

# RAPTURE LITMUS PAPER

## A Litmus Test for Deception

by Edward Emerson Crawford

**WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH? WILL THE CHURCH BE TAKEN OUT OF THE WORLD BEFORE THE TRIBULATION? OR, WILL THE RAPTURE BE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TRIBULATION? OR, WILL THERE JUST BE A GATHERING OF THE SAINTS TO MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR AFTER THE TRIBULATION? BUT, WHAT IS THE REAL ISSUE BEHIND THE QUESTION?**

**O**ne of the most pervasive controversies among people who profess to be Bible-believing Christians is the rapture. What is the rapture? The term *rapture* generally refers to the following event:

Christ's chosen people, those who have waited for His return, kept His works unto the end, and died faithful to their Lord, shall be raised out from among the dead to meet Christ at His coming. Those in Christ who are still living when He returns from heaven shall then be transformed. They too shall be given bodies like unto their Lord's resurrected body. In resurrected or transformed bodies, all these shall be caught up by the clouds to meet their Lord at His glorious return.

This is what is most often referred to as **'the rapture of the saints'** (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:4). But, does the Bible say that the Lord's people are to expect two bodily comings of Christ and two raptures? Or, are there three? The rapture that Christians are waiting for, is it to come before the great tribulation? Or, is it to be in the middle of the tribulation? Is there only one, or are there one or two more resurrections immediately following the tribulation? How many times will the Lord arrive from heaven? How many times will different groups of people—all of whom are counted as the Lord's elect—be raised out from among the rest of the dead? Is it once? Or, are there two or three such resurrections? It is a controversy that cuts across denominational lines. It is argued over in colleges and seminaries. Yet, the Scriptures are clear, cutting through the questions and arguments. However, many have simply adopted prior assumptions that contradict the Scriptures, and, without realizing it, they have allowed these assumptions to determine what the Scriptures say.

In some churches, the controversy over the rapture is shunted into the background with a tacit agreement not to talk about it. If someone opens up the subject, others immediately try to close it by saying, "Our church takes an open position on the rapture." However, it is the Lord Jesus Himself who stipulates that this one subject that is not a matter left to private judgment or discretionary interpretation, not among His disciples.

**The rapture is one of the most straightforward promises and prophecies of Scripture. The fact that it has been made into such a controversy should make people suspicious. People should wonder what is really at stake.** The Holy Spirit does not “minister questions” (I Timothy 1:4); the answer to all of the questions on the previous page is clearly given in Scripture. Those who minister questions and then proffer their own assumptions instead of answering by showing what the Holy Scriptures clearly says, have their own agenda. Beware of them. In spite of the false teachings that are so rampant, rest assured, the Lord’s chosen people “are not in darkness” (I Thessalonians 5:4). The Lord will not leave them *up in the air* (*pun intended*).

So, what is really at stake? **Is the controversy really just a question about the rapture? By no means!** Though the question about the rapture is serious enough, there is a far greater area of concern that is at stake. How a preacher or teacher handles the Holy Scriptures with regard to the rapture is quite indicative: the one who errs with regard to the rapture reveals a grave error in his entire approach to the interpretation of Scripture (his hermeneutic). His is a fundamental error in the perception of what Exegetical Theology is and in what it means to expound the Word of God.


▶ **The Rapture Litmus Paper** ◀ **The rapture question is just one of the indicators** that reveals whether a preacher or a teacher is an exegete of the Holy Scriptures. Even if he has the ability, he may lack the integrity to be a faithful exegete of the Word. He may teach only what a particular group of people wants to hear. Many superimpose their own *a priori assumptions* upon the Scriptures and then abuse and distort the Scriptures to make the Bible appear to teach what is really merely their own or someone else’s preconceived notions. Those who do this, whether willingly or ignorantly, are partners in a great scheme of deception—“deceiving and being deceived”—teaching instead the doctrines of men. Under the guise of Bible teaching, they subtly wean people away from the sincere milk of the Word.

The particular kind of subtle deception that this paper exposes is a deception that affects every conclusion that people make when they read the Scriptures. It affects the very means by which people draw conclusions about what the Holy Scriptures teach. **The purpose of this paper is to enable people to counteract the most prevalent form of deception and error in the Church, a priori deception.** As we are about to show, *a priori* deception is the very *first* form of deception, the *first* false method of interpretation. All those to whom the Lord will send strong delusion will believe THE LIE. This paper demonstrates how it is the same lie and the same method that confronted man in the beginning. For those who have received the love of the truth, to Scriptures expose this means of deception. Once this form of deception is exposed, the controversy over the rapture is resolved and a great many other false teachings are exposed for what they are.

**Is the Lord’s arrival imminent? Or, do certain things have to happen *first*?**

Are there certain events that must happen first before that rapture takes place when the dead in Christ shall rise and when we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air? (See I Thessalonians 4:13-

18 and Revelation 20:4.) Is this rapture before the great tribulation, in the midst of it, or after that tribulation? The Scriptures do give us the answer in the very clearest of terms. Jesus declares when His chosen saints of this era, in fact, when all of those who will have embraced Him by faith up to that point, are going to be raptured and gathered together unto Him. He spoke of a coming tribulation, the likes of which there has not been since there was a nation on the earth nor ever shall be afterwards. He clearly said that He would send His angels and gather together (rapture) His elect saints **“after that tribulation”** (Mark 13). The Apostle Paul told all Christians when they should expect rest from their tribulations, rest from persecution. A literal translation of the time he gave is “at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His mighty angels taking vengeance on them that know not God...” (II Thessalonians 1). Not before then! These passages and many others declare plainly that the saints will be raptured, not before, not during, but after that tribulation. But, to deny these plainest of statements in the Word of God by subtly qualifying God’s Word and construing the Lord’s words according to the prior assumptions of another is the very oldest of ploys. It is the ploy itself and the means of it that needs to be exposed. (Mark 13 and II Thessalonians 1 and 2 will be dealt with later in this *Rapture Litmus Paper*.)

**The second and most important part of this introduction** may be read after the main body of the paper has been read, without loss of continuity. To leap ahead to Number 1 of the bold headings, **“1. How many arrivals, is ‘the arrival’ (the PAROUSÍA)?”** [It’s one of the **terms**.], click on this green square→ 

**But, the actual problem that is being addressed**, of which the popular false teaching concerning the rapture is just one example, is called **a priori deception**. This subtle form of deception is illustrated in the second part of the introduction, with an analogy about dark, rose-colored glasses and ‘The Story of Dr. Cockatrice.’ Also, because nothing should distract from the importance of Christ’s return in the flesh according to His own prophecy, this too is dealt with in the second part of the introduction. Even those who leap ahead at this time will want to come back to this point and read the second part of the introduction before they consider the conclusion of the paper and the epilogue. If your interest is in dealing with the underlying but primary issue and not just the rapture itself, you should just read on without leaping ahead.

### **The reason for the second part of the introduction:**

The popular doctrine concerning the rapture is only an *a priori* assumption. It is a doctrine taught nowhere in Scripture. But, because so many people do not really understand what *a priori* deception is, for them, a discussion about the rapture should first explain exactly what *a priori* deception is and how it works.

If a man decides what the Bible says before he really examines it, if what he wants it to say is more important to him than what it does say, then he is simply a slave to the prejudice of his own *prior assumption*. Those who have this approach are not really disciples of the Word, for the Word of God is not the essential controlling factor of their

faith. Their presuppositions and the group of people who draw their conclusions using the same presuppositional approach are have become the controlling factor.

Unfortunately, such people have little difficulty finding writers and preachers who are very adept at gratifying and taking advantage of their assumptions and, by the same approach, proffer more of the same kind of assumptions. However, it is only because they themselves have cultivated such a *a priori* itch in their ears that it no longer matters to them that the Holy Scriptures contradict their assumptions. They simply do not want to hear things that do not fit into the parameters of their assumptions.

To put one's faith in prior assumptions (presuppositions) of men, which often takes the form of denominational loyalty and faithfulness to one institution or church, may masquerade for keeping the Faith. However, it is the opposite of keeping the Faith. Many put their faith in *the statement of faith* or *in the confession of their church or denomination*, not realizing that they are placing the statements and conclusions of men above the Holy Scriptures. To keep faith in the mere assumptions, extrapolations, and conclusions of men is essence of Phariseeism. Many only go to the Scriptures to try to make the Scriptures appear to prove what they had assumed in the first place. They make an idol out of their church and the assumptions of men. People often do this because they have men's persons in admiration and because of certain advantages that result from the approval of others.

The point is that what they are doing is pretentious. To go to the Word simply to try to justify prior assumptions is to misuse the Bible.

***A PRIORI* deception is like a pair of dark, rose-colored glasses that make things to appear just the way the one who furnishes the glasses wants them to appear.**

To the shame of those who are supposed to teach and to pastor, the vast majority of people in supposedly evangelical and Bible-believing churches are unaware of what *a priori* deception is. It is necessary to know how to recognize it and how to warn others about it.

The following example illustrates exactly what ***a priori* deception** is and how it works. ***The Story of Dr. Cockatrice*** is based on the actual files of the '*Lord of the Manor.*' Only the names have been changed, but not to hide anyone's identity. There is no question about who is innocent and who is guilty in this brief historical account:

**This is a story about a certain Dr. Drăco Cockatrice and how he enticed and deceived a most beautiful and talented lady named Eva.** The setting of this story is a prodigious estate, a positively heavenly garden overlooking an arboretum that was of the utmost of splendor and perfection, Paradise Manor Ltd. The great *Lord of the Manor* Himself had appointed this remarkable woman to her position, placing her as First Lady among the royal conservators of His famous '*Paradise Arboretum.*' First, her husband and then she at his side were placed in charge and given command of the whole Paradise domain.

However, one day, El Drăco, as Dr. Cockatrice was also known, met this lady as she approached a tree that grew in the midst of the lush arboretum. Doc. Drăco, with the demeanor of a wise and very perceptive counselor, initiated the conversation. He seemed to be well aware of what had been on her mind and perplexing her. It wasn't just that he had been looking her over, he had been looking for her inner vulnerability. What he first said to her agreed perfectly with what she knew to be true: "You are not to eat of every tree of the garden, are you?" But his subtle implication really was this: 'If you have authority here, why aren't you allowed?'

"Well, we are allowed to eat of all the rest of the trees, it's just this one..."

After she had made it clear that this was indeed exactly what had been on her mind, he persuaded her to consider—actually **to presuppose** (if only at first just for argument's sake)—that *the Lord of the Manor* had been holding out on her. (Now, *the Lord of the Manor* is the One who had designed and planted the entire Paradise Complex.) Even though Drăco had begun his suggestive approach in such an unabashed fashion, he could see that he still had her attention. So, he told the woman that *the Lord of the Manor* had not furnished her with the whole and actual truth about the parameters of her position and job description. That is, that He supposedly had not told her the whole story about the actual extent of her powers and about the real effects of eating the fruit of that certain tree that grew in the middle of the arboretum. For *the Lord of the Manor* had forbidden for human consumption the fruit of that tree, saying that in the day that humans ate of it, they would surely die.

Doc. Drăco suggested to her that she had simply accepted the words and the *world view* (the view of life and reality) that *the Lord of the Manor* had wanted her to accept and that she had done this without really considering other possibilities.

Of course, she had to agree that this is what she had done. What Drăco was really doing was setting her up for his next suggestion, actually for the next *a priori* assumption that he wanted her to presuppose. He wanted her to assume another view of reality. His tactic was to get her to presuppose an altogether different reality, one that he would plant in her imagination by suggestion.

El Drăco was no gardener, but he knew how to plant a suggestion. And, once it was planted, he simply wanted her to consider everything that *the Lord of the Manor* had said in the light of, or really in the dark shade of, this other reality and world view.

He intimated that *the Lord of the Manor* had deliberately deprived her of the knowledge of certain things that, according to Drăco, she might as well know. Drăco then proceeded to tell her that *the Lord of the Manor* had withheld that information because He did not want to lose His position of control, as if *the Lord of the Manor* did not want the members of His staff exercising certain powers that He had reserved for Himself. Presumably, the only way He could do this was by keeping members of His staff ignorant and afraid even to contemplate the exercise of such powers.

Once she had considered these suggestions to be plausible, she indicated that she wanted him to go on with what he was saying. Then, Doc. Drăco saw his opportunity. He suggested to her that, as long as she acquiesced to the *world view* and the only kind of life that *the Lord of the Manor* had furnished to her, as long as she simply obeyed what the *Lord of the Manor* told her, she was just a captive in His reality. She was allowing Him to

determine what was right and wrong for her and therefore allowing Him to be the Lord of her conscience.

Supposedly, it had only been her own willing acceptance of His *world view* that had been keeping her within certain boundaries. And, if it had only been her assumption (just her state of mind) that had made the idea of staying inside those boundaries *good* and the idea of going outside the boundaries *evil*, why not at least consider assuming another state of mind and another kind of reality and *world view*?

The wily Doctor Drăco had a patronizing air about him, as if to say, ‘My dear, how could you be expected to know any better? You have never experienced anything else.’

She reasoned that El Drăco had to be a very spiritual individual, one *in-the-know* with his *word of knowledge*, because he certainly knew exactly what she had been thinking about, and he was right about every word that *the Lord of the Manor* had said about that tree and its fruit. He seemed to be interested in her concerns and able to provide explanations.

El Drăco went on to persuade her that, if she would only opt for it, she could have her own alternate reality according to her will, just as *the Lord of the Manor* had His reality. She could be her own Lord, and she could set all the terms and parameters of what would be right and wrong, good and evil, in the same way that *the Lord of the Manor* had done according to His will.

After this idea had been planted in her imagination, it was just as if she herself were already *the Lord of the Manor* in her mind. For, presumably, what Drăco suggested would have to be the case because she would then be assuming control **the reality of her own choosing**.

El Drăco made her think that the only thing that was holding her back from fully experiencing this new state of awareness and power, the only thing that was holding her back from complete control of her own destiny, was her inhibition about asserting the full power of her own free will.

Just to think of it! To transcend the realm that she had known! To rise above it! To set up her own circumstances and standards and to know and determine things for her reality as *the Lord of the Manor* had purposed them for His reality! After that, Drăco only had to wait for her to ask herself, ‘How can I really know for sure if I don’t try it?’

**What old Drăco was doing was peddling his own brand of dark, rose-colored glasses, as it were. If he could just get the woman to put on a pair of his special *a priori* presuppositional lenses, she would see things and want things to be just as Drăco wanted her to envision them.** She would become a slave to her new vision and self-image. If she would just presuppose it as a reality, then it would become her aspiration. It would not matter then what she had to give up or swallow in order to get it. For, by that time, it would be the reality of her mind. There would be no backing up, no returning from the brink, because she would no longer want to see things any other way.

**She did put the glasses on, as it were.** And, all of a sudden, she saw the fruit of that tree in an altogether different light. By looking at the fruit in this altered way, her foreboding was turned to fascination. Now she could only allow herself to look at things and perceive things in a way that supported the conclusion that she had already tried on for size and *accepted in her mind*. (This is the very essence of the *a priori* approach.)

She immediately began to make up Drăco's style of arguments all on her own and to tell his kind of suggestions to her own heart. All Doc. Drăco had to do was lie back for a moment and allow his suggestions to do their work, to grow, and to blossom. He was in no hurry. He could let her just imagine it all and visualize herself in a world where good would be whatever felt good to her. With those *a priori* presuppositional lenses on her eyes, everything that she saw appeared to verify what Drăco was saying and **not** what *the Lord of the Manor* had said. The command not to eat that fruit now seemed unreasonable, for she could see that the fruit was good for food. After all, other creatures ate of it with no ill effects. They didn't die. It didn't seem to affect them at all. If human beings were forbidden to eat of it, why weren't the other creatures forbidden? What Drăco said seemed to be true: for, to continue to obey the command of *the Lord of the Manor* only meant that she was still under His control and dependent on His standards. It dawned on her: this was what the fruit was really all about. (Of course this was true, but the light in which she now perceived it had undergone a radical change. El Drăco's *distraction-and-diversion* method was very subtle. She had been skillfully diverted from the fact that the tree and its fruit did not belong to her and that even she did not belong to herself.)

As she continued to contemplate what Drăco had suggested, the fruit of that tree became ever more interesting and desirable to her. Just the thought of eating it became exciting, daring, and exhilarating. Old thoughts of right and wrong became merely contextual concepts (only right and wrong according to her previous assumption and state of mind). That moral standard only applied to one assumption about reality. Now her thoughts about that subject were proceeding from a different paradigm, one more relevant to the expanding horizons that she was suddenly able to contemplate: 'No absolutes!' and, 'No boundaries!' even, 'No restraint on the powers of her imagination!' What thoughts were these? Her reality would be what she would make it. Why, she could have a 'New World Order' unrestrained and therefore completely compatible with her own rapidly evolving expectations. Now she could make herself think of tasting the fruit as a brave and noble quest of self-discovery. She was going to be all that she could be, and all on her own terms.

The inner language of self-seduction became very powerful: 'Come on now! Since you've already tried it on in your mind and you like it, be honest with your desires. It's just **you! No limit to the expression of yourself!**'

She knew that she would be experiencing a kind of knowledge that she could not get any other way. If she could just make herself eat some of that fruit, she would be wiser in her own eyes. Her self-esteem was demanding it.

What was holding her back? By reconsidering the Doctor's suggestions, she was finally able to persuade herself that her life and her whole world could be her own little apple to do with as she pleased. All she would have to do is name it and claim it and she could have *total dominion* in her own new realm. Finally, she had fully convinced herself that her reality, '**her life!**', should only be what her own choices would make it.

She took the fruit. She bit into it, and suddenly the sickening fragrance of '**THE IDOLATRY OF SELF**' came out all over her. And the sweet breath (spirit) of life that had been breathed into mankind when mankind became a living soul was suddenly gone. Now her breath had become the horrible halitosis of treason and everlasting death. There was no way to mask it when she brought breakfast fruit to her husband that morning. Yet, he was enticed with his eyes wide open! Did he even hold his nose?

Doctor Cockatrice himself had previously succumbed to **the idolatry of self** and all the **treason** that it involves. He is most adept at the seduction of self, for he had made the same vile transition, only he had done so all on his own. There will be no sympathy and no remedy for the likes of him. But now, at least for a time, this Drāco has gotten his way. At his behest, Eva and her husband forfeited themselves, their children, and their entire dominion over to him. They had asserted their independence, cut themselves loose, severed the spiritual umbilical that had connected them to the only source of life. When they did this, they fell right into the waiting clutches of Dr. Cockatrice (cf. Genesis 3).

Dirt they were. And, now that they had rejected the spirit of life that had been given to them, they were just going to sweat and dig in the dirt until they returned to the dirt. And WHO could defeat the power behind **the lie** and raise them back out of the dirt? WHO could resuscitate dust?

It didn't matter that the woman had coveted what was only a foolish illusion. All that Drāco had to offer was really a nonentity. Sure, it was just a con! A lie! She was the mark. What Satan was able to get her to presuppose (*a priori*) and to sell herself out for was a fiction. But, even though Drāco had helped her dupe herself, **she** was still covetous. That is the point. Damning iniquity is internal. All mankind have sold themselves for nothing. What selfish people think that they covet is really a nonentity, a foolish illusion. God and God's reality is the only reality there is. Sin, the corruption that is in the world through selfish covetous lust, is just the inevitable outgrowth of **THE IDOLATRY OF SELF** (see II Peter 1:4 and Ephesians 5:5).

To all those who reject His Word, rather, **now reject the Lord's remedy**, and still take pleasure in the contemplation of unrighteousness (unlawfulness), God will send strong delusion, "a working of deception," that they should believe "**the lie**" and be condemned (II Thessalonians 2:10-12).

The scheme and the delusion that Satan used is *a priori* deception. What was Drāco's ploy? It was only a matter of establishing a **contrived point of reference**. It was a matter of getting the woman to consider the Word of God in the light of the presuppositions that he would furnish to her by suggestion. Actually, after that, it would not have mattered if such *a priori* presuppositions came from the suggestions of the old serpent or from the woman herself. They would all have done the same thing. In order for Satan to accomplish his ends, the Word of God simply had to be superseded and reconfigured in the mind by means of a contrived assumption, a false point of reference.

The Sovereign Lord God set the parameters of the only reality that there is. Thus, God, by right, is the determiner of what is right and wrong in His created reality. Man determined to cross over and to imagine and presuppose himself in his own kind of reality so that he could determine for himself what is right and wrong in the light of his own presupposed or assumed reality. When man did this, HE PRESUMED TO MAKE HIMSELF HIS OWN GOD. He envisaged himself as his own sovereign who could construe himself, all creation, and God's Word in the light of his own preconceptions or *a priori* assumptions about what he wanted his reality to be. Once he had done this he defiled himself and became the enemy of God and the destroyer of God's creation. Once he had presumed to determine and thus to know what is right and wrong for himself in the same way that God had first determined write and wrong for him, God could no longer sustain man in his false reality without contradicting Himself. Therefore man had to be denied access to the tree of life.



If Satan can get a person to consider the Word of God in the light of any extra-biblical preconception or *prior conclusion*, whether it comes directly from himself or through other means, he has **succeeded** in putting his deceptive pall over the mind and heart of his client. (Satan entraps. At the same time, he is the false counselor. He also steps in as the accuser. *Client* is definitely the right word.)

### **Didn't we all read the same Book? Who goes to an ophthalmologist named Dr. Cockatrice?**

If a man presupposes what a book says before he reads it and then interprets and judges everything in the book in the light of his own prior assumption about the book, if he does this irrespective of what the author of the book puts in the book, can he really do anything but read into the book what he wants or expects it to say and mean? Two men may appear to be looking at the same Bible. One may hold to a system of *a priori* assumptions and only look at the Bible through the rose-colored glasses of his own preconceptions or presuppositions. If he does this, he cannot even want to see the propositions that the Scriptures themselves set forth. But, if the other person is looking for the Bible's own propositions and for how the Bible itself proves and elucidates its propositions, the difference between the approaches of these two people is the difference between night and day. The first person has adopted hypotheses and presuppositions from **outside** the Bible. These are his substitute frames of reference. He is trying to figure out how to interpret (or really how to construe) the Bible to make it appear to justify his extra-biblical assumptions. When he reinforces his assumptions in this way, he may even think that his faith is being strengthened. Although, he is only entrenching himself in his prior assumption. Yet, he may feel that he has no lack of support to re-enforce himself in his position: after all, he can readily agree with all kinds of people who, like himself, have been persuaded to wear the same kind of colored glasses. All those other people see things in exactly the way the providers of dark, rose-colored glasses had expected them to see them.

Their fellowship at this point is not in the Word. It is really in the presuppositional lenses that are in front of their eyes. As far down the garden path as all their assumptions can take them, they may appear to have a mutually gratifying relationship. But, concerning the Faith, their fellowship is mutually deceptive.

What if a small crack develops in their system? Say that a piece of a dark, rose-colored lens falls out of the frame, letting the whole white light through. Watch out for photophobia! If the person has to let go of one of his dear presuppositions, then, his entire system of *a priori* assumptions will fall apart. If the Lord is gracious to him, his rose-colored glasses will fall off his face. Now he will discern things in plain black and white. His conscience will no longer allow him to qualify and rearrange things according to the presuppositions of men. However, if this happens, and if he should begin to talk about things in black and white to those still wearing the dark, rose-colored glasses, they will not listen to him. They will ostracize him.

Unfortunately, far too many preachers and teachers would rather be comfortable with whatever prevailing system of assumptions seems to be in vogue than face the naked Word

with honesty and a good conscience before the Lord. Keeping the rosy glasses on and just going-along is the only way for them to save face, keep their position, protect their institution, keep their job, and maintain their salary. After all, this is what they had declared their position to be. Such acceptance and recognition is what they went to school for. What would it look like if they were to change? Of course, to say this is to describe a mental and spiritual recreant, one who has become a victim of **the idolatry of self**.

Many teachers and preachers avoid anything controversial in doctrine (at least things that are controversial within their own support group), and they could not take a stand on the truth if they did know it. They are too cowardly to be stewards of the truth of God's Word. Seeing God's word in clear black and white and **just telling it like it is** are often uncomfortable and even dangerous this side of glory. The Lord designed and appointed it to be hard in order to do two things: (1) to prove the character of His own elect and (2) deliberately to exclude a lot of people who—though they may cry, "Lord! Lord!"—actually please themselves and please men, but do not do the will of the Father. For, "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

**We face the days of strong delusion**, "deceiving, if *it were* possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22), but the Lord yet has true "pastors, even teachers, for the equipping of the saints" (cf. orig. Ephesians 4:11-12). He will use them as His appointed means of keeping His flock. There are sincere souls, born from above, who not only want to know, but are willing both to receive the Word of God and to do the will of God. These will testify to the truth regardless of the cost. They are the only ones who will know the teaching, whether it is of God (John 7:17). These will prove all things by the Word of God itself and hold fast to that which is good.

**But, just how important is it to ask, 'Will the rapture be before, during, or after that tribulation?'**

**Does it really matter?**

**Who says so?**

**It is our Lord Himself Who says that it matters.** The order of events surrounding Jesus' return is so important that Christ Jesus Himself accompanied His announcement of that **order of events** with a warning. The warning is to all of us: "**Take heed!**" (or, "**Beware!**"). Then the Lord gave the following solemn admonition: "I have foretold to you all things" (Mark 13:23). Christ here speaks as "THAT PROPHET." The "all things" that He spoke of are qualified both by the preceding and by the ensuing context. Earlier in the message, He spoke of certain essential prophetic events that must precede His coming. He did not furnish every detail of what will happen, but He did set forth certain events that must happen first. And, in the ensuing context, He set forth all things (everything) concerning **the order of those events** that would surround His return. He laid out these events according to their predetermined sequence. In the exercise of His office as PROPHET (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15 and NT refs.) there is absolutely no room for Him to be mistaken about the order of events that He has laid down.

Though this order of events will be dealt with later in this paper, the very fact that Christ specifically declared each of the events in sequence is brought up here to emphasize that

anyone who purports to be a minister of Christ's Word had ought to proclaim exactly what Christ proclaimed. He is neither to change nor to contradict it according to his own or anyone else's *a priori* assumptions. Jesus is "THAT PROPHET." We are admonished, **"Him shall you hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you, and it shall come to pass that whoever will not hear [hearken to obey] that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people"** (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15, Acts 3:22-23). [The order of events that surround His bodily coming, when His saints are gathered together unto Him, is set forth under bold title number **12**]

It is absurd for anyone to say that he has embraced Christ as Savior, Master, and Lord, but does not happen to believe everything that He said. Those who do not believe what is promised in His everlasting New Covenant do not receive what is promised. One either believes the Lord's words or one does not believe in the Lord. If a person is born from above and taught of the Spirit, he will readily embrace what is taught and promised by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some have said, 'Isn't this whole matter concerning the rapture really one of those non-essential doctrines in the church?' The people who say this obviously do not understand the essential things about the person and work of the Lord our Kinsman-Redeemer. The order of events that Christ prophesied is definitely not one of those subjects concerning which the Lord said, "Not everyone can yield admittance to this saying but those to whom it is given" (Matthew 19:11) or, "If you will receive it..." (Matthew 11:14). Nor is it one of those matters in which the Apostle was permitted to say, "Let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Romans 14:5). Rather, in this case, there is no room for any kind of equivocation or personal consideration as to whether the matter applies to one's own situation and calling in life. The reason why this matter is different is because it has to do with the very authority of Christ in the office of PROPHET. This is what is at stake.

**THE PROPHET:** In order to be a prophet, one had to demonstrate the **signs** of a prophet. This means that a certain specific event (or certain specific events) that the prophet prophesied (gave as a sign) had to transpire in the presence of the Lord's people in exactly the way that the words of the prophet said that it (or they) would. Those who were present when the sign took place became **witnesses of the prophet's signs**. In the case of Jesus the Messiah, this pertains not only to **the sign of His resurrection**, but to **the sign of His coming in the clouds with power and glory**. The events surrounding His Second Coming must transpire exactly according to the order and sequence that Christ prophesied. Christ told everyone to **"Take heed!"** concerning both the prophesied events and the specific order of those events. Accordingly, His Apostles relayed His warning to us in the Gospels. The Apostle Paul is very emphatic about the timing of the rapture in relation to the coming Man of Sin or Antichrist: **"Let no one deceive you by any means..."** (II Thessalonians 2:3).

The Church of the Thessalonians was susceptible to deception because many there had not paid adequate attention to what the Apostle Paul had told them concerning the order of events surrounding Christ's return and the destruction of the Antichrist. Thessalonian Christians had accepted a false teaching. That false teaching had introduced a false and

unscriptural assumption and false frame of reference for what the Apostle had told them. This caused them to misconstrue what the Apostle Paul had preached and written to them. (This will be dealt with later in this *Rapture Litmus Paper*.) Today, because *a priori* deception is rampant, the professing Church of Christ is being deceived at an unprecedented rate: In many instances, being taught exactly the opposite of what the Scriptures actually say about Christ's return and the resurrection and rapture that will take place at His arrival. Unsuspecting souls do not realize that they are being asked to accept an extra-biblical and false frame of reference for what the Bible is saying.

## **Why is Jesus Christ's coming in the flesh absolutely essential to the Christian's system of doctrine?**

**It is necessary to understand the doctrine of Christ:** one of the key and essential words in the whole Bible is a NAME and a title: **JEHOVAH-GOËLKHA, the Lord your Kinsman-Redeemer.** This One, our Kinsman-Redeemer, is the One speaking to us in Isaiah, Chapter 48, verses 16 and 17:

**Come near unto me. Hear this. I have not spoken in secret from the beginning, from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the Lord God has sent Me and His Spirit. So says the Lord your Kinsman-Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am Jehovah your God, Who teaches you to prosper, Who leads you by the way you should go.**

In this verse, the Lord God (the Father) sends "ME" the Son (your Kinsman-Redeemer) and His Spirit. The verses cited are not only a plain reference to the Trinity, but they identify our Savior and Kinsman-Redeemer as the eternal **LORD** God. He is the One speaking. In order to be the "**LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**" (Jeremiah 23:6), He had to be the "Lord our Kinsman-Redeemer." And, without this, He could not be **Jesus**, the "**LORD OUR SALVATION.**"

The only way that the LORD could fulfill the office of "YOUR KINSMAN-REDEEMER" is by being born into the family of man; fulfilling all that was ever required of you in the Law; paying the debt for you and purchasing you back, avenging you, and restoring you. (cf. the right of the able kinsman, Leviticus 25, et al.) The eternal Son of God, having become our virgin born Kinsman, exercises **the offices of a PROPHET, of a PRIEST, and of a KING.** After the fall, man needed **a prophet** in order to be told God's will for man's salvation, for man had lost the basis of communion and rapport with God and needed special revelation; **a priest**, because sinful man had nothing to offer and no way to atone for his sins; and **a king**, because he had lost dominion and had no way to deliver and restore himself.

**As PROPHET**, Christ makes known to us, by HIS WORD AND SPIRIT, the will of God for our salvation. But, as "that Prophet," He must have the signs of a prophet. One of the things that He prophesied was the sign of the Son of man coming in the clouds in glory. Just how His future bodily coming (PAROUSIA) is to take place and exactly the order in which its surrounding events are to transpire must be fulfilled (Matthew 24:27-29) or He is not "that Prophet". The sign of His return, according to His prophecy, will be the conversion of the remnant of Jacob. "They will look on Him whom they have pierced" (Zechariah 12:10).

**As our HIGH PRIEST**, Who has entered into the heavenly holy of holies to intercede for us with the blood of the only acceptable sacrifice (Himself), He must come out bodily, returning to us to receive us and bless us as His holy congregation (cf. Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 9:28). On YOM KIPPUR (Leviticus 16) after the Old Testament high priest came out of the tabernacle alive the first time (corresponding to Christ's resurrection), he entered the second time to make intercession for the people of God. The whole congregation was summoned to wait for the high priests to appear the second time. So, Christ has entered into the heavenly tabernacle and the actual *holiest of all* to make intercession for us. "And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). Apart from His bodily second coming, He could not be our HIGH PRIEST.

**As KING**, He not only subdues us unto Himself, He must come bodily to avenge His church, to sit on David's throne and thus to restore the Kingdom to Israel. In so doing, He will restore everlasting dominion to His redeemed people. If He were not to restore dominion to those of Adam's race and to the throne of David, He could not be the Redeemer.

Our first parents (and mankind in them) had dominion, for God gave our first parents dominion over the first creation. They forfeited that dominion to Satan. This is because "to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are, to whom you obey" (cf. Romans 6:16). But, the LORD our Kinsman Redeemer, "THE LAST ADAM," has defeated Satan and made a show of it openly, rising victoriously from the dead. Now all authority is given to Him in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18). When He comes again, dominion will be given to the saints of the Most High (Daniel 7:27), and, together with their Kinsman-Redeemer King, the saints shall be ruling the nations with an iron rod (Rev. 2:27). That is why God promised to Abraham that out of his loins would come a line of kings whose dominion would be perpetual (Genesis 17:7-8). In Christ, the promised Seed, the Kinsman-Redeemer and everlasting King, we shall reign with a perpetual dominion, in fulfillment of the covenant promise made to Abraham. Christ, the King and Kinsman Redeemer, the rightful heir of all things, the Kinsman Redeemer of David's family and David's throne, restores the inheritance that was lost and restores the dominion.

## **Beware!**

In the mean time, we are to beware "**because many deceivers are come into the world who are not confessing (that) Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh**" (II John 7). In this verse, the present participle, "**is coming**," refers to Christ's second coming, just as the use of the same present participle does in Revelation, Chapters 1, verse 8, and 4, verse 8: "**the One Who was, and Who is, and Who is coming**." According to the Lord's Apostle, anyone who purports to be a minister of Christ, but who does not preach this doctrine of Christ and does not confess that "**Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh**," is to be regarded in the category of "**the antichrist**" (II John 7).

**Beware of insidious disobedience:** Many unfaithful just-going-along-to-get-along ministers are accustomed to saying: 'Well, I personally believe that Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh, but I just don't happen to think that a person has to make this doctrine a touchstone for fellowship and a necessary criterion for cooperative endeavors among

churches and individuals.” But, notice what the Apostle John says, **“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into house and do not say to him [or do not salute him with the word] Rejoice! (Hail!), for the one who says to him, ‘Rejoice!’ partakes in his evil works (II John, verses 10-11).**

It was appropriate and customary in the early church for fellow Christians to salute one another with the greeting, CHAIREIN or CHAIRE [CH is pronounced like German ch in Ich], which has the connotation of Hail! or Rejoice! On the other hand, obedient and faithful Christians neither extend any Christian greeting towards, nor do they acknowledge in any way, one who purports to be a minister or a disciple and yet does not confess his faith in the bodily second coming of Christ. Even to infer that a person who does not believe and confess this doctrine is yet to be equated among Christians is to be a partaker of that person’s evil works. No one who chooses to hob-knob in what purports to be Christian fellowship with such unbelieving clergy and false brethren for any reason will do so with impunity.

**“This is love, that we keep His commandments.”**

If it is absolutely necessary to believe that **“Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh”** in order to be a minister or a member of Christ’s own holy congregation, what does that make all of those denominations and church organizations that no longer hold that this teaching is necessary? To refuse to separate from apostasy or to refuse to take a militant stand against apostasy to the same extent that the Apostle John, by the authority of our Lord and Master, has commanded us to do (Epistle of II John) is to operate at the behest of another master. When churches or church organizations refuse to obey, they place themselves in the synagogues of that another master.

It is required in Scripture not only that we believe that Christ is coming in the flesh, but that we hold the confession of His bodily second coming to be an absolute requirement for fellowship. Maintaining this requirement is a litmus test for fellowship in Christ. If the Lord Jesus were not to come again in the flesh, He could not be our Kinsman Redeemer. To deny His bodily second coming is to deny Christ.

## **Who really wants to know?**

A few sections of the discourse that follows contain terms and forms of discussion that may be unfamiliar to those who have not been involved in any study of biblical languages. This does not imply that specialists in linguistics are the only people who can understand the Bible. It is simply necessary to include certain more technical terms and explanations in order to debunk the arguments of people who, though they claim to be specialists in language, have asserted things that are not taught in the Scriptures and are contrary to the precise language of Scripture. In the vast majority of cases, the English is clear enough, if people will just read the pertinent passages of Scripture for themselves and set aside the prior assumptions that men have imposed on them. By suggestion and then by proffering assumptions and scenarios to color, distort, and even reverse the actual meaning of the plainest statements of the Scripture, false teachers make havoc and heresy among God’s people. It is important. Furthermore, there is no rule that says that the reader should be opposed to looking up the terms with which he or she is not familiar.

What would Peter say if people complained that the arguments that Paul wrote concerning this subject are hard to understand?

**And account *that* the long-suffering of the Lord *is* salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul, also according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you; as also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest [distort], as *they do* also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction. (II Peter 3:15-16)**

## **The Normal Usage and Grammar of the Language of Holy Scripture Exclude the Popular Assumption about the Rapture**

**A few terms have to be explained in order to answer the questions involved in the controversy over the bodily second coming of Christ and the rapture.**

### **1. The word for bodily coming or arrival is PAROUSÍA. Just how many arrivals of the Lord do the words, “the arrival of the Lord,” denote?**

The Greek word PAROUSÍA (pronounced pâ-roo-see-a,) means bodily coming or bodily arrival (*to appear* or *to be present bodily*). All those who truly believe the Gospel are waiting for the bodily coming (the PAROUSIA) of our Lord and Savior. **Those who have waited faithfully for Christ to arrive from heaven will be raptured at His PAROUSIA, His arrival** (I Thessalonians 4: 15-17). The word PAROUSIA can refer to outward appearance or mere presence, but not in a context where it has to do with anyone’s coming or expected arrival. When this word is used with reference to a person’s arrival, it only refers to the very event of that arrival. It can refer to that arrival as an event that either has occurred, will occur, or is presently in the process of occurring (as in, *he is arriving*, or *his arrival has come*). To await the PAROUSIA of a man means to wait for him to arrive bodily. A person either arrives bodily or he does not arrive. The word does not allow for any kind of partial materialization or partial manifestation of the individual. If a person were to arrive, go away, and then come back again, he would then necessarily have two PAROUSIA’s (two PAROUSIAI, nominative plural), two arrivals. Even if these arrivals were but minutes apart, he would necessarily have two PAROUSIA’s, two arrivals, as in two appearances or two PAROUSIA on a stage.

The idea that there could be two “phases” of one PAROUSIA (two arrivals of the same individual that supposedly yet constitute but one arrival), with the two “phases” being several years apart, is nothing other than an absurdity. Such an idea utterly contradicts the meaning and usage of the Greek word PAROUSIA. Yet, it is essential to the pre-tribulation rapture position to hold to such a two-phase PAROUSIA. The Scriptures speak of but one future bodily coming (arrival) of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven. The PAROUSIA is not two arrivals.

One of the functions of the singular definite article (the) with a singular noun is that it is used to denote a singular thing or event. There is never a plural verb predicated of or associated with the PAROUSIA of the Lord. The Holy Scriptures would have to say

nothing more than what they do say (and to say it in no other way than the way that it has been said in the Scriptures) in order to clarify, **to specify**, that the Lord Jesus is only going to arrive once (“at the PAROUSIA of Him from heaven”).

In the same way, there is only one first resurrection (“the first resurrection,” as set forth in Revelation 20:5). So, those who have presupposed that there is going to be a pre-tribulation resurrection and rapture simply violate the rules of the definite article with the singular noun, as well as the very usage and meaning of the term PAROUSIA. It is not simply that there is absolutely nothing in the language of Scripture that speaks of different phases of the PAROUSIA of the Lord, it is that the grammar of the Holy Scriptures itself also rules out the idea of two phases of the PAROUSIA.

Essential to the *a priori* assumptions of the pre-tribulation rapturists is the assumption that the words and grammar of Scripture do not mean what they say in their normal and ordinary usage. It is merely the pre-tribulation rapturists’ own prior assumption that determines for them what the words and the text can mean. By such an *a priori* approach, anyone can assume anything and say that the Scriptures affirm it.

Those who presuppose a pre-tribulation rapture have to make two PAROUSIAS out of the PAROUSIA of the Lord. They have two arrivals. They have at least two first resurrections, if not three; and, yes, they actually teach that there are at least two raptures, if not three distinct raptures. They have said that one “phase” [to use their terminology], which is the more first of their two or three first resurrections (Rev. 20:4-7), is going to happen before the great tribulation. The other “phase”, which includes their second “first resurrection” (Rev. 20:4-7), is going to happen after that great tribulation. Many have a third phase of the first resurrection, which is also to take place after the great tribulation, but before the millennial reign. The latter is what they refer to as the resurrection of the Old Testament Saints. Their doctrine is not only a violation of the grammar and usage of Scripture, but all of their dividing up of the first resurrection and their multiple raptures are a fantasy that does not arise from the words of Scripture at all. They simply made it up. They proffer it as a qualifying *a priori* assumption to be superimposed over the pertinent passages of Scripture. What they have asserted makes a mockery of the language of Scripture. (The “first resurrection” spoken of in Revelation, Chapter 20, verses 4 through 7 and its relation to the tribulation and the millennium will be dealt with later in this paper.)

As to the order of those particular events that will happen on the day of the one future PAROUSIA of the Lord, and as to the singularity of the entire event that is called the PAROUSIA of the Lord, the Scriptures are straightforward and matter-of-fact. Christ’s words could not be more clear: **“For as the lightning comes out of the east and shines even unto west, thus also shall the PAROUSIA (the bodily arrival) of the Son of man be”** (Matthew 24: 27). He did not say, ‘so shall the arrivals of the Son of man be.’ Nor did He say anything that could be construed as saying, ‘so shall the phases of the PAROUSIA of the Son of man be.’ Jesus only spoke of one arrival (“the PAROUSIA of the Son of Man”) because He is only going to arrive once. He only spoke of one “gathering together of the elect from the four winds...” The only such gathering or rapture is the one that will take place “then,” and the “then” He declared to be “immediately **after** the tribulation of



those days” (Matthew 24:27-31, this also will be taken up later in this treatise). One thing that is involve in worshipping Him as Kinsman Redeemer and THAT PROPHET, is ones personal affirmation that His coming and the events that will happen at His coming will transpire in exactly the order and in exactly the way that He said that they will happen. He did not say, ‘If a man keep some of my sayings he will never see death.’ Jesus said, “If a man keep my saying, he shall never die.” Of THAT PROPHET it says, “Him shall you hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you.” All who do not do this will be cut off from among His people. To believe in Him is necessarily to believe everything that He said.

## 2. The Sequence:

Likewise, the Apostle Paul’s words concerning the PAROUSIA are candid and clear. There is no provision in Paul’s words for two or more expected arrivals of Christ. It is only singular, “the arrival.” **“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; but every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterwards [EPEITA] they that are Christ’s at the arrival [PAROUSIA] of Him, then [EITA] comes the end...”** (I Corinthians 15:23). These words are an EPEITA/EITA sequence.

The word EPEITA (then, after that), when used in a construction with EITA, denotes *next-in-sequence*, as is the case of “the PAROUSIA of the Lord” explained in I Thessalonians, 4, verses 15-17: “and the dead in Christ shall rise first, then [EPEITA, then, after that] we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them by the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...” One cannot assume any intervening events between the resurrection of “the dead in Christ” and “then [EPEITA] we who are alive and remain shall be caught up...” After the “dead in Christ” rise, the next thing that happens in the sequence of rapture events is that the ones who are alive and remain are caught up to meet the Lord.

**In I Corinthians, Chapter 15, (cited above) the Apostle Paul had already set forth an EITA/EPEITA order and sequence.** This kind of sequence denotes *then this, then afterwards this, then afterwards this*. Earlier in the same chapter, when he spoke of the appearances of the risen Lord (I Corinthians 15:5-8), notice the following order of events: “**then (EITA)** of the twelve; **after that (EPEITA)** he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once...**after that (EPEITA)** he was seen of James; **then (EITA)** of all the apostles. And, last of all, He was seen of me...” The Apostle has given a chronological sequence of events.

An EPEITA/EITA sequence is used here for order of sequence. It can also be used for order of importance: “And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, **afterwards (EPEITA)** miracles, then **(EITA)** gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversity of tongues” (I Corinthians 12:28). A sequence of *order of importance* is not something that is subject to rearrangement; nor can one place additional elements into the order that is given, for then there would be no point in giving the order or sequence.

But the category or kind of events in time that is spoken of in the EPEITA/EITA sequence of in I Corinthians 15, verses 23 and 24, is an order and sequence of resurrection

events. If the order that is proffered by the pre-tribulation rapturists were correct, the Apostle Paul would have had to give the following order: ‘Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ’s at the first phase of His PAROUSIA (the arrival that comes before the great tribulation); then, afterwards, those who will have been saved during the tribulation will be resurrected at the second phase of the PAROUSIA (after that tribulation); and then after that the Old Testament saints will be raised (in a third phase of the first resurrection which is also to happen after the great tribulation), and then (after that) comes the end...’. This is because all of these would be separate resurrection events involving different people at different times in the entire sequence of resurrection events. After all, this is the sequence of events that is presupposed by pre-tribulation rapturists. But, if this were the actual sequence, and the Apostle simply did not bother to include these other resurrection events in that sequence (either as happening before the PAROUSIA of the Lord, or as additional resurrection events to happen after that PAROUSIA but before “the end”), then the Apostle did not follow the same rules of EPEITA/EITA sequence that he had followed earlier in the chapter, when he spoke of the sequence of the appearances of the risen Lord.

It is equally in error to presume to ignore one of the elements (one of the separate steps) in an EPEITA/EITA sequence. The *a priori* assumption of the amillenarians and post-millenarians compels them to presuppose that the sequence of events in time that is expressed in the verse is as if it simply said, ‘Christ the first fruits, after that comes the end.’ These anti-millenarians just leave out one of the elements in the time sequence, and make the PAROUSIA synonymous with “the end”. To do this is to ignore and violate the essential purpose of the EPEITA/EITA construction. There are three distinct elements in these verses, not two: Christ’s resurrection as the first fruits, then they that are Christ’s at His arrival is the second, then the complete victory over death at the end is the third (verses 22-28).

**Conclusion of this brief section:** The pre-tribulation rapturist’s ideas of two future arrivals of the Lord, or two or three phases of the Lord’s PAROUSIA, and two or more phases of the first resurrection, does not exist in Scripture. These ideas are simply contrived *a priori* assumptions that pre-tribulation rapturists have tried to impose on the Scriptures. Such extra-biblical and *a priori* assumptions no more fit into the Scriptures than extra numbers and rotations can be added into the sequence of the combination of a safe. No one can make two arrivals out of the arrival and two or three first resurrections out of “the first resurrection.” Such assumptions are not only made up by men, but they are plain contradictions of the Word of God. They are an absurd corruption of the language of Holy Scripture.

### **3. It is important to look at words as they are used in context:**

- (a) Our gathering together** unto Him (EPISUNAGOGES);
- (b) Has come, is present, or is at hand** (ENESTEKE);
- (c) The apostasy** (APOSTASIA).

The saints are going to be gathered unto the Lord at His PAROUSIA:

**“But I ask you [or I beseech you, KJV] brethren, concerning the coming (viz. the PAROUSIA, the bodily coming or arrival) of our Lord, and (or even) our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind or troubled, neither by word, nor by spirit, nor by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ were present Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that day shall not come* [These italicized words are a clarifying addition in KJV which serve to complete the sentence.] except the apostasy comes first, even the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he, as God, sits in the temple of God showing himself that he is God”** (II Thessalonians 2:1-4).

**a. EPISUNAGOGE, “our gathering together unto Him” at His PAROUSIA:**

In the first verse of this passage (II Thessalonians, Chapter 2) the Apostle specifies “the PAROUSIA (the bodily coming) of our Lord, and (or, more properly, even) our gathering together unto Him” as being one event. The reason this is so is because both “the PAROUSIA” and “our gathering together unto Him” constitute the collective object of the one preposition HUPER, *on behalf of* or “*concerning*.” (In this context, the Greek preposition HUPER is correctly translated *concerning*.) Both elements comprise **one event** because, following the one preposition HUPER, the primary substantive, **the PAROUSIA**, has the definite article, but, “our gathering together unto Him” does not have the definite article. The latter does not have the definite article because the author is neither designating it nor setting it apart as a separate event. Rather, he is using it as an explanatory apposition that is to be incorporated as part of the collective substantive object of the one preposition. Therefore “and” (KAI) here actually has the force of **even**, being a KAI of explanatory apposition. It should read, “the bodily arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ, even our gathering together unto Him.” The only reason why “our gathering together” is anarthrous (i.e. without the definite article) is because it is such an explanatory apposition. It is an explanatory apposition which serves to explain what is going to take place at **the** event of the PAROUSIA. If “our gathering together” were intended to be understood as a separate event, it would at least have had to occur with the definite article. In all actuality, if the author had intended it to be understood as a separate event, there would have been a separate conjunction and a separate preposition qualifying it and setting it apart. (The King James translators supplied a separate preposition “*by*” in italics simply to repeat of the same preposition. By doing so, they obscured the explanatory apposition. Yet, they added no definite article. The translators did not hold the PAROUSIA and “our gathering together unto Him” to be separate events. They recognized that the language only made provision for one event.)

It is no accident that the same word, EPISUNAGOGE, (used here in II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verse 1, in its noun form επισυναγωγή to refer to the *rapture* at the PAROUSIA of the Lord) is also used in its verb form for the *rapture* at the PAROUSIA in Christ’s Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27). In both instances, the one PAROUSIA (the expected arrival of the Lord) is identified as the event which involves the rapture of the saints. It is one definite and singular event. The Holy Scriptures, in every instances, only make reference to one future PAROUSIA of the Lord and only one rapture,

vis. **one sending of the angels** “to gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth unto the uttermost parts of heaven.” Let no one add to God’s Word.

### **The Biblical Frame of Reference:**

In the Olivet Discourse, the Lord’s own words concerning His PAROUSIA and the rapture need to be placed together with the same words usage in I Thessalonians 4:15-18. These two passages provide the Scriptures frame of reference for “the PAROUSIA of the Lord” in II Thessalonians 2. There is only one frame of reference for understanding the entire event (i.e. the PAROUSIA, including the rapture).

Later (in the second verse but still the same sentence), there is a parallelism in the grammar: the Apostle uses the words, “the day of Christ”, to refer collectively to both the PAROUSIA of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him. This form of parallelism is simply the way the original Greek language of the New Testament is constructed. If this construction (this means of maintaining the context and the build of the passage) is ignored, the Apostle’s explanation has no logical build in the original language, and there could be no frame of reference for what he is saying.

There is a reason why the point has been made here that the one bodily arrival of our Lord from heaven and our gathering together (rapture) unto Him are one event. The reason is because, as we are about to point out, the passage goes on to say that when the Lord comes at His PAROUSIA He will destroy the Antichrist. Just as the Apostle declared in II Thessalonians, Chapter 1, this has to take place after the tribulation.

**Dispensationalists assert that the coming of “the day of Christ” and the coming of “the day of the Lord” are two different things just as they assert that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are two different things.**

There is a scribal variance: the Textus Receptus has “the day of Christ” and the Alexandrian Text has “the day of the Lord.” Both “Lord” and “Christ” are used in the first clause (verse 1), to which the second clause (verse 2) refers. This scribal variation does not change the sense of the whole sentence one iota. However, Mr. C. I. Scofield, and the bulk of dispensationalists who—to one degree or another—follow him, want to make an issue of this kind of the thing and to strive about words to no profit but to the subverting of the hearers. For instance, they make a distinction between the terms *kingdom of heaven* and *kingdom of God*, though the Scriptures use these terms interchangeably (cf. Mt. 3:2, John the Baptist preaching “the kingdom of heaven,” and Mk. 1:14 John the Baptist preaching “the kingdom of God; “Blessed are the poor in spirit for of them is the kingdom of heaven,” Mt. 5:3 and “Blessed are the poor because of them is the kingdom of God, Lk. 6:20; “to you it is given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,” Mt. 13:11, and, “to you it is given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God,” Mk. 4:11, and so on, all the way through the Gospels). Other examples could be cited, but the point is that the Scriptures clearly demonstrate their supposed distinction to be contrived and false. In the same way they want people to presuppose that there is a difference between *the day of Christ* and *the day of the Lord*. They presuppose an artificial distinction in order to divert

attention from the Apostle Paul's proposition in this passage. According to the Apostles' own usage, both terms are simply references to the day of Christ's arrival and presence with His gathered saints. Paul prayed for Christians that they might be "sincere and without offense until **the day of Christ**" (Philippians 1:10), and Christians are to do all things without murmuring and complaining that they might shine "as lights in the world; holding forth the Word of life; that I [Paul] may rejoice the **day of Christ**..." (Philippians 2:15 and 16). Peter says, "But the **day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night" (II Peter 3:10, TR). It is the term "**the day of the Lord**" in the first letter to the Thessalonians (4:13-5:4) that is used to refer to the PAROUSIA and our gathering unto Him; therefore it is this term that supplies the Scriptural frame of reference for "the PAROUSIA of the Lord, even our gathering together unto Him" in II Thessalonians 2: 1 and 2. For, Paul, making direct reference to the day of the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the rapture, said, "For yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord** so comes as a thief in the night...but you brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (I Thessalonians 5:2-4). So, the Apostle called that day "**the day of the Lord.**" Note that **that day** will overtake the world as a thief. However, it is not that **that day** will not overtake the true Christians: it is simply that it will not overtake them as a thief. They will be fully expecting it. The day that is spoken of is necessarily the PAROUSIA of the Lord, even our gathering together unto Him (II Thessalonians 2:1). That day, the day of that entire event, is called "**the day of the Lord**" in I Thessalonians 4:13-5:4. To assert that these are not all references to the very same day of Christ's arrival that Paul is talking about in verses one and two of II Thessalonians, chapter 2, is to set aside the only frame of reference that had been furnished to the Thessalonian Church and thus to vitiate Paul's entire explanation.

### **The Scriptures provide the frame of reference for the terms and the sequence of events:**

The Apostle Paul was not bringing up a new subject to the Thessalonian Christians. **The frame of reference had already been established.** Those who have simply presupposed a pre-tribulation rapture (*a priori*) naturally want to **substitute their own prior assumption for the biblical frame of reference.** It is simply the means whereby false teaching is subtly insinuated into the churches. The means by which the Apostle's words in II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verse 1, are qualified and twisted by them is just one example. In other words, they want to set aside that frame of reference established by previous usage of same terms in the Holy Scriptures, supplanting it with their own assumed meaning. What they do is the opposite of the true exegesis Scriptures.

Some of the teachers of the pre-tribulation rapture want us to think of II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verse 1, as if it had read in the original as two events: that is, as if it read 'I ask you therefore brethren concerning the PAROUSIA of the Lord and concerning the gathering together of us to Him,' but this is not what the original says. There is no manuscript, no scribal variant any place, that either allows for such wording or for such an idea concerning this verse. Rather, the original clearly says, "I ask you therefore brethren concerning the PAROUSIA of the Lord, even our gathering together unto Him."

**Conclusion of this brief section:** Pre-tribulation rapturists want the passage to be understood as a reference to two different future occasions or events of uncertain relationship to each another. Such an interpretation not only denies the only frame of reference concerning *the* PAROUSIA *of the Lord* that had been furnished to the Thessalonians, but it also sets aside *the anarthrous explanatory apposition* explained earlier. What it really does is to reduce the Apostle's explanation to inconsequential gibberish. For, if that were the case, what the Apostle says in his explanation does not really clarify anything for the Christians in Thessalonica who were in tribulations and persecution. It does nothing to help those who had been deceived into thinking that the day of the Lord's PAROUSIA had arrived (or, was already in process of coming) and that their gathering together unto Him was therefore imminent. The Pre-tribulation rapturist's ***Imminent Rapture*** is the deception and the very error that the Apostle is correcting. **The Apostle's explanation is logical and definite.** He was telling the Thessalonian Christians that the day of our gathering together unto the Lord had not come and that they should have known better because those things that he had assured them would have to happen first had not happened yet. The apostasy and (or even) the appearance of the man of sin must antedate the day of the Lord's coming and the rapture.

**b. ENESTEKE "...AS THAT THE DAY OF CHRIST IS AT HAND [or IS PRESENT]."**

Certain Christians in Thessalonica thought that "the day of Christ" had arrived or was present (Gk. ENESTEKE, perfect of ἐνίστημι). The meaning and force of Greek words are often determined by their context. As was pointed out earlier, PAROUSIA is a word that can refer merely to the visible and outward form or appearance of a person. However, in the context of someone's arrival, it always refers to the event of that person's bodily arrival. Just as the meaning of the word PAROUSIA, in a given passage, is determined by the context, so is the case with the word ENESTEKEN, *has come, is present* (as in, "as if that day *were present*"). The reason why the King James translators used the words "as that the day of Christ is at hand" is because they recognized that the context demanded it. In such a context ENESTEKE refers to *already being in the process of coming* (cf. Kittel, TDNT, vol. 2, p. 544, n.2). For, obviously, the Thessalonian Christians did not think that the day of Christ's PAROUSIA had already come, as if it had already come and gone and they had somehow missed it, for, if that were the case, they would not have continued to cease all worldly employments and look for Him to rapture them at any moment. Nor did they think that the rapture and the other events that must accompany the Lord's PAROUSIA (the Lord's arrival) had already happened and nobody among them had noticed. They knew that the Lord had not yet come bodily in power and glory. They knew that the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God had not yet sounded. They knew that the dead in Christ, some of whom had already perished in Thessalonica, had not yet been raised. The believers at Thessalonica had not yet been caught up by the clouds and gathered to meet the descending Christ in the air. Yet, they knew very well that these things had to transpire at the PAROUSIA of the Lord. They knew that His bodily coming from heaven would be no secret event (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). They knew that all these things will accompany the bodily coming of the Lord because these had been declared to them by the

Apostle in person and also written to them in his First Epistle to the Thessalonian Church (cf. I Thessalonians 4:13-5:4).

There is nothing in the first sentence of II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, to intimate that the Thessalonian Christians had any misunderstanding about the fact that they were going to be gathered unto the Lord at *the* PAROUSIA of Him. This was the only frame of reference that they had been given for the term “the PAROUSIA of the Lord.” If the Apostle Paul were now, for any reason, going to change that frame of reference, he would have had to tell them that he was changing it from what they had been told (I Thessalonians 4:13-5:4). In II Thessalonians, the Apostle is doing nothing of the kind. The Thessalonian Christians knew what he was talking about: the language of the entire passage indicates that at least this much they clearly understood. It was only because of a certain deceptive and false doctrine that many in Thessalonica seem to have accepted—“whether by word, or by spirit, or by letter as *if* from us” (i.e. from the Apostles)—that they were now sure that the day of the PAROUSIA of Christ, even our gathering together unto Him, had arrived (ἐνέστηκε ENESTEKE), or was already in the process of coming. Therefore they thought that their gathering to the Lord (the rapture) had to be at any moment (that it had to be impending or imminent). And, because of this error, some among them had stopped working (i.e. had ceased from their regular earthly employments, cf. Ch. 3:10-12). They just expected the Lord to arrive from heaven at any moment, send his angels, and rapture them. Because of this false teaching, the Apostle Paul had to explain over again to them things that he had already told them while he was yet with them, **that the apostasy, even the appearing of the man of sin himself, had to come first.**

**So, the Apostle’s purpose for writing II Thessalonians was to set this matter straight, once and for all:**

The Apostle made it clear that the Lord’s coming and the accompanying rapture are not going to happen until after the apostasy has transpired. Which apostasy is referred to? As the following point in this treatise points out, it is the great apostasy (the great rebellion against the supremacy of God and the rule of law) that will give rise to the man of sin himself. The Apostle goes on to explain that the Lord’s coming and our gathering together unto Him will not happen until after the man of sin has not only arrived, but has also accomplished all of his appointed deeds. For, as is also pointed out later, the only PAROUSIA that the Apostle elucidates is the time of the termination of the reign of the lawless man, the man of sin himself.

Since these things had not yet happened, the Apostle told the Thessalonian Christians that they should have know that the day of Christ had not come, i.e. was not in the process of coming. They were not to let anyone deceive them into thinking otherwise. Clearly, the PAROUSIA of Lord, with its accompanying rapture of the saints, was not to be regarded by the Christians of Thessalonica as either impending or in the process of coming until these preceding events happened.

**c. The Apostasy** (Why do certain dispensationalists want the word *apostasy* to mean rapture and the departing of the Holy Spirit from the earth?)

The word “apostasy” (**APOSTASIA**) has only one meaning in the original language of the New Testament. It denotes **rebellion**: to apostatize is **to rebel by standing in rejection of law and lawful authority** (whether it be with regard to the law of some particular standard of ethics, or of family, or of nation, or of God Himself). The word does not denote any sort of spatial *leaving, departing*, or any *falling away* in a physical or spatial sense, as if the people of the church were to depart from the earth or fall away from the earth, or as if the infinite Holy Spirit were to fall away from or stand apart from this world. The only meaning of this word in Greek is **apostasy**, as defined above. Furthermore, the apostasy that is spoken of here in II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, is no local apostasy: it is designated as **the** apostasy (rebellion against God) which gives rise to the antichrist, the man of sin, the ANOMOS (the lawless man). The apostasy and the man of sin have to come **PROTOS**, first, before the arrival of the Lord from heaven.

Those who impose their presuppositions on the text, irrespective of what the words mean and what the text actually says, inevitably find themselves striving about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Concerning the word APOSTASIA, pre-tribulation rapturists have been inclined to give credence to the following false argument: APO means *from* and STASIA is from ISTEMI, which means *stand*, so APOSTASIA means *stand from*. So they suggest that this must mean that the Church and the Holy Spirit stand away from or depart from the earth. What they assert has nothing to do with the actual use of this word in Greek, but it sounds plausible to people who have no knowledge of Greek. But, pre-tribulation rapturists have to contrive something that at least sounds like an argument. By using their approach, let us look at a few other words: an **apothecary** (from APO and THEKE) is really just a *from-put*; **ecstasy** has to refer to *standing out*, or, at least, *standing out of something* (When the teacher of the pre-trib rapture finds himself locked out and made to stand outside, all he has to do is refer to his pre-trib dictionary of terms, for then he will be able to think of himself as really being enraptured in a state of *ecstasy* [standing-outside].); and, by the same approach, one can then easily see that to be **ecstatic** is to be positively *outstanding*. Does somebody beg to differ? This word **differ**, from DIA • PHERO, has to mean *to carry through*, by their method of establishing the meaning of words. However, in Greek, it just means *to be different*.) These are all Greek words. This is how they break down, but they do not mean these things in Greek any more than they do in English. Pre-tribulation rapturists do not seem to mention that the word **ecstasy** (*out of stand* or *stand from*) is the word translated **rapture** in Greek-English lexicons. But, indeed, it does refer to a different idea of *rapture* or *being enraptured*. (The word EKSTASEI <sup>dativ singular</sup> is used in the New Testament with the idea of *trance* or *to be amazed*.) One can easily see where these English words came from. There are proper Greek terms to be applied to a teacher who insist that APOSTASIA can mean rapture: he is simply to be called a ψευστης and a ψευδο-διδάσκαλος.

For someone to contend that, in this instance, “APOSTASIA” denotes a rapture when the Church and the Holy Spirit are going to be taken out of the world, even to assert that the word might or could signify a rapture or a removal of the Holy Spirit from the world, as many who teach the pre-tribulation rapture have done, is to corrupt the Word of God. It is



to perpetrate deception. But, there is a reason why so many proponents of the pre-tribulation rapture have said that the term “the apostasy” refers to (or may refer to) the rapture, or to the departure of the Holy Spirit from the world, or to both. It is because they have recognized that, if ever there were any portion of Scripture that would have to speak of the pre-tribulation rapture and/or of the Holy Spirit being taken out of the world, II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, would have to be that passage. That is, if there were a pre-tribulation rapture, the Apostle Paul would definitely have to include it at that point in his explanation. But, it is just not there. So, they had to find some way to try to put it there, even if it meant distorting and corrupting the Word. The truth is that the passage expressly and quite deliberately excludes (rules out) the very possibility of the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture.

#### **4. A literal translation of the text reads, “If not the apostasy *should come first*, even the man of sin *should be revealed*...”**

If one is going to be slavishly literal, it would be translated, “**except** (or lit. **if not**) the apostasy **should come first**, even the man of sin **should be revealed**...” The reason are as follows: <sup>(1)</sup> because “**should come**” and “**should be revealed**” are both subjunctives that are conditioned on (or qualified in relation to) the same “except” (the same “if not”), and <sup>(2)</sup> because the word “**first**” is neuter and used as an adverb to qualify the time of the entire subjunctive clause. It determine the time of the verbs that follow the one “**except**” or “**if not**” (verse 3). The force is, “if not first should come...and...(first or beforehand) should be revealed” [because the qualifier “*if not first*” carries through the whole of the subjunctive clause ] (The second instance of the word *first* is in parentheses. It is added because, in the original language, it applies without being repeated.) Both subjunctive verbs in “**if not the apostasy should come first, even the man of sin should be revealed**” are to be seen as inseparably interrelated actions because of this construction of the grammar and also because of the related nature of the subjects of each verb. Therefore, both the coming of the apostasy, and (or even) the revelation of the man of sin, are events that must come **first**, i.e. before the coming of the day of Christ. The emphasis of this entire section of the Apostle’s explanation is that both the apostasy and the appearance of the man of sin must happen **before** the PAROUSIA of the Lord, even (before) our gathering together unto Him.

#### **5. So, beware! Lest anyone deceive you with a diversionary ploy:**

What the proponents of the pre-tribulation rapture have really done is to make a diversion so that people will be distracted and miss the actual proposition of the Apostle’s statement in II Thessalonians, Chapter Two. The Apostle’s proposition is clear: he was telling the Thessalonian Christians that the reason why “**our gathering together**” unto the Lord was not present, not to be regarded as imminent (viz. not to be regarded as already in process), was because the apostasy and the very presence of the man of sin himself had not come to pass yet. The Apostle’s point is that these things must happen **first**. We are not to allow anyone to deceive us into thinking otherwise.

There is absolutely nothing in II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, that speaks of a pre-tribulation rapture, nor is there anything in that chapter—or anyplace else in the Holy Scriptures—that

says that the Holy Spirit is going to be taken out of the world. These ideas are completely foreign to the vocabulary and the nature of the passage. The kind of deception that is used by those who teach the pre-tribulation rapture involves two familiar elements: <sup>(1)</sup> getting a person to accept such an ill-founded conclusion in the form of an *a priori assumption* as if it were a plausible explanation; and <sup>(2)</sup> then getting that person to look at passages of Scripture in the light of the conclusion that has been planted in his or her mind by way of suggestion. What those who teach the pre-tribulation rapture are doing comes under the category of “handling the Word of God deceitfully” (cf. II Corinthians 4:2). It is the very kind of craftiness that the Apostle denounced. It is the old rose-colored-glasses-trick (see the second part of the introduction to this *Rapture Litmus Paper*). Such suggestions are nothing more than contrived *a priori* presuppositions. Though their suggestions have been couched in words that sound like biblical terminology, they do not come out of Holy Scripture at all. “Though hand join in hand,” those who willfully go along with this kind of scheme and teach it, as if it were the Word of God, will suffer the consequences. They corrupt the Word of God.

## 6. “THE GREAT TRIBULATION” and the blood-washed Christians who will emerge out of the inside of it.

The Scripture’s own frame of reference for the term “the great tribulation” (Revelation 7:4) is not simply from Christ’s words in the Olivet Discourse. Even Christ was not introducing a new subject when He spoke of “that tribulation” and the resurrection of the saints that will be occasioned by it. The frame of reference for that greatest of tribulation periods had been furnished in Daniel, Chapter 12, verses 1 and 3:

**And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble [or tribulation] such as never was since there was a nation to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone that shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, these [i.e. the ones who do awake at that time] unto ever-lasting life, and those [i.e. the others who are left and are not included in the “many” and therefore do not awake at that time] unto shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and those who turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.**

The construction in verse 2 is referred to as a ZEH VE ZEH/ELAH VE ELAH partitive in Hebrew. It is that kind of partitive which has been explained above by the bracketed insets in the translation (see immediately above), BDB. In this case, it is *these, the “many,”* as opposed to *those not included with the many.* (Literally, it will be at the time when Daniel will rise to stand in the lot of his appointed inheritance in the promised land.) The attention and the emphasis of the passage as a whole are placed on that side of the partitive designating the “many” who do awake to everlasting life at that time. All those on the other side of the partitive are not included among the “many” and therefore do not awake out of the dust of the earth at that time. The resurrection that is spoken of here is clearly not a resurrection of all of those who sleep in the dust of the earth, but, rather, of “many.”

Anti-millennarians, because of their own *a priori* assumptive approach to the interpretation of Scriptures, have not only chosen to ignore the proper force of the Hebrew partitive, but they also wanted everyone to assume that the “many” actually means all. As if all shall rise at one time, at one resurrection at the end of this present era. Although, with regard to Isaiah, Chapter 53, verse 11: “by His knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many,” they do not seem to want anyone to think that “many” actually means all. In both cases, the Hebrew word RABIM (pronounced râ·beem) is used. It means *many*. It does not mean *all*. If the Holy Spirit meant to say ‘and **all** of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,’ then the Hebrew word QŌL, *all*, would have been used and not the word RABIM. There is nothing ambiguous about the Hebrew of this verse. If the resurrection spoken of here were a general resurrection that includes **all** the ones who “sleep in the dust,” that is exactly what the inspired author would have said. Thus, Daniel, Chapter 12, verse 2, does not allow for the amillennial/postmillennial doctrine of but one general resurrection to take place when Christ arrives at the end of this era.

What is referred to here is the resurrection of **many** “who are counted worthy to obtain that age, even the resurrection that is out from among the dead (EK NEKRŌN)...” (Luke 20:35). When will this resurrection take place? It will take place “immediately after the tribulation of those days” (Matthew 24: 29-31), when “He shall send His angels with the great sound of a trumpet” (Matthew 24:31). “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel [Michael] and the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first...(I Thessalonians 4:16); “and they [i.e. His angels] shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31).

The inescapable implication of the partitive in Daniel 12:2 is that the resurrection described in this verse is a decisive partitive: it is “the first resurrection.” Of all those who will have been sleeping in the dust of the earth at that point in time, the ones among them whose names were never written in the book will **not** awake out of the dust of the earth at that time. Of the “**these**” and the “**those**” in the Hebrew partitive, it is the “those” who are appointed to shame and everlasting contempt who do not awake at that time. Concerning the “**these**” in this partitive, they do arise out of the dust at that time. The Scriptures say “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no authority, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years,” (Revelation 20:6). As for the “**those**”, the Scriptures say, “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were completed...” (Revelation 20:5) “And when the thousand years were completed...if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:7 to 15). “This is the second death” (Revelation 20:14).

Letting the Holy Scriptures interpret and elucidate the Scriptures is the key rule. Like pre-tribulation rapturists, amillennarians and post-millennarians ignore the grammar and the terms in order to make allowances for their own prior assumptions. The point is that Daniel 12:2 furnishes the Scriptural frame of reference for the tribulation and the singular first resurrection (out from among the dead) that is associated with it. The passage in Daniel, Chapter 12, furnishes the necessary basis for what Christ and the Apostles refer to

concerning this same subject. The doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture, on the other hand, is merely a contrived assumption: it has no scriptural frame of reference whatsoever. It is simply men setting aside the frame of reference provided in the Scriptures and proffering their own substitute frame of reference for what the Apostle says.

Proponents of the pre-tribulation rapture use Daniel, Chapter 12, as a proof-text for the resurrection of the Old Testament Saints after the tribulation. However, they simply presuppose the prior resurrection of the Church. By the term *Church* they mean the saints of this era. The Scriptures never speak of a resurrection that is just to include the saints who have trusted in Christ after His earthly ministry. This also they just assume. There is no proof-text whatsoever for a pre-tribulation rapture.

**The blood-washed and faithful servants of Christ will still be in the world during the tribulation, and they will emerge victoriously out of the inside of “the great tribulation.”**

The only verse in the Holy Scriptures where the words “the great tribulation” (with the definite article) occur is Revelation, Chapter 7, verse 14. The Apostle John had seen “a great multitude that no one could number, out of all nations, tribes and people and languages” (Revelation 7:9). John is told, **“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”** (vs. 14). The preposition EK, “out of” connotes that these had been inside the great tribulation.

C. I. Scofield of the *Scofield Reference Bible* taught that the Church is going to be taken out of the world prior to the great tribulation and that the Holy Spirit is also going to be taken out of the world before the tribulation. He also taught that, after the Church and the Holy Spirit have been taken out of the world, a bloodless, “Christless” so called “Gospel of the Kingdom” will be in effect. Should it not seem more than incredible that such an overwhelmingly huge multitude of true believers from all over the world, faithful unto death, beloved of Christ, could emerge out of the inside of the very worst of persecutions and trials without the convicting and converting power of the Holy Spirit, without the indwelling and keeping power of the Holy Spirit? And, the very fact that these will have all **washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white**, certainly does not sound like any bloodless and “Christless” Gospel will be the efficacious proclamation to their salvation during that time. The inescapable conclusion is that the Christ’s Church is going to be here all during the tribulation.

Scofield simply adopted his utterly false doctrine *a priori* because it seemed consistent with the *a priori* assumption that there will be a pre-tribulation rapture. He had to have a pre-tribulation rapture in order to facilitate an end to the Church age. (Remember, his assumption concerning dispensations was that they are all distinct probationary periods.) But, if he had know the Scriptures, he would have know that the Church age is the “age without end” (Ephesians 3:21, cf. Isaiah 45:17). Just as everyone who lies has to tell other lies to cover his lie, one of the problems with adopting and trying to impose extra-biblical *a priori* assumptions on the Scriptures is that there is no end to the other assumptions that

then have to be contrived and forced on the Scriptures in the same presumptuous way. The sin of adding to the Word and teaching false things to cover other false assumptions becomes progressively worse for those who have allowed themselves to be led down that garden path.

## 7. What is it the now restrains (II Thessalonians 2)?

**In order to determine this it is necessary to look at the words and how they are used.**

### a. The word for *law* is NOMOS; the word for *lawlessness* is ANOMIA:

**It is necessary to understand some more Greek terms and their gender: NOMOS with the ‘A’ (Alpha) privative, ANOMOS, means *against* or *contrary to law*, a *thing contrary to law* (Latin, *lex apostata*), ANOMOS means *lawless*, or, when used to denote a person (as a substantive with the definite article), it denotes *THE LAWLESS MAN*. ANOMIA means *lawlessness* (iniquity).**

NOMOS, the Greek word for **law**, is a masculine noun. When law is spoken of in the absolute it is masculine (he). So, In Greek, αὐτός, *he*, does not necessarily denote (or even infer) a person. Teachers of the pre-tribulation rapture have inferred that it denotes a person, even though they know this to be a false argument. Αὐτός, *he*, is simply the pronoun for any such masculine noun. (A house is a *he*, and doorway is a *she*, and a lamb is an *it*, in Greek.) Nevertheless, if one wishes to intimate or to refer to **law** as being a thing and not a person, it is quite acceptable to refer to it indirectly in the neuter as **that which** or **what** (as the Apostle does in “**what** restrains” or “**that which** restrains”) and not as **who** or **he who** now restrains.

In Greek, when someone asks, ‘What is it?’ a hint is in the gender of the question. If the answer that is expected is a masculine thing, like NOMOS (law), the question, though it may be translated in English, ‘What is it?’ would actually be, ‘Who is he?’ or ‘What is he?’ in Greek. To answer the question in Greek would be to say, “He is **law**.” However, since law is not a person, the gender of even the question may be both neuter and masculine, as in the question, ‘What is he?’ (*What* being neuter; *he* being masculine.) If NOMOS (law) is referred to, one might say, ‘Now you know what *he* is,’ (*he* referring to law) instead of saying, ‘Now you know what *it* is.’

**A short note about gender:** There is some experience with gender and the deliberate use to two genders to refer to the same thing in the English language. In much the same way as what is referred to in the previous paragraph, a ship is feminine in English. It would be most proper to say of a ship, ‘She’s a sound vessel.’ But, one can say ‘It’s a sound vessel.’ Ships can be both neuter and feminine at the same time: ‘Who is she?’ means ‘What is the ship’s name?’ ‘What is she?’—with ‘*what*’ being neuter, and ‘*she*’ being feminine—is a question that asks, ‘Under what flag does she sail?’ or ‘What kind of ship is it?’ If one wishes to make the point that a ship is an inanimate and neuter thing and not a person, it is quite acceptable to say of a ship, ‘It’s leaking astern’, rather than to say, ‘She’s leaking astern.’ Even though both are correct and could refer to the same thing, they actually have somewhat different connotations. ‘It’s leaking astern,’ would be more likely to refer to a

superstructure leak toward the back of the ship. But, ‘She’s leaking astern.’ would generally be understood to mean that the hull under the waterline and toward the back of the ship does not have integrity. Gender can add a lot of descriptive character and descriptive precision to a language.

The word for *lawlessness*, ANOMIA, translated “iniquity” in most English translations, is a feminine noun in the Greek. To use the same masculine word, ANOMOS, for both *lawless* (as in the case of *a lawless man* [substantive]) and also for *iniquity* or *lawlessness* was perhaps too confusing, even for the Greeks. So, the Greeks used the feminine form ANOMIA for *iniquity* or *lawlessness* (no-law-ism, to coin a word). In order to restrain ANOMIA (no-law-ism) it is necessary to keep the law in its prominent place in the consciousness of the society, actually in the mind and conscience of each individual in the community.

**b. The mystery of lawlessness (iniquity) has continued to work in this world and in the professing church, eroding the restraint of God’s law out of the midst of human society and human consciousness:**

The following is a more literal and more correct translation of II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verse 1 through 11:

**But I ask you [beseech you, KJV] brethren, concerning the coming (the PAROUSIA, the bodily coming or arrival) of our Lord, even our gathering together unto Him [the coming and the gathering are all one event, the object of one preposition], that you be not soon shaken in mind or troubled, neither by word, nor by spirit, nor by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ were imminent (ENESTEKEN, imminent or impending). Let no one deceive you by any means; for that day (vis. the day of the PAROUSIA of Christ when we are to be gathered unto Him) shall not come except the apostasy comes first, even the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he, as God, sits in the temple of God showing himself that he is God.**

**Do you not remember that when I was yet with you I told you these things: and now you what is restraining [neuter] so that he [the antichrist] *might* be revealed in his own time, for (or because, Greek GAR) [the reason why you know this is because or for] the mystery of lawlessness is already working, until the restrainer (that which restrains) [masculine, though not a person but a thing, according to the previous verse] be out of the midst. And then shall that lawless man be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit [or breath] of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness [or manifestation] of His coming [lit. of the PAROUSIA of Him], even him [referring to the lawless man] whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deception of unrighteousness in those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved. And, on account of this, God shall send them a working of deception so that they should believe the lie.**

The inspired writer's deliberate use of interrelated words pertaining to NOMOS (**law**) in II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, is more than obvious in the original Greek: <sup>(1)</sup>APOSTASIA, *rebellion and standing in rejection of law*; <sup>(2)</sup> "the mystery of ANOMIA," *lawlessness or iniquity*; <sup>(3)</sup> "and (or even) the ANOMOS be revealed," *the lawless man*; <sup>(4)</sup> "those who had pleasure in ADIKIA" (vs.12), *injustice or unlawfulness, unrighteousness in relation to law*. (For the direct correlation between ANOMIA AND ADIKIA see Moulton and Milligan under ANOMOS.)

**c. How do we know for certain that it is the law that restrains lawlessness and that it is the law that is being taken out of the midst:**

(Or, what "letteth?" (verse 7, KJV) In this usage, to "let" [KJV] is to restrain, to hold back, which was one of the usages of the word *let* in the Elizabethan English of the 1611 King James Version.)

Something that has been right in the midst of human society human consciousness has been holding back the working of lawlessness and not allowing that degree of lawlessness to develop that would give rise to the ANOMOS, the lawless man. The restraining factor is thus not allowing the ANOMOS to manifest himself on the scene of history until his appointed time. In the passage itself, the **reason** is given for why **what it is that is restraining** should be more than obvious to us. The Apostle deliberately tells us why. Notice the tenor and the direction of the Apostle's words in the context. He is furnishing the reason why we do know what is restraining. He says that the reason why we should know this is "**for,**" or "**because the mystery of lawlessness (iniquity, no-lawism ) is already working.**" The Apostle plainly says: "**You know what restrains because the mystery of NO-LAWISM is already working.**"

Just as evil men and deceivers have continually become worse and worse in these last days (II Timothy 3:13), the very restraint that the force of law itself actually asserts is in the midst of human society and in the consciousness of adults and children has been continually eroded. This is because the mystery of lawlessness has been working. That is, the restraining factor, LAW, has been in the process of being taken out of our very midst by the working of the mystery of lawlessness (internal iniquity) ever since ancient times. It was already working and doing this in the time of the Apostle's ministry. We know that the awareness of the rule of law, respect for law, LAW itself (in Greek, a person would say Law himself instead of Law itself, because law is masculine ), yes, LAW is the thing that restrains lawlessness in the consciences of men, in families, in cities, and in nations. It is God's law, the very restraint of law itself, "the supremacy of God and the rule of law", that is being eroded and taken out of the midst or out of the way. The mystery of iniquity has been working, now there is barely an obstacle, barely a standard of godly ethics applied, even left in the world. There is almost nothing on the world scale, in the midst of human society and civilization, to restrain the lawless one from grabbing power. "That which" has been restraining lawlessness has been eroded and is almost which is now almost done away ("don aweie," Wyclif, 1380) or "taken out of the way," Tyndale (1534), Cranmer (1539), Geneva (1557), Rhemish (1582), and KJV (1611).

The Apostle did not leave anyone to guess or conjecture what it is that is restraining. He wrote the answer right into both the words and the grammar that he used in his explanation. The causal particle or conjunction **GAR**, *for* or *because*, when it is used in construct with the verb **OIDA**, *know*, designates the rational explanation for why something is known. It furnishes the reason, as in II Thessalonians 2:6, “Now you **know (OIDATE)** the thing that is restraining... **because (GAR, for or because)** the mystery of *no-lawism* [lawlessness] is already working.”

The following are other examples of this in New Testament Greek:

1. “We know (OIDAMEN) that you are a teacher sent from God, for (GAR, for or because) no one is able to do these signs that you do, except God is with him” (John 3:2);
2. “Teacher, we know (OIDAMEN) that you are true, courting no ones favor, because (GAR) you do not see the face [respect the person] of men” (Mark 12:14).

To say that **GAR**, *for* or *because*, in II Thessalonians 2:6, does not serve this function in the Apostle’s explanation, as the pre-tribulation rapturists do, is to ignore the usage of the language and to set aside to continuity of the passage itself. It is to make the Apostle’s explanation uncertain and irrational, as if he were simply begging the question. The inspired author is not ministering questions and sowing doubts and uncertainties. He did not leave it up to the Thessalonian Christians to guess what was restraining. Rather, the Apostle is emphasizing a point in the strongest of terms by means of the structure of language and the distinct Greek words pertaining to LAW that he chose to use.

**AN ANALOGY:** To restrain the ANOMIA (the lawlessness) of an ANOMOS (a lawless man, an outlaw) in order to keep the outlaw from overrunning and ravaging a community, the people of that community have to both want the rule of law and a lawman to enforce the law. They have to want to legislate right laws. “There is no authority except from God” (Romans 13:1). They also have to elect a sheriff (a lawman) and a judiciary to enforce the laws. But, none of these things would avail anything if the people did not want restrain iniquity (inner lawlessness) by teaching right and wrong and the love of “*the supremacy of God the rule of law*” to their citizens, even to educate all their children in these principles. Otherwise, lawlessness will not be restrained, and loss, bondage, destruction, murder, and continued exploitation by lawless people will inevitably result.

When human society will not have the Law of God in anywise to rule over the consciences of men, their marriages, their families, their children, their towns, and their nations, then, whom will the Lord allow—whom has God appointed—to reign over human society? That is the point: the ANOMOS, the lawless man himself, the man of sin, is going to reign over them to their destruction.

In this passage, the only reason for referring to the antichrist or “the man of sin” by the term the ANOMOS (“the lawless man” [substantive]) is to reemphasize that it is the law of God in the midst, in the very consciousness of human society, that restrains lawlessness. It



is law itself that is being rebelled against, that is slowly being taken out of the midst. By definition, one cannot apostatize against anything else but law and lawful authority.

Once again, the advocates of the pre-tribulation rapture have missed the grammar, the sequence, the parallelisms, and the actual build of the Apostle's explanation in II Thessalonians, Chapter 2. Obviously, because of this, they have simply missed the point of the passage and made up their own little story. Even missing the point does not give them an excuse for making up their own story and substituting their own conjecture and contrivances for what they have not understood. Even though many people have "**itching ears**", those who exploit the itching ears of others with the contrivances of men are the more culpable.

The Apostle explains the nature of the on-going conflict. First, there is that which has been restraining lawlessness and not allowing circumstances in this world to develop so that Satan's demonic MAN OF SIN (the ANOMOS) can come to power and fully manifest the evil one's personal enmity against God. Second, something else has been eroding that restraining influence which has been in the midst of human consciousness and society. The **mystery of iniquity** (or *of lawlessness, of no-lawism*) has been working to take away (to take out of the midst) that which has been restraining lawlessness. That force was already working when Paul wrote the Epistle of II Thessalonians. It was **eroding that which was restraining**. That is, this working of the *mystery of iniquity* was in the process of removing from the midst *that which* was restraining and keeping that lawless man from appearing. There is no other honest way to deal with Paul's explanation. When the "supremacy of God and rule of law" are sufficiently removed from the consciousness of men, the apostasy will have come to universal fruition. Men will worship themselves; their god will be their belly; and will sell their soul for a piece of bread. So, one should ask the advocates of the pre-tribulation rapture if they actually believe that the Holy Spirit was already in the process of being removed from the midst and taken out of the world when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians. **If that which is restraining were the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit was in the process of being removed as a consequence of the working of the mystery of iniquity ever since the time of the Apostles, or actually before.**

Do they believe this? Do these ministers and teachers know the consequences of refusing to read what the Scriptures actually say? Do they know what they are reading? Obviously, their presuppositions have precluded their ability to read the Scriptures. Any candid and honest reading of the text does not allow their assumptions.

II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, says absolutely nothing about the Spirit of God doing the restraining and then being taken out of the world. These ideas are merely *a priori* assumptions that have been first subtly suggested as an explanation of the passage and then overtly foisted onto the text. They are ideas that actually have nothing whatsoever to do with the actual words and order of thought in the passage itself. But, after this false approach to Holy Scripture was perpetrated and imposed on this passage of Scripture, many have about to justify it by pains-taking and artful but false means.

## **8. The antichrist (that ANOMOS) is going to be destroyed at the PAROUSIA of the Lord, at the only future bodily coming (arrival) of the Lord from heaven (II Thessalonians 2:8):**

After setting forth his proposition in the first sentence of II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, the Apostle Paul does proceed to elucidate and clarify more of what will happen at the PAROUSIA of the Lord. He explains that “that wicked” [KJV], literally, the ANOMOS, **the lawless man**) will be destroyed at the Lord’s PAROUSIA (at His arrival from heaven). In verse 8, the Apostle affirms that this ANOMOS is the one “**whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit (or breath) of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness (with the manifestation) of His PAROUSIA (of His arrival).**”

It is Jesus Christ Himself who has declared that His saints shall be gathered unto Him at the event of His PAROUSIA, i.e. upon His arrival from heaven (Matthew 24). This is “the PAROUSIA (the arrival) of the Son of man”, the one bodily coming (or arrival) that the saints are now looking forward to with earnest expectation. And, it is clearly to take place after the conclusion of the tribulation, for it is then that the antichrist will be destroyed by the brightness of His arrival. (The antichrist’s destruction is obviously the end of his reign, after he has perpetrated all that he was appointed and allowed to do. It is not at the beginning and not in the middle of his reign.) Thus, the Apostle made it exceedingly clear that the one singular PAROUSIA of the Lord will not take place until after the tribulation. The expected arrival of the Lord from heaven will be the termination of the reign of the ANOMOS.

**The Church is told to expect rest from its troubles at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His mighty angels taking vengeance...**

In declaring that the time of “our gathering together unto him” will be when the Lord comes in vengeance against the lawless man, the Apostle Paul is simply elucidating what he had said earlier in this second letter to the Thessalonians (in Chapter 1). **The Apostle Paul had said in II Thessalonians, Chapter 1, verse 7 and 8, that there is a time (an event) coming when the Christians of this present era who are suffering tribulation and persecution, as the Thessalonian Christians had been suffering, shall rest from tribulation.** The Apostle said:

**And to you who are troubled [you who are under oppressive tribulation], rest with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with *the* angels of His power in fire of flame, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, even on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

We, together with our fellow Christians of this era, are not to expect rest from tribulation until “**the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in fire of flame, taking vengeance of those who do not know God...**”

Especially to those who are suffering persecution, tribulation, and death, if the Church were going to obtain rest from these afflictions and troubles by being raptured before the

Lord comes in power to take vengeance on those who reject the Gospel, one would certainly think that the Apostle would have said this to the Church. In fact, if this were the case, he would certainly have been obligated to say this in this very passage in II Thessalonians, Chapter 1, verse 7 and 8. The Apostle's words are clear: the Church is to expect no rest from its many tribulations and persecutions until the day of the Lord's arrival and revelation of Himself with His mighty angels, taking vengeance at the end of the tribulation.

**9. In II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verse 1, how many arrivals of the Lord did the Apostle say that he was going to talk about? Just one! The PAROUSIA!**

Did the Apostle Paul speak of that one arrival, "the PAROUSIA of the Lord", in I Thessalonians, Chapter 4, verses 15 and 16, when the saints are caught up by the clouds to meet the Lord in the air? Did he speak of "the PAROUSIA of the Lord" in II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verse one, "even our gathering together unto Him?" Unless he deliberately intended to confuse the Christians of Thessalonica, he was talking about exactly the same arrival, together with its accompanying rapture, that he spoke of in I Thessalonians 4: 13-5:1 The Apostle would not use deceitful language. When he said, "This we say unto by the word of the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:15), he did not speak a different PAROUSIA from the one that the Lord spoke of when He is going to send His angels to gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven (Matthew 24:27-31, Mark 13:27). But, the question really is whether the Apostle spoke of a different "the PAROUSIA of Him" in II Thessalonians 2, **verse 8**, when the Lord is going to destroy the antichrist with the brightness of His arrival ("the PAROUSIA of Him"). Is that one a different "the PAROUSIA of the Lord" from the one that he had spoken of in I Thessalonians 4:15-17, and different from the one that he spoke of in the first sentence of II Thessalonians, Chapter 2? Of course they are all one and the same. For, to say that they are different arrivals of the Lord from heaven is to say that the Apostle either made a deliberate and deceptive bait-and-switch or inadvertently contradicted himself. Actually, it would be to say that the Holy Spirit contradicted himself. The explanatory build of the passage does not allow that the PAROUSIA of the Lord in verse 8 (when the Lord destroys the Man of Sin) is a different event than the PAROUSIA that the Apostle spoke of in verse 1 (when the saints of this era and of Thessalonica are going to be gathered unto the Lord).

Yet, those who do teach the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture presume to denigrate the Apostle's inspired words and bring them down to just such a level of contradictory and deceptive double-talk. What they teach is tantamount to saying that the Apostle did a bait-and-switch and that the PAROUSIA of our gathering together unto Him both in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and in II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verse 1, is a different "the PAROUSIA of Him" from the one spoken of in II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verse 8. **For they say that the arrival of the Lord and the rapture that the Christians are waiting for is not the arrival when He is going to destroy the antichrist.** Yet, the whole point of Paul's explanation with regard to timing focuses on this point. This is the reason why the

Thessalonian Christians should not have been deceived. The great apostasy which culminates in the appearance of Man of Sin himself has to happen before the arrival of the Lord and the rapture of the Church. For, the Lord is going to destroy the man of sin with the brightness of that same arrival from heaven. It is the same arrival when the Church will finally rest from its tribulations by going up to meet the coming Lord and to conduct Him to his victory (I Thessalonians 4: 13-18 and II Thessalonians 1:7 and 8).

Especially in Greek, **explanatory composition demands a logical progression of thought according to rules.** Interestingly enough, the English adjective used to describe these particular laws or rules of reason and explanation in exegesis and hermeneutics is *nomological*. One of those important rules requires that when a given passage says that it is going to talk about a particular thing (or event), and then, in the explanation that follows, it proceeds to refer to that same thing (or event) and to elucidate it in the same and terms, using exactly the same word (usually referring back to it by employ the definite article also), the ensuing explanation is necessarily talking about and elucidating the very same thing (or event).

Even though this is clearly demonstrable in II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, there are those who would assert that the text is talking about a different subject in the explanation in verse 8 than the subject that the author said that he was going to elucidate in verse 1. (By the way, what these others have asserted is contrary to the nomological rules and standards of explanatory prose, especially those of Greek explanatory prose.) The words **“the arrival of the Lord”** in verse 1 of II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, with the definite article, is referred to in the ensuing explanation by the words, **“the arrival of Him”** (verse 8). Both of these instances necessarily refer to the same event. The necessary frame of reference for “the PAROUSIA of the Lord, even our gathering together unto Him,” was established by the Lord Jesus (Mark 13) and by the Apostle in I Thessalonians 4:13-18. Otherwise, the Apostle would be contradicting his own previously established frame of reference.

The author said that He was going to elucidate what is going to precede and also what is going to transpire at the arrival of the Lord from heaven, even at the event of our gathering (rapture) to meet our coming Lord. The Apostle went on to explain in verse 8 that the lawless one (the Antichrist) will be destroyed by the brightness of the Lord arrival from heaven. All this is going to happen at the one arrival of the Lord. Therefore, that arrival cannot have begun to take place yet. This is because the Antichrist, who will sit in the temple (the NAOS in Jerusalem) proclaiming himself to be above all that is called God or that is worshipped, has not arrived yet.

So, with regard to the whole matter, the pre-tribulation rapturists have endeavored to set aside the Scripture’s frame of reference and impose their own extra-biblical and presuppositional frame of reference. They have violated the vocabulary, the grammar, and the nomological standards of exegesis and hermeneutics in order to corrupt the Apostle’s explanation and in order to impose their own presuppositions upon it. They have demonstrated their own lawlessness in trying to set the Word of God against itself. The mystery of lawlessness in these last times is well illustrated by the ungodly license, the

willful ignorance, and the presumptuous false teaching that teachers and preachers have done with these passages of Holy Scripture.

**10. In II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, there are two bodily comings mentioned. In each case, the word PAROUSA is used:**

Two different PAROUSIAI are set forth in the same sentence in the original: see verses 8 and 9. There is the one PAROUSIA of the Lord when He come to put an end to the reign of the ANOMOS, the lawless man, the antichrist; there is also the mention of the PAROUSIA of that lawless man, “whose PAROUSIA is after the working of Satan...” It is important to take note of this because there are those who want to deny the bodily presence of the man of sin, the antichrist, and to say that this ANOMOS, lawless one, or antichrist is just an idea or a system and not a personal human being. But, to speak of his PAROUSIA in juxtaposition to the PAROUSIA of the Lord, and especially to mention it in the same continuing sentence, is clearly to set forth the bodily arrivals of both on the scene of history. It is intentionally to mark the contrast of the two individuals in combat and to emphasize the victory of Christ.. To set aside the bodily coming of the one is necessarily to set aside the bodily coming of the other and to vitiate the intent and structure of the whole passage.

**So, exactly what was the Apostle’s purpose for writing this passage in II Thessalonians, Chapter 2?**

In the first sentence of II Thesallonians, Chapter 2, the Apostle committed himself to elucidate the timing of the PAROUSIA when we shall be gathered to the Lord. He then explained why it is not imminent. It is not imminent because the very apostasy that gives rise to the man of sin (the antichrist) must come first (cf. also verse 9). The Apostle is very logical and clear: these things must happen first because the Lord is going to destroy the man of sin with the brightness of His arrival from heaven. The young Church of the Thessalonians was already suffering tribulation and persecution unto death. They thought that they were not appointed to these things, but that they where going to be raptured, gathered to the Lord, before the dreaded circumstances, which they could see were about to engulf them in Thessalonica, could run their course. At least, they thought their rapture had to be imminent, so much so that some had stopped working and pulled up stakes, as it were, to go to be with Jesus at any moment. The Apostle set them straight. It is not imminent. The saints are not to be in darkness about the things that signal the Lord’s return. They are to look for the things that are appointed to happen, the things that are immediately to precede the bodily coming of the Lord, and (or even) our gathering together unto Him.

**11. When the Apostle said, “But you are not in darkness,” what did He mean?**

Only because the PAROUSIA of the Lord is not imminent, but is to be preceded by certain identifiable events, could the Apostle say, “**But you, brethren, are not in**

**darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief”** (I Thessalonians 5:4). If the day of the coming of Christ, even the day of our gathering together unto him, were imminent, it would also overtake His elect as a thief. They would not know when to expect it any more than anyone else. But, it will not overtake them as a thief. The day of the Lord’s PAROUSIA will overtake those who are under the darkness, the unbelief, and the ignorance of this age **“as a thief.”** On the other hand, those who truly trust in the words of Christ’s New Testament will be fully aware of what things must precede their Lord’s coming. Those things, when they happen, will be signposts standing in proper order to strengthen their faith in all of the prophetic statements of their Master. That is why there Master foretold them “all things.” By the time that the PAROUSIA of the Lord does come, they will have been fully expecting it. No, it will not overtake Christ’s true servants as a thief, but this can only be because the day of the Lord’s PAROUSIA is not imminent. They know what precedes it.

The Apostle had to remind the people of the Church of Thessalonica that he had already told them what things had to happen before day of the Lord’s PAROUSIA, before “our gathering together unto Him.” He said, “Do you not remember that when I was yet with you I told you these things?” (II Thessalonians 2:5). The only reason why they had been deceived into thinking that the rapture was imminent was because they had either forgotten or been distracted from what the Apostle had told them. Like pre-tribulation rapturists today, people in the Church of Thessalonica wrongly held that their rapture was imminent. Paul corrected that wrong doctrine by telling them what things had to happen first.

## **12. Christ, the Prophet, has prophesied the Order of Events:**

In Mark, Chapter 13, Christ spoke of the great tribulation and the particular time, in relation to that tribulation, when His saints are going to be raptured and gathered to Himself:

**For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for elects’ sake, whom he has chosen, he has shortened the days. And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to deceive, if it were possible, even the elect.**

**But take heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall He send his angels and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. (Mark 13: 19-27, emphasis added)**

The word translated “**after**,” in “**after that tribulation**” (Mark 13:24), is **META** with the accusative: it simply means **after**. Here **META** in “**after that tribulation**” is followed by

two instances of “**and then**” (KAI TOTE): “**and then** shall they see the Son of Man coming...” and, “**And then** (KAI TOTE) shall He send His angels and shall gather together His elect...”

**META...KAI TOTE...KAI TOTE...**, is another construction that has the force of saying, ‘*After this, this happens, and then this happens and then this happens.*’ As EPEITA/EITA, when used with regard to time, designate things in their chronological sequence, this **META...KAI TOTE...KAI TOTE...** construction designates a particular order of events as those events relate to a leading adverb or preposition of time. In this instance **META** is the leading preposition of time. The meaning is that **the rapture** of all of God’s elect who have embraced the Lord up to the point in time of His arrival (of the **PAROUSIA** of Him) **shall take place “after that tribulation.”** Compare II Thessalonians 2:8, “**Until** he [or it] be out of the midst, **and then** the lawless man shall be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His arrival [of His **PAROUSIA**].” **Until** (ARTI with EŌS) is the leading adverb of time. It is followed by **and then** (KAI TOTE). The meaning of the verse here used for comparison is that not until the restraining factor has been taken out to the midst shall the lawless man appear, and that the same lawless man will be destroyed with the brightness of Christ’s expected arrival from heaven.

In Mark, Chapter 13, Christ’s prophecy of this future **order of events**, has an added warning, “**But take heed: behold I have foretold you all things.**” He has not only told us both the certainty of the events themselves and the certainty of the order in which those events will take place, He has also emphasized that He has told **all things** concerning the order of the execution of those events. The only gathering together of the saints (rapture) mentioned in His prophetic order of events and the only one mentioned anywhere in the Scriptures is “after that tribulation.” Nothing in Scripture contradicts Christ’s order of events.

**In the plainest of language, the Lord Jesus Christ has told us that the rapture (the only rapture of the saints mentioned in Scripture) is going to take place after the tribulation. Jesus put special emphasis on this fact by warning us to take heed, lest anyone should add to or try to nullify what he has told us about this. We are to allow no one to deceive us into thinking otherwise.** After the Lord has said this, it is hard to imagine someone who purports to be a servant of this Master and a faithful minister of His Word who could assert that Christ did not tell us **all things**; that is, all the actual truth about the order of the events (see the second part of the introduction concerning the signs of Christ the Prophet). There would be no point in telling us to take heed if the order of events that He laid down was either incomplete or chronologically incorrect, for there would then be no way to take heed on the basis of the things that the Lord has prophesied. Beware of anyone who, under any pretense or on the basis of any assumption whatsoever, puts a question mark over the Lord’s Word, over any of His warnings. Who was it that first said, “**Yea, hath God said...?**” Nevertheless, there are many who contradict the Lord’s order of events and declare that Christ did not tell us **all things** concerning that order of events. In spite of what Christ has said, they boldly declare that it is before the great tribulation that

the saints shall be gathered unto Him from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost parts of heaven.

Have they suggested that people in the Church are to presuppose that Jesus was only speaking to some kind of distinct class of Jewish believers in the Olivet Discourse and not to the Church? Those who suggest such things actually presuppose and proffer A DIFFERENT KIND OF NEW TESTAMENT, one that is not found in the Holy Scriptures. This will be dealt with later in this treatise.

How many pre-tribulation rapture timelines and charts have we seen that boldly contradict Christ's own timeline of events in the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13:24-27)? These all too common timelines contradict the Lord and contradict the grammar of His inspired Word. The set aside the sign of Christ's future coming. One should inform those who presuppose a pre-tribulation rapture that, according to their means of interpretation, even if Christ had wanted to stipulate that His saints are to be gathered unto Him after the tribulation, He would have had no way to express this. This is because they presupposition supersedes and qualifies or determines the words of Christ.

**There is an ironclad rule:** a prophecy concerning a certain sequence of future events may be referred to again and elucidated in subsequent passages of the Holy Scriptures. The subsequent passages can furnish explanations and greater details concerning that designated order of events. However, it is always an error to construe or to place an interpretation upon such subsequent passages so as to make them contradict the order of events that has been laid down in the first instance. We will be held accountable for knowing and believing the prophetic order of events that the Lord has given to us.

**An Important Example:** The Lord, through Daniel, revealed an order of events pertaining to a succession of world powers (Daniel 7): He set forth four great beasts as representative figures of these world powers that would arise: Babylon, Persia, Greece or Greco-Macedonia, and Rome. He spoke of one who would eventually arise out of the Roman Beast to hold universal dominion for "a time, times, and half of a time" (three and a half years) and to make war with the saints and to prevail against them. This one will have power to wear out the saints, but only until the Ancient of Days comes and the power to do justice and to exercise dominion is given to the saints of the Most High. At that time the saints shall possess the kingdom (vs.22).

In the prophetic description, when the Ancient of Days came, "the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (vs. 11, cf. Revelation 19:20). But, of the four beasts (kingdoms), it was only the Roman beast that was utterly destroyed. "As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time" (vs. 12). According to Daniel's prophecy, the saints of the most High do not possess the kingdom and do not exercise dominion over this earth until after the utter destruction and perdition in flames of the Roman beast.

Yet, the great Roman/Byzantine error set aside this prophesied order of events. The Roman/Byzantine error is the Constantine/Justinian amillennial/post-millennial error (also known as the anti-millennarian error). It construes the various passages of the New Testament so as to make them contradict the order of events that God revealed through Daniel. Obviously Emperors Constantine (288-337 AD) and Justinian (483-565 AD) were very much integral figures in that Roman beast. By no stretch of the imagination had the great Roman beast been consumed and cast into the lake of fire when these two established



and codified the false Roman millennial kingdom and world order. It was this error that plunged the world into the corruption of the dark ages and the medieval oppressions. Under the church/state oligarchy that was orchestrated under these two Emperors, everyone was to *presuppose* that the saints indeed possessed the kingdom and that the millennium had already arrived. The scarlet-colored beast on which the harlot religion would ride was largely built upon this *a priori* deception and error. It is a presupposition that boldly contradicted the sequence of events that was prophesied in Scripture.

It was a matter getting people to presuppose that the millennial kingdom is of the present world order and that the saints are to take the kingdom and rule the nations with a rod of iron before the Christ's second coming. But the Scriptures say that the saints will sit as judges and exercise dominion over the earth after Christ returns, after the regeneration and restoration has come (cf. Daniel 7, Matthew 19:28 and Revelation 2:27 and 20:4).

This great anti-millenarian error is the *a priori* assumption that has given rise to the corruption of papal imperialism (as if the church were to operate as a monarchy on earth). Multitudes of other corruptions under the name of Christianity, which have arisen out of amillennial state/church imperialism, are a direct result of the anti-millenarian error: savage crusades and oppressions in the name of Christ, untold pogroms, persecutions, inquisitions, murders, and massacres. The Roman beast has used the harlot church, just as she has ridden in symbiosis on the beast's back. She has become intoxicated with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. The deadly wound of this same beast is about to be healed. All those whose names are not written in the book of life will marvel and serve the beast.

**But, how could so many sincere people, sincere unto death, be so wrong for so long?** All they had to do was to buy into a set of *a priori* assumptions. They only viewed the Scriptures in the light of what the Emperor's endowed, tax-exempt, controlled oligarchy of clergy told them to presuppose. (Be sure to read the second part of the introduction of this paper, p.3 ff.) That was the problem that plagued the medieval professing church, and, in even more subtle ways, the same problem still plagues the professing church.

Until Christ comes and the saints obtain that coming age and kingdom, Satan is **“the god of this age, who blinds the minds of those who do not believe”** (II Cor. 4:4). “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour” (I Peter 5:8). If the Devil is “the god of this age” and “the one who is deceiving the whole world” (Rev. 12:9) we are definitely not yet in the millennial reign of Christ (Rev. 20:3). The Holy Spirit describes Satan not only as that old serpent and the dragon, but the Spirit also emphatically describes the Devil by what he is doing: the Apostle John, in the Spirit, describes him as **“the one who is deceiving the whole world”** (Rev. 12:9). Satan is **not** called the one who had been or the one who was deceiving the whole world, he is described (with the present participle) as the one who **is** deceiving the whole world. There is a deliberate contrast between the way the Devil is described in Revelation 12 by what he **is now doing** and what the Devil **shall no longer be doing** during that promised millennial age (Revelation 20). Revelation 20:1-3 is not an isolated passage with no previously established frame of reference in Scripture; it is the sequel of Revelation 12, to which it is to be carefully compared. The distinction between the two passages is clear: in the present age, Satan is described as **“the one who is deceiving the whole world”** (Rev. 12:9); but, during the future millennium, Satan will be deceiving the nations **“no more”** (Revelation 20:3). The words translated *no more* do not mean *some more but not quite to the same extent*. The force and usage of “no more” OUKETI/MĒKETI is demonstrated in the words of Romans 11:6, “if it is of grace, it is no more of works.” It does not mean *some more of works but not quite to the same extent*.) Satan is not yet bound so that he cannot deceive the nations, but he shall be bound to that extent during the “thousand years” (Rev. 20), i.e. during the only millennium mentioned in

the Bible. Satan will not be the god of that age and will not be deceiving the world when Christ, together with His saints, rules the nations for a thousand years.

In spite of the fact that the Scriptures declare plainly that we are not in the millennium, amillenarians have chosen only to view these Scripture passages under the presupposition that we are already in the millennium. Therefore, to them, these Scripture passages could not possibly mean what they plainly say.

Those who willfully contradict Christ's order of events, as He set forth that order of events in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 21), may also soon suffer the disastrous ramifications and consequences of their error. When the beast fully manifests itself and the lawless man, the antichrist, reigns during the great tribulation and overcomes the saints, when the Church is very much still here, what effects will this have upon all of those people who had believed that the church would not go through that tribulation? Those who were exploited and deceived into thinking that they were going to be raptured before any of these things came to pass will have been set up for even more deception. What denials and machinations will teachers of the pre-tribulation rapture involve themselves in at that time? Their doctrine, even now, plays right into the hand of the coming ANOMOS, the Wicked Man.

### **13. A little Dendrology (study of trees):**

**Is summer suddenly upon us before the fig tree's branches have become soft and tender and before its leaves have appeared? Or, rather, does the fig tree let us know, by the softening of her branches and by the emerging of her leaves, that summer is about to arrive?**

While sitting amongst the trees of the Mt. of Olives, Christ gave to us the prophecy concerning the sequence of events that would surround His Second Coming. It was far more than just coincidental that He would proclaim this prophecy on the Mount of Olives, that same Mount of Olives from which He was going to ascend to the Father and to which He shall return on the day of His arrival from heaven. It was there that He proceeded to give us the following example:

**But from the fig tree learn the example [parable]: when her branch is already tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. Thus you know, when you shall see these things come to pass, that He is at the door. (Mark 13:28-29, cf. Matthew 24:32-33)**

In the context of Christ's message on the Mount of Olives, what are "these things" that must come to pass before Christ comes, in order that we can know when His coming is imminent? The following is a list of those things that shall have transpired before the PAROUSIA (Matthew 24:27, cf. Mark 13 and Luke 21), the arrival, of the Lord Jesus:

1. "The Gospel must first be published among all nations." Mark 13:10.
2. The abomination of desolation as spoken of by Daniel the Prophet will have been set up at the site of the temple in Jerusalem, Matthew 24:15 (cf. Daniel 11:45).
3. The great tribulation shall have run its course, Matthew 24:29.
4. False christs and false prophets shall have appeared to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect of God, Matthew 24:23-24.
5. Stars of heaven shall have fallen, Matthew 24:29.

6. The sun shall have been darkened, Matthew 24:29.
7. The moon will have ceased to shine for a time, Matthew 24:29.

“So, likewise you, **when you shall see all these things, know that it (or He) is near, (even) at the doors**” (Matthew 24:33). That is the time when the Church will know that Christ’s PAROUSIA, His arrival, is imminent, because those things that shall precede it will all have happened. It is only after these things have transpired that He will come with the clouds and rapture His saints, sending His angels and gathering them to Himself “from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost parts of heaven. Once again, this is the only reason why the Apostle could say, **“But you, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief”** (I Thessalonians 5:4).

**In the context, we are to watch for the things that shall immediately precede Christ’s coming.** By these things, we will know that “He is at the door.” That is why He has “told us all things.” On the other hand, if His coming were imminent, if there were to be no identifiable events to precede it and presage it, the true church would be just as much in the dark about the actual time of His arrival as the rest of the world is. It would also then overtake the His saints as a thief.

#### **14. When did the rapture become imminent?**

**When was the church supposed to start regarding the first resurrection and the rapture of the Church to an imminent event? The Apostles Paul, John, and Peter did not believe that it was imminent in their day.’**

Did the Apostles go around saying, ‘Keep looking up!’? Not only did the Apostle Paul say that certain things must happen first, but Paul wrote to Timothy of his own coming martyrdom: “For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand” (I Timothy 4:6). In the same letter, Paul goes on to write, “Do your diligence to come before winter” (I Timothy 4:26), it is apparent that he knows that his death is not immediate. Yet, he is **not** saying, ‘If the Lord does not come first, come before winter...’ He was not telling Timothy that the Lord’s coming and the rapture are impending. Paul did not think that the Lord was going to come before he was martyred. In fact, the tenor of Paul’s letter to Timothy was to get him ready for a long run of endurance and struggle and to tell him to prepare a succession of ministers to carry on after him (II Timothy 2:2). To say that “the Lord is at hand” did not mean to the Apostle Paul that He was going to come at any moment. Timothy was to bring Mark with him, because Paul had further work for Mark to do. But, what the Apostle’s teaching was (and is) is that in the category of resurrections and the hope of the fulfillment of Christ’s prophetic promises, the next thing in that category or sequence, EPEITA, is the resurrection and rapture of those who are Christ’s at His arrival (I Corinthians 15:23).

Neither did Peter think that the Lord’s coming was imminent. Notice his words, “Knowing that shortly I must put off (this) my tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus has shown me.” It was not just that the rapture was not going to happen before his death, but he was going to make provision for us after his death: “Moreover, I will endeavor that you

may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance” (II Peter 1:14-15). Telling everyone that he must die soon because the fatal affliction that the Lord spoke of (John 21:18), whereby he was not able to clothe himself and was carried about by others, had come upon him. To tell people of his impending death and to make preparation for the Church after his death is not telling people that he really wanted them to expect to be raptured any moment. The Epistle of II Peter was not written as a mere contingency, just in case the Lord did not come before the Church would need to make some use of it. If the writers of the New Testament had indeed believed that the Lord’s coming was imminent in their day, all of the New Testament would have been written down merely as a contingency, just in case the Lord did not come before any of their writings were completed and distributed. Of course this is an absurdity, but only because the doctrine of an imminent rapture is an absurdity that does not come from the Scriptures.

John, in preparation for his own death, had to correct a misapprehension concerning him that had gone out among disciples of his day. John had to write, “Then went the saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple [being John himself] should not die: yet Jesus did not say to him. ‘He shall not die:’ but, ‘If I will that he remain until I come, what is (that) to you?’.” (See John 21:22-23.) Apparently, the Apostle John not only did not expect the Lord to come before he died, but he did not want anyone in the Church to think that he thought that. Otherwise, he would not have bothered to include in his Gospel the fact that the brethren misunderstood this. It would not have been necessary to include it. But, John also wrote that the first resurrection was not going to take place until after the time of the reign of the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 19:11 through 20:7).

(Accordingly, none of the apostolic and early church fathers or the first and second centuries, whose writings are extant, believed in the imminent return of the Lord.)

### **15. Jesus told the Parable of the Pounds, Luke 19, because people erroneously thought that the kingdom should immediately appear. We are waiting for his appearing and His kingdom (cf. II Timothy 4:1).**

**The first principle of the parable:** To correct those who thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear, Jesus spoke of “a certain nobleman who went into a **far** country to receive a kingdom and to return” (Luke 19:12, the parable 19:11-26). The nobleman entrusted one pound (μύα = 100 denarii) to each of his ten servants, instructing them to transact business until he returned. In the parable the idea of a considerable time laps is expressed: first, there was the thought of the far distance of the journey that was necessary for the nobleman to undertake in order to receive the kingdom; secondly, a considerable amount of time would be required for the investment to accrue the expected interest and profits; thirdly, the judgment on the one servant who had squandered the long period of time given to him and wasted that considerable investment opportunity was a well founded condemnation. On the other hand, if the unprofitable servant had reason to believe that his master’s return was imminent, he would have had a perfectly good excuse for having his master’s money ready at any moment.

**The secondary principle of this parable** is also significant. The original language in verse 15 is not sufficiently translated by the word, “when he was returned” (KJV), and certainly not by the words, “and returned home” (NIV). Jesus made a point of saying, “and it happened **at the returning of him** (or **upon the return of him**) after having received the kingdom” (viz. it was at the very event of his return) that he both summoned his servants for a reckoning of accounts and also put to death those who had militantly remonstrated against him and refused his right to rule over them.

In the parable, Jesus’ primary point was that His return and the appearance of His kingdom is not to be regarded as immediate, not imminent. However, He also made the secondary point that at the moment or at the event of His return, after having obtained the kingdom, he will both acknowledge His faithful servants, giving them authority to rule (verses 16-19), and put to death those who had engaged in organized resistance against his right to reign.

The primary reason and intent of the parable excludes the *imminent return* assumption of the pre-tribulation rapturists. The secondary point of the parable also excludes the pre-tribulation rapturist’s position for another reason; their position is that the Lord is not going to come in judgment upon His enemies at that return when He summons His servants to himself and rewards them. According to them, He is to come with vengeance at a separate and later coming.

Incidentally, the parable very clearly and deliberately excludes the typical anti-millenarian assumption that the kingdom actually was manifest within twelve days of the time that Christ spoke this parable. Christ did rise from the dead within that time. According to a large number of amillenarians, it was at that time that the kingdom appeared and was supposedly manifest among the faithful. Accordingly, they say that Christ, in them, is ruling the nations with a rod of iron at this present time. However, the appearance of the kingdom in the parable is not until the nobleman returns. Also, in that the servants are given dominion only after the return of their master and king, Jesus’ teaching excludes the assumption of post-millenarians. The parable coincides in every aspect with the post-tribulation/pre-millennial return of Christ.

## **16. The usage of the words *EIS APANTĒSIN* (to meet, as in “to meet the Lord in the air”):**

In the time of the Koiné Greek (the language of the original New Testament and of the Septuagint) whenever an expected king, an expected dignitary, conquering general, or any person of note (a person who is to be acknowledged or congratulated) comes to a city or a town, the people of that city or town are expected to go out to meet that person as he is approaching and to accompany or conduct him into their city, town, or residence. This was the required practice at the arrival of a king or dignitary. To fail to go out and meet a king or a dignitary and accompany him in would have been a gross affront denoting hostility on the part of the people whose city or town the king was approaching. The particular idiom translated “to meet” is EIS APANTESIN. Whenever this idiom is used in this particular

context, i.e. in conjunction with the expected arrival of any person, it always denotes going out and meeting that expected person and conducting or accompanying him on his way in.

This Greek idiom, when used in this context, in no way expresses that the expected person either stops, or remains where the people meet him, or turns around and goes the other way, taking the people who meet him with him. On the contrary, the expected person simply continues to come. In the passage in I Thessalonians, Chapter 4, the language in no way intimates that the Lord either interrupts or discontinues his descent. Those who are caught up and go out to meet the Lord actually join with Him in celebration and welcome by accompanying Him as He continues to descend to the appointed destination (vis. the Mount of Olives, Zechariah 14:4). The original language of II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, expresses no other kind of action.

The following are some examples of this idiom EIS APANTESIN (used in the context of arrival) in the various ancient versions of the Septuagint:

1. As David and a number of his men returned to Ziglax in victory, returning with the wives and children of all those who were of his band of men and with all of the plunder, the men who had stayed there in Ziglax went out *to meet* (εις απατησιν) those who were returning in triumph. After David had come into Ziglax, he sent the plunder to the elders of Judah (I Samuel 30:21).
2. Jael went out *to meet* Captain Sisera (εις απατησιν) and to conduct him into her tent. Once in her tent, She gave the thirsty and exhausted man some yogurt (LĒBEN) to make him sleepy and a stake (Judges 4:18). She nailed him!
3. When Jephthah was arriving at his house after the victory over Ammon, his daughter come out with timbrels and dances *to meet* him (εις απατησιν) and to receive him home with joy (Judges 11:31&34).
4. When David was in the process of returning after the Absalom/Ahithophel *coup de tat* had been put down, Shemei spared his life by going down to the Jordan with those who went *to meet* David (εις απατησιν) and accompany him back to Jerusalem (I Kings 2:8).
5. As the Shunammite came running to Elisha, Gehazi was sent *to meet* her (εις απατησιν) as she was coming and to greet her by inquiring of her welfare and the welfare of her husband and son. When she did finally arrive to clutched the Prophet Elisha's feet, Gehazi, who had accompanied her to Elisha, came over to thrust her away (II Kings 4:26).
6. When Jehu was on his way to Jezreel, the king sent horsemen out *to meet* him (εις απατησιν) and to ask if he was coming in peace. The horsemen who were sent, one after another, joined with Jehu to accompany him into Jezreel. The king himself finally went *to meet* (εις απατησιν) him and to enquire of him if he was coming to Jezreel in peace. Jehu continued to come into Jezreel in triumph over two wicked kings. Once there, he dealt with Jezebel. There was a canine feast in Jezreel (II Kings 9:16-31).

There are many other examples of EIS APANTESIN (used in this kind of context), but there is no instance where an expected or arriving person did anything other than continue to come, as he or she was met and immediately accompanied on the way in—at least in some fashion—by those who went out to meet him or her that was arriving. The person who was arriving or coming always continued on his or her way to the municipality or to

the location from which those had gone out to meet him had previously been. At least, there is no instance when this idiom is used with reference to an arriving person who, after being met, then stopped or changed his course and did not proceed all the way to the appointed destination. The nature of the meeting and accompanying that this idiom refers to in this kind of context is not subject to doubt.

### **But, how is the idiom EIS APANTESIN used elsewhere in the New Testament?**

Let us look at the other places in the New Testament where this idiom, EIS APANTESIN, is used:

- (1) The Apostle Paul was a prisoner being brought into Rome for trial before the Emperor Nero. Luke, the writer of Acts who was with Paul at the time, writes, “...and so we went toward Rome. And from there [vis. out of Rome], when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us [i.e. they came EIS APANTESIN] as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns: whom, when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. And when we came to Rome...” (From Acts 28:14-16). Take note of what is expressed here: the brethren who were at Rome came out from that city to meet Paul, after they heard that he was coming. Having met up with Paul out there at Appii Forum, the brethren from Rome conducted him, together with Luke, on into the city.
- (2) In the parable of the wedding and the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), after the wedding chamber had been prepared and the virgins had waited with long expectation, finally at midnight they heard a cry: “Behold, the bridegroom is coming, go out to meet him [EIS APANTESIN]!” The wise virgins went out with their bright burning lamps to meet the expected bridegroom and to conduct him on his way into the prepared wedding. Then, after the wise virgins had accompanied the bridegroom in, the door was shut.

The description of the actual event in I Thessalonians, Chapter 4, verses 13 through 18, with the same use of the idiom EIS APANTESIN, is a true sequel to the parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25. Both deal with the same subject and the same arrival, and both express the same usage.

The only teaching that the language of I Thessalonians, Chapter 4, verses 15 through 17, allows is that, at “the PAROUSIA of the Lord,” the dead in Christ shall rise first and then we who are alive and remain unto the PAROUSIA shall be caught up in (or by) the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (EIS APANTESIN). That is, we are to meet the Lord in order to accompany Him on His way, as the Lord continues to descend to the earth. The usage of the language itself makes no provision for any other interpretation.

As a matter of interest, see Augustine, *City of God*, Book 20, Chapter 20, ¶<sup>2</sup>, concerning his comment on EIS APANTESIN. For, Augustine of Hippo—not that he kept the pre-millennialism that he first found in Scripture—nevertheless declared that the language of I Thessalonians 4, verses 13 through 18 did not allow for any other interpretation than that the saints do not remain up there but that the Lord continues on His way to the earth and the raptured saints simply accompany Him in.

## 17. The Lord shall descend:

Other than the verb “shall descend” (KATABESETAI), no other verb and no other action, direction, or course, is predicated of the Lord in the passage (I Thes. 4:13-18). There is nothing to suggest that He stops without continuing His descent. There is nothing at all that implies that He will turn around and go the other way, taking His raptured saints with Him. In fact, both of these ideas are completely foreign to the kind of language and expression that the Apostle has used. They are both *a priori* assumptions contrived by men. It’s the rose-colored-glasses trick that was spoken of earlier. The Apostle simply informs us, “by the word of the Lord”, that at the PAROUSIA the Lord shall descend. The Scriptures nowhere say that Lord will go any other direction at that PAROUSIA when His saints will meet him. It is His saints who are “caught up” to meet Him and thus are enabled to conduct Him in, as He continues to descend. Proponents of the pre-tribulation rapture subtly predicate the verb **caught up** (HARPÁDZŌ) to the Lord, as if the Lord would somehow also be caught up or caught away. But this is a manipulation that contradicts the grammar of the passage. It neither says this, nor in any way does the original language imply such an idea.

## 18. The Apostles’ message concerning the Second Coming agrees with Christ’s Olivet Discourse:

It should be noted that the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25) is part of the same Olivet Discourse cited earlier from Mark, Chapter 13. The parable of the ten virgins is an explanation of those who are gathered unto the Lord at PAROUSIA (Matthew 24:26-31). The words, “caught up together in the clouds” (I Thessalonians 4:17), together with, “and [or even] our gathering unto him” (II Thessalonians 2:1), are all descriptive of the very same PAROUSIA event. The PAROUSIA of the Lord’s bodily coming is also the day when vultures will be gathered together (Matthew 24:28). The vultures will feed on the dead carcasses of the enemies of Christ. **“And then,”** at His PAROUSIA, **“shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and glory. And He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”** (Matthew 24:30-31). So, the day of the PAROUSIA, when the saints are raptured, will also be a day of death and destruction on the forces that oppose Christ at His coming. This sets aside the false teaching that the Church will be raptured before the tribulation, but that the Lord will not come as the avenger to do battle with His enemies until after the tribulation.

**Is there a plural that someone missed?** We await the Lord’s coming, not the Lord’s comings. The question should be obvious: **Who has authority to change the words of Christ and to add to what He said?** No one was given authority to talk about the future bodily comings, or the future resurrections out from among the dead, or gatherings of the saints to meet the Lord in the air. To preach the Word is not to modify the Word according to the assumptions of men. To preach the word is to leave things that are in the singular in the singular, to say what it says and not to add to it. Those who subtly add plurality to



things that are in the singular in order to change the meaning shall be found guilty of adding to the Word.

## **19. The Lord's people have been told in what manner the Lord will come:**

As His disciples watched, Jesus “**was taken up**” from the Mount of Olives “**and a cloud received Him out of their sight**” (cf. Acts 1:9). Two men in white apparel stood by the disciples and said to them, “**You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus Who was taken up into heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven**” (Acts 1:11). So, He is to return in the following manner: He is to come with the clouds of heaven; He is to descend in the way that He ascended; and He is to put His own feet back down on the Mt. of Olives. What are we, His disciples, to expect? We are to expect Him to return to this earth in the way that it has been revealed. We are not to expect some prior coming in which He does not actually return to the earth.

The prophecy of Zechariah (14: 3-4) is in precise agreement with this: “**Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day on the Mt. of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east.**” The Lord will have His saints with Him because, as He descends to the Mt. of Olives, His saints will be caught up by the clouds to meet Him (EIS APANTESIN) and accompany Him on His way. Thus, they shall be His victorious conscripts in an invincible, resurrected, avenging army (Ezekiel 37:1-14). They shall accompany Him as He descends to the Mount of Olives, just as the Prophet says: “**the Lord my God shall come and all the saints with you [or with Him]**” (Zechariah 14:5). There, the vultures will be gathered for the destruction of the antichrist, when the rest of the army of the beast shall be slain with His sword (Rev. 19:11-21).

Zechariah, Chapter 14, goes on to explain that in the ensuing earthquake the Mount of Olives will split; with a chasm running from east to west through the mountain. The Mount of Olives will divide and separate apart. Half of it will move toward the north and half toward the south. Descendants of Jacob (some of his chosen remnant who will be residing in Jerusalem at that time) will flee toward the east, though the chasm in the Mount of Olives. These shall flee like as they fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah (cf. also Amos 1:1). All of the descendants of Jacob who will be left alive at that day will embrace Christ and will be saved under the blood of His everlasting New Covenant (cf. Romans 11:26-27 and Isaiah 59: 20-21). They shall weep for Him as the Jews wept for Josiah at Hadad-Rimmon in the valley of Megiddo, Zechariah 12:11. (The unconditional prophecy of Zechariah thus speaks of future literal events: the Divine Author has connected—by way of direct comparison—the future events of the prophecy to certain literal and physical events in the past. Thus, neither those past events, nor these prophesied future events can be spiritualized.)

Proponents of the pre-tribulation rapture are simply expecting the Lord's coming (His PAROUSIA, His arrival) to be in a different manner: different from the manner in which the disciples were told by Christ Himself that He will come (Matthew 21, Mark 13, and Luke 21) and different from the way His coming was revealed to His disciple on the day of His ascension. Pre-tribulation rapturists also expect His second coming to be in a different manner from the way that it was prophesied in Zechariah. Their idea of His arrival is also out of accord with every other portion of Scripture that explains His coming. But, for the saints, *Sola Scriptura* is the rule and not the assumptions, additions, and traditions of men.

### **Is there a secret rapture?**

There are certain events that will take place just before and in the process of Christ's coming: the sun and moon are darkened; the powers of the heavens are shaken; the stars fall; the sign of the Son of Man is seen coming in the clouds; then, there will be the resurrection and the gathering of the saints; and the great and final earthquake will take place. All these come like the sudden and hard contractions and pains of a woman about to give birth to her first child. They are sudden and inescapable. Now, on the other hand, if the Lord were to come with an arrival that is as the lightning shines from the east to the west, with the trump of God and the voice of the archangel, and if He were to raise all the dead in Christ and transform all His saints yet living at that day, instantly giving them glorified bodies, and then if all these people were to be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, that is, if the Lord were to do all these things a few years before His coming in judgment and wrath, then His coming in wrath upon His enemies would not be to them as a thief. Worldlings can still read the Book. If such a thing were to happen, guess what? No surprise! An astounding sign would be given to them that they certainly do not deserve, a sign the likes of which has never happened on the face of the earth. Then, the Lord's coming in judgment would not come upon them as a thief. So, the pre-tribulation rapturists have it backwards. They have Christ's coming for His saints as if it were imminent as a thief (a contradiction of I Thessalonians 5:4 and Mark 13). They maintain that no one is to expect any prior indications, for, according to them, there is no recognizable events to tell His saints when "He is at the door." But, by the same token, the pre-tribulation rapture scenario would furnish this great big advanced warning to the rest of the world. Some pre-tribulation rapturists, because they have recognized this glaring discrepancy and contradiction in their system, have devised the idea of a "secret rapture." According to the "secret rapture" approach, all these things (the trumpet of the Lord, the voice of the archangel, the resurrection out from among the dead, and the gathering in the clouds) will still happen several years prior, but the world won't know it. It will be a secret.

Their so called "secret rapture" is supposed to happen a few years before the time of that PAROUSIA when Christ will come to put an end to the reign of the antichrist and destroy his armies (II Thessalonians 2:7). And, why not? If the preachers of the pre-tribulation rapture are going to fantasize and subordinate the Scriptures to their own ideas and assumptions anyway, why not just fantasize a little more? Or, even a lot more! However, there has always been this one extra problem with that "secret rapture" scheme: no one has been able to find anything like a "secret rapture" anywhere in the Scriptures. Rather, the Scriptures are most adamant that there will be no secret coming of the Lord and no secret rapture (cf. the Olivet Discourse and I Thessalonians 4:13-18). But, since they have simply

presupposed the pre-tribulation rapture without any actual warrant from a single passage of Scripture, what difference does it make if some of them presuppose it to be secret? What does the Lord say about blind leaders of the blind?

The one **sign** that has been given to the world by Christ the Prophet, that one **sign** that has already been fulfilled exactly according to His words, is His resurrection. It was fulfilled exactly according to Christ's prophecy. The next **sign** that the world will behold is that of His PAROUSIA. It will come upon the **world** "in those days after that tribulation" as a thief, and every aspect of it will transpire exactly according to Christ's prophecy (Mark 13:24-27). The protagonists of the pre-tribulation rapture, if they do not repent, will be counted among those who have corrupted the words of Christ's prophecy and misrepresented the sign of His coming. Their witness will be found to be unfaithful to His Word (cf. the second part of the introduction to this treatise).

## **20. The day of the PAROUSIA of the Lord is also the day of our Kinsman Avenger: It is a day of battle and a day of the gathering of vultures over the battlefield:**

The Scriptures speak of the vultures that gather and hover over battlefields. The day of the gathering of the vultures is the day of carnage, death, and gore on the battlefield (cf. Revelation 19:18). To emphasize that He, our Kinsman Avenger, will come and engage in such a great battle and slaughter on the very same day that the saints are raptured, Jesus gave the following explanation:

**'I tell you, in that night there shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left.'**

**And they answered and said unto Him, 'Where, Lord?' [i.e. Where will they be taken?]**

**And he said unto them, 'At what place the body is [i.e. Christ's own body], there will the vultures be gathered together.'** (Luke 17:35-37)

From the Bible's perspective, the gathering of unclean carnivorous birds (of whatever sort including eagles) only means one thing: it is a harbinger of woe and death. The birds are not mentioned here as mere decorations to denote either that the meeting is in the sky or simply glorious. The only kind of glory that such unclean and carnivorous foul express in the Scriptures is the glory of a bloody victory over enemies on the battlefield. To speak of their gathering together is to portend death and the devouring of carnage and blood. The Lord will amass the armies of His saints around Him while He continued to descend to the earth for battle with His enemies. The vultures (even eagles may well be included in that day.) signify the impending (imminent) death and destruction of the armies of the antichrist.

The word *ÁËTOS*, as used in verse 37 (see above) refers to *vultur percnopterus* or *vultur barbatus*, see both Bauer and Thayer (Aristot., Hist. An. 9,32 and Pliny, Hist. Nat. 10,3). In

such a context, this word *ÁËTOS* should not have been translated *eagle*, but *vulture*, even though *vultur percnopterus* does have the appearance of an eagle.

Pre-tribulation rapturists affirm that the day of the rapture of the church, when “one shall be taken and the other left,” is not the day when the unclean birds gather over the bloody battlefield for the supper of carnage that the Lord has appointed for them. Once again, they have not examined and compared the Scriptures. They have not compared the expressions of Scripture. They have only subordinated the Scriptures to their prior assumption.

## **21. When will the present creation be liberated from the corruption brought upon it by man’s sin? And, for how long is it necessary for Christ to be in heaven before He comes again?**

**“The creation was subjected to vanity, not voluntarily, but on account of the One who subjected it in hope”** (Romans 8:20). Together with each one of us who has the earnest of the Spirit, the whole of the present external creation, the entire earth (with all its regions and its depth of flora and fauna), is groaning in painful travail until now, waiting earnestly for one particular event. It is the event of the first creation’s deliverance from bondage. Oh for that coming event when both we and creation itself will be freed from corruption! The great moment of creation’s liberation will be simultaneous with **“the redemption of our body”** (Romans 8:23, cf. I Thessalonians 4:13-18). At the very moment that the Christian receives his glorified, resurrected, new body **“the creation itself will be freed from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God”** (Romans 8:21).

But, according to the pre-tribulation rapture view, at the time when Christians receive the redemption of their bodies the earth will most definitely not be delivered from corruption. By the pre-tribulation rapturist’s scenario, instead, right after that time (after the Christians receive their new bodies) the earth and its creatures will be plunged into tribulation, corruption, death, and destruction unparalleled since the time that there was a nation. According to their position, the present creation would have to be looking with woe and certain dread for “the adoption, *that is*, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23), for that moment would have to signal its greatest anguish since the time there was a nation. To assert that the Church is to be taken out of the world at that moment, as they do, and to say that the world is subsequently going to be plunged into the great tribulation does not speak of the time of refreshing and restoration that all of the prophets spoke of (cf. Acts 3:19).

The Words of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 8:19-23, not only will not tolerate the error of the amillenarians and post-millenarians, these words also exclude the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapturists. They agree only with the post-tribulation/pre-millennial coming of Christ and the post-tribulation first resurrection (Historic Premillennialism). For, then is the time of the liberation of creation from its bondage to futility and corruption. The external creation will be liberated from corruption when we who wait in hope (vs.24) receive the redemption of our bodies at the end of the tribulation.

The Scriptures do clearly teach that in those days after that tribulation Christ will come with the clouds, and then His elect shall be gathered together unto Him from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost parts of heaven. (cf. Mark 13:23-27). It is at that time that the earth shall be freed from the bondage of corruption. For then the millennial reign shall begin and the earth shall bring forth abundantly (cf. Amos 9, and all places that speak of the restoration).

#### **“THE TIMES OF THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS” (Acts 3:19-21)**

The times of the rise of the man of sin and of the tribulation, with all of its accompanying wars, disasters, famine, plagues, and destruction, are not the times of “the restoration of all things.” Rather, they are the times when the beast and the false prophet shall make war with the Lord’s holy people “to overcome them” (Revelation 13:7). It is the time when the beast and the antichrist shall have power to wear out the saints (Daniel 7:25). The “refreshing” that is “the times of the restoration” spoken of in Acts, Chapter 3, verse 21, can only come after the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jeremiah 30:7), after “the great tribulation” (Revelation 7:14). Then the Lord **“shall send to you Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, Whom it is necessary for heaven to receive until the times of the restoration of all things”** Acts 3: 20-21. If Christ were to come from heaven before the tribulation then there would have been no necessity for Him to remain there until the times of the restoration of all things. To reiterate, the times of restoration only happen after Jacob’s trouble, after the great tribulation. It is the Holy Spirit who has revealed that Christ necessarily will be in heaven until the times of the restoration of all things. There will be no restoration until after the tribulation.

The purpose of this Section 21 is to demonstrate that even the most incidental utterances of the Spirit through Christ’s Apostles will not be found to be in any way erroneous utterances. The point is that those who have presupposed a pre-tribulation coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven, a pre-tribulation resurrection of saints out from among the dead, and a pre-tribulation rapture, have simply presupposed that which is out of accord with the prophetic chronology of the Spirit of God every place in Scripture.

## **22. When do the saints of the Most High judge the nations and rule them with an iron rod? For, they shall be shepherding them with an iron rod.**

Christ made the following promise both to those members of the Church of Thyatira who would keep Christ’s works unto the end and die faithful to their Lord and to all those who have ears to hear: they will be enthroned with Him and they will be ruling the nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:26-27, compare Psalm. 2:9 LXX). The Masoretic vowel pointings of עֲשֶׂרָה, “you shall break,” is assumptive and incorrect. The word is not *you shall break*, but “you shall shepherd” or “rule.” The fulfillment of this promise shall take place after Christ comes, when He (lit.) shall be ruling [or shepherding] the nations with an iron rod (cf. Revelation 19:15). It is after He comes that the saints shall receive the kingdom and judgment shall be given unto them (Daniel 7:27). The fulfillment of the promise that the saints shall then sit in dominion and judgment is set forth in Revelation, Chapter 20, verses 4 through 6, as follows:

**And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them, even the souls of those who had been beheaded on account of the witness of Jesus and on account of the Word of God, even those who did not worship the beast, nor his image, and did not take the mark on their forehead and on their hand, and they lived and they reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one having part in the first resurrection: on them the second death has no authority; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ; and they shall reign with Him a thousand years...**

Thus, there are two future bodily resurrections taught in Scripture: one before the millennium and one after the millennium. It seems absurd to ask the question: how many first resurrections can there be? But, according to the advocates of the pre-tribulation rapture, **“the first resurrection”** that is set forth in Revelation, Chapter 20, verse 4, is not the first resurrection that they are looking forward to. They are expecting to rise at a prior resurrection because the one in Revelation 20, verse 4, takes place after the great tribulation has transpired and the beast has reigned. So, they have devised for themselves an presupposed a first resurrection that is prior to the only first resurrection that is mentioned in Scripture, cf. Ezekiel 37, Daniel 12, and Revelation 20.

There is only one future resurrection that is properly termed **the resurrection EK NEKRŌN, a resurrection out of (or out from among) the dead**. The only way that one can speak of a resurrection EK NEKRŌN is if some people are still dead and in the graves while certain ones are raised out from among them. Jesus was raised EK NEKRŌN, out from among the dead (Mark 9:9-10). The following is a more literal translation of Luke, Chapter 20, verses 35-38:

**But those who shall be counted worthy to obtain that age, even the resurrection out from among the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die anymore, for they are equal unto the angels and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.**

**Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him.**

The only access to the resurrection out from among the dead is through the work of the Lord our Kinsman-Redeemer. What was most disturbing to the officials of Jerusalem and of the temple was what the Apostles proclaimed. After Christ’s resurrection the Apostles “proclaimed in Jesus [lit. by means of the Jesus] the resurrection out from among the dead (EK NEKRŌN)” (Acts 4:2). Access to that resurrection is the only way to obtain the promised inheritance of the chosen children of Abraham. The Jews were aware of this ‘resurrection of the just’ as the means whereby those counted worthy would partake of the blessings of the restoration of Israel and the kingdom of God (cf. Luke 14:14-15, cf. Ezekiel 37 and Daniel 12). But, if it was only by means of Jesus that anyone was included in the resurrection of the just, all of them (the ones who did not come by Jesus) would be excluded from the hope of Israel and the kingdom. The Jewish officials understood what the words of the Gospel meant, that is what made them so angry. The early church

understood the words. However, the *a priori* assumptions of the translators caused them to miss this focal point of the book of the Acts.

The point is that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were the three individuals who were expressly told that they themselves would inherit the promised land to dwell there as possessors: “to thee will I give it...” (Genesis 13:15; 24:7; 26:3; 28:13; 35:12). The words, “to thee will I give it,” are put in the place of emphasis before the seed or offspring is mentioned. This is what Jesus pointed out from the word and the grammar of Genesis when He put to silence the assumptive and ignorant argument of the Sadducees. At least these three themselves will most certainly have to rise physically to sit (dwell) as owners in the physical Land that they walked on and that was promised to each of them individually. **They are definitely among “those who are counted worthy to obtain that age, even the resurrection which is out from among the dead.”**

So, the argument proceeds as follows: (1) the promise that was made specifically to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is that they, as individuals, will inherit and possess the promised land; (2) since none of these three have yet dwelt in the promised land as possessors (heirs and owners) of that land; therefore each of these three must rise from the dead in order to possess it; otherwise, (3) God would be found a covenant breaker. Not only this, but the promise to Abraham that he himself would inherit the land to possess it (Genesis 13:16), to be there no more as a stranger and pilgrim, but to be there as owner, was confirmed by the oath that God swore to him (Genesis 24:7). This is what confirmed the promise that he had already been given: “For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed forever” (Genesis 13:15). Even though Abraham still had not so much of the land “as to set his foot on: yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him...” (Acts 7:2). Jesus’ point concerning “obtaining that age, even the resurrection which is out from among the dead” (Luke 20:35) is that Abraham (together with Isaac, Jacob, and all of Abraham’s children of promise, including us who believe the promise, must rise to possess the land.

Abraham himself has not yet received it. He is to receive it after the resurrection out from among the dead. This idea that Abraham will not personally possess the very land that he was instructed to traverse and claim with the soles of his feet, the idea that he will not possess it together with the children that were promised to him (We who believe are the children of Abraham), was certainly foreign to the early Christians. The very idea that we, together with our father Abraham, will not rise in that resurrection which is “out from among the dead” to possess what was promised to Abraham is repugnant to the spirit. It is contrary to “the faith once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). How the early Christians understood Christ’s argument to the Sadducees (Luke 20:35) is more than obvious. Nevertheless, various people, for different reasons, have developed the idea that God has not obligated Himself by oath to keep all His covenant promises to Abraham and to give him that place which “he should after receive for an inheritance” (Hebrews 11:8).

Abraham’s, Isaac’s, and Jacob’s children (vis. the believing and faithful children that were promised to them) shall come “from the east and the west, from the north and the south” (form among the Gentiles, Luke 13:29), and “sit down together with Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 8:11). Those from among the Gentiles who embrace Christ, the Kinsman Redeemer of Israel, will come because they are grafted in and are made partakers with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the same promise. Those who are partakers of Abraham’s covenant promises shall either rise with him or, if they are yet alive at the PAROUSIA of Christ, they will be transformed, given immortal bodies, to ascend together with the resurrected saints and to accompany their Lord in His continued descent to the earth. These therefore shall be with their Lord when He defeats the antichrist and the forces of the beast. At the victory celebration and marriage supper, they shall be enthroned with Christ. These shall be ruling the nations for a thousand years (Revelation 20).

### **A NOTE ABOUT THE DOCTRINE OF THE EARLY CHURCH:**

Irenaeus, born 117 A.D. in Smyrna, in his treatise *Against Heresies*, Chapter 30, section 4, wrote:

But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that “many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

(Like Justin, a contemporary of the Apostle John, Irenaeus was confident that these things would transpire after the year 2000. There is no record of anyone in the early Church who held to the doctrine of the Lord coming in the clouds for his saints prior to the great tribulation, prior to the coming that Irenaeus speaks of here.)

Those who have devised another future resurrection out from among the dead, one that precedes the one that Christ prophesied, shall be found guilty of adding to and adulterating the prophecies of Christ. They have presupposed and substituted the teachings of men, and they have superimposed the assumptions of men over the revelation of God. His ministers have been charged never to do any such thing.

### **The Scriptures only speak of one future resurrection which is out from among the dead:**

When Christ spoke of the resurrection EK NEKRŌN, out from among the dead, the definite article and the word resurrection are singular. He did not speak of resurrections (plural) out from among the dead, as if there were to be more than one. Nor did He speak of mere *resurrection out from among the dead in general*, as if the subject were of some general nature that did not designate any particular resurrection event. Rather, He spoke of the resurrection (the particular one) that will include all those who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that future age and to sit down in glorified bodies with resurrected Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom and the land that was promised to them.

In the same way, the Apostle Paul expressed his earnest desire that he might attain in this life an intimate experiential knowledge and a fellowship with the Lord Jesus,



commensurate with the fact that he had been appointed to have part in that resurrection which is *out from among the dead*.

**That I might know Him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any mean I might attain unto the resurrection out from among the dead.** (Philippians 3:10-11)

The words in verse 11 are perhaps more emphatic: it is literally *the out resurrection from among the dead*. This singular resurrection out from among the dead takes place when “the dead in Christ shall rise first...” (I Thessalonians 4:13-5:4).

The advocates of the pre-tribulation rapture want us to presuppose that “the resurrection out from among the dead” which Jesus spoke of (Luke 20:35) is a different resurrection from the one that was the hope and earnest expectation of the Apostle Paul. They recognize that the one that Paul waited for is the hope of the Church. They must make their artificial distinction because Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are included in *the resurrection out from among the dead* that Jesus spoke of, and, according to the pre-tribulation rapturists, these three are not included in the resurrection and rapture of the Church. But, the pre-tribulation rapturists are shown to be mistaken by Christ Himself: the hope of Abraham is THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH. For, in that day, “many shall come from the east and the west,” from among the Gentiles, and “shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:9-12). Christians, even though in times past they may have been afar off and enemies of God, are now heirs with them of the same promises. (Ephesians, Chapter 2, will be taken up later in this paper.) If the Lord says that their resurrection and hope is the same, who has authority to assert that they are different.

### **23. At the first resurrection, the dead in Christ are raised out from among the “rest of the dead” (Revelation 20:5):**

The resurrection that takes place after the millennium is **not** called a resurrection EK NEKRŌN (out from among the dead), because no one will be left in the grave at that resurrection (Revelation 20:11-15). All of the dead, including all who die during the time of the millennial reign, will be raised. The Bible nowhere speaks of more than one future resurrection EK NEKRŌN, out from among the dead. The only future resurrection out from among the dead will take place at the PAROUSIA (the arrival) of the Lord from heaven before the thousand year reign. And, according to Christ’s own words, it will not take place until “after that tribulation” (Mark 13:23-27) when the Lord comes to terminate the reign of the antichrist and destroy his armies (II Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 19).

**Are the Lord Jesus and His saints ruling the nations with an iron rod right now in this present age?** The anti-millennarians insist that Christ and His saints are doing so right now. However, the Scriptures do not say that He and His saints are ruling the nations with an iron rod right now. Our fellow Christians of this present era who were in Thyatira and who kept Christ’s works unto the end, dying faithful to our Lord, shall yet be raised, enthroned and given authority to rule the nations with an iron rod. (Compare Revelation 2:26 and 27 with Revelation 20: 4, as cited below.) Instead of saying that Christ is ruling the nations at this present time with a rod of iron, as if He were doing so right now,

Revelation, Chapter 12, verses 1 through 5, describe Him as the One **“Who is about to be ruling all nations with an iron rod”** (Greek, HOS MELLEI, *who is about to be* is a certain future). (There is no excuse for translating HOS MELLEI with the words “*who was to*” as the KJV has done.) It is a certain future. While Revelation, Chapter 12, describes Jesus by saying that He is about to be doing, the same passage proceeds to describe the Devil by what he is doing during that time when Christ is caught up to the heavenly throne of God: **“that old serpent called the Devil and Satan, the one who is deceiving the whole world”** (Revelation 12:9). (It is a descriptive, substantive, present participle with the definite article.) There is a deliberate contrast between the present era and the future era, between Satan’s description as **“the one who is deceiving the whole world”** and Satan as the one who then will **“deceive the nations no more until the thousand years should be completed”** (Revelation 20: 3, as cited below).

## 24. When does Christ, together with His saints, start ruling the nations with an iron rod?

The Scriptures say that when Christ comes from heaven with His armies to make war with the beast and his armies, He will feed the unclean carrion-eating birds with the dead carcasses of the forces that come against Him (Revelation 19:11-21). Of that time Daniel said, **“the thrones were placed”** (Daniel 7:9) **“and judgment was given to the saints of the most high; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom”**(Daniel 7:22). The fulfillment of this is spoken of in Revelation, Chapter 20, verses 1 through 7, as follows:

**And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more until the thousand years should be completed. And, after that, he must be loosed for a short time. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, even the souls of those who had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had taken a mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no authority, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go forth to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth...**

The passage speaks of saints who, after they have been beheaded for the witness of Jesus under the reign of the antichrist, will have part in the first resurrection. So, the first resurrection does not happen before the tribulation and before the reign of the antichrist. It is called the first resurrection for only one reason: because there is a second resurrection

after the thousand years are completed (Revelation 20:12-13). The second resurrection is followed by the second death in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). All whose names were not written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world shall be cast into the lake of fire (cf. Revelation 13:8 and 17:8).

As has been pointed out above, the first resurrection does not transpire until after the mark of the beast has been imposed on those people who have their dwelling on the earth, not until after the reign of the antichrist, not until after those saints who did not take the mark of the beast were beheaded. In the prophetic narrative, their refusal to take the mark of the beast and their resulting martyrdom was because of "the testimony of Jesus." They are Jesus' people, saved under Jesus' everlasting covenant. Before their martyrdom, they had been the Church on earth during the great tribulation (cf. Revelation 7:14). Therefore, the antichrist will have exercised his appointed power to overcome the saints before the first resurrection takes place (cf. I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and II Thessalonians 1:7).

There are advocates of the pre-tribulation rapture who hold to three phases of the first resurrection. Supposedly these are as follows: (1) the resurrection and rapture of Christ's church before the tribulation; (2) the resurrection and rapture of those who are saved during the tribulation and after His church and the Holy Spirit have been taken out of the world; and (3) the resurrection and rapture of the Old Testament saints. So these people actually hold to three first resurrections.

**"Who's on first?" We know! But, what if first is called 'first, second, and third'?** Whether they have either two or three firsts, they have not only presupposed that the singular definite article does not denote what is singular and definite, they have also presupposed that **first** is an indeterminate modifier. But it is a determinate modifier. The Greek word PROTOS, **first**, cannot refer to some second phase of anything that has already been preceded by a first phase; nor can one refer to a following third phase and still call it the **first**. The **prototype** of a machine does not refer to any second phase of the development of that machine. It does not refer to the improved, modified, or secondary phase, or any other subsequent development. It does not refer to a simplified, a more cost effective, or a diversified type. It is neither a later nor an earlier type; it is simply the first type of that machine. If this were not the case, there would be no way to designate what is actually first in the Greek language. In Greek <sup>masc.</sup> PROTOS, <sup>fem.</sup> PROTÊ, <sup>neut.</sup> PROTON, **first**, refers to the first phase, of the first end, of the first side, of the first time, of everything in that class, category, sequence, or order of things. When referring to the same category or sequence of events (In this case, the category and sequence is of **resurrections**.), there is no such thing as two firsts, with one of those firsts being more first than the other first. **First** is a determinative modifier. The Greek word PROTOS simply does not mean and does not do what the pre-tribulation rapturists want it to make it do.

In a context such as Revelation, Chapter 20, where two resurrections are mentioned, the term "first resurrection" does not imply *the first of many*, but simply *the first of the two*.

Once again, the pre-tribulation rapturists have made a mockery of the language of Scripture. Revelation, Chapter 20, verses 4-6 is just one more passage of Scripture that

plainly refutes their doctrine. They want people to presuppose that *first* is really an indeterminate modifier, even though they know better. The dishonesty and the absurdity of the pre-tribulation rapturists' presumptive and false hermeneutic is more than obvious. For, according to their approach, **even if the Holy Spirit had wanted to say** that those who will have been beheaded for refusing to take the mark of the beast will afterwards be raised out from among the dead in the **first** resurrection (cf. Revelation 20:4-5), He would have had no means of making that distinction in the normal expression of the Greek language.

The point is that, once the Word of God has been superseded by an extra-biblical *a priori* assumption it no longer appears to mean what it plainly says. This is the very method of *a priori* deception (See the second part of introduction, p.3 ff.). It is the only method that the pre-tribulation rapturists have to promulgate their doctrine. But, once their *a priori* method has been exposed and made to appear for what it really is, it is easily recognized as having no foundation whatsoever.

Pre-tribulation rapturists may claim to have fifty passages of Scripture that support their doctrine, but, in each case, it is first necessary to presuppose their assumption of a pre-tribulation rapture *a priori* and then to view that passage in the light of their *a priori* assumption. In other words, their doctrine is not found in any of the passages that they cite, any more than it is in any other passages of Scripture. Their method is this: if they cannot get a person to adopt their subtle suggestion and *a priori* assumption with regard to one passage of Scripture, they will try the same approach with regard to 49 others. Their doctrine is just presupposed. They have adopted a conclusion *a priori* and colored or construed their supposed evidence in the light of what they have already concluded each passage (or the aggregate of their passages) to mean. They assume that if they can just beg the question in such a multitude of places people should just give in and presuppose what they want them to presuppose. Those who use this kind of approach do not really prove anything. In fact, to use their kind of approach is to exhibit the very first trait of a false teacher. But they have adopted this method for three reasons: <sup>(1)</sup> because there is no propositional statement anywhere in Scriptures that sets forth a pre-tribulation rapture; <sup>(2)</sup> because they have to color the floor, as it were, to try to supersede and contradict (by means of diversionary presuppositions) Christ's plain statement that His saints will be raptured "after that tribulation" (Mark 13: 24-27) and <sup>(3)</sup> because they have to try to impose an alternate frame of reference on all the other propositional statements of the Scriptures that repudiate their doctrine. (Isaac Gould has prepared some comments on fifty passages claimed by pre-tribulation rapturists as "evidence" that their assumption is valid. The list and his fifty comments has been appended to this paper.)

This writer is aware of some who embrace an even more bizarre form of Dispensationism. These assert that there is an unknown number of such resurrection events. They say that there may be thousands of separate ones. They speak of a continual succession of resurrections that will transpire from some time before the tribulation through the brief time that comes after the tribulation, when, according to their approach, the Old Testament saints will be raptured. Whether pre-tribulation rapturists hold to two, three, or a multitude of phases of the first resurrection, their approach should be termed *Assumptive*, for it has nothing to with language of Scriptures. They might have been happier if the Bible had said,

‘these are the first resurrections,’ and, ‘those who are Christ’s at His arrivals.’ Of course, there is not the slightest allowance for such ideas anywhere in the Holy Scriptures. It really does not matter to the proponents of the pre-tribulation rapture that the Scriptures do say, **“This is the first resurrection.”** and do refer to **“those who are Christ’s at the arrival [PAROUSIA] of Him.”** This is because, for them, their presupposition takes precedence over whatever the Scriptures have declared, even in the most *definite* and *singular* of terms. They have presumed to divide up “the first” and make as many firsts, seconds, or thirds out of **“the first”** as they choose.

The only rapture of the saints that is ever spoken of in Scripture will happen in conjunction with the one and only future “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5) when “the dead in Christ shall rise first” (I Thessalonians 4:16), and then “we who are alive and remain” (verse 17), will be changed “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (I Corinthians 15:52), and given immortal, glorified bodies. “The first resurrection” is the only future resurrection “out from among the dead” mentioned in Scripture. It is singular (Luke 20:35, et al.). That first resurrection is one event that will transpire “in those days after that tribulation” (Mark 13:24). What Christ prophesied in the Olivet Discourse will be fulfilled exactly according to its designated sequence. It will accord perfectly with Revelation 20 and all of the passages mentioned here. For, “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

Advocates of the pre-tribulation rapture have blatantly contradicted Scripture. And, by placing their own presuppositions above the Word of God and by misconstruing and distorting the Word to make coincide with their presuppositions, they have both added to and contradicted the prophecy of Christ. They have merely invented another first resurrection, one that precedes the reign of the antichrist and the great tribulation. The Church age does not end with any rapture. How long is the age of the Church? It is as long as the blood of Christ and His salvation is efficacious. Forever!

## **25. Why is it that the pre-tribulation rapture seems to be so indispensable to dispensationalists:**

**The pre-tribulation rapture is just one of the teachings of Dispensationalism.** While others may hold to the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture today simply because it has been promulgated far and wide, it is only through the Dispensationalists and the instrumentality of the Scofield Bible that it has come to such prominence over the last century. In the form of a false definition, C. I. Scofield put his *a priori* assumption right at the forefront of his notes in the *Scofield Reference Bible*: he defined a dispensation as a period of time during which man is on probation with regard to whether or not he will obey a particular probationary statute. He held that there are seven such probationary periods in the Bible. He said that we are now in the Church age and that the probationary statute for this Dispensation is whether or not we will choose to accept Christ. Subtle, but false! Since the fall, every naturally conceived person has come into the world “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). Dead men are not on probation! They are “condemned already” (John 3:18). Jesus said, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (John 15:16). Those who are saved are only saved because they are God’s elect. “So then it is not of him

who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” (Romans 9:16). Man’s will has nothing to do with his being born again (John 1: 13). God regenerates (gives new birth to) whom He will (John 3:5-8). Once a man is born from above, he agrees both with God’s demands of righteousness and with God’s just condemnation on his soul. That man condemns himself in God’s sight and cries out for Christ’s saving grace and mercy. Only those who come in this way are given the kind of faith that actually lays hold of the promise of salvation in Christ Jesus. On the other hand, under Scofield’s scheme, men are on probation as to whether they will somehow cause themselves to be born from above. Of course, the natural, carnal, unregenerate man has nothing to do with regenerating himself; and, because he is dead in trespasses and sin, he cannot even want to be regenerated (John 6:44). “It is all of God” of God’s will: “He chose to give us birth by means of the Word of truth” (James 1:18). Because of this obvious error on Scofield’s part, many proponents of Dispensationalism say that they do not hold to Scofield’s definition of a dispensation.

Dispensationalists do not understand that all of the covenants are not only still in effect, and that they are the necessary basis for Christ’s everlasting New Covenant. Christ and His everlasting New Covenant is the fulfillment of them all. Each covenant had its promised blessing which could not be obtained but through Christ Himself. Dispensationalism is the denial of Covenant Theology. Everyone who is saved in the Bible is saved because he was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and because he is under the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God. There is only one Gospel.

1. The covenant of works made with our first parents is still very much in effect. If a person does not have the works of Christ paid to his account, he will simply be judged according to his own works and condemned (Revelation 20:12).
2. The covenant that God made with Noah is still in effect. The propitiation of the sweet smelling savor (Christ) is still staving off God’s wrath (I John 2:2).
3. God’s covenant with Abraham is still in effect. It is one of the immutable things established by oath to which Christians are anchored behind the heavenly veil (Hebrews 6:19)
4. The covenant that God made through Moses is still in effect, that is why all of the promised blessings of Law come to all of those who believe through Christ, the only perfectly obedient Child of Jacob. We have all of these things through Christ, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.
5. Together with the Law (Deuteronomy 17:14-20), the covenant that God made with David to establish his throne forever is obviously still in effect. Christ is the Kinsman Redeemer of David’s throne and the dominion of Christians is established there, in fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham of God’s appointed kings.
6. The everlasting New Covenant in Christ’s blood made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. How everlasting is everlasting? All the other covenants culminate in it and are fulfilled by it.

All of these covenants are necessarily still in effect. This means that the age of each one has necessarily continued in and because of Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **The Defining Tenet of Dispensationalism**

**It is necessary to define Dispensationalism** in order to get down to the source and reason for their assumption of a pre-tribulation rapture. Even though there are many variations and groups that are dispensational in their doctrine, there is one overarching but utterly false *a priori* assumption that Dispensationalists of every ilk and denomination hold in common, one utterly unscriptural principle without which their entire approach

collapses. **Their primary false assumption is that there is one history and future for Israel and another (a different) history and future for the Church.** In other words, according to their heresy, there shall be two folds (two distinct flocks) and one Shepherd. The doctrine that there shall be a rapture of the church prior to the tribulation (and, hence, an end to the “Church Age”) and then a sequence of God’s subsequent dealing with Israel under a separate or different covenant arrangement is simply an outgrowth of their primary and overarching false presupposition. Their contrived pre-tribulation rapture and the supposed removal of the Holy Spirit from the world is simply a facilitating and secondary *a priori* which was necessary to their system.

### **What is the actual and everlasting New Covenant?**

Jesus was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt. 15:24); His is a Gospel “to the Jew first” (Rm. 1:16). When He addressed that Jewish fold, He also said to them, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring [i.e. bring to that fold], and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be **one flock, one Shepherd**” (John 10:16). Dispensationalists, because of their one primary assumption, presuppose instead that there are two flocks. The problem is that their prior assumption does not allow them to see what the New Testament (New Covenant) is. The only New Testament (Covenant) there is, the only one that was ever promised, is that everlasting New Covenant made exclusively “with the house of Israel and the house of Judah”(Jeremiah 31:31-40). A major theme of the New Testament is the explanation of how those from among the Gentiles are grafted in. Grafted into what? They are grafted into the great olive tree of promise that grew out of the root of Abraham, through the trunk of Isaac, and then topped out in Jacob (Israel). For, out of this Israel grew twelve big branches (12 tribes). These branches, for the most part, have been cut off for a time, because of unbelief, in order that Gentiles who do believe might be grafted in, grafted into the place where the branches were lobbed off to make room for them. The place where they are grafted in is called Israel (cf. Romans 11:11-32). Believing Gentiles are no longer counted as foreigners, they have become the true Israel of God. They may have been counted as Gentiles in times past but they are no longer foreigners, they are fellow citizens among the commonwealth of Israel’s branches. They are sheep who have been brought into that one flock, into the very same fold (even though they were not of it), because they all hear the voice of the ONE SHEPHERD, the Kinsman Redeemer of Israel. There is no better way to show the difference between Dispensationalism and the glory of the actual New Covenant that was promised than to point to Ephesians 2:11 through 22:

**Wherefore, remember that you, *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by that which is called ‘Circumcision’ in the flesh made by hands; that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have become near in the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, Who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances, in order that He might create [make] the two into one new man, making peace; and that He might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, having put to death the enmity in it [or by**

**means of it]: and came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and the household of God...**

Nothing could be better and more succinctly written to refute the false *a priori* assumption and error of Dispensationalism than this (above cited) passage of Holy Scripture.

All of the promises to Israel, all of the promised blessings of the Law, “all of the promises of God are in Him YES! and in Him AMEN!” (II Corinthians 1:20). This is a statement that stands by itself as an absolute. And what a glorious absolute it is! Dispensationalists do not know the reason why those who are in Christ receive every single promised blessing of the Old Testament, including the first resurrection and the restoration into the land of the promised inheritance (i.e. including the first resurrection in Ezekiel 37:12; and Daniel 12:2 and 13 [the **lot** of Daniel’s inheritance in the land after the first resurrection], including being gathered from all the nations of the earth to “the uttermost **parts of heaven**,” Deuteronomy 30:3-4). The rapture itself, “our gathering together unto Him” (II Thessalonians 2:1) “from the uttermost parts of heaven from there will the Lord gather you, and bring you back” is one of the promised blessings of the Law. The Old Testament establishes the scriptural frame of reference, and the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old. In other words, dispensationalists deny the very basis of the New Testament.

But, all the promised blessings of the Law are conditioned on obedience, “Cursed is everyone who continues not in all thing that are written in the Book of the Law, to do them” (Galatians 3:10/Deuteronomy 27:26). “And the Law is not of faith, but, ‘The man who does them shall live in them’.” (Galatians 10:12/Leviticus 18:5). How many children of Jacob perfectly kept the Law? Just One! The Lord Jesus Christ is the One who “loved righteousness and hated iniquity above His fellows” (Psalm 45:7, Hebrews 1:9). He is not only the perfect last Adam, but He is also the only perfect child of Jacob. He alone kept the Law. Jesus is the only child of Jacob who could say of the Father, “I do always those things that please Him” (John 8:29), and He is the only One to Whom the Father could say, “You are my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11: Luke 3:22). Jesus perfectly paid up everything that was ever required by the Law.

What was promised in the Law to the one who would be found perfectly obedient, to the one who would keep the Law in perfect righteousness? It was obviously to anyone who would do it. The answer is: ‘All of the promised blessings of the Law.’ There was no one to do it; therefore God Himself had to become man to be the Kinsman Redeemer and to do it for us.

Though Jesus alone merited all these promised blessings, He did not become man merely to keep them for Himself. He came to take the curse on Himself, that curse which is rightly upon all those “who continue not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do



them” (Galatians 3:10), and He came to die, “the just for the unjust” (I Peter 3:18). And, He came to bestow upon us all of the promised blessings by a gift of inheritance.

Everyone knows that, though a person writes down his solemn will and testament and signs it with witnesses, it is a document that yet has no force in law while he, the testator, is still alive (Hebrews 9:15-16). But, after the testator has died, no one has the right to change or to take away that which the testator has written. For, he alone has the right to bestow what had belonged to him on the one whom he has chosen. In that Jesus died as the Testator of His own solemn will and New Testament, He has the right to give as a gift of inheritance, to whomever He has chosen, the gift of His perfect righteousness and all the promised blessings of the Law.

In order to be justified, a person’s debt must be paid up in full. Only the gift of Christ’s perfect righteousness, received by faith alone, can do that. “Blessed are the poor in spirit (the word for poor is PTÖKHOS, utterly broke and destitute, having absolutely nothing of themselves that is acceptable to God) for of them is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). Christ does not give His gift to any other kind. Furthermore, He restores to the Israel of God all of the promised blessings that no one could receive, except by the grace of their Kinsman Redeemer. He is called JEHOVAH-TZIDKENU, the Lord our Righteousness. He alone obtained the promised blessings because He alone was righteous. He alone has a right to give them to whom He will, for he alone is the mediator of the everlasting New Covenant. (Or, He alone is the testator of the everlasting New Testament.)

When the Apostle Paul went into the Synagogue and told the Jews that in Christ “all who believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses” (Acts 13:39) they understood the implication. They understood that the only way that anyone could be justified is by all the just demands of God’s holy Law being fulfilled and satisfied. It was not that they did not recognize that if one would do this he would therefore have a right to own all the promised blessings of the Law. It was not that they could not comprehend that he would have a right to give what was justly his as a gift of inheritance to whomever he would choose. It was just that, out of envy and pride, they did not like to hear that Jesus did it and that He is the only One Who could justify them and make them acceptable to God by His gift. For, that would mean that they had nothing of themselves that could justify them and make them acceptable to God. They did not want to equate themselves with those who were just that poor in spirit, guilty, destitute, and utterly helpless. That would make them not one bit better than the Gentiles (cf. Luke 4:18-30). That is why they rejected Paul’s message. That is why they rejected Christ and His Gospel.

When the Jews of that synagogue rejected it, they were told, “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). In other words, we are going to take the gift of Christ’s perfect righteousness and all the covenant blessings that have ever been promised to Israel, and we are going to proclaim them to the Gentiles because you have excluded yourselves and rejected the only remedy for sin and the idolatry of self.

But, the gift is only to those whom He has chosen. How many of the Gentiles received it? God's Word tells us, "And as many as were appointed to everlasting life believed" (Acts 13: 48).

It is not a different New Covenant (New Testament) from the New Testament that was promised in the Old Testament. There is no different hope and no different future. Only "one flock and one shepherd"! Jesus must call them. They will hear His voice. He will bring them all to the same fold. The name of that one fold is **the true Israel of God**. There has never been one set of promises to be proclaimed for Israel and a different set of promises for the Church. There is no different first resurrection and no different gathering from the uttermost parts of heaven. They are all His sheep. Every single one of them was given to Him before the foundation of the world.

Dispensationalism is an *a priori* assumption and heresy that errs on the essential **Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ** as the Kinsman-Redeemer of Israel, the only Mediator and Testator of the only New Testament that was ever promised and ever proclaimed in the Word of God. Jesus is the mediator of the everlasting NEW COVENANT. The actual Church Age will last as long as the everlasting New Covenant lasts.

## **26. Dispensationalists have made up the pre-tribulation rapture because they have made up a different kind of new testament which is not the New Testament of the Bible.**

The only reason dispensationalists have made up this very different pre-tribulation rapture for the Church is because they made up a different kind of testament, which is really their own assumptive kind of new testament. They made it up to go along with a different idea of what the Church is. But their ideas are not found anywhere in the Holy Scriptures. They have simply presupposed these things and tried to impose them upon the Word and on the Church. They have to drive an artificial and assumptive wedge between the true Israel of God and the Church, even though the Scriptures say these are one-in-the-same, because the dispensationalists have put their *a priori* assumption above the plain statements of the Word of God.

Why will the whole remnant of Jacob (every single one of them left alive when the Lord comes) be saved together with all of their children? They will all be saved because of what their Deliverer (Redeemer) will do in that day: He "will turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (Romans 11:27). Notice where Paul is quoting:

**"As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD, "My Spirit, which is upon you, and My words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouth of your children, or from the mouths of their children from this time forth and forever," says the LORD. (Isaiah 59:21)**

**Then will all of your people be righteous, and they will possess the land forever.**

(Isaiah 60:21)

The reason why they will all be saved is because they will be brought into the same New Covenant that they had first rejected, the New Covenant promise that was to them and to their children “and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39). In that day, for His own name’s sake, the Lord will no longer allow them to reject Him and His New Covenant. Some of that remnant of Jacob will run out of Jerusalem from the earthquake in the day that the Lord Jesus comes and will run through the chasm that will be made in the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14). These will not have their resurrected bodies yet, but they will be saved at that time, for they will be under the blood of the same everlasting New Covenant. There will be one flock and One Shepherd. They will be in the Church, the holy congregation of the Israel of God.

What is the scriptural frame of reference for the doctrine of **the washing of regeneration** in Titus, Chapter 3, verse 5? These words, “**Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit,**” are a direct reference to the same passage about regeneration (being “born of water, even the Spirit”) that the Lord Jesus reproved Nicodemus for not knowing: “**Are you a teacher in Israel and you do not know these things?**” (John 3:5-10). Both of these New Testament passages are references to the very promise of the New Testament found in Ezekiel 36, verses 24 through 28:

**For I will take you from among all the nations, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness and all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you: and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do *them*. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people and I will be your God.**

This is the only doctrine of salvation that there is. The whole living remnant of Jacob shall definitely be poor in spirit, destitute, and utterly helpless in that day. At that time, they, together with their little ones, shall be baptized by the same emblem of water, by the same Spirit, into the same covenant body and into all of the promised blessings of the Law.

Jeremiah, Chapter 31: 31-40, the very reference to the “New Covenant,” is a reference to the same future time as that of Ezekiel 36 (above). But it is the same, the only, New Covenant (New Testament) for the Church. There is only “one way.” There is not one way for Israel and a different way for us today (cf. Hebrews 8). It is called ***the way***. That “**one way**” is right out of Jeremiah 32, verse 37 through 41:

**Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, where I have driven them in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good: but I will put my fear in their**

**hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.**

All those who do not believe that what the remnant of Jacob receives in that day is what we receive today by the same everlasting New Covenant promise and by the same Spirit are properly called dispensationalists. They are at best double minded, two-way teachers. They do not have the “one way.” They have devised a different way. They have bought into the *a priori* assumptions of men and substituted these things for the true Gospel because they have not understood the covenant teaching of God. The New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old.

Old Testament passages have provided the frame of reference for the tribulation and the first resurrection that will happen in conjunction with that tribulation (Daniel 12:2). Death itself and the confines of the earth’s sphere are no impediment to God’s gathering of His saints; even from the uttermost parts of heaven will He gather them in that day. In every place where the Apostles preached, they preached all of the promises of the New Testament right out of the Old Testament. **It is what is to be expected of every able minister of the New Testament today.** Those who searched the Old Testament Scriptures verified what the Apostle preached to them (Acts 17:11).

It is not possible that those who are God’s elect will be left in darkness. The day when the Lord will gather his elect from the furthest nations of the earth to the uttermost parts of heaven will overtake them, but not as a thief. They are the ones who will be fully expecting it, because the things that must precede it will have transpired exactly according to the prophecy of Christ. Though there will be strong and subtle delusion, deceiving, if it were possible, even the very elect, it is not possible that God’s elect will be deceived. There shall continue to be faithful ministers of God’s Word, expounding what the Holy Scriptures actually say and mean, teaching the Lord’s disciples to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. No deletions! No prior assumptions! No additions! The Lord will be with these, His faithful ministers, “every day” until the end of the age (cf. Matthew 28: 18-20). And, as many as are appointed to everlasting life will believe. These who have been given the gift of repentance unto life (Acts 11:18) will continue in His Word. Who are these? These are the ones who will have come out of the great tribulation, having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14). These are the ones who overcame Satan “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they love not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11).

**Who says** that the saints who now look for their Lord’s coming shall be raptured (i.e. “gathered unto Him from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost parts of heaven”) **after the great tribulation? The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the One Who says this.** Does the Lord Jesus allow that this doctrine can be considered nonessential? No, because it is one of the appointed signs of the fulfillment of His prophecy. The Lord Himself set the standard and the test for the office of the prophet and the signs of the prophet (Deuteronomy 18:18-22). Would Christ be found to be a false prophet if His coming and “our gathering together unto Him” were to happen as the advocates of the pre-tribulation rapture say that they will? Or, for that matter, if it were to

happen in any other way than the order in which it is described in Christ's Olivet Discourse, could His office as "THAT PROPHET" stand? Who can fail to see what is really at stake? Those who truly serve Christ have staked their ministry and their very souls on the fulfillment of His Word.

The apostle has emphasized the same point. "**Let no man deceive you by any means**" (II Thessalonians 2:3). When he said, "**For that day shall not come except the apostasy come first, even the man of sin be revealed...**" he was plainly telling why the day of the Lord's gathering of His saints was not imminent.

**Epilogue: The error called *the pre-tribulation rapture* is just a case in point: as bad as it is, it is just one of the glaring symptoms of an even greater infectious disease:**

The readers of this paper—who by now have gone back to page 3 to read the whole introduction—have probably realized that what the protagonists of the pre-tribulation rapture have foisted on the church is only one of many such *a priori* deceptions. Other *a priori* presuppositions, which have no more basis in Scripture than the pre-tribulation rapture, have been superimposed on the Scriptures and viewed by multitudes just as if they were the Word of God.

**As for man's contribution is concerned, the account of the fall really encompasses it all:**

Satan does not really care how many categories and names are given to his *a priori* deception. Neither is he concerned about how many tiny increments are used to divert and distract people from the truth. '**The Story of Dr. Drăco Cockatrice,**' included in the second part of the introduction, elucidates the essential *a priori* methodology of Existentialism, Hegelian Pluralism and the dialectic philosophy of Modern Liberalism. The idea of contextual morality that the story speaks of is integral to Nietzsche's philosophy. That reality is merely an assumed state of mind (state of awareness) is an essential element of Post-Modernism.

Dr. Cockatrice's style of *a priori* deception is employed by a multitude of cults: Roman Catholicism, the New Age Movement, Scientology, Mormonism, Post-Modernism Philosophies, Masons, Watchtower, The Way International, and many more.

But, the same methodology is used to distort and corrupt "the Faith once delivered unto the saints" in the multitude of purported Bible-believing churches. Some groups who openly suppose that "gain is godliness" (which entice people with the 'name-it-and-claim-it' and 'health-and-wealth' approach) simply presuppose that God wants to reassert His lost authority and dominion in the world through them; that is, if they will just let Him. (One wonders if they have the capacity to understand what an oxymoron their approach is.) A related form of this same approach presupposes that the church is to reestablish, reconstruct, and enforce the kingdom now in a realized dominion. These presuppose

(*a priori*) that the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20) is merely a restatement of the creation mandate to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion...” (Genesis 1:28). It sounds plausible to the gullible. But, like Dispensationalism, it is one of those recent *a priori* assumptions and contrived innovations that has been insinuated into churches by the slight of men’s craftiness. It too is an approach that uses biblical terminology, but it is not the faith once delivered unto the saints.

Once someone accepts one such *a priori* assumption scheme, there is a hole in the dike. Resistance erodes and an avenue is made for even more deception and corruption. Those who let down their guard will be more easily deceived, even by other *a priori* approaches. Often, without even realizing it, they will be continually subordinating the Scriptures to other presuppositions. They will be interpreting the Scriptures in the light of other *a priori* assumptions of men. In the false light of such presuppositional approaches the plainest statements of the Word of God are qualified and modified and even completely reversed in their meaning. That is what the pre-tribulation rapturists have done. What is left when a flood of such *a priori* schemes have finally gushed in through the hole in the dike and settled to become stagnant over the witness of the Word?

No person ever came up with a pre-tribulation rapture by reading the Holy Scriptures. It was introduced to that person by way of suggestion and wrong teaching. He may have derived it from the notes that certain dispensationalists and erring brethren have added onto the pages of various editions of the Bible, but no one derived it from the Scriptures themselves. The doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture is nothing more than an *a priori* assumption devised and imposed upon the Scriptures by men. The Holy Spirit never led anyone either to add to the Word of God or to subordinate the Word of God to the innovations and assumptions of men. The Lord spoke of a singular resurrection out from among the dead and only one rapture. No one was ever led of the Lord either to contradict or to add to the plain statement of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has affirmed that “the resurrection out from among the dead” and the gathering together “of His elect from the four wind, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost parts of heaven” (the rapture, Mark 13:24-27) will take place “in those days **after** that tribulation” (vs. 24). The Holy Spirit never led anyone to teach the pre-tribulation rapture, but He has led many who love the Lord and the true Gospel sincerely to repent of teaching that doctrine. Let the Lord’s people pray to be delivered from all *a priori* deception and false doctrine and pray to be given the grace and wisdom to proclaim “the whole council of God” (Acts 20:27).

Many churches reject people who do not hold to the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture. They boldly make their church’s *a priori* assumption of this doctrine a tenet of the Faith, a binding commandment and requirement in their church constitution. This is one way for them to avoid having to deal with any ongoing discussion about this subject and to avoid having to answer from the Scriptures. Let them consider this: Jesus said, “Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching (for) doctrines the commandments of men” (Mark 7:9).

All true Christians are reformers. It is one thing to come to an understanding of Lord’s teaching concerning His arrival and His gathering together of His elect to meet Him in the air at His arrival from heaven and to accompany Him to Mt. of Olives on that day, but

those who love the Lord and His people have even a greater burden. They want to see their fellow Christians delivered from the assumption and error of Dispensationalism and all other kinds of *a priori* deception.

**Take courage, we labor not in vain:**

What this paper has really pointed out is the dire need for a true reformation, a great revival of the Faith once delivered unto the saints. May the true doctrines of Praise the Lord: that reformation is coming, it will affect every nation, language, and tribe on the earth. They will come out of the inside of the great tribulation, having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white (Revelation 7:14).