

## **THE ORIGIN OF DISPENSATIONAL ESCHATOLOGY AND THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE**

At this point it would be profitable to make known the facts about dispensational Eschatology as well as the doctrine of the "secret rapture" prior to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What I personally believe is so interesting about the entire development of these doctrines is that their initial sources come out of the ranks of the most blasphemous and deceptive organization in the entire history of Christendom; the ranks of Romanism.

The first person who formulated this eschatology was a Jesuit named Ribera in 1591AD. He interpreted the book of Revelation suggesting an end-time personal antichrist, a rebuilt Babylon and a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem at the end of the Christian Era.

This doctrine began to fester within the system of Romanism which by now had a few dozen more erroneous and blasphemous doctrines introduced as biblical truths by its own leadership. But it wasn't until 1745AD that another Jesuit named Manuel de Lacunza y Diaz began to really distort the Scriptures through doctrines that perfectly fit the category of the kind of doctrines whose destructive results we are warned about by Paul. (2 Tim 4:3-4)

Back in the 18th Century, there was a Spanish family living in Chile named the De Lacunzas. In 1731, they had a baby boy whom they named Manuel. After fifteen years at home, young Manuel boarded a ship bound for Spain. He wanted to join the holy orders of Romanism and become a Jesuit priest. Twenty-one years later, the Jesuits were expelled from Spain because of their brutality, and "Father" Manuel de Lacunza y Diaz was forced to leave the country. He made his new home in Imola, Italy, where he remained for the rest of his life.

While in Imola, Lacunza claimed to be a converted Jew named "Rabbi Ben Ezra."

Under that alias, he pens down a doctrine which he calls "The coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty." He theorizes for the first time ever the end-time tribulation view. A book with his entire work was published in Spanish after his death.

In his book, he theorized that the Church would be "raptured" (taken up to be with the Lord) 45 days before Jesus' real return to Earth. During that 45-day period (while the Church was in heaven with the Lord), God would judge the wicked who were still remaining on Earth.

This Jesuit "Rabbi" theorized the earliest mini-tribulation, pre-trib rapture view on record! He derived his view primarily from a faulty interpretation of the 1290 and the 1335 days of Dan 12:11-12 (1335-1290 = 45).

De Lacunza died in Imola in 1801 and that should have been the end of his theory. But after his death, Lacunza's views were taught in Spain where his book was published in 1812.

A little over 14 years later in 1827 his book was translated into English by a Scottish radical named Edward Irving. Irving was the founder of an early charismatic cult, the Irvingites. He published Lacunza's view in his paper, "The Morning Watch."

Lacunza's views could have died right there, for most in England thought Irving to be a heretic, but the next three years two individuals added some more sensational views of doctrinal error to Lacunza's initial ones.

First, in 1830, a sickly little 15 year old charismatic girl named Margaret Macdonald, only a Christian for one year, claimed that she had a vision of a "secret rapture." What is interesting is that Margaret Macdonald was believed by her contemporaries to be involved in the occult and there are documented records of her performing levitation in some of her meetings, claiming that it was the work of the Spirit.

A year later in 1831, Robert Norton, a charismatic Irvingite evangelist, meets Margaret Macdonald and popularizes her "secret rapture" vision around England.

But it was 40 years later that this "tribulation period" and the "secret rapture" theories began to really spread. In 1870, John N. Darby, founder of the Plymouth Brethren, began to partake in many of the Irvingite meetings and at one point he wrote that he had "come to an understanding of a new truth." Later in his own letters, Darby admitted that he had been influenced by the writings of the Jesuit De Lacunza. And so he goes ahead now and expands Lacunza's views to a "seven-year Great Tribulation." Darby was not satisfied with Lacunza's rather simplistic 45-day tribulation idea, so he devised a more complex theory. It appeared to him that the last week (Dan 9:27) of Daniel's 70 weeks had yet to be fulfilled, so he suggested a 2000 (plus)-year gap between the 69th and 70th week. Darby then theorized that the 70th week was about a future seven-year-tribulation period that would take place at the end of the Christian Era.

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From that springboard, by sundry leaps of logic, Darby supposed that the Temple would be rebuilt and the animal sacrifices would be reinstated. An antichrist was supposed to appear and rule the world for seven years. After three and a half of them, this antichrist would presumably turn against the Jews, stop the sacrifices, and start Armageddon. He went on and on with many other unsupported conjectures yet all were based upon the erroneous doctrines of his predecessors we already mentioned and on his own idea of a 2000 (plus)-year gap and a seven-year great tribulation, theories he conjured up to fit his ideas and interpretation of Dan 9:27. What is even more interesting is that the Plymouth Brethren hide the origin of this view and claim that it is totally theirs.

Perhaps if J. N. Darby had not visited the United States, the seven-year trib theory and the secret rapture could have died right there. After all, there weren't very many Plymouth Brethren. But while in the States, Darby met C. I. Scofield. Scofield was so charmed by the Lacunza-Macdonald-Darby creed that he went on to include it in an annotated Bible he had in the works.

Sound Bible scholars of the day such as A. J. Gordon, W. G. Moorhead, Charles R. Eerdman, and others tried to dissuade him. Three noted members of Scofield's own revision committee even resigned because of Scofield's unswerving support for the Lacunza-Macdonald-Darby view, but their voices were not heard. The seven-year view remained and was incorporated into the notes of the now world-famous Scofield Bible.

In the following decades, the Scofield Bible became the most widely read Bible in the English language, and that annotated Bible was the primary vehicle by which the seven-year great tribulation view was spread throughout the whole English-speaking church. Scathing reviews have been written against Scofield's Bible by various respected scholars of the day, but many others presumed Scofield's notes to be all but inspired. Even today, some folks think a commentator's notes below the line are as valid as the Scriptures above it.

It is impossible to believe that a major end-time doctrine of the Protestant world began in the minds of Jesuit priests, one of which wrote under an assumed name and claimed to be a converted Jew. But the historic record of the origin of this creed is unassailable.

John Bray, the well known researcher of Christian faith in doctrine and history who wrote the book "The origin of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Teaching," has even offered a large reward to anyone who can find an earlier or different source of these false doctrines.

The church is indebted to this evangelist who was led of the Lord to dig down to the very roots of the pre-tribulation rapture position with such great courage.

There have been a host of weighty rebuttals by conservative theologians, but few clearheaded scholars have bothered to refute the De Lucanza-Macdonald-Darby-Scofield view scripturally, in a language the everyday saint can understand.

Albertus Pieters is another well known courageous theologian who writes in his "Examination of the Scofield Bible":

"From start to finish it (the Scofield Bible) is a partisan book, definitely, both openly and under cover, an instrument of propaganda in favor of an exceedingly doubtful eschatology...If Darby and his school are right, the entire Christian church for eighteen hundred years was wrong on a vital part of the Christian faith." Some have questioned the importance of knowing the origin of this doctrine, but in any court of law, the jury is

entitled to know the credibility of the witness. So the Church has every right to ask:

"Would a priest from an organization known for its blasphemous doctrines and the brutality that has exhibited throughout hundreds of years against the true believers in Christ, masquerading as a Jewish Rabbi, be a credible witness on spiritual matters and on biblical truth?" God forbid!

Finally, what makes this whole thing even more sad is the fact that Scofield knew the true origin of the pre-trib view in every detail, as some of his close associates did indicate, but since Irvingites were known to be heretics, he hid this knowledge from the public.

The reasons for supporting this view? Its great fundraising capability (of the view) for the increase of Bible sales (i.e., sensationalism).

Dr. Harry Ironside of Moody Bible Institute, himself an ardent supporter of the Lacunza-Darby-Macdonald-Scofield eschatological scheme, admitted in his book *Mysteries of God*, p. 50 :...Until brought to the fore through the writings of...Mr. J. N, Darby, the doctrine taught by Dr. Scofield (the Seven-Year Tribulation) is scarcely to be found in a single book throughout a period of 1600 years. If any doubt this statement, let them search, as the writer has in measure done, the remarks of the so-called Fathers, both pre-and post-Nicene, the theological treatises of the scholastic divines...the literature of the reformation...the Puritans. He will find the 'mystery' conspicuous by its absence."

Should such a statement surprise us? Yes, indeed, this "mystery is absent," because the Bible doesn't teach it.

Should we be offended by the continuous teaching and the proliferation of such erroneous doctrines?

Well, these doctrines were first taught when the Jews were not home and when Jerusalem was not free, so there was less data available then than there is now that throw much light to the prophetic words of the Bible. As a result, one must be careful not to speak ill of the brethren who taught and have proliferated this error unwittingly and without proper research of its origin. But an error is an error regardless of who teaches it, and false doctrines will remain if no one is willing to stand against them. Some things can't be whitewashed, or brushed under the carpet, and God holds a teacher responsible for what he teaches, Jas 3:1. Among 20th century evangelicals, the pre-trib rapture and the Seven-Year Tribulation are the most widely believed myths there are. Today's Christian schools have perpetuated these counter-scriptural dogmas. How? Because professors have spent their lives studying what past men had to say about the Bible while very little original work is undertaken within the Bible, despite the unprecedented prophetic fulfillment which have taken place in our lifetime. And if at some point such prophetic fulfillment is taken in consideration, for by staring us in the face cannot be ignored any longer, the familiar and deeply ingrained pride of man, due to past efforts, recognition and fame, will not let humility rise from within the heart and admit the error. As a result, our end-time views do not address today's realities, they are filled with deceptive doctrines and therefore do not meet the real needs of the church. But this is not true only with the De Lacunza doctrine. There are countless of erroneous doctrines that are flooding the church of Jesus Christ these last days.

Who would ever thought that out of the glorious Protestant church that is filled with the legacy of the martyr's who died for the defense of our faith, today, will have a denomination that its entire synod will gladly elect an Archbishop to defend the Christian faith and care for the flock of Christ, who openly and unashamedly flaunts his homosexuality.

May the Lord raise up men who will stand as rocks of faith against the tide of evil that has come to destroy our pure and holy faith in God's word and be willing to give their lives in doing so.

\* A copy of the Irving translation of Lacunza's work may still be found in Oxford University, Oxford, UK.

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