

# Declaring the End from the Beginning

## Part 1

***“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:”*** -(Isaiah 46:10)

This has been one of my favorite passages of Scripture. It reveals an important feature of our Lord and Saviour, a sort of “Big Picture” of all that God is doing to get our attention and to commune with and worship Him. This series is offered to provide comfort and hope in these perilous times leading up to our soon “Departure!” I will be posting one about every week or at least as long as God permits me to share. He has allowed us time to see the wonder of The Blessed Hope!

The most common argument of critics is that the Rapture is not in the Bible. Statements like that merely reveal the ignorance of the person making them. However, the word **“Harpazo”** is found **14X** in the Greek text of the New Testament. Most of these are not unusual uses and pose no special difficulties. The term functions literally in John 6:15 in reference to the peoples’ desire to make Jesus king “by force.” Similarly in Acts 23:10 the Roman captain instructed his soldiers to “snatch” Paul from the crowd of Jews who were about to tear him to pieces. The “evil one” “takes away” the Word sown in the hearts of listeners -(Matthew 13:19). In the Epistle of Jude, the term depicts the rescuing of a sinner from the fire of hell -(verse 23).

In recent years, especially since the Internet became a platform for every Tom, Dick, and Harry to pontificate on their opinion of the Bible, it began to occur in my mind that no one should be allowed to publicly comment on Scripture until they have personally read it at least 10 times, front to back. Recently, I decided to take a day and troll the search engines on the topic of the Rapture. Amazingly, upwards of 90% of these sites are explicitly damning and critical of such a bizarre idea that God will deliver folks from Divine judgment. To these pseudo-Bible experts, I wonder, what might be their qualifications about the Bible’s message that I should listen to what they are saying? They have obviously learned little about God’s love, His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness, His abundance of Scripture that conveys how He wants all to come to repentance and faith.

Many people suddenly find themselves at retirement age and are filled with regret and remorse because they did not make preparation for this final chapter of their life. If failing to prepare for this creates regret, imagine how the person feels who finds himself in eternity—saved, but spiritually bankrupt because he just never got around to making those spiritual investments. Like the person who didn’t plan for retirement, he had good intentions—he always intended to get ready, he always planned to do something, but time kept marching on and before he knew it, it was too late.

Whether you acknowledge it or not, the central message of the Bible is about God, His Sovereignty, His Rule! The Sovereignty of God is the biblical teaching that all things are under God's rule and control, and that nothing happens without His direction or permission. God works not just some things but all things according to the counsel of His own will (see Ephesians. 1:11).

Back in the mid-1990's, I was under the direction of a United Methodist Bishop by the name of Robert (Bob) C. Morgan. He was a leader among leaders, and he would go out and meet with his pastors in various districts of the Kentucky Annual Conference. During his leadership, Bishop Morgan oversaw the merger of the Louisville and Lexington Conferences into a single state-wide body. He had a knack of inspiring his pastors. One of his major messages was to "Keep the main thing the main thing!" That is not particularly an easy task where shepherds are drawn into all directions and causes.

The chaplain of Waynesburg College, Rev. Dennis Benson opened the fall semester chapel with a message that has stayed with me over many years. That was in 1965 when I was in college. It was both a challenge as much as an inspiration. That fall morning in chapel, Rev. Benson raised four questions to the student body:

- Who am I?
- Why am I here?
- Where am I going?
- How am I going to get there?

My days here are getting shorter and so I am going to begin a series of short segments on why the critics are wrong and why we can rest assured in the Blessed Hope. So many of them have no clear or realistic understanding concerning what they pontificate on or about. A pastor needs to be a "teachable spirit", and so I make no apology for my being an advocate of Dispensationalism or the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. Of the four academic institutions that I attended and graduated from, none of them were Dispensational. They were all Covenant-Reformed and all taught Amillennialism (no Millennium). I discovered Dispensationalism on my own using the study tools I was equipped with in my seminary education.

Let me preface this series with a recommendation of a small book authored by Dr. Renald E. Showers. The book contains important answers that have been gleaned from the pages of the Bible. *'What On Earth Is God Doing?'* is now in its 9<sup>th</sup> printing. Dr. Showers begins his book with my same questions this way:

- Where have we come from?
- Why are we here?
- Where we going?

Dr. Showers little book puts into perspective the understanding of the Six Millennia and how man has been allowed to reign upon the Earth. Each chapter addresses the conflict between

Satan and God. This is where Amillennialism comes up short in helping man to understand the larger agenda afoot in the world today. At the end of the day, the tenets of Dispensationalism have the fewest unresolved questions and issues. What I believe in my heart first must make sense in my head!

I graduated sixth in my high school graduating class, sixth from the bottom of 665 that is. When I was an American soldier in West Germany, I was in a section that contained an overly large number of college graduates, who were drafted into the Army. Over half of them had Master's degrees in various disciplines and hated the Army. One even had a PhD in Musicology. You would have hated the Army too if your career was interrupted and put on hold for two years of compulsory military duty. I was the recipient of a unique learning experience where my buddies' education rubbed off on me. When I was in high school, my dad, a fourth grade educated truck driver, would say, "*Son, get a good education and work with your mind and not your back.*" As it turned out, I took his lesson to heart, but several years later than the admonition he had on his mind.

As noted, I intend to keep these "diamonds and nuggets" on the Pre-Tribulation Rapture brief enough to be digested in a short time but without sacrificing the significance of each. God gave man 6,000 years to rule and reign, but has reserved the last Millennium for His Rule! It's all about Him and He does not give His glory to others as you will soon see, if you did not already know that fact.

In the last couple years, there have been a number of instrumental books that have been published relative to Dispensationalism. They were needed because few of you have the time or opportunity to visit a seminary library and research the writings of the early church fathers.

Phil Schaff's 38-volume work on the early church fathers is the definitive source if you want to know what the early church fathers and leaders had to say. Needless to say, you are not likely to need or want a set of this important work. Virtually every seminary library has a set or two. The value of the collection is in the fact that up until the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century A.D., the early church fathers were Dispensationalists. They used words like "Millennial", "Millennialists", "Sabbath-Day Millennial" which we know means Dispensations. Some actually used the word "Dispensation". The Apostle Paul used the term in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:7; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2; and Colossians 1:25. As I have often pointed out, it was Saint Augustine, the bishop of Hippo, North Africa who adopted the "Allegorical" interpretation of the Bible. He was Dispensational until for the latter part of his life.

Augustine's spiritual history was shaped by his understanding of the Bible. After reading Cicero and being stirred for a love of wisdom, Augustine turned to the Bible to seek wisdom there. He didn't understand at that point that the Bible, in its humble style, is "*a text lowly to the beginner but, on further reading, of mountainous difficulty and enveloped in mysteries.*" He was then seduced for 9 years by a heretical group called the Manichees, who attacked the Bible because of its problematic passages. After meeting Ambrose in Milan, he found answers to all their challenges, especially by means of an allegorical interpretation of those passages. His early

book, *'Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees'*, catalogs and refutes many of these challenges. Thus, interpretation steered his spiritual history, from heretic to skeptic to catholic.

For anyone wanting to understand Augustine's exegetical methods, *'On Christian Teaching'* his work is a must read. It was required reading in a church history course. Augustine had been a Dispensationalist but that fact has largely been hidden from history. Although *'City of God'* and the *'Confessions'* demonstrate Augustine's exegetical methods, *'On Christian Teaching'* is unique among his written works because it is a textbook that teaches those very methods. The first sentence is, *"There are certain rules for interpreting the scriptures which, as I am well aware, can usefully be passed on to those with an appetite for such study to enable them to progress not just by reading the work of others who have illuminated the obscurities of divine literature, but also by finding illumination themselves."*

The fact that so many of the early church fathers up to the late 5<sup>th</sup> Century were Dispensational really is no surprise when you closely study the Apostle Paul's writings. For example, *the Apostle Paul says absolutely nothing, not a single word about the Church facing the Tribulation era.* Ask yourself, if Paul anticipated the Great Tribulation, would he not have prepared his churches for such an event or be at least aware of such a possibility. The Bible tells us the Apostle Paul, God's apostle to the Gentiles, did not teach the Church about God's wrath of great tribulation judgment coming upon the world. Why would he not teach the Church about such an important event which is described and warned about in so many places in the Bible? For example Romans 5:9, ***"Much more then having been justified by His blood, we shall be SAVED FROM WRATH THROUGH HIM."*** Then there is 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1:10: ***"And wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who DELIVERS US FROM THE WRATH TO COME."*** (***"delivers us" means raptures us***). In 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:9, Paul states again: ***"For God DID NOT APPOINT US TO WRATH, but to obtain Salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."***

Furthermore, in studying Paul's 13 Epistles, they are all positive and upbeat about a future Kingdom. The Apostle John and his students Irenaeus and Polycarp taught the concept of the Sabbath-Millennium – a 1,000-year rest.

In *'The Church History,'* Eusebius quotes Irenaeus, saying of Polycarp that he *"...was not only instructed by the apostles and acquainted with many that had seen Christ, but was also appointed by apostles in Asia bishop of the church of Smyrna."* This also would connect Irenaeus to the apostolic line of John, since Irenaeus was disciplined by Polycarp.

The tradition that Polycarp and Ignatius were both disciples of the Apostle John goes back to at least the time of the martyrdom of Ignatius was written: *"Wherefore, with great alacrity and joy, through his desire to suffer, he [Ignatius] came down from Antioch to Seleucia, from which place he set sail. And after a great deal of suffering he came to Smyrna, where he disembarked with great joy, and hastened to see the holy Polycarp, [formerly] his fellow-disciple, and [now] bishop of Smyrna. For they had both, in old times, been disciples of St. John the Apostle."*

Why is this so important for believers of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture? Simply, to say that it refutes those critics of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture, who argue Dispensationalism and the Rapture teaching began in the 1800's with John Nelson Darby, and C.I. Scofield. Scofield gets tagged as a fake con-artist linked to the Christian-Zionist movement, and is tied to Samuel Untermyer's efforts to gain Protestant support for Christian-Zionism.

Scofield was *"taken under the wing of Samuel Untermyer..."* Read the excerpt from *'The Hidden Tyranny'*, by Benjamin H. Freedman. He explains how Untermyer blackmailed President Woodrow Wilson for the duration of Wilson's presidency, and how Untermyer was able to choose the next vacant seat on the U.S. Supreme Court, which installed Justice Brandeis.

The important point is, not that C.I. Scofield was a con-artist, but rather that C.I. Scofield is totally irrelevant. What is at stake here is that for the first five centuries after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the church was Millennial and Dispensational both in belief and teaching. However, that does not stop Rapture critics from using their "strawman" argument to discredit Scofield and the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. We know with confidence that the early church leaders were Dispensational or Millennial up to about 490 A.D.

**Rapture Fact 1:**

**For the first five centuries after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the church was Millennial and Dispensational both in belief and teaching.**

Four books that came out in the past few years note this fact along with other church leaders of the period:

- *'Dispensationalism Beyond Darby,'* by Dr. William Watson
- *'Ancient Dispensational Truth'* by James C. Morris
- *'Dispensationalism: Essential Beliefs and Common Myths, 2nd Edition'* by Michael J. Vlach
- *'Rapture: Fact or Fiction'* by Dr. David Reagan

In the opening verse from Isaiah 46:10, God is declaring His Sovereignty. A. W. Tozer wrote, *"What is God like?"* If by that question we mean 'What is God like in Himself?' there is no answer. If we mean *"What has God disclosed about Himself that the reverent reason can comprehend? There is, I believe, an answer both full and satisfying."*

Tozer is quite right in that we cannot know what God is with respect to Himself. The book of Job declares, ***"Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? They are high as the heavens, what can you do? Deeper than Sheol, what can you know?"*** (Job 11:7-8).

However, we can ask what God has revealed about Himself in His Word and in creation that *"the reverent reason"* can grasp.

When Moses was directed by God to go to the Egyptian Pharaoh and demand the release of the Israelites, Moses asked God, ***“Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?”*** -(Exodus 3:13).

The answer God gave Moses was simple, yet very revealing: ***“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’”*** - (Exodus 3:14). The Hebrew text in verse 14 literally says, “I be that I be.”

This name speaks to the fact that God is pure existence, or what some call pure actuality. Pure actuality is that which IS with no possibility to not exist. Put another way, many things can have existence (e.g., human beings, animals, plants), but only one thing can **BE** existence. Other things have “being” but only God **IS** Being.

The fact that God alone is Being leads to at least five truths about what God is – what type of being God is.

**First**, God alone is a self-existent being and the first cause of everything else that exists. John 5:26 simply says, ***“The Father has life in Himself.”*** Paul preached, ***“He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else”*** -(Acts 17:25).

**Second**, God is a necessary being. A necessary being is one whose nonexistence is impossible. Only God is a necessary being; all other things are contingent beings, meaning they could not exist. However, if God did not exist, then neither would anything else. He alone is the necessary being by which everything else currently exists – a fact that Job states: ***“If He should determine to do so, If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust”*** -(Job 34:14–15).

**Third**, God is a personal being. The word personal in this context does not describe personality (e.g., funny, outgoing, etc.); rather, it means “having intent.” God is a purposeful being who has a will, creates, and directs events to suit Him. The prophet Isaiah wrote, ***“I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’”*** (Isaiah 46:9–10).

**Fourth**, God is a triune being. This truth is a mystery, yet the whole of Scripture and life in general speaks to this fact. The Bible clearly articulates that there is but one God: ***“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one”*** -(Deuteronomy 6:4). But the Bible also declares that there is a plurality to God. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He commanded His disciples: ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”*** -(Matthew 28:19). Notice the singular “name” in the verse; it does not say “names,” which would convey three gods. There is one name belonging to the three Persons who make up the Godhead.

In various places, Scripture clearly calls the Father God, Jesus God, and the Holy Spirit God. For example, the fact that Jesus possesses self-existence and is the first cause of everything is stated in the first verses of John: ***“All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life”*** -(John 1:3–4). The Bible also says that Jesus is a necessary being: ***“He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together”*** -(Colossians 1:17).

**Fifth, God is a loving being.** In the same way that many things can exist but only one thing can be existence, people and other living things can possess and experience love, but only one thing can BE love. 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:8 makes the simple ontological statement, ***“God is love.”***

What is God? God is the only one who can say, ***“I be that I be.”*** God is pure existence, self-existent, and the source of everything else that possesses existence. He is the only necessary being, is purposeful/personal, and possesses both unity and diversity.

God is also love. He invites you to seek Him and discover the love He has for you in His Word and in the life of His Son Jesus Christ, the one who died for your sins and made a way for you to live with Him for eternity. A God of love stands in stark opposition to the logic and rational of those who reject the Rapture they say is not in the Bible. However, God has tagged the Greek word ***“Harpazo”*** with God’s signature covenant number in the “Heptadic Design Feature”. Note below how ***“Harpazo”*** is found and used **14X (7 X 2)** times in the New Testament.

Scripture	Greek	English meaning
Matthew 11:12	harpazousin	take by force
Matthew 12:29	harpazō	and carry off
Matthew 13:19	harpazei	catcheth away
John 6:15	harpazein	taken by force
John 10:12	harpazei	catcheth
John 10:28	harpasei	Pluck
John 10:29	harpazein	to pluck
Acts 8:39	herpasen	caught away
Acts 23:10	harpasai	to take by force
2nd Corinthians 12:2	harpagenta	caught up
2nd Corinthians 12:4	herpage	was caught up
1st Thessalonians 4:17	harpagesometha	shall be caught up
Jude 1:23	harpazontes	Pulling
Revelation 12:5	herpasthe	was caught up

God is faithful. He does what He promises. The problem is that we sometimes place limits on the way God should fulfill His promises. If he does not do things our way, then something is wrong with the world. The Creator of the universe knows better than we do what is right, good, and just, because He Himself is right, good, and just. He can choose to use a Cyrus of Persia or a Martin Luther King or a Donald J. Trump to do his will and help bring his purposes to pass. He

can also use you if you are willing to let him do things his way rather than insisting on your own way.

Any reference suggesting an absence or mention of the Rapture is erroneous reasoning, an assumption again because of the way we might expect God to fulfill how His agenda is carried out. God reveals just enough for us to discern His promise, not everything we might want God to reveal to us. Critics will attempt to persuade with the use of fallacies that are a kind of deceptive reasoning even if it seems true, based on arguments with little solidity, that try to convince another person intentionally or involuntarily. These erroneous beliefs derive from a logically incorrect reasoning that detracts from the argument. When someone says that the Rapture is not in the Bible, they are attempting to persuade others from the logic of “absence of evidence”. This argument is one of the weakest types of reasoning through false logic.

The argument from ignorance, also known as appeal to ignorance (in which ignorance represents "a lack of contrary evidence"), is a fallacy in informal logic. It asserts that a proposition is true because it has not yet been proven false or a proposition is false because it has not yet been proven true. This represents a type of false dichotomy in that it excludes the possibility that there may have been an insufficient investigation to prove that the proposition is either true or false. It also does not allow for the possibility that the answer is unknowable, only knowable in the future, or neither completely true nor completely false. In debates, appeals to ignorance are sometimes used in an attempt to shift the burden of proof.

As a believer, you need not be discouraged when you hear a critic debunk the Rapture teaching as dating to the 1800's with John Nelson Darby and C.I. Scofield. A spirit of timidity ought not to be held by those who believe in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture! Even now, as we see so many signs of the End Times coming to pass, the common reaction is “convergence”. All of the signs spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 24 and 25 are there. Scan the list below showing the converging signs all around the world, a confirmation that the Rapture is not too far off on the horizon.

Signs of the End that confirm historical and biblical prophecy unfolding in the present era, which clearly are precursors of the period in which we now live:

1. False Bible teachers would be money hungry. They would be smooth talkers, have many followers, and slur the Christian faith -(2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:1-3).
2. Homosexuality would be increasingly evident at the end of the age -(2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:3).
3. Earthquakes would be in diverse places -(Matthew 24:7).
4. Stress would be part of living -(2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:1).
5. Many wars would erupt -(Matthew 24:6)



6. People would forsake the Ten Commandments as a moral code, committing adultery, stealing, lying, and killing (Matthew 24:12).
7. There would be a cold religious system, in denying God's power -(2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:5).
8. Men would substitute fantasy in place of Christian truth -(2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:4). This is so evident at Christmas when the birth of the Savior is lost behind the myth of Santa Claus.
9. Deadly diseases would be prevalent -(Matthew 24:7). The worldwide increase in AIDS deaths is almost inestimable. Over 160,000 Americans die of cancer each year.
10. The fact that God once flooded the earth (the Noachic flood) would be denied -(2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:5-6). There is a mass of fossil evidence to prove this fact, yet it is flatly ignored by the scientific world because of its uncanny implication.
11. The institution of marriage would be forsaken by many (1 Timothy 4:3).
12. There would be an increase in famines -(Matthew 24:7).
13. Increase in vegetarianism would increase -(1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:3-4).
14. There would be a cry for peace -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:3).
15. The possession of Jerusalem would be at the center of international turmoil -(Zechariah 12:3).
16. Knowledge would increase -(Daniel 12:4).
17. There would be hypocrites within the Church -(Matthew 13:25-30).
18. There would be an increase of religious cults/false teachers -(Matthew 24:11 & 24).
19. The future would seem fearful to many -(Luke 21:26).
20. Humanity would become materialistic -(2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:4).
21. There would be many involved in travel -(Daniel 12:4).
22. The Christian Gospel would be preached as a warning to all nations -(Matthew 24:14).
23. Jesus said Christians would be hated "for His name's sake" -(Matthew 24:9).
24. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing

them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. -(Luke 21:25-26).

25. Youth would become rebellious. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy -(2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:2).
26. Men would mock the warning signs of the end of the age saying, ***"for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."*** -(2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:4). The Bible even reveals their motivation, they love lust -(verse 3). They fail to understand that a day to the Lord is as a thousand years to us. God is not subject to the time that He created. He can flick through time as we flick through the pages of a history book. The reason He seems to be silent, is because He is patiently waiting, not willing that any perish, but that all come to repentance.

I trust and pray that this Rapture Fact will comfort and strengthen your resolve during what time we have left. As our brother, the Apostle Paul said in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:7: ***"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."***

Blessings,

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