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Pre-Tribulationism-The 2nd Thessalonians 2 & Escapist Criticisms

There are four criticisms of pre-tribulationism. Let's review the first two, the Darby criticism and the Matt 24 criticism, then we'll answer the third and fourth, the 2 Thess 2 criticism and the escape hatch criticism; those are the four basic objections to pre-tribulationism.

First of all, the Darby criticism goes something like this, pre-tribulationism is a recent development by John Nelson Darby in 1830 who got it from a demon possessed little girl named Margaret MacDonald. There are actually a couple of criticisms intertwined here. Let me separate them out so we see clearly what's going on. One charge is that pre-tribulationism is a recent development. So the criticism is that if it wasn't discovered until 1830 then obviously it's not true, it couldn't happen that truth would lie dormant for so long and no one in church history saw it. So where did it come from? That's the other charge, namely that Darby got it from this teenage girl Margaret MacDonald who had these visions, so Dispensationalism is a cult.

What's our answer to these two charges? First of all, it's historically false that pretribulationism began in 1830. If you carefully read the letters of Darby you find that he thought of the idea in 1827 while he was convalescing after a riding accident at his sister's house. The guy didn't have anything else to do, he saw problems with the state church, he started studying the Bible to find a solution and the solution he came to was that the Church was not a nation, the Church was the body of Christ. So three years before he ever met this teenage girl he had already realized the rapture. Further, people who have studied this girl's prophecies point out they are not pre-tribulation prophecies. So how did Darby get the pre-trib rapture from a girl who he had never met and who was not even pre-tribulation?

Secondly, it's historically false that the idea of a pre-trib rapture is a recent development by Darby. I pointed out three earlier believers who noticed it. I mentioned the guy named Morgan Edwards, who makes statements in 1742 that were pre-tribulational. I mentioned Brother Dolcino who died in 1307, in a treatise written about him and his followers, that he has pre-tribulational statements. That's long before Darby. And then the Pseudo-Ephraem sermon, delivered sometime between 373 and 627. We say Pseudo because the actual sermon we found was delivered by someone who used the name Ephraem but we don't think he was Ephraem. The actual man who wrote the original sermon was Ephraem of Syria, but it was a popular sermon in the day and other men took it and translated it and delivered it, so we call it Pseudo-Ephraem. We're not exactly sure the date it was delivered by this man but it was before the rise of Islam, so the latest date is 627BC. In this sermon believers are clearly removed "before the tribulation." So it's just not true that the pre-trib rapture is a recent development. Other people have seen this in Scripture and taught it. All Darby did was develop it more fully than anyone had before and that grew out of his personal experience of the confusion of Church and State. So it was the historical circumstances that set him on course to resolve the problems that plagued his own day.

The second criticism was Matt 24; the charge is we read it wrongly. Let's turn there. Matt 24 was given to Christ's disciples as representative of Israel. The setting is the Mt of Olives. In verse 1 the disciples comment on the temple. They're pointing out the beauty of the temple stones. Verse 2, "And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" Technically that's only two questions, one about the temple and the other about the end of the age when Jesus would be coming in His kingdom. These are very Jewish questions. What I want to do is try and point out to you how Jewish this chapter is.

What people do with Matt 24, among those who aren't reading this in light of OT prophecy, is read later NT prophecy about the Church back into it. So they read backwards ideas that come later instead of reading forward, thinking through the details of prophecy, then they start seeing things like

verse 6, about “wars and rumors of wars.” Verse 7, “nation rising against nation” and they say, that’s WWI, that’s WWII. Prophecy is being fulfilled before our very eyes and they get very excited. There’s plenty to get excited about but that does not fit the metaphor of verse 8. What’s the metaphor in verse 8? Observe the text, it’s birth pangs, giving birth to a baby, and those pangs come at the very end of the pregnancy. Once they begin the baby comes pretty fast, so everything in this chapter, once it gets started, occurs in very quick succession all in the 70th week of Daniel. These are the events of the first half of the 70th week called the beginning of birth pangs, they extend through the second half because what is born? The kingdom is born. That’s the question the disciples are asking, what is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? That’s the kingdom. So the birth pangs start in the first half and continue through the second half. The second half of the 70th week doesn’t begin until verse 9. “Then they will deliver you to tribulation.” Israel has peace, geopolitically in the first half, that’s provided by Antichrist, but in the second half they have terrible distress, so the “you” here is Israel as represented by the disciples. “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.” Who will be hated by all nations? The nation Israel. Just like the Book of Revelation describes, when Antichrist arises to world power at the mid point, he goes after Israel. So this is all Jewish. It goes on to describe Jews betraying one another and hating one another. It’s back to the 1st century all over again; some Jews are believing in Messiah, some are rejecting, turmoil in every Jewish ghetto. They can never agree. Jesus is a line of division. By the end of verse 14 “the end will come,” showing that by this point Jesus has just finished summarizing the entire 70th week of Daniel.

Then in verse 15 the Lord Jesus backs up to start giving details. He says “when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place,” now he brings in Daniel 9 that talks about the seven year period, and that passage establishes that the abomination of desolation occurs at the mid-point. When you see the “abomination of desolation standing in the holy place,” what’s the holy place? The Temple in Jerusalem. How much more Jewish could you get? What does the temple in Jerusalem have to do with the Church? The fact is that the Church is a spiritual temple, the Temple in Jerusalem is a physical temple. This is clearly referencing a physical temple and a physical abomination of desolation in that Temple. So by this point the Church is long gone, you have

a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. The antichrist comes in there and sets himself up as God and demands that all people worship Him. Is this Jewish or what? A literal, physical Temple on the Temple Mount in the city of Jerusalem.

Verse 16, “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains,” who is in Judea? The Church of Israel? This is all Israel. Verse 17, “let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; 18and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. 19But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! 20But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath day,” what does Sabbath have to do with? Why not the Sabbath day? Because Jews have travel restrictions on the Sabbath, the Church doesn’t have a Sabbath. The big idea here is that the abomination of desolation is the trigger that tells the Jews who are reading Matthew’s gospel to get out of town because the pressure of Antichrist is coming. It starts at the midpoint of Daniel’s 70th week and vv 9-14 overlap with the verses we are now covering, they’re all referred to as the great tribulation, the time of Jacob’s trouble.

Then in verse 29, the next major paragraph, “But immediately after the tribulation of those days.” So now the 70th week is complete, at that point tremendous geophysical and astronomical catastrophes, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heaven will be shaken, 30then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky” and that’s a quotation. Where is the quotation taken from? It comes out of the OT; it comes out of Daniel. Chapter and verse? Dan 7:13. So again Jesus is following the prophetic outline of OT Israel. Verse 31, “And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” Gathering together the elect goes all the way back to Deuteronomy. Isaiah 27 says it will occur in conjunction with trumpets. The point here is that nothing Jesus has said up to verse 31 differs one iota from what the OT has already consistently laid out with respect to Israel.

Think about this, it’ll help you think this through because there are Christians today that want to mix the Church in Matt 24. Wait a minute here, think! If Jesus isn’t changing the OT framework but continuing it; the

Church isn't in the OT because it didn't start until Pentecost. So if He's continuing the OT it should be no surprise that the Church isn't in Matt 24, because He's expositing the OT prophecies about the destiny of Israel. People want to read the Church into this chapter and it just doesn't work. This is Jewish at the core.

Last time I showed you what was going on here by going through Zech 14. Turn back to Zech 14. (reference last week's lesson for the diagram) If you look at the figure notice the flow of the boxes. That's Zechariah's view. We're going to see what Zechariah taught in the OT to Jews of the nation Israel. Zech 14:1-2, "Behold, a day is coming from the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. 2For I will gather all the nations against" not Paris, not Washington, not Beijing, "I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem" it's centered on Israel, "to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city." So the first box summarizes Zech 14:1-2. The Gentiles come to destroy Jerusalem; that's the first major action in this passage.

Now we go to verse 3, "Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle." Who are "those nations" in the context? Verse 2, the nations that have come against Israel, and the Lord is going to fight against those nations. He's not coming to fight Israel, He's coming to fight against the nations that have come against Israel. Verse 4, "And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives," where was Jesus standing when He preached Matt 24? He was standing on the Mount of Olives. "...which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south," a huge geophysical event happens. Think about it, a mountain splits in half and moves north and south. And look what opens up, verse 4, a way of escape, "you [that's Israel] will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you" did when? "before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah." Now was that a literal earthquake in the days of Uzziah? You bet. Will this future earthquake be literal? If words mean anything, yeah. So in the flow of boxes what is the second action in the Zechariah context? That when the Gentiles come to

destroy Jerusalem the Messiah is going to split the Mt of Olives in half to give the Jews a way of escape.

Further in verse 5, “Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! 6In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle.” Does Jesus talk about that in Matt 24? You bet he does. That’s the third box, astronomical and geophysical catastrophes accompanying the return of the Lord.

On down to verses 9ff, “And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one. 10And all the land will be changed into a plain...” Not only will the Lord Jesus come back to reign as King but its saying that the kingdom will be geophysically adjusted. It happens very rapidly, it doesn’t take a million years to form, it’s catastrophic. Wouldn’t it be great to stand there and watch this with some geology professors? The land is just flattened in a matter of seconds. I thought that took a million years! Better recalculate, and call the cartographers in, we need a new set of maps and while we’re at it, call in the textbook publishers, gonna need a new set, gotta revise.

In the fourth box you see; the “Messianic Kingdom and world peace” come. If you just cover up the Jesus’ view, the boxes underneath, and just look at those top four boxes that is what is in the disciples mind when Jesus comes along teaching the Olivet Discourse. So forget the Jesus view for now, just look at the top four boxes of Zechariah. If you thought that way and you heard the Lord Jesus Christ say guys, look at this Temple, there’s not going to be a rock left, this Temple is going to go. If you just had those four top boxes, which box would you be thinking if you heard the Lord Jesus Christ say this Temple is going down? What would you associate that with? You’d associate it with the first box; the city of Jerusalem is going to be destroyed. Why would that turn you on in one sense, you didn’t want the Temple to be destroyed but the fact that the Temple is being destroyed is a sign of what? What’s going to happen next? Messiah is going to come and split the Mt of Olives, provide a way of escape, accompanied by astronomical and geophysical catastrophes, deliver the city and bring in what? The ever awaited kingdom.

The only thing that causes us to pause is the question about the temple being torn down. We don't read anything about the temple being destroyed in Matt 24. We read about an abominable act in a temple but we don't read that the temple is destroyed. If we turned to the parallel in Luke what would we find? We'd find a section unparalleled by anything in Matthew and it gets set off because Jesus says, but before all these things, that is, before the birth pangs, Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies, the nation will go into exile, the times of the Gentiles will reign supreme. So what Jesus does is take the original Zechariah prophecy, he confirms that, but he adds a new prophecy. Is that unheard of in prophecy? Can you do that? It happened in Daniel's day. Daniel was reading Jeremiah and Jeremiah said restoration from Babylon after how many years? 70 years. And it was about up. The nation had gone into captivity in 586BC. 586 minus 70 is 516BC. So Daniel is sitting there in Iraq, and he's noticing the calendar and he's saying you know, I studied the prophecies of Jeremiah and in 70 years God's supposed to restore this nation. So he prays about it. Daniel is not a fatalist, he's not some hyper-Calvinist that says oh, seventy years and it's going to happen. Daniel knows his theology well enough to know that no restoration is going to happen unless Israel does what? They have to confess, they have to adjust to God's holiness. So Daniel begins to confess his sin and the sin of the nation, that's his whole prayer in Daniel 9; Lord, I've blown it, my nation has blown it, we've rejected your word, it's a great big confession. Then the angel shows up and says, Daniel, you're confessing because you have this big restoration in mind, but let me give you a little more information. The 70 years Jeremiah predicted is just a partial restoration, the final restoration is 70 years times 7. So yes, Jeremiah's prophecy is on the brink of fulfillment, but as far as the final restoration and the kingdom coming in all its glory, as it was in the days of Solomon, that's 70 years times 7, or 490 years.

So what did the Lord just do there through the angel Gabriel? He took a prophetic picture and he did this to it; he expanded it, he opened it up and showed there were two prophecies with a lot of time in between. And you see over and over again. That's why I'm taking you back to this. You have to learn to read Scripture the way it's intended to be read.

So now what are we able to do in Jesus' view down here? Add this earlier box that does not have a parallel in Zechariah or Matthew. He's talking in Luke about something that occurs prior to the Gentile invasion that results in the

Messiah returning to the Mt of Olives and rescuing the Jews, bringing in the kingdom. He's talking about an attack prior to that where He does not return to rescue the Jews or bring in the kingdom, but rather the Jews go into Exile.

So what has Jesus just done? He's done the expansion thing again; the first siege of Gentiles did come against Jerusalem in what year? When did they destroy Jerusalem as the Preterist say? AD70, the Romans came against it. That is covered in Luke 21, that's Luke's version; Luke 21 is parallel but in the Luke passage Luke is careful to include enough detail so we know that the Lord Jesus Christ, when He talked about the Gentiles coming against Jerusalem, included details that were unmistakably fulfilled in AD70. However, then Jesus goes on to say that in the last days there will be these earthquakes, wars, rumors of wars, etc. and then you will see the abomination spoken of by the prophet Daniel. How can you have an abomination in a Temple that's already been destroyed in AD70? The Temple is destroyed in AD70. So if the Temple is destroyed in AD70 how do you get it rebuilt and have this abomination happen inside it? The answer is there must be a period of time that lapses between the Roman destruction of the Temple and the time the Lord Jesus Christ comes back, because prior to the Lord Jesus Christ coming back there's got to be this antichrist guy and not only does there have to be an antichrist, Israel has to be in the land, Israel has to be in control of Jerusalem and Israel has to have a Temple and doing sacrifices. So this gets injected but the rest is identical to Zechariah.

So Jesus, in Matt 24, is talking in terms of the OT. He does inject time into the OT position, but He's not injecting the Church into the OT position. How do I know that? "The OT prophesied that God would scatter Israel to the four winds. It also prophesied, however, that God would regather His elect nation from the four winds one-by-one accompanied by the sound of a great trumpet." That's the trumpet He's talking about in Isa 27:13 quoted by Matt 24:31; that's not talking about the rapture in verse 31, it's a reference to the OT trumpet and it's talking in terms of the OT of His elect nation who are Jews. So they're talking about Jews being brought back. Back where? Back to the land.

The story is Israel's not the Church's. That's why we defend the position that Matt 24 isn't talking about the Church. It's an exposition of the OT, talking about Israel. There's no rapture here, the rapture is the blessed hope, the

rapture is the transformation of believers in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. There's nothing at the rapture about looking for the antichrist in Jerusalem, the Temple in Jerusalem. Look for Christ, the blessed hope, it comes, suddenly, without warning, and the transformation happens. There's no transformation in Matt 24:31, there's no resurrection there. I'll give you \$500 if you can find a resurrection in Matt 24:31. You can't find it. But the rapture is a resurrection and it's imminent, it could happen today, it could happen a hundred years from now but with no warning, it will just happen, and it will happen when the body of Christ is finished, boom, we're gone, Church over. Now what happens?

Israel is back on. The world is back to where it was left just before the Day of Pentecost. Israel and the nations; just read Revelation, after you get through Rev 2-3 which is church, church, church, then suddenly there is nothing about the Church and everything is about Israel and the nations, Israel and the nations, 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe, the nations rage against Israel. Finally in Rev 19 you see the Church coming back with Christ, so if we're coming back with Him when did we get with Him? Logically after Rev 2-3, that's where the rapture would be placed.

Alright, today let's move on to the third criticism; 2 Thess 2, let's turn there. In 2 Thess 2 here's a passage that is also said to be impossible to interpret as pre-tribulational. But actually every view could have problems with this view depending on how you interpret certain things. "Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ²that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ⁵Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?" Now, the subject is broached in verse 1, the coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering together to Him, in other words, the general subject is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the particular subject is that aspect of His coming when we are gathered together to Him. Remember, the coming of the Lord can be used of a complex of events, but the particular aspect of this

complex is our gathering together to Him. And notice we are going to Him, He is not coming to us, we are going to Him. So obviously Paul has in mind the rapture in distinction from the return. That's the topic and verse 2 they've been deceived and agitated by some false teaching either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us. It was false teaching propagating a message that was not from Paul, it was being propagated under Paul's name but Paul did not endorse it. And whatever this teaching was it was troubling, they were disturbed by it. Now he tells us what it was at the end of verse 2, it was the idea that "the day of the Lord has come." Now, have we seen that term before? Where does that term come from? It comes from the OT. Who did it relate to in the OT? Israel and the nations. So what is this term all about? It's about judgment first of all, a period of judgment followed by a period of blessing in the kingdom. So what's the problem these believers were facing? Somebody told them it had already come! They were in the judgment period. Now that's unsettling, that's very troubling because this is a period of wrath. And he describes in v 4 some of the things that happen during the extreme wrath: the Antichrist is going to go into the temple and exalt himself as God, etc. it's all the same stuff as Matt 24 and he says in verse 5, don't you remember, when I was with you I was teaching you all these things?" Did you contract amnesia or something? I taught you that you can't be in that day unless two things happen first, verse 3.

So these folks have been deceived into thinking they are in the day of the Lord and Paul says you can't be in it because two things have to happen before it begins, actually this is the only passage in the entire Bible that gives the beginning of the day of the Lord, He says in verse 3, "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it," what's it? What's the nearest antecedent? The day of the Lord. Has to be, can't be anything else, that's what they thought they were in, but Paul says, the day of the Lord "will not come unless the apostasy comes first," so the very first thing that occurs before the day of the Lord is the apostasy, and then, secondly, "the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God," very clearly that's the antichrist. There's a strict sequence here, the first thing has to happen then the second thing has to happen, then and only then can the day of the Lord begin. So what is the first thing? The apostasy. Then what is the second thing? The revealing of the antichrist. Then and only then can the day of the Lord begin. The problem is this word apostasy and what it refers to. If

you look at the word and how it's been translated down through church history, every Bible translation till the early 1600's translated the word "departure." So when you see the word "apostasy" and your mind thinks of the idea of doctrinal apostasy you might want to slow down and think that through a bit. It's true the word can be used that way but there are a couple of things you might want to consider. First of all, it's being used very specifically here because Paul uses the definite article, he doesn't just say apostasy has to happen, he says "the apostasy" or "the departure," so it's a very specific event he has in mind whatever it is. Secondly, if it refers to doctrinal apostasy then what degree of apostasy are you talking about? I'm just presenting a problem with the view. How would you know the doctrinal apostasy was reached? Because when I read Christ's analysis of the seven churches in Rev 2-3 they all look apostate to me except one. So is that the apostasy? In AD96 6/7ths of the representative churches are apostate. So is that the apostasy? All I'm trying to say is that if this means doctrinal apostasy it's a pretty vague idea. How would the Thessalonians have even evaluated that with any meaning? Is that their church? Is that all local churches? What would that mean to them? Further, you could argue the church was apostate in the 7th century, the 8th century, the 9th century, the 10th century, all the way up to the 16th century and the Reformation. So the point is that the doctrinal apostasy idea is far too vague to satisfy the specificity of the text. Paul has something much more specific in mind.

The problem is Paul doesn't tell us what it is? It just says the departure has to come first. But whatever it is, it's something the Thessalonians knew well. Paul says in verse 5, don't you remember when I was with you I was telling you all these things. So all we have to go on is the record of what Paul taught them in 1 Thessalonians. And that's what I suggest is the answer. So what did Paul teach there? Paul taught in 1 Thess 4 that the rapture will occur first, then in 1 Thess 5 that the day of the Lord will come on the world. Isn't that exactly the same sequence he describes here? The apostasy comes first, being the rapture, the spatial departure of believers from the earth then the revealing of the antichrist's identity and only then could the day of the Lord begin. So could they be in the day of the Lord? No way, the rapture has to happen first, then the revealing of the antichrist. Then and only then can the day of the Lord come. As David Olander states, "While there is absolutely no sign or event which must take place prior to the rapture, there are very detailed events prior to the beginning of the day of the Lord. No other book of

Scripture details the exact beginning of the day of the Lord except Second Thessalonians. For the day of the Lord to begin the apostasy must come first, and then the man of lawlessness must be revealed (2 Thess 2:1–3). Only after these two events is it possible for the day of the Lord begin.”ⁱ So the rapture first, then the revealing, then the day of the Lord. No Christian can ever be in the day of the Lord because the rapture must happen first. Any other view, mid-trib or pre-wrath or post-trib would not have the effect of calming the Thessalonians down because the church still has to go through some kind of wrath, whether man’s or Satan’s. But an exclusion from all the wrath, that would calm the Thessalonians down from the frenzy caused by the false teaching that they had entered the day of the Lord. Enough for 2 Thess 2. You want to be acquainted with Matt 24 and 2 Thess 2; there is a lot of study that has to go into those two passages.

The last objection to pre-tribulationism is that it is Escapist. We’re accused of just trying to escape the difficulties of this world. And this is the easiest criticism to answer. While sounding pious, this argument actually trivializes the momentous, misunderstanding the nature of the Church and misunderstanding the purposes of suffering for the Church. Why does the Church suffer? Is it because we need to be cleansed? We need to somehow be purified? What about the fact we’re justified by faith and imputed the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ? If we do have to go into the Tribulation is it a Protestant form of purgatory? What is that all about? That is not the purpose of the Church’s suffering. The Church suffers, first of all, in order to stimulate spiritual growth, not to be further cleansed. Further, if that were the purpose 20 centuries of Christians missed the cleansing, they’re already dead, they’re not going to face the Tribulation.

The second reason we suffer is because of our association with Christ. Satan hates Christ and since we are associated with Christ then he attacks us. We are the only ‘part’ of Christ which is available to Satan for attack. So yeah, we do suffer, not all at the same time incidentally, there are regions where Satan’s attack are concentrated at any one given time. Right now the Christians in Sudan are suffering persecution while we here in America have enjoyed tremendous freedom for 200 years. So the Church’s suffering is characterized by is localization, that is, it’s not going on globally. But the suffering in the tribulation is global. So there’s a difference in the extent of the suffering at any one given time between what the Church goes through

and what Israel and the nations will go through; we experience it locally, they will experience it globally.

We would also look at the nature of the Church. The Church is in Christ. He is the head, we are the body, why would Christ put His body in the Tribulation, when the purpose of the tribulation is not to mature believers but to trample the world with geophysical and astronomical catastrophes?

Lastly, the pre-trib position is not arguing that the Church doesn't face tribulation; Jesus said, in this world you will have tribulation, all the pre-trib guys are doing is saying that the tribulation the Church now faces is of a different nature and purpose than the coming Tribulation. We distinguish between the kinds and purposes of tribulation, we don't say there is no tribulation today. So it's not escapist to argue for pre-trib rapture.

Alright, next time I'll try to review the Framework. We've been in this four years now and we want to try and tie all this together. What I've tried to do, basing this on Charles Clough's work, what he was trying to do and what I'm trying to do in following his method and he is the one who developed the approach, not me, Charlie saw in the 70's that we had to do something with our approach to the Bible because people had compartmentalized the Bible over to a little religious box. So what the framework does is it emphasizes the historicity of the biblical events and then ties doctrines to those events. That way we're not divorcing all our beliefs over here from history, over here in the subjective arena, rather we're embedding them in objective history. That way you're tied down and you can't slip and slide around on grease. Satan wants to keep you unstable, slipping and sliding around, God wants you to be grounded on the rock and that's what this framework was designed to do, to solidify your beliefs by embedding them in God's plan for history.

So with Creation we tied in the doctrines of God, man and nature, those are basic categories and without those you can't understand anything, you certainly can't understand the gospel. Satan has really done a number on the categories and that's why you had surveys coming out in the 1960's - just imagine what I'm about to tell you is over 50 years old - you had people coming out of Billy Graham crusades, saying they were Christians and they didn't even believe in the existence of God. Now you tell me how you can be a Christian and not believe in God. So don't tell me you can just ask someone,

are you a Christian, yes, I'm a Christian, and be satisfied. At that point you haven't even scratched the surface. Who knows what they mean by that, who knows what they believe. Muslims believe in Jesus, Mormon's believe in Jesus, Jehovah's Witnesses believe in Jesus, they all believe in Jesus, so what? What's the difference? Who is the Jesus they are believing in? Because if He's not the God of creation He's not the biblical Jesus. And then, are they really saved or not? These are serious questions and my point is that you cannot get to the biblical Jesus until you deal with the biblical God. And He defines Himself forever and ever by the act of creation. That's where we go to find out about God. God comes first, then we'll talk about the Fall and sin and Jesus, what Jesus was doing on the cross. But there's a logical progression to get to the Jesus of the Bible so people can have a clear view of who it is they are accepting or rejecting.

ⁱ Olander, D. (2009). *The Greatness of the Rapture: The Pre-Day of the Lord Rapture* (K. R. Cooper & C. Cone, Ed.) (115). Ft. Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press.

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