a thousand years between Christ's coming and the judgment of the nations.³²

Gundry's parade of unlikely explanations is forced and unconvincing. I have responded to Gundry's arguments elsewhere.³³ Suffice it here to say that (1) Gundry's awkward attempt to get saved Israel into the millennium, (2) the suggestion that some of "the wicked" Gentiles enter the kingdom, and (3) his placement of the judgment of the nations after the millennium, are an insufficient explanation of the population of the millennial kingdom.³⁴

Two other factors which militate against Gundry's view are (1) Matthew 13:42-43 which indicate that none will be left after Christ's coming and judgment of the nations except the saints, and (2) Revelation 19:9. Here the bride (the church) is distinguished from other believers who apparently do not belong to the church and who are invited to the wedding supper. Who are these people and where do they come from? However we answer the question, it will hardly do to say that these are "some of the wicked" as Gundry would have us believe³⁵ Whoever they are, they are not the church. They are a separate body of saints distinguished here from the bride. Certainly the bride is not invited as a guest to her own wedding supper!

Here, then, we have two distinct peoples of God. One, the bride, is bedecked in fine linen which "is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:8). Surely this indicates the church has already been before the Bema seat and rewarded. This is incompatible with a posttrib rapture. The existence of a saved people (Rev. 19:9) other than the church, which can only be tribulational saints (and probably OT saints, cf. Dan. 12:1-2) is also incompatible with a posttrib rapture. Posttribulationism must provide a reasonable solution to this problem.

Posttribulationism Does Not Allow Sufficient Time for Events Which Must Occur between the Rapture and Christ's Return to Earth

Scripture indicates that there are a number of events which must intervene the rapture and Christ's return to earth; events which occur in heaven, and events which occur on earth. In heaven, there is the judgment seat (0 'pa) of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:9-15; 4:5), and the marriage and wedding ceremonies of the bride and Bridegroom (Rev. 19:7-9). Some see the wedding supper occurring in heaven during the tribulation period.³⁶ For others, it occurs on earth after the second advent.³⁷

Events which must occur on earth are the judgment of Israel and the Gentiles, and the conversion of national Israel as well as Gentiles who will populate the millennial kingdom. The conversion of Israel poses no problem to posttribulationism. Israel will likely be converted in a day (Isa. 66:8), at the last moment when they see Christ returning (Zech. 12:10-14). However, this does not account for the regenerate state of the 144,000 and perhaps other Jews who

constitute the "brothers" of Christ during the tribulation period (Mat 25:40). This "treatment-of-Christ's-brothers" scenario requires a period of time.

Furthermore, saved Gentiles at the end of the tribulation who populate the millennium are best explained by a period of time. At the second advent Christ judges the nations and puts "the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left" (Matt. 25:31-33). The goats are consigned to "eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (though Gundry has permitted some of them to enter the kingdom!). The sheep He invites to "inherit the kingdom" (Matt. 25:34). The basis of their judgment and entrance into the kingdom is their treatment of Christ's "brothers" which is said to be their treatment of Christ: "to the extent that you did it to one these brothers of mine... you did it unto Me" (Matt. 25:40).

What did they do? They fed them when they were hungry, gave drink when they were thirsty, invited them in when they were strangers, clothed them when they were naked, visited when they were sick, and came to them when they were in prison (Matt. 25:35-36). All of this could hardly take place at the last moment, in the twinkling of an eye, between a posttrib rapture and the second advent of Christ. It is out of the question to place these activities during the millennium. The only other scenario is a pretribulational one. But Matthew says this judgment occurs "when the Son of Man comes in His glory" (Matt. 25:31). This is posttribulational. This judgment then, pertains to events and deeds which occur during the tribulation period.

It is reasonable therefore, to identify Christ's "brothers" as the 144,000 Jews who must be placed in the tribulation, not after it. Posttribulationism has no satisfactory solution to this problem. Events which must take place on earth necessitate time which a posttrib rapture does not allow.

So also, events in heaven. Regardless of whether the wedding supper takes place in heaven or on earth,³⁸ other events which must occur in heaven necessitate a measure of time. One such event is the judgment seat of Christ. As Dr. Walvoord says: "this judgment, important as it is, precedes the return to earth and could hardly be accomplished during the process of the Second Advent itself."³⁹ To avoid this problem, Gundry places this judgment after the millennium and considers it synonymous with the great white throne, and the judgment of the nations.⁴⁰ But the evidence does not support one postmillennial general judgment.

If the marriage of the Lamb and consummation of the marriage follow the custom of Jewish wedding ceremonies as many suggest,⁴¹ it is clear that a period of time must occur. Part of this procedure is for the Bridegroom to come and receive the bride and take her to the Father's house (Jn. 14:1-3). This is impossible with a posttrib rapture. The promise of the rapture is not that the church will ascend in the air to welcome and receive Christ (as a dignitary, after the fashion of Hellenistic formal receptions), but for Christ to receive the church and take her to the Father's house. I have in my possession a clever "memo" which my wife gave me.⁴² It reads:

MEMO

Gone to Father's house
to prepare your place.
Will be back soon

to pick you up.
Jesus
14TH CHAPTER, JOHN

The point of John 14:1-3 is that He is coming to take us to the place He has prepared. A posttribulation rapture does not leave time even for this, let alone the wedding ceremony and consummation of the marriage (see endnote 11 for a response to Moo on this).

Ladd cites W. G. Moorehead who asks, "What becomes of (the saints) and of the Lord whom they encounter in the air (at the rapture)? Do they abide there? No, their stay in the air is brief, - - momentary Christ does not return to heaven with His saints; He comes on with them to the earth."⁴³ But this explanation simply doesn't allow sufficient time for intervening events.

**Posttribulationism Does Not Adequately Explain the Differences and Discrepancies
between the Rapture and the Second Coming Passages**

Others have given excellent discussions of this issue.⁴⁴ I merely point out here that the inconsistencies and omissions in the rapture and return passages place the burden of proof on posttribulationism. The differences and discrepancies are a greater problem to posttribulationism than are the similarities to pretribulationism. Dr. Paul Feinberg makes a strong case for this in his presentation of the pretrib rapture position.⁴⁵

In response to Feinberg, Moo solves the problems of "omissions" by (1) placing the church in the Olivet Discourse, (2) ignoring the force of itpi. 6 in 1 Thessalonians 5:1, and (3) locating the resurrection of the church in Revelation 20:4 which is clearly postmillennial. For Moo, the differences in messages of hope and comfort in rapture passages, and warnings of judgment in return passages is explained by selectivity based on the writer's present purpose.⁴⁶ But this simply yields the point pretribs are making. In the end, Moo admits that "omissions can suggest that different events are involved. .."⁴⁷

Moo further admits that "a greater problem, as Feinberg points out, are inconsistencies."⁴⁸ Moo concedes that if the differences are irreconcilable, they virtually demand that the events be understood as different events. He then proceeds to give one improbable interpretation after another in response to Feinberg's arguments⁴⁹ to show that the differences are not irreconcilable. It is one thing to hold a view in which one of the supporting arguments is a bit weak or unlikely. It is quite another thing to hold a view on the strength of a cluster of unlikely interpretations.

Posttribulationism has yet to explain the differences and discrepancies (omissions and inconsistencies) between rapture contexts and return contexts. The burden of proof is on posttribulationism.

Addressing Revelation 8-16, Ladd says: "There is no pretribulation rapture in this prophecy. The only description of the second coming of Christ in the book of Revelation is His glorious coming in chapter 19; and the Rapture of the Church is altogether omitted."⁵⁰ I have written in the margin of the book, "thank you, Dr. Ladd. This is precisely the point!"

Posttribulationism's Strongest Argument Is an Argument from Silence

While arguments from silence are not improper, they do not form the strongest case. Posttribulationism is based largely on the lack of any distinct mention of two comings in Scripture, and the assumption that all references to Christ's return refer to one coming. The assumption that only one coming is referred to, is only that; an assumption.

This argument, which is an argument from silence is weakened by the following. First, the omissions and dissimilarities between the passages which clearly speak of the rapture, and those which clearly have the second advent in view speak louder for two different events.

Second, the OT prophecies concerning the coming of Messiah did not clearly disclose that His coming would not be a one-phase coming, but a two-phase coming, each phase being separated by thousands of years. But it was a two-phase coming. What's more, there were inferences for this. Messiah was presented as a suffering Messiah and a reigning Messiah. Probably there were those who thought Messiah would fulfill both functions in one coming. But as Paul Feinberg points out, "It is only after the event that we can see finally whether the differences or the similarities were the more important."⁵¹ Obviously the differences were the more significant.

In light of similar discrepancies which surround Christ's second coming, pretribs have good biblical precedent for seeing a two-phase coming. Especially if the rest of the facts or inferences lean in this direction. Pretribs maintain they do. Dr. Renald Showers has recently given us 288 pages of pretrib inferences.⁵²

An example of similar discrepancies may be found by comparing rapture passages versus return passages with Christ's use of Isaiah 61 (Lk. 4:16-21). In passages which clearly refer to the rapture there is no warning of judgment; no warning of an intervening tribulation period "such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall" (Matt. 24:21). Conversely, in passages which clearly refer to Christ's return to earth, there is no mention of a rapture. The contrast is between joy and judgment, deliverance and discipline, good news and bad news. When Christ read from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue in Nazareth (Lk. 4:16-21), He read only verse one, and half of verse two. He stopped at the very place where the message of Isaiah changes. What He read was the good news. What He did not read was the bad news. This is because the "good news" pertained to His first coming. The "bad news" pertained to His second coming. What He said was, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk. 4:21). Similarly, Christ's word to the church is rapture. Concerning His return to earth, it is retribution. The one is a joyous occasion. The other is judgment. The one is the church's "blessed hope;" the other, earth's "bloody hell."

Posttribulationism further leans on argument from silence when it claims the church is on earth during the tribulation period. In spite of the glaring absence of any mention of the church in Revelation 6-18, posttribulationism claims it is there. In spite of the obvious "Jewishness" of the Olivet Discourse, posttribs see the Olivet Discourse as addressed to the church, with the church in the discourse described as raptured--"one will be taken... one will be left" (Matt. 24:40 - obviously a context of judgment). And in spite of the fact that the church appears in Revelation

19 in heaven and bedecked in apparel that indicates the judgment seat of Christ has already occurred, and though the advent of Christ to earth is described in this same chapter without one reference to a rapture of the church (not to mention the guests who are invited to the wedding supper who are mentioned), this is where posttribulationism would place it.

Dr. Walvoord is eminently correct to say that the "burden of proof is on the posttribulationist to prove that the church is in the tribulation."⁵³ The best it can do is say that Revelation 6-18 does not state that the church is not there. Again, an argument from silence.

Posttribulationism Is Logically Flawed and Inconsistent

Cataloging all of posttribulationism's logical inconsistencies is outside the scope of this study. Some have already been addressed in the previous discussion. Here, I only make two assertions.

First, posttribulationism sacrifices logic on one front to establish it on another. Gundry's answer to the population of the millennium is one example. In order to maintain the logic of a posttrib rapture, Gundry sacrifices logic in populating the millennial kingdom. As we have noted, he has the wrath of God occurring during the tribulation with the church divinely protected, and he has the wrath of God occurring after the tribulation with the church raptured before it. Such equivocal argumentation is self-refuting.

Another example of logical inconsistency is posttribulationism's insistence on a one-phase- only first resurrection. Lindsell, who argues for a one-phase first resurrection like most other posttribulationists (Gundry acknowledges two-phases), admits however that Revelation 20:4-5 constitute "a problem for both the pretribulation and posttribulation positions."⁵⁴ He is wrong about pretribulationists. For pretribs who hold a multi-phase first resurrection, this passage is no problem. He is right however, in that it is a problem for posttribulationists.

Posttribs argue for one general resurrection. But Lindsell correctly observes that Revelation 20:4, 5 seem to be speaking of martyred tribulation saints only. Nothing is said here about the resurrection of OT saints or church saints. Lindsell admits that "If Revelation chapter twenty is to be taken very literally, it is hard to see how the Old Testament saints could be included in this first resurrection."⁵⁵ Lindsell rejects a pretrib rapture of OT saints in this passage (in this I think he is correct), but still sees an inference here of a multi-phase first resurrection.

If Israel of the Old Testament is left to be raised from the dead in the event spoken of in the Revelation, the passage does not say so explicitly and we are back again to two resurrections in any event: that of the church earlier and the great tribulation dead later so that the term the first resurrection loses force and effect. It appears to me that pretribulationists and posttribulationists must read something into the text in Revelation chapter twenty in order to make their respective positions square with their exegesis.⁵⁶

This is an admirable and telling admission. Posttribs want to see a one-phase-only first resurrection. But Lindsell, a posttribulationist, acknowledges that Scripture indicates there must be two phases to the first resurrection. If two, why not more? Dr. Walvoord states:

A fact uniformly ignored by all posttribulationists in their exposition of Revelation 20:4 is that the resurrection here clearly comes after Christ has come to earth. In the preceding context, Christ returns to earth in chapter 19, destroys His enemies, and in chapter 20 binds Satan. Judgment seats are then set up on the earth. In connection with judgment, the resurrection of the tribulation saints takes place after Christ has come to earth. In the posttribulationist order of events, the resurrection should have taken place while Christ was coming from heaven to earth according to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, before the events which follow His second coming. Accordingly a resurrection in the process of Christ's coming to earth becomes highly questionable and poses a serious problem to posttribulationists. It confirms the pretribulationist contention that there is no rapture or resurrection while He is descending from heaven to the earth at His second coming.⁵⁷

Walvoord further states, "Even a posttribulationist would have to recognize that in his order of events, the resurrection of Revelation 20:4-6 is not 'first.'"⁵⁸

Revelation 20:4 and 5 establish the principle of a multi-phase first resurrection (cf. Also Matt. 27:52, 53). Posttribulationists are therefore inconsistent to acknowledge a multi-phasic first resurrection (Lindsell, Gundry)⁵⁹ on the one hand, but disallow it to include a pretrib resurrection, on the other.

Second, posttribulationism is logically inconsistent with premillennialism. Premillennial posttribs inevitably wind up with logistical congestion at the end of the tribulation. Dr. Ryrie says:

Posttribulationism has a veritable logjam at the second coming of Christ. A number of the judgments have to occur then, the rapture will occur then as part of the second coming, the wrath of God must be held off until then, there has to be a time of peace and safety, and the Day of the Lord will begin with those judgments and yet not include any part of the Tribulation!⁶⁰

This "logjam" is an albatross to premillennial posttribulationism. And is the result of logical inconsistency. In fact amillennial posttribulationism is far more logical as a system, than is premillennial posttribulationism. Dr. Walvoord states: "Logically, posttribulationism leads to amillennialism and pretribulationism leads to premillennialism. Any compromise between these two points of view leads to confusion in principles of interpretation as well as in the interpretation itself."⁶¹ This section "belongs" to Dr. Walvoord, so I close it by quoting him once again:

While writers in all schools of biblical interpretation can be found who are guilty of illogical reasoning, careful observers of posttribulationism will find that so often their conclusions are based upon illogical reasoning. In some cases, their arguments hang upon dogmatic assumptions from Scripture passages under consideration which the passages

actually do not teach. The fact that an interpreter is a great scholar does not necessarily make him a logician; unfortunately, ability to do research and skill in linguistics do not necessarily lead to formation of logical conclusions. The writer believes that a major problem in posttribulationism is logical inconsistency.⁶²

Posttribulationism Is Inconsistent with Literal Interpretation

Pretribulationists continue to call attention to this.⁶³ Posttribulationists continue to deny it' or ignore it.⁶⁴ What is the solution? Is this a "standoff" argument? Should it be abandoned? This argument has had, and will probably continue to have, little or no appeal to posttribs. I do not think however, that his argument should be jettisoned or that pretribs should cease to point out the "non-literalness" of posttribulational interpretations. In spite of the controversy that surrounds literal interpretation (i.e., how do you define it, do it, identify it, etc.), this issue is of extreme importance. Those who stand undecided or who are considering the merits of pretribulationism versus posttribulationism, or any theological system for that matter, should be vitally concerned with how consistent that system is in its application of a literal hermeneutic, especially as it is defined by that system.

It is here, that premillennial posttribs are most inconsistent. Their definition and application of literal interpretation logically leads them to premillennialism. It should also lead them to dispensational pretribulationism.⁶⁵ Gundry, himself a dispensationalist, seems most uneasy on this point. He acknowledges the necessity of literal interpretation and attempts to be consistent. But in the end, he compromises literal interpretation.⁶⁶

The following are some examples of non-literal interpretations by posttribulationists. Ladd favorably quotes W. J. Erdman commenting on the saints who are to be persecuted by the Antichrist: "unless the contrary can be proved, it is a fair inference from many facts that by the 'saints' seen as future by Daniel and by John are meant 'the Church' which consists of Jews and Gentiles. ,⁶⁷ But is this a literal interpretation of Daniel? Speaking to Daniel, Gabriel identifies them as "your people," i.e., Daniel's people (Dan. 9:24; 12:1). Daniel's people were Jews, yes, but Jews of national Israel, not a Jewish constituency of the church. It is anachronistic to read back into Daniel a Jewish church. There is no hint here of the church. On the contrary, this part of Daniel's prophecy concerns the future of national Israel, God's covenant people. Daniel gives us every reason to see Israel in the tribulation period and persecuted by Antichrist, but no reason whatever to see the church there. This conclusion does not come from literal interpretation.⁶⁷

Gundry abandons literal interpretation in his discussion of John 14:1-3. Posttribs cannot have the church going to heaven at the rapture. Gundry's solution is to spiritualize this passage. He explains it thus:

In order to console the disciples concerning His going away, Jesus tells them that His leaving will work to their advantage. He is going to prepare for them spiritual abodes within His own person. Dwelling in these abiding places they will belong to God's household. This He will accomplish by going to the cross and then ascending to the Father. But He will return to receive the disciples into His immediate presence forever.

Thus, the rapture will not have the purpose of taking them to heaven. It rather follows from their being in Christ, in whom each believer already has an abode.

We can... easily understand why Jesus said, "I... will receive you to Myself, that where I am, you may be also," instead of, "I... will receive you to myself, that I may take you to the heavenly mansions." Believers already dwell in Christ, their abiding place. Hence all that is needed at their meeting with Him is to be kept in His immediate presence for evermore. We are not to deny a literal heaven, of course, but only to regard the context of John 14:1-3 as indicative of a spiritual relationship to the Father through union with Christ.⁶⁸

In my judgment, this is not literal interpretation.⁶⁹ Gundry's own words betray abandonment of literal interpretation.⁷⁰ Among the many questions we might ask Gundry, is "why did Christ say He went to prepare places for us in which to abide, if we already abide in those places?"

Lindsell asserts that the phrase "not appointed us to wrath" as used in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 "probably means what it does in Matthew 3:7 and Luke 3:7 where it does not refer to the church at all but to final judgment and the lake of fire."⁷¹ First I doubt that any of these passages refer to final judgment and the lake of fire. They are probably references to the tribulation wrath. Second, regardless of what Matthew and Luke are referring to, the context of 1 Thessalonians 5 indicates temporal eschatological wrath. Third, if the wrath of God is so defined (as Lindsell) in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, from what is the church protected during the tribulation, assuming as does Lindsell that the church will go through the tribulation? Lindsell's interpretation removes entirely the wrath of God from the tribulation period. His departure from literal interpretation here, lands him in logical contradiction.

Moo reduces the nature and intensity of the judgments during the tribulation by not taking them literally. He says:

no description of the Tribulation presents it as a time of wrath upon God's people. no description of the Tribulation indicates that it will involve greater suffering than many believers have already experienced.⁷²

First, the tribulation is a period of divine wrath upon God's people. Who are Israel if not God's covenant people? This is Daniel's seventieth week. Second, it is described as "an unprecedented period in the history of suffering humanity."⁷³ Moo's interpretation hardly does justice to literal interpretation of passages like Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21; and Revelation 6-19. In the Pulitzer Prize-winning play by Beth Henley, entitled "Crimes of the Heart," three sisters, whose mother hanged herself, try to work through their various neuroses. One sister asks another, "Why did mama hang herself?" The other sister replies, "Oh, I don't know. I think she was just having a bad day!" Perhaps for Moo all the martyrdom and suffering and judgment in the tribulation (described in Revelation 6-19 and OT prophets) is just the saints "having a bad day!"

Posttribulationism's inconsistency with literal interpretation leads to the next problem.

Posttribulationism Blurs the Distinction between Israel and the Church

This too, is a problem to which pretribs continue to call attention. To his credit, Lindsell, a posttribulationist, makes this admission:

The Apostle Paul in Romans 9-11 interrupts his discourse after the eighth chapter to focus on Israel. He indicates that God still has a concern for his people Israel. And there is a time coming when all Israel will be saved. It is difficult to fit Israel fully into the picture with the Church and commingle them so as to impair any distinction between them. Here the pretribulationist and the dispensationalist have a point which should not be overlooked.⁷⁴

And while he favors a posttrib view, Lindsell says, "However, posttribulationism leaves me without satisfactory answers about Israel in relation to the end times, the Church and the lack of explicit biblical details which would answer my unanswered questions."⁷⁵ Such candor is appreciated, and is a "breath of fresh air" from the posttrib camp.

Lindsell seems confused however, when he says "If the Church has been raptured before the tribulation and that is the end of the Church so that none can be added to it, then there must be a third group of people besides Israel and the Church. But Scripture allows for no such possibility."⁷⁶ But Lindsell is wrong. Scripture does allow for such a possibility. In fact it leaves us with no other alternative. Lindsell recognizes both the church and Israel, two distinct people of God, yet leaves no room for a third. But what about OT saints who were saved before Israel became God's national covenant people? Certainly these are not to be identified with either Israel or the church. Do we identify Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18) with the church? What about OT Gentiles who were saved? What about the people of Nineveh who repented at the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3:5)? There is a body of saints which belong neither to Israel or the church.

In Matthew 16:18 the church was still future. A comparison of this verse with Acts 1:5; Acts 2; Acts 10:47; Acts 11:15-16; and 1 Corinthians 12:13 (see also Eph. 1:19-20; 4:7-12) clearly indicates the church did not exist until the Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost.

We must therefore distinguish between the church, Israel, and a third group (contrary to Lindsell) who are OT saints belonging neither to Israel or the church. If there is such a group, and there is, why not a similar group during the tribulation period which economically is similar to the OT in that it is primarily Jewish. All things considered, the existence of a group of saints in the tribulation which belong neither to the church or Israelis not only possible, it is probable.

We should not miss the fact that between Daniel's sixty-ninth week and the seventieth, there is a gap. As far as Israel's eschatological future is concerned, the clock stopped ticking at the close of the sixty-ninth week. It will begin again at the commencement of Daniel's seventieth week. During this interval, Christ is building His church. Surely the nature and purpose of the church precludes its presence in the tribulation period, Daniel's seventieth week, when God resumes His covenant dealings with the nation Israel. A clear and consistent distinction between the church and Israel necessarily precludes the church's presence during the period of Daniel's seventieth week.

Moo is therefore incorrect when he says "a total and consistent separation of Israel and the church does not necessarily entail any specific view of the time of the rapture."⁷⁷ Indeed it does. The nature of the church requires that the rapture be pretribulational.

Dr. Tim LaHaye suggests two keys to understanding the prophetic Word of God:

First, one must interpret the Bible literally unless the context provides good reason to do otherwise. Second, we must understand that Israel and the church are distinct! They had different beginnings, purposes, commissions, and they have different futures. If a person fails to acknowledge these two facts of Scripture, all discussion fails and argument is fruitless. The issue is not so much prophecy as it is one's view of Scripture and the church.⁷⁸

I'm sure that Dr. LaHaye would be the first to affirm that the second principle is the natural and necessary result of consistently applying the first.⁷⁹ Consistent literal interpretation naturally leads to dispensationalism. Dispensationalism naturally leads to, and is compatible only with, pretribulationism.

Those posttribs who deny a national future for Israel are more logically consistent in the construct of their system. Posttribs who acknowledge dispensational distinctions between the church and Israel, fly in the face of their own hermeneutic, and in the end either compromise their adherence to literal interpretation, or resort to exegesis that can be said (in all fairness) to be eisegetical and on occasion, downright acrobatic.

This is quite conspicuous in posttribulationism's interpretation of the Olivet Discourse. Gundry, a dispensationalist, places the church and the rapture in the Olivet Discourse. In fact this interpretation is central to his whole position.⁸⁰ Gundry's exegesis here is weak and unconvincing. He fails to establish either the presence of the church or the rapture of the church in the Olivet Discourse.⁸¹ Pretribs, on the other hand, have strongly demonstrated the opposite.⁸² This is a serious problem to posttribulationism. Failure to distinguish between the church and Israel lies at the root of posttribulationism's exegetical anemia. Ironside was right when he said:

If Christian students of the Word would always distinguish carefully what prophecy has to say concerning the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God, it would not be difficult to clear up this entire subject. It is by confusing these three distinct classes that many strange unscriptural theories are foisted upon the people of God.⁸³

Posttribulationism Is Inconsistent with the Doctrine of Imminence

The doctrine of imminence as held by most pretribs is that Christ may at any moment return to rapture the church; that no predicted event must precede the rapture of the church. Posttribulationism, on the other hand, claims that the tribulation must precede the rapture. Imminence and posttribulationism are therefore mutually exclusive.⁸⁴ Gundry acknowledges this and devotes an early chapter of his book, *The Church and the Tribulation*, to an attack on the doctrine of imminence.

The posttrib approach to this problem is to deny or re-define imminence so that it no longer means imminent! Moo acknowledges the Scriptural necessity of holding to imminency, but he then re-defines it so that it no longer obtains the "any moment" concept.⁸⁵ Gundry vigorously denies imminency. His denial of imminency has apparently persuaded some. In his commentary on Matthew, Carson writes, "the truth is that the biblical evidence nowhere unambiguously endorses the 'any second' view and frequently militates against it, as R. H. Gundry... has demonstrated."⁸⁶ Gundry's work also seems to have occasioned a re-evaluation of imminence by pretribulationists.⁸⁷ Again, I have responded to Gundry's arguments elsewhere.⁸⁸ Here, I simply mention the following. The doctrine of the imminent return of Christ for His church is the clear teaching of Scripture (Gundry's arguments notwithstanding). Moo cautiously states: "The 'imminence' of our Lord's return is a doctrine that should not be jettisoned."⁸⁹ Moo assumes, of course, his definition of imminence which he thinks allows for a posttrib rapture.

But the doctrine of imminence is incompatible with posttribulationism. The Bible cannot declare Christ's return to be imminent and posttribulational at the same time. Imminence and posttribulationism are mutually exclusive. Gundry's "sliding scale" suggestion⁹⁰ (apparently adopted by Moo) that imminence does not necessitate pretribulationism, but merely permits its possibility on a sliding scale with mid- and posttribulationism is only true of one does not claim the Bible also teaches posttribulationism. Which of course, posttribs do.

The Bible cannot declare Christ's return to be imminent and posttribulational at the same time. Scripture does declare Christ's return for the church to be imminent. To say that Scripture also teaches posttribulationism, and that the tribulation must intervene, is to involve God, the Author of Scripture, in a logical contradiction to say nothing of the aspersions it casts on His character. The "sliding scale" theory only stands if we do not claim that Scripture says anything about the time of the rapture. But of course both pretribs and posttribs claim that it does. Thus, pretribulationism is compatible with the doctrine of imminence. Posttribulationism is not.

Pretribs have no reason to abandon the doctrine of imminence. It is a valid biblical doctrine. The Bible teaches imminence. The Bible cannot also teach posttribulationism. This is a problem for posttribulationism. Showers concludes his excellent study of imminency with these words: "We can conclude then, that the concept of the imminent coming of Christ strongly infers a Pretribulation Rapture of the church and therefore is significant evidence in favor of that view."⁹¹

Posttribulationism Is Undergoing Historical Erosion

The historical evidence for posttribulationism was never strong. Nor was it for pretribulationism. But recent discoveries and the fruit of historical research are mounting in favor of pretribulationism and slowly eroding one of posttribulationism's platforms; namely, that the historical evidence favors posttribulationism, and casts shadows on pretribulationism's origins.

I do not want to make too much of this argument from history. Arguments from history are tenuous and supportive at best. Just because a certain church father held a particular view is no proof that the view is correct. It is proof however, that the view was held. This may or may not be significant.

I would however, like to make three observations. First, posttribulationism's appeal to the church fathers, continues to lose ground. Posttribulationism's claim that the early church fathers were posttribulational was enervated by Walvoord and others who pointed out that the church fathers also thought they were in the tribulation period, and held to the imminence of Christ's appearing.⁹² Moreover, recent articles like that of Crutchfield continue to challenge posttribulationism's appeal to the church fathers.⁹³ Posttribulationists should either respond decisively or drop this argument altogether.

The second observation I would like to make is this: posttribulationism must now relinquish its most vociferous claim that pretribulationism is a late Darbyite invention, stolen from Edward Irving and Margaret MacDonald.⁹⁴ Careful research by pretribs has shown this charge to be false. Darby did not derive his pretribulationism from Margaret MacDonald.⁹⁴ Pretribulationism was extant over one thousand years before Darby, as evidenced by the Pseudo-Ephraim document (c. 374 -627) brought to light by Grant Jeffrey.⁹⁵

What is more, J. N. Darby and Morgan Edwards (another pre-Darby pretrib rapturist) both claimed that they arrived at their pretrib conclusions by literal interpretation.⁹⁶

It is time that the spurious charges made by posttribs⁹⁷ concerning the origin of Darby's pretribulationism were laid to rest. This brings me to my third observation. Failure to distance itself from this kind of "shabby scholarship"⁹⁸ does nothing to enhance the credibility of posttribulationism.

Posttribulationism Lacks a Comprehensive Treatment of Its View Which Harmonizes the Full Corpus of Biblical Data

No one has constructed a systematic exposition of posttribulationism which harmonizes all the biblical data. Even Gundry, who probably deals with more biblical data than other exponents of posttribulationism, fails to harmonize all the data. In fact, the more comprehensive he becomes, the more unharmonious his view becomes. This is the problem that all posttribulationists face. This is why posttribs are selective in their treatment of Scripture. As Walvoord says, "posttribulationism tends to select certain facts in a given passage and ignores evidence contradictory to its conclusion. Because all the facts are not taken into consideration, its conclusions become faulty logically."⁹⁹

Dr. Stanton mentions Leon Wood's book, *Is the Rapture Next?* as "the result of a faculty study group of the Grand Rapids Baptist Theological Seminary and Bible Institute, who 'entered the consideration [of the rapture] with open minds to determine what the Scriptures had to say."¹⁰⁰ This study came to the conclusion that the church should expect a pretribulational rapture. To my knowledge, no other group of biblical scholars has convened with the same "open minds to determine what the Scriptures had to say" about the rapture and come to a posttribulational conclusion, and subsequently published an exposition of their study which systematically harmonizes the data and "fits" comfortably with a premillennial scheme.

The fact is, the voice of posttribulationism consists largely (almost exclusively) of defensive response (sometimes offensive¹⁰¹) to pretrib arguments. Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost said of posttribulationism: "that the position rests essentially on a system of denials of the interpretations held by pretribulation rapturists rather than on a positive exposition of Scripture."¹⁰² As stated at the beginning of this study, it is always easier to criticize someone else's system than to construct a system of one's own. Posttribulationists are strong on the former, weak on the latter. The overriding methodology of posttribulationism is to attack pretribulationism rather than to construct a system which explains all the evidence. It has no cohesive, systematic, harmonistic view of the biblical data which surround the issue of the rapture. Walvoord concludes, "There is a constant tendency among posttribulationists to be selective in the facts chosen from eschatological passages."¹⁰³ This selectivity is because "posttribulationism does not lend itself to a single system of eschatological interpretation."¹⁰⁴

Posttribulationists suggest that pretribulationism is so widely held because of the popularity and wide distribution of the Scofield Bible and prophecy conferences which are predominantly pretribulationist. But as Dr. LaHaye notes, "The pre-Trib view is popular because it fits so well all the Bible passages that touch on end-time events."¹⁰⁵ In my view, this explains the popularity of the Scofield Bible. It is not so much the wide distribution of the Scofield Bible that explains the vantage of pretribulationism. It is the vantage of pretribulationism that explains the wide distribution of the Scofield Bible.¹⁰⁶

Showers calls attention to the harmony of the pretrib rapture view, and skillfully demonstrates this harmony without resorting to "selectivity."¹⁰⁷ Linton (with whom Gundry interacts) advised that "the answer to our question should harmonize the Scriptures The wrong answer may get us out of one difficulty but would land us in many more The correct answer to our question must and will harmonize and reconcile Scripture with Scripture."¹⁰⁸

Faced with reconciling the differences between rapture passages and return passages, Herbert Vander Lugt says, "I came to believe there was only one way I could harmonize the passages which speak of the Lord's return with the verses that say awesome events will immediately precede it. I had to distinguish clearly between the Lord's coming for His own and His return in glory to rule over the earth,"¹⁰⁹

The strength of pretribulationism is that it better harmonizes all the data, and is built not solely on refutations of posttribulationism, but primarily upon positive exposition of Scripture using a consistently literal method of interpretation. Consequently, pretribulationism is systematized, and its adherents are in basic and fundamental agreement. Posttribulationism can neither boast of a developed system which harmonizes the biblical data, nor common agreement among its proponents. Walvoord notes:

it remains true that the posttribulationist view does not afford a uniform system of prophetic fulfillment related to the second coming and this is evident by the fact that posttribulationists hardly ever sponsor a prophecy conference or attempt to unify their own school of thought as to the order of end time events. Their problem is that they do not agree among themselves as to how a posttribulationist rapture actually fits the sequence of events related to the second coming.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

Posttribulationism must be taken seriously. Advocates of posttribulationism who are skilled logicians and exegetes can make their view seem reasonable. At least to those who are not so skilled, or are not inclined to be. Gundry is a good case in point. His book is a labyrinth of exegetical data, assertions, assumptions and dogmatisms. Virtually every topic or sub-topic raised by Gundry is supported by more assertions and more assumptions which, in turn, are shrouded in a plethora of details. It is arduous and practically impossible to examine one facet of Gundry's arguments without overlapping another facet. Each subpoint is interrelated with and inter-dependent upon another. Often a given assertion is based upon an assumption, the validity of which, is based upon another assumption, and so it goes. Getting to the root of any given argument is tedious and time consuming.

The complexity of Gundry's work is reflected in this statement by Dr. Ryrie in his review of Gundry's book, *The Church and the Tribulation*: "in reading this book one could get himself into a position whereby he is unable to discern the validity of the conclusions."¹¹¹ Gundry later objects, and with tongue-in-cheek, commends Ryrie for "closing his review with a very fine summary of the posttribulationist system constructed throughout" his book and adds: "Apparently he [Dr. Ryrie] found himself less confused than he lets on, or fears others will be."¹¹² But the credit here belongs not to the lucidity of Gundry's exposition, but to Ryrie's interpretive skills.

My first introduction to Gundry's book occurred while I was a student in Bible School. One of my most admired instructors announced that he had read Gundry's book, was persuaded by his arguments, and that he was now shifting his position from pretribulationism to posttribulationism. This did two things for me. (1) It caused me to reassess my own views. (2) It also caused me to reassess my instructor's views!

Eventually I chose to critique Gundry's posttribulationism as the subject of my doctoral dissertation. This did three things for me. (1) It showed me how clever a skilled logician can be and how reasonable he or she can make something that is not logical appear to be so. (2) It suggested to me the notion that most of those who have moved from pretribulationism to posttribulationism on the strength of such arguments, never really knew why they were pretribs in the first place. (3) It also deeply strengthened my pretribulationist convictions.

I confess that as a pretrib, I don't have answers to all my questions. But if I had to cross a large body of water in one or another of two boats, I would choose the boat with the fewest holes in it and which had more promise of getting me safely across. In my view, pretribulationism has the fewest holes and shows more promise of getting me safely across. Pretribulationism's problems are minor. Posttribulationism's problems are considerable and, in my view, insurmountable.

F. F. Bruce gave good advice when he said that contempt is an attitude which should play no part in criticism. Equally, no part should be played by imputations of dishonesty or by the raising of doubts about the personal integrity of those with whom we disagree.¹¹³

Without casting aspersions on the character or integrity of any of posttribulationism's proponents, I do however, question the integrity of their exegesis. If posttribulationism expects to be considered a viable contender for the faith, hope, and expectations of the church, it must (1) engage in, and provide, responsible exegesis, (2) it must explain how posttribulationism can be considered a "blessed hope," and (3) it must squarely face and address its problems. I close with one more reference to the Dean of pretribulationism: "If posttribulationism is to be credible, its proponents must not dodge their problems but face them."¹⁴

¹ Gundry has the wrath of God occurring on the one hand at the very end of the tribulation. On the other hand he places it after the tribulation. Gundry seems unable to make up his mind. See Steven L. McAvoy, "A Critique of Robert Gundry's Posttribulationism," (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1986), 250-52.

² George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), 121; Harold Lindsell, *The Gathering Storm* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1980), 152; and Douglas J. Moo, *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Posttribulation?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 174-75, 181. Other contributors to this last named volume are Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Paul D. Feinberg, and Richard R. Reiter.

³ Moo, 181; Ladd, 91

⁴ Robert H. Gundry, "A Pre-Trib vs. Post-Trib Debate" with Earl Radmacher (at Long Beach, Calif.: The Pre-Trib Research Center). The address for Pre-Trib Research Center is 370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W. Suite 801, Washington, D.C. 20024. Phone (202) 488- 0780; Fax (202) 488-0806. It is interesting to note that Gundry also states that during the tribulation "the Church will receive shelter from the penal judgments of God but will suffer persecution from other quarters. . . "; see Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), 51. See also Steven L. McAvoy, "A Critique of Robert Gundry's Posttribulationism," 250-308.

⁵ Michael R. Cosby, "Hellenistic Formal Receptions and Paul's Use of ΑΙΙΑΝΘΗΙ in 1 Thessalonians 4:17," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 4 (1994):15-34.

⁶ McAvoy, 251.

⁷ *Ibid.*, I have discussed these at length in my dissertation.

⁸ John F. Walvoord, "1 Thessalonians 4: A Central Rapture Passage," in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, eds. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1995), 257.

⁹ John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, revised and enlarged ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 266; Renald Showers, *Maranatha Our Lord, Come!* (Bellmawr: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1995), 154-75. Showers' discussion here is thorough, responsible, and convincing; Alan Beechick, *The Pre-Tribulation Rapture* (Denver: Accent Books, 1980), 58-80; Gavin Hamilton, *Will the Church Escape the Great Tribulation?* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1941), 49-60; McAvoy, 49-60.

¹⁰ Posttribs argue that John 14:1-3 say nothing about Christ taking the church to heaven. Moo states: "the text does not state that believers will go directly to heaven... but only that they will always be with the Lord. If it be argued that this is the inference of the text, it is hard to see how any other view can offer a more reasonable scenario" (178). Moo then cites Gundry who says, "The pretribulation interpretation would require us to believe that the church will occupy heavenly mansions for a short period of seven years, only to vacate them for a thousand years" (178-79). First, it may be said that it is the inference of John 14:1-3 that the church be taken directly to heaven., to the Father's dwelling places. Simply saying that "it is hard to see force of this inference. Second, it is the argument of this study that a pretrib scenario is indeed "more reasonable." The fact that it is "hard" for Moo "to see" this, does not reflect on pretribulationism, but Moo's "eyesight." Third, pretribulationism does not require that the church

vacate heaven and be confined to earth for a thousand years. This is a "straw-man" argument, and carries no weight. Even if it did, pretribulationism would lose nothing. Perhaps the millennium is one long wedding feast. And what does time matter to the immortal who are now in celestial bodies?

¹¹ McAvoy, 250-308; see also note 20.

¹² Moo, 178.

¹³ Gleason L. Archer, Jr. *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Posttribulationism*, 215.

¹⁴ Tim LaHaye, *No Fear of the Storm* (Sisters: Multnomah, 1992), 210.

¹⁵ Richard L. Mayhue, *Snatched Before the Storm! A Case for Pretribulationism* (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1980), 9.

¹⁶ John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 38.

¹⁷ Alexander Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, n.d.), 284 cited by Gerald B. Stanton, *Kept From The Hour* (Miami Springs: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1991), 40; Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 46-53; Moo, *The Rapture*, 88-89, 172-74.

¹⁸ See for example, Moo, 183-84; Gundry, *The Church*, 95; cp. also Charles C. Ryrie's discussion in *What You Should Know About the Rapture* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 91-106.

¹⁹ H. A. Ironside, *Not Wrath But Rapture* (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, n. d.), 47.

²⁰ J. Randall Price, "Old Testament Tribulation terms," in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 57-83; John McLean, "Chronology and Sequential Structure of John's Revelation," *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 313-51; Fruchtenbaum, "Is There a Pre-Wrath Rapture?" *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 382-411; Showers, *Maranatha*; Ryrie, *What You Should Know*, 91-118; Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*, 74-81; Stanton, *Kept*, 70-91; Paul D. Feinberg, *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Posttribulationism?*, 61-63, 223; Robert Gromacki, "Where is 'the Church' in Revelation 4-19?" in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 353-65; John A. Sproule, *In Defense of Pretribulationism* (Winona Lake: BMIH Books, 1980), 52-55; A. J. Pollock, *May Christ Come At Any Moment?* 2nd ed. (London: The Central Bible Truth Depot, n.d.), 40.

²¹ McAvoy, "A Critique of Robert Gundry's Posttribulationism," 204-49 are given to the question of the Day of the Lord; pages 250-308 address the question of divine wrath.

²² John A. Sproule, "An Exegetical Defense of Pretribulationism," (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), 34 cited by McAvoy, 253.

²³ Moo is incorrect to say "All agree that no true believer will experience the wrath of God (1 Thess. 5:9)." First, this passage is not addressed to "all believers" but believers who are members of the church, the body of Christ. Second believers do experience the wrath of God. Moo admits this when he says "although God's judgments are never directed toward those who truly belong to Him, the judgments can indirectly affect them" (176). Moo is also incorrect when he says "no description of the tribulation presents it as a time of wrath upon God's people" (176). Who does the nation Israel represent if not God's people. What is the seventieth week of Daniel if not temporal wrath and judgment against Daniel's people (Dan. 9:24), who are also God's covenant people to whom God has pledged Himself and with whom He remains forever in covenant relationship.

²⁴ McAvoy, 215-224. I have also set forth my arguments for this view in an unpublished paper entitled "Revelation 1:10 and the Rapture Question."

²⁵ Moo, 183.

²⁶ S. Maxwell Coder, *The Final Chapter* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1984), 150.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 152

²⁸ William F. Kerr, "Tribulation for the Church--But Not the Tribulation," in *Understanding the Times*, eds. William Culbertson and Herman B. Centz (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956), 104-5.

²⁹ Gundry, *The Church*, 81-83, 163-171. For a response to Gundry's arguments see Paul D. Feinberg, *The Rapture*, 72-79; McAvoy, 164-203.

³⁰ Robert H. Gundry, "An Open Letter to Dr. John F. Walvoord Concerning His Book *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation*." (Westmont College, September 1977), 61-62. Note Gundry's use of the phrase "predominantly Gentiles." Does this mean that some of this multitude is Jewish? To whom then do they belong in his scheme; the church or Israel?

³¹ Gundry, *The Church*, 166-67. Gundry actually states "that some of the wicked will survive the tribulation and Parousia and that those who do will enter the millennium" (166).

³² *Ibid.*, 168.

³³ McAvoy, 164-203.

³⁴ For other discussions of this issue see: Showers, 187ff.; Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*, 39, 52-53, 146-48; Ryrie *What You Should Know*, 73-89; Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, 86-92; Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah* (Tustin: Ariel Ministries Press, 1982), 287-356; Allen Beechick, 39-57; J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1958), 275-318; W. graham Scroggie, *Prophecy and History* (Glasgow: The Hulbert Publishing Co., n.d.), 89-100; Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Jew after the Rapture," in *Prophecy in the Seventies*, ed. Charles Lee Feinberg (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 180-86.

³⁵ Gundry, *The Church*, 166.

³⁶ Tim LaHaye, 210; J. F. Strombeck, *First the Rapture*, 5th ed. (Moline: Strombeck Foundation, n.d.), 128; Henry C. Thiessen, *Will the Church Pass Through the Tribulation?* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, n.d.), 46; Leon Wood, *The Bible & Future Events* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), 51-52; A. Skevington Wood, *Prophecy in the Space Age* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 95-102; C. A. Shipman, *Unfulfilled Prophecy*, revised & enlarged ed. (London: Samuel E. Roberts, 1915), 14-17. 37.

³⁷ Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 227; Stanley A. Ellisen, *Biography of a Great Planet* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1975), 125; Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps*, 112; Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible* [New American Standard Bible], expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 1562 (note on Matt. 25:1); John F. Walvoord, *The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook* (Dallas: Dallas seminary Press, 1990), 617-18.

³⁸ In my view, placing the wedding supper on earth best explains the biblical data.

³⁹ Walvoord, *Rapture Question*, 85.

⁴⁰ Gundry, *The Church*, 170, 167.

⁴¹ Walvoord, *Rapture Question*, 226-67; Showers, *Maranatha*, 154-175; Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps*, 110-112; McAvoy, "A Critique," 65-70; see also note 10.

⁴² These "memos" were sent to my wife from a dear friend in Texas: Mrs. Mary Usrey 902 Carroll, Garland, Texas 75041.

⁴³ Ladd, 50.

⁴⁴ Paul D. Feinberg, *The Rapture*, 80-86; Walvoord, *Rapture Question*, 93-95; Edward E. Hindson, "The Rapture and the Return: Two Aspects of Christ's Coming," in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 151-162; John S. Feinberg, "Arguing About the Rapture: Who Must Prove What and How," in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 193-94; Thomas Ice, "The Rapture & The Second Coming: An Important Distinction," *Pre-Trib Perspectives* 11 (May 1995):4-5.

⁴⁵ Paul D. Feinberg, *The Rapture*, 80-86.

⁴⁶ Moo, 98-101.

⁴⁷ Moo, 100.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

⁵⁰ Ladd, 75.

⁵¹ Feinberg, *The Rapture*, 85.

⁵² Showers, *Maranatha*.

⁵³ Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*, 52.

⁵⁴ Lindsell, 149.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 149-50.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁵⁷ Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*, 51.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵⁹ Gundry acknowledges a two-phase first resurrection: that of Christ the first fruits (1 Cor. 15:20) and that of the saints raised at the end of the millennium (*The Church*, 148). If Lindsell's observation on Revelation 20:4-5 is correct, Gundry would have to expand his view to three phases!

⁶⁰ Ryrie, *What You Should Know*, 100.

⁶¹ Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*, 165.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 166.

⁶³ Walvoord, *Rapture Question*, 54-58; and *Blessed Hope*, 9, 16-19, 33-36, 41, 159-60; Stanton, *Kept*, 138-164, 359; LaHaye, *No Fear*, 50-51, 191, 197, 212, 222; Rolland D. McCune, "Hermeneutics and Church among 'Historic' Premillennialists," *Central Bible Quarterly*, 18 (Fall, 1975):2-34; Thomas Ice, "Morgan Edwards: Another Pre-Darby Rapturist," *Pre-Trib Perspectives*, 11 (Sept./Oct. 1995):2; Thiessen, 26; William K. Harrison, *Hope Triumphant*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 149-53.

⁶⁴ 64. Gundry, 51-53. P m,

⁶⁵ As Walvoord points out, "Ladd recognizes that dispensationalism naturally leads to pretribulationism and therefore he devotes a chapter to a refutation of dispensationalism" (Blessed Hope, 41); see also McCune, "Hermeneutics," 2-34; Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, revised and expanded (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 79-104; Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1974).

⁶⁶ McAvoy, "Critique." 13; Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*, 9.

⁶⁷ Ladd, 48.

⁶⁸ Gundry, *The Church*, 154-55.

⁶⁹ See McAvoy, "A Critique," 59-70 for a response to Gundry's arguments.

⁷⁰ His attempt to establish this exegetically, is desperate.

⁷¹ Lindsell, 152-53.

⁷² Moo, 176; see Stanton's response in Kept, 359.

⁷³ Stanton, 359.

⁷⁴ Lindsell, 156.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁷⁷ Moo, 172.

⁷⁸ LaHaye, 234.

⁷⁹ For a discussion of this (literal interpretation leads to dispensationalism) see: Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 86-109; and *Dispensationalism*, a revision and expansion of the aforementioned, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 79-104; Thomas D. Ice, "Dispensational Hermeneutics," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, eds. Wesley R. Willis, John R. Master, Charles C. Ryrie (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 29-49; Robert L. Thomas, "The Hermeneutics of Progressive Dispensationalism," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 6 (Spring 1995):79-95; see also Thomas' article "A Critique of Progressive Dispensational Hermeneutics," in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 413-425; Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*.

⁸⁰ McAvoy, 94.

⁸¹ For an analysis and refutation of Gundry's arguments concerning the church in the Olivet Discourse, see McAvoy, 94-163.

⁸² *Ibid.*; see also Stanley D. Toussaint, "Are the Church and the Rapture in Matthew 24?" in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 235-50; Bruce A. Ware, "Is the Church in View in Matthew 24-25?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 (April-June 1981):15 8-72; Ma! Couch, "An Exegesis of the Olivet Discourse," unpublished paper delivered to the annual meeting of the Pre-Trib Study Group (Dallas, Texas, December 11-13); John Reis Master, "The Tribulation: In or Out. A Response to Gundry's *The Church and the Tribulation*." (Unpublished paper, Baptist Bible School of Theology, n.d.); Ronald Clark Rhodes, "A Theological Evaluation of Robert Gundry's View on the Judgment of the Nations," (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1983); Stephen E. Schappert, "The Rapture in Matthew 24?" (M.A. thesis, Capital Bible Seminary, 1980).

⁸³ Ironside, 9.

⁸⁴ Gundry freely admits this. He says, "Imminency doesn't merely tend to contradict posttribulationism; it does contradict posttribulationism (of a futuristic variety that is)." See Gundry, "An Open Letter," 20.

⁸⁵ Moo, 207f.

⁸⁶ D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* 12 vols. (Grand Rapids Zondervan Publishing House, 1984) 8:490.

⁸⁷ See my discussion in "A Critique," 16-18.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 16-93.

⁸⁹ Moo, 208.

⁹⁰ Gundry, *The Church*, 29.

⁹¹ Showers, 149. For other pretrib treatments on imminence see: McAvoy, 16-93; Rolland D. McCune, "Eschatology of 'Historic' Premillennialism," *Central Bible Quarterly* 18 (Winter, 1975):16-20; John A. Sproule, *In Defense of Pretribulationism*, 12-23; Stanton, Kept, 108-137; Gerald B. Stanton, "The Doctrine of Imminency: Is It Biblical?" in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 221-33; Paul D. Feinberg, *The Rapture*, 152-58; Walvoord, *Rapture*

Question, 69-76; Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*; James H. Brookes, "I Am Coming," revised ed. (London: Pickering & Inglis, n. d.), 3 6-43; David L. Larsen, *Jews, Gentiles, and the Church: A New Perspective on History and Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1995), 239.

⁹² Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*, 24; see also Larry V. Crutchfield, "The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation in the Apostolic Fathers," in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, 85-88.

⁹³ Larry V. Crutchfield, "The Blessed," 85-103.

⁹⁴ Grant R. Jeffrey, "A Pretrib Rapture Statement in the Early Medieval Church," (105-25) and Floyd Elmore, "J. N. Darby's Early Years," (127-50) both in *When the Trumpet Sounds*; Thomas Ice's article in this same volume is also relevant to the history of pretribulationism: "Back to the Future: Keeping the Future in the Future," 11-24; see also Larry V. Crutchfield, *The Origins of Dispensationalism* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992); Thomas Ice, "Examining an Ancient Pre-Trib Rapture Statement," *Pre-Trib Perspectives* 11 (April 1995):1-3; R. A. Huebner, *The Truth of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Recovered*, (Millington: N. J.: Present Truth Publishers, 1973); Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*, 41-48.

⁹⁵ Jeffrey, "A Pretrib Rapture Statement," 105-25.

⁹⁶ Thomas Ice, "Morgan Edwards: Another Pre-Darby Rapturist," *Pre-Trib Perspectives* 11 (Sept./Oct. 1995):1-3; see also Max S. Weremchuk, *John Nelson Darby* (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1992).

⁹⁷ See especially Dave MacPherson, *The Incredible Cover-Up* (Plainfield: Logos International, 1975).

⁹⁸ LaHaye, 182.

⁹⁹ Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Stanton, 312.

¹⁰¹ Some of the more vitriolic spokesmen for posttribulationism have been Alexander Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1932); MacPherson, *Incredible Cover-up*; John J. Bray, *The Origin of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Teaching* (Lakeland, Fl.: John J. Bray Ministry, 1982); John J. Scruby,

The Great Tribulation: The Church's Supreme Test (Dayton, Ohio, the author, 1933). Scruby ridicules and maligns pretribs as "false teachers," "exegetical crooks," and as teaching "damnable heresies;" see John Linton, *How Near Is Christ's Coming* (Philadelphia: Westbrook Publishing Company, 1946), 78.

¹⁰² J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1958), 165.

¹⁰³ Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*, 146.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁰⁵ LaHaye, 217.

¹⁰⁶ Arno C. Gaebelin, *The History of the Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Our Hope Publications, 1943; reprint ed., Spokane: WA: Living Words Foundation, 1991). About the Scofield Bible, Gaebelin said: "The publication of this Bible edition was not heralded as a great event. No costly advertisements were published. A comparatively small number of Christians knew anything about it. Yet before the year 1909 [the year it was first published] had passed, thousands of copies had been sold throughout the English-speaking world. It was soon discovered by believing Christians of all denominations that the Bible edition possessed a great spiritual value. Many believed that the work filled a great need, and, more than that, that its publication at that time was of much importance. In fact, it appears to the writer that the production of the Reference Bible was a significant act of Divine Providence" (page 9). By 1943, approximately 2 million had been sold (11).

¹⁰⁷ Showers, 189-90.

¹⁰⁸ Linton, 78-79.

¹⁰⁹ Herbert Vander Lugt, *There 's a New Day Coming! A Survey of Endtime Events* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1983), 9.

¹¹⁰ Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*, 58-59.

¹¹¹ Charles C. Ryrie, "The Church and the Tribulation': A Review" *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April-1974): 178.

¹¹² Excerpts from a letter dated June 28, 1974, answering a student at Dallas Theological Seminary and containing a response to the remarks of Dr. Charles Ryrie in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 131(1974): 173-179. These "excerpts" are appended to Gundry's "Open Letter" to Dr. Walvoord, and constitute pages 68-77. This particular quote is from page 69.

¹¹³ F. F. Bruce, *In Retrospect: Remembrance of Things Past* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 303.

¹¹⁴ Walvoord, *Blessed Hope*, 58.