

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 15 No. 2

Anthony Buzzard, editor

November, 2012

A Little Leaven...and We All Go to Heaven?

by Bethany Reise, Atlanta Bible College

Bethany is currently enrolled in my "Basic Bible Doctrine" class. She is an ardent student of truth and emerged from an original Episcopal background.

When Jesus taught his disciples, he gave them an important admonition: "Watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Matt 16:6). Leaven, in this case, refers to the teachings of the religious leaders of the day. It is of utmost importance to heed Jesus' warning, because as Galatians 5:9 cautions, "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." False teachings and Greek philosophies have crept into the Church and metastasized, leading multitudes astray.

One common deception found in the Church today concerns what happens to a person after he/she dies. The majority of Christians believe that after death, one either goes directly to heaven to praise God ceaselessly, or straight to a fearsome, fiery place called hell, where they are eternally tormented. This "little bit of leaven," namely the Greek philosophical belief in the immortal soul, directly impacts many foundational Christian beliefs, ultimately corrupting the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the message of salvation about the Kingdom of God (Mk. 1:14, 15; Matt. 13:19; Luke 4:43; Acts 28:23, 31).

For many Christians today, what happens after you die is quite simple. After death, immediately the righteous will go to live in heaven forever and the wicked will be eternally tormented in hell. Evangelical Pastor Erwin Lutzer sums up this common belief well in his article titled "One Minute After You Die." He writes:

"Those who find themselves in heaven will be surrounded with friends whom they have known on earth. Friendships, once rudely interrupted by death, will continue where they left off. Every description of heaven they have ever heard will pale in the light of reality. All this, forever.

"Others — indeed many others — will be shrouded in darkness, a region of deprivation and unending regret. There, with their memories and feelings fully intact, images of their life on earth will return to haunt them. They will think back to their friends, family and relatives; they will brood over opportunities they squandered and intuitively know that their future is both hopeless and

unending. For them, death will be far worse than they imagined."¹

The majority of Christians today will see nothing wrong with this view and probably affirm Lutzer's statement. They, like Lutzer, are looking forward to life in the heavenly realms, while perhaps feeling a sense of sorrow for the poor souls who are destined to be *eternally* tormented and tortured in the fires of hell. However, this common understanding of life after death is completely unbiblical. It masquerades as Christian but is not derived from Scripture.

This belief has its roots in Platonic philosophy, which was later adopted into the Christian faith by early "church fathers." According to Platonic thought, the soul is a separate entity from the body and immortal by nature. Author of *The Moral Quest*, Stanley J. Grenz writes that the Platonists believed that "the real person is the immortal, immaterial soul." He goes on to explain that the "soul simply uses the body that houses it for a time, while longing for the great day when it casts the body aside."² Greek philosophy began working its subtle way into the Church as early as the third century. Many of the church fathers of this era supported and expounded upon the Platonic understanding of the immortal soul, including Origen, Tertullian, and Augustine.³ These Platonic philosophical beliefs quickly fused with Christian doctrines and over time, they began to overshadow, suppress and replace biblical truth. In his work titled *De Principiis*, Origen writes:

"The soul, having a substance and life of its own, shall after its departure from the world, be rewarded according to its deserts, being destined to obtain either an inheritance of eternal life and blessedness, if its actions shall have procured this for it, or to be delivered up to eternal fire and punishments, if the guilt of its crimes shall have brought it down to this."⁴

The writings of these early "church fathers," such as Origen's *De Principiis*, provide numerous examples of how philosophy insinuated itself into Christian thought

¹ Lutzer, Erwin, "One Minute After You Die," Billy Graham Evangelical Association.

<http://www.billygraham.org/articlepage.asp?articleid=809>

² Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest*, InterVarsity Press, 1997, p. 143.

³ Stump, Keith. "What Is Man?" Church of God Cyber Auxiliary. <http://www.cgca.net/pabco/whatisma.htm>

⁴ *Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volume 4*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.

and laid the foundation for false doctrines like the immortality of the soul. The Apostles cautioned believers about the dangers of false teachers and about philosophy and implored them to test what they heard by the Scriptures and to cling resolutely to sound doctrine. But despite these warnings, deceitful and unbiblical teachings made their way into the Church. And so it has remained to this day.

When read without the influence of Greek philosophical thought, the Bible presents a completely different understanding of the human soul. According to Genesis 2:7, "The LORD God formed man dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The Hebrew word for "soul" is *nephesh*. The word implies "life-breath" and can be applied to any living creature.⁵ It never implies a body-soul dualism. In fact, in the Hebrew language, there is no separate word for body because there is no differentiation between the body and soul.⁶ Robert C. Pingpank states in his essay "Immortality and Resurrection" that "For the Hebrews, man is a united organism with many complex parts which draw their life and activity from *nephesh*, which is not a separable aspect of the body."⁷

Clearly, the Hebrew people understood man to be a whole and complete being, a psycho-somatic unity, with no separation between body and soul. They also learned from their Scriptures that man is mortal and that he will not automatically live forever, for God alone is immortal (1 Tim 6:16). For instance, Psalm 146:3 refers to "mortal man" and Psalm 144:4 says that "man is like a mere breath; his days are like a passing shadow." According to Ezekiel 18:4, "The soul who sins will die." This understanding of the soul as the whole being and the belief in the mortality of man directly impacted the Hebrews' perception of death, and ultimately their understanding of the Gospel. The Greek philosophical view derailed, and derails to this day, a truthful understanding of the Bible.

This leads to the question, If man is mortal and his soul is his whole being and person, what happens to a person after he or she dies?

According to the Bible, the fate of both man and beast is the same: both die and both return to the dust from which they were created, and their breath or life energy returns to the LORD who gave it to them (Ps. 115:17; Ecc. 3:19-20; 12:7).

⁵ Pingpank, Robert C., "Immortality and Resurrection," <http://www.philosophy-religion.org/bible/immortality-resurrection.htm>.

⁶ Orr, James. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Eerdmans, 1939. <http://www.internationalstandardbible.com/>

⁷ Pingpank, "Immortality and Resurrection."

In the Old Testament, the destination of the dead is a place called *Sheol*. In the New Testament, the same realm of the dead is known as *hades*. *Hades* and *sheol* are interchangeable and refer simply to the netherworld, the grave, or the pit.⁸ In the grave nothing happens! There is only silence; there is no praise, no love, no hate, no activity or planning (Ecc. 9:5, 6, 10). On the day that a man dies, even his very thoughts perish (Ps. 146:4). Psalm 13:3 describes this state of unconsciousness as the "sleep of death" (not "soul sleep,"⁹ which is a pejorative slur phrase!)

The New Testament understanding of death remains the same, consistent with the Old Testament beliefs. When Jesus said that he was going to awaken his friend Lazarus who had been sick, his disciples were confused. They thought Lazarus would get better if he slept and cautioned Jesus against waking him. However "Jesus had spoken of his death, not a literal sleep," and so "Jesus then said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead" (John 11:11-14). The Bible is very clear that the resting place of the dead is the grave or the world of the dead, "gravedom," and that it is the same location for all, both the righteous and the unrighteous.

Contrary to popular belief, the dead are still in their graves, sleeping. Surely, if the righteous were resurrected and go immediately to heaven after death, David would be among them. After all, he is called a man after God's own heart. However in the book of Acts, Peter clearly says that David "is both dead and buried" and that he has not "ascended into the heavens" (Acts 2:29, 34). According to 1 Corinthians 15:20, "Jesus has been raised from the dead" and is the "first fruits of those who are sleeping." Therefore, since Christ is the first fruits, there is no one who has been resurrected too immortality before him. It is only at Christ's return, at his Parousia, that the righteous will be resurrected to inherit the gift of immortality (Rev. 20:6, 15; 1 Cor. 15:23).

The grave, the place of all the dead, is not the final destination for the dead in Christ. However, neither is heaven. In his book, *In the End, God: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of the Last Things*, Cambridge biblical scholar John A.T. Robinson writes that "Heaven in the Bible is nowhere the destination of the dying."¹⁰

Churches seldom pay attention to their scholars! Once again, the influences of Platonic thought invaded Christian theology and contributed to the deception that

⁸ Strong, James, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Hendrickson Publishers, 2007.

⁹ Although of course the soul, *in the biblical sense*, as person, does sleep.

¹⁰ Robinson, John A. T., *In the End God: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of the Last Things*, James Clarke & Co, 1950.

followers of Christ go to heaven the moment they die. Plato believed that after death, “the immortal soul finds its ultimate fulfillment as it becomes one with an eternal, transcendent realm.”¹¹ This notion crept into the church and was domesticated by the early Christian “fathers.” It was ultimately crafted into the belief that after death the righteous go to heaven. This idea has been taught in most Christian denominations ever since. However, according to Scripture, only one man has gone to heaven and that was Jesus. If man were to go to heaven at death, it would be contrary to the promises of God and the even the gospel of Christ.

The Christian destiny is to rule with Messiah on a renewed earth (Rev. 5:9, 10; 1 Cor. 6:2; Matt. 19:28, Dan 7:18, 22, 27, etc.). According to Scripture, the righteous will *inherit* the earth. This is the promise which God made to Abraham in Genesis 17, where God appoints Abraham the spiritual father of many nations, and they will all inherit the land. Abraham did not receive the promise during his lifetime though, and neither did his descendants because as Hebrews 11:13 says, “all these died in faith, without receiving the promise.” They have not yet inherited Life or immortality. This includes even Enoch who walked with God, whom God took (Heb. 11:5), i.e. removed to a place of safety — not to heaven!

This marvelous promise to Abraham is affirmed throughout both the Old and New Testament. In fact in Psalm 37 alone, the promise that the righteous will inherit the land/earth is mentioned over five times. Jesus confirms this. He speaks of the righteous inheriting the land/earth in his Sermon on the Mount. He says, “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). The concept of the righteous inheriting and ruling with Christ on the renewed earth is at the heart of the Gospel which Jesus preached. They will, as Psalm 37 says, dwell in the land forever.

During his ministry, Jesus’ main mission was to preach the Gospel about the Kingdom/land (Luke 4:43). The message which Jesus proclaimed is summed up in Mark 1:14-15, where Mark reports that Jesus comes into Galilee “preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel [about the Kingdom].’” Jesus taught and preached about the future kingdom on earth which God promises will be fully realized and established from the Second Coming of Jesus and the thousand year (millennial) reign. In this Kingdom, the righteous will be “kings and priests” to God and they will “reign upon the earth” (Rev 5:10). Eventually, in future

ages, there will be no more death, no more mourning, pain, or crying, and God will dwell with His people (Rev 21:4).

Jesus expressed the awesomeness of the final Kingdom of God in one of his parables, where he said, “The kingdom of heaven/God is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matt 13:44). Paul too understood the incomparable glory of the coming Kingdom when he quoted Isaiah 64:4: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2:9). But God has revealed these things through the spirit. The glorious coming Kingdom of God was the heart of the saving Gospel message which Jesus and Paul preached, and the reason for which Jesus urged all who would hear him to repent and believe that Good News (Mark 1:14, 15).

Paul writes, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50). A person must first be reborn through repentance and the acceptance of the word of God, that is, the gospel of the Kingdom of God (1 Pet. 1:23-25; Matt. 13:19; Mark 1:14, 15). This is because every man and woman has “sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). No immoral person can enter the Kingdom of God when it comes (Eph 5:5). Jesus was sacrificed for the sin of the world, and through his blood there is forgiveness of sin and salvation for those who put their faith in him (Col. 1:14; Eph. 2:8) and believe and obey him (Heb. 5:9; John 3:36). According to Hebrews 5:9, Jesus has become “to all those *who obey him*, the source of eternal [to do with the Age to Come] salvation.” However, those who are disobedient and reject Christ and his teachings will not gain entrance into the Kingdom of God.

The Bible is clear that those who are immoral and do not know God or obey the Gospel of Jesus, as preached by him (cp Isa. 53:11) will not inherit eternal life (the Life of the Age to Come, Dan. 12:2) in the Kingdom of God and will be destroyed. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:9, they “will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” This is a destruction which will happen to those excluded from the Life of the Age to Come in the Kingdom.

However, in His infinite mercy and love, God has made provision for those who never heard the Gospel and did not reject Him. The Bible is clear that even though many wicked perish at the Parousia, some will survive the Second Coming and live as mortals during the thousand-year reign that follows. Isaiah speaks of the millennial period where people will be born and will die (Isa. 65:17-25). During the thousand year reign, Christ and the immortalized saints will “rule the nations with a rod of

¹¹ Vlach, Michael J, "Platonism's Influence on Christian Eschatology," Theological Studies.
<http://theologicalstudies.org/resource-library/47-assorted-articles.pdf>

iron” and “reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (Rev. 12:5; 1 Cor. 15:25; Rev. 2:26). The Gospel will go out to all the nations and all those who live on the earth who have not received immortality will have the opportunity to accept the saving Gospel/word of God and learn Kingdom principles and truth.

At the end of the thousand years Satan, who was imprisoned for that period of time, will once again go forth to deceive the nations. He will raise up an army against the saints but will be defeated by fire from God. At this time, the rest of the dead (those not in the first resurrection) will be brought back to life in what is known as the second resurrection. Following that resurrection there will be a great judgment and all whose names are not written in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire and experience what is known as the “second death” (Rev. 21:8).

However, since the wicked do not inherit immortality, this second death does not refer to burning consciously in hell forever. Psalm 37 provides a clear contrast between the fate of the righteous and the wicked when it states that “those blessed by Him will inherit the land, and those cursed by Him will be cut off” (Ps 37:22). In addition to being “cut off,” it also speaks of the wicked as “withering quickly like the grass,” “fading as the green herb,” and vanishing like smoke and being no more (Ps. 37:2, 10, 20). The wicked will perish and be no more; they are burned up like chaff. There will be no *eternal* burning or torment.

Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians that if anyone should preach a gospel other than the gospel of Christ he is accursed (Gal. 1:9). However, as a result of the Platonic concept of a separate and immortal soul, a twisted gospel and hope of salvation has emerged and is being preached as truth from the pulpits of many churches today. The message that “if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” is not the whole Gospel because it leaves out the Kingdom of God, the heart of the very Gospel which Jesus preached! Instead this “gutted” gospel motivates by fear of eternal torment, distorts God’s character, and provides a false hope of a future life in heaven. This gospel message and the hope it confesses contradict both the Scriptures and promises of God. It even ignores the very words of Jesus! The teachings of Jesus were consistent with the Old Testament: he called people to repent and believe the message about the coming Kingdom of God to be established on the earth, as promised to Abraham and those who are his descendants by faith. The Gospel is the only message which can lead to salvation, so understanding the Gospel as proclaimed by Christ is of the utmost importance.

It is not difficult to see that the influence of Platonic philosophy has penetrated to the very heart of Christian theology and the consequences of this are devastating. Therefore, it would be wise to heed the warning of Jesus and his Apostles and to “beware the leaven” of the religious teachers, always being sure to search the Scriptures and “examine everything carefully, holding fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

Canon Goudge said it well, and the alarm is fair: “When the Greek and Roman mind came to dominate the Church, there occurred a disaster in doctrine and practice from which we have never recovered.”✧

Voices from Past and Present Warning of a Coming Antichrist

Compare Mark 13:14, Matthew 24:15: “The Abomination of Desolation standing where *he* [Mark 13:14, *esteekota*, masc.] ought not to, in a holy place.”

Antichrist “will raise a temple of stone in Jerusalem. And his seductive arts we shall exhibit in what follows” (Hippolytus, *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 6).

“In Revelation 11:1 the command to John is ‘rise and measure the temple of God and those who are worshiping in it.’ In this case we are fairly obviously to think in terms of the earthly temple in Jerusalem...The temple and the altar denote the sacred precincts, the altar the inner court” (*Theological Dictionary of the NT*, Vol. IV, p. 887).

A Note on the Friday Crucifixion and Sunday Resurrection

There is no need at all to complicate a simple issue. Luke reckons inclusively and reports Jesus as speaking of “today, tomorrow and the third day” (Luke 13:32-33). He uses the same inclusive reckoning (found also in the OT) when he speaks of the Transfiguration happening “after eight days” (Luke 9:28). Thus Luke 24:21 is decisively and definitely proof that the resurrection was on “the third day since these things happened” (the crucifixion of Jesus). That “third day” occurs often in the New Testament and repeatedly in Luke 24:7, 13, 21. Sunday is the third day since Friday, counting inclusively.

The crucifixion was on the preparation day, the day before the weekly Sabbath. There is no evidence in the New Testament or the Old of a common use of “Sabbath” to mean other than Saturday. Feasts are holy days and Sabbath is the weekly Sabbath. Paul distinguished them clearly in Colossians 2:16-17, reflecting about 10 different Old Testament passages clarifying them equally.

Paraskeue (preparation day) is the normal term for Friday, the day of the crucifixion. Can you imagine how “tricky” Luke, the historian, would be if he wanted his readers to understand two different “sabbaths” in Luke 23:54-56! Luke reports that “it was the preparation day [Friday] and Sabbath was about to begin...Then they prepared spices and on **the** Sabbath they rested according to the commandment” (Luke 23:54-56). How could any reader imagine that two “sabbaths” could be meant? Indeed the definite article on “**the** sabbath” in verse 56 suggests “*that* sabbath,” the one just mentioned.

Luke 24:21 can put us at rest, that the Friday-Sunday scheme is correct and easy: “Today [Sunday] is the third day since these things [the crucifixion] happened.”

Note that in John 19:31 it was “the day of preparation” and the Sabbath was approaching. That Saturday (Sabbath) was of great importance as being the weekly Sabbath falling in Passover week. John 19:14 was the preparation day of (not “for”) Passover week. Jesus had introduced the Lord’s supper at the meal celebrated as Passover by all Jews. Matthew, Mark and Luke make it clear that the meal was the Passover being eaten at the time the nation was eating the Passover. Jesus died the next day.

Some did not enter the Praetorium (John 18:28) not because they were yet to keep the Passover (they would have been clean by evening anyway) but because of the further feasting involved in the Passover week. Note how John uses the Greek word *pascha* here to mean the Passover week (see A.T. Robinson’s excellent explanation in an appendix to his famous *Harmony of the Gospels*). ✧

Helping Your Friends to Obey Jesus in Mark 12:29, His Foundational and Critically Important Creed

God is a single personal SELF, a single soul, and this is said of HIM some 20,000 times. There are 14 forms of the singular personal pronoun applied to the One God.

The Creed of Jesus which he said is THE most important issue of all is a unitarian Jewish creed, agreeing with a unitarian Jewish scribe (Mark 12:28ff). It is brilliant of Mark to have a Jew agreeing with Jesus. This roots Jesus in the Old Testament and in the faith of Israel. This also guarantees the continuity between the Testaments.

The Trinity was not known to them in the first century and it is a clever excuse, I think, for departing from Jesus without saying so!

The embarrassing thing for the Church is that it has rejected its own founder’s creed! Why not reinstate the *Shema* in Church and abolish the Athanasian creed?

God is one single Person, and to say He is an **essence** or a **WHAT** simply betrays one’s lack of a grasp of Scripture.

The Jews have many reasons for not accepting the Messiah. It is not enough to agree with the *Shema*; one must *also* believe that Jesus is the Messiah, who has come, as the only way to salvation.

The Church has created a very embarrassing situation for itself, claiming to accept Jesus while rejecting Jesus’ creed! The *Shema* is the most important command of Jesus (Mark 12:29) and of God in Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

Why do churches not insist on reciting this? Because tradition has swamped that creed and another creed was substituted for it.

Do we really think Paul and Jesus knew of a Triune GOD? Would that not be like asking what software Paul had on his computer? 1300 times in the New Testament GOD means the Father and none of 11,000 occurrences of the words for GOD in the Bible means the Triune GOD.

This is massive, massive evidence. Please see “Jesus Is Still a Jew” at youtube.com/AbrahamicMovement

Salvation is by truth and loving truth (2 Thess. 2:10). This is not so hard. GOD was alone, unaccompanied at the creation (Isa. 44:24). God was the Creator (Rev. 4:11). That position must not be taken away from Him. “GOD rested on the seventh day” (Heb. 4:4), not Jesus. “GOD made them male and female” (Mark 10:6). “In the beginning was the word” (not Word). That is God’s creative plan and intention. “All things were made by IT.”

Jesus is the final expression, in a human being beginning in Mary, of God’s wise plan. Any suggestion that Jesus was the Creator in Genesis 1 challenges and usurps the unique position of the true God who is jealous! Thus in Colossians 1:16 *en* (within the sphere of, or because of) Jesus, all things were created — not “by him.”

And THROUGH him in the *new* creation God is recreating. Note again *en* (“in,” not “by”) him all things, all authorities, were created by GOD (a divine passive, God is the implied subject).

Not for one moment did Paul preach a pre-human or non-human Messiah! Paul did not contradict Luke and Matthew as is the trend today!

The Father is “the only one who is true God,” Jesus said, and this is the core, essence of eternal life (John 17:3). None of this is harder than saying “Obama is presently the only one who is President of the USA.” GOD means the Father 1300 times in the NT.

Jesus is never ever called “the LORD GOD.” The confusion caused by tradition is rather massive. Believe the unitarian creed of Jesus (Mark 12:29). ✧

Can Anyone Find a Pre-Tribulation Resurrection?

The debate over the pre- or post-tribulation rapture should really be called the debate about the pre- or post-trib *resurrection*. The discussion is about the place of the *resurrection* in the sequence of end-time events. Pre-tribulationism says that the faithful will be resurrected **seven years before** Christ's return in power and glory. (This is a new teaching dating from the 1830s, never heard of before that time.)

Both sides of the argument agree that there will indeed be a resurrection of the dead **after** the tribulation. But the pre-trib camp maintains that this post-trib resurrection has nothing to do with the Church — because *the Christians* will have been resurrected before the tribulation.

The two positions may be illustrated very simply thus:

A	SEVEN-YEAR PERIOD	B
Pre-trib secret coming of Jesus Pre-trib rapture/resurrection of Church		Post-trib Second Coming of Jesus Post-trib rapture/resurrection of Church

The question is this: Where in Scripture is there a mention of a resurrection **before** the tribulation period? Consider these facts:

1) The Resurrection in Daniel 12:2 (“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake...”) occurs just **after** the great tribulation described in Daniel 12:1, a verse earlier. This is a **post-trib** resurrection.

2) The gathering of the elect at the sound of the **trumpet** in Matthew 24:31 happens soon **after** the great tribulation (see Matt. 24:29: “immediately after the tribulation of those days...”). This is a **post-trib** resurrection.

3) The resurrection promised to the faithful in John 6:39, 40, 44, 54 occurs at the last day — presumably the last day of this age, not seven years earlier. This is **post-trib**.

4) The resurrection of 1 Corinthians 15:23 involves all the Christians and happens “at the coming of Jesus.” Verses 51 and 52 describe this as a mystery which will occur in the twinkling of an eye *at the last trumpet*.

5) The resurrection of Revelation 11:15-18 (“the time came for the dead to be judged”) happens at the **seventh** (i.e., last of a sequence of seven) **trumpet** and this is **after** the time of the Great Tribulation, as both camps agree. This, too, is a **post-trib** resurrection.

6) The resurrection of the dead found in Revelation 20:4 occurs **after** the arrival of Jesus to destroy the Beast

and False Prophet (Rev. 19:20, 21). This, also, is a **post-trib** resurrection, as all agree.

7) The resurrection described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 occurs at the day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:2) when sudden destruction comes upon the unsuspecting world (1 Thess. 5:3). This, too, must therefore be a **post-trib** resurrection.

8) The gathering of the church to the Lord at the coming of Jesus promised in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 will not occur until after the Man of Sin is revealed (“The day of the Lord will not come until the apostasy comes first and the man of sin is revealed,” v. 3). This, therefore, is a **post-trib** resurrection.

Where then is the pre-trib resurrection in which so many place their hope? There appears to be no such event. If the resurrection of the faithful does not occur after the tribulation in Matthew 24:29 (gathering of the elect, v. 31) where in Matthew 24 does it occur? If the resurrection of the Christians does not occur at the **seventh trumpet** in Revelation 11:15, where in Revelation is it mentioned?

Overlooking the primary evidence above, which establishes the place of the resurrection in the order of events, the pre-trib argument may attempt a counter-position as follows:

(a) Maintain in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, where the only gathering of the saints mentioned is POST-trib, that there is no mention of the resurrection and gathering of the Church. This would mean that in the whole of Jesus' discussion of the end-time and the Second Coming he omits entirely to say anything about when Christians will be resurrected and gathered! Though he speaks to disciples who are the foundation of the Church, PRE-trib maintains that nothing is said of the resurrection or gathering of *the Church*.

Note: The “elect” whom Jesus instructs are the faithful church as Matthew 22:14 shows (chosen = “elect,” same Greek word).

(b) Maintain that the resurrection and gathering described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 (point 7 above) happens before the Tribulation.

Note: This can only be attempted by overlooking the context of the passage. Firstly, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, taken without reference to the following context, does not say **when** this event occurs. But the following verses (5:1-4) do tell us that the event in question will take the world by surprise. This means that it is a **post-trib** event, as are all the other descriptions of the resurrection.

(c) Maintain that Revelation 4:1-2, where John was invited to “come up here,” describes the resurrection and gathering of millions of dead and living Christians. This goes far beyond the evidence. Not a word is said about a rapture or resurrection in this passage.

Final note: 1 Corinthians 15:52 tells us that the resurrection of the faithful will occur at the *last trumpet*. Revelation 11:15-18 says that when the **last (the seventh) trumpet** sounds the “time for the dead to be judged and rewarded has come.” This trumpet sounds **after** the Tribulation, as all agree. Can it seriously be held that the *last trumpet* and the *seventh trumpet* are not the same event? If they are the same they provide absolute proof of the post-trib resurrection for all the faithful. If Revelation 11:15 is not the resurrection of the Church where in the whole of the book of Revelation is there a pre-tribulation resurrection? Where in the whole Bible is there evidence of a resurrection occurring before the tribulation?

We should be careful not to place our hopes in an event which the Bible does not promise. ✧

Comments

“Thank you so much for continuing to send me *Focus on the Kingdom*. It really helps me understand more about the truth. It is not easy for me and my wife to live in biblical unitarian faith in a country like Indonesia. We still go to the Church of Christ in order to have friends and fellowship with other Christians but we do much study by ourselves in our home. I have some contact with other non-Trinitarians but we live in a different island.” — *Indonesia*

“I just finished your book *Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven*. I loved it! I learned so much. Twice this week I posted the question asking if anyone has ever heard a sermon on the Kingdom of God and also the promise to Abraham. Funny: no one responds!!” — *Alabama*

“Reading Mrs. Buzzard's reviews of the various featured books on **21stcr.org** has been enlightening and educational as I thought I had researched and collected just about all that was available on the subject of the Trinity over the last nearly 40 years, first to attempt to prove the doctrine to a much-loved but obviously unenlightened believer who challenged me to prove it to him; secondly (and finally) to concede after literally thousands of hours of study and copious notes, that neither I nor anyone else could prove the doctrine of ‘The Blessed Holy Trinity.’

“The question then became one of ‘Why?’; i.e., Why does the Church insist on forcing this unintelligible mystification on its members? I'd write to offer my explanation that may be ‘old hat’ to Mrs. Buzzard, but one that I have neither seen in print nor heard from any other source to this date. Who knows, maybe my idea was a good thought divinely revealed by the Holy Spirit ‘for such a time as this’? If so, then credit the Source, the one God revealed by the uniquely-born Son (as distinguished from us born again sons). Please consider

that as we approach the end of the age it is inevitable and unarguable that mankind in general is being prepared to accept and submit to a world leader of unprecedented authority, a leader who will mesmerize and entrance beyond even the considerable abilities of such historical examples as Hitler, etc. I believe that this leader (as described in 2 Thess. chapter 2) will rise to power on his ability to duplicate the miracles of Jesus through ‘great signs and lying wonders’ (v. 9) to the point that even those professing to know the truth (the church, v. 3) will be deceived, as indeed they already are, in this most important matter of the Trinity. The bottom line is that in order for these prophecies to be fulfilled this person must come to worldwide prominence and recognition as the ‘Great One’ whose claims to being God (v. 4) will in fact be substantiated by his ability to perform ‘miracles’ (lying wonders, v. 9). That the organized ‘church’ should play such a prominent preparatory role in his rise to power and acceptance is heartbreaking but not to be unexpected given the lethargy and complacency of most ‘Christians’ today with regard to the Gospel/Word. Modern Bereans are few and far between. Keep up the good work.” — *Email*

Hell and Mr. Fudge

A little story about a big lie

A new movie based on a true story:

“Edward Fudge, a young Bible-belt preacher, gets a surprise visit from an eccentric stranger who has a bizarre request. He wants Fudge to investigate Hell. Trained in biblical languages and theology, Edward finds the proposal intriguing. He agrees to take it on, not knowing where it will lead. He dedicates a year of his life to a systematic study of Hell — and his life will never be the same again.

“Today Edward Fudge is a well-respected author, lecturer, and theologian. The book that resulted from his research, *The Fire That Consumes*, is a compelling study on the subject of Hell and eternal torment. It stands as a testimony to a man who had the courage to search for truth and to pay the price for what he found.”

To request the movie *Hell and Mr. Fudge* in your town send an email to Jim Wood at jww@me.com

— from hellandmrfudge.org

Restoration Fellowship Books for Kindle

FREE Nov. 26-30 at Amazon.com

The Amazing Aims and Claims of Jesus

The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah

Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian

The Law, the Sabbath and New Covenant Christianity

Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven

They Never Told Me This in Church!