

A Post-trib Response to John Walvoord's "Fifty Arguments for Pretribulationism"

Chapter XIII of *The Rapture Question* (Zondervan, 1957)

This Appendix is adapted from a previously-unpublished anonymous source, used by permission. The main body of this article establishes the post-tribulation rapture viewpoint as Biblically consistent to the exclusion of all other theories. However, pre-tribulationists continue to reiterate weak arguments based on human reasoning such as those debunked here (below).

HISTORICAL ARGUMENT

1. *The early church believed in the imminency of the Lord's return, which is an essential doctrine of pretribulationism.*

The fact that some statements in the NT can be construed as supporting the doctrine of imminency does not prove that the early church believed in this doctrine, especially with evidence to the contrary. John Walvoord defines imminency by saying, "the coming of Christ is not qualified by description of any signs or prerequisite events" (p. 79), so that He could literally return at any second. It is claimed that the Lord could have come back during any generation of church history, though He has tarried for His own purposes. However, this cannot be maintained for the Apostolic Age. The Apostle Peter, for example, knew quite well that he would die and not be translated (John 21:19; 2 Peter 1:13-15). Also, Paul expected to die soon (2 Tim 4:6-7). With these two small facts in mind, every statement made by either Peter or Paul that may seem to teach imminency must be taken with a grain of salt. They knew Christ would not return in their lifetimes. They did not expect Him at any second. If they had meant that Jesus could return at any second *after they died*, they should have been more clear about that. However, because they made no such qualifications, we must more carefully analyze the statements that speak of the soon return of the Lord before leaping to conclusions.

2. *The detailed development of pretribulation truth during the past few centuries does not prove that the doctrine is new or novel. Its development is similar to that of other major doctrines in the history of the church.*

The development of pretribulationism is similar to the development of dispensationalism – recent and not spoken of by previous generations. Simply because other "popular" doctrines are recent makes no case for their validity. Purveyors of false doctrine are often quite prolific and well-liked.

HERMENEUTICS

3. *Pretribulationism is the only view which allows literal interpretation of all Old and New Testament passages on the great tribulation.*

Proponents of pretribulationism are *not* the only exegetes to suppose they use a literal hermeneutic. Pretribulationism, however, is unique in its ability to introduce distinctions in the text presuppositionally, and then operate within that framework as if it were revealed truth (i.e. distinction between Rapture and Second Coming).

4. *Only pretribulationism distinguishes clearly between Israel and the church and their respective programs.*

Distinction between Israel and the Church is admired only by dispensationalists, and thus this is not a valid argument. It is presuppositional to propose that because pretribulationism makes this distinction in the "peoples of God" and "their respective programs", it is hermeneutically superior to any other interpretation of God's dealings in history.

NATURE OF THE TRIBULATION

5. *Pretribulationism maintains the Scriptural distinction between the great tribulation and tribulation in general which precedes it.*

No exegete worth his beans would fail to distinguish the necessity of a specific referent when speaking of της θλιψεως της μεγαλης ("the great tribulation", Rev 7:14), I would hope. This is not only maintained by pretribulationism. However, it is questionable whether pretribulationism always maintains this distinction (see #6).

6. *The great tribulation is properly interpreted by pretribulationists as a time of preparation for Israel's restoration (Deut 4:29-30; Jer 30:4-11). It is not the purpose of the tribulation to prepare the church for glory.*

Objectively speaking, there is no particular reason to suppose that Deut 4:29-30 and Jer 30:4-11 refer to the Great Tribulation spoken of in the New Testament. In Deuteronomy, the context is most certainly not concerned with the Great Tribulation. Moses is telling the people about the mercy God will show the Israelites in that He will receive their repentance even after they have turned aside to idols. After solemnly warning them that God will scatter them among the nations if they worship idols, Moses gives them the hope of God's mercy that He will forgive them for the sake of the covenant that He made with their forefathers. The use of the word "tribulation" in Deut 4:30 does not mean that this is the same thing spoken of in the New Testament. The "tribulation" meant here is the judgment of God on Israel in the sense of being scattered and destroyed as a people as a result of national idolatry. While it is true that this promised judgment was for the purpose of causing Israel to return to the LORD, this does not mean that "The Great Tribulation" is for the purpose of preparing Israel to take possession of the land of Caanan. This is flawed exegesis. Jeremiah 30:4-11 is a better passage to refer to the Great Tribulation because it is in the context of the New Covenant, which will be made with all of Israel at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ

(cf. Zechariah 12-14 and Romans 11:25-32). However, one cannot ignore the context of Jeremiah 30, as it was written as a message for the exiles in Babylon. The promises of ch. 30 are about a change of heart for the Israelites, a return to the LORD, an end of captivity and a restoration to the land are all found in Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in ch. 29. In that chapter, the application is clear: the promised restoration will come after seventy years of captivity (Jer 29:10). Did this occur, or is Israel still looking for this restoration? The Scriptures boldly declare that this prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled in the decree of Cyrus (2 Chr 36:22; Ezra 1:1). However, when Daniel was studying this matter and inquired of the LORD about it, the angel Gabriel came to him and used this topic as a springboard to give Daniel the timetable for the complete restoration of Israel and "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy [place]" (Dan 9:24). It seems that the same device is used in Jeremiah as the promise of restoration for the exiles leads into a discussion of the final regathering of Israel and the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth. In ch. 30, the context is still too close to that of the exile to be dogmatic in asserting that it must refer to the Great Tribulation in the end times. Finally, a note must be made about the determination of a purpose for the Great Tribulation. It is dispensational theology, and not the exegesis of Scripture, that determines for pretribulationists that if the Great Tribulation is a time of preparation for Israel, it cannot be a time of preparation for the Church as well. In the New Testament, believers are encouraged to hold on until the end of the Tribulation, because "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt 24:13). By doing this, believers will prove themselves to be the elect, who are the only ones who will survive this judgment. This is not a reference to Israel, despite however much dispensationalists would like to make it one. The Apostles preached the gospel in this way, when they were "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Act 14:22). They did not tell the Church to expect easy times and then rapture before things got tough. Obviously, the passage in Acts is not a reference to the Great Tribulation, but the principle applies: God refines His people through tribulation. There is no reason to separate God's purposes for Israel from His purposes for the Church.

7. *None of the Old Testament passages on the tribulation mention the church (Deut 4:29-30; Jer 30:4-11; Dan 9:24-27; 12:1-2).*

None of the Old Testament mentions the Church by name, so it should be no surprise that no Old Testament passages that are supposed to describe the Tribulation mention the Church. Such a point certainly cannot be a significant part of an argument of this nature.

8. *None of the New Testament passages on the tribulation mention the church (Matt 24:15-31; 1 Thes 1:9-10, 5:4-9; Rev 4-19).*

There is nothing in Matt 24 to suggest the absence of the Church. If this is a fair kind of argument, then can it not be argued that Israel is not mentioned by name either, and so must not be in view? "The wrath to come" of 1 Thes 1:9-10 is the same judgment the wicked receive in 2 Thes 1:6-10, at which point the Church is given rest. There is no reason for distinction in these passages within the Thessalonian context. "That day" spoken of in 1 Thes 5:4-9 is the same one spoken of in v. 3 of the same chapter, which

refers to *sudden, inescapable destruction*. This is not what Scripture envisions at the beginning of the Tribulation period, but rather the end. In 2 Thes 2:1-11, Paul is clearly correcting the understanding of the Thessalonians with respect to what they can expect in the end times. Rather than allowing them to believe that Christ's return had already occurred (or that it was imminent, *cf.* ἐνισταίμι, v. 2), he reminds them that they have certain events to look for (not to be vainly informed of), namely the apostasy and the revelation of the Antichrist. As to John's failure to use ἐκκλησία in Rev 4-19, this by no means rules out the presence of the Church. For example, if the Tribulation is for Israel, and the time of the Gentiles is over, why is there "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" identified as "they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:9,14), whose names are "written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8), but those for whom Christ died? Who else is associated with the Lamb (Rev 14:1-4) so closely as the Church whose "saints" keep "the faith of Jesus" (Rev 14:12)? Who but the Church "have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 12:17) and to which people of God do the "holy apostles and prophets" (Rev 18:20) belong?

9. *In contrast to midtribulationism, the pretribulationist view provides an adequate explanation for the beginning of the great tribulation in Revelation 6. Midtribulationism is refuted by the plain teaching of Scripture that the great tribulation begins long before the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11.*

Is this an argument against midtribulationism or an argument for pretribulationism? If midtribulationism is wrong, it does not make pretribulationism right, necessarily.

10. *The proper distinction is maintained between the prophetic trumpets of Scripture by pretribulationism. There is no proper ground for the pivotal argument of midtribulationism that the seventh trumpet of Revelation is the last trumpet in that there is no established connection between the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11, the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52, and the trumpet of Matthew 24:31. They are three distinct events.*

Is the literal interpretation of Scripture a poor reason for making connections between passages with similar references? One must keep in mind the fundamental principle of hermeneutics: Let Scripture interpret Scripture. I notice that 1 Thes 4:16 is not mentioned, probably because its trumpet reference is too similar to Matt 24:31 and 1 Cor 15:52, thus making a connection between Christ's posttribulationist return and His gathering of His people. With respect to the Rev 11 trumpet, it must be pointed out that Rev 4-18 do not seem to be strictly chronological (*cf.* people having exited the Tribulation in 7:14, the vision of ch. 12). While Rev 11 may refer to a separate event, Matt 24:31 and 1 Cor 15:52, when connected with 1 Thes 4:16, seem to refer to the same gathering of the elect. Additionally, if the trumpet mentioned in 1 Cor 15:52 is a reference to a pretribulationist rapture, why would it be called the "last trumpet" if the trumpet of Matt 24:31, which clearly refers to a gathering of the saints after the tribulation (Matt 24:21,29-31), comes after it, chronologically speaking?

11. *The unity of Daniel's seventieth week is maintained by pretribulationists. By contrast, midtribulationism destroys the unity of Daniel's seventieth week and confuses Israel's program with that of the church.*

Despite any problems midtribulationism may have with this text, posttribulationism has no problems with Daniel's seventieth week being a continuous seven-year period. However, Daniel in no way demands that the Church be absent by a mere argument from silence. He has nothing to say about a resurrection and removal of dead believers before this week. In fact, he makes reference to only one resurrection, "some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt," occurring after "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (Dan 12:1-2, though the Hebrew grammar allows for an indefinite time elapsing between the two elements).

NATURE OF THE CHURCH

12. *The translation of the church is never mentioned in any passage dealing with the second coming of Christ after the Tribulation.*

If one makes the assumption that no passage dealing with the second coming of Christ after the Tribulation is associated with His coming to translate the Church, of course there will be no passages mentioning the two events that have already been separated by a presupposition. That is an entirely fallacious argument. However, there are at least two passages that mention the translation of the church following the tribulation. The first is: "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23). This passage states that the creation itself, together with the church, is groaning in eager expectation of a particular event: the consummation of our adoption as sons in the kingdom of God, which is defined further as "the redemption of our body." It is important to note that the church and the creation are not awaiting different events, but rather the same glory (v. 18), the same adoption (v. 19), the same liberation from decay and the same glorious freedom (v. 21). So then, will the creation experience this end of suffering and freedom from decay at the beginning of the Tribulation? Far from it! That period of time will be the most awful period of suffering and destruction since the Flood! There will be no rest for creation until the Millennial Kingdom of Christ is established on earth, at which time the creation will be restored (cf. Isa 65:25; Amos 9:13). According to the Apostle Paul, the redemption of our bodies and the rest that creation has been so eagerly longing for are realized at the same time. Creation is not eagerly awaiting the Tribulation with all its plagues and distress; it is looking for the revelation of the sons of God, who will be translated and given glorious bodies at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The second passage is: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thes 1:6-8). Curiously enough, this passage connects the time of our relief from affliction with the time of judgment on unbelievers at the coming of the Lord. This is certainly the second coming spoken of elsewhere in Scripture, as Christ is seen coming with a heavenly army to

avenge His people. This is significant in that Paul gives the Thessalonians no reason to expect any relief from their afflictions until the coming of the Lord in judgment against their enemies. While this passage does not specifically mention the rapture as occurring after the Tribulation, it rules out any other possibility. If the Church will be raptured prior to this second coming of the Lord, they would have already had relief from their afflictions and thus Paul's chronology would be in error. If the Church is translated at any time other than "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire", then the Apostle Paul will prove to be a false prophet.

13. *The church is not appointed to wrath (Rom 5:9; 1 Thes 1:9-10; 5:9). The church therefore cannot enter "the great day of their wrath" (Rev 6:17).*

The statement "the church...cannot enter 'the great day of their [sic] wrath' (Rev 6:17)" is a loaded statement. It assumes that the Church must be taken and placed inside of this period of time. Rather, history could simply proceed without the Church being removed, and this is no problem, because God is able to save His people from judgment being put upon the whole world *even while* they are in the midst of it (*cf.* John 17:15; Gal 1:4; 2 Peter 2:9; Rev 7:3; 9:4; 12:6).

14. *The church will not be overtaken by the Day of the Lord (1 Thes 5:1-9) which includes the tribulation.*

It is true that believers will not be taken by surprise (or "overtaken") by the day of the Lord (1 Thes 5:4), and even pretribulationists recognize that the Rapture is included in this day of the Lord, though it somehow comes unexpectedly, which is somewhat of a contradiction in that the whole set of events will not overtake believers. Posttribulationism does not teach that the Church will be "overtaken" by the Tribulation, because Christ has declared all things beforehand, even the order of events (Mark 13:23ff.).

15. *The possibility of a believer escaping the Tribulation is mentioned in Luke 21:36.*

The escaping in Luke 21:36 seems to correspond with the redemption found at the coming of Christ in verse 28, which, in the context, comes after great affliction that will be observed by believers, so does not refer to escape from the period of the Tribulation. It most likely refers to escape from God's destruction of the wicked.

16. *The church of Philadelphia was promised deliverance from "the hour of trial, that hour which is going to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev 3:10).*

The flaw in this argument lies in the understanding of the text, and specifically the use of the preposition *ἐκ* ("out of"). It should be carefully noted that God does not promise to remove the Church in Philadelphia from the earth so as not to endure the hour of trial, nor does He promise to deliver them from that hour, but that He will "keep them" (Gk., *τηρηεω*), which has to do with God's ability to protect them from harm during the time of tribulation in the same way that the plagues in Egypt were widespread, but had no effect on the Israelites (*cf.* also Rev 7:3; 9:4; 12:14). We see an exact verbal parallel in the Greek when Jesus prays, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest *keep them from* the evil [one]" (John 17:15). Jesus' prayer here is not that His disciples be kept from the presence of the devil. He is not even asking that the devil would be kept from bothering them. In fact, in spite of this

prayer, Jesus told Peter that same night: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32). Satan had apparently been granted permission to sift Peter. Jesus made it clear that He had prayed for Peter, and that his faith would be shaken to the core, but he would emerge from the testing better able to serve God. What Jesus wanted in His prayer was that the devil would not have mastery over His disciples, to overcome them, but that they would be *protected from harm in the midst of testing*. Jesus knew what was in store for His disciples, but He also knew they had to go through it for the sake of the gospel. His prayer did not in any way request their removal from being around Satan or his devices. Peter was given over to Satan, in fact, for the strengthening of his faith. The way to say "keep away from the presence of" in Greek is a similar construction, but instead of the preposition $\epsilon\kappa$, the preposition $\alpha\pi\omicron$ is used, as in the Greek translation of Prov 7:5, which says, "...that they may keep you away from an adulteress..." Jesus could have used this word with the Church in Philadelphia, but His promise was of a different nature.

17. *It is characteristic of divine dealing to deliver believers before a divine judgment is inflicted upon the world as illustrated in the deliverance of Noah, Lot, Rahab, etc. (2 Peter 2:6-9).*

True, it is characteristic of God to save believers from the judgment of the wicked, but the judgment Peter has in mind in his second letter is the destruction of the present heavens and earth by fire, as well as the destruction of ungodly men, none of which things happen before or during the Tribulation (2 Peter 3:7).

18. *At the time of the translation of the church, all believers go to the Father's house in heaven (John 14:3) and do not immediately return to the earth after meeting Christ in the air as posttribulationists teach.*

There is no reason to believe that the disciples thought Jesus was speaking of a house in heaven in John 14:1-3. It is insensitive to the language and to the historical background the disciples had to assert that Jesus was speaking of a multi-room mansion-house in heaven. Linguistically speaking, the Greek $\omega\omicron\rho\delta\mu\omicron\nu\eta$ means the "state of remaining in an area, *staying, tarrying*" (cf. John 14:23) or "a place in which one stays, *dwelling(-place), room, abode*", as here (BDAG). Whatever "mansions" meant in 1611, it does not adequately communicate today. Historically, the "house of God" has always been associated with the temple in the Jewish mind. Before the temple was constructed, the tabernacle was referred to as "the house of the LORD" (cf. Exo 23:19; Deut 23:18; Josh 6:24; 1 Sam 1:7,24). However, it was recognized that this was not a permanent fixture (1 Kings 3:2). When David decided to build a house for the Ark of the Covenant, he was told that his son would be the one to do it (2 Sam 7:1-17), and in accordance with the prophecy, Solomon built the Jerusalem temple (1 Kings 9:10). In the Psalms, we see the psalmist's desire to dwell in the house of the LORD, often perpetually, which is clearly a longing for the presence of the LORD as expressed in the temple (cf. Psa 23:6, 27:4, 84:1-12, 92:12-13). Finally, in the prophets, the "house of the LORD" was always a reference to the temple (cf. Isa 66:20; Jer 7:11; Eze 8:16; Dan 5:23; Hos 9:4; Joel 1:9; Hag 1:2; Zech 4:9; Mal. 3:10). For this discussion, the eschatological references to the house of the LORD are especially significant. Both Isaiah and Micah spoke of "the mountain of" the house of the LORD being raised up above the

other mountains of the earth in the last days (Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1). It will become the center of the restored kingdom with the LORD Himself ruling there (Zech 14:10-11, 16-21). It should be no surprise, then, that when Jesus referred to His Father's house elsewhere in the Gospels (Luke 16:27; John 2:16) that He was speaking of the temple on both of these occasions. God is not referred to as having a house in heaven where believers will be taken. This statement by Christ in John's Gospel was most likely taken by the disciples to mean that they would be like those who lived in the storeroom-apartments around the temple in their proximity to the Father in His Kingdom (*cf.* Anna the prophetess, Luke 2:36-37). Jesus' disciples expected to reign with Christ when His kingdom appeared (Matt 19:28-29; Luke 22:28-30), and from the Old Testament, they would have expected the temple to be the center of the Messianic kingdom. When He will return in power, He will have his kingdom with Him (*cf.* Luke 19:12) and He will take His disciples to be with Him where He will be, in the Father's house, ruling the nations with a rod of iron. Does the pretribulation rapture theory not allow for a physical kingdom on earth with Christ? Do pretribulationists expect to remain in heaven forever after going up to God's "house"? Posttribulationism believes in the kingdom as well, but the difference here is a matter of timing: Will Christ appear with His kingdom or will He appear first without His kingdom, and then come another time with His kingdom? So then, if John 14 does not speak of the timing of the return to earth with Christ to rule, why make an issue out of it from this text?

19. *Pretribulationism does not divide the body of Christ at the rapture on a works principle. The teaching of a partial rapture is based on the false doctrine that the translation of the church is a reward for good works. It is rather a climactic aspect of salvation by grace.*

Proving that "partial-rapture" theories are invalid merely clears the playing field, so to speak. It does not, however, provide a reason to believe that belief in a pretribulation rapture is taught by the Scriptures.

20. *The Scriptures clearly teach that all, not part, of the church will be raptured at the coming of Christ for the church (1 Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thes 4:17).*

See #19.

21. *As opposed to a view of a partial rapture, pretribulationism is founded on the definite teaching of Scripture that the death of Christ frees from all condemnation.*

See #19.

22. *The godly remnant of the tribulation are pictured as Israelites, not members of the church as maintained by the posttribulationists.*

If the godly remnant of the Tribulation are pictured as Israelites, then why would the "great multitude, which no man could number" (Rev 7:9) who are described as "they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14) be "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (Rev 7:9)? These have come *out from inside of* the Great Tribulation (εκ της θλιψεως της μεγαλης)! If there is any godly remnant emerging from the Great Tribulation, it is this mixed multitude. To describe this group as Israelites is not only misleading, but it is irresponsible. If the church is not a blood-bought group whose

robes are washed, then to whom is John writing this letter (cf. Rev 1:4,6,11; 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22)?

23. *The pretribulationist view as opposed to posttribulationism does not confuse terms like elect and saints which apply to the saved of all ages with specific terms like church and those in Christ which refer to believers of this age only.*

Supposing that dispensationalism is a proper presuppositional approach to the Scriptures, this argument might be remotely admissible. However, this point not having been established, such a point is altogether invalid in a discussion of this nature. Of course, I suppose that I would not mind being lumped in with the likes of Paul who would be found guilty of "confusing" terms such as *saints* and *church*, as he does in Ephesians 3:18-21, or *saints* and those *in Christ*, as in 1 Cor 1:2; 14:33, Eph 4:11-12 and Col 1:2. If Paul maintained a distinction between the terms *saints* and those *in Christ*, why would he speak of Jesus coming "with all His saints" (1 Thes 3:13), then explain that "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thes 4:14)? There is no difference between the event described in 1 Thes 3:13 and Zech 14:4-5, which says that the LORD will return to the Mount of Olives with all of His saints with Him. According to pretribulationism, Jesus will not bring all the saints of all ages with Him when He returns, but only the dead of the "Church Age." If the term *elect* refers to "the saved of all ages", why would Christ use this in the Olivet Discourse to speak of the believers who will be gathered *after* the Great Tribulation (Matt 24:22,24,31; Mark 13:20,22,27), which group pretribulationists (erroneously) term as Israelites and *not* the Church? This is by no means "the saved of all ages" in the dispensational system! It is exegetically irresponsible to introduce unnecessary disjunctions between terms that are often merely descriptive and not entirely referential in nature. *Elect* simply means "chosen"; *saint* simply means "holy one"; *church* simply means "congregation"; and *in Christ* simply means "included in Christ's atonement." Also, given the fact that "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Act 4:12), "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (Act 4:10), I would consider it safe to expect that any of the elect of God, His saints, if they are saved, will be found in Jesus Christ.

DOCTRINE OF IMMINENCY

24. *The pretribulationist interpretation is the only view which teaches that the coming of Christ is actually imminent.*

Had the doctrine of imminency been previously established as the teaching of Scripture concerning the return of Christ, the argument that the pretribulationist rapture theory is in accordance with this might be legitimate. Walvoord himself admitted that pretribulationism rises or falls on the doctrine of imminency: the two doctrines are dependent upon one another. If one has created two comings of Christ and assigns descriptions of events at His coming to one or the other, and places all prophesied signs between these two comings, then it is impossible to convince him of the error of imminency without dealing with his prior conclusions. It seems that the doctrine is wholly founded upon several Scripturally untenable presuppositions: (1) there are two comings of

Christ which constitute His return; (2) it is impossible to “look for” both the coming of Christ and the signs of His coming; (3) the Church is not told to look for the signs of the coming of Christ; and (4) the word “soon” means “at any moment.”

1. To address the first (1), it should be pointed out that the simplest reading of the New Testament tends toward understanding Christ’s coming as a singular event. It is dispensational theology that requires two comings in order to satisfy promises made to believers in different dispensations of God’s grace. There is no difficulty harmonizing the various passages in both Testaments to describe a singular coming.
2. Secondly (2), pretribulationists make a logical distinction between looking for Christ’ return and looking for the signs that precede it. This is an exercise in minutiae, and it comes as a logical necessity for supporting the first presupposition (1). If believers in the New Testament are, in various places, commanded to look for the return of their Lord *and* the signs of His coming, these must be separated because pretribulationism cannot allow for there to be advance notice of an unannounced event, so these exhortations are distinguished to refer to different “peoples of God.”
3. Because of the previous presupposition (2), the distinction is necessary between Christians who will be raptured separately from those looking for the signs of the Lord’s coming. This means that exhortations in the Scriptures that pertain to the signs of the coming of the Lord must be reinterpreted to fit the pretribulational framework, and thus relegated to “Tribulation saints” rather than the Church. This is problematic exegetically speaking, because in passages regarding the signs (mostly from the Gospels), there is no clear indication that the message was not for the hearers or the audiences of the respective Gospel authors. This casts considerable doubt upon the interpretation. A message is rarely delivered in the Scriptures that has no relevance for those who hear it.
4. Finally, the fourth point (4) is simply a semantic issue. Perhaps the most significant statement by the Lord Jesus Christ about His soon coming is at the end of Revelation, where He says, “Surely I come quickly” (Rev 22:20). The Greek word here, *ταχως*, which is usually translated “quickly”, often carried the idea of “pertaining to a relatively brief time subsequent to another point of time” (BDAG). It is rather evident that the Lord did not intend us to view His appearing as coming within moments of John’s having received the visions of Revelation, as He did not appear in the way He set forth there. The frame of reference must be the Lord’s timing, for Whom a day is as “a thousand years” (Psa 90:4, 2 Peter 3:8). Jesus meant for us to know that He would not unduly delay His return, but the exact number of elect must first be brought in (2 Peter 3:8-10ff).

These presuppositions are rather poor and do not stand up to the scrutiny of logic and Scripture, and thus the doctrine of imminency is on shaky footing, to be generous.

25. The exhortation to be comforted by the coming of the Lord (1 Thes 4:18) is significant only in the pretribulational view, and is especially contradicted by posttribulationism.

To suppose that the comfort associated with the coming of the Lord is significant only in the pretribulation view is absurd. Actually, the “comfort” the pretribulation view espouses is nearer escapism and a desire to avoid difficulty and persecution, when that is precisely what Scripture has promised Christians (*cf.* John 16:33; 2 Tim 2:12; 3:10-12; 1 Peter 1:6-9). It seems that Walvoord believes that since posttribulationists disagree with his interpretation of John 14:1ff they must deny the intent of the whole passage, thus contradicting the exhortation not to be troubled by coming difficult times in light of the promise of the Lord’s coming. He does not allow for other views of the context than his own; thus, tampering with one aspect of the interpretation spoils the whole context. This is the same kind of *ad hominem* argument he accuses posttribulationists of in his chapter against posttribulationism. In reality, knowing all of the trouble and persecution that will come upon true believers during the Great Tribulation, I would say that posttribulationists, in general, have a much greater comfort than pretribulationists, because the comfort and rest received after difficult labor is far greater than the comfort following light work.

26. *The exhortation to look for “the glorious appearing” of Christ to His own (Titus 2:13) loses its significance if the tribulation must intervene first. Believers in that case should look for signs.*

This point is rather irrational. Just because posttribulationism believes that identifiable signs will precede the coming of Christ does not mean that the signs take on more significance than Christ’s coming or that the focus is on them! That would be like suggesting that our understanding of the approximate length of the human gestation period has led women to look for contractions and labor rather than the birth of their child. The hope of the child’s birth sustains the woman through her labor pains, and in the same way, believers will be encouraged in the midst of their trials by the knowledge that their Lord is coming. As pertaining to the matter of “looking for” the return of the Lord, it is rather significant to whom Christ will appear: “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb 9:28). The first time Christ appeared was when he, functioning as our High Priest, emerged from the grave alive, demonstrating that our justification had been accomplished (Rom 4:25). When he returns from heaven the second time (which is, by the way, the only time He will be returning from heaven), at His Second Coming, He will appear to those who look for Him and will bring salvation. A pretribulation coming of Christ cannot be “unto salvation”, because the kingdom will not be established for seven years, and there will still be martyrs and suffering and persecution and the work of the antichrist. Also, would “tribulation saints” not look for the appearing of the Lord? If He had already appeared “unto salvation” (Heb 9:28), what do they have to look forward to? It doesn’t say, “unto them that look for him shall he appear the third time...”! The salvation that is to be sought at the Lord’s appearing is in view in the prophecies of both the Old and New Testaments. There is only one second appearance of our High Priest, and if we are not looking for that one, we are in serious trouble.

27. *The exhortation to purify ourselves in view of the Lord’s return has most significance if His coming is imminent (1 John 3:2-3).*

True believers would not say, “My lord delayeth his coming,” (Matt 24:48) and thus begin to be unfaithful believing that Christ’s return is far off. Such who abuse their freedom by “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness” are “denying the only Lord

God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:4). It is also important to point out that Christians will not have a clue about the timing of Christ's return until the Great Tribulation begins, and at this point, Christians will be running for their lives (Matt 24:15-22), not thinking about how long they can be impure before the day of reckoning comes. Our lives could be demanded of us at any time, so we should always strive to be pure before our Lord. If anyone is not concerned with being pure, such a one does not have his Master's interests in mind, and has no part in His kingdom. The Lord's return is only a threat to unfaithful servants, so the exhortation to purity in light of Christ's return has no more significance to the pretribulationist than to the posttribulationist.

28. *The church is uniformly exhorted to look for the coming of the Lord, while believers in the tribulation are directed to look for signs.*

The only reference to this vague argument Walvoord makes in his book is at the very end of chapter 6, "The Imminency of the Return of Christ". He first makes reference to four passages where the Church is exhorted to watch, wait for, look for or have (the hope of) Christ's return (1 Thes 5:6, 1 Cor 1:7, Titus 2:13, 1 John 3:1-3). He then proceeds to contrast this with the exhortations given in the Olivet Discourse, showing that believers are there told to look for the sign of the abomination of desolation (Matt 24:15), the announcement of false Christs, and then to watch for the return of the Lord after all the signs have appeared. It is quite interesting that the same final command appears in the Olivet Discourse that was seen elsewhere: WATCH! Walvoord wants us to think that because the command to watch comes after the introduction of other elements (i.e., signs) that it is an exhortation of a different nature and not fitting for the group to whom the prior exhortations were issued. The problem is that Jesus was abundantly clear that He wanted His followers to know that His coming would not be a secret event and that they should not expect Him until certain signs had come to pass! He was answering His disciples' question, and He never indicated another category of believer for whom the answer would apply. His reply to His disciples is transmitted to us, His Church, by the same disciples. The distinction Walvoord makes is wholly unwarranted by exegesis or context. Additionally, in light of the overwhelming command in Scripture to look for the return of Christ, looking for signs loses its significance. Daniel is told, "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days" (Dan 12:12). Jesus, when speaking of the Tribulation, said, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt 24:13). The focus is clearly not on the signs, but the return of the Lord. Even Walvoord acknowledges that believers during the Tribulation are exhorted to look for the return of Christ, but since that does not help his contrast, he does not dwell on that point. The instructions to the saints are to endure to the end and look forward with eager expectation to the Lord's return (Rev 13:10; 14:12; 16:15).

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

29. *The Holy Spirit as the Restrainer of evil cannot be taken out of the world unless the church, which the Spirit indwells, is translated at the same time. The Tribulation cannot begin until this restraint is lifted.*

The suggestion that the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the world is an entirely unfounded assertion, and needs to be supported, since this is not universally accepted. So, to base an argument on this foregone conclusion is improper when the evidence is not given. In the passage in question, 2 Thes 2:6-8, Paul speaks of the antichrist as being held back by a certain power. In verse 6, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of “that which holds back” (το κατεχον) the antichrist from being revealed, as they already know, probably because he told them when he was with them. So then, the emphasis here is not particularly on the restraining force, but more on the fact that this lawless one is restrained. He is under control, or on a leash, and his destiny is sealed (2 Thes 2:3), and the new information here is that he will not come until the time is right. In keeping with the context of the passage, it is most likely that Paul is referring to the “principle of law and government” as the restraining force. This is consistent with Paul’s understanding of earthly rulers and human governments being used as God’s agents to punish evil and restrain lawlessness (Rom 13:1-5). As well, it is much easier to envision the idea of law being set aside than the Holy Spirit (as pretribulationists suggest), and it seems logical that the result of setting aside law (*cf.* “apostasy”) is the revelation of the *lawless one* who is empowered by the secret power of *lawlessness*, and ultimately Satan, the original rebel and apostate.

30. *The Holy Spirit as the Restrainer must be taken out of the world before “the lawless one,” who dominates the tribulation period, can be revealed (2 Thes 2:6-8).*

While it is true that “the lawless one” will not be revealed until the restraining force is taken out of the way, it is not necessary to suppose that the restraining force is the Holy Spirit, as was argued above (#29). *Even if* the restraining force is the Holy Spirit, pretribulationists must maintain that His presence is not necessary for there to be Christians on earth, since after His “departure,” as pretribulation theology teaches, there will yet be a great multitude who come to faith in Christ during the Great Tribulation. So, if men can be saved without the presence of the Holy Spirit, why does it necessarily follow that the Church must leave along with the Holy Spirit? Of course, if one were to invent a new kind of believer who did not need the regenerating work, baptism, or filling of the Holy Spirit, the salvation problem during the Tribulation would be solved for pretribulationists. However, as Jesus told Nicodemus, “Δει υμας γεννηθηναι ανωθεν” (John 3:7, literally, “It is necessary [for] you to be born again”), and this new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit. Without His work, it is *impossible* to see the kingdom of heaven (John 3:3). This is a significant inconsistency in pretribulationism that must be dealt with.

31. *If the expression, “except the falling away come first,” be translated literally, “except the departure come first,” it would plainly show the necessity of the rapture taking place before the beginning of the tribulation.*

It is irresponsible and exploitive to recommend the translation of “apostasy” (αποστασια) in 2 Thes 2:3 as “departure.” It is irresponsible because the literal mean-

ing of ἀποστασία is “defiance of established system or authority, *rebellion, abandonment, breach of faith*” (BDAG; *cf.* also *TDNT*, 1:513-514). If it ever carried the connotation of a physical departure, it was not in a positive sense, but rather in the sense of desertion or betrayal. It is exploitive to suggest this because without a knowledge of Greek and proper lexical tools, such blatant textual wrangling goes unnoticed and unchecked. The Church deserves the proper reading of the text, not willy-nilly conjecture. Essentially, because ἡ ἀποστασία does NOT mean “the departure,” it does NOT “plainly show the necessity of the rapture taking place before the beginning of the tribulation.” As an added note, *even if* ἀποστασία did signify the Rapture of the Church, it would not place it at the beginning of the Tribulation, as has been suggested; rather, it would put it an indefinite period of time before the revelation of the antichrist with his defiling of the temple and demand to be worshipped as God (2 Thes 2:4), which is usually recognized as being the mid-point of the seven-year Tribulation. This would give more of a nod to midtribulationists than to pretribulationists were this faulty reading accepted. However, the point is moot. Note: Substituting “the rapture” for “a falling away”, as Walvoord suggests, introduces illogical redundancy: “for that day [the rapture] shall not come, except there come [the rapture] first”!

NECESSITY OF AN INTERVAL BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE SECOND COMING

32. *According to 2 Corinthians 5:10, all believers of this age must appear before the judgment seat of Christ in heaven, an event never mentioned in the detailed accounts connected with the second coming of Christ to the earth.*

To be specific, 2 Cor 5:10 says that all believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, but it does not say that this is in heaven. Because of this small matter that is not taken from the text, it is assumed that there must be an interval between the rapture and the second coming to facilitate this judgment scene in heaven. However, because the text never says that it is in heaven, there is no reason why it cannot happen on earth, in the Millennial Kingdom, after the second coming. Additionally, this judgment seat of Christ sounds very much like what Jesus Himself spoke of in one of His parables. He told a parable of a man who was going away to receive a kingdom, and in the meantime, he gave ten servants ten sums of money with the instruction to transact business in his absence (Luke 19:11-13). After he returned, his kingdom with him, he had his servants come before him and give a reckoning for what they did with the money he had given them (v. 15). The faithful were given charge over cities in his kingdom as a reward and the unfaithful were punished (vv. 15-26). Jesus told them this parable to correct their understanding of the kingdom of God: the people thought it was going to appear at once (v. 11), but Jesus informed them through the parable that the kingdom would appear after He had gone away and returned. Important to this discussion is that it is *upon His return* that He will have the kingdom with Him and will judge among His servants. If this does not happen at His return, when He sets up His kingdom, then it cannot be considered His return.

33. *If the twenty-four elders of Revelation 4:1-5:14 are representative of the church, as many expositors believe, it would necessitate the rapture and reward of the church before the tribulation.*

If there were some objective exegetical basis for believing that the twenty-four elders are the church rather than the opinion of "many expositors" (cf. Exo 23:2), this point might be admissible. However, to suggest that because some expositors might have correctly opined, that there is a necessary interval between the rapture and the second coming to facilitate a reward ceremony is fallacious. Also, if the twenty-four elders were the church, already glorified and rewarded, why would they, in their song of praise to God, call for the judging of the dead, the rewarding of the prophets, saints, and those who reverence God's name, and the destruction of those who destroy the earth (Rev 11:18)? This seems to indicate that the servants of God have not yet received their reward. It is impossible for the twenty-four elders to represent the church, yet not be included among the saints and those who reverence God's name, both small and great.

34. *The coming of Christ for His bride must take place before the second coming to the earth for the wedding feast (Rev 19:7-10).*

While there is mention of a wedding feast in Rev 19, there is no mention of a wedding ceremony. In fact, it seems that the wedding feast is the actual celebration of the marriage (cf. "Parable of the Ten Virgins," Matt 25:1-13). As well, this must take place on earth, as there can certainly be no wedding feast in heaven, since Christ took a Nazarite-like vow before His disciples when He said, "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt 26:29). He also told them, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:15-16). There is a feast coming that will include Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and "many from the east and west" (Matt 8:11) where Jesus will celebrate the establishment of His kingdom. This seems to be consistent with the wedding feast spoken of in Revelation. Even in the pretribulation system, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be resurrected right before dinnertime for this feast, so why is it a problem for the Church to be gathered together with the Lord as He comes to defeat His enemies and celebrate the establishment of His kingdom and union with His people?

35. *Tribulation saints are not translated at the second coming of Christ but carry on ordinary occupations such as farming and building houses, and they shall bear children (Isa 65:20-25). This would be impossible if all saints were translated at the second coming to the earth as posttribulationists teach.*

While it is true that Isaiah 65:20-25 tells about the occupations that will be taken up by those living in the millennial kingdom, it does not refer to them as "tribulation saints," which is important to note. This is an interpretation, and the basis for it is, unfortunately, not given. From the context of Isaiah 65, it is apparent that the people building houses, planting gardens, and bearing children are Israelites, not "tribulation saints." Those who come out of the great tribulation are from every nation, tribe, people and language group (Rev 7:9), so unless pretribulationists are willing to spiritualize what it means to be an Israelite, they have a problem here. But is this a problem for posttribulationism? What does the Scripture say about the nation of Israel at the coming of the Lord? Plen-

ty. First, Israel will be shaken like grain in a sieve, and a great holocaust will occur (Amos 9:1-10). However, the LORD promises that He will not totally destroy Israel (Amos 9:8), but He will leave a remnant, and He will restore this remnant. Jeremiah 30-31 talks about the restoration of Israel and the New Covenant. Israel has not yet embraced the New Covenant, but there is a promise here that the whole of Israel that remains after the judgment of the LORD which Amos spoke of will all have the law written on their hearts, will all know the LORD, and will all have their sins forgiven (Jer 31:33-34). God also promises the restoration of the land and the permanent rebuilding of Jerusalem. He also promises that a righteous ruler from David's line, the Messiah, will rule over the land forever (Jer 33:15-16; cf. Eze 37:24-28). The way this comes about is given in Zechariah ch. 12-14. In ch. 12:10-14, God promises to pour out a spirit of grace and supplication on the Israelites, and they will look on the One whom they pierced and mourn. Literal weeping will occur throughout the whole land, according to the word of the LORD. This will not be idle weeping, but it will be tears of repentance, as indicated, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech 13:1). The remnant that remains after the slaughter that is promised will say, "The LORD is my God" and God will say, they are "my people" (Zech 13:9). When the LORD goes out to fight against His enemies, He will set foot on the Mount of Olives, which will split in two and form a valley, through which these Israelites will flee (Zech 14:3-5). This is clearly the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, who "shall so come in like manner as [the men of Galilee] have seen him go into heaven" (Act 1:11). The reason that these Israelites are the ones who will populate the earth during the millennium, build houses and farm the land is that they will be granted repentance when they see Jesus with their own eyes (Zech 12:10), at which time He will meet His saints in the air and come to defeat the antichrist. Because they are converted at the rapture, these believers will not receive new bodies until after the millennium is complete (Rev 20:5).

36. *The judgment of the Gentiles following the second coming (Matt 25:31-46) indicates that both saved and unsaved are still in their natural bodies. This would be impossible if the translation had taken place at the second coming.*

The trouble with taking Matt 25:31-46 as a judgment occurring directly after the Second Coming is that the details cannot be reconciled with Revelation, ch. 19-20. It says in Rev 19:20-21 that only the beast and the false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire when Christ returns, but the rest of those who opposed Christ will be killed by His sword. However, in Matthew 25:46, the "goats" are sent away to everlasting punishment after the King reads their sentence. After the Millennium, Satan is thrown into the lake of fire, where he joins the beast and the false prophet (Rev 20:10). There is no indication anywhere in the text that the beast and the false prophet had been sharing the lake of fire with anyone else up to this point. It is not until after Satan is thrown in that the rest of those whose names were not found written in the book of life will be thrown in (20:15). This judgment has two significant similarities with Matt 25:31-46: (1) It is a final judgment that results in either everlasting punishment or eternal life (Matt 25:46; Rev 20:14; 21:4), and (2) those involved are judged on the basis of works, as recorded by the Lord (Matt 25:35-36,40,42-43,45; Rev 20:12-13). The objection may be raised that this judgment must occur at the Second Coming, because Matt 25:31-32 says that when Christ returns in His glory with His angels, He will sit on His throne and the nations will be gathered before Him for judgment, separated on His right and left, like

sheep and goats. This objection is best answered by an appeal to a principle of the interpretation of prophecy that states that prophets see future events but do not always see them in order or with respect to intervening events or periods of time. For example, Daniel did not seem to foresee an interval of more than 2000 years between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks that were decreed for Israel (Dan 9:26-27), even though the previous sixty-nine had been without any breaks (although some posttribulationists view the seventieth week as following directly after the sixty-ninth). Also, many Old Testament prophets looked ahead to the coming of Christ and some saw His suffering, but some saw His kingdom, though these are fulfilled in two different comings, separated by a long interval. Finally, for a New Testament example, Peter prophesies about the coming of the Lord, "in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet 3:10). Peter looked ahead to the coming the Lord, and saw the destruction of the whole created order in preparation for the new heavens and new earth, which other Scripture shows to be after the Millennium. Without the context of the whole of Scripture, many have misunderstood these prophecies, and so the importance of context is again to be stressed even here.

37. If the translation took place in connection with the second coming to the earth, there would be no need of separating the sheep from the goats at a subsequent judgment, but the separation would have taken place in the very act of the translation of the believers before Christ actually sets up His throne on earth (Matt 25:31).

Yes, the fact that the rapture will separate the saints from the world is another reason to believe that the "sheep and goats" will be separated at a time other than the Second Coming. So, because the rapture and this judgment do not make sense at the same time, there are two options: move the rapture in the timetable of events, or move this judgment. Because there are reasons to believe that the rapture is connected with the Second Coming but not the judgment, it seems safer to move place the separation of the "sheep and goats" elsewhere in one's eschatology.

38. The judgment of Israel (Ezek 20:34-38) which occurs subsequent to the second coming indicates the necessity of regathering Israel. The separation of the saved from the unsaved in this judgment obviously takes place sometime after the second coming and would be unnecessary if the saved had previously been separated from the unsaved by translation.

There is nothing in Ezekiel 20:34-38 to suggest that this must occur subsequent to the Second Coming. In fact, this sounds much like the judgment and restoration promised in Amos 9, as referred to in #35. It is not fair to say, "The separation of the saved from the unsaved in this judgment obviously takes place sometime after the Second Coming," without giving some reason to believe this. Such argumentation is not helpful. However, it must be granted that if the saved and unsaved had already been separated at the time this passage speaks of, this judgment would seem unnecessary. Again, this should lead to a reconsideration of where these events are understood eschatologically speaking.

THE RAPTURE AND THE SECOND COMING: CONTRASTS BETWEEN

39. *At the time of the rapture the saints meet Christ in the air, while at the second coming Christ returns to the Mount of Olives to meet the saints on earth.*

This is really an issue of semantics. Pretribulationists maintain that the Greek word for “coming” or “arrival”, *parousia*, does not always really mean coming in the sense of actually showing up in person and being present in a place. If the Greek word *parousia* does not mean coming, then Paul would really be limited in how he could express the arrival of the Lord from heaven. However, this is not the case. This is the very word used in passages that speak of both the Rapture and the Second Coming. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 makes it rather clear that at the *coming* of the Lord, the dead will rise and those who remain alive will meet Him in the air. This passage makes no reference at all to the pretribulational notion of returning to heaven after this false “coming”, where Jesus does not really come, His sign does not appear in the heavens, and He does not really descend to the earth. The same word, *παρουσία* (arrival/coming), appears in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 and 8, which are clearly a reference to the physical, bodily appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ when He will set foot on the Mount of Olives. I would say that the burden of proof is on the pretribulationists to demonstrate that *παρουσία* does not necessarily mean a bodily appearing. Jesus was rather clear that when He returns, it will be quite obvious, comparable to lightning that streaks across the sky (Matt 24:27). Jesus never gave information about two comings. He informed His disciples to look for Him, and to look for the signs that would necessarily precede His coming. Anything that does not fit the description He gave cannot be considered a coming. However, the *παρουσία* when the dead are raised and the living saints meet the Lord in the air is called “the coming of the Lord” by Paul. Was he misinformed? Was he tricking the Thessalonians by using the same word to refer to two different events? There is absolutely no contradiction involved in saying that at the coming of the Lord, the saints will meet (or intercept) the Lord in the air and accompany Him as His holy people when He descends in glory to defeat His and our enemies.

40. *At the time of the rapture the Mount of Olives is unchanged, while at the second coming it divides and a valley is formed to the east of Jerusalem (Zech 14:4-5).*

This is an argument from silence. It is to be assumed that since none of the pretribulationist’s favorite Rapture passages mention the Mount of Olives that it will remain unchanged when the Lord comes to gather His elect people. It is evident what will happen to the Mount of Olives when Jesus returns. It is also evident that this prophecy will not be fulfilled at any other time except when Jesus returns. He will do this only once, and will fulfill the prophecies only once. Really, though, there is no response to illogical arguments (Prov. 26:4).

41. *At the rapture living saints are translated, while no saints are translated in connection with the second coming of Christ to the earth.*

Not so. In 2 Thes 2:1, when one considers the Greek, the reality of a connection between the Lord’s return and the translation of living saints is undeniable. Paul uses only one article (shown here in red) to refer to both the coming of the Lord and our translation: **της** παρουσίας του κυριου ημων Ιησου Χριστου και ημων επισυναγωγης επ’ αυτο

v (lit., *THE coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him*). While this does not refer to the same thing (i.e., an arrival and a gathering together are different and cannot be viewed as having an *identical* referent), and this does not represent an example of Granville Sharp's rule for personal substantives sharing an article and connected by $\kappa\alpha\iota$, there is plenty of evidence from the New Testament that two such nouns that are connected by $\kappa\alpha\iota$ and have one article in front of them are significantly connected. In his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel Wallace gives five categories for classifying impersonal constructions of this nature (pp. 286-288):

(1) *distinct entities, though united*

e.g. Rev 1:9, "I, John, your brother and fellow-partaker in **the tribulation and kingdom**",

(2) *overlapping entities*

e.g. 2 Cor 12:21, "those who have previously sinned and not repented over **the impurity and immorality and licentiousness**",

(3) *first entity subset of second*

e.g. Rev 9:15, "the four angels who had been prepared for **the hour and day and month and year** were released",

(4) *second group subset of first*

e.g. Matt 24:36, "Now concerning that **day and hour**, no one knows", and

(5) *both entities identical*

e.g. Acts 1:24-25, "Show [us] which one you have chosen...to take the place of this **ministry and apostleship**".

In considering the possibilities, it should be noted that there is no technical overlap between the Rapture and the Second Coming, the Second Coming is never discussed as a subset of the Rapture, and the two events are not identical, so the most viable options are (1) and (4). Pretribulationists may be quick to dismiss (4), but the context of 2 Thes 2 suggests that it is a distinct possibility. Paul's main concern is dispelling the mania caused by false reports concerning the timing of the day of the Lord and the events preceding it. His teaching is concerned with the arrival of the Lord, what will lead up to it, and what will happen on that day. It is in this context that Paul's exhortation includes "our gathering together unto Him." Because he does not mention "our gathering together unto Him" again in the text, it could be taken as a subset of "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Also, (1) is possible because Paul may intend to use the Rapture and the Second Coming as a double-edged sword, so to speak. He could be speaking of them as two simultaneous or sequential events, the timing of which had been warped by false teachers. Pretribulationists may be quick to argue that this view allows for the Rapture and the Second Coming to be two related events separated by a seven-year interval. This is grammatically possible, though contextually unlikely. Paul's focus is not on a range of eschatological topics spread out over a period of time; rather, he is addressing the singular coming of the Lord and the necessary signs that will precede it. A pretribulationist rapture cannot fit into this framework.

42. *At the rapture the saints go to heaven, while at the second coming to the earth the saints remain in the earth without translation.*

It is difficult, and perhaps impossible to find a single verse in the entire Bible that supports the view that the saints go to heaven at the Rapture. An examination of the three main Rapture texts used by pretribulationists will confirm this.

First, there is John 14:2-3: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." This text says nothing about Jesus' bringing the saints with Him to heaven (*cf.* also #18). It only says that they will be with Him where He is. If He happens to be on earth in His kingdom, then the saints will be there with Him. The only thing that can be inferred from this passage is that believers will be united with Christ at His coming and will go to the place prepared for them.

Secondly, there is 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." This passage is simply about resurrection and the new bodies we will receive at the time of the resurrection from the dead. There is nothing here that necessitates a trip to heaven. In fact, this resurrection is inextricably connected to the Lord's coming in the preceding context: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Cor 15:22-25). The order of things is given here: Christ is raised first as the firstfruits, and then those belonging to Christ (the rest of the harvest) are raised at His coming. Following this is the end. Period. There is no allowance for a resurrection unto life at any time other than at the singular coming of Christ. A harvest is only brought in once.

Finally, the third Rapture passage is 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven 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 which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Again, this passage speaks of resurrection and meeting the Lord, but here a new element is added. The realm of the meeting is clearly given: the air. If the Holy Spirit had wanted Paul to say that we would go to heaven at this point, that would probably be mentioned here. Instead, he uses the word *αἴρῃ*, which is defined by BDAG as "the atmosphere immediately above the earth's surface" and "the space above the earth", specifically "of space as locale of celestial bodies or phenomena" and "of the political domain of transcendent beings or powers" (*cf.* Eph. 2:2). This is not heaven, and the statement that we will continue to be with the Lord always after this does not necessitate a dwelling in heaven either. The book of Revelation ends with the believers in the New Jerusalem on a new earth, not in heaven. We are going to where Christ will be, and at His coming, He will be on the earth ruling the nations with a rod of iron (Rev 19:15). It is therefore unfounded to assert that the saints will go to heaven at the Rapture, and that there will be no translation at the Second Coming.

43. *At the time of the rapture the world is unjudged and continues in sin, while at the second coming the world is judged and righteousness is established in the earth.*

This point is built upon nothing more than the assumption that the Rapture and the Second Coming are not simultaneous events. With this assumption firmly in place, the doctrinal superstructure of pretribulationism can be affixed to this sandy foundation. In an objective and exegetical view of the Scriptures, however, it becomes apparent that judgment is most certainly associated with the Rapture. While it is true that no “rapture text” mentions judgment by name, this silence does not mean that there is no judgment associated with the Rapture. Following the most commonly referenced description of the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul contrasts the comfort and encouragement that believers will receive at the coming of Christ with the destruction and judgment that will come upon the enemies of Christ, who are not sons of light and sons of day (5:5). In the context, Paul has stressed that Christians have no business grieving like the world (“as others which have no hope”, 4:13) because we do, in fact have hope, and that hope is the hope of Christ’s return. In stark contrast to this encouraging message is the foolish chant of the blinded masses, “Peace and safety” (5:3), who have no idea that they are facing inescapable destruction and everlasting suffering. We have hope and do not cry, “Peace and safety,” because we know what is coming for the enemies of the Lord and we know what the day of the Lord will bring. Pretribulationists often focus on the phrase “as a thief in the night” (5:2) as a reinforcement of the doctrine of imminency and the unexpected nature of the return of the Lord. However, this is not the most prevalent aspect of the image of the thief here, as a grammatical and contextual analysis reveals: (1) First, Paul points out that the day of the Lord will bring destruction to those who expected continued complacency: “then sudden destruction cometh upon them...” (5:3). The focus is not on the surprise but on the destruction, as it has more enduring consequences. (2) Secondly, Paul uses language befitting ruin and destruction in the context. Particularly, his use of καταλαμβάνω (“overtake”) in v. 4 is significant, as this word indicates an attack with the purpose of gaining control over someone. He uses this to describe how the day of the Lord will *not* affect believers. This suggests that the day has the potential for this kind of effect, but the believers will be shielded from such consequences because they are not “in darkness.” (3) Thirdly, Paul uses this description of the day of the Lord as a basis for discussing what it means for Christians to be spared from the destruction of the Lord’s wrath against sin. As opposed to the fate of those who delight in this world and have no hope, the Christians are not destined for wrath but for salvation (5:9). The basis of Paul’s contrast is the matter of the day of the Lord and its consequences. Whether or not one expects destruction, the important thing is whether it affects one or not, so the issue of expectancy is rather dwarfed by the understanding that believers are not destined for wrath because Christ has taken the wrath of God on Himself for His elect people. This discussion of the day of the Lord in 1 Thes 5 is a continuation of the teaching about the Rapture in ch. 4 and cannot be removed from this context. With this in mind, there is no way of construing this passage to suggest that there is no judgment for the unsaved associated with the Rapture. This destruction can be nothing less than the wrath of God poured out on His enemies (*cf.* Rev 19:11,15). That is the entire crux of Paul’s argument. Without a knowledge of this judgment, there is no encouragement in the fact that we are destined to salvation through Christ and not wrath! If there is no wrath at the coming of the Lord, then what are we saved from? Does not the Lord Jesus Christ Himself compare His coming to gather His elect to the days of Noah,

when the unsuspecting world was swept away in the waters of judgment but the Lord's people were saved by a miraculous deliverance (Matt 24:37-41; cf. also vv. 29-31)?

44. *The translation of the church is pictured as a deliverance before the day of wrath, while the second coming is followed by the deliverance of those who have believed in Christ during the tribulation.*

These may be two valid observations, but the preconditioning of pretribulationism prevents the proponent of this argument from realizing that they could be mutually existent in a single, complex event. It is quite true that the Church will be translated before an unprecedented pouring out of the wrath of God that will be utterly inescapable for the Antichrist and his followers (1 Thes 5:3; cf. also Rev 19:19-21). The Lord has told us that when He returns, He will fight against His and our enemies, and He will be victorious. This, however, should not be classified as a calamity from which we will be delivered by translation, as the pretribulationist pictures it; rather, since we are with the Lord, He would not come to fight against us, and the wrath will not be poured out on us. Certainly, though, the day of our translation will be a day of wrath. As for the deliverance of those who have believed in Christ during the Tribulation, it should be noted that the deliverance comes as the Lord is coming, not following His descent from heaven (1 Thes 4:17). The deliverance that comes after the coming of the Lord is for the remnant of Israel that remains alive. Zechariah prophesied that this remnant will see Jesus descending from the clouds (12:10), repent with weeping (12:11-13:1), call on the name of the Lord (13:9) and flee by the valley created by the splitting of the Mount of Olives (14:4-5). Pretribulationism has mixed up these distinct prophecies in an attempt to make a distinction between the "peoples of God" that will be maintained even on the day of the Lord, but the Lord has been clear about when and how He will deliver His people.

45. *The rapture is described as imminent, while the second coming is preceded by definite signs.*

This apparent discrepancy becomes more difficult for pretribulationism, actually, when "Second Coming passages" (not "Rapture passages") refer to Christ's coming at an unexpected time (Matt 24:44; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:40). The issue of the Scriptural basis for imminency has already been discussed in #24, but the relevance of that discussion here may be summarized by saying that coming at an unknown time and coming at any moment are rather different. It is clear that Jesus expects His followers to discern the times surrounding His return and to remain in a state of readiness because the specifics both of one's own death and the return of Christ are known only to God. The significance of the unexpected nature of Christ's return is greatest when considering those who are "in the darkness", i.e., unbelievers. It is for those who are saying, "Peace and safety!" (1 Thes 5:3) that the imminency of the Lord's coming is a threat. This fear is not present in those who are "in the light" because we will be able to discern the signs of His coming and we will look for Him eagerly. The differences in the nature of the expectation associated with the Lord's coming are seen across the lines of faith, not in different events.

46. *The translation of living believers is a truth revealed only in the New Testament, while the second coming with its attendant events is a prominent doctrine of both Testaments.*

Actually, the translation of living believers was not a foreign idea to the Old Testament. Both Enoch and Elijah were translated as living believers, and in the case of Enoch, the Greek word for translation, μεταθεσις, which occurs only once in the context of bodily translation in the New Testament, is used to describe his departure (Heb 11:5). While it is true that the Old Testament never mentions the translation of believers as an element of end times events, there is plenty of mention of resurrection. In creating distinctions between the Second Coming and the Rapture, pretribulationists neglect to realize that the translation of living believers we call the Rapture is really only an element of a greater event, the first resurrection (Rev 20:4-6). Jews who were in tune with God's revealed truth knew quite enough to believe in a future resurrection (Job 19:25-27; Psa 16:10; Luke 20:37-38; John 11:24; Acts 24:15). There is never an indication in the New Testament that Old Testament believers looked for a different resurrection than New Testament believers look for. The resurrection that will occur at the return of the Lord is called the first resurrection because it will be followed by another, the second resurrection, after the Millennium (Rev 20:5; Dan 12:2). In order to maintain the distinctions of dispensationalism, pretribulationism cannot have OT believers raised in the same resurrection as NT believers, so pretribulationists have invented separate phases of the first resurrection to include (1) the Church, (2) "Tribulation saints" and (3) OT believers. While these do not occur at the same time, they are viewed as the same first resurrection. The text does not support this kind of interpretation. The problem here is that (apart from the unwarranted mangling of the text) in the description of the first resurrection in Rev 20, it is rather clear that when it occurs, those who are not raised from the dead will remain dead until the Millennium is over (v. 5). This means that if, for example, the Church were to be raised in the "first phase" of the first resurrection, anyone who was still dead would not be raised until the second resurrection after the Millennium and would not reign with Christ during the Millennium. This makes it altogether impossible for the LORD to fulfill His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen 13:14-17; 15:18-19). They must inherit a land with specific boundaries *on this earth* and this must happen during the Millennium! God is still in covenant with them for what He promised (*cf.* Luke 20:34-38), and they died in faith, not having received the promises (Heb 11:13). Fortunately, Jesus made this all quite clear before men muddled up His words. He said "that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 8:11). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will share their inheritance with Gentiles [the Church] who have been grafted in and will share in their promises at the first resurrection. The resurrected patriarchs will share with the resurrected and raptured Church in the first resurrection, as those destined to reign with Christ. This restored kingdom is revealed in both Testaments and the idea of resurrection, even the first resurrection, is revealed in the OT as well. There is no reason here to see a distinction between the Rapture and the Second Coming in this matter.

47. The rapture concerns only the saved, while the second coming deals with both saved and unsaved.

To the extent that inescapable destruction like labor pains (1 Thes 5:3) and retribution dealt out by the Lord Jesus Christ and His angels on those who do not know God and have not obeyed the gospel call resulting in everlasting banishment from the presence of God (2 Thes 2:7b-10) do not concern the unsaved, this argument is valid. Unfortunately for pretribulationism, both of these passages that *clearly* relate to the coming of Christ for His Church (a.k.a. “the Rapture”) concern not only the saved, but the unsaved. As to why other “Rapture texts” may omit reference to the unsaved, it can only be said that each must be taken by its own context, and while the silence of Scripture is important, it is not hermeneutically acceptable to characterize the failure to mention a detail in the description of a future event as a denial of it.

48. At the rapture Satan is not bound, while at the second coming Satan is bound and cast into the abyss.

What this really means is that no “Rapture texts” describe Satan being bound, and to extrapolate out from that silence that it cannot occur then is to rely on unrelated presuppositions. Along the same vein, there is no reason to suspect from any of the “Rapture texts” that Satan could not be bound at the same time as the Rapture. (The issue here is *when* it happens since technically, the binding of Satan is neither a part of descriptions of the Rapture or descriptions of the Second Coming.) In reality, this is not an argument but a reiteration of the presupposition that the Rapture and the Second Coming are different events. However, it may be noted that at the same coming of Christ (in context) where Paul and the Thessalonians are given rest (2 Thes 1:7), unbelievers are punished and the Antichrist is destroyed by the word of Jesus’ mouth and the brightness of His coming (2 Thes 2:8). This is significant because in the continuity of the account in Rev 19-20, the beast (the Antichrist) and the dragon (Satan) are judged at the same time.

49. No unfulfilled prophecy stands between the church and the rapture, while many signs must be fulfilled before the second coming.

Actually, the Church has been carefully instructed to look for some events to transpire before the Rapture occurs. This is set forth by the Apostle Paul in 2 Thes 2:1-4, the grammar of which has been discussed in #41. A look at the context of this passage will help clarify the interpretation that the Thessalonians had (erroneously) come to view the appearing of the Lord as imminent. The church in Thessalonica had been erroneously misinformed by some means (2:2) that the day of the Lord had, literally, “already become present.” This was a teaching contrary to what Paul had instructed them while he was with them, and he wrote to them again to correct their eschatology and accompanying practice. Some in the church had become idle because they expected the Lord at any moment. Their understanding of the persecutions surrounding the times of the end fit in with their current circumstances and some false teaching had led them to expect Jesus imminent return, so it appears that they stopped working and simply waited. For this they are severely rebuked for disobeying both the teaching and practice of Paul and his associates. The issue was both doctrinal and practical. In the second chapter, Paul corrects the false teaching by reiterating what they are to expect. He tells them not to let anyone deceive them, because two things must happen first:

the apostasy and the revelation of the Antichrist. These events must precede the day of the Lord, which, in context, is the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him (v. 1). Paul wanted the Thessalonians (and us, as well) to know that there are signs we should look for before we expect the day of the Lord. We should neither expect to be raptured nor to see the coming of the Lord before the signs occur. Otherwise, Paul would be a false prophet and so would the Lord Jesus Christ. In saying that no unfulfilled prophecy stands between the Church and the Rapture, Walvoord is directly contradicting Paul's message to the Thessalonian church, which is a dangerous thing to do, especially in light of what Paul says at the end of the letter: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thes 3:14-15).

50. No passage dealing with the resurrection of saints at the second coming in either Testament ever mentions translation of living saints at the same time.

This argument depends on acceptance of the pretribulational definition of the Second Coming, which is really His Third Coming in pretribulational theology. However, it does not even stand up to that scrutiny. Even though pretribulationists can, by redefinition, exclude 1 Thes 4:13-18 from this discussion despite its clear connection of the resurrection of saints with the translation of living saints at THE coming of the Lord, this argument still cannot be maintained. The challenge comes from, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (1 Cor 15:22-24). At first glance, this places the resurrection at the time of the Second Coming, but what about the translation of living saints? Reading on in the text, we come to, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor 15:51-52). Paul connects the resurrection of those who are asleep with the transformation of those who are alive. Consequently, those who are changed and rendered imperishable will inherit the kingdom with Christ at His coming, as the order given in v. 23 places the resurrection/transformation of believers at the coming of Christ directly before "the end." This suggests that the resurrection referenced here is that which will occur when Christ is revealed from heaven and He sends out His angels to gather all the elect (Mark 13:27). In drawing the connection between the resurrection of saints and the transformation of living saints, Paul points to a single event occurring at the Second Coming of Christ.