

THE PATHFINDER

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THE RAPTURE QUESTION

(Part 1)

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE RAPTURE'S ORIGIN

MARGARET MACDONALD'S ACCOUNT

THE RAPTURE is an intriguing subject for many who are familiar with it! Scores who embrace the teaching have wondered with great admiration, and some with great consternation. Their thoughts vary: "What a tremendous event it will be! When will it happen? Hopefully it be in my lifetime. Who of my loved ones will miss it and have to go through the tribulation? Or will I myself be left and stand below watching the few lucky ones fly away into the clouds to meet Jesus when the trumpet sounds?"

There are a number of beliefs about the rapture. In a nutshell, it is said to involve the second coming of Christ when a trumpet sounds from the heavens that heralds His appearance in the clouds. It is at this time that the dead will rise from their graves and be the first that will be supernaturally lifted from the earth to join Jesus in the clouds. The second phase of the rapture will involve the remaining church, which is all the saved people in the world likewise to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, the sky. One of the several scenarios following this earthshaking event have them being transported to a four-square, cubed city beyond our solar system measuring 12,000 furlongs in each direction. 12,000 furlongs is approximately 1500 miles. It is said to be a high-rise city large enough to house each person in a mansion with golden streets running throughout the celestial metropolis.

Of course, this does not address the varying views of the *end time* which is generally in relation to the *rapture*:

The *Preterists* say that the end time prophecies were fulfilled by 70 AD, and the age of miracles and organization of the first century church ended at that time. Some say they were fulfilled by the fourth century, and Nero is seen as the antichrist and Jesus Christ as having

returned in the Spirit. Others have a slightly different view and say that the return of Christ has yet to happen.

One of the *Historical* views, citing the book of Revelation, says that the end time prophesy is fulfilled from the time of Christ until the present day.

The *Spiritual* viewpoint say that there is no millennium as such, but rather, when the Bible talks about a thousand year reign of Christ on this earth, it is all pictorial and not literal. The thousand years is a term which means an unknown period of time which represents the Church age. After this there is the Second Coming (the return of Jesus Christ), followed by the great white throne judgment, and finally a new heaven and a new earth. There is no rapture in this view and no physical thousand year reign of Christ, with His church, on this earth. The book of Revelation does not teach church history as such, but rather, it is written to show us the type of life that the Christian must endure here on earth.

Futurist thought consists of either a pre-millennium and post-millennium rapture. The millennium is seen as the thousand year reign of the church on the earth, which is still in the future. The pre-millennialists say that Christ will return and rapture the church after the great tribulation but before the thousand years begins, while the post-millennialists say it will all take place after the thousand years.

Some say that there is *a time span of three and a half years* of great tribulation followed by *three and a half years of God's wrath* making seven years in all. Others say that there is *only a time span of three and a half years*, which include both the great tribulation and God's wrath. Still others say there is a time span of 10 years between the rapture and second coming of the Lord according to 'The Final Schedule Revealed' by Maureen Metcalf.

This is not all the views about the rapture, and although we get a fairly good picture of what many believe, or at least hope will transpire, we will not address which, if any of those listed, are scripturally sound, especially concerning the Spirit of the word.

With that being said, as it is written in Isaiah 1:18 — “Come now, and let us reason together....”

There are so many today that have their hope set in *the rapture*, it has become a foundation of belief through much of the church system. Some go as far as to say that you must believe in *the rapture* to be saved. A pastor with probably the largest church in Alamogordo had a local TV show of questions and answers. After the book, “88 Reasons The Rapture Will Happen In 1988” by Edgar Whisenant, and prior to September of that year, the questions and answers were on the subject of *the rapture*. Our daughter called in and asked, “What if a Christian who loves the Lord, but does not believe in the rapture, what will happen to them if it really takes place?” He stammered and hum-hawed a bit, then blurted out, “I can't imagine any true Christian not believing in the rapture! **Next caller!**” It was during that time of great expectations of the rapture taking place that a Baptist pastor's wife told me, “If there is no rapture, I have no hope.” I

mention these things to give us an idea how strongly some believe in this and how highly it is positioned on their list of tenets of faith, but should this be in the churches of Christ?

In this study, there are three primary purposes in mind as we reason together:

(1) To bring to light some points of which the reader is possibly unaware.

(2) To confirm and clarify what the Spirit has already been speaking to many.

(3), Also, to shake, to pull down, and destroy a few man-made doctrines that are preventing people from progressing in their quest for life. We then, hope to plant and build up from there. If any or all of these are accomplished, we will be grateful.

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE RAPTURE'S ORIGIN

We will initiate this study with the words of one of today's most prolific and anointed writers, **J. Preston Eby**. Without his diligent research of these long forgotten facts, the exposé of *the Rapture's Origin* would be incomplete:

“It wasn't until the early or mid 1800's that there was any significant group of believers around the world that looked for a "rapture" of the Church prior to a seven-year tribulation period. It may come as a shock to some who read these lines, but it is a fact, nonetheless, that the "rapture" teaching was not taught by the early Church, it was not taught by the Church of the first centuries, it was not taught by the Reformers, it was not taught by anyone (except a couple of Roman Catholic theologians) until about the year 1830. At the time of the Reformation, the early Protestants widely held and were convinced the Pope was the supreme individual embodiment and personification of the spirit of antichrist, and the Roman Church, the Harlot System of Revelation chapter 17. This understanding was responsible for bringing millions of believers out of the Roman Catholic religious system. It therefore became expedient for certain Romish theologians to turn the attention of the people away from the Papacy, and this they endeavored to do by inventing a counter-interpretation to that held by the Protestants. This new scheme of prophetic interpretation became known as *futurism*. Rather than viewing the drama of the book of Revelation spiritually and historically, they would consign it all to a brief period of time at the end of the age. It was a Jesuit priest named **Francisco Ribera** who, in the days of the Reformation, first taught that all the events in the book of Revelation were to take place literally during the three and a half years reign of the antichrist way down at the end of the age. Thus, Ribera laid the foundation of a system of prophetic interpretation of which the *secret rapture* has now become an integral part.

“Later, **Emmanuel Lacunza**, also a Jesuit priest, built on Ribera's teachings, and spent much of his life writing a book titled *"The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty."* Lacunza, however, wrote under the assumed name of **Rabbi Ben Ezra**, supposedly a learned Jew who had accepted Christ as his Saviour. With Jesuit cunning, he thus conspired to get his book a hearing

in the Protestant world — they would not even permit it in their homes coming from a Jesuit pen — but as the earnest work of the "converted Jew," they would consume it with avid interest! Within the pages of this elaborate forgery, Lacunza taught the novel notion that Jesus returns not once, but twice, and at the "*first stage*" of His return He "*raptures*" His Church so they can escape the reign of the "*future antichrist*." His book was first published in Spanish in 1812 and soon found its way onto the shelves of the library of the Archbishop of Canterbury in London, England.

“Now, enter the name of **Edward Irving**. Born in Scotland in 1792, Irving became one of the most eloquent preachers of his time, and a leading figure of the Catholic Apostolic Church of England. In 1828 his open-air meetings in Scotland drew crowds of 10,000 people. His church in London seated one thousand people and was packed week after week with a congregation drawn from the most brilliant and influential circles of society. There were some among them who by prophetic declaration announced that the Lord was coming soon, and this idea became prominent in their prophetic utterances and teachings. Out of those prophetic declarations some began to study the scriptures in the light of a physical, literal coming of the Lord. Up until that time the coming of the Lord was understood as coming of the Lord *TO* His people, and *IN* His saints, and there was no sense of His fleshly coming. Irving discovered Lacunza's book and was deeply shaken by it, in fact, fell in love with it, translated it into English, and it was published in London in 1827. At this time Irving heard what he believed to be a voice from heaven commanding him to preach the *Secret Rapture of the Saints*. Irving then began to hold Bible conferences throughout Scotland, Emphasizing the coming of Jesus to rapture His Church.

“About this same time was the emergence of a new movement which came to be known as the *Plymouth Brethren*. The Brethren movement had its beginning in Dublin in 1825 when a small group of earnest men, dissatisfied with the lethargic condition that prevailed in the Protestant Church in Ireland, met for prayer and fellowship. Soon others joined the fellowship and associated groups sprang up in various places. Though the movement had its beginning at Dublin, it was Plymouth, England that became the center of their vast literature outreach, thus the name *Plymouth Brethren* became attached. Although there was interest from the start in prophetic subjects, the center of interest was on the body of Christ as an organism and the spiritual unity of Christ of all believers — in reaction to the deadness of formalism of the organized church systems and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. A man by the name of **John Nelson Darby** was the leading spirit among the Plymouth Brethren from 1830 onward. Darby was from a prosperous Irish family, was educated as a lawyer, took high honors at Dublin University, then turned aside, to his father's chagrin, to become a minister.

“Thus Irving and Darby were contemporaries, though associated with different spiritual movements. Another series of meetings were in progress at this time. A group of seeking Christians were meeting in the castle of Lady Powerscourt for the study of Bible prophecy. Many clergymen attended, and quite a few who were Irvingites. The Irvingites came to the meetings obsessed with the ideas of the "*Secret Rapture*" and the "*future antichrist*," imbibed from the

Jesuit teaching of the Secret Rapture and the futurist interpretation of prophecy, as well as the famous book by *Rabbi Ben-Ezra*, or, actually, Jesuit priest *Emmanuel Lacunza!* Darby was himself a prolific writer and from the time a constant stream of propaganda came from his pen. His writings on biblical subjects number over 30 volumes of 600 pages each. Darby developed and organized "*futurism*" into a system of prophetic teaching called "*dispensationalism.*" Darby's biographers refer to him as "*the father of dispensationalism.*" And the crown jewel in the kingdom of dispensationalism is, of course, the so-called *SECRET RAPTURE!*

“The *Secret Rapture* teaching was introduced into the United States and Canada in the 1860's and 1870's though there is some indication that it may have been taught as early as the 1840's. Darby himself visited the United States six times. The new teaching was spreading. A Congregationalist preacher by the name of *C.I. Scofield* came under the influence of Darby and the Plymouth Brethren. *The Scofield Reference Bible* was destined to have a tremendous impact upon the beliefs of many when three million copies were published in the first 50 years. Through this Bible, Scofield carried the teaching of *the Secret Rapture* into the very heart of evangelism. Some ignorant souls look on the notes in this Bible as the Word of God itself. I do not doubt for one instant that many who read these lines have been influenced somewhere in their spiritual lives by the footnotes in the Scofield Bible. *[We recently found that there was a Baptist minister, Morgan Edwards, who wrote about the Rapture theory around 1772 in his essay, *Two Academic Exercises on Subjects Bearing the following Titles; Millennium, Last-Novelties*. Thanks to Evangelist John L. Bray who wrote in his newsletter, *Biblical Perspectives*, March 1, 2009 edition. ~ER]

“There is one final link in the chain of the development and spread of the rapture theory that should be mentioned in passing. I would draw your attention again to the source, the origin, of the rapture doctrine and the chain of contact by which it has been brought down to this day. It began as a **Roman Catholic invention**. The Jesuit priest *Ribera's* writings influenced the Jesuit priest *Lacunza*, *Lacunza* influenced *Irving*, *Irving* influenced *Darby*, *Darby* influenced *Scofield*, *Scofield* and *Darby* influenced *D.L. Moody*, and *moody* influenced *the Pentecostal Movement*. How? you ask. *The Assemblies of God* is today by far the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world. When the Pentecostal movement began at the turn of the century, and the Assemblies of God held their first general council in 1914 in Hot Springs, Arkansas, they were a small movement and didn't have their own publishing house. They needed Sunday School and study materials for their churches — so where do you suppose they got it? They bought it from *Moody Press* and had their own cover stitched on it! So what do you think the Assemblies of God people believed? They believed what *Moody Bible Institute* taught! This had its impact on Pentecostal theology, because in the early years there were practically no pre-millennialists in the Pentecostal movement. Most of the ministers in those early days came from Presbyterian, Methodist, or other historic denominations — men who, being baptized in the Holy Spirit and leaving their denominations, joined themselves to the Assemblies of God or one of the other emerging Pentecostal denominations. That is how the Pentecostal movement became influenced and saturated with the "*Secret Rapture*" doctrine — by a direct chain right back to **THE**

ROMAN CHURCH.” —End quote.

MARGARET MACDONALD'S ACCOUNT

The doctrine of the **“PRE-TRIB RAPTURE”** can also be credited to what began in Port Glasgow, Scotland in 1830. It was reported that a young Scottish lass named Margaret MacDonald had a revelation of the coming of the Lord before the great tribulation. Several noted Bible teachers of that day picked up on this thought, but it was Edward Irving and John Darby who were primarily responsible for it being popularized in Scotland and England. It is said of Darby that he borrowed from Margaret MacDonald's revelation, modified her views, and then taught them under his own name without giving her credit. He visited the U.S. at least five times. His teaching on the rapture and dispensationalism became part of the Scotfield Reference Bible (1909). It was the notes in Scofield's Bible that helped to lay the foundation of this new teaching and to find favor in the U.S. and Canada.

The following is from **Margaret MacDonald's** handwritten account of her 1830 revelation as it appears in the Memoirs of James & George MacDonald, of Port-Glasgow (1840) by Robert Norton, pp. 171-176; The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets; In the Catholic Apostolic Church (1861) also by Norton, pp. 15-18; and The Incredible Cover Up by Dave MacPherson, (1980).

"It was first the awful state of the land that was pressed upon me. I saw the blindness and infatuation of the people to be very great. I felt the cry of Liberty only to be the hiss of the serpent, to drown them in perdition. I repeated the words, 'Now there is distress of nations, with perplexity, the seas and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear — now look out for the sign of the Son of man.' Here I was made to stop and cry out, 'O it is not known what the sign of the Son of man is; the people of God think they are waiting, but they know not what it is.' I felt this needed to be revealed, and that there was great darkness and error about it; but suddenly what it was burst upon me with a glorious light. I saw it was the Lord Himself descending from Heaven with a shout, the glorified man, even Jesus; but that all must, as Stephen was, be filled with the Holy Ghost, that they might look up, and see the brightness of the Father's glory. **I saw the error to be, that men think that it will be something seen by the natural eye; but 'tis spiritual discernment that is needed, the eye of God in His people.** Many passages were revealed, in a light in which I had not before seen them. I repeated, 'Now is the kingdom of Heaven like unto ten virgins, who went forth to meet the Bridegroom, five wise and five foolish; they that were foolish took their lamps, but took no oil with them; but they that were wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.' 'But be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is; and be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.' This was the oil the wise virgins took in their vessels — this is the light to be kept burning — **the light**

of God — that we may discern that which cometh not with observation to the natural eye. Only those who have the light of God within them will see the sign of His appearance. No need to follow them who say, see here, or see there, for His day shall be as the lightning to those in whom the living Christ is. 'Tis Christ in us that will lift us up — He is the light — 'tis only those that are alive in Him that will be caught up to meet Him in the air. I saw that we must be in the Spirit, that we might see spiritual things. John was in the Spirit, when he saw a throne set in Heaven. — But I saw that the glory of the ministration of the Spirit had not been known....I said, Now shall the people of God have to do with realities — now shall the glorious mystery of God in our nature be known — now shall it be known what it is for man to be glorified. **I felt that the revelation of Jesus Christ had yet to be opened up — it is not knowledge about God that it contains, but it is an entering into God** — I saw that there was a glorious breaking in of God to be. I felt as Elijah, surrounded with chariots of fire. I saw as it were, the spiritual temple reared, and the Head Stone brought forth with shoutings of grace, grace, unto it. It was a glorious light above the brightness of the sun, that shone round about me. **I felt that those who were filled with the Spirit could see spiritual things, and feel walking in the midst of them, while those who had not the Spirit could see nothing** — so that two shall be in one bed, the one taken and the other left, because the one has the light of God within while the other cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven. 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 if 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 every thing we have believed in — 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. I frequently said that night, and often since, now shall the awful sight of a false Christ be seen on this earth, and nothing but the living Christ in us can detect this awful attempt of the enemy to deceive — for it is with all deceivableness of unrighteousness he will work — he will have a counterpart for every part of God's truth, and an imitation for every work of the Spirit. The Spirit must and will be poured out on the church, that she may be purified and filled with God — and just in proportion as the Spirit of God works, so will he — when our Lord anoints men with power, so will he. This is particularly the nature of the trial through which those are to pass who will be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man. There will be outward trials too, but it is principally temptation. It is brought on by the outpouring of the Spirit, and will increase in proportion as the Spirit is poured out. The trial of the Church is from antichrist. It is by being filled with the Spirit that we shall be **kept**. I frequently said, Oh be filled with the Spirit — have the light of God in you, that you may detect satan — be full of eyes

within — be clay in the hands of the potter — submit to be filled, filled with God. This will build the temple....Jesus wants His bride. His desire is toward us. He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Amen and Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus." —End quote.

This young Scottish lass was not only maligned and called a heretic by the church and the news media in her day; but her credibility has also been attacked from all sides today. Those who believe in a literal "post-trib" rapture as well as those who see it more as an inward catching away, have brought her under fire. The proponents of a post-trib *rapture* have tried to discredit her, because she had said one has to be filled with the Spirit of Christ to see the Lord coming in glory and for saying His coming to His church will be *without observation* — only those with an eye (spiritual eye) to see will see Him when He appears. Those who have the vision of an inner catching away have used her name in a negative way, because it sounded as if she believed the saints would at that time meet Jesus in the literal **air**. Due to ignoring the spiritual reality of being caught away, her vision was one of the things that helped to enforce the concept Ribera and Lacunza founded earlier. Both factions—those of the post-tribulation rapture and the spiritual minded—have undermined the authenticity of her vision because it did not line up with their views, and being a female, a young one at that, did not help.

After reading her account of the vision, as well as other letters she had written, and what others in her day wrote about her, we can see she had a very close walk with God and what she had seen was clearly by the Spirit. The problem appears to lie with what Darby, Irving, and Scofield had done with her vision and with her own apparent lack of understanding in what she was seeing; namely that, **the soon appearing of the Lord was speaking of His appearing in them, for in the prophecies that came through them almost always ended with, "BEHOLD HE COMETH (COMES), JESUS COMETH (COMES)." This would indicate He was **ALREADY COMING** to them at that time (**JESUS COMES is a PRESENT ACTION**); but it appears that they had failed to see the spiritual reality of Him that **COMES**, and they too were looking for that which was outward rather than inward.**

Thus, *the historical view of the rapture* and *Margaret McDonald's account* of what was opened to her. Our next issue will cover what Jesus said in ***Matthew 24:37-40 & 51*** that has to do with ***"AS IT WAS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH."*** We will also see what is in store for ***THOSE IN CHRIST WHO ARE KEPT FROM THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION*** as recorded in ***Revelation 3:10***.

To be continued...

Elwin R. Roach