

**Lesson 53 Darby On Trial: Debunking
Attacks on the Pre-Trib. Rapture,
Part 3**

Was Margaret Macdonald the Source?

- Dave MacPherson has relocated the source of the teaching of the pretribulation rapture from London in 1832, to Port Glasgow, Scotland in 1830. This shift involved a Margaret Macdonald. In a 1971 brochure titled *Who was Margaret Macdonald?*, MacPherson wrote:
 - “She was the young woman who originated the Pre-Tribulation rapture theory! According to Robert Norton’s book, *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets in the Catholic Apostolic Church* (London 1861), she claimed on p. 15 to have received a ‘revelation’ in the spring of 1830, while living in Port Glasgow, Scotland, that Christians would be raptured before the Tribulation—something never taught before 1830. Before 1830, the Church taught only one coming, after the Tribulation! Margaret’s revolutionary ‘revelation’ split the second coming of Christ into two phases—first, a Pre-Trib. Rapture; and then after the Trib, the return of Christ to earth. Her own statement, covering three pages in Norton’s book, clearly contains most of the major tenants found today in Pre-Trib. Dispensationalism—meeting the Lord in the air, secrecy, suddenness, invisibility, immanency, a Pre-Trib. Separation of believers and unbelievers, distinction between the raptured bride and Trib elect, and so on.” (quoted in Huebner, 135)

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- “Mr. MacPherson refers us to a book by an Irvingite, R. Norton, *The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets In the Catholic Apostolic Church* (London: Bosworth and Harrison, 1861), pp. 15-18, and I cite from the copy located at Yale Divinity School. The account is also found in a book by R. Norton published in 1840, *Memoirs of James & George Macdonald of Port Glasgow*. This 1840 account differs from the 1861 in an important way—one tells a story. Here is the 1861 account of Margaret Macdonald’s revelation, after R. Norton had become a member of the Catholic Apostolic Church (Irvingites):
 - See Appendix A in Notes

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- According to the quotation cited above MM was not speaking of an any moment rapture because she believed in intermediate events (see bold sentence above), despite MacPherson's claims to the contrary. Where is the pretribulation rapture? Where is the pre-Rev. 4 rapture? The scheme of Miss MM is that Christians will be in the world when Antichrist is there, including herself (which is what posttribulationists believe).
- In 1973, Dave MacPherson published *The Incredible Rapture Cover-Up*, in which he collated R. Norton's 1861 doctored version of MM's "revelation" with R. Norton's 1840 version found in his *Memoir of James and George Macdonald of Port Glasgow*. Several sentences that R. Norton quoted in 1840 were omitted in his 1861 book. Those key sentences read as follows:
 - See Appendix A in Notes

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- Why did R. Norton omit these sentences from his 1861 book? Could it be because they contradicted his claim that MM was the origin of the Pretribulation rapture?
- “What seems incredible is that in his 1973 book, *The Incredible Cover-Up*, Mr. MacPherson had collated the 1840 and 1861 versions by R. Norton and so he knew about these sentences that were omitted in the 1861 version. To maintain his notions, he had the temerity to state that:
 - Margaret believed that a select group of believers would be raptured from the earth before the days of Antichrist, but also saw other believers enduring the Tribulation.” (quoted in Huebner, 138)
- “Her view is that all members of the body must undergo the fiery trial from Antichrist. He cited these sentences (that R. Norton omitted in his 1861 account) once again in 1983 in his *The Great Rapture Hoax*, p. 127. I would add here that we see in the ‘revelation’ the idea that persecution under Antichrist is meant to make the body of Christ ready for his coming. This is for purification (the idea of purification is a posttribulationism idea also).” (Huebner, 138)

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- It is true that R. Norton visited the Macdonalds in 1830 as an observer, as Macpherson states on page 38 of *The Incredible Cover-up*. The following statements regarding what R. Norton believed in 1839 can be found in his book titled *Neglected and Controverted Scripture Truths*:
 - “The tribulation which this fearful reign of the Antichrist will bring upon the saints, and for which, therefore, we should be preparing, instead of anticipating nothing but a smooth and immediate passage into the latter day glory. . .”
 - “. . . we have also seen that he shall make war with the saints, and prevail against them, for the well-known period of 1260 days. We have next to remark, that at the last judgments and woes of the Apocalypse, a most important event intervenes, viz., the translation of the saints, and their consequent exemption from these woes.” (quoted in Huebner, 138)

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- It is clear from these quotations that R. Norton espoused a historicist-type, pre-conflagration view, or a historicist-type pre-days-of-vengeance view as many others had done in the past. So in 1839, the chroniclers of the Macdonalds, R. Norton, who himself heard MM, propound the same post-antichrist type notions in 1830 just as others had done in the past. In 1840 he did not pretend that MM was the first to give the distinction between two-stages as he claimed in his 1861 book. The fact is that in his 1861 book, R. Norton, then a member of the Catholic Apostolic Church (Irvingite), omitted the sentences that stood in his way, claiming that:
 - “. . . the power of the Holy Ghost rested upon her for several hours, in mingled prophecy and vision. . . for here we first see the distinction between that final stage of the Lord’s coming, when every eye shall see Him, and His prior appearing in glory to them that look for Him.” (quoted in Huebner, 139)

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- Dave MacPherson has followed the false claims of this dishonest Irvingite crediting the pretribulation rapture as having originated with Margaret Macdonald. In a paper dated Jan. 23, 1990, MacPherson touts himself as the “world’s leading authority on the origin of the Pre-Trib rapture theory:
 - “1830—“The Occult Connection”—Darby didn’t originate any rapture view in 1827 or any other year. Pre-Trib leaders know that Prior Rapturism began in 1830. But they’re also aware that both the originator and the first group to adopt it (that is, the Irvingites—followers of Edward Irving) were all heavily influenced by the OCCULT! So leaders today do everything they can to draw attention away from 1830. . . Darby knew that in 1830, Margaret (whom he had visited) had given birth to the Prior Rapture. He also knew that the Irvingites had soon echoed her ideas and given her credit. Too many people knew about this even in 1850. If Darby had dared to claim in 1850 that he’d come to these ideas BEFORE 1830, he would have been the laughingstock of Britain! In effect, the Pre-Trib Darby of 1850 contradicts today’s Pre-Tribs who deviously emphasize 1827. Such history revisionism allows them to detour around 1830 (even though Darby himself pin pointed it!) and thus escape the stigma of the OCCULT! Their claim that Darby was the originator in 1827 is groundless. Neither Darby nor any other early developer made such a claim.” (Macpherson *Hoax*, 7-9)

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- “Here it comes out plainly that the purpose is to stigmatize. . . At any rate, . . . ‘the world’s leading authority on the origin of Pre-Trib rapture theory’ has distorted, and revised, and manipulated history. . . Instead of: 1) apprehending the plain import of her statement, which has affinity to the posttribulational scheme and no real resemblance to the interlocking church truth, pre-Rev. 4 rapture and dispensational truth, and 2) not being alarmed by R. Norton’s omission of certain statements in his 1861 version of MM’s revelation, he has read into her statement what he appears so anxious to find. He has calumniated and slandered JND for about 30 + years now, as well as indulged in *ad hominem* attacks and attributing unsavory motives to those who have not fallen for his manipulations.” (Huebner, 139-140)
- “Mr. Macpherson stands in a line of discredited calumniators of JND, regarding the recovery of the pretribulation rapture, i.e., the pre-Rev. 4 rapture, beginning it seems, in 1855 when the supporter of B. W. Newton (i.e., S.P. Tregelles) in his effort to attack the recovered truth said the doctrine came from (merely) Judaizers, while in 1864 he stepped up the calumny to say it came from a spirit—a great difference.” (Huebner, 140)

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- “From S.P. Tregelles, Mr. Macpherson received that idea but subsequently shifted to MM of Port Glasgow, Scotland; hence his baseless allegation, “So Plymouth Brethren organizer John Darby rejected Margaret’s ‘miraculous gifts’ but accepted her novel ‘two-phase coming.’ It is interesting how some who are hostile to dispensational truth have fallen for this obviously absurd calumny. Consider the following by ‘reconstructionist’ postmillennialist’ Gary North:
 - The students are not told of Dave MacPherson’s discovery that Margaret Macdonald, a girl about twenty years old, went into trances in 1830 and announced the pre-tribulation doctrine. We are still waiting for Professor John Hannah, a competent and talented church historian, to go into print and show from original source documents that MacPherson’s thesis is nothing but a sham. Strangely, he has decided to remain silent. Or not so strangely, as the case may be.” (North, XXXV)
- In order to accept Macpherson’s thesis one would have to conclude the JND as well as all his early ministry companions, including B.W. Newton, who later opposed him were all liars.

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- In point of fact, JND knew and visited the Macdonalds shortly after the outbreak of tongues there. Interested parties should consult Appendix B to read JND's entire account of this visit.
- B.W. Newton, who later became JND's chief opponent offers great insight into what Darby understood and when he understood it when he states the following regarding his visit with the Macdonalds in 1830:
 - “But what decided him when on the spot was when those who were inspirited were expounding prophetic Scriptures such as Isaiah respecting Israel and Jerusalem they explained them as being prophetic of Christian Churches of this dispensation.” (quoted in Huebner, 141)

Concluding Remarks

- The word “rapture” was in use, to designate the catching up of the saints, long before JND was even born and therefore certainly before 1830/1832. Joseph Mede (1586-1638) the father of English historicism wrote:
 - “Therefore, it is not needful that the Resurrection of those which slept in Christ, and the Rapture of those which shall be left alive together with them in the air. . .” (*The Complete Works of Joseph Mede*. 1677, quoted in Huebner, 83)
- Many before the time of JND were trying to reconcile 1 Thessalonians 4 with Revelation 19. Early attempts at reconciliation placed the rapture at some point during the tribulation because these men did not see a difference between Israel and the Church and therefore failed to understand dispensational truth.

Concluding Remarks

- Many before the time of JND were trying to reconcile 1 Thessalonians 4 with Revelation 19. Early attempts at reconciliation placed the rapture at some point during the tribulation because these men did not see a difference between Israel and the Church and therefore failed to understand dispensational truth.
 - See Charts

Two-Stage Pre-conflagration Rapture



Stage One: “Rapture of the Saints to meet the Lord in the Clouds. . . That they may be preserved from the Conflagration of the Earth.”

Stage Two: The Lord Returns with his saints to a New Earth to set up his Kingdom

Saints on earth & Persecuted by the Anti-Christ Tribulation



**2 Peter 3:10
Conflagration
Earth
Destroyed by
Fire**



**New
Earth**



Millennium

Joseph Mede—*The Complete Works of Joseph Mede*, 1677.

Increase Mather—*A Dissertation Concerning the Future Conversion of the Jewish Nation*, 1709.

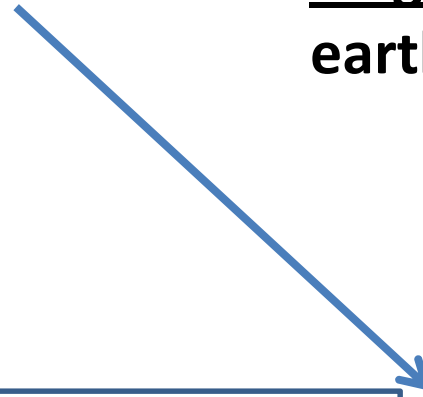
Cotton Mather—*The Threefold Paradise of Cotton Mather, An Edition of Triparadisus*, 1729.

Two Stage Pre-1260 Days Rapture



Stage One: Saints taken to heaven before the 1260 days i.e., Mid-Trib. Rapture

Stage Two: Christ return to earth in judgment to make war on the AC



“... and the living changed at Christ’s ” appearing in the air” (1 Thes. iv, 17); and this will be about three years and a half before the millennium. . .”

**1260 Days/42 Months
“The struggling of Antichrist towards the mastery of the world and his assumption of Godhead will also precede the millennium. . .
Destroyed at Christ’s coming to reign”**



Millennium

Morgan Edwards—Two Academical Exercises on Subject Bearing the Following Titles: Millennium, Last-novelties, 1788.

Lacunza's Two Stage, Post-1260 Days, Pre-45 Days, Pre-conflagration Rapture

Stage One: Saints Raptured after 1260 days of tribulation i.e., Post-Tribulation Rapture. Saints in heaven and return with Christ to a new Earth after 45 days.

Stage Two: The Lord Returns with his saints to a New Earth to set up his Kingdom

Saints on earth & Persecuted by the Anti-Christ Tribulation/1260 days

45 Days



2 Peter 3:10
Conflagration
Earth
Destroyed by
Fire



New
Earth



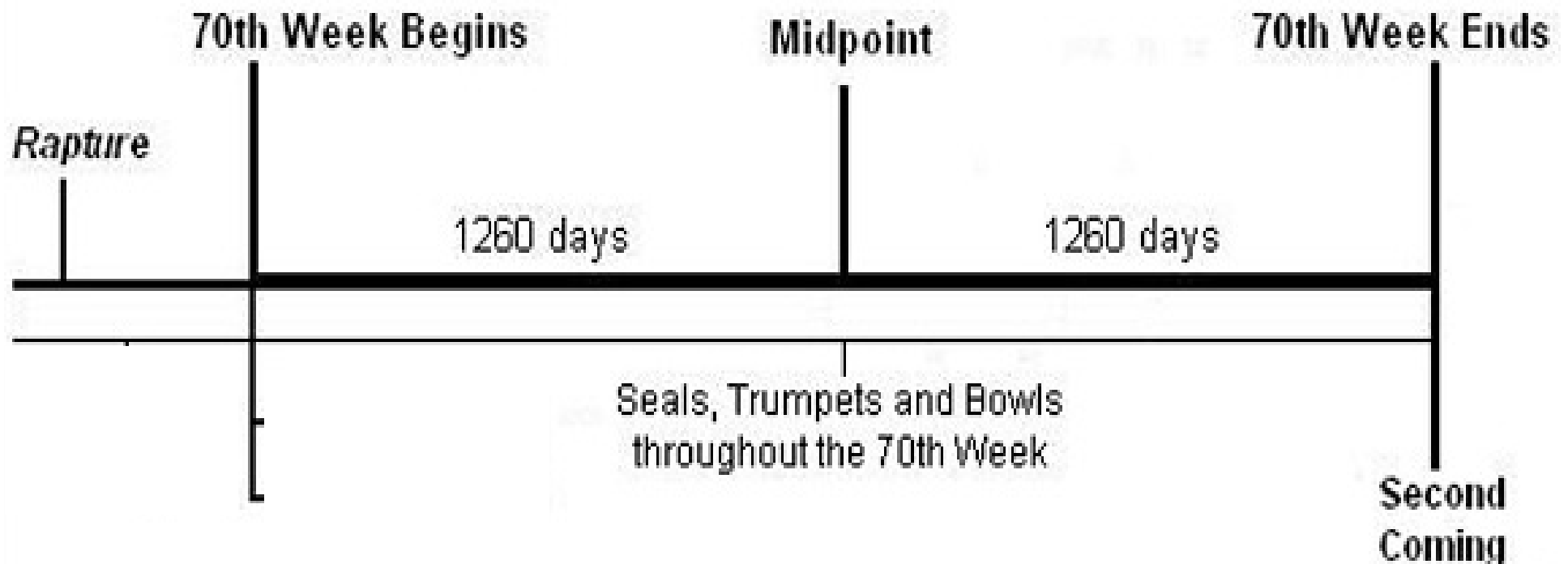
Millennium

Concluding Remarks

- Once JND understood the difference between Israel and the Body of Christ, and the Church's unity with its Head in heaven, the correct placement of 1 Thessalonians 4 before the 70th week of Daniel was natural and easy. JND did not invent this teaching – it was contained within the pages of Scripture for almost 2,000 years. This doctrine experienced resurgence thanks to the ministry of Darby.
- When viewed in this fashion, the pretribulation rapture is the end result of a nearly 200+ years of doctrinal refinement to reconcile 1 Thessalonians 4 and Revelation 19.

Two Stage Pre-Trib. Rapture

The Pre-Tribulation Rapture Timeline



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