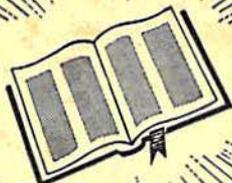
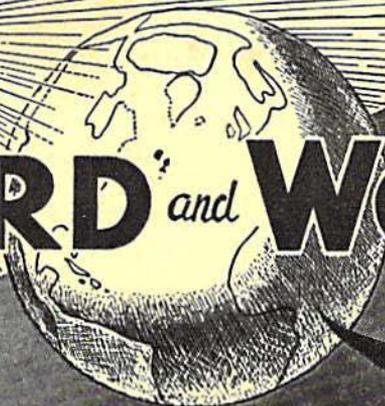


*"Holding fast the faithful Word . . ."*



# The **WORD** and **WORK**



*"Holding forth the Word of life."*

JULY, 1991

## **"HERE I COME, READY OR NOT!"**

**"You ask, Is the Church to go through the Tribulation? That is not the question. It is this: Is the Church ready? ARE YOU READY, ready either for Tribulation or Rapture? If you are, that is all that matters. What difference does it make so long as you are ready? If you are to be in it, you cannot avoid it, and if you are to escape, you will not be in it."**

**—Oswald J. Smith**

\* \* \*

**"I AM COMING QUICKLY."**

**"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22:20)**

**"What comes from heaven in a promise should return to heaven in a prayer."**

**—Matthew Henry**

# AGREE to DISAGREE AGREEABLY, For We Are Brothers and Sisters in Christ

*From R. H. Boll's first editorial in Word and Work, 1916:*

Having no heart to see for themselves what God says, [some people] become chiefly anxious to know what good brethren teach, and fearful only lest they might come to be considered unorthodox. And so, unwittingly they slip their necks under the yoke of human tyranny and fall under the bondage of a human creed, whether written or unwritten."

*Word and Work* "shall be little concerned about 'the representative views of the brotherhood'—of any brotherhood; but very greatly concerned as to God's word in all its utterances . . . While it would not be expedient to open the paper [W & W] to every disputant who may differ with anything that may have appeared in it, yet on any considerable matter of difference, we expect to call upon some of the ablest brethren who may hold an opposing view to set forth that view. Thus we hope that the way shall always be open for friendly comparison of differences, and mutual helpfulness in searching out the truth. *We shall have discussions, but never strifes.*"

*Mark Nitz:*

"Robert Richardson, the biographer of Alexander Campbell, wrote, 'A sect is characterized by a marked stagnation of religious thought. The theological system of each party surrounds it with fixed boundaries which afford no outlet to free investigation.' When people reach the point where they believe they have discovered all truth, that they have everything worked out, and that their conclusions are equivalent to 'truth,' surely they have become a sect."

*R. H. Boll, 1938, when he was being bitterly attacked for his teachings on prophecy:*

"That differences of views and doctrines should exist in the church of the Lord is not strange. Nor is it in itself bad. When free brethren study God's word independently it is to be expected that on one point and another they will arrive at different conclusions. Where brotherly love rules, these different views and findings and the discussions that follow, are mutually helpful. Where motives other than love control, differences result in dissension, strife, bitterness, sectarian parties and partisan hate. The blame in such a case, however, does not rest on the differences themselves, but on the spirit and attitude of those who differ. The wrong comes in when lines are drawn, when brethren are branded, ostracised, disfellowshipped."

# THE WORD AND WORK

*"Declare the whole counsel of God"*

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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## THEME:

# “Here I Come, Ready or Not!”

## Don't Lock Yourself In

Alex V. Wilson

Not long ago I saw a dear Christian friend. We meet rarely because our homes are quite far apart. I mentioned to him in passing that *Word and Work's* themes for June and July would be on prophetic matters. He was not overjoyed at the prospect. It's not that he disbelieves or dislikes Biblical prophecy. He is interested in it; but his comment was this: “It seems that usually when Christians study prophecy, they get wrapped up in the details, the timing, and the controversial points much more than in the Lord Himself—the One who is coming.” I had to admit that it often happens that way.

Former editor Gordon Linscott warned of this years ago.

Do we hope to escape from the tribulation to come? Emphatically, yes. . . . Scriptures convince us that this is a “pretribulation” escape—we are caught up before the wrath of God is poured out upon “them that dwell upon the earth.” All this we confidently expect, but is this our hope? Emphatically, No!

Our hope is a Person, Jesus (1 Tim. 1:1). Our hope is “set on him” (1 John 3:3). Though John refers to the catching up of the saints, he makes no mention of the blessedness of our escape—there is something far better. “We shall see him!” Blessed day! “Whom not having seen we love,” Him we shall see. Our hearts that have so long hungered for His presence, that have longed to look into His face, shall see Him!

May God use our study of coming events to quicken our love for the coming One.

### “Don't Confuse Me”

This issue contains articles that contradict each other. Some take one view, some take another. Lots of folks don't like it when we present differing interpretations. They want us to present only the one view that's right. But that, of course, is the point. On some matters the Bible presents truth that is so big and complex that sincere and godly people don't see it all alike. Oh, the *basic* truths are clear, the major facts about the living, loving God and the salvation He has provided for us (“the *plain* things are the *main* things”). And regarding prophecy the main things are plain: see the article right after this one, it's the “simple” article for this month.

But when we try to work out some details, it is not always clear how they all fit together. This results in differing opinions. There is nothing new in this; read the quotations inside our front cover. (And the solution to this predicament is not hard either; see Oswald Smith's quotation on the front cover!)

So this month two articles strongly promote the belief that Christ's born-again disciples will be snatched away from Earth before Antichrist unleashes history's worst persecution. But two other articles argue just as fervently that we really have no such guarantee of escape; rather we may be part of that multitude of conquered-but-victorious "saints" "who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus," who make "their robes white in the blood of the Lamb" and "come out of the great tribulation" and are "victorious over the beast" (Rev. 13:7; 12:17; 7:9-14; 15:2).

In his article in 12-89 *Word and Work*, Earl Mullins Sr. wrote, "The church could see [certain] events take place within this decade. However, none of these prophecies have to be fulfilled in order for the church to be raptured. The Lord could come at any moment! Hallelujah! Maranatha!" But he also issued this warning while preaching at Portland Avenue Church some months later: "Our emphasis on the rapture may numb us to the danger of God's judgment on our wicked country. *We need to prepare ourselves to suffer*—maybe not physically so much as morally, mentally, emotionally, and socially." Those two statements fit in well with Oswald Smith's (and my) plea that we be *ready*—ready for *either* rapture or tribulation. In the meantime let's avoid being so rigidly devoted to *any* doctrinal position that we never consider that possibly we are wrong on some points.

#### *Locked In and Thus Locked Out!*

This leads to the recent true story of a Christian teacher and leader, Marvin Rosenthal. For over fifteen years he was director of a fine Christian ministry that seeks mainly to lead Jewish people to Jesus Messiah. During that time he established an official policy of requiring all the organization's staff to believe in the "pre-trib rapture" (that Christ will return for the church before the Great Tribulation carried out by the "beast" or Antichrist). We'll let him continue the story:

About 3 years ago, as a result of some questions posed to me by a friend, I felt compelled to reexamine my view concerning the timing of the Rapture. I had been a staunch defender of Pretribulation Rapturism for more than 30 years and was certain my renewed study would serve to reinforce my existing, strong convictions. The theological schools I attended, my colleagues in the ministry, and the Christian leaders whose writing influenced me most were all Pretribulationist. . . . I had earnestly believed that and preached it. . . .

As a result of my study, a new conviction began to emerge in my heart. I still believed the major facet of Pretribulationism, that the Church will be raptured Prewrath. The debate is over when that wrath begins. [For more details see his book *The Prewrath Rapture*.]

As a result of his changed conviction, he had to leave his organization. Why? Because of the policy he himself had established which required that no one could be on their staff unless they believed the pre-trib view. He had locked them into that position; now he found that he was locked out as a result.

I mention this example, not because his change of conviction to some extent paralleled my own during college days. No, but because it shows the danger of any church or institution insisting that every member or even every leader fully agree doctrinally. Only on core

doctrines directly related to God Himself or related directly to the Gospel of salvation should uniformly be insisted on. Why shouldn't pre-tribs and post-tribs and pre-mils and a-mils be able to work together in love, serving their Lord and reaching out in love to others? I have seen it happen—and no one was told he couldn't speak up and responsibly share his view, either! It is a beautiful sight when disciples of Jesus live in harmony despite doctrinal disagreements over prophecy or anything else. We *need* not agree on everything; we *will* not agree on everything . . . until we reach the glorious presence of God. Only then shall we know fully. Till then we should keep learning and keep loving.

\* \* \*

## **JESUS IS COMING AGAIN!**

Clifton J. Allen

The most wonderful event in all past history was announced by an angel from heaven: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Likewise, the supreme event in all future history has been declared by messengers from heaven: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Glorious truth—Jesus is coming again!

The statement at his advent and the statement at his ascension were equally simple in their terms. The uneducated shepherds who heard the announcement of Christ's birth had no difficulty in understanding it, and did not hesitate to believe it. How can there be any doubt as to the meaning of the words spoken to those disciples who saw their Lord "taken up" until "a cloud received him out of their sight"? They can mean nothing else than this: that Jesus is coming again. So the apostles understood the message; so evangelical Christians have understood it down the centuries; and so we understand it today.

Here is a promise, then, concerning our Lord which is as yet unfulfilled. Is it not vitally important to every one of us? Yet it must be admitted that the prevailing attitude toward the second coming of Christ is often unworthy and in many cases tragically untrue to Bible teaching. For some it has become the center and circumference of all thought, the focal point in theology, and the key to all biblical interpretation. Some others are perplexed and confused about the second coming. They believe in it nominally but have little conviction about it, little interest in it. Still others think of the second coming as a theological fancy, an idle dream; they scoff at the idea and reject the fact. Their attitude is that of denial and indifference.

We need to realize that the second coming of Christ is a prominent and inspiring doctrine of the Scriptures. Hundreds of passages relate to it. How strange is our accustomed neglect of this teaching! He cannot declare the whole counsel of God and leave it out. Many of the most important teachings of the gospel have no foundation, no assurance of fulfilment, apart from the second coming of Christ. Just

as Christ's resurrection was the confirmation of all that he claimed about his deity and saving mission, so the second coming is the confirmation of his claims about the kingdom of God, the resurrection from the grave, the judgment, and the victory of righteousness.

The second coming of Christ is a certain and glorious fact. Jesus himself declared it, again and again: "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30). "I will come again, and receive you unto myself" (John 14:3). The angels declared the fact after the ascension as we have seen; and the apostles affirmed over and over the same glorious truth. Paul's word is unequivocal: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 Thess. 4:16). If we fail to believe and teach and treasure this fact, we deny the affirmation of Christ and the witness of angels and apostles; and we take from our witness the very climax of the gospel message.

Christ will return *personally*: "This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner" (Acts 1:11). He will come *triumphantly*: "The Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him" (Matt. 25:31). He will come *unexpectedly*: "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be . . . But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:27, 36). Therefore, let us watch and be ready, for in such an hour as we think not our Saviour will come. His coming may be very near at hand.

The second coming of Christ has tremendous meaning for Christians. It will mark the consummation of his kingdom. That for which he became incarnate in the flesh, died on the cross, and has longed for through the ages, that for which his Spirit has striven and his saints have suffered, will then be brought to consummation. It will mean hopes realized, purposes achieved, and grace justified. It will mean victory. Then will be fulfilled the word in Revelation: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15).

The certainty of the second coming of Christ should have sublime meaning for *Christians*. It gives us assurance and confidence. It assures us that evil will be conquered and that righteousness and peace will be established in the earth. No matter how dark the prospect now, we can look forward to the victory of goodness. No matter how great the suffering, we can endure in anticipation of that day "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels" (2 Thess 1:7). Again, the second coming will bring to fulfilment the promise of our resurrection. "The dead in Christ shall rise first, . . . so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17). What comfort in these words! We wait for that glad day when the Saviour will fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the image of the body of his glory. "Beloved, . . . it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

Ours is a blessed, challenging, life-transforming hope. Let us fan

the flame of love for his appearing that we may receive a crown of righteousness. And let us warn all men everywhere that Christ is coming in judgment to render to every man according to his works.

\* \* \*

A COMMON VIEW: STUDY CAREFULLY

## Caught Up in the Rapture Question?

Kenneth G. Hanna

Christians agree that the Bible says a lot about the future, but not all agree about *what* it says. Our considerable differences of opinion hinge on disagreement about four future events: the Rapture of the Church, the Tribulation, the return of Christ to the earth, and the millennial kingdom.

The Millennium, or 1,000-year rule of Christ, is described in Revelation 20. Those who do not see it as a literal kingdom occurring on earth are called *amillennialists* (*a* or “no” literal Millennium). *Postmillennialists* see the Millennium as a symbolic kingdom on earth. They view the 1,000 years as a time of preparation that will culminate in the return of Christ to earth.

As a *premillennialist*, I believe the return of Christ will precede His literal kingdom on earth. Prophecies of Christ’s first coming were all fulfilled literally, and I expect the same to hold true for prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled.

Though *premillennialists* agree on most biblical prophecies, we may differ on our understanding of when the church will be raptured (caught up, removed; 1 Cor. 15:50-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). *Posttribulationists* believe the church will be raptured after the entire seven years of tribulation, almost simultaneously with Christ’s return to establish the millennial kingdom on earth. *Midtribulationists* believe the church will endure the first three and one-half years of tribulation. They place the Rapture in the middle of that period, but before the portion known as the Great Tribulation. *Pretribulationists* believe the church will be raptured from earth *before* the seven years of tribulation.

The Rapture question is not a test of orthodoxy. It is not essential to our salvation. However, it is important to our understanding of the future, and it can affect the church. The Thessalonians are not the only believers to have been disturbed and distracted by the question of whether the church would go through the Tribulation (2 Thess. 2:1-3). Our understanding of the future of the church on earth involves many other doctrines and affects how we live our lives.

Here are 10 reasons I believe the Rapture will occur before the Tribulation.

1. *The Tribulation is primarily related to the nation Israel.*

Daniel 9:24-27 gives an outline of prophetic events. That outline begins with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem following the Babylonian captivity and extends through the final “week” (seven years) known as the Tribulation.

Daniel’s prophecy parallels Jewish history. The 70 weeks of sevens fit the chronology of the Jewish return to Palestine and the

crucifixion of Jesus, the Messiah. Since the first 69 weeks were literally and historically fulfilled, we must expect the same to hold true for the final week of Daniel's prophecy. That period of seven years, like the other 69, is related specifically to the Jewish nation. "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city" (9:24). As the details of the Tribulation unfold, they are clearly national and political in nature. The world ruler will be a covenant maker and a covenant breaker in Israel (9:27).

Jeremiah had earlier related the tribulation to the Jewish people. He called it "the time of Jacob's distress" (Jer. 30:7).

Jesus referred to those prophecies when He warned of the Great Tribulation to come upon Jerusalem and the Jewish nation (Luke 21:20-24). In both the Old and New Testaments the tribulation period is related to God's purpose for the Jewish nation. It focuses on the people and land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, not on the church.

2. *The nature of the church points to its rapture before the Tribulation.* The church is distinct from Israel. Though they share in the same salvation purchased by Jesus, the Messiah, God has a distinct purpose for each.

The church is unique to the New Testament and has a distinct character and purpose on earth. Jesus promised the disciples that He would build (future tense) His church (Matt. 16:18). Paul develops the uniqueness of the church as a mystery: that is, something previously unknown but now clearly revealed (Eph. 3:1-12). Passages such as Ephesians 1:3-12, 2 Timothy 4:18, and Hebrews 12:18-28 point to a different kind of kingdom for the church. It is heavenly, not earthly: it is eternal, not temporary.

The Tribulation focuses on Israel and on earth. The prophets of the Old Testament consistently relate the events and effects of the Tribulation to Israel and to the land of Palestine (for example, Deut. 28, Joel, Micah 5, Zephaniah, and Zechariah 12). The church does not become or displace Israel. Paul makes it clear in Romans 11:25-32 that Israel still has a future as a nation. The times of the gentiles will run their course. God's purpose for the church leads me to the conclusion that it will be raptured before the Tribulation comes upon Israel.

3. *The conditions of the tribulation period suggest the absence of the church.* Isaiah describes the Tribulation as a time of "deep darkness" (60:2). Zephaniah 1:15 lists its dreadful qualities: "A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness."

Unprecedented physical and spiritual darkness will mark those seven years. Absence of spiritual and moral light is stressed. The apostate religion described in Revelation 13 and 17 will enslave, not enlighten men.

By contrast, the church of Jesus Christ and its individual members are pictured as the light of the world (Matt. 5:14; Eph. 5:8-13; Col. 1:13; 1 Thess 5:4, 5). These contrasts do not require the removal of the church before the Tribulation, but they strongly suggest it. That

unequaled spiritual darkness will be possible because of three factors: the church's absence as a convicting moral force (Eph. 5:11-13); the martyrdom of many who believe in Jesus Christ during the Tribulation (Rev. 7:9-17); and the spiritual blindness that God will send as a judgment upon unbelieving men (2 Thess. 2:9-12).

4. *The parallel drawn between the Tribulation and the days of Noah and Lot favors the Rapture of the church before the Tribulation.* In 2 Peter 2:4-9 and again in 3:3-14, Peter says the judgment to come will be patterned after the past. The indifference of the unbelieving (3:3, 4), the unexpected arrival of judgment (3:6, 10), and the escape of the righteous from that judgment are common to both.

Noah was delivered from the worldwide flood. Lot was delivered from the fiery destruction of Sodom. Peter thus argues that God knows how to deliver the godly. The past becomes a pattern for the future. Though it may be interpreted otherwise, the pattern itself and the parallel Peter draws to future judgment argue for the removal of the church from the tribulation period.

5. *The sealing of the 144,000 witnesses during the Tribulation indicates the absence of the church.* Revelation 7 describes the appointment of 12,000 witnesses from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. This indicates there will be a worldwide gospel during the Tribulation. However, it will originate with the nation of Israel. The 12 tribes are named individually, and emphasis is placed on both the number and source of these witnesses (Rev. 7:4-8).

The restoration and spiritual regeneration of Israel will begin during the tribulation period (Joel 2:28-32). Through God's working, many in Israel will be brought to faith in Jesus as the Messiah. They in turn will be witnesses to every language and culture of the world. The result is a numberless host of converts (Rev. 7:9-17).

The picture is not that of the church continuing into and through the tribulation period. Rather, God will be calling witnesses out of Israel. It represents an abbreviated, but even more universal witness than that which marked the birth of the church at Pentecost. It is significant that Peter could draw on Joel's prophecy of the Tribulation to explain that birth (Acts 2:16-21). Though again this interpretation is not strictly required, the removal of the church certainly fits with the spiritual regeneration of Israel.

6. *The church is specifically promised deliverance from the time of God's wrath.* First Thessalonians is one of the earliest New Testament books. In it Paul depicts the church as destined to be saved from wrath.

While wrath may be seen as general or eternal in nature in 1:10, such is not the case in 5:9, 10, where Paul is discussing the day of the Lord (5:2). It is a day we know from Old Testament prophecies. Its unexpected arrival, destructive force, and divine wrath clearly show that the Tribulation is in view. Paul concludes his teaching on the day of the Lord with a bold statement: "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:9).

The deliverance promised to Christians here is apparently from the wrath of the day of the Lord, not the eternal wrath of God. The

church is clearly distinct from the unbelieving world in its relationship to the Tribulation. This passage argues strongly for the absence of the church from earth when the Tribulation arrives.

The church at Philadelphia is also promised deliverance from the Tribulation: "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the world, to test those who dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10).

Whether the church at Philadelphia is representative of the true church or is simply a single church, this passage promises it deliverance. In light of the vivid description of the Tribulation that follows in Revelation, it seems clear that the church is delivered from that time of suffering on earth.

**7. *The unique relationship of the Holy Spirit to the church argues for the Rapture before the Tribulation.*** God's Spirit was at work in the Old Testament. However, His indwelling and baptizing ministry in this church age is distinct.

Jesus told His disciples He would ask the Father to give them another Helper, the Spirit of truth, who "abides with you, and will be in you" (John 14:16, 17). That new work of the Spirit occurred at Pentecost (Acts 2). Since that time every believer in Jesus Christ is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit and placed into the church, the body of Christ (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13). The nature of the Holy Spirit's work, not His existence, is new and unique to this church age.

Paul insists the Thessalonian church was not already in the Tribulation, as some false teachers suggested (2 Thess. 2:1-3). He argues that the day of the Lord cannot come until the apostasy occurs and until the man of lawlessness is revealed. Having stated what must occur before the Tribulation truly comes, Paul then explains what or who is holding back the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:5-7).

The restrainer is best identified as the Holy Spirit. Though interpreters have seen the restrainer as the law, human government, or even the church itself, only the Holy Spirit seems adequate. To overrule the power of the Antichrist, the restrainer must have greater power, a power God alone possesses. Both neuter and masculine terms are used in these verses to describe the restrainer. This also is characteristic of the way the Holy Spirit is addressed in Scripture.

The restrainer will be "taken out of the way," signaling the freedom of the Antichrist to have his own unveiling. That, Paul argues, will mark the day of the Lord.

Since Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit began His unique ministry in the church, it is possible for Him to be "taken away" by the removal of the church from earth. As in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit will be present and at work, enabling salvation for sinners and empowering the saints in the tribulation period. But the unique indwelling and uniting work of the Spirit in the church will be terminated. These events are best understood if the church is raptured before the Tribulation.

**8. *The imminence of Christ's return requires the Rapture before the Tribulation.*** Paul and other New Testament writers anticipated the

return of Christ to earth at any moment. They expected it in their lifetime.

The Thessalonian church was known for its belief in the imminent return of Christ (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). Believers were waiting for the Son of God to come again from heaven. Jesus had promised it to the disciples (John 14:1-3). The angels confirmed it at the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:6-10). Peter preached it following Pentecost and wrote of it later, particularly in his second letter. When Paul spoke of the coming of Christ for the church (the Rapture) in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, he counted himself as among those who would be alive at the time: "*Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord*" (4:17).

The imminent return of Christ for the church points to a pre-tribulation Rapture. If the Rapture occurred in the middle or at the end of the Tribulation, believers would know quite clearly when Christ would be coming. The time and order of events during the Tribulation are detailed in the book of Revelation. If the church was to go through the Tribulation, its sense of the imminent return of Christ would seem to be misplaced.

Someone might protest, "If the church could see the time of Christ's coming so clearly during the Tribulation, why couldn't unbelievers also?" The answer is in the spiritual blindness that God will allow to come on the unbelieving (2 Thess. 2:8-12).

The signs of Christ's second coming will be as unmistakable to the unbelieving of the tribulation period as the signs of His first coming were to Israel almost 2,000 years ago. As men rejected Him then, so they will in the tribulation period. But in the future Tribulation as in the past, many will believe and be saved.

9. *Christians are told to prepare for persecution, but not for the Great Tribulation.* Jesus told the disciples they would be persecuted for His sake (John 15:20, 21; 16:33). Paul was forewarned at his conversion that he would suffer persecution for the cause of Christ (Acts 9:15, 16; 20:22, 23). He in turn repeatedly warned new Christians to expect affliction (1 Thess. 3:15).

Though it is an argument from silence, there is a noticeable absence of warning about preparing for the tribulation period. Rather, Paul comforts the suffering believers at Thessalonica with reminders that the Rapture will deliver them from the day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:9). Paul and others fortified the saints against general persecution, but not for enduring the Great Tribulation.

10. *Significant New Testament passages that speak of the Rapture and the Tribulation period are best understood when the Rapture precedes the Tribulation.* Paul's letters to the Thessalonian church give important details about the events surrounding Christ's return. It is significant that the truth about the Rapture is developed first (1 Thess. 4:13-18). This is followed by a discussion of the day of the Lord (5:1-11). The truth about the Rapture was not previously understood (4:13), though the day of the Lord was well-known to believers (5:2). The order of Paul's teaching was first the Rapture, then the day of the Lord.

In his second letter to the Thessalonians Paul had to counteract some false teaching about the Rapture and the day of the Lord. The church was not in the Tribulation (2:1-3). In fact, before that day could come, the restrainer must first be removed. As we have noted, that indicates the Rapture of the church before the revelation of the Antichrist. Again the order is first the Rapture, then the Tribulation.

John on the Island of Patmos was given an extensive revelation of the future. In the first three chapters of Revelation, John is on earth and so is the church. The disclosures recorded in those chapters occur before the Tribulation. Chapter 4 and following involve a change of focus and location. John is caught up to heaven to witness future events on earth. That change of scene suggests the Rapture of the church and its absence from earth as the Tribulation unfolds. Israel and Old Testament prophecies regarding it dominate the book of Revelation from chapter 4 onward.

Confusion over when the church will be raptured can disrupt or discourage believers. Paul was concerned enough about it to write a second letter to the Thessalonians to assure them it had not already come.

Belief in a pretribulation Rapture can calm us even in persecution. It can give us confidence, not complacency. As with the Thessalonians, the Rapture of the church before the Tribulation should motivate us to stand firm in the truth, hold fast to the truth, and be fruitful for the truth.

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## The Church and the Great Tribulation

R. H. Boll

There is a question that comes to the minds of many people. I have been asked that question by earnest Bible students. They want to know whether the Church will have to pass through that great tribulation. Some maintain that she will. Now I want to give you three reasons why I think that the Church is not going to have to pass through that tribulation. In the first place, if God had taught that the Church would pass through that tribulation, we would not need to look for the coming of Jesus until the great tribulation had set in. But God tells us to look for the coming always and at all times. Paul would not have told those Thessalonians to wait and watch for the day, if he had known that the great tribulation had to come first. If someone were to convince you that the great tribulation would come and the Church must pass through it, you would say, "There is no immediate prospect of Christ's return, evidently, because that great tribulation has never broken in on us." It would put that period of the tribulation between the Christian and his hope.

The second reason why I believe that the Church is not to pass through that tribulation is that it would introduce something

worse than death itself between the Christian and his hope. I would rather die if I knew that I had to go through that tribulation. I would say, "Let me fall asleep peacefully in Jesus and be raised up at the latter day, and so escape that tribulation." When God wanted to show favor to a penitent sinner, He would sometimes say, "I will not let the evil come upon him *in his day*, but he shall die in peace" (1 Kings 22:29). That tribulation will be worse than death. It says that men shall seek for death and will not find it, cry for the rocks to fall on them and for the hills to hide them. I would far rather be asleep in Jesus that go through that trouble. If the Church had to pass through that great tribulation, that would make death more desirable than the coming of the Lord. Therefore I do not believe that the Church will go through that tribulation.

The third reason is that the Lord has made some very definite promises in regard to it. In Luke 21:34-36, we are told (it is a solemn exhortation to careless Christians)—"Take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare: for so shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of all the earth. But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Something is coming to pass down here that they will want to escape and they are to watch and pray that they may be permitted to stand before the Son of man ere that thing happen. Again, speaking to the faithful church at Philadelphia (Revelation 3:10), the Lord Jesus says, "Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." That hour of trial cometh upon the whole world, but He will not only keep them out of the trouble but out of the very hour of the trouble.

So here are three reasons why I believe that the Church of Christ is not going to have to share in that tribulation.

But evidently somebody is going to have to face it. It is especially "the day of *Jacob's* trouble." When the Lord Jesus comes with "a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." In the meanwhile, down here on the earth breaks loose the final rage of Satan, because he knows that his time is short, and there will ensue this day of tribulation such as has never been known. It will center upon Israel but will involve the whole world.

It will be the day of *Jacob's* trouble. Israel, the nation hitherto disobedient, will be brought to realize her condition and will be brought to he senses in her distress. But someone may say, "You do not believe, then, that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation?" Yes, I believe that the Gospel, and it alone, is the power of God unto salvation, but sometimes people have such a good time that they won't listen. The Prodigal Son did not think seriously about his father's home until he was perishing with hunger in the

far country. Israel will not till the great distress comes upon her. "In her affliction they will seek me earnestly." In their final state of distress they will turn to the Lord Jesus and when they turn they will turn like everyone else. There is only one way of coming to the Lord Jesus, one way of salvation. What puzzled you all the time is the idea that when Christ comes it will settle the destiny of every soul living. When the Lord Jesus comes in the first stage of His coming, there will be certain ones caught up to meet Him. The rest of men are not just then dealt with. When Jesus returns with His saints there will be those who are found disobedient, and He will execute judgment upon the Beast and his devotees.

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**ANOTHER VIEW: STUDY CAREFULLY**

## **The DAY and the 1,260 Days**

Alex V. Wilson

For years it has seemed to me that a key point in Biblical prophecy is often overlooked. That is, the differences between the *Day of the Lord* and the *Great Tribulation*. The final Day of the Lord will be that period when God in righteous wrath will smash all evil at last. The Great Tribulation (or "great distress," NIV) will be the period when the Beast will rule all nations and terribly persecute God's people living at that time, whoever they are (Matt. 24:15-22; Dan. 7:21, 25; Rev. 13:5-10).

Many teachers on prophecy assume that the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord occur at the same time, or at least overlap. Notice these quotations, for example. A prophecy newsletter from California says, "The Day of the Lord begins at the same time the Tribulation begins." Another very wellknown writer speaks of "the Tribulation which is sometimes called 'the Day of the Lord'"—as though these are one and the same period. And a seminary professor wrote, "The Day of the Lord is that extended period of time which begins with the inception of the Tribulation. . . ."

It is obvious that these authors believe that the two periods begin at the very same time, but that seems impossible, as we shall see. (From now on, we'll use the abbreviation GT for the Great Tribulation, and DL or "the Day" for the Day of the Lord.)

*The Great Division.*

That idea seems untenable because of the clearly-stated fact that something divides the GT from the DL. Notice carefully the following Scriptures: (1) "*Immediately after the (great) tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. . . .*" (Matt. 24:29, 30). (2) "*The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes*" (Acts 2:20, where Peter quotes Joel 2:31).

If Friday comes after Thursday and before Saturday, then Thursday and Saturday cannot overlap. Likewise, if the darkening of the sun and moon *follows* the GT but *precedes* the DL, then those two

periods cannot be simultaneous or even overlap, can they? These passages give us this order of events: the period of the GT, followed immediately by the stunning sign of the sun and moon being darkened, followed by the period of the DL.

The two references given above are not the only places where inspired writers mention the lights of the universe being put out. This cosmic crisis is often referred to in passages that describe the DL.

The time of fierce judgment and wrath that closes this present age is a constant theme of the prophets and is known to them as the "Day of the Lord." Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Malachi, Luke in Acts, Paul in Thessalonians and Peter, all use the term. In their descriptions it is frequently accompanied by tremendous natural disasters. Apart from Revelation, we are told ten times (if my count is correct) that there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. It is one of the most unmistakable signs of the end of the age, and one of those most often given in the Bible. —G. R. Crow

Let's notice two of the main passages regarding these signs and the D.L., in addition to Acts 2:20 which we quoted above. Isaiah says, "Behold, *the day of the Lord comes*, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the earth a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For *the stars* of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; *the sun* will be dark at its rising and *the moon* will not shed its light. I will punish the world for its evil" (Isa. 13:9-11).<sup>o</sup>

Then in the last book of the Bible, we read of what will happen when Christ opens the sixth seal: "There was a great earthquake; and *the sun* became black as sackcloth, *the full moon* became like blood and *the stars* of the sky fell to the earth . . ." Then all the ungodly will cry out in terror, "The great *day of God's wrath* has come, and who can stand before it?" (Rev. 6:12-17).

Thus Isa. 13, Joel 2, Acts 2 and Rev. 6 teach that there will be a darkening of the heavenly bodies *before* the DL bursts forth. And Matt. 24:29 (also Mark 13:24-25) reveals that the GT occurs *before* that miraculous universal backout—and thus before the DL begins, of course. Therefore we reach this conclusion about the order of some major endtime events: 1st the GT period, then the spectacular signs in the sky (sun, moon, stars darkened), then the short-but-devastating DL period. (See R.H. Boll's article in this issue on the Seals/Trumpets/Bowls of Rev.)

### So, What's the Difference?

"What difference do these facts make?" you may be wondering at this point. The answer: A great deal of difference. For the passages commonly used to show that the church will escape the GT do not actually refer to the GT (at least so it seems to this writer), but to the DL! If this be true, then we are not promised escape from the persecutions of the Beast but rather from the outpourings of divine judgments during the Day of God's wrath that follows (and brings to an end) the reign of the Beast.

Look, for example, at Luke 21:36. Christ says, "Watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to ESCAPE

**ALL THESE THINGS** that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." He implies that those who watch and pray will escape. But escape what? "All these things." But what are those things to which He refers? Verse 25-35 give the answer; we use the ASV here because it translates the Greek more literally.

There shall be signs in sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows; men fainting for fear, and for expectation of THE THINGS which are coming on the world: for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when THESE THINGS begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh. (25-28)

... When ye see THESE THINGS coming to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh. (31)

... Watch ye at every season... that ye may prevail to escape all THESE THINGS that shall come to pass. (36)

The things we should pray to escape are the devastating judgments which will follow right after the signs in the sun, moon and stars—the cosmic convulsions we mentioned earlier. But when will those heavenly signs take place? "Immediately *after* the tribulation," says Christ in Matt. 24:29 and Mark 13:24-25. This entire passage in Luke seems strongly to indicate that Christians will be on earth when God veils the heavenly lights (how else could we "see these things taking place?"). Thus we would have to be on earth during the GT that precedes that veiling, would we not? However, by watching and prayer we can escape the awful outpourings of God's wrath that follow, during the DL.

Another oft-quoted verse is 1 Thess. 5:9, "God has not appointed us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is said that this proves that the rapture mentioned in 4:16-17 will occur before the GT. But is that really what Paul says here? Paul never mentions the GT even once in this entire prophetic section (4:13 - 5:11).

But he does mention the DL. "You know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night," bringing destruction on those in spiritual darkness (5:2-3). For *them* the Day will be unexpected, like a thief's coming, and inescapable, like travail before birth. But, in contrast, "*you* are *not* in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise *you* like a thief?" (4). Christians ought not be surprised when the DL comes. Why? Is it because they will have been raptured years before that time? No, rather it is because they ought to know the "times and the seasons" (1). That is, because they should know that the GT will come first, before the DL!

This was also a major point of his second letter to Thessalonica. Don't get excited, he warned them, by thinking "that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless... the man of sin is revealed" (2 Thess. 2:2,3). I.e., the Beast and his reign (which is during the GT) precedes the DL. He does not say, "You can know the DL isn't here because we Christians will all be raptured years before the DL comes"—though that would be the thing to say, if it were true. Instead he says, "The DL can't be here now, because the Man of sin hasn't appeared yet and

he must come first.” So again we get the same order: the GT, followed by the DL. And notice that from the context Paul seems to expect that the DL is the time of “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him” (v. 1). Isn’t that “gathering together” of Christians to Him the rapture? Notice that Matt. 24:29-31 also puts these two things together—“the Son of man coming” and the angels *gathering together* His elect—and says it is “after the tribulation.” So the DL seems to be the time of: (a) the rapture (2 Thess. 2:1-2; Matt. 24:29-31); (b) God’s judgments outpoured (Isa. 13:9-11); and (c) the defeat of the Beast at Armageddon (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:11-21). And this period follows the GT and the darkening of the sun and moon.

Abomination  
of Desolation  
/ The Great Tribulation

Signs in  
Sun, Moon  
/ The Day of the Lord

The Beast persecutes Israel & Christians

1. Rapture & 1st resurrection
2. Bowls of God’s Wrath
3. Christ comes to destroy the Beast.

(Note: the diagram makes the GT and the DL look as though they are about equal in length. Actually the GT is 3½ years long, but the DL seems to be only a few days or weeks.)

### Revelation 3:10

Another verse supposed to support the pre-tribulation rapture is Rev. 3:10. Christ says, “Because you kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try *those who dwell upon the earth.*” That sounds like everybody, but in Revelation John uses this term to describe *only the unsaved*, not the people of God. See 6:10; 11:10; 13:8, 14 for proof of this. So this hour of trial from which faithful disciples will be kept is (a) a *short* period, (b) of awful trouble for the *unsaved* who will not repent. Now the DL fits that description well, but the GT does not. The GT will be a time of trouble for *Israel* (the “time of Jacob’s trouble,” Jer. 30:7, Dan. 12:1, when the Beast will persecute the Jews until they wake up from their unbelief and turn to Jesus as Messiah, Zech. 12:13). The GT will also be a time of trouble for all living *followers of Christ* (Rev. 12:17; 13:7; 14:12; “saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus” is an apt description of Christians). But *the DL* will be the time of God’s worldwide plagues of judgment upon the unrepentant, “those who dwell upon the earth,” and thus fits Rev. 3:10 better than the GT does.

The term “hour of trial” also fits in with the DL better. Note that the length of the GT is repeatedly said to be 3½ years or the equivalent terms 42 months or 1,260 days (Rev. 11-13). “Hour” seems more appropriate to describe the DL’s shorter length. Note too that Rev. 14:7 speaks of “the hour” of God’s judgment, seemingly to refer to the DL. For these reasons Rev. 3:10 seems to promise protection from the DL rather than the GT.

### Tribulation, Not Wrath

There is another important point: tribulation from men should be

distinguished from the wrath of God. People sometimes say, "We cannot go through the GT, for that is when God will pour out His wrath and He promises that we shall escape His wrath."

It surely is true that we shall never be the objects of *God's wrath*, for the Lamb of God has borne that for us. "Since we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God" (Rom. 5:9). "Jesus... delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10; also 5:9). We are promised escape from God's anger.

But we are never promised escape from *tribulation*—the persecutions of men. Just the opposite, we are repeatedly told that tribulation is the Christian's normal lot! "In the world you will have tribulation..." (Jn. 16:33). "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). "We told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction" (same Greek word translated "tribulation" in the other two verses; 1 Thess. 3:4). Many other scriptures state the same truth: 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Peter 2:21; 4:1, 12-13.

Now the GT is just what its name says—the most terrible time of *tribulation* that will ever take place. But we are nowhere promised protection from persecution, or the GT, that I can find. It will be the time of *men's* wrath against Christians, of *Satan's* wrath and the *Beast's* wrath. From such we have no immunity, though we are provided divine strength to meet those trials with courage when they arise.

What we are promised is deliverance from *God's* wrath, and that will be unleashed during the DL. In the book of Revelation, God's anger is especially related to the seven bowls of wrath. That period is previewed in Rev. 6:12-17 (the sixth seal; note "the day of wrath"); introduced in 11:15-19 (the seventh trumpet; note "thy wrath" and "destroy them that destroy the earth"); and actually portrayed in chapters 15-16 (the seven bowls, "which are the last plagues, for with them the *wrath of God* is ended," 15:1). It seems this time could only last a matter of days (or a few weeks at most), for how could anything exist longer under such conditions?

### Conclusions

We realize these views are contrary to the cherished beliefs of many wonderful Christians. We do not wish to stir up angry debate, nor to cause divisions in any way. On the other hand, these views are not at all novel or new. Many fine Christians have held them: George Mueller, G. Campbell Morgan (though not in his early years), Horatius Bonar, A. B. Simpson, Oswald Smith, and others. But we must never decide on our beliefs by looking to see who else believed this way or that. The Word of God is always to be the final basis. Examine, then, the teachings set forth earlier; and if there be errors, please correct them.

We conclude with two quotations from Oswald Smith, one a warning and the other a word of wise advice:

I wonder if we have been lulling the Church into a false security? Can it be that we have been preaching an easy escape? Ought we to prepare the Church for the greatest of all ordeals? Should not our teaching harden her for the fires of the Tribulation? What kind of soldiers are we

training? We need men and women today of the martyr spirit.

You ask, Is the Church to go through the Tribulation? That is not the question. It is this: Is the Church ready? Are you ready, ready either for Tribulation or Rapture? If you are, that is all that matters. What difference does it make so long as you are ready? If you are to be in it, you cannot avoid it, and if you are to escape, you will not be in it.

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\* We realize that Isa. 13 refers first of all to the overthrow of ancient Babylon by the Medes, in the days of Daniel (13:17-19; Dan. 5:25-31). But that was just a partial fulfilment of the passage. In the same way the Day of the Lord came upon Judah in the form of a plague of locusts, but will finally and fully come as the end-time Day of judgment and salvation (Joel 1:1-20 & 2:30-32). Other examples could be given. The DL, especially in the OT, is "both an historical visitation of God and an endtime act... The historical event is described against the background of the final end-time drama; both are visitations of the one God in the accomplishment of His redemptive purpose." (George Ladd).

We realize too that sometimes the darkening of the sun and moon is used by the prophets symbolically, to represent earth-shaking political or military events (e.g., Ezek. 32:7-8). That does not, however, mean that such terms are always symbolical. E.g. Luke 21:25-26 mentions the tossing of the sea and the shaking of the heavenly bodies. If they merely symbolize popular political agitation and the overthrow of governments, they lose their usefulness as being "signs" of Christ's coming—for such revolutions have occurred often in history.

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## We Might Face the Beast

by Phil Reedmore

(This was originally written in 1981, reflecting on a series of articles by David Reagan.)

As a reader of Dr. Reagan's articles in *Word and Work*, I am helped by his teachings. Especially interesting was his series on the timing of the Rapture, and the following statement he made:

Although the event of the Rapture is clearly taught by the Bible, its timing is purely inferential. The Bible does not anywhere state when the Rapture will occur. It only provides hints. (May 1980)

We could probably go so far as to say that the Bible teaches that the Rapture is most likely to occur before the tribulation. But that is still a long way from stating dogmatically that the Bible "guarantees" a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. There is no such guarantee in the Bible. And those of us who are Bible teachers need to keep that in mind. We need to emphasize that the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is an inference and not a guarantee, because it is downright dangerous to teach that it is guaranteed by scripture. (August)

The Rapture may occur sometime after the Tribulation begins. It may even occur late in the Tribulation period. It mostly likely will occur before the Tribulation starts. (September)

Then in the Nov. - Dec. issue he leans much stronger toward a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, raising new questions and giving three new arguments.

It is interesting that since studying Dr. Reagan's series, I saw another book favoring the Post-Tribulation position, which deals with each of his three new arguments and many others too. It is *The Church and the Tribulation*, by Robert Gundry, published by Zondervan. Since this book was not mentioned in the *Word and Work* series,

maybe Dr. Reagan has not seen it yet. It would be helpful if he could interact with its strong Biblical reasoning.

### POST-TRIBULATIONAL BUT ALSO DISPENSATIONAL

Dr. Gundry is unusual in that he is dispensational even though he believes the Church will go through most or all of the Tribulation. He says, "If an event such as the destruction of Jerusalem prophesied in the OT (Dan. 9:26) fell within the Church age (A.D. 70), then from the dispensational standpoint other events foretold in the OT and relating to Israel, such as tribulation events, might equally well fall within the Church age." In other words, dispensations overlap, and during the Tribulation God may deal with Israel (purging it) and through the Church (as His worshipping, witnessing people who will suffer as during the times of the Caesars and of the Inquisition).

If the Church is to go through the tribulation, God will work simultaneously with two groups of covenant people, Israel and the Church... (However) the tribulation knows only one group of redeemed people, the Church. The regenerate Jewish remnant will belong to the Church then as now (Rom. 11:5) and will be raptured at the post-tribulational advent of Christ. That unconverted part of the Jewish nation who by God's special protection will physically survive the tribulation (Rev. 7:1-4) will repent, believe and be saved as they see their Messiah descending. But they will have missed the rapture. Instead, they will enter the millennium as the natural-bodied subjects of the restored Davidic kingdom. Indications are strong that the conversion of those Jews who will form the nucleus of the Davidic kingdom will take place suddenly at Jesus' return following the tribulation. (Zech. 3:8, 9; 12:1-14:8; Mal. 3:1-5; Jer. 30:7-11; Rom. 11:26, 27) .

### THE MILLENNIAL POPULATION

The quotation just given answers Dr. Reagan's question about who will be the peoples who will repopulate the earth during the Millennium. The author later spells out his idea in more detail. He suggests they may be the 144,000 Israelites mentioned in Rev. 7. During the Tribulation "they would be 'orthodox' (though unconverted) Jews who will resist the seductions of the Antichrist. The designation 'bond-servant' (Rev. 7:3) anticipates their role in the reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom (during the Millennium). They are converted immediately after the rapture as they see their Messiah descending onto the earth."

### THE RAPTURE IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

On this question Dr. Grundy says,

Whereas we have in the whole of Revelation no description of a pre-tribulational return of Christ, rapture, or first resurrection—an absence incredible from the standpoint of the book's being addressed to the churches and its purporting to reveal in detail final events—we do have the first harvest in 14:14-16, the return of Christ in 19:11ff., and the first resurrection in 20:4-6—all post-tribulational... The second harvest in Rev. 14:17-20 lands the wicked in 'the great winepress of the wrath of God' (Armageddon; cf. Joel 3:13). But in the first harvest (verse 14-16) there is only the reaping as though the Son of Man gathers the harvest to Himself. The two harvests, then, seem to be distinct. The Son of Man reaps the first, an angel the second. The first lacks the elements of wrath, the second exhibits it prominently. The first reaping immediately follows the beatitude upon 'the dead who die in the Lord' (14:13). Consequently, a description of the rapture in which 'the dead in Christ shall rise first' (1 Thess. 4:16) follows very fittingly.

The book of Revelation is addressed to churches, to encourage them in their hardships by pointing forward to their final victory and the glory of Christ. "Yet nowhere does John describe, straightforwardly or figuratively, a pre-tribulational return of Christ, resurrection, or rapture of the Church. On the other had, the descriptions of the reaping done by Christ (14:14-16) in connection with Armageddon (14:17-20), and of the post-tribulational advent, and of the first resurrection between the tribulation and the millennium perfectly fit and strongly support post-tribulationism." In other words, Revelation *does* teach the Rapture! John portrays it symbolically in chapter 14:14-16 after telling of the Tribulation in chapter 13.

### JOHN 14:1-3

Those who believe in the pre-trib rapture claim that this passage is the first mention anywhere of the rapture—that is, of Christ's coming for the church *seven years before* His return to earth with the church (according to their view).

But the promise of Jesus, "When I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself," was made to the same apostles to whom He had given detailed instruction about the future just two days before (Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21). "Did our Lord give them, up to two days before His betrayal, full teaching about His coming in glory with which they were acquainted from the Old Testament Scriptures, and of which He had spoken to them on many previous occasions; and then without any explanation give them two nights afterwards in one brief sentence, a *different hope*? No! Especially when this one brief sentence, 'I will come again and receive you unto myself,' contains no hint of secrecy; no hint of being a new revelation; no hint of being anything else than a simple reference to the coming of which He had already so fully instructed them. If they received John 14 as apostles of the Church, why not Matt. 24? Any attempt to rule the Church out of Matt. 24 (on the ground that it was given them before the day of Pentecost) would equally apply to John 14 and even to Acts 1:11." (Rowlands) In other words, if John 14:1-3 refers to a coming of Jesus which is distinct from His coming in power and glory after the tribulation (Matt. 24:29-31), then He surely would have made that fact clear to His listeners. But He didn't do so.

But what about the many "mansions" or "rooms" in the Father's house?

The pre-tribulational 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 in order to reign with Christ 'upon the earth' (Rev. 5:10; 20:4-6). A thousand years' delay before habitation of the mansions poses no greater problem for post-tribulationists than a thousand years' vacating them does for pre-tribulationists. . . . We might avoid the difficulty by regarding the New Jerusalem (where the mansions are assumed to be) as a millennial as well as an eternal city. Then the Church would not have to leave her mansions during the millennium because they too will descend from heaven after the tribulation. But if this view be adopted, no difficulty arises for post-tribulationism either! For if the mansions in the New Jerusalem will descend at the beginning of the millennium, the Church will not need to return to heaven before the tribulation in order to dwell in them. (Gundry)

## OTHER PROBLEMS FOR THE PRE TRIB VIEW

The following verses seem to contradict the Pre-Tribulation view. *Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43.* How can the wheat (Christians) and tares (unsaved church-members) "both grow *together* until the harvest" which is "the end of the world," if the wheat is raptured from the earth seven years before then, as the Pre-Tribulation view says? *Matt. 28:18-20* says Christ will be with Christians "even unto the end of the world" or "the consummation of the age." How can that be if we are to be removed seven years earlier? *1 Tim. 6:14* urges Timothy (and all Christians) to keep God's commandment "until the *appearing* of our Lord Jesus Christ," which most scholars agree is after the Tribulation when Christ defeats the Beast. In fact the Greek word translated *manifestation* in *2 Thess. 2:8* (the Lord Jesus shall bring the lawless one to nought by "the manifestation of his coming") is the same word translated appearing in *1 Tim 6:14*. How can Christians keep God's commands (for example, the Great Commission) until Christ's Post-Tribulation appearing if they will be taken from earth before the Tribulation?

*Acts 3:21* says heaven must receive Christ "until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by . . . his holy prophets." But those times of restoration are the Millennium, not the Tribulation! So it seems this verse teaches that Christ will remain in heaven until time for the Millennium to start, after the Tribulation. *2 Thess. 1:4-10* seems to be one of the strongest arguments favoring the Post-Tribulation view. Paul says that "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus . . . when he shall come," God will repay affliction to those who afflict the church and *also* will give rest from affliction to Christians. How can this be if Christians have not been around for years? How can they be afflicted if they are not on earth? How can they be given rest *then* if they got it years earlier?

So we see lots of reasons supporting Dr. Reagan's statements, "We need to emphasize that the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is an inference and not a guarantee." Christ may come for His Church before, during, or at the end of the Tribulation. Christians should face up to all three of these possibilities, realizing that a strong case can be made that we shall face the Beast's persecutions. If we do, our all-sufficient Christ will be with us!

\* \* \*

## God Will PRESERVE Them; They Will PRAISE Him

David Wilkerson

There is a doctrinal fuss that has been going on in the church for years: Will true believers go through the Great Tribulation? Will we who love Jesus live to see all these awful sights?

Some say Jesus will come and take away His bride before the suffering. Some say He will come after three-and-a-half years of

tribulation. Still others say we will go through it all. Some say only Jews will go through the Great Tribulation.

*Let me put your mind at ease!* This Scripture passage ought to assure us no matter which doctrine is right:

"After this I beheld . . . a great multitude, which no man could number . . . and one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? . . . and he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation" (Revelation 7:9, 13-14).

These believers *came out!* A great multitude! And that is the point: they went in— *but they came out!*

Not only did they survive the great sufferings, but they came out shouting with a very special testimony! They were saying, "Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever" (Rev. 7:12).

These people did not just "survive"—*they sang of Who had brought them out!* God had proved Himself to them in every way! They had learned to "serve Him night and day."

Beloved, God is not interested in simply preserving us physically with food, water and shelter. That is no great victory. These overcomers triumphed in the worst of times because the whole word of God came alive to them!

They had His strong arm and His glory and wisdom to the end. Every word out of His mouth become real. They were praising Him with great thanksgiving!

Imagine—no despair, no cowering and no surrender to satanic threats! These overcomers came out washed, dressed in white and victorious! (verse 14).

Brothers and sisters, be encouraged. His Word says that no matter what we go through—*we're coming out!*

### *We Are the Body of Christ!*

We are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh! "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

We are His household. God's Word says, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8).

You see, to even entertain the thought that the Head of our house will not provide for us is to accuse Him of denying Himself and to call Him an infidel! "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh: But nourisheth it and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church" (Eph. 5:29). *It is impossible for Christ to neglect His own body!*

God would have to hate His own flesh to neglect you or me in a time of trouble! Oh, but it is written: "He cherishes, He nourishes [feeds and cares for] His beloved!"

Don't try to figure out how He will do this for you! You can't figure it out anymore than you could have guessed how He would open the Red Sea, or how He would keep the Hebrew children alive in a furnace that was so hot it killed their tormentors outside the entrance . . .

Or how He would shut the mouth of hungry lions all night long

as Daniel stood among them, untouched! Or how God would bring water out of a rock. Or how one angel would wipe out an army of 185,000 men in one night! Or how a raven could feed a prophet in the wilderness. Or how a barrel of meal and a bottle of cooking oil never bottomed out for months on end. Or how Jesus would pay for His disciples' taxes by getting money out of the mouth of a fish. Or how He could feed 5,000 people with just a few loaves and fishes. Or how He could turn water into wine!

We could never figure any of it out! *He* has the words of eternity!

Today many Christian are trying to figure out how God is going to take care of His people when the ruin comes in full force. Some plan to head to the outback of Australia, others for the mountains of Colorado or Montana.

Some talk of survival farms and Christian communities. I even tried that myself! I purchased a 250-acre farm and built lakes on it, stocking them with fish. We bought 50 head of Black Angus cattle and were ready to ride out the Tribulation, depression or whatever else came!

But that wasn't God's plan! The cows got Bang's disease and had to be sold. The hay we grew cost less to buy than to produce. We ended up nearly giving away "Shangri-la" for 10 cents on the dollar—to a ministry whose purpose is not survival but evangelism!

Jesus warns us to "take no thought, saying What shall we eat? Or, what shall we drink?" (Matt. 6:31). Our heavenly Father knows what we need, and He has spoken this eternal word: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

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## The 7 Seals, 7 Trumpets, and 7 Bowls

From *The Revelation*, by R. H. Boll

*Note on the Sixth Seal, Revelation 6:12-17*

The sixth seal is the vision of the final catastrophe, which occurs just before the Lord's glorious appearing with His saints. The signs in sun and moon and stars which are seen at the opening of the sixth seal cannot be distinguished from those foretold by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Olivet sermon (Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24, 25; Luke 21:25, 26); and those celestial portents Christ told us that they follow *immediately after* the Great Tribulation. They precede the "Day of the Lord," Christ's coming in power and great glory (Matt. 24:29-31; Acts 2:20). The seventh seal, however, goes back and opens to view the successive steps (the seven trumpets, afterward followed by the seven bowls) by which this climax is reached.

The seven seals therefore comprise the whole great judgment-drama of the Apocalypse. They reveal the forces and prevailing conditions during that period of unexampled trouble, but do not portray

definite events in temporal sequence and order. The first four seals—the four horsemen—stand in a certain relation to one another and follow each other in order, each being called forth in turn by one of the “living creatures.” They symbolize the release of four forces, sent forth into the world preliminary to the final cataclysm. The fifth seal indicates that persecution of God’s people is raging throughout the period. In the sixth, the convulsions of the earth and the heavens herald the great day of wrath. But the seventh tell of the seven trumpets that must first be sounded, and the seven bowls that must first be poured out before the scene of the sixth seal is realized. Careful study will make it clear that the seals are not the first of three co-ordinate and consecutive series of judgments (seals, trumpets, bowls) but that the seals take in the whole sweep of the time of trouble up to the glorious coming of the King (Rev. 19:10); and that the trumpets and bowls mark certain details within that time of trouble.

\* \* \* \*

## Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

*How do we know that the last week of Daniel’s Seventy-week prophecy is yet future?*

The reference is to the prophecy of Daniel 9:24ff.

The surmise of the average English reader of this passage is probably that it speaks of seventy weeks of days. This illustrates how we tend to bring our own culture and concepts to the word of God and read them into it. Our usage of week is virtually limited to a period of seven days. All the prophecy declares, however, is that seventy “sevens” are decreed upon Daniel’s people. It could be seventy sevens of days, months, years, or any other time period. In reality we discover it is years, not days or some other period, because of the events which mark the beginning and the close of the sixty-nine of those weeks. Beginning with the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem sixty-nine weeks run their course, and after the sixty-ninth week the Messiah is cut off (vs. 25, 26). Without trying here to work out the technicalities of which command is in view or of calendar changes, we know that it was approximately 483 years ( $69 \times 7$ ) from the days of Ezra and Nehemiah to the crucifixion of Christ. Hence, the fulfilled portion of the prophecy enables us to determine what time period is being spoken of. Since the sixty-nine weeks are weeks of years, then the seventieth is also a week of years, or seven years.

While all of the prophecy was future to Daniel’s day, sixty-nine of those seventy weeks have now long since had their fulfillment. They cover the period from the Babylonian captivity (or specifically, from the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem) through the intertestament period and down to the death of Christ. In passing we might point out that this portion of the prophecy is a most accurate

identification of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ. Our interest now especially focuses on the last, or seventieth, week, however. The natural assumption would be that the seventieth week follows the sixty-nine consecutively. Yet, when we try to fit it into such a time frame we run into several difficulties. One difficulty is that seven years from Christ's crucifixion does not bring any distinct event of such significance as v. 24 requires. The completion of the seventy weeks is to "finish transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place." Just a casual glance tells us that these things will not be completely accomplished until the second coming of Christ. Moreover, no such leader came on the scene at Christ's crucifixion as is presented in v. 27, making a covenant with Daniel's people for seven years and breaking that covenant after three and a half years. In short, there is nothing identifiable immediately after Christ's death which answers to the seventieth week of the prophecy.

Another difficulty to a consecutive seventieth week is found in the words of Jesus Himself. In Matthew 24, where the general theme is the second coming of Christ (see v. 3), Jesus speak of the abomination of desolation (v. 15). He specifically refers to the prophecy in Daniel. According to Daniel, the ruler who dominates the seventieth week will set up the abomination of desolation. Yet Jesus associated that event with His second coming. Jesus warned those living when the abomination of desolation is set up to flee because it will mark the beginning of the great tribulation (v. 21), an event that just immediately precedes the Lord's coming in glory (v. 29). Thus, Jesus did not indicate that the events of Daniel's seventieth week would follow immediately after His crucifixion but placed them at His second coming. This is a compelling reason for believing that this seven year period is yet future.

Again, when we study the beast of Rev. 13 there is a remarkable comparison between him and the ruler who makes and breaks the covenant with Israel. Most notable is the fact that he has authority to continue forty-two months (or three and a half years).

We do not learn from Daniel that there is a great break (some have called it a parenthesis) between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. Such may be implied in that the Messiah is cut off "after" the sixty-ninth week and yet that event is not placed in the seventieth week, but there is in Daniel no clear declaration of an intervening time. It is not at all unusual for events of the first and second comings of Christ to be merged in O.T. prophecy, so this is not something unique to this one passage. It is when we add the truths of N.T. prophecy that we discover the great interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. In all matters it is the *sum* of God's word that is truth, and in no matter is that fact more relevant than in the study of prophecy. New Testament truths are the key to opening the prophecies of Daniel (cf. Dan. 12:9 and Rev. 22:10).

Many students of prophecy think they understand why this age of grace—the church age—intervenes between the sixty-ninth and

seventieth weeks. Certainly it was not a matter of chance or accident. The church, though unrevealed in O.T. times, was in God's eternal purpose. You will note, however, that it was Daniel's people and "thy" holy city which were the subjects of the prophecy. This prophecy is concerned with Israel! And with the rejection of Christ, Israel was sidetracked nationally. It is only when He has completed His work with the Gentiles that He again begins to deal with Israel as a nation (Rom. 9-11; etc.). The clock will begin to run again for them at that time. Just as in a football game the "time out" periods do not advance the clock, so Israel is in a "time out" period. There is much in prophecy to show that they will again be specially dealt with by God, and since that is future the events of the seventieth week are future.

. . .

An old Puritan preacher said, "God washes our hearts of guilt here in this life, but He won't wash our brains of error till we get to Heaven."

\* \* \* \* \*

## Books for Further Study of Prophecy

The Editor

There are literally hundreds of books out there about Biblical prophecy. Beware of becoming a prophecy nut and trying to read them all! And beware of neglecting the Bible in favor of uninspired writings. Also, beware of reading only those books you know you already agree with. Frank Mullins Sr. one time told me, "I often profit more from reading books by authors whose positions differ from mine, because then I am challenged to dig into the Bible and see if my view is correct after all."

Here is a classified list of books you may want to consider. It is not complete! Order these from your Christian bookstore, not us.

Books with Several Differing Views, Each Presented by an Able Proponent:

*The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views.* Edited by Clouse; published by InterVarsity Press. Four capable writers present historic premillennialism, dispensational premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism. After each main presentation, the other three writers briefly respond.

*The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?* Edited by Reiter; published by Zondervan. The format of this book is similar to the one mentioned just above. All seven writers of these books present their positions forcefully, yet with mutual respect and humility.

Books Presenting the Pre-Trib Rapture Position:

*The Rapture*, by Hal Lindsey; Bantam Books. *What You Should Know About the Rapture*, by Charles Ryrie; Moody Press. *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation*, by John Walvoord; Zondervan.

Books Presenting the Post-Trib Rapture Position:

*The Church and the Tribulation*, by Robert Gundry; Zondervan. *The Rapture—A Question of Timing*, by William Kimball; College Press, Joplin, Missouri. *The Blessed Hope*, by George Ladd; Eerdmans.

Christ will Come After the Great Trib. but Before the Day of the Lord, yet During Daniel's 70th Week:

*The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*, by Marvin Rosenthal; Nelson Publishers.

#### *Other Books by People You May Know!*

Robert Shank has written a scholarly book of over 500 pages (11 chapters with 6 appendices) on various prophetic themes; primarily a defense of premillennialism: *UNTIL—The Coming of Messiah and His Kingdom*; Westcott Publishers, Springfield, Missouri.

David Reagan has written various prophetic materials. My favorite is still *Trusting God*. This is more of an autobiographical testimony, yet contains several chapters on prophecy at the end. Lamb and Lion Ministries, P. O. Box K, McKinney, TX.

Aliene Mengelberg Haynes, who grew up in Louisville under Brother Boll's teaching, has written *What After World War III?* In 188 pages she gives a combination of factual teaching interspersed with dramatic imaginative presentations of how some of the events might occur. (For example: a fascinating possible explanation that Antichrist might give to a panic-stricken world after numbers of people disappear in the rapture—which in her view will occur after the GT.) She has information about trends toward one-world religion and government, and various ideas (some more convincing than others) about how nuclear war might fulfill a number of prophecies. Published by Vantage Press, or maybe order from the author at 104 W. Matisse Circle, Nokomis, FL 34275. (\$11.95, hardback).

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## **VOICES from the FIELDS**

Mark & Candy Garrett, 3700 N. Main St., Columbia, SC 29203, (808) 254-6765 (Mark is the son of Cecil Garrett, an elder at Belmont Church of Christ in Winchester, Ky.—where Mark grew up—and the nephew of Robert Garrett, who ministers in Zimbabwe.)

Senegal is *not* a prescription drug! Senegal is a small country in West Africa. You might be wondering why we have any connection at all to this land so we'd better explain.

We have just been appointed as missionaries by SIM (Society for International Ministries—formerly Sudan Interior Mission) to join a church planting team in Senegal. This comes after a long process of prayer, application procedures, and a four week missionary candidate orientation at SIM's headquarters in Charlotte, NC.

Before we arrived in Charlotte we had been praying that God would guide us through the wise counsel of the leaders at SIM. We wanted to serve where our God-given talents could be used and where there was an urgent need for a church to be started. As we considered the options with SIM it became clear that Senegal was the place.

The church planting effort in Senegal focuses on the muslim Wolof people. SIM has given it high priority for several reasons:

The country allows Christian missionaries to do open evangelism (unusual situation for a nation that's 90% muslim). The need is great. There are only one or two dozen believers among the 2.5 million Wolof people, and there is no organized church. Although the Wolof have been resistant to the gospel, there is no open opposition and many are willing to listen. So it is of utmost importance for the church to *seize this moment* because someday the door could clang shut.

Neither of us went to candidate orientation intending particularly to be involved in a muslim ministry. But God used both past experiences and present circumstances to give us peace about His call to Senegal.

Mark's time spent in Asian muslim areas and a class he took about Islam "for the fun of it" both had their impact. And as we talked with three other SIM couples in muslim ministry in Bangladesh (who "just happened" to be attending the same candidate orientation) it became clear that God wanted us to serve Him in Senegal. The day after we said yes to this opportunity we discovered that the team was looking for someone to begin a radio ministry there. Isn't it great to know that in God's economy Mark's two years experience as a radio announcer at a Christian radio station here in Columbia will not be wasted! And to further encourage us God has already provided some to join our prayer and financial support team.

Although we know that most muslims *do not* drive trucks filled with explosives, we are aware that church planting in muslim societies is difficult. And we know that ultimately this is a spiritual battle "for our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:12) So our urgent appeal to you is for your prayers. Perhaps you've already been praying for God to send workers into His harvest. Now we ask you to pray specifically that God will open the hearts of the Wolof people. Join us as partners in this church planting effort. We seek those who will commit themselves to pray once weekly for the Wolof people and for our coming ministry there.

Our target date for reaching Senegal is August 1992. Between now and then we want to stimulate prayer for the Muslim World and specifically for the Wolof people. You can help us by suggesting churches you know where we could contribute in that way. But most of all we need a dedicated prayer team. Without it we may as well stay home.

Kristy (& Tom) Nickell, translating the Bible into the language of the Agta tribal people of the Philippines, June, 1991

The end of March brought the welcome news that Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians have all been approved by consultants for publication.

April 8-12 Tom attended a "comic book" workshop in Manila conducted by the Philippine Bible Society at which he translated two comic books into Agta: *Peter: The Great Fisherman* and *Paul: Man With a Mission*. They are both in the works now to be printed (four colors) and they should be completed by April 1992. Response to the three comic books Tom translated last term has been very enthusiastic.

In early March Diner (an Agta Christian leader) went to the east coast near Blos River to look for his father. About a week later we received a telegram saying, "Please come. Emergency." It was two weeks before we could make arrangements to go there. When Tom arrived he learned Diner had been arrested on charges of unlawful associations. Evidence against him: he was carrying medicine. An informant turned in his name. Tom finally located him in a jail in the provincial capital. He was released to our custody and returned to Bagabag April 6—just before we left for Manila. His wife, Christy, gave birth April 15 to a healthy baby boy. Thank you, Lord, for helping us find him and get him back to Bagabag for the big event!

Our new son Dillon Keane made his debut on May 13 after several false alarms. I thank God for two very competent midwives and their assistants who attended me in labor. So far Dillon just eats and sleeps and cuddles. Jordan keeps asking when he's going to wake up. Colin is more ambitious. He is ready to teach Dillon to walk!

Please keep us in your prayer as we all adjust to each other and establish a new routine. Pray also for the Agta as they face a lot of political conflict in their area.

Nakahara Mission Work

Shizuoka City, Japan

July, 1991

On May 11, 1991 my mother, Margie Yarbrough, went home to be with the Lord after a long struggle with cancer. She loved the Nakaharas and was a strong supporter of the mission work. After her passing, Dad, along with other members of the family, made a visit to Japan during the month of June. Dad had been instrumental in initiating the Nakahara Mission work sponsored by the Piedmont Church. His dream of visiting that work and speaking at the new church building came to pass last June. He was able to give the church there a word of encouragement from the Lord. He is convinced the work there is difficult but worthy of our continued prayers and support.

Michiya and Tomoko Nakahara have begun their last year of studies at Osaka Bible Seminary. They still continue to commute by train twice per month to Shizuoka. Michiya reports that his studies in the Word of God are equipping him well to do battle with our arch enemy, the Devil, but he is coming more and more to see the need to redouble his and our interest and effort in Christian missions.

The gods of Japan are powerful (money and education), but *our God Prevails* (Isaiah 42:13, 46:10). One of the men of the church in Shizuoka, Bro. Yamanashi, has not been well. We need to remember him especially in our prayers. His daughter, Grace, attended Portland Christian School and is now a student at Dallas Christian College.

—Bob M. Yarbrough, Treasurer, Nakahara Mission Fund

News from Manila & Alaska

June 25, 1991

By now I am sure you have heard of the volcano that is erupting north of Manila. There are believers not far from there, at Camiling, Tarlac about 20 or 25 miles north of the Volcano. We have not heard from anyone in Camiling yet, but we have heard from Manila (about 60 miles south). So far, it seems the worst part of ash and debris is falling to the South and West. There was volcanic ash even at Manila airport—enough to close down the airport for several days.

A recent letter from Winston Allen mentions that he will soon reach his 72 birthday. In spite of by-pass surgery plus cataract removal in the past six months, he is still going strong. He asks for prayer that a younger preacher may be able to join that work in Alaska.

—Victor Broadus letter

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## God and Jonah — God and Me

### God and Jonah in the Sea

Florence Olmstead Collins

Part 1: *Jonah* 1:17 - 2:6a

17 But the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights.

2:1 From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God.

2 He said, "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help and you listened to my cry.

3 You hurled me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me. All your waves and breakers swept over me.

4 I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'

5 The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head.

6 To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth barred me in forever."

God was not finished with Jonah. He had work for Jonah to do, and continued to prepare him for it.

We don't know how long Jonah was in the sea before the fish swallowed him, but surely it seemed very long to him. His description of that frightening time reveals his distress. The belly of the great fish may, or may not have been luxury accommodations, but Jonah eloquently expresses his gratitude for it. Both in the sea and in the fish, God was saving Jonah's life. God has made many fishes and he made our bodies. If he wishes, he can adapt our bodies to our surroundings or can adapt our environment to us. The word "great,"

is the only one used to describe this fish. We can assume, then, that its appointments are not as important as what happened inside it.

The text tells that Jonah had prayed while in the sea (2:11) Now he prays in the belly of the creature. Having experienced times of helplessness ourselves, we feel that we are there with him. Jonah may be kneeling. He may be lying face down inside the fish. But surely his heart is prostrate before God, his only hope, and, glad for God's presence, Jonah pours out his feelings.

### JONAH IN THE JAWS OF DEATH

This prayer is not one of petition, asking to be out of the fish. Jonah begins with talking to himself or to some imaginary listener. He says, "I called to the Lord and *he* answered me." Then he repeats these sentiments and addresses them to God—"I called for help and you listened to my cry." Asking God for help and receiving it made Jonah aware of God's nearness, and the rest of his prayer is spoken directly to God. Later he says, "I remembered you, Lord." It is easy to forget God when we are busy "doing our own thing." But God never forgets us. Just as he sent Jonah to the bottom of the sea, he graciously sends us reminders—some harsh, some gentle—that he is in control and that we need him.

Jonah felt that he had been in the grave before the fish swallowed him. In some versions the word for "grave" has not been translated, but has been transliterated from the original language and reads, "Sheol." Its meaning is "the world of the dead." The scriptures present Sheol as being beneath the ground, a place of silence and darkness. "All mankind goes there (Psalms 89:48), though the righteous hope to be redeemed whereas the wicked remain (Psalms 49:14-15). Though Sheol implies separation from God (Psalms 88:3-6), it is a place accessible to God (Psalms 139:88; Amos 9:2)." (Kohlenberger)

Jonah says that the Lord himself hurled him into the sea, and he describes to God the torment he underwent there. This was not news to God. Before Jonah was cast into the ocean, God knew the agony he would experience there. He knows when we suffer. This knowledge of his doesn't exclude us from telling him our troubles. For our good, he often waits for us to ask before he will help. His love is as great as his knowledge, so he asks us to pray to him about everything. The God of the universe invites each of us to talk with him about anything—joys, sorrows, little and big problems!

Jonah's problem was a very large one. He says that he went to the depths of the ocean—"to the roots of the mountains" of the sea. God sent him there and preserved his life without using so much as skin diving equipment. If Jonah was in the ocean south of Greece, he was in the bottom of the deepest canyon in the Mediterranean Sea—more than 16,000 feet below the surface.

Not only did the breakers and waves sweep over Jonah (he calls them *God's* breakers and waves), but the currents swirled about him (2:3). Long before we discovered the intense permanent currents that develop on the western sides of the oceans, such as the Kuroshio Stream in the North Pacific and the Gulf Stream in the North Atlantic,

the Holy Spirit recorded about them here and in Ezekiel 31:15.

In the water, seaweed had made a blindfold around Jonah's head. He couldn't see God. Once again, when he couldn't see God he thought God couldn't see him (2:4). But unlike his attitude when fleeing from God, now he is distressed when thinking God didn't see him.

Jonah felt that while he was in the sea the bars of Sheol had closed upon him, that he was imprisoned with no way out (2:6). We may sometimes feel trapped by what we call an "impossible" situation. Perhaps it is dire financial circumstances, poor health, burdensome commitments to others, or loneliness. We may be blinded by daily cares and can't see God. But he sees us and is as surely with us as he was with Jonah.

If sin is our prison, Jesus Christ can release us. If we trust him, he can save us from the penalty of sin. If we depend on him daily, God can free us from sinning (Philippians 2:13). If we continue to follow him, we will spend eternity where there is no sin. If we are slaves to sin, Jesus Christ can liberate us (John 8:32, 34). Whether our problems are a result of our own behavior or of the stresses of normal life, we should do as Jonah did. We should cry to the Lord and he will hear.

Jonah has been pouring out to God the anxiety he had felt in the sea. Next, he offers the Lord his gratitude for rescuing him from certain death. Next month we will study that oblation of thanksgiving.

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## NEWS AND NOTES

### Comings & Goings

James Embree now serves as youth minister at the Fisherville church near Louisville. Rick Murphy soon will start ministering in Lebanon Junction, Ky. & hopes to take classes at the School of Biblical Studies. Robert & Joy Garrett hope to be in Kentucky by December; pray that the Lord will supply funds for their fare. Contact Victor Broaddus (P. O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555) if you want them to come to your church.

4 missionary families from the same clan will have a rare family get-together in early August. They are Hall & Alice Crowder and their 3 daughters and families: Ken & Cindy Brady, James & Karen Ashely, Ted & Crystal Hardin. They'll meet in Waynesboro, Ga., where the Crowders & Bradys live, working for OM.

### Dan Wilson to Honduras

Dan Wilson, a graduate of Portland Christian High School and Bryan College, will leave in mid-August for a

year (or more?) of missionary work in Honduras, C. Amer. He will teach in the Christian school where Ted & Crystal Hardin work (Ted is principal). 20% of the students there are "missionary kids" (as Dan was for years). The other 80% are Hondurans, & due to the cost of tuition, almost all of them are from influential families: children of Honduras' president, & of the head of their armed forces, & cabinet members, etc. Most of these are only nominal Christians. Dan will teach 6 periods of Bible daily, to 4 different grade levels. Please pray for him very much. He graduated from Bryan last May.

### Southeast Church of Christ, Louisville

One Sunday evening there was a "missionary visit." 3 generations of the Garretts shared about mission work: Dollie Garrett, Cecil & Betsy Garrett, and Jim & Joann Garrett Broaddus.

Another Sunday night Hollace Sherwood presented details of the Lysine corn Project for the Poor.

(Continued on Inside Back Cover)

## NEWS and NOTES, continued

### Ralph Ave. Church, Louisville

Their strategy is to stretch VBS throughout the summer, once a week, rather than holding it all at once. E.g., during July the children's class had crafts one Wed. night, Bible games on another, a Video presentation the next Wed., and emphasized singing the last Wed. All this in addition to Bible teaching.

### Linton, Ind. Church of Christ

We had a great time in our VBS. We averaged 49 in attendance each day. And what a great time we shared with students and parents at the closing program the next Sunday evening: more than 100 were in attendance.

### Gallatin, Tenn.

Sun. July 21 there was a special event—the opening of the new Christian Enrichment Center. Folks gathered to see the completed fellowship hall & kitchen & after-school care facility.

Notice from Gallatin's bulletin: We urge each member of our Church to be much in prayer this week for the decisions to be made Sunday relative to elders and deacons to serve us for the next three years. In addition to approving our present elders and deacons, we will have the opportunity to approve John Harris as a deacon. Plan to be here Sunday to participate in the important decision.

### Maple Manor Christian Home, Adult Division, Sellersburg, Indiana

For many years God has blessed the operation of the Adult Division of Maple Manor Christian Home in abundance. Unfortunately, circumstances beyond our direct control have arisen which have the potential to disrupt the very vital day-to-day operations of the Home. Nursing shortages and increasingly stiff regulations and requirements have put the Home in a serious financial crisis, but the Board of Directors is steadfast in its belief that Maple Manor can continue to be powerfully used of God to meet the needs of Senior Citizens requiring the special care the Home affords them.

The Board urges you to be much in prayer, asking the Lord to provide nurses to fill positions the state requires if the home is to continue to operate. Additionally, unforeseen financial expenses have been incurred

from complex administrative regulations imposed by the state, affecting the time period for Bro. Ray Naugle to assume his duties as Administrator. At present our deficit is roughly \$8,000.00 per month. This amount is substantial, but can be overcome through prayer and sacrificial giving from our supporters.

### Sermon Topics from Here & There

Dennis Kaufman has recently preached sermon series on the books of Titus, Daniel, and now on Rom. 12-15, at Ky. Ave. Church. In Johnson City, Carl Kitzmiller preached 2 messages on Dan. 9, the "70 Weeks"; plus a message on "Now That I'm a Christian," and another on "Should Sunday Be a Day of Rest?" Julius Hovan in Gallatin is giving a series on the 2nd Coming of Jesus. Alex Wilson continues to preach from various Psalms, though he interrupted those studies to present a 5-sermon series on Heaven & Hell.

### Borden, Ind.

Singing Practice will be held each Sunday night after our Evening Bible class. This practice is for all and is meant to better our congregational singing in general.

### Tell City Church of Christ, Indiana

We had a great time in VBS as we traveled "Sonward Ho!" We had an average of 103, and there were about 150 at our closing program. A special thank you to the Young Adult class for sponsoring the VBS picnic that we had yesterday.

### Johnson City, Tenn.

Vacation Bible School Saturday: Bible School will begin at 8:30 and last until 12 Noon, to be followed by a picnic in Rotary Park. This is to be more intensive than the usual V.B.S., with at least two class periods during the morning with a "recess" between. Some classes may cover as many as four separate studies.

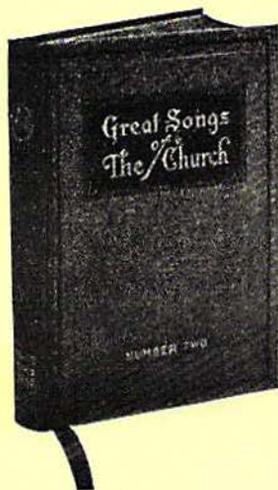
This requires only one day of intensive effort, so let's see how many youngsters we can invite, transport, or encourage to attend.

This is something different, so rather than showing that it will not work by being indifferent to it, why not give it a chance by giving all the encouragement you can?

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