

Lord, I pray that You would minister to our hearts, by Your Holy Spirit, as we study Your Word. Help us to be open and teachable to what You want. Thank You for this time. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is a very serious matter. It is interesting to me that liberal doctrine says that there is no visible bodily return, but that the Second Coming means Christ comes into your heart. Well, He might come into your heart, but He is coming again, and the Bible is filled with it.

One writer I was reading said that one out of every twenty verses refers to the Second Coming. I am not sure about that because I did not read the entire Bible to find out if that was true, nor did I count them, but I know that the Second Coming is spoken about a lot. We have books dedicated to the Second Coming. The book of Daniel certainly speaks a lot about it, though not all of it, but probably a good half of it. We also have Zechariah, which perhaps all of it is related to the Second Coming. We have volumes of remarks by Jesus referring to the Second Coming. There are parables of the kingdom of heaven, and also an entire book in the New Testament dedicated to the Second Coming, whose name means the revelation of Jesus Christ when He comes again. That is the Book of Revelation. We have some chapters with whole passages dealing with the Second Coming, and it makes me wonder why there is so little among mainline churches on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It is almost like they are fearful of it. If you are not really saved, you ought to be fearful, but if you know the Lord, it is our great joy. It is our anticipation. It is

what we are waiting for, and that is a little insight into what is wrong with our Christian life. Many of us have the spiritual “blahs” because we are not anticipating the Second Coming. We are not expecting it. We think life is going to go on. With all we have seen happen in recent times, and I mean recent, in your lifetime, it is going to be amazing if Jesus does not come before this generation is finished. It will be amazing. How in the world would He reconstruct all of the events that have occurred and line it up the way that it is lined up at the present time? Of course He can do that, and world war could perhaps change every thing, but I do believe we are in that time. Any moment now Jesus could come and we will be out of here. If you are in heavy debt on your MasterCard or Visa, this could be good news. The debt goes to the antichrist! But we do have a certain sorrow in our hearts when we think about the immediacy of the return of Christ because we realize that there are family members and friends who, in fact, do not know the Lord.

This is a doctrine of salvation. Sometimes people ask me, “Do you have to believe in the Second Coming in order to be saved?” I answer, “Is the grass green? Is the sky blue? Is the pope Catholic?” I mean, “What are you saying? Of course we have to believe it.” There is no gospel without the return of Christ. If He is not returning, it affects your understanding of the Resurrection. So this is all very important stuff.

We are going to deal with the following subjects: (1) the promise of His coming, (2) the problem of His coming as it relates to time and place, and (3) the power of His coming. Let us start with the fact that the promise of His coming was given by Jesus Christ Himself. If you have your Bibles open them to John 14:1-6, which is a wonderful passage.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I

would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:1-6)

The night before He went to the cross, Jesus made it very clear that He was going to come again. He said, "I go to prepare a place." Some say that He is preparing the mansions. Some say He is referring to His cross which would prepare a place for them in heaven by His death. There are different views on that. Acts 1:9-11 records the ascension:

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

They watched as His physical body ascended to heaven, and He will so come in like manner. He is going to come back in the same physical body, and it will be visible exactly like it was at the time of the ascension. The two men in white apparel, whoever they are, give the same message

that Jesus had given to His disciples the night before He went to the cross. They promised that Jesus Christ would come back again.

In Revelation 1:7 it says, “Behold He cometh with clouds.” This text said a cloud received Him out of their sight. He will come with clouds according Revelation 1:7. It is interesting that three times at the end of Revelation, Jesus is quoted as saying, “I come quickly” (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20). These are basically the last words of the Bible. The apostle John ends this last book of the Bible with the prayer, “Even so come, Lord Jesus.”

When you play down or ignore or neglect the Second Coming of Christ, you are certainly ignoring the biblical layout of this material and the fact that the last thing God wanted you to know is that He is coming. Maybe that prayer should be on our lips. “Even so, come Lord Jesus.”

He is going to come on His time schedule. Your prayer is not going to make it earlier. So why pray it? The answer is that it represents the expectation of your own heart and your relationship to Him. Why do not people look forward to the Second Coming? There are a lot of reasons. They do not know much about it. They are not really in love with Jesus Christ like they say they are. They do not really know Him well enough to want Him. The cares of this life are choking the word. They, in fact, want to live down here and enjoy everything it has before they go home to be with the Lord. It is kind of interesting, as to why people are not constantly thinking of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. Maybe it is good that we wake up each morning and wonder if this is the day. Live your life as though it were the day of the Second Coming. Maybe you would talk nicer to people. Maybe you would get more accomplished. Maybe your walk with the Lord would be stronger. I do not know, but that is an important thing to do.

Now this prediction of Jesus which was reiterated by the two men in white apparel, was grounded in the predictions of the apostles who wrote the New Testament. Here is where I do not understand the people that do not see the Second Coming. It is everywhere. Please turn to Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. We call this passage "The Rapture of the Church." The word "rapture" does not appear in the text or anywhere in the Bible. So where did we get the word?

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

The phrase, "caught up" when translated from Greek into Latin, is the word *raptureo*. We just said it in English, "rapture," and so that is where the word comes from. It is a transliteration of the Latin for the word in Greek, "caught up."

Let us read what Paul says about the Second Coming of Christ.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

It is easy to be neglectful of this doctrine at the funeral of a friend or family member. It is easy to forget what the Bible says. I have seen it over and over again. You can sit in class and say, "Well I would not be like that," and then someone close to you dies and at that funeral it is amazing how that is a test to what we believe.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them
also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

(1 Thessalonians 4:14)

This is an interesting revelation. The Rapture is not taught in the Old Testament, but it was given directly by Jesus Christ to Paul. Perhaps it was given, as Galatians 1 argues, in the three years that he was out in the Arabian Desert, because it says that he received direct revelation from Christ. It is interesting that it does not appear in the Old Testament. The other day on the radio I heard a pastor trying to make it appear. But no way! The Rapture is not mentioned. It was a brand new and direct revelation to Paul.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which
are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not
prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall
descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the
archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ
shall rise first. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-16)

It is very hard for me to believe that religious cults could believe that Jesus is Michael the Archangel, on the basis of this verse. It says the Lord Himself will come with the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up (*i.e.*,
raptured) together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in

the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore
comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians
4:17-18)

You will need to do that frequently if you have a heart for God. You will see people discouraged about a lot of things in life. We are to encourage one another with these words. He actually goes on and discusses the Day of the Lord.

In 2 Thessalonians, the coming of Christ is at the end of the tribulation.

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

(2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

Now here is the coming of Christ at the end of the tribulation. He deals with both phases of the Second Coming. If you are troubled about this and you really want to study it, though it is not required, I have a set of tapes called “The Case for Pre-tribulationism” that walks through the whole argument. If it is in your mind that you want to really get it down, and therefore answer everybody who does

not believe that the Rapture is before the Tribulation, then get these tapes. We are going to talk a little bit more about that here in a minute.

Paul clearly deals with the Second Coming in a multitude of ways. So does Peter, and in setting the stage for our understanding of the Second Coming we must be aware of the fact that all of the writers of the New Testament refer to it. It is even referred to in the little one-chapter book of Jude, at the end and in the middle. In 1 Peter 1, Peter mentions very clearly the importance of the Second Coming in relation to all of us.

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.
(1 Peter 1:6-8)

The third chapter of 2 Peter, in its entirety, is given to His Second Coming at the end of the tribulation in power and great glory.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (2 Peter 3:8)

According to this, there has only been two days so far.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

(2 Peter 3:9)

He is not delaying for no reason at all. Why has He not come? He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Are you glad that He waited for you?

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10)

The “Day of the Lord” refers to a day of judgment, not blessing. It is the tribulation (a day of darkness and gloom). It is a day of death and destruction. It will come as a thief in the night. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. This shall also happen to the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in holy conversation or conduct and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we,

according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth,
wherein dwelleth righteousness. (2 Peter 3:11-13)

All these writers express the importance of the Second Coming. In James 5, he tells us to be patient unto the coming of the Lord—that the Lord is near at hand. In 1 John 3, the apostle said, “Beloved it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.” It is wonderful encouragement.

Go to Matthew 24 please. I want you to list the three primary words in the Greek language that are translated the “coming” of Christ. First is *parousia*, which is used twenty-four times in the New Testament, and basically means, “presence” or “arrival.” An example would be, “The *parousia* of a king that is coming and he is finally here.” Second, is the word *epiphaneia*, which is used six times in the New Testament, and means “appearing” or, literally, “brightness.” It is talking about the display when He comes. Third is the word *apokalupsis*, which is the name of the last book (we say Revelation, but the Greek name is *apokalupsis*). This word is used eighteen times, and literally means “unveiling.” This sheds light on our English word “revelation.” In other words, our Lord Jesus will be unveiled like you have never seen Him. That is why the last book is called “The unveiling.” Did you know there are more names of Jesus Christ in the Book of Revelation than all the New Testament combined?

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is not simply the event of His coming (i.e., the last book), but it is unveiling who He is. In the first chapter you see a picture of Him that was unlike anything you read in the Gospels. He has eyes “as a flame of fire,” and feet “like burning bronze.” It is totally different.

In Matthew 24:3 we have a question by the disciples. They said, “Tell us when shall these things be?” in reference to what He predicted (*i.e.*, regarding the destruction of the Temple). “Not one stone would be left upon another would be thrown down.” Let me stop right there.

Recently, in the excavations along the western wall of the Temple Mount, the Israelis discovered the fulfillment of this prophecy. I know that people have been following what Josephus said, but we really never had any evidence, until now. As they were digging down to that level of the Herodian temple (the temple of Herod the Great that was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70), they were shocked to find giant pieces of stone all knocked down. When they uncovered the dirt off of it all, they are all stacked up. It was as if the wall fell down and there was not one stone hooked to another. The Israelis, in spite of not really being sympathetic all the time to *Yeshua*, yet in reality decided to leave that stack of stones there. It is right below the walkway up to the Temple Mount and right down below where you can see it. There is probably a thirty to forty foot section of it. They left them there as the proof that not one stone was left upon another. Jesus told the truth, forty years before it happened. That is pretty incredible.

There was another question they asked. They said, “When shall these things be?” meaning the knocking down of the Temple. But the next question was, “What shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the age?” It is one question. “The sign of Your coming and the end of the age.”

I want to point something out to you that really needs to be said, lest you get confused by various people teaching the Second Coming. Some people say the word *parousia*, which means “arrival” or “presence,” is only speaking of the Rapture, because the word in verse 3 for “coming” is *parousia*. It is the same as saying, “What evidence do we have as to when You will arrive and Your presence be with us again?” Using the word, “end of the age,” we know that they are

referring to the Tribulation (the Jewish age). Jesus then begins to describe what they should be looking for.

Look at Matthew 24:27. He said, “For as the lightening cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of Man be.” We know from Matthew 24:29 that it is immediately after the Tribulation. Matthew 24:30 says, “Then shall appear the sign of the coming of the Lord.” You see, *parousia* meaning “presence” or “arrival” can apply to either the Rapture, or His coming at the end of the Tribulation. It is amazing when I read Matthew 24-25 because of what you see in it. We are told in this passage that “no man knows the day or the hour when the Son of Man comes.” We are told in this passage that we should “watch and be ready.” We are told in this passage that the Lord is going to reward His servants. The passage ends with the fact that some, not turning to the Lord, are going to go to hell—to everlasting punishment.

In the judgment of the nations, there were sheep nations and goat nations. The sheep went into the kingdom; the goats went to hell. In Matthew 25:41, He said, “Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” He then said in Matthew 25:46, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal.”

There is a heresy abroad in the Christian evangelical camp. It appears quite often, and is even found in *Christianity Today* by John Stott, who is an excellent teacher, however, he very incorrect concerning this. He said that hell was not forever.

Now in Mark 9:43-48 Jesus said, “The worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.” That sounds like it is pretty continuous. But Matthew 25:46 is the only verse in the New Testament that puts the

same word, “everlasting,” in front of punishment and life. The Greek word *aion*, can mean age. Many of the people who do not believe hell is forever point out its usage in several passages that it is just referring to an age of suffering and time and then all will eventually be redeemed. The word *aionion*, a compound word that derived from the same root, which means “everlasting, forever and ever.” This is the only verse where *aionion* refers to punishment as well as eternal. Notice that King James changed it to “eternal” rather than “everlasting.” To me, they both mean the same thing, but that is part of the game people play with words. Actually, I want you to know it is the same Greek word in both cases, though it is translated different in English. If life is eternal with God in heaven, then hell is eternal with the wicked. It is an awesome thought, is it not?

Well, Matthew 24 and 25 are indeed tremendous passages. You find the same thing in Mark 13 and Luke 21. All of these writers refer to the Second Coming. I could add Jude. You know, we can add a lot of things here. The Second Coming is mentioned, almost without exception, in all 27 books. It is a major theme of the Bible.

Let me put it to you another way. There is some evidence that it is *the* theme of the Bible. In the last book of the Bible, it pictures the return of Jesus Christ at the end of the tribulation, with all the armies of heaven with Him. He has on His thigh a name written. Revelation 19:16 says, **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**. It is almost like the entire Bible is pointing to this verse. Why do I say that? In the Bible it is in bold and all capital letters. We could write it “King of kings and Lord of lords” and it would mean the same thing. Then why did the Bible put it in capital letters? This is an interesting question. I wrote on this subject some time ago, but I want to just tell you about it. It interested me so much because I noticed the English. If you look at the manuscripts and fragments of Revelation 19, every last one of them have it in capitals—what we

can uncial letters. It is cursive writing, small letter writing right up until that point, and then it is all capitals. In other words, God intended it to be that way. So the whole world would know that the theme of the Bible is the glorious return of Christ when it will be announced that He is **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**. Amen.

I almost need to put on the Hallelujah Chorus right now. I thought about bringing that, but I did not. I have a great CD of the Westminster Choir (five hundred voices) and the Royal Philharmonic of London playing the Hallelujah Chorus. It makes you want to get a bus for heaven right now. It is the theme of the Bible. Do not ever miss it.

The actual name of the last book of the Bible is “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” Maybe you just want to turn to the first verse. The first verse of Revelation 1 gives the title: The Revelation (the *apokalupsis*, or the unveiling) of Jesus Christ. You see, you can teach the Second Coming as an event, or you can teach the Second Coming as a disclosure of who Jesus really is. When you study be careful that you do not miss the point of the Second Coming. We are going to see Jesus. As Peter said, “the one we have not seen, yet love.” He is One on which we have never cast our eyes, yet we believe in Him. Revelation 22 says that we shall see His face. Wow! All twenty-two chapters of Revelation are about the unveiling of Jesus Christ and I think that it is rather spectacular.

This brings us to the problem. Here is where we are going to be spending a good amount of time. The problem is His coming as it relates to time and place. You and I both know that Christians disagree over this.

In Christianity today there are four views. First of all, the pre-tribulational rapture. We believe that this event will occur sometime previous to the coming Tribulation. By the way, it does not have to be right on the nose when the Tribulation starts. We know it happens before the Day of the Lord begins. What if it is a few years before? We see the Tribulation as a seven year period of time in which God's judgment will be poured out upon planet earth. It will be a holocaust of destruction and death like the world has never seen. We do not believe that the church (the individual believers) is going to be here. We are going to be in heaven.

We have also what is called the mid-tribulational view. A hundred years ago, it was very popular. The best book ever written on Revelation up until that time was called, *The Apocalypse*, and was written by Joseph A. Seiss. The book is in our library, and it teaches the mid-tribulational view. This view is that at the middle of the week, the two witnesses are killed and then they are resurrected and invited to come up here. They see in the two witnesses a symbolism of the church being raptured at the middle of the tribulation, before the really terrible time comes. That particular view is having a renaissance. A very fine man and good Bible teacher (a great student of the Word), named Marv Rosenthal was head of Friends of Israel (one of the finest Jewish organizations among evangelical Christians). They do great work, and I recommend all of their books. The board had to let him go because he changed his view on pre-tribulational rapture, which is their official position. He started another Jewish work, and so he is now down in Florida. He wrote a book that became a best-seller called, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*. If you read it, you will probably become convinced if you do not have a sharp eye. He presents a lot of arguments to show that the final wrath is only the last seven plagues, and that the rapture only needs to occur before that, because that is called the Day of God's Wrath. Now, I do not believe that. Early in Revelation 6, we are told that the Day of God's Wrath has come, and we are long preceding that event. The mid-tribulational view is growing very strong. I think the reason that

this is happening is because people feel that we are in dangerous times. People are seeing that this looks like what God had predicted. There are more and more feeling like we are in the tribulation and things are going to get worse.

Now, we have another view called the partial Rapture. It is held by certain outstanding Charismatic and Pentecostal leaders, perhaps some others as well. The Christians who hold this view, do not have a whole lot of support, but their particular doctrinal slant does. In this particular argument, they believe that only Spirit-filled believers will be raptured. Carnal believers have to go through the tribulation as God's judgment on them. To me it seems like a Protestant purgatory, but I do not know.

Then we have post-tribulational rapture view. This is the majority view of all church history and the majority of Christians alive today. It connects the Rapture of 1 Thessalonians 4 with the spectacular display of Christ returning at the end of the Tribulation. Now, all Bible-believing Christians do believe that He is coming at the end of the Tribulation. That is our point of unity. The problem of having living Gentile believers at the end of the Tribulation when Revelation has them all killed, makes a difficult problem, because Paul wrote that at the Rapture there will be those Gentiles to whom he wrote who will be alive and remaining. Yet the only people who are spared are the 144,000 and a Jewish remnant. What we have at the end of the tribulation, we have already had all of the Gentile believers killed because they would not take the mark of the beast.

We also have a group of twenty-four elders in heaven. Nobody seems to be able to get that straight on what it represents. We also have in Revelation 20 the statement that there is going to be a period of a thousand years when Jesus will rule and reign on the earth. It is interesting to me that those who believe in the post-tribulational Rapture view, are also those who are amillennial.

That is, they do not believe in a literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth. Sometimes they speak of the triumph of the gospel in this present age as God's drawing out a people for Himself. They believe it is symbolic.

What are we going to do with all this? You say, "Well, I'm going to stick to being pre-trib. 'cause I know that's going to be on the test. I mean, I'm not dummy. I wasn't born yesterday. I'm pre-trib, pre-millennial. Amen."

Well, it is a very difficult subject, and in your notes, we mentioned the difficulty of the place of His coming. "We will meet Him in the air," (1 Thessalonians 4) but at the end of the tribulation, He comes to the earth. As a matter of fact, turn to Isaiah 63, which is a messianic passage dealing with the return of the Messiah to judge the nations that have come against Jerusalem and Israel.

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from
Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the
greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to
save. (Isaiah 63:1)

Bozrah is on the plains of Edom (or Jordan today). I was just in Bozrah couple of months ago. There, it is a flatland for miles. You can easily see how many armies (millions of them) could be assembled on that plateau. It is also Israel's most vulnerable point. "This that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?" The answer is, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like
him that treadeth in the winefat? (Isaiah 63:2)

This is quoted in Revelation 19. His vesture is dipped in blood, and the answer from the Messiah.

I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was
none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample
them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my
garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of
vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is
come. (Isaiah 63:3-4)

Now this is all spoken of in the Book of Revelation and quoted phrase after phrase. It deals with Him coming to the earth. He will come to Bozrah first after He wipes out the nations and the blood flows to the horses' bridles and it is staining His whole garment. He will go to the Mount of Olives, put His feet on the top of it and declare victory. His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, as Zechariah 14:4 says.

Now, Paul says, we are going to meet Him in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord. The whole place problem is here. The difference between meeting Him in the air and returning to heaven and Him coming to the earth, to Bozrah, defeating all the nations, going up to the Mount of Olives in a victory ascent and declaring victory is quite a difference.

We also have the problem of the position of His coming in relation to the Tribulation. We have it both before the Tribulation, during the Tribulation and after the Tribulation. Here is what I mean.

Where is Jesus during the tribulation? He is at the right hand of God. As a matter of fact, during the Tribulation from Revelation 6 to Revelation 19, He is in heaven the entire time. Yet Jesus said to the disciples, “I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am there you will be also.” We have a problem here about Jesus Himself. He does not come back to the earth until the end of the Tribulation described in Revelation 19. Wherever He is, that is where the believers are. When you die, you are “absent from the body and present with the Lord.” You are going to be with the Lord where He is, and you are also going to come with Him at the end of the Tribulation. This makes a big problem as it relates to time and place, both before the Tribulation (He is at the right hand of God interceding for us), during the Tribulation (He is at the right hand of the throne of God called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Lamb who is opening the scroll and sending out the seven angels to do the work), and after the Tribulation (He is on earth ruling and reigning). Trying to explain that without the Rapture before the Tribulation is very difficult.

If the Rapture is the same as Revelation says, then He has to be on earth during the Tribulation. If the Rapture is the same event as His coming at the end, when we are caught up to meet Him then come back to earth in a procession, then we have a big problem. Those who are post-tribulation say, “Well, the answer to that problem is simple. There’s no evidence that we won’t be in the Tribulation during that whole time while He is in heaven. So it’s like they will agree with us that He is in heaven and we are on earth during the Tribulation.” That is interesting.

You say, “How do we get out of these problems.” Well, you need a break. You have already had too much thinking. After the break we will tell you. How do we know for sure that the church is not going through the tribulation? Have a nice break.

[[This editorial break represents a fifteen-minute intermission.]]

There were writings a hundred years ago that are absolutely stupid in relation to world events. Time shows us a lot of things. As a matter of fact, within this particular argument is the whole subject of Israel. The majority of Christians in this world do not believe that Israel is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. I think you better wake up to that! Eighty-five percent of them at least, if not more, do not see Israel and a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. They teach that the disobedience and the transgression of Israel broke the promise of God and that they are excluded forever. Then, to answer some of the passages that seemingly say that God has not cast away His people, they say that refers to the church. The church is the new Israel. All the prophecies to Israel are fulfilled in the church. That is an interesting thing.

Now, let me tell you something else that is interesting: practically all those that are in the Reformed tradition (i.e., Presbyterians, some Baptists etc.) are post-tribulational and amillennial. They do not believe in a literal millennium. Also, without exception, they do not believe that Israel is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. They do not believe that at all. It does not make them wrong, but I am just trying to get you to see that this battle has to be fought on several points. You cannot just use one point.

If I were to ask them, “Do you believe that God is fulfilling prophecy with Israel becoming a nation in the end times?”

They would say, “No. That’s just a secular nation.”

If I said, “Well, what about the tree deal. Got a lot of trees there and God said it would be a land of forests and there wasn’t a tree there in 1948. That should make some difference.”

They would say, “No. It’s just a matter of forestry. You know, the forestation process is all that that it is.”

“God did say they would become a major fruit producing country in the world and they are now third behind the United States and Canada. Wouldn’t that have something to do with it.”

They would say, “No. They’re just businessmen and all of that, farmers and whatever.”

Believe me, I have been through this. I ask them, “What do you think about what Paul said, ‘Has God cast away His people whom He foreknew?’”

There answer is, “The people of God are referring to believers—whether they are Jewish or Gentile, and it has nothing to do with Israel.”

I bring up the question, “Well, when the Lord comes they are going to look on Him whom they have pierced.”

They always say, “You bet they will.”

I say, “I have got a problem. It says, ‘The Spirit will be poured on the inhabitants of Jerusalem.’ Now wouldn’t you surmise that if they’re going to be unbelievers, as inhabitants of Jerusalem, when the Spirit is poured on them, then it would be a fulfillment of prophecy if they got

Jerusalem back, even in unbelief. Otherwise, how could the Spirit pour on the inhabitants of Jerusalem if they aren't there?"

They always say, "You are stretching it."

"No, I'm not. I'm just reading it literally." And this goes on and on and on.

I believe that the biggest success that the Reformed tradition has had, because they have a lot of notable scholars (e.g., R.C. Sproul, John MacArthur, who used to be pre-tribulationist, but is now leaning very strongly toward the Reformed tradition, and James Montgomery Boyce), is that they are all good men that love the Lord. So what is the problem here?

One deals with Israel and the other deals with what Revelation teaches. When you come to that problem you have different views of Revelation. For an example, you have in the Reformed tradition what is called the Preterist view. It is the historical view that everything that was said has already happened during the days of the Roman Empire. You have the symbolic view, an allegorical view which is taught by many people.

Again, I do not want you to get confused. I am going to do my best to answer it, but I do not want you to get confused. If you believe in pre-tribulationism and pre-millennialism, then you are in the minority. I suppose some of you on the way up might like to tell the others, "Hey we were right, but they would probably like to do the same to you." I think it is a very serious matter. People say, maybe it does not make any difference. Yes it does. It makes a lot of difference in witnessing and evangelism. It makes a lot of difference in how you live your life. Are we really going to go through the Tribulation?

That is why what I am going to tell you now is so critical. Turn please to Revelation 1:19. They will set aside almost every discussion you have until you come to one: the twenty-four elders. Every post-tribulationist that is a scholar that I know of (including George Eldon Ladd who taught at Fuller Seminary and wrote the commentary on Revelation which is supposed to be the best commentary on Revelation from the post-tribulationist view) makes a statement that I am going to challenge. They say that the twenty-four elders represent the church of Jesus Christ in heaven, therefore we all must be pre-tribulationists.

Marv Rosenthal's book, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church*, sold many thousands of copies and people were real excited about it. I called Marv myself. I do not take on the job of criticizing others that I do not know anything about, and so I discussed the view with him. I said, "Marv, look on page 254 of your book."

He pulled it out and said, "What's the problem?"

I said, "You said that the new song, if it was sung by the twenty-four elders about themselves, then we would have to be pre-tribulationists. But that you believe that most ancient manuscripts did not read 'us,' but read 'them.' That's what you said."

"So? I've read that in many Bibles."

I said, "Yeah, so have I." I said, "It just ain't so. So Marv, I give you a challenge to look up all the fragments we have on Revelation 5 on the new song and to see whether it reads they are singing a song about 'them' who will be redeemed on earth during the Tribulation. Or whether it

says they are singing a song about ‘He’ who has purchased us with His own blood as the King James says.”

He said, “I’ll have to look into that.”

I have never heard from him, because he does not stand a chance as I shall tell you in a moment.

The truth of the matter, and this is true of every one of us (whether me or a thousand other guys), is that a little knowledge is always dangerous. You need to pursue it to the point that there is nowhere else to go. Make sure you really have studied that matter.

In George Ladd’s book on Revelation, he says that the twenty-four elders (when you see twenty-four you have to see two sets of twelve) are the twelve apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel. Is there anywhere in the Bible, that tells you to look at the word twenty-four and read two sets of twelve? My answer to him was, “Why not three sets of eight? Or four sets of six? Or twelve sets of two? You do not have one shred of evidence and you know it.”

We are still back at the problem. There are twenty-four elders who are, obviously, in heaven all during the Tribulation. They are falling down and worshipping the Lord, because that is what they do. Now, who are they? Some post-tribulationists say, “Oh those are just the angels.” Some say, “That’s just Israel.” Then they think about it for a moment and they say, “Well it couldn’t be, I guess, all of Israel, because there is still an Israel on earth and still an Israel that is going to be saved during the Tribulation, according to your view.”

Who are they? Look at Revelation 1:19. This is the outline of the Book of Revelation according to John. “Write the things which thou hast seen.” What had he just seen? The resurrected Christ. “Write the things which are.” That is the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. “And then the things which shall be after.” This is literally after these things.

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven:
and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet
talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew
thee things which must be hereafter. (Revelation 4:1)

The exact same phrase as Revelation 1:19 is found in 4:1. We know that “the things which are,” are the seven churches of Revelation. “The things that are after that,” is what is from Revelation 4 on.

In heaven we see a throne set in heaven.

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and
upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in
white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.
(Revelation 4:4)

That is an interesting little identifying verse. They “sit on thrones,” and are “clothed in white raiment,” and they have “crowns of gold” on their head. We also know that they will be casting their crowns at His feet (Revelation 4:10). Is it not interesting that even the post-tribulationists

use that in music and refer it to the church. I find that very interesting. Why would you sing a song about casting crowns at His feet, if you do not believe the twenty-four elders is the church?

Who are these people? We know we have the seven churches in Revelation 2-3. Look at Revelation 3:21. In every one of the seven churches we have this statement: “to him that overcometh.” The same writer wrote in 1 John 5:3-4, “who is He that overcometh, but He that believes that *Yeshua* is the Messiah, the Son of God.” Overcomers are believers. “To the overcomer in the church at Laodicea, who truly believes, I will grant to sit with Me in My throne.” That is kind of interesting. It was said to church age believers and it is one of the descriptions of the twenty-four elders.

They are clothed in white raiment. Look at Revelation 3:5. To the church at Sardis He says, “To the one that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.” Would you say that is a slight clue? That somebody who is a believer in the church of Sardis would have the same description as the twenty-four elders.

Then it says that they have a crown of gold on their head. In Revelation 2:10 it says, “Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.” To church age believers, he mentioned, that they will sit on thrones, clothed with white raiment, and have a crown on their head, but I am not done yet. I am just warming up.

How do we answer this problem about the twenty-four elders in heaven? First of all, one of the basic rules of Bible exegesis is to let the Bible interpret for itself. According to 2 Peter 1:20, “No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.” You and I do not have the liberty to teach something other than what the Bible reveals. Now, where do we find the number twenty-

four in the Bible? It is in 1 Chronicles 24-25. What is it talking about? It is talking about 24 divisions of the Jewish priests who represent the entire nation of Israel. There are twenty-four divisions of priests. The 24 number therefore becomes a number of a completed body. It is a representative group of a bigger body. In this case the 24 divisions of priests represent all of Israel. Are these called priests in Revelation 4? No, they are called “elders.” According to the Bible, elders were in the Old Testament. There were elders in the Jewish corrupt priesthood and Sanhedrin at the time of Jesus, but what do you know about the church as it relates to its represented leaders? What are they called?

In Acts 14, Paul appointed elders (plural) in every church on his first missionary journey. In his instructions for the qualifications he gave it to bishops (who are also called elders) in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. In 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter said, “I write to the elders, one who is already an elder, to feed the flock of God and take its oversight and all of that.” Elder is a term that we all know for the New Testament church. They are representatives. The fact that there are twenty-four of them reminds us of the passage in 1 Chronicles 24, the twenty-four divisions of priests represented the whole nation. It is a representative group whose descriptions are the same descriptions given to believers in the church age in Revelation 2-3. That is pretty strong in my opinion, but again, we are just getting started.

There are twenty-four elders with crowns on their head and they throw them at the feet of the Lord and say, “Thou art worthy, O Lord.”

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to

open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. (Revelation 5:2-10)

Many post-tribulationists say that these twenty-four elders are angels. I do not think so. In Revelation 5:11 it says, “I beheld and heard the voice of many angels round the throne, and the beast and the elders.” The elders are made distinct from the angels around the throne. The post-tribulationists say, “It just says ‘many angels.’ It wouldn’t include all of them.”

Now over in Revelation 7:11 it says, “And all the angels stood around the throne and about the elders and the four beasts.” They cannot be elders because they are separated from the elders in Revelation 7:11.

Who are they? They cannot be Israel because in Revelation 12 we have Israel on earth again.

Who in the world are they? We come back to the crucial problem.

Now go to Revelation 3:10, because this is what they use to prove their point that the church will go through the Tribulation. “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation.” In the Greek, you have a definite article the in front of “our” and also in front of “trial” or “temptation.” “The hour of the trial.” It is a particular one. As a matter of fact, it is worldwide, which shall come upon the entire world to test or try them that dwell upon the earth.

Go through the book of Revelation and ask yourself, “Who are the earth-dwellers in Revelation?” They are all unbelievers. The purpose of the Tribulation is to test and try unbelievers, and not believers.

We also read here, “keep thee from.” The Greek preposition is *ek*, meaning “out of.” Here is what the leading proponent of post-tribulationism at a major school says: “What that means is ‘immunity from.’ That you will be in the Tribulation, but God will protect you and keep you from all the disasters.”

I said, “Even if it meant that, which it does not, but even if it did mean some “immunity,” we will all be killed. What kind of protection is that?” No, the word “out of,” means exactly what you

think. I will keep you out of this great hour of trial that will come on the whole world that will test those that are unbelievers, those that dwell on the earth. You can check that out in Revelation as to the earth-dwellers.

When it comes down to it, there are a multitude of issues that are thrown into the pot (e.g., Israel, the twenty-four elders and parallelisms, Noah going into the ark before the Flood, which is not a simple parallelism because Jesus used it to compare it to the Tribulation, Rahab saved out of the destruction that came on Jericho, Lot pulled out of Sodom and Gomorrah, which is used of the Second Coming in 2 Peter 2). The very parallel illustrations that are used in the Bible teach the Rapture, and that we do not that we go through the Tribulation.

Teaching God's word is not an easy matter. I think what you want to do here will not be achieved. First of all, why do I continue listening to guys who I do not agree with? It is because of intellectual respect and honesty. I want to hear their positions. I want to read their positions. I do not want to be closed minded. Some people say, "Pre-tribulationism came from a whacko woman a couple hundred years ago, who led the Plymouth Brethren to get into this, and that John Darby affected Scofield and we use the Scofield Bible and so that is how we all became pre-tribulationists." That is wrong. None of those factors were in my life. I think you have to get down to something basic. We have to study His word to be approved unto God—a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. I personally believe that the whole problem starts with the attitude one has toward Israel. If Israel, in your mind, is not in the prophetic plan of God for the future, it is going to affect everything you say about prophecy. That is the truth.

There is a great Bible teacher and excellent scholar named Oswald T. Allis, who taught at Westminster Seminary and was a Reformed amillennialist until his death a few years ago. He has a book called, *Prophecy and the Church*, in which he lays out the most scholarly view of why Israel and the church should be one and the same. I read the whole thing. I do not believe a word of it, but I respect his teaching on it.

Be careful what you mean. You do not downgrade the people, even though you disagree with their views. What I have seen on pre-tribulationism is enough to let me know that the issue is studying the word. Everybody says glibly and in general, “Well they study the word too.” Listen, if we all got down to business and studied the word like we say we do, it might represent a lot. I changed tremendously from when I started in the ministry. I listen to my old tapes and I say, “I disagree with that guy. He’s way off base. Who is that lunatic? Get rid of those tapes.” The point is that you grow in your knowledge. There are a lot of things in relation to prophecy. If you want to understand how to interpret prophecy and the problem, there is an excellent book called, *The Interpretation of Bible Prophecy*, by Dr. Paul Tan. He is interestingly, a teacher in a Reformed amillennialist school. He taught at a Presbyterian Seminary in the Philippines. He is a scholar, and is recognized as so among everybody. Again, he has a book called *The Interpretation of Bible Prophecy*. If you read that book and follow his principles, then you will discover that you are going to be a pre-tribulationist. It is very interesting.

If you want more help on this and the difference between Reformed, Covenant theology, the best book to read on that is *Israelology*, by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum. It is a thousand page book that is very easy to read. It maps out all the current positions of everybody and answers it with the Bible. It is very excellent, and I recommend it highly.

Father, we thank You for all Your love, grace, and mercy. Thank You, Lord that You love us no matter what. Many of us are on the wrong side on many things and Your grace and mercy is always there, loving us in spite of our stupidity and foolishness at times. Help us, Lord, to be good students of the word. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.