

Sunday, January 8, 2011—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 52 Darby on Trial: Debunking Attacks of the Pre-Trib. Rapture, Part 2

Was Manuel de Lacunza the Source of the Pretribulation Rapture?

- “Manuel de Lacunza was born in Santiago, Chile (1731) and died in Italy (1801). In 1747 he entered the Jesuit order and was ordained in 1755. When the Jesuit order was expelled from Spain and its colonies in 1767, he went to Italy for study and there wrote his famous tome, *The Coming Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, under the pen name of Juan Josaphat Ben-Ezra, being suspicious it might be placed on the Index of forbidden books for Roman Catholics. He completed this work in 1790. Before it was published in Cadiz, Spain in 1812, it circulated in manuscript form. It was placed on the Index on Sept. 6, 1824 and again on July 11, 1941.” (Huebner, 127)
- J.L. Bray, a Southern Baptist and Preterist, is also the author of a book titled, *The Origin of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Teaching*, in which he advances the view that Manuel de Lacunza taught the pretribulation rapture. (Huebner, 127)
 - “We look askance at Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Herbert Armstrongism, etc., because we know they had their origins with false teachings thought up in modern days by their leaders. But how in the name of Bible truth can Christians look with FAVOR on modern-day inventions by human leaders, such as the theory of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, which never was taught by ANYONE before 1812 so far as we have any record? Actually, this is the way by which nearly all new cults have their beginnings.
 - And I have not seen but one published book anywhere (and I have studied a tremendous number of books on this subject) that traced this Pre-Tribulation Rapture teaching back as far as Lacunza (1812), and that quoted very little from Lacunza. So I am hoping that all of what I have to say in this little book, tracing in detail the origin of the teaching back to Emmanuel Lacuna's book, will be of help to sincere and honest Bible students in ascertaining the truth about this matter.” (Bray, 31)
- Duncan McDougall, author of *The Rapture of the Saints*, states the following regarding this subject:
 - “Were the Powerscourt meetings started for the express purpose of 'bringing to light' the "secret rapture"? The theory had been in print for six years in Irving's TRANSLATION of Lacunza. It had been preached by Irving in his own church, and was regarded as one of the distinctive tenets of his new Irvingite sect. But the spirit manifestations in connection with his preaching of the new doctrine had put the Christian public on their guard, so that it took him six years to dispose of the first edition of his translation. Then, in this fateful year 1833, in which Newman floated the Tractarian Movement, appeared the cheap popular edition of Lacunza, and about the same time the Powerscourt meetings were opened "for the study of prophecy". Would it be a very wild guess to surmise that the anonymous editors of Lacunza were among the promoters of the Powerscourt meetings?” (McDougall, 51)
- “Lacunza stated his view that at the close of the 1290 days of Dan. 12 (which, of course, includes the 1260 days) the rapture will occur and judgment will be poured out for 45 days, before the

saints return with Christ to the earth—thus at the 1335th day of Dan. 12. Like some historicists had done, he viewed the conflagration of 2 Pet.3:10 as occurring just before the millennium and that the saints would return to a renovated earth. But he gave a precise time.” (Huebner, 128)

- First we take note of his statement that much before Christ’s arrival to earth, He will have raised the righteous dead and have caught up the living ones:
 - “From these words of the apostle, which he himself gives us to know, that he spoke by the word of the Lord, we derive two truths of the utmost importance; first, that when the Lord returns from heaven to earth, upon his coming forth from heaven, and much before his arrival at the earth, he will give his orders, and send forth his commandment as King and God omnipotent; which is all signified in these words, With a shout, [in the vulgate, *jussu*, i.e. by the order] with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. At this voice of the Son of God, those who shall hear it, shall forth with arise, and, as saith the Evangelist St. John (chapter v. 25.) “those who hear shall live.” But who are these? May it not be all the dead, good and bad, without distinction? It certainly and evidently appears not, otherwise St. Paul would not have taught us, upon the word of the Lord, the great novelty of two things absolutely incomprehensible, as well as contradictory, to wit, that all the individuals of the human race good and bad should rise, which could not take place unless all had died; and after that resurrection, that some should still live and remain until the coming of the Lord.” (Lacunza, 1:195)
- He directly linked 1 Thess. 4:13-17 with the elect in Matt. 24.
 - Besides this, it ought to be remembered that the Apostle in this place is speaking of the resurrection of the dead *who are in Christ*, or of those who sleep in Jesus, and not a single word does he speak of the other infinite multitude; doubtless for this very reason, that their time is not yet come. In the same way speaketh the Lord in the Gospel, and pray consider it. *And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory; and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds.* Matt. xxiv. 30. If you compare this text with that of St. Paul, you shall find no other difference than this, that those who are to arise on the coming of the Lord, the apostle nameth those *who are dead in Christ*, who sleep in Jesus; and the Lord nameth them *his elect*.” (Lacunza, 1:195-196)
- Thus Lacunza placed Christians in the time of the tribulation in Matt. 24, but had said that before Christ actually descended to the earth, they would be caught up much before his arrival to earth.
- In Volume II of *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, Lacunza concludes that there would be an interval of 45 days.
 - “ALTHOUGH it was said at the beginning of the fourth section that it is uncertain how long the great and terrible day of the Lord’s coming will endure, that is the commotion, perturbation, and agitation of our globe; yet having now read with greater reflection the twelfth chapter of the prophet Daniel, it appeareth to me certain that it cannot endure a shorter time than the space of forty-five natural days. Whoever readeth this chapter shall at once perceive, without the possibility of a doubt, that it is a prophecy wholly directed to the last times, very immediate upon the coming of the Lord, forasmuch as there are announced therein these two capital points only; first, the vocation and conversion of the

Jews; second, the antichristian temptation and tribulation of the Gentiles. Of this latter the prophet, or the angel who speaks to him, says, that it shall endure in all its force twelve hundred and ninety days, which is forty and three months. “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.” Dan. xii. 11. Which days being concluded, (doubtless in the first beginning of the day of the Lord,) these words are added, which have ever appeared to, me an impenetrable mystery; “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days;” Dan. xii. 12. the difference between which two periods is exactly forty and five.

- Why then shall he be blessed who waiteth or abideth alive during these forty and five days? Because he will be one of the few untouched by the two-edged sword which proceedeth from the mouth of the King of Kings. Because he will be one of the few clusters which shall remain untouched in the great vine when the “vintage is done.” Because he will be one of the few which shall not have been deemed an object for the wrath of God Almighty, nor for the wrath of the Lamb. Because he will be one of the few who having seen this present earth and these heavens, shall be worthy to behold likewise the new heavens and the new earth, which “we according to his promise do look for.” This appeareth to me the true understanding and resolution of that enigma. I invite all the intelligent to examine it with greater attention, considering, as ought to be done, the whole context from the beginning to the end of the chapter.
- In this examination it is very natural that some may be struck with another kind of enigma, which though accidental to the point in hand, might yet occasion a degree of embarrassment; which is, that the prophet Daniel makes the anti-christian tribulation to last for a thousand two hundred and ninety days, or forty and three months, whereas St. John in his Apocalypse assigneth to it only the duration of one thousand two hundred and sixty days, which is thirty days less. This difficulty occasioned me in other times not a little embarrassment, until I recollected those words of Matthew xxiv. 22. “And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” As St. John wrote after this prophecy and promise of Christ, he sets down the time of that great tribulation as actually abbreviated, and so strikes off thirty days from the time that it was to endure according to the prophecy of Daniel. In a pestilence or conflagration so great and universal, appeareth it to thee a slight mercy to assuage the fire thirty days before the time of its appointed duration, that all flesh might not perish?” (Lacunza, 2:165-167)
- A careful reading of the preceding passages reveals the following about Lacunza’s scheme; it is after 1260 days that the rapture will occur, a scheme that is very similar to the historicist posttribulation scheme presented above.
- “According to Lacuna, following the coming of Christ on the 1260th day when He will destroy the Antichrist, the day of the Lord will begin and last for 45 days. Since the seals, trumpets and vials, really all of Rev. 4-18, have already occurred, and Christ has come (Rev. 19), what occupies these 45 days? It is the conflagration of 2 Pet. 3.” (Huebner, 129)
 - “THIS great day being at length concluded, (the time of the duration of which we know not,) the horrible tempest being overpast, all the impious and sinful being exterminated thence, the ecliptic and equator being united in one and the same individual line, the whole atmosphere hushed, the air cleared, the sea quiet, and all its waters gathered into

the place which shall then be appointed; there must necessarily forthwith appear a new earth, a new heaven, a new terraqueous orb, in every thing widely different from what the present is, even as the present appeared in every thing very different after the flood of Noah was past; and in every thing it shall be at least as good as it was in its primitive state. I say at least, because it appears to me highly probable, that in respect and honour to a person of infinite sanctity as is a man-God, every thing upon our globe should renew and ameliorate itself, taking on in its natural aspect (as it is to take in its moral) a new and sublime degree of perfection. “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” 2 Pet. iii. 13. . . . And here thou dost behold the present age concluded, and the day of men come to its end. . . Now begin the thousand years of St. John, at the beginning of which the imprisonment of the devil must take place, with all the circumstances which are written expressly throughout the twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse;” (Lacunza, 2:248-249)

- “It should be clear that his view is that Revelation from chap. 4-19 precedes Christ’s coming, that the tribulation under Antichrist precedes that coming; at which coming Antichrist is destroyed and the saints are caught up and remain in the air during the 45 days of the Day of the Lord during which the conflagration of 2 Pet. 3 takes place in preparation for the 1000 year reign. What we have is a posttribulationist variation, a two-stage, pre-conflagration coming, not a pretribulation rapture (a pre-Rev. 4 rapture) with all its blessed associations and interlocking truths.” (Huebner, 129)
- “Lacunza taught a variation of futurist posttribulationism. He believed that the church would go through the 1260 days of tribulation, though he placed a subsequent 45 day period between the rapture and the return to earth, during which the conflagration of 2 Pet. 3:10 was to occur and the saints return to a renovated earth.” (Huebner, 129-130)
- “Keeping this in mind, the reader may perceive that as we review the development of prophetic views among Irvingites, he may see Lacunza’s influence at work, for it was E. Irving who published Lacunza’s two volumes in 1827. I hardly need to say that Lacunza is not the source of the doctrine of the pretribulation rapture (the pre-Rev 4. rapture), the interlocking church truth and dispensational truth.” (Huebner, 130)

Alleged Demonic and Occult Source of the Pretribulation Rapture

- In 1864 the posttribulationist S.P. Tregelles, of text critic fame, made the following charge:
 - “But when the theory of a secret coming of Christ was first brought forward (about 1832), it was adopted with eagerness. . .
 - I am not aware that there was any definite teaching that there would be a secret rapture of the church at a secret coming until this was given forth as an “utterance” in Mr. Irving’s church, from what was there received as being the voice of the Spirit. But whether anyone ever asserted such a thing or not, it was from that supposed revelation that the modern doctrine and the modern phraseology respecting it arose. It came not from Holy Scripture, but from that which falsely pretended to be the Spirit of God, while not owning the true doctrine in our Lord’s incarnation in the same flesh and blood as His brethren, but without taint of sin.” (Tregelles, 35)

- Nine years earlier, in 1855, S.P. Tregelles had attributed the doctrine merely to the Judaizers, when he stated the following in an article titled, “Premillennial Advent” in *The Christian Annotator* on June 16, 1855. It should be noted that these two statements made by Tregelles are contradictory. (Huebner, 133)
 - “All Christians, of course, believe that what is taught in 1 Thess. 4, as to the raising of the dead in Christ when He comes, as this was known alike by John and by those whom he addressed, in Rev. 1. . . Their hope is that day; not some secret advent, or secret rapture to the Lord, as Judaizers had supposed might be the case, but His coming, with every circumstance of publicity and manifested glory.” (quoted in Huebner, 133)
- “In 1840 and 1861 R. Norton published books that spoke about a “revelation” that Miss Margaret Macdonald (MM) of Port Glasgow, Scotland received. Since R. Norton spoke about 1830 and Scotland, it is evident that S.P. Tregelles, who spoke about 1832 and E. Irving’s church (London), did not get his ideas from R. Norton’s books.” (Huebner, 133)
- S.P. Tregelles and B.W. Newton were both a part of the Plymouth England gathering of Christians and therefore had been in fellowship with JND for some time. In 1844 Newton began publishing his *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*, a posttribulation work to which JND issued a series of written rebuttals. Newton’s book was a systematic attack on the resurgence of dispensational truth that had occurred in the mind of JND. Though greatly opposed to JND, Newton never alleged a demonic source for the pretribulation rapture as JND understood it. Newton, who was acquainted with the teachings of Irvingism, made no charge of a demonic source. On the contrary, as we have already seen, it was Newton who claimed that about 1830 a Mr. Tweedy suggested 2 Thess. 2:1-2 to JND as proof of the Lord’s immediate coming. (Huebner, 133-134)
- Writers in *Watching and Waiting* (a British, posttribulationist publication of Strict Baptists) are supporters of Tregelles and Newton and in substance repeat Tregelles’s charge:
 - “. . . the Any Moment, Secret Rapture, Pre-Tribulation, or Two-Stage Coming theory was taught by Edward Irving, as a result of a vision received by a woman in his church.”
 - “Beginning with an Irvingite woman, then propagated by Mr. J.N. Darby, this new, spirit-inspired doctrine. . .”
 - “This strange theory, originally put forth by persons in connection with the Irvingite assembly under the power of evil spirits. . .” (quoted in Huebner, 134)
- J.B. Payne, the former Old Testament professor at Wheaton College stated the following in *The Imminent Appearing of Christ*:
 - “For soon after 1830 a woman, while speaking on tongues, announced the ‘revelation’ that the true church would be caught up (raptured) to heaven before the tribulation and before Christ’s return to earth. Edward Irving was deposed from the ministry and died in 1834, but not before his pre-tribulationism had been introduced at the Powerscourt meetings. There the Irvingite view received the enthusiastic support of Darby and of others. . .” (quoted in Huebner, 134)

- Robert Baxter, a lawyer, had joined the Irvingites in London England during the early 1830s and became one of their prophets. At some point Baxter left the Pentecostal confusion of the Irvingites. In 1836, He wrote an expose titled, *Irvingism in its Rise, Progress, and present State* in which we find his testimony about what Irving and his followers actually held concerning the Second Advent.
 - “The first testimonies from the utterance were on **the nearness of the coming of Christ, and of the fearful judgments which would immediately precede it**. The minds of Mr. Irving and his followers had been prepared for this by a long course of prophetic study; and the opening and upholding of their prophetic views formed one of the means by which the utterances commanded themselves to their consciences as from God. . . . This was the position of affairs when I unhappily joined them. In January 14th, 1832, I became a participator in the power of utterance, and was recognized by Mrs. Caird, Mrs. J. and Miss E. Cardale, Miss Hall, and Mr. Taplin, as equally gifted with themselves. . . . There was an utterance from Miss Cardale, in April 1832, which stated, “that the word was true, but contained a mystery.” I know not what is to be inferred from Miss Cardale’s message;” (quoted in Huebner, 135)
- Not only does Baxter himself indicate that no one knew what Miss Cardale meant by her utterance that the word contained a mystery but he clearly states that the Irvingites were teaching in 1832 that “fearful judgments” . . . “would immediately precede” the coming of Christ. Therefore it is clear that JND did not get his teaching on rapture from the Irvingites. (Huebner, 135)

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