

An End-Time Myth

A widely held end-time view is that a seven year time of trouble will take place at the end of this age. Few know the origin of the doctrine and the Great Tribulation (as it is called) is generally accepted as an established fact. But just having an explanation for a few puzzling Bible verses doesn't mean the explanation is true.

Back in the 1500s, when an end-time tribulation was first thought up, they could also explain diseases. Everyone knew diseases were caused by night humors. At bedtime, folks would board their homes up tight, draw the curtains shut around their high-off-the-floor, four-poster beds, huddle under the covers and hope they didn't catch a pox or the bloody flux by morning. They had an explanation for diseases alright, but their explanation was wrong and therein lies the problem.

As popular as the Seven-Year Tribulation view might be, it might also be wrong because there is no direct scriptural support for it. Oh, there are verses we interpret as a seven-year-tribulation, but not one verse in the Bible says we are going to have such a time at the end of the age. Few question the origin of the view, but it had a most dubious beginning . . . and here's the story.

From the early Church fathers until the Reformation, the generally accepted view of Bible prophecy was "linear-historic," that Revelation was in the process of being fulfilled throughout the Christian Era. But in the 16th century, a new view of Bible prophecy was devised by a Jesuit priest to stop the Reformers from teaching that the Catholic Church was probably the "whore of Babylon" of Revelation 17:3-6.

In 1591AD, the Jesuit Ribera invented a "futurist" view. He claimed that Revelation would not be fulfilled until the end of the Christian Era. Ribera taught a rebuilt Babylon, a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and an end-time Antichrist, etc., etc. Sound familiar? It should, Ribera is the father of the prophetic views taught by many major denominations today.

But Ribera is only part of the story. In 1731, there was a Spanish family living in Chili named the de Lacunzas, who had a boy named Manuel. After fifteen years at home, young

Manuel decided to become a Catholic priest so he boarded a ship to Spain. Thirty-six years later (when the Jesuits were expelled from that country because of their brutality) the now “Father” Manuel de Lacunza y Diaz had to move to Imola, Italy, where he remained for the rest of his life.

In Imola, de Lacunza claimed to be a converted Jew named Rabbi Juan Jushafat Ben-Ezra. Under that alias, he wrote a 900 page book titled *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*. In it, Lacunza theorized that the Church would be taken to be with the Lord some 45 days before Jesus’ final return to Earth. During that 45 days (while the Church was in heaven), God was supposedly going to pour out His wrath upon the wicked remaining on Earth.¹ Believe it or not, a Chilean Jesuit, a.k.a. a Jewish Rabbi, theorized the earliest mini-trib, pre-trib-rapture view on record!² But to continue on . . .

De Lacunza died in Imola in 1801 and that should have been the end of it. But after his death, Lacunza’s views were taught in Spain. In 1812 his book was published in Spanish. Fourteen years later, it was translated into English by a radical cultist named Edward Irving. Lacunza’s views could have died there, too, for most in England saw Irving as a heretic.

But now the plot thickens. About the same time, an Irvingite evangelist named Robert Norton met a little Scottish girl named Margaret Macdonald who supposedly had a vision of the church being secretly raptured. Norton was so charmed by the idea that he preached her “vision” all over England.

¹ De Lacunza derived his view from a premature interpretation of the 1290 and the 1335 days of Dan 12:11-12. We now know his view to be faulty because we now have the true fulfillment of those prophecies in the new nation of Israel and can prove with certainty what those “days” really mean. You can read the details in Skolfield’s book *The False Prophet*, also downloadable from this site.

² Though not so well known, an 18th century American pastor, Morgan Edwards, may have published a pre-trib rapture paper slightly earlier than de Lacunza. But when one looks at the tremendous impact the *Scofield Bible* had on the western church, it appears that Ribera-Lacunza-Macdonald-Darby-Scofield is the route through which this view gained wide acceptance. A copy of Irving’s translation of Lacunza’s work is archived in Oxford University Library, Oxford, England. (John Brey, *The Origin of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Teaching*, pp1-12)

John Darby, founder of the Plymouth Brethren, became interested in this new doctrine so he attended several Irvingite meetings. In his letters Darby states that he had “come to an understanding of this new truth” and made no secret of the fact that he had been influenced by de Lacunza’s writings.

Darby, however, wasn’t satisfied with the rather simplistic Lacunza-Irving 45-day tribulation idea, so he devised a more complex scheme. Darby thought the last week of Daniel’s 70 weeks (Dan 9:24-27) was still unfulfilled so he theorized that the 70th week might actually be a future seven-year-tribulation that would take place at the end of the Christian Era. To make his idea fit world history, he also invented a 2000 year gap between Daniel’s 69th and 70th weeks. It was all guesswork theology, but there you have it, the true origin of the seven-year-tribulation and pre-trib rapture doctrines! Upon that dubious foundation, Darby and his associates then added a few of Jesuit Ribera’s wrinkles:

1. That a Jewish temple would be rebuilt and animal sacrifices reestablished.
2. That Antichrist would appear and rule the world for seven years.
3. That after 3½ years of good rule, this supposed Antichrist would turn against the Jews, stop the sacrifices, and start the battle of Armageddon.

Whew, it went on and on in a dizzying profusion of unsupported conjectures, all based upon Darby’s imaginary 2000 year gap theory and the seven-year-tribulation he conjured up from Daniel’s 70th week.

If Darby hadn’t visited the United States, his seven-year idea could have died right then, too. After all, there weren’t many Darbyites around. But while visiting the United States, Darby met C. I. Scofield.

C. I. was so taken by the Ribera-Lacunza-Macdonald-Darby ideas that he decided to include them in the annotated Bible he was working on. Sound Bible scholars of the day like A. J. Gordon, Charles R. Erdman and W.G. Moorhead tried to dissuade him. Three members of Scofield’s revision committee even resigned because of his unswerving support for the view,

but their voices were not heard. The seven-year-tribulation doctrine remained . . . and that's how a Jesuit's imaginative creation – which grew like a poisonous mushroom – was incorporated into the now-famous notes of the *Scofield Reference Bible*.³

Since the Protestant Church held the Jesuits and Irvingites to be heretical, everyone involved tried to hide the origin of the doctrine and by almost unbelievable deception claimed to be the originators of the creed themselves. They were generally successful, for most pastors and theologians believe John Darby and C. I. Scofield to be the fathers of what is known today as *Dispensational Eschatology*.

In the following decades, the *Scofield Bible* became the most widely read Bible in the English language so that annotated Bible is the primary vehicle by which the seven-year-tribulation view was spread throughout American churches. Scathing reviews have been written against Scofield's views by various respected scholars, but others presume Scofield's notes to be all but inspired. Even today, some folks think a commentator's notes below the line are as valid as the text above it.⁴

Dr. Ironside of Moody Bible Institute fully supported Darby-Scofield, but later in life admitted that it was “full of holes.” Dallas Theological Seminary, Biola University and other centers of dispensational thinking also support Darby's views. There have been a host of rebuttals by conservative theologians, but few have bothered to refute the Ribera-Lacunza-McDonald-Darby-Scofield view in a language that the everyday saint can understand.

³ Albertus Pieters wrote, “From start to finish it [*the Scofield Bible*] is a partisan book, definitely, both openly and under cover, an instrument of propaganda in favor of an exceedingly doubtful eschatology . . . If Darby and his school are right, the entire Christian church, for eighteen-hundred years, was wrong on a vital part of the Christian faith” *Candid Examination of the Scofield Bible*, Albertus Pieters, (Union City, PA, Bible Truth Depot, 1932) pp25, 27.

⁴ Dr. T. T. Shields humorously commented: “From a position of entire ignorance of the Scripture to a position of oracular religious certainty -- especially in eschatological matters -- for some people requires but from three to six months with a Scofield Bible” *The Gospel Witness* (Toronto Canada, April 7th, 1932).

It is almost impossible to believe that major end-time doctrines of the Protestant church began in the minds of a couple of Jesuit priests, one of which wrote under an assumed name . . . and even more unbelievable, that those views were amplified by the supposed vision of a fifteen year old girl who had only been a Christian for a year, dabbled in the occult and had a documented levitation.⁵ But the historic record of the origin of *Dispensational Eschatology* is unassailable.⁶

Many seminary students have tried to reconcile the plain assertions of Scripture with the dispensational position, but to no avail. Eventually, the future pastors just accept Ribera-Lacunza-Macdonald-Darby-Scofield and after being ordained go forth and happily teach this false doctrine to their flocks. Rarely do they question the quivering foundation upon which they are trying to build: the questionable opinions of the Jesuits who started it all.⁷

Many evangelical churches still champion the seven-year view, but it is so counter to the plain statements of the Bible itself – particularly the last trumpet – that one wonders how it has managed to command so many ardent supporters . . .

2Ti 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to

⁵ Levitation is recognized by most churches as a sign of demonic activity.

⁶ The Church is indebted to Dave MacPherson, *The Rapture Plot*, (Simpsonville, SC, Millennium III Publishers) for 23 years of researching source documents to uncover the true origin of present-day dispensational eschatology.

⁷ Dr. Harry Ironside of Moody Bible Institute, himself an ardent supporter of the Ribera-Lacunza-Macdonald-Darby-Scofield eschatological scheme, admitted in his *Mysteries of God*, p.50: “. . . until brought to the fore through the writings of . . . Mr. J. N. Darby, the doctrine taught by Dr. Scofield [*i.e.*, *the Seven-Year Tribulation theory*] is scarcely to be found in a single book throughout a period of 1600 years. If any doubt this statement, let them search, as the writer has in measure done, the remarks of the so-called Fathers, both pre- and post-Nicene, the theological treatises of the scholastic divines . . . the literature of the reformation . . . the Puritans. He will find the ‘mystery’ conspicuous by its absence.”

Yes indeed, that so-called “mystery is absent,” because the Bible doesn’t teach it!

themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

We are very near the end of all things. The Jews are home in Israel now, just as the Lord predicted they would be in countless Scriptures. Because of the many prophecies that have been fulfilled in the last sixty years, we can now state conclusively that all Scriptures used to formulate the seven-year-tribulation view, including Daniel's 70th week, have been fulfilled. The Ribera-Lacunza-Irving-Macdonald-Darby-Scotfield dispensational end-time scheme just isn't true. And since it isn't, maybe we should look at Daniel's prophecies again to see if we can find out what they are really all about.⁸

You can download an explanation of *Daniel's 70th Week* from this site, but to get the complete picture, you should also download Skolfield's latest book on Bible prophecy, *The False Prophet*.

God is truth, so how well a person serves the Lord is not based on how good he is at defending his doctrine, but on how willing he is to seek out and follow the truth.

⁸ The futurist view, contrived by the Jesuit priest Ribera in 1591AD, was the foundation for Lacunza's "tribulation" musings. Ribera theorized a future antichrist, a rebuilt Babylon and a Jewish temple in Jerusalem at the end of this age. The Praeterist view, conceived by the Jesuit priest Alcazar in 1614AD, claimed just the opposite - that the book of Revelation was fulfilled by the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD. Both views were in opposition to the linear historic view that until then had been the generally accepted position of the true church. Those two innovative Jesuit positions succeeded in excluding fifteen centuries of unsavory Roman Church history from the scrutiny the Bible prophecies that showed the Roman Church hierarchy to be at least one face of Rev 17's "whore of Babylon." For documentation, read Michael de Semlyen, *All Roads Lead To Rome?* (Gerrards Cross, Bucks, UK, Dorchester House Publications, 1991) p. 202.