

## Rapture and 7-Year Tribulation?

By Jim Meletiou

INTRODUCTION.....	1
THE HISTORY.....	1
THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH - NOT TAUGHT BEFORE 1788 .....	2
MARGARET MACDONALD'S PROPHECY.....	3

### INTRODUCTION

When I was a young man, I heard several ministers preaching about a 7-year period of Great Tribulation at the end of this age. Having read the Bible, I knew that Jesus taught that there would be a time of Great Tribulation, such as the world had never seen—nor would ever see again [Matthew 24:21]; however, Jesus did not say that it would last 7 years. After hearing several teach or preach that the Great Tribulation would last 7 years, I finally asked someone, "Where in the Bible can we find that the Great Tribulation will last 7 years?" The person I talked to pointed to Daniel's prophecy about 70 weeks [or 70 sevens], and that the last week [or last seven-year period] would be the time of Great Tribulation. I did not know how the Great Tribulation was connected to Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, but all the preachers taught the same thing. After being with conservative/fundamental/evangelical churches for 45 years, I have not heard a single minister of the gospel teach otherwise. Neither was I able, in 45 years of reading the Bible, to find any evidence to connect Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week to the time of the Great Tribulation.

### THE HISTORY

Finally [after reading the Bible for almost 50 years], I ran across some research into the origins of the teaching that the Great Tribulation would last 7 years. Evangelist John Bray of Lakeland, Florida [and a few others] researched the origins of the teaching of a 7-year tribulation. According to Bray, John Nelson Darby, the founder of the Plymouth Brethren denomination, started teaching a 7-year tribulation about 1828. [The title of Bray's book is: *The Origin of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Teaching*, 1980, Fish House Publishing, Fort Myers, Florida. This book is now out of print.] Darby got some of his ideas from a Catholic monk named Manuel de Lacunza who published his ideas in 1790 in a book called *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*.

**NOTE:** De Lacunza was with the Jesuits in Spain. They were expelled from that country in 1767 because of their excessive brutality. His book was banned by the Catholic Church in 1824. Before him, about 1580, a Jesuit priest named Ribera taught and wrote about the book of Revelation trying to reverse the losses to the Catholic Church that resulted from the Protestant reformation. About 1790, the Jesuit priest named Emmanuel de Lacunza, modified Ribera's writings. De Lacunza told everybody that he was a Jewish rabbi, because he thought the Protestants would listen to a converted Jew, whereas, he knew they would not listen to a Jesuit priest.

Darby modified some of Lacunza's writings to develop the teaching that the Great Tribulation would last 7 years. [De Lacunza was a Jesuit priest who claimed that he was a Jew named Rabbi Ben Ezra, but he was using an alias.]

Some time later, Darby visited the United States and met Dr. C.I. Scofield, the editor of the now-famous Scofield Bible. Scofield was fascinated by Darby's "new revelations," and immediately determined to include them in footnotes in his Scofield Bible. [He had some outstanding Bible scholars working with him in preparing the Bible footnotes. They disagreed with him about doctrine of the 7-year tribulation. Scofield insisted, and they resigned.] So it is that another major doctrine of the conservative / fundamental / evangelical community of the Christian Church came through these three men: Lacunza, Darby, and Scofield—men who "just made up" these doctrines—and most of the church world swallowed them hook, line, and sinker. There is no evidence that before 1800 any minister, preacher, priest, bishop, pastor, theologian, evangelist, or Bible scholar ever taught that the Great Tribulation would last 7 years!

## **THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH - NOT TAUGHT BEFORE 1788**

However, these three men [along with a few others] were the same ones who developed the doctrine of the rapture of the church. [This is a doctrine that the church, that is, all true, born-again believers, will one day be caught up, or snatched out, or raptured out of this world before the great tribulation preceding Jesus' return.] Did anyone teach this doctrine before Lacunza? Evangelist John Bray of Lakeland, Florida, offered a \$500 reward to anyone who could find evidence that anyone taught a pre-tribulation rapture of the church before Lacunza published his book in 1790. Someone finally found records that Morgan Edwards, a pastor from Kentucky, taught the pre-tribulation rapture in his church in 1788, two years before Lacunza wrote his book. Dr. Bray paid the \$500 reward and withdrew his offer.

Before 1788, no Christian preacher, pastor, evangelist, priest, or bishop taught that the church would be raptured out before the tribulation. Almost all taught that the church would go through the tribulation victoriously. These all took a stand against this pre-trib doctrine: Charles Finney, Charles Spurgeon, George Mueller, and G. Campbell Morgan. Before 1790, these made statements clearly showing that they did not believe in a pre-trib rapture: Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, John Calvin, John Knox, Matthew Henry, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, George Whitfield, and David Brainerd.

When Darby met with Dr. C.I. Scofield in 1862, he presented both of these doctrines to him:

1. The Church will be raptured out of the world before the Great Tribulation, and
2. The Great Tribulation will last 7 years.

Dr. Scofield, decided to include both of Darby's doctrines in the footnotes of his Bible. It was through Dr. Scofield's footnotes that these two doctrines gained widespread circulation and acceptance. Millions of copies of the "Scofield" Bible have been sold, and millions of Christians have accepted these doctrines hook, line, and sinker.

**NOTE:** Dr. Scofield had several scandals in his life: He abandoned his wife and two daughters to marry another woman. Once he was arrested on a fraud charge and served six months in prison for that crime. He adopted the Dr. title which he never earned—and several more scandals. Yet, today, millions of Christians are still following Scofield's Bible footnotes.

Another writer related an account of a 15-year-old girl named Margaret MacDonald in Port-Glasgow, Scotland, who fell into a trance, and in a vision saw Christians or saints floating up to the sky to meet Jesus at his return before the tribulation. Darby and others accepted Margaret MacDonald's vision as a confirmation of the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture of the church. Others published Margaret's vision.

And thus it is that two of the major doctrines of the evangelical/fundamental Christian community are the result of the writings of two Jesuit priests, several prominent ministers who modified the writings of those two Jesuit priests, and a vision of a young girl in Port-Glasgow, Scotland, about 1830. These two doctrines did not come down to us in ancient time from God and the Bible, but are man-made doctrines.

However, a researcher recently found a prophecy/revelation/message that was written by Margaret Macdonald [the 15-year-old who reportedly had the vision of the rapture of the church before The Great Tribulation]. When she writes: "then we will be caught up to meet him", she seems to be speaking about a "spiritual" catching up. Below, I am copying the complete text of Margaret Macdonald's prophecy:

## **MARGARET MACDONALD'S PROPHECY**

### **The Revelation of Jesus' Coming**

A revelation/prophecy/message by 15-years-old Margaret Macdonald in Port Glasgow, Scotland, about 1830. Young Margaret said:

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 just to be the hiss of the serpent, to drown them in perdition. It was just 'no God.'

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. [Luke 21:25] Now look out for the sign of the Son of Man. [Matthew 24:30] Here I was made to stop and cry out, "Oh, 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 [sign] needed to be revealed, as there was great darkness and error concerning it. But suddenly what it was burst upon me with a glorious light. I saw it was just the Lord himself descending from Heaven with a shout [1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:16]—just the glorified man, even Jesus; but that all [of us] must, as Stephen was, be filled with the Holy Ghost, that [we] might look up, and see the brightness of the Father's glory. [Acts 7:56]

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 seen them before. 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.' [Matthew 25:1-13]

Don't be unwise, but understand what the Lord's will is; and don't be drunk with wine which is excessive, but be filled with the Spirit.' [Ephesians 5:17-18] 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 does not come with observation to the natural eye.

Only those who have the light of God within them will see the sign of his appearance. [Matthew 24:3+30] No need to follow those who say, "...see here, or see there...", for his day shall be as the lightning to those in whom is the living Christ. [Matthew 24:26-27] '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. [1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:17]

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. [Revelation 1:10] But I saw that the glory of the ministration of the Spirit had not been known. I repeated frequently, but the spiritual temple must and shall be raised up, and the fullness of Christ [or Christ's nature] be poured into his body, and then we will be caught up to meet him. Oh none will be counted worthy of this calling except his body, which is the [true] church, and which must be a candlestick all of gold.

I often said, "Oh, the glorious in-breaking of God which is now about to burst on this earth; Oh, the glorious temple which is now about to be reared, the bride adorned for her husband; and Oh what a holy, holy bride she must be, to be prepared for such a glorious bridegroom."

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 yet to be.

I felt as Elijah, surrounded with chariots of fire. [2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 6:17] 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 greater than 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 [him] walking in the midst of them, while those who did not have the Spirit could see nothing—so that two shall be in one bed, the one taken and the other left [Luke 17:34], 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 [1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 2:9], so that if it were possible, the very elect will be deceived. [Matthew 24:24] 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 everything we have believed in, but the trial of real faith will be found to result in honor and praise and glory. Nothing but what is of God will stand. The stony-ground hearers will be made manifest [Matthew 13:5-6; 20-21]. And the love of many will grow cold. [Matthew 24:12]

That night [and often since] I have frequently said, "...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 that he will work [2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:10] He will have a counterfeit 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 in just the same proportion as the Spirit of God works, so will he [the false christ]—when our Lord anoints men with power, so will he [the false christ] do the same. This is precisely the nature of the trial through which all those who will be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man will have to pass through. There will be an outward trial too, but 'primarily it will be temptation.' It is brought on by the outpouring of the Spirit, and will increase in proportion just as the Spirit is poured out. [The trial of the Church comes through the anti-christ, but 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. It is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. [Zachariah 4:6] This will fit us to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. [Revelation 19:9]

I saw that it was the will of God that all should be filled. But what hindered the real life of God from being received by his people? It was their turning from Jesus, who is the way to the Father. They were not entering in by the door. For he is faithful who has said, "...by me if any man enters in....he....shall....find pasture." [John 10:9] They were bypassing the cross, through which every drop of the Spirit of God flows to us. All power that comes not through the blood of Christ is not of God.

When I say, "they are looking [away] from the cross," I feel that there is much in it - they turn from the blood of the Lamb, by which we overcome, and in which our robes are washed and made white. [Revelation 7:14] There are low views of God's holiness, and a ceasing to condemn sin in the flesh [Romans 8:3], and a looking from him who humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation. [Philippians 2:7] Oh! it is needed, much needed at present, a leading back to the cross.

That night [and often since] I saw that there will be an outpouring of the Spirit on the body, such as has not been—a baptism of fire, [Matthew 3:11] that all the dross may be put away. Oh there must and will be such an indwelling of the living God as has not been—the servants of God sealed in their foreheads—great conformity to Jesus—his holy holy image seen in his people—just the bride made comely by his comeliness put upon her.

This is what we are at present made to pray much for, that speedily we may all be made ready to meet our Lord in the air—and it will be! 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 of Margaret Macdonald's message —

Margaret Macdonald has been blamed for "inventing" the teaching known as the "pre-tribulation rapture of the church." There is nothing in the above message that shows that the church will be raptured out before The Great Tribulation.

The above prophecy/message/revelation was altered several times during the early years of its circulation. Those who were promoting the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture omitted those portions that spoke specifically of anti-Christ's being revealed and a fiery trial of purging that would result from his appearance. Those portions were published in the 1840 version by R. Norton, but were missing from the later 1861 book, presumably because they were now an embarrassment to the emerging pre-trib dispensationalist viewpoint.