

Tribulation Central

When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed...2 Thessalonians 1:1-8

Boiling it Down

by Dave MacPherson

<http://tribulationcentral.com/pdf/guest/mc-boil.pdf>

(This book excerpt is found on pages 227-231 in my book *The Rapture Plot*, my most comprehensive work on pretrib rapturism's earliest development in the early 1800's. It's my summary of the book's highlights and takes the unusual form of an imaginary phone call from a dispensationalist, with a dash of humor thrown in. Incidentally, *all* of my book royalties have always gone not to me but to our nonprofit research group, a group that has never paid salary to myself or anyone else! You can obtain *The Rapture Plot* through Armageddon Books on the Internet or by calling 800-967-7345.)

The dispensationalist who non-literally phoned me in the chapter on Darby's early works phoned me again. He wanted me to boil down, in my "own words," the earliest pretrib development. Here's what was said:

Dispensationalist: Dave, can you boil down, in your own words, the earliest pretrib development?

Me: I'll be glad to.

Dispensationalist: My teachers have long said that the most important underlying "truth" which led to pretrib was the church/Israel "dichotomy," which means "separation."

Me: That's right.

Dispensationalist: I've gone through Darby's works up to and through 1830 and he doesn't have any dichotomy between the church and the Jews. In 1827 he had his "heavenly" theme, echoing Irving in 1825 and Lacunza in 1812, but no dichotomy. In 1828 he talked about "unity" the way Irving and Lacunza did, but again no dichotomy. In 1829 he expected only the Revelation 19 coming, following intermediate events, and saw no dichotomy during either the tribulation or a following millennium----all omitted by Huebner. Even if he'd had a millennial dichotomy, it wouldn't have been a support for pretrib. In December of 1830 he again expected only the Revelation 19 coming, which Huebner does admit. But Huebner again overlooks that this coming followed intermediate events and that Darby still didn't have a church/Israel dichotomy during the tribulation or anything else. It seems that Huebner, wishing to credit Darby, had read church/Israel *dichotomy* into church/Israel *distinction*----a distinction that the church had always seen prior to 1830.

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Me: That's right.

Dispensationalist: And when I went through your chapter on Darby's reminiscences, I couldn't find him expressing a dichotomy even in his later, exaggerated memories. Memories 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 mention Isaiah 32. But my teachers, including Walvoord, say that Isaiah 32 isn't on "church" ground and that a pretrib rapture isn't found anywhere in the Old Testament. How can Isaiah 32 portray such a dichotomy if the "church" half of the dichotomy is missing? And Memories 2 and 7 say nothing about the Jews. Since his dichotomy was non-existent through December 1830---he saw both the church and Israel together on earth until the Revelation 19 coming---it appears that the only separation in Darby's early progress was the separation between Darby and the dichotomy!

Me: That's right.

Dispensationalist: Besides, the "truths" that reportedly evolved into pretrib were all held by Irving in 1825 in his preliminary discourse, or preface, to Lacunza and published in 1827. Only after Darby's "heavenly" (1827) and "unity" (1828)---which weren't original---do we see him in 1829 with some detailed development. Even if we give Irving's "truths" an 1827 date, 1827 is before 1829. And well-read Darby, fluent in several modern languages as well as ancient Biblical languages, knew about Irving's "truths." In his 1829 work, Darby expressed his familiarity with the ideas "throughout this preface" to Lacunza, quoted page 55 in it, summarized pages 55-65, and came close to Irving's "truths." For example, on page 53 Irving used "expectation" while holding to intermediate events and on page 67 he used the phrase "look daily for the coming"---even though Irving then expected only the Revelation 19 coming. Obviously Darby was influenced by Irving and by other earlier writers!

Me: That's right.

Dispensationalist: But not even the Irvingites derived pretrib from these "truths" which were theirs and not Darby's. Their first public pretrib teaching in September 1830---while Darby still defended posttrib three months later---was based on "Philadelphia" raptured and "Laodicea" left on earth, and not on the dichotomy or other "truths" that my teachers have credited Darby with. Only after pretrib was established did the Irvingites use the dichotomy for further support. Their first public pretrib was only a church/church dichotomy between "Philadelphia" and "Laodicea." Not until a year later did *The Morning Watch* see a tribulation primarily for "the Jews" and not "Laodicea"---a true church/Israel dichotomy explicitly separating church members and Jews and emphasizing the latter even though God wasn't supposed to be dealing again with the Jews until the vicinity of the final advent which was then about 36 years in the future! The Irvingites sure seemed to be unnecessarily and arbitrarily anti-Jewish, right?

Me: That's right.

Dispensationalist: Even Darby's first "understanding" in 1830, based on his 1850 memory, and his first "hint" of pretrib in 1834, based on his words at the time, weren't based on the church/Israel dichotomy. They were drawn from what seemed to be an order of events in the Thessalonian letters---"church" ground. Whereas Isaiah 32 didn't have the first half of the dichotomy, the Thessalonian epistles didn't clearly have the second half. So the underlying "truths" weren't

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used by either the Irvingites or Darby to either initially understand or initially teach pretrib. And even Darby used the dichotomy only after pretrib's arrival---as additional support.

Me: That's right.

Dispensationalist: And it seems that Darby was behind others in everything. He was defending posttrib three months after the Irvingites were clearly pretrib. He was behind others on even the so-called underlying "truths." His 1830 statement about the "Gentile parenthesis" was almost a duplicate of what William Davis of South Carolina wrote in 1811. And Lacunza (1812) and *The Morning Watch* (1829) also used "parenthesis." When Darby finally had clear pretrib teaching in 1839, his basis was the Revelation 12 "man child" symbol with support soon coming from I Corinthians 12's mystical "body"----but Irving's pretrib basis in 1831 was the same symbol with the same support!

Me: That's right.

Dispensationalist: If Darby really wasn't a year-day late and a British pound short, why have some individuals taken great pains to cover up pretrib in the Irvingites? Why did Kelly, with Darby's approval, fashion footnotes from Darby's much later writings and add them to Darby's early writings in order to "mature" him? And why, for the same purpose, did Kelly add bracketed insertions within Darby's text and even reveal in a footnote to Darby's 1830 work that he wasn't against "suppressing" and "changing" Darby's own words? Since Darby lived many more years after the revisionism of his own words had begun----revisionism less subtle than Darby had intended----why didn't Darby object? Did he think that no one would ever notice? And why has Kelly's massive and desperate revisionism between 1889 and 1903 been unobserved until now? If the most important thing is what the Bible teaches, Kelly should have stuck to Bible teaching and not engineered his clever distortions of the Irvingites and even fellow Brethren member Tregelles.

Maybe you should call this whole thing "Rapturegate" or refer to the Brethren "grinch" who stole the Irvingite "Christmas"!

Me: That's right.

Dispensationalist: Something else. My teachers admit that the most crucial underlying "truth" that supposedly led to pretrib was the church/Israel "dichotomy" which means "separation." And when will this separation take place? At the start of a future tribulation. By what means? The pretrib rapture. If the pretrib rapture itself is the separation between the church and the ones that my teachers call "Israel"----and it is----then the pretrib rapture *itself* is this "dichotomy"! It's like saying that "The pretrib rapture was the main truth that led to the pretrib rapture" or "The pretrib rapture sprang from itself"!

I know I've taken too much of your time. But I'm grateful for all of the enlightenment you've just given me during this phone call. Many thanks. Good-bye.

Me: Good-bye.

Well, it certainly was nice to get another phone call from that dispensationalist. If I'd known about him years ago, he could have written the present book and saved me a lot of time and trouble!