***Focusing on the Word of Life - PH56-01

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 2:16***

As we focus on the Word of Life, we have come to the subject of the catching away of the believers to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air. This is a very great and important piece of doctrinal and of prophetic study. The rapture of the church is this event of Christians being taken out of this world to meet Christ in the air. It is an event which takes place before the beginning of the tribulation period–the seven years of God's pouring out of his wrath upon the earth. This is the seven years which Daniel predicted as part of a longer period of time which has not yet been fulfilled in God's program for dealing with His Jewish people. Again, I want to stress to you that any time we say "tribulation," you must associate that word with the Jewish people. It is primarily God's finishing of His dealings with the Jews. That is very important to the question as to whether we as Christians are going to be part of that.

**Pre-Tribulationism vs. Post-Tribulationism**

Well, this catching away before the tribulation begins is called the pre-tribulation rapture view. The other major view is the post-tribulation view; that is, that Christians go through the tribulation, and then they are caught up and taken out of this world. Again, I want to stress that neither pre-tribulation nor post-tribulation is specifically declared in Scripture. You can't turn to a single verse in the Bible that declares pre-tribulationism. You can't turn to a single verse that declares post-tribulationism. Both of these are conclusions which we arrive at by taking all of the pieces of Scripture relative to prophecy, and the order of things that are coming, and fitting them together. When the pieces are put together in a way that they harmonize, we conclude that this is the order, though it has not specifically been declared.

What we have been trying to show you is that when we take the pieces of what prophecy tells us, and we relate them in a pre-tribulation frame of reference, that they all harmonize. But if you try to fit them into a post-tribulation frame of reference, there are pieces of Scripture which just do not fit.

There is also the question that naturally comes up: "Well, how important is all this? What is the significant importance of a pre-tribulation or a post-tribulation rapture view?" Well, the pre-tribulation view makes the return of Christ for Christians an any-moment event. Pre-tribulation means that Christ can come at any moment. If you know that the Lord Jesus Christ can show up at any moment to take you to heaven, then it is more conducive to personal application of your life to service. We are more concerned with the fact that at any moment, everything may end.

So we make our plans accordingly, if we are wise Christians. We recognize that I am making a plan now; it has extended for this length of time; Christ may return for me at any moment; and, all of this that I am putting my effort in may be left behind and pointless and worthless. I don't know how much time I have. Therefore, my reward in heaven is going to be determined by the investment of my service now. So while I may be doing things in life that are long-range and that are of interest to me, I have to balance that (because Christ may return at any moment) with the service that I must do for which I will be rewarded, or else I'll be the poorer for it.

For example, a wife who is expecting guests to arrive at any moment is going to be acting accordingly, as opposed to if she knows that in a month from now, she may have visitors. If in a month from now she may have visitors, she doesn't concern herself too much with the conditions and the appearance of her house, or any number of other things. But if she knows that those guests may arrive at any moment, then she is concerned with all of these matters, including her own personal appearance in a totally different way. That's the significance of 1 John 3:1-3 which tell us that we purify ourselves as per our attitude of expectation of the Lord's immediate return. There are no signs or events preceding the rapture. Therefore, we don't know how close it is. There is nothing that we could button down and say that this indicates to us that here it is at hand.

**Urgency of Service**

If you take the post-tribulation view, on the other hand, this ensures that Jesus Christ cannot return at any moment. The post-tribulationist says that you've got to go through a tribulation first. Therefore, He can't return it any moment. Now, immediately, that gives a whole different mental attitude to the believer. He's less conscious of the need to get on with serving the Lord. Not that he would be any less devoted just because he's a post tribulationist, but his mental attitude is not that of urgency of the fact that, at any moment, he may be cut off from any further storing of treasures in heaven. Consequently, he will live without expecting the guests to arrive immediately. He, as a matter of fact, will be looking for signs. He will be looking for things that will signal to him that Christ is arriving.

For example, in Matthew 24:15, we have a sign that indicates the Second Coming of Christ is at hand. It says, "But when you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, whosoever reads it, let him understand." The abomination of desolation is the image of the antichrist that he makes of himself and puts in the Jews' Temple in Jerusalem, and says, "Now, worship that. That's your God."

Daniel says, "When you see that happening in the world." This, of course, indicates that when the Jews have a temple back in Jerusalem, which indicates that when you see the Jews own the city of Jerusalem again, which indicates when you see that the Jews are a nation again in the land of Palestine, all of these pieces are put together: the Jew back in Palestine; the Jew possessing the city of Jerusalem; and, the Jew having a temple. Well, two of those have already taken place. Is that the sign that the rapture is near? Not on your life. It is only a sign that there is approaching the time of the Second Coming of Christ.

When the temple is put up, then the antichrist is going to come along. When he puts his image there and says, "Now, worship that," immediately, you have a signal that you have three-and-a-half years left before Jesus Christ returns. Now, that's what post-tribulationism does for you. It gives you signs to look for, and therefore, the urgency of service is reduced.

So because neither pre-tribulationism nor post-tribulationism is specifically stated in Scripture, logically, we have to say that one of them could be wrong. Now, suppose pre-tribulationism proves to be wrong. Suppose that we find that indeed we do go into the tribulation. What has been lost to us? Very little. A little disappointment. But what we would say is, "Well, there he is: the antichrist. Sure enough, he is here. He's running the world from Rome. We were wrong. We are in the tribulation." What would we have lost? A little disappointment. However, the urgency before that of anticipating the imminent return of Christ would have kept us applying our efforts and our capacities where they counted for eternity.

Whereas if post-tribulation does prove to be wrong, there is much greater loss potentially to the individual, because his post-tribulation view lends itself to making him careless about devoting himself to the Lord's business. That's the critical thing. The Lord Jesus Christ, when He was rebuked by His parents at twelve years of age for His staying in the temple, had to ask His parents, "Why are you rebuking me? Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business?" He knew that He was on an urgent mission because He knew He had a timespan. He knew He had so many years. Now, once He experienced John's baptism in the River Jordan, He knew that He had but three years to go. Therefore, He had to urgently get on with the work.

That's the point. When we know that Christ may return at any moment, then the urgency of serving Him predominates our thinking. Pre-tribulationism lends itself to that urgency of service, where post-tribulationism does not. So we have less to lose if we find that we pre-tribulationists are wrong. We have much more to lose, likely, if we were to follow a post-tribulation position.

However, as we put the pieces of the puzzle of Scripture together, more and more we see that pre-tribulationism fits the picture. The church does not go through the time of God's wrath against the Jew and against the unbeliever, whereas post-tribulationism does not fit.

We have pointed out there are certain factors which indicated a pre-tribulation catching away. First of all, there is the distinctive nature of the body of Christ. This theologically has to do with the subject in theology called "ecclesiology." That's a theological word. You might get acquainted with it. It comes from the Greek word "ekklesia." It has to do with the word "church." The doctrine of ecclesiology is what I've been stressing to you. It is critical to the determination of whether the church goes through the tribulation or not.

Incidentally, I'll acquaint you with the literature before we're through. There have been two main books on post-tribulationism in the past. Recently, a new book on post tribulationism has come out, and it is one of the most definitive and one of the most powerful arguments for the post-tribulation position.

**The Old and New Testaments**

So what we have been stressing to you is that our ecclesiology, our view of the church, will determine our view of whether we go through the tribulation in a great way, because we have stressed that the New Testament expression of the saints and of the relationship to God is not the Old Testament Judaism and the nation of Israel carried over. What happened in the Old Testament is not continued in the New Testament. The church is a totally separate body of saints from the Old Testament Jewish body of saints. The church was never revealed in the Old Testament, and it was not related to Israel. One of the arguments you will find from post-millennialists, particularly in this new book, is the agreement that the church and Israel are separate. However, the writer seeks to establish that the church and Israel are related together in the tribulation. There are separate groups, but they are related in a common experience of the tribulation suffering.

So we must stress here that the church and Israel are different, and there is no indication in Scripture that they are ever related in any common program. Its program in God's plan is totally different. God began a program for the Jews. It continues to a certain end. When you get out there, you're still a Jew. God prepares a program for gentiles. It goes through the ages, and when you get out into eternity, they are still gentiles. God has a program for Christians. You go through the time period, the history of Christianity, and when you get to the end, you're still Christians. The three are separate. They are never mixed.

So the tribulation is a period where God deals with the Jewish nation as part of the dispensation of the Jews. We read in Jeremiah 30:7, in dealing with the tribulation period, Jeremiah says "Alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it. It is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." The tribulation is specifically in Scripture (and the Old Testament prophets referred to it as) "the time of Jacob's trouble," referring to the Jews. The Jews are going to be preserved through it, but it is a time for the Jews. So it is a specific seven-year period for Jewish tribulation, not for trial of believers in general. There is no biblical reason to include the church in this Jewish tribulation period.

**The Doctrine of the Church**

Christians are never said to be destined to come under God's wrath when He pours it out against unbelievers. Romans 8:1 says we're not; 1 Thessalonians 5:9 says we're not; and, Revelation 3:10 says we're not. So the first reason we hold to a pre-tribulation rapture is because of our doctrine of the church. The separation of church and Israel does not logically indicate that the church is going to be part of God's judgment upon Israel. The church has its own area of judgment.

**The Imminent Return of Christ**

There is a second point, and that is that the return of Christ for His body is imminent. We pointed out that the post-tribulationists reject this completely. They come up with all kinds of reasons for things that must happen before Christ can return. But the rapture never has any signs. The only thing delaying the return of Christ for us is the sovereign will of God. When God the Father tells His Son, "Now return," that's what decides it. But there are no events and no signs to be fulfilled before He can return.

The Lord has promised to come and take the Christians from earth to heaven. We read that in John 14:3. We also have that described in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. That's the rapture event. Christ comes and takes us from earth to heaven. At the Second Coming of Christ, He is coming with the saints from heaven to the earth. It's a complete reversal. However, that Second Coming has many signs and many events which must precede it (during the seven-year tribulation period) before Christ can come to the earth and arrive at the Mount of Olives.

**The Holy Spirit**

We also pointed out a third reason, and that's the Ministry of the Holy Spirit during the church age. During the church age, God the Holy Spirit permanently indwells every believer. John 14:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 6:19 tells us that He indwells us; He is in us; and, our bodies are His temple. The Holy Spirit restrains the maximum expression of evil today in order to prevent the antichrist from coming to power. 2 Thessalonians 2:2-4 tell us about this restrainer. Until the Holy Spirit stops holding back evil, such a horrendously evil man as the antichrist can never take over control of this world.

The Holy Spirit restrains this maximum expression of evil only as long as He is in this world. While He is here, the antichrist cannot come to political power. In all likelihood, he has already been born this day; someplace in the world he is growing up; and, his interest in political matters is shaping up. That's the direction in which his career will move. But his full expression and his public recognition is being held back by the fact that the Holy Spirit restrains the expression of evil.

This restraint is going to be removed when the Spirit of God leaves His residence here on this earth and returns to heaven. His residence is in the body of the believers. Therefore, He cannot go until the believers go, because He permanently indwells Christians in the age of grace. In the Old Testament, people were sometimes indwelt. He came and went. In this age, He is there permanently.

**Between the Rapture and the Second Coming**

There is another factor besides these three that I want to point out to, and that is that between the rapture and the Second Coming, you do need a time interval. We have the rapture going up, and the Second Coming, coming down. We use two different expressions: rapture; and, Second Coming, or Second Advent–that is, Christ coming the second time to the earth. Whereas the rapture is the saints going up to meet Him in the air. He comes *for* His saints at the rapture. He comes *with* his saints at the Second Coming. Those distinctions are very important. Christ comes first to the airspace above the earth (the rapture), and then He comes to the earth itself at the Second Coming.

Between these two events, there are several things which must take place. Once the church is gone, certain things move into operation. For example, in 2 Corinthians 5:10, we are told that all we Christians who have gone up into heaven are going to stand before the "bema," the Judgment Seat of Christ. The purpose of this judgment seat will be that we receive individual rewards.

The point is that it's going to take time for every believer to stand individually before the Judgment Seat of Christ. All these inane excuses, such as we read this morning in Luke 14, are going to be dealt with with one blow. Before this seven-year period is over, everyone will know where he stands. Everyone will know what he has for rewards. Everyone will know what the results are of his life's service.

There is also a time factor needed on earth. There are things that have to go on on this earth. Here on earth, when the rapture takes place, there are only unbelievers left. So where are you going to get the people who are going to go into the millennium? If you have it after the tribulation, there is no time for somebody to become a believer. So during the seven-year period on the earth, people are going to be saved again. They're going to be saved as the result of the ministry of these 144,000. Most of these who are saved will become martyrs. They'll be killed. But many of them will survive to the end of the tribulation. That's what the Scriptures speak about–surviving to the end–hanging on to the end.

The result will be that at the end, when Christ returns with the Saints, He will come with believers from heaven, but there will be a large body of believers now on the earth, again, in mortal bodies. These people will then go into the millennial kingdom. Thus, they will marry, and be able to bear children. They will conduct life. Remember that the millennium will be life as you know it now on this earth, but without all of the objectionable things that we have in the way of life on this earth now. It will be the magnificent era of human history. These people will, in their mortal bodies–not resurrected bodies–will carry on the normal life cycles that we know of today.

It will be out of their children that will come the new body of unbelievers. These who are unbelievers at the end of the tribulation are all going to be put to death. So we have the reversal of what we had at the beginning of the tribulation. At the beginning of the tribulation, everybody is an unbeliever. At the beginning of the millennium, everybody is a believer. At the beginning of the tribulation, they're all lost. At the beginning of the millennium, they're all saved. At the end of the 1,000 years, there is a large body of unbelievers there. They are the children of these people who were born and grew up during the millennium. That's why you have to have people who are in regular mortal bodies who continue into the millennium. At the beginning of the tribulation, there is nobody on the earth who is a believer in a mortal body. They're all gone. They have to arise during that period. So our point is that that you need time between the rapture and the Second Coming for a new body of believers to arise.

**The New Post-Tribulation View**

I'm just going to mention to you that the newest view in post-tribulationism has to do with the 144,000 evangelists whom the Scriptures indicate become servants of the Lord High God as the result of some testimony to them. This new view of these post-tribulationists is that they become this after the rapture. These 144,000 are Jewish unbelievers who refused to accommodate themselves to the antichrist. So God enables them to survive all the way through the tribulation. Then at the very end, they get saved. And they are the people (144,000 men and women, they say) that becomes the basis of those who go into the millennium in their physical mortal bodies.

What they are trying to do is to get around the very problem that I'm bringing up to you, all of which is another conjecture on the part of the post-tribulationists because they have a piece of the puzzle that just won't fit. There's nobody to go into the millennium in a mortal body. You have to have a time period to do that.

Coming more specifically, this time period of a judgment situation refers partly to Israel. In Ezekiel 20:33, we have described for us what God is going to do when Christ returns to this earth–what He's going to do to every unbelieving Jew. If you have any Jewish friends, you can give them a little bit of prophecy. You can become a prophet for them. You can tell them that the Christians will be taken out of this world. If they (the Jews) manage to survive through the seven years of the earth's most hellish period, when Christ returns to this earth, if they have not received Him as Savior, here's what's going to happen to them.

Ezekiel 20:33 says, "'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'Surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. And I will bring you out from the peoples scattered among the peoples of the world, and I will gather you out of the countries in which you are scattered with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out.'" God is going to bring together, after Christ returns, all of the Jews from all over the world, wherever they are living.

Notice that Ezekiel describes for us the multitude of the means of transportation which are going to be brought together in order to bring the Jews together. No single Jew is going to be left out of this regathering. Ezekiel 39:25 says, "'Therefore,' says the Lord God, 'I will bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for My Holy Name. After they have borne their shame (during the tribulation), and all their trespasses by which they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the peoples, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, who caused them to be led into captivity among the nations: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them anymore there.'" So no Jew will be left out of this regathering.

What is He going to do when He regathers them? Getting back to Ezekiel 20:35, here is what He's going to do with them: '"And I will bring you into the wilderness. (These are unbelieving Jews here at the Second Coming.) I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I enter into judgment with you face-to-face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you,' says the Lord."

What did God do with the rebellious Jews under Moses? He says, "I took them out into the wilderness, and I had a face-off with them. I had a face-off with your fathers who rebelled against Me. What was the face-off? God put them to death. He said, "For 40 years, you will wander until every one of you dies, and your carcasses will be scattered across this desert. Now," He says, "I'm going to do the same thing. I'm going to come. When My Son returns, He will gather you together from all over the world with every means of transportation. You unbelieving Jews will be faced with Me directly. We'll have a face-off. Here's what we will do."

Verse 37: "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against Me. I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel, and you shall know that I am the Lord." What he says here is, "I'm going to purge you out. I'm going to put you to death. I'm going to bring you under the rod of My judgment. Every Jew who has rejected Christ during the tribulation will be put to death."

After the regathering is completed (which takes place after the Second Coming), this judgment will be imposed upon unbelieving Jews. They are put to death. Those who believe are still on this earth. They are left in their mortal bodies. They are permitted to go into the millennium. So believing Jews go into the millennium. Unbelieving Jews are put to death.

This judgment of the Jews cannot be equated with the rapture. That's my point. This judgment upon the Jews cannot be equated with the event of the rapture. That's what post-tribulationists try to do. The judgment upon the Jews is upon the Jewish people. It is totally different. It is not even comparable to what we read about the rapture. The rapture is a moment of time. The Jews take some time, because this is individual, one-by-one as they are judged. The rapture involves only believers, whereas the Jews are going to be gathered. Saved Jews and unsaved Jews are going to be gathered. The rapture deals with Jews and gentiles. But this judgment deals only with the Jews. The rapture is not related to the land of Palestine, but this judgment has to do with the land of Palestine.

There are too many differences to say that this judgment of the Jews is the judgment of the rapture. The destiny of the rapture is to take people to heaven. But the destiny of the tribulation Jews is to take them into the millennium. The raptured saints received glorified bodies. The tribulation believing Jews stay in their same mortal bodies.

If the rapture takes place here at the end, then this judgment is unnecessary. There are no Jews to be judged. Both believers and unbelievers have been dealt with by the rapture. They've already been separated. So you need this time interval to be able to come to a new group of Jews who are saved to be judged at the end.

The same thing is true for the gentiles. We have this described in Matthew 25:31-46. The same thing that has happened to the Jews is going to happen to the individual gentiles. They're going to be gathered together, and God is going to individually deal with them, and separate them. He will separate some into goats (unbelievers to be put to death), and some into sheep (believers to go into the millennium in their mortal bodies).

Again, if the church is gone, where are you going to get believing gentiles? All the believers are gone. Well, we need a period of this seven years for a new group of believing gentiles to arise–a group of believing gentiles who are not part of the church, any more than the group of believing Jews are part of the church. But here at the end, when Christ returns, He finds gentiles on the earth who are trusting Him as Savior.

He takes these people, and on the principle of James 2:18, that your works show what you think, their works show that they dealt with the Jewish believers who were under suffering. These gentiles took care of them. So they evidence their salvation, and they are brought into the kingdom.

This judgment, again, cannot be equated to the rapture. This is a totally different judgment. If the rapture is right at the end of the tribulation, there are no believing gentiles to judge. They have already all gone to heaven. So you have to have the rapture first and then the Second Coming of Christ, if you are going to have these Jews and Gentile believers to be judged worthy of going into the millennial kingdom.

The view that we have been presenting to you of post-tribulationism is the majority view of the churches today. That is because most denominations are amillennial in their "eschatology." Eschatology has to do with the last things–with prophecy. Most churches in their eschatology are amillennial. If you're an amillennialist, then you are also a post-tribulationist automatically. Therefore, post-tribulationism is the majority view. But it is not the view which is sustained by Scripture any more than the fact that Christ is not going to have a kingdom upon this earth is sustained by Scripture. So because the amillennialist is wrong, his conclusion on the tribulation is also wrong.

Instead, the Word of God teaches a specific seven-year period preceding the return of Christ. Just to sum this up, what is the basis for the post-tribulation rapture position? Why do these people think this? What is their basis for it?

Well, here is one of the things that somebody who knows something might shock you with. They'll ask you, "Do you know that for centuries, Christians believed in a post-tribulation rapture? Do you know that it was only 150 years ago that the pre-tribulation rapture view came into effect in popularity?" You would say, "Only 150 years ago?" That would scare you, wouldn't it? Could all the people over all the centuries since apostolic times have been wrong when they believed that the church was going to go through the tribulation?

**The Trinity**

Well, that's not as shocking as it may appear. Please remember that there were doctrines, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, that were not settled for several centuries. It was something like 300 or 400 years after New Testament times before the doctrine of the Trinity was specifically stated, and people were now told that the Bible teaches that God is one in essence, but three in persons. Now, you would say, "They didn't know that for several hundred years?" No, they didn't. "Was it not true for those 300 or 400 years?" Of course it was true. However, they hadn't brought the pieces of Scripture together to determine this doctrine.

The same was true of many doctrines concerning the person of Christ. For a long time, they couldn't decide: "Was He just a human being; or was He just God; or, was He a God man?" And the debate raged back and forth, and centuries went by. Finally it was settled, and they made a declaration. Jesus Christ was a God man: 100% God; and, 100% human. He always was that. But the doctrine had not been researched and settled.

**Prophecy**

Now, one of the areas of greatest neglect of doctrine, as you know, was the area of prophecy. You would have thought that when we came to the Reformation, that all of this would have been changed. But unfortunately, the reformers, as ex-Roman Catholics, went back to amillennialism, which is what they believed. They went back to Augustine instead of to Paul. Because they went back to Augustine, they all hung in there with the false concepts of eschatology. They weren't fighting the battles of prophecy. They were fighting the battles of soteriology, which has to do with salvation. They wanted to establish how in the world a sinner goes into heaven. The Roman Catholic Church had so confused that and covered that up, that people were going into hell in a flood-tide. And the reformers brought that truth to life, and that was the area of their battles.

**Origen**

So the truth of the matter is, when you read the early church fathers, we know that they were pre-millennialists, but what did they say about the tribulation? They didn't have much to say. They just didn't deal with this subject. They didn't express themselves. Over the centuries, the same thing was true. When you got to the third and fourth century, a man named Origen said, "You know, the trouble with our study of the Bible up to now has been that we have been literal." They said, "What do you mean, Origen?" He said, "Well, we've been reading the Bible and reading this Greek and Hebrew, and we've been pretending that what the Greek and Hebrew words said, that that's what God meant. But the truth of it is that God has spoken in code. Underneath the words is a secret message." So he's spiritualized the Scripture.

So when I was a student at Baylor University, a very bright head of the Bible Department would look me straight in the eye and say, "John, when the book of the Revelation says that Jesus Christ is going to come and rule for 1,000 years, that doesn't mean a thousand 365-day years. That means a long period of time. That's all." That professor, in our day, was repeating what Origen sold them back in the third and fourth century.

**The Plymouth Brethren**

Well, once they started spiritualizing prophecy, you can see that what the Word of God had to say was gone. While it is true that 150 years ago, we started getting a grasp upon prophecy, I'll tell you why this was. It was because a group of believers arose in England, in the city of Plymouth, who called themselves simply "brothers." They were doctors and they were everything else, but they addressed themselves as brothers to one another. So they have come to be known as the Plymouth Brethren. But these men returned to a study of the Bible in an expository fashion. When they did that, they said, "Look here, we've got pieces of Scripture. This amillennial view doesn't fit. Nor does the post-tribulation view fit. When we put it together, we've got conflicts here," such as I've been trying to show you in this session.

So these men, because they went back to Scripture, did exactly what the Christological controversies of the early church did. They went back to Scriptures and they fought out what the person of Christ was really like and what the Trinity was really like. And as they put the pieces together, they were able to formulate a doctrine.

So the fact that we have this in modern recent times only indicates how much Bible doctrine exposition has been neglected by the church over the centuries in some areas, particularly prophecy. The early New Testament church leaders just did not teach one way or another on this subject. So the fact that this is a doctrine that we have hammered out, and our predecessors have hammered out in recent days, does not at all mean that it is new.

**The Recency of Doctrine**

This is one thing the post-millennialists will do to you. They will hit you with this recency of doctrine. The same thing is true about the doctrine of dispensations. One of the first attacks about dispensationalism is, "Oh, it's a new doctrine." Yet, when you go back to the early church fathers, here we have more evidence. For two-and-a-half centuries, every early church father you read is a premillennial. Whenever he talks about the end times, he only describes it in terms of a premillennialist.

**Ad Hominem**

But recency is not an argument against it any more than is the "ad hominem" argument. That's another one they like to do. You and I fall into that. If somebody who is a creep teaches something that may be the truth, does the fact that he's a creep change the truth? No. We have plenty of creeps teaching the Bible, but the fact that they are creeps does not mean that what they teach is not true. You'd be surprised how many post-millennialists will zero in and attack somebody who's teaching a pre-tribulation rapture because this guy is a creep in some way. So they dispose of the argument "ad hominem." The Latin words mean "as per the person."

You could just look around among yourselves and see how you could take any number of people and they could teach you a lot of truth. Boy, you could make their truth look bad just because you could start showing what kind of people they are. Look at the clothes they wear. Look at how they smile, and so on. This is ridiculous. Obviously, that doesn't prove truth one way or another.

But the worst thing of all is the tribulation itself. Among post-tribulationists, they have utter confusion on, "What is the tribulation really like?" We are told that Christians, indeed, are going to have trouble in this world. Jesus told us that (John 16:33, Acts 14:22). But Jesus also predicted a specific period in history of great tribulation, which is not just trials in general (Matthew 24:21-29). The post-tribulationists blur this kind of general Christian suffering and the specific period of suffering. Why should we, who are Christians, having been justified by faith in Jesus Christ, have to suffer when God pours His wrath out upon the unbelieving world? If you don't remember that the tribulation is for God to pour out His wrath on the unbelieving world, then you will miss an important point of the pre-tribulation rapture position. There is no reason in the world why we should come under God's wrath when we are believers, and we have accepted what He has provided. We have many expressions in the Word of God that we will not come to this.

Sometimes a post-tribulationist says, "Well, Christians are going to suffer in the tribulation, but they're not going to come under the wrath of God. They're going to be protected from that." Well, what is the wrath of God going to do in the tribulation? The wrath of God in the tribulation is going to pour a disease out upon human beings so that human beings are going to walk down the street, and all over their face there's going to be pus running down. All over their clothes, their clothing is going to be wet and sticking to them because they're going to have open sores all over them, and they're going to be screaming with pain, barely able to move. Do you think that the believers in the tribulation are going to avoid picking that up? Not on your life. How can they avoid this expression of God's judgment?

What's God going to do? He's going to cut the food supplies. He's going to do to every country on this world what is now happening in communist countries. A socialist country cannot feed itself. This is why Solzhenitsyn pleaded with the American Congress, "Please don't sell grain to Russia, or to the communist countries. Let them suffer the consequences of their brutal system that they have imposed upon people until hungry people rise up and tear it to the ground. If you give them food, you enable their system to continue. Without your food and your technology, the communist system cannot continue."

Well, because we have dark minds who rule our country, they don't understand that kind of wisdom. In the tribulation period, all countries will be under a socialistic control. You will have a communist system. The nation of Russia will be destroyed in the tribulation, but communism as a system (socialism as a system) will dominate the world. Because it will dominate, it will have its natural consequences of famine. It will have the natural consequences that when you take incentive away from people, they don't work, and food will not be produced. So famine will be widespread. Do you think believers are going to escape that? Not on your life.

Obviously, fantastic things that are going to happen in nature. A third of the sun's light will be cut off. Can you imagine what that's going to do to how cold the earth is going to become? Can you imagine the intensity of the pain? Do you think believers are going to escape that? Not on your life. They're going to come under the consequences of this expression of God's wrath.

God's wrath is going to cause the freshwater areas to turn to blood. Do you think that a believer walking up to his sink and turning the tap, and out comes pure blood, is going to escape that wrath of God? Not on your life. There's no way a believer can escape that.

So it's really, really dumb to say that the Christians are going to be in the tribulation, but they're not going to suffer from these things that are the expressions of the wrath of God. You think about what God is going to do, and you'll see that anybody living in that period is going to suffer the consequences of those acts. Yet, we're told in many Scriptures that we're not going to even enter this period. 1 Thessalonians 5:5 says, "We are sons of the day, not of the night." In Revelation 3:10, Christians in Philadelphia are promised that they will be saved from the hour of trial on earth, and we, in their pattern. Luke 21:36: "Watch, therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." The only way you will escape the tribulation events is to stand before the Son of Man at the rapture, and not be on the earth. Otherwise, you will be in the tribulation, and you will suffer the things that are taking place. May, God forbid, in His grace, that any of us should be so foolish.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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