

GNITN

The Rapture The Blessed Hope or Blessed Nope

Week 7

The Darby Deception

Rapture Doubters

In this teaching we're going to address a big stumbling block for those who think the Rapture is not in the Bible. In the information age this theory is growing most likely because there are so many social media influencers referring to it like it's the gospel truth. The problem is that when one takes the time to do a little research they will find that their ironclad evidence has some major holes in it. To be fair, there are people who are very sincere about their rejection of the Rapture and I'm not questioning either their character or their relationship with Jesus. And to be fair there are people who aren't Christians who've latched on to the belief that the Rapture isn't in the Bible and was made up in the 1800s. What I am maintaining is that the Rapture is not only in the Old and New Testament and it is even found all throughout the Church's history up until the 1800's. And I will provide the reasons why as I've done all throughout this teaching series. When I'm done those who are critical of my stance will have to provide better evidence for why I and others still believe the Pre-Tribulation Rapture is fully supported by Scripture, the early church fathers and theologians up until today are not correct. I am standing strongly on that statement because I have done my research and I can counter any argument put forth. I'm not saying I can change the critic's minds because only God can do that. But when people say that the Rapture isn't in the Bible and was invented in the 1800's and then say I am deceived, teaching a doctrine of demons and leading people astray and away from God, well I need to speak up. The doctrine of the Rapture is not only supported by the Bible it is the Blessed Hope and is critical to understanding end time prophecies. And it will make people more evangelistic, not less, if it is taught correctly. So, now that I've said all that, let's get into the nuts and bolts of addressing these criticisms.

A Litmus Test

In a recent [book](#) by Author Alan Didio aptly titled *They Lied To You About Rapture*, he says this: *For me, the claim that John Nelson Darby invented the Pre-Tribulation Rapture serves as a kind of litmus test. When someone trots this out, I know they probably got their information from someone else's YouTube video or an echo chamber of bad theology. You know how easy it is to spot when someone's perspective has been shaped by one political news source, leaving them out of touch with reality? The same principle applies to the claim that Darby invented the Rapture: it's a misconception that's remarkably simple to disprove.*

Didio then cites William C. Watson, PhD, Colorado Christian University. [According](#) to Watson, there have been no less than 24 references to the teaching on the Rapture in the Middle Ages starting in the 1320's through 1748. These include teaching that there will be a separate appearance of Jesus in the clouds before He steps on the Mount of Olives and that the saints will be taken to Heaven for safety escaping troubles:

This paper will show that ideas now considered distinctly dispensational were present in the medieval period—contrary to those who assert that dispensationalism is a modern innovation. Specifically, the paper will focus on antiquitous positions reflecting dispensational thought from both the Late Antiquity (5th – 9th) and Late Medieval (10th –15th) centuries. Protodispensational elements found in these periods include: sacred history being divided into periods in which God deals with humanity in different ways; a literal interpretation of Scripture—especially of prophetic passages—rather than the spiritualizing of them; belief in a literal future Antichrist; a literal restoration of God's earthly people to their own land; a literal rapture of God's heavenly people; a literal period of tribulation immediately preceding Christ's return; and, a literal millennium with Christ ruling on earth with His saints.

He then also mentions others who prove that the Pre-Tribulation Rapture was taught way before Darby. *Recent Pre-Trib Findings in the Early Church Fathers* by [Lee Brainard](#) is one and another one is *The Rapture* by [Ken Johnson](#). I've cited Johnson many times and his writing shows that the Doctrine of the Rapture goes back way before Darby. If you like, you can read my [lesson](#) about the Rapture and how it is not a new thing for more details.

Common Conversations

Didio details how most conversations go with people who assert that Darby created the Rapture doctrine:

The way the conversation normally goes is that these detractors say, "There is zero evidence that a rapture of any kind was taught before Darby." Then once you show them evidence, they say, "Well in context they weren't really pre-tribbers, they were more pre-wrath." Now they're moving the goalpost. To be clear, the only main difference between Pre-Tribulation and Pre-Wrath is when they say the wrath of God starts. They both teach that the Church is not appointed to wrath, which is the heart of Pre-Tribulation theology and what the critics attack. They started this by saying that the concept of being delivered from the wrath of the tribulation was not taught throughout church history, and they can't squirm out of it now that history is not on their side. This idea was only able to survive as long as we didn't have internet and people couldn't research this on their own.

I can tell you that I get comments about Darby all the time in response to my podcasts just like this. And I'm certain even after this lesson is seen online I'll see even more. My hope is that the conversation will go past simple replies that start getting personal and attacking my faith. Didio then gets down to business about what he calls "The Darby Deception":

The story that Darby was influenced by a young Scottish girl named MacDonald is another one of those baseless myths that somehow refuses to die. According to this narrative, MacDonald had a supposed prophetic vision in the 1830s about the Pre-Tribulation Rapture, which some claim was demonic, and that this is where Darby got his idea. But when you dig into the historical documents and her writings, her vision doesn't even match what we understand today as the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. In fact, it leans more toward a Mid or even Post-Tribulation view, with believers enduring tribulation and facing the antichrist. There's also no evidence that Darby ever even met her or drew from her vision. It's simply a lie that's been repeated so often that people take it as fact.

Didio then notes that Darby popularized the Pre-Tribulation Rapture again. Hal Lindsey did the same things for us in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Neither created the doctrine as many still teach:

What Darby did was systematize Dispensationalism, organizing and articulating a framework that helped believers understand the sequence of end-time events more clearly. He provided a theological lens through which we could view the Rapture, Tribulation, and the Millennial Reign. He actually got this from his pastors who got it from theirs, and it wasn't new. Darby simply helped to popularize it.

Margaret MacDonald's Vision

To many, Darby got his view of the Rapture from a vision by a young woman, Margaret MacDonald. She had this vision in 1830 and according to one author was under the influence of demons when she had it. If we read her [vision](#), and I have, MacDonald refers to something other than a Pre-Tribulation stance. In fact, she actually talks about the Church being tested by the Antichrist:

I saw the people of God in an awfully dangerous situation, surrounded by nets and entanglements, about to be tried, and many about to be deceived and fall. Now will THE WICKED be revealed, with all power and signs and lying wonders, so that it were possible the very elect will be deceived. - [This is the fiery trial which is to try us. - It will be for the purging and purifying of the real members of the body of Jesus]; but Oh it will be a fiery trial. Every soul will be shaken to the very centre. The enemy will try to shake in every thing we have believed - but the trial of real faith will be found to honour and praise and glory. Nothing but what is of God will stand. The stony-ground hearers will be made manifest - the love of many will wax cold.

So, she actually says that the Church will go through the Tribulation. That isn't a Pre-Tribulation Rapture position that Darby taught. That is one issue all by itself. Bible Author Thomas D. Ice [makes](#) the point that Darby discovered his views on the Rapture before MacDonald had her vision:

... Darby's view of Christ's return without intervening events-the pre-trib rapture-came to him as a result of arriving at an understanding of the uniqueness of the church, as opposed to Israel. As is true of pretribulationists today, their pretribulationism is built upon a view of the church (ecclesiology), which when applied to eschatology produces this view. It means that from day one (December 1826 and January 1827) that Darby had the theological rationale, whose basics never changed, that further support the notion that pretribulationism, along with dispensationalism, were a product of his own thought based upon Bible study.

At least three years before the vision, Darby's view of the Rapture was already formed. And if we read her vision, demonic or not, she didn't believe in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture at all. Add to this that there is no clear evidence that Darby and MacDonald ever met. In an [article](#) by Ice he includes this quote:

F. F. Bruce's conclusion as to where Darby got the doctrine of the pretribulational rapture seems to be correct: "It was in the air in the 1820s and 1830s among eager students of unfulfilled prophecy. . . Direct dependence by Darby on Margaret Macdonald is unlikely."

Dave MacPherson has failed to demonstrate that Macdonald's "prophecy" contains latent rapture ideas, nor has he linked Darby to her influence with clear, historical evidence. This is why the doctrine of the pretribulational rapture did not begin with Margaret Macdonald.

Perhaps Darby's training at Dublin accounts for many of his views, especially his views on the nature of the church. Walvoord concludes:

"Any careful student of Darby soon discovers that he did not get his eschatological views from men, but rather from his doctrine of the church as the body of Christ, a concept no one claims was revealed supernaturally to Irving or Macdonald. Darby's views undoubtedly were gradually formed, but they were theologically and biblically based rather than derived from Irving's pre-Pentecostal group."

A Little In The Weeds

I realize that this is a tad more college class language than I prefer to use, but I wanted to nail this thing down for you when this line of reasoning comes up. My intent is to have you loaded for bear as it were when someone glibly makes these criticisms. Trust me when I tell you it is coming up all over social media these days when people want to sound like they have those pesky Pretribulationists on the ropes. In fact, it is these critics who haven't done their homework. The doctrine of the Rapture is not a new thing. It is not made out of whole cloth. You don't need to back down when challenged. Minds may not be changed, but you can say with confidence that your adherence to a Pretribulation Rapture is on solid ground when faced with this Darby line of teaching. I like how Didio sums this up:

Keep in mind that those who insist there is no reference to anything resembling the Pre-Tribulation Rapture are actually boxing themselves into a corner. They bear a much higher burden of proof compared to those who believe in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. It's like someone trying to argue that there's no gold in China is like setting yourself up for failure. They would have a much harder task than someone claiming there is. Why? Because proving there's no gold would require scouring all of China—every mine, every jewelry box, every bank vault, every corner. But the person who claims there is gold only needs to find one earring to prove his point...In the same way, those denying any Pre-Tribulation references have set an impossible standard for themselves. All I need is a single quote, clearly in context, that supports what we believe about the Rapture, and suddenly, their sweeping argument crumbles.

The point is, this isn't some newfangled doctrine. The Rapture has always been part of the Church's hope. Dismissing it as a 19th-century invention is, frankly, lazy scholarship. The historical record is rich with examples of believers who held to this view, long before Darby ever penned a word. So the next time someone brings out the Darby myth, you will be ready. The evidence out there is clear, historical, and undeniable, for anyone who takes the time to look. Let them know that the truth isn't hiding; it's simply waiting for those willing to take an honest look at the facts.