

# Tribulation Central

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

## Famous Rapture Watchers

by Dave MacPherson

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

(The following quotes - to which a couple more have been added - were first circulated in a little-known, non-copyrighted paper of mine in the 1970's. While noting how Rev. 3:10 has been interpreted by the greatest Greek experts, can you determine the rapture view of each of the leaders herein?)

*Barnabas* (40-100): "The final stumbling-block (or source of danger) approaches...for the whole [past] time of your faith will profit you nothing, unless now in this wicked time we also withstand coming sources of danger....That the Black One [Antichrist] may find no means of entrance..." (*Epistle of Barnabas*, 4).

*Clement of Rome* (40-100): "...the Scripture also bears witness, saying, 'Speedily will He come, and will not tarry'; and, 'The Lord shall suddenly come [Matthew 24:30 coming] to His temple, even the Holy One, for whom ye look'" (*I Clement*, 23).

*Hermas* (40-140): "Those, therefore, who continue steadfast, and are put through the fire [of the Great Tribulation that is yet to come], will be purified by means of it....Wherefore cease not speaking these things into the ears of the saints..." (*The Pastor of Hermas*, Vision 4).

*Polycarp* (70-167): "He comes as the Judge of the living and the dead" (*Epistle to the Philippians*, II).

*Justin Martyr* (100-168): "The man of apostasy [Antichrist], who speaks strange things against the Most High, shall venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us the Christians..." (*Dialogue With Trypho*, 110).

*Melito* (100-170): "For with all his strength did the adversary assail us, even then giving a foretaste of his activity among us [during the Great Tribulation] which is to be without restraint..." (*Discourse on the Resurrection*, i, 8).

*Irenaeus* (140-202): "And they [the ten kings who shall arise] shall lay Babylon waste, and burn her with fire, and shall give their kingdom to the beast, and put the church to flight" (*Against Heresies*, V, 26).

## Famous Rapture Watchers

*Tertullian* (150-220): "The souls of the martyrs are taught to wait [Rev. 6]...that the beast Antichrist with his false prophet may wage war on the Church of God..." (*On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 25).

*Hippolytus* (160-240): "...the one thousand two hundred and three score days (the half of the week) during which the tyrant is to reign and persecute the Church, which flees from city to city, and seeks concealment in the wilderness among the mountains" (*Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 61).

*Cyprian* (200-258): "The day of affliction has begun to hang over our heads, and the end of the world and the time of the Antichrist to draw near, so that we must all stand prepared for the battle..." (*Epistle*, 55, 1).

*Victorinus* (240-303): "...the times of Antichrist, when all shall be injured" (*Commentary on the Apocalypse of the Blessed John*, VI, 5).

*Lactantius* (240-330): "And power will be given him [Antichrist] to desolate the whole earth for forty-two months....When these things shall so happen, then the righteous and the followers of truth shall separate themselves from the wicked, and flee into solitudes" (*Divine Institutes*, VII, 17).

*Athanasius* (293-373): "...they have not spared Thy servants, but are preparing the way for Antichrist" (*History of the Arians*, VIII, 79).

*Ephraim the Syrian* (306-373): "Nothing remains then, except that the coming of our enemy, Antichrist, appear..." (*Sermo Asceticus*, I).

*Pseudo-Ephraem* (4th century?): "...there is not other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one [Antichrist]..." (*On the Last Times, the Antichrist etc.*, 2).

*Cyril of Jerusalem* (315-386): "The Church declares to thee the things concerning Antichrist before they arrive...it is well that, knowing these things, thou shouldest make thyself ready beforehand" (*Catechetical Lectures*, 15, 9).

*Jerome* (340-420): "I told you that Christ would not come unless Antichrist had come before" (*Epistle* 21).

*Chrysostom* (345-407): "...the time of Antichrist...will be a sign of the coming of Christ..." (*Homilies on First Thessalonians*, 9).

*Augustine* (354-430): "But he who reads this passage [Daniel 12], even half asleep, cannot fail to see that the kingdom of Antichrist shall fiercely, though for a short time, assail the Church..." (*The City of God*, XX, 23).

*Venerable Bede* (673-735): "[The Church's triumph will] follow the reign of Antichrist" (*The Explanation of the Apocalypse*, II, 8).

*Bernard of Clairvaux* (1090-1153): "There remains only one thing---that the demon of noonday [Antichrist] should appear, to seduce those who remain still in Christ..." (*Sermons on the Song of Songs*, 33, 16).

## Famous Rapture Watchers

*Roger Bacon* (1214-1274): "...because of future perils [for the Church] in the times of Antichrist..." (*Opus Majus*, II, p. 634).

*John Wycliffe* (1320-1384): "Wherefore let us pray to God that he keep us in the hour of temptation, which is coming upon all the world, Rev. iii" (*Writings of the Reverend and Learned John Wickliff, D.D.*, p. 155).

*Martin Luther* (1483-1546): "[The book of Revelation] is intended as a revelation of things that are to happen in the future, and especially of tribulations and disasters for the Church..." (*Works of Martin Luther*, VI, p. 481).

*William Tyndale* (1492-1536): "...antichrist preacheth not Peter's doctrine (which is Christ's gospel)...he compelleth all men with violence of sword" (*Greenslade's The Work of William Tindale*, p. 127).

*Menno Simons* (1496-1561): "...He will appear as a triumphant prince and a victorious king to bring judgment. Then will those who persecute us look upon Him..." (*Complete Writings...*, p. 622).

*John Calvin* (1509-1564): "...we ought to follow in our inquiries after Antichrist, especially where such pride proceeds to a public desolation of the church" (*Institutes*, Vol. 2, p. 411).

*John Knox* (1515-1572): "...the great love of God towards his Church, whom he pleased to forewarn of dangers to come, so many years before they come to pass...to wit, The man of sin, The Antichrist, The Whore of Babylon" (*The History of the Reformation...*, I, p. 76).

*John Fox* (1516-1587): "...that second beast prophesied to come in the later time of the Church...to disturb the whole Church of Christ..." (*Acts and Monuments*, I).

*Roger Williams* (1603-1683): "Antichrist...hath his prisons, to keep Christ Jesus and his members fast..." (*The Bloody Tenent, of Persecution*, p. 153).

*John Bunyan* (1628-1688): "He comes in flaming fire [as Judge] and...the trump of God sounds in the air, the dead to hear his voice..." (*The Last Four Things: Of Judgment*).

*Daniel Whitby* (1638-1726): "...after the Fall of Antichrist, there shall be such a glorious State of the Church...so shall this be the Church of Martyrs, and of those who had not received the Mark of the Beast..." (*A Paraphrase and Commentary*, p. 696).

*Increase Mather* (1639-1723): "That part of the world [Europe] was to be principally the Seat of the Church of Christ during the Reign of Antichrist" (*Ichabod*, p. 64).

*Matthew Henry* (1662-1714): "Those who keep the gospel in a time of peace shall be kept by Christ in an hour of temptation [Revelation 3:10]" (*Commentary*, VI, p. 1134).

## Famous Rapture Watchers

*Cotton Mather* (1663-1728): "...that New Jerusalem, whereto the Church is to be advanced, when the Mystical Babylon shall be fallen" (*The Wonders of the Invisible World*, p. 3).

*Jonathan Edwards* (1703-1758): "...continuance of Antichrist's reign [when the Church is persecuted] did not commence before the year of Christ 479..." (*A History of the Work of Redemption*, p. 217).

*John Wesley* (1703-1791): "'The stars shall...fall from heaven,' (Revelation, vi. 13)....And then shall be heard the universal *shout*...followed by the 'voice of the archangel,'...'and the trumpet of God'...(I Thessalonians iv. 16)." (*The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, Vol. V, p. 173).

*George Whitefield* (1714-1770): "...'while the bridegroom tarried,' in the space of time which passeth between our Lord's ascension and his coming again to judgment..." (*Gillies' Memoirs of Rev. George Whitefield*, p. 471).

*David Brainerd* (1718-1747): "...and I could not but hope, that the time was at hand, when Babylon the great would fall and rise no more" (*Memoirs...*, p. 326).

*Morgan Edwards* (1722-1795): "[Antichrist] has hitherto assumed no higher title than 'the vicar general of Christ on earth!'" (*Two Academical Exercises etc.*, p. 20).

*John Newton* (1725-1807): "'Fear not temptation's fiery day, for I will be thy strength and stay. Thou hast my promise, hold it fast, the trying hour [Revelation 3:10] will soon be past'" (*The Works of the Rev. John Newton*, Vol. II, p. 152).

*Adam Clarke* (1762-1832): "*We which are alive, and remain...*he [Paul] is speaking of the genuine Christians which shall be found on earth when Christ comes to judgment" (*Commentary*, Vol. VI, p. 550).

*Charles G. Finney* (1792-1875): "Christ represents it as impossible to deceive the elect. Matt. 24:24. We have seen that the elect unto salvation includes all true christians." (*Lectures on Systematic Theology*, p. 606).

*Charles Hodge* (1797-1878): "...the fate of his Church here on earth...is the burden of the Apocalypse" (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. III, p. 827).

*Albert Barnes* (1798-1870): "...he will keep them in the future trials that shall come upon the world [Revelation 3:10]" (*Notes on the New Testament*, p. 94).

*George Mueller* (1805-1898): "The Scripture declares plainly that the Lord Jesus will *not* come until the Apostacy shall have taken place, and the man of sin...shall have been revealed..." (Mrs. Mueller's *Missionary Tours and Labours*, p. 148).

*Benjamin W. Newton* (1805-1898): "The Secret Rapture was bad enough, but this [John Darby's equally novel idea that the book of Matthew is on 'Jewish' ground instead of 'Church' ground] was worse" (unpublished Fry MS. and F. Roy Coad's *Prophetic Developments*, p. 29).

## Famous Rapture Watchers

*R. C. Trench* (1807-1886): "...the Philadelphian church...to be kept *in* temptation, not to be exempted from temptation..." (*Seven Churches of Asia*, pp. 183-184).

*Carl F. Keil* (1807-1888): "...the persecution of the last enemy Antichrist against the church of the Lord..." (*Biblical Commentary*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 503).

*Henry Alford* (1810-1871): "Christ is *on His way to this earth* [I Thessalonians 4:17]..." (*The New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. II, p. 491).

*John Lillie* (1812-1867): "In his [Antichrist's] days was to be the great---the last---tribulation of the Church" (*Second Thessalonians*, pp. 537-538).

*F. L. Godet* (1812-1900): "The gathering of the elect [Matthew 24:31]...is mentioned by St. Paul, 1 Thess. 4:16, 17, 2 Thess. 2:1..." (*Commentary on Luke*, p. 452).

*Robert Murray McCheyne* (1813-1842): "Christians must have 'great tribulation'; but they come out of it" (*Bonar's Memoirs of McCheyne*, p. 26).

*S. P. Tregelles* (1813-1875): "The Scripture teaches the Church to wait for the manifestation of Christ. The secret theory bids us to expect a coming before any such manifestation" (*The Hope of Christ's Second Coming*, p. 71).

*Franz Delitzsch* (1813-1890): "...the approaching day is the day of Christ, who comes...for final judgment" (*Commentary on Hebrews*, Vol. II, p. 183).

*C. J. Ellicott* (1819-1905): "[I Thessalonians 4:17] 'to meet the Lord,' as He is coming down to earth..." (*Commentary on the Thessalonian Epistles*, p. 66).

*Nathaniel West* (1826-1906): "[The Pre-Trib Rapture] is built on a postulate, vicious in logic, violent in exegesis, contrary to experience, repudiated by the early Church, contradicted by the testimony of eighteen hundred years...and condemned by all the standard scholars of every age" (*The Apostle Paul and the "Any Moment" Theory*, p. 30).

*Alexander Maclaren* (1826-1910): "He will keep us in the midst of, and also from, the hour of temptation [Revelation 3:10]" (*The Epistles of John, Jude and the Book of Revelation*, p. 266).

*J. H. Thayer* (1828-1901): "To keep [Revelation 3:10]:...by guarding, to cause one to escape in safety out of" (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 622).

*Adolph Saphir* (1831-1891): "...the advent of the Messiah...to which both the believing synagogue and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ are looking..." (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Vol. I, p. 96).

*M. R. Vincent* (1834-1922): "The preposition ['from'] implies, not a keeping *from* temptation, but a keeping *in* temptation [Revelation 3:10]..." (*Word Studies...*, p. 466).

## Famous Rapture Watchers

*William J. Erdman* (1834-1923): "...by the 'saints' seen as future by Daniel and by John are meant 'the Church'..." (*Notes on the Book of Revelation*, p. 47).

*H. Grattan Guinness* (1835-1910): "...the Church is on earth during the action of the Apocalypse..." (*The Approaching End of the Age*, p. 136).

*H. B. Swete* (1835-1917): "The promise [of Revelation 3:10], as Bede says, is 'not indeed of your being immune from adversity, but of not being overcome by it'" (*The Apocalypse of St. John*, p. 56).

*William G. Moorehead* (1836-1914): "...the last days of the Church's deepest humiliation when Antichrist is practicing and prospering (Dan. viii:12)..." (*Outline Studies in the New Testament*, p. 123).

*A. H. Strong* (1836-1921): "The final coming of Christ is referred to in: Mat. 24:30...[and] I Thess. 4:16..." (*Systematic Theology*, p. 567).

*Theodor Zahn* (1838-1933): "...He will *preserve*...at the time of the great temptation [Revelation 3:10]..." (*Zahn-Kommentar*, I, p. 305).

*I. T. Beckwith* (1843-1936): "The Philadelphians...are promised that they shall be carried in safety through the great trial [Revelation 3:10], they shall not fall" (*The Apocalypse of John*, p. 484).

*Robert Cameron* (1845-1922): "The *Coming for*, and the *Coming with*, the saints, still persists, although it involves a manifest contradiction, viz., *two* Second Comings which is an absurdity" (*Scriptural Truth About the Lord's Return*, p. 16).

*B. B. Warfield* (1851-1921): "...He shall come again to judgment...to close the dispensation of grace..." (*Biblical Doctrines*, p. 639).

*David Baron* (1855-1926): "(Tit. ii. 13), for then the hope as regards the church, and Israel, and the world, will be fully realised" (*Visions of Zechariah*, p. 323).

*Philip Mauro* (1859-1952): "...'dispensational teaching' is *modernistic* in the strictest sense...it first came into existence within the memory of persons now living..." (*The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 8).

*A. T. Robertson* (1863-1934): "In Rev. 3:10...we seem to have the picture of general temptation with the *preservation* of the saints" (*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, p. 596).

*R. C. H. Lenski* (1864-1936): "...it [Philadelphia] shall be kept untouched and unharmed by the impending dangers [Revelation 3:10]" (*The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation*, pp. 146-146).

*William E. Biederwolf* (1867-1939): "Godet, like most pre-millennial expositors, makes no provision for any period between the Lord's coming for His saints and His coming with them..." (*The Second Coming Bible*, p. 385).

## Famous Rapture Watchers

*Alexander Reese* (1881-1969): "...we quite deliberately reject the dispensational theories, propounded first about 1830..." (*The Approaching Advent of Christ*, p. 293).

*Norman S. MacPherson* (1899-1980): "...the view that the Church will not pass into or through the Great Tribulation is based largely upon arbitrary interpretations of obscure passages" (*Triumph Through Tribulation*, p. 5).