

So, what do you believe about the Second Coming?

A letter I received in the mail:

☞. Mr. Townsend,

Someone who goes to your church told me that you would answer any theological question anyone had. I have a few questions for you to answer. Is it true that you believe in a rapture of the church? If so, why don't you teach it at the church? No one remembers you teaching it. If you believe it is true should'nt you teach it. The word rapture isn't even in the Bible.

The Bible says that "judgment must begin at the house of God." Therefore the church will be judged in the end-time along with the rest of the world. In Rev. 12:17 the devil makes war with the remnant who "keep the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ." These can't be Jews because they know Jesus Christ. And this is in the middle of your tribulation. Why do you think you will escape judgment by being raptured? Why do you follow the teachings of Darby? Don't you know that he got his rapture from a woman who had a vision? No one down thru history believed in this doctrine.

No one knows what you believe. Why don't you answer that you believe so all of us will know. Are you a coward? The rapture is heresy and a doctrine of Satan. If you believe it, then you are a heretic.

Sincerely,
A Christian Brother

Here was my response:

August 15, 1998

Dear Brother Christian,

You did not sign your name to your letter, nor did you have a return address on the envelope, so I do not know how to respond to you directly. I would like to respond to you person to person, because I would like to ask you what you believe in the areas of your questions.

My first inclination was to disregard your letter. I have no problem answering Biblical questions from those who really want to know what I believe the Bible teaches. If you will read the four Gospels, you will find out that our Lord Jesus Christ always answered the questions of those of His disciples who were seriously wanting an answer. However, He did not answer His critics. He usually answered their questions with questions of His own. He did this so that they could not trap Him and use His words against Him. At first I thought that you would use my answers against me. It is true that "Silence may be misunderstood, but it is never misquoted."

However, I think your needs are different than a normal critic, and I am going to handle this differently than someone who would try to trip up another Christian. I read deeper messages and issues in your letter than just the surface issue which you have broached. I will let you know that I will answer your questions so that you will not be able to say that I have no Biblical foundations for my beliefs. You may believe I am wrong in my foundations, but you will not be able to say I do not use the Bible to get my beliefs. I will take your questions one at a time, try to answer them as sincerely as I can, and then I will endeavor to explain why even though you think you may be correct in

your theology, you are wrong in your Christianity, i.e., your ways of handling differences.

Question 1: Is it true that you believe in a rapture of the church?

Answer: No. I do believe, however, that there will be a catching away of the Christians at the return of Christ. You may think that is the same thing, but let me point out to you a flaw in your ecclesiology. I believe there is no such Biblical thing as a catholic (universal) church. The Romanists believe in a universal visible church. The Reformationists believe in a universal invisible church, which supposedly is the mystical body of Christ. I do not believe you could support either of these with the Bible. In the Bible the word “church” means a called-out assembly. In Acts 19:32-41, the word “assembly” was used of those who were against Paul in Ephesus. This word “assembly” is the same word translated “church” in the New Testament. To try to use your meaning and apply it to Acts 19 would be to say that this ungodly assembly was a universal church.

Second, the word “churches” is used thirty-seven times in Scripture. It would be a stretch of the imagination to think that this word represents the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, the African-Methodist Episcopal Church, the Mormon Church, the Pentecostal Church, etc., all put together. Churches simply were that: local bodies of believers, called together to worship God.

I would think that the phrase “the whole church” would be enough to convince a logical Christian of what the whole church is. Three times in Scripture the phrase “the whole church” is used. In Acts 15:22, the “whole church” refers to the church at Jerusalem sending men to other churches. In Romans 16:23, the “whole church” saluted the church at Rome. This is only logical if the whole church was the church where Paul was writing from. Especially since he speaks of the “church...at Cenchrea” in verse one, “all the churches of the Gentiles” in verse four, the “church that is in their house” in verse five, and the “churches of Christ salute you” in verse sixteen. In 1 Corinthians 14:23, the reference is to the “whole church be come together in one place.” It would be increasingly difficult to believe this refers to the universal body of Christ, specifically since Paul four verses before this one (14:19) states that he would rather “in the church speak five words with my understanding,” and five verses afterward (14:27) Paul is talking about keeping “silence in the church.” Both of those would be difficult to do in a universal church. They are very practical admonitions for a local church, or the body of Christ in a locality.

To understand the word “church” means “assembly” would straighten out much of your theology. These would no longer be a Methodist Assembly (not possible, unless it is local), a Presbyterian Assembly (same), etc., etc.

Now, lest you think I have side-stepped the question, let me explain. I believe in a rapture, if rapture means “caught up.” There are several “rapture” incidents in the Scriptures. In Genesis 5:24, the Bible says that Enoch “walked with God, and was not, for God took him.” The Hebrew word for “took” is “laaqach,” which means to take, to get, to fetch, to lay hold of, to seize, to receive, to acquire, to snatch, to take away. However you would like to envision this verse, the reality of it is that God transported him from the earth to heaven. Lest you think that God taking him means that he died, you need to consider Hebrews 11:5, which says: “By faith Enoch was translated that he

should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” The word for “translated” (metetethee) means to carry over to another place. I do not mean to make applications here, but Enoch was “translated” before the judgment of God was poured out on this world (with the flood). Am I to assume that he “escaped” judgment? Certainly you must take the position that Enoch should have been judged with this world. I would ask you: Is this any more of an “escape” than Noah had, who went through the flood unscathed? Is this any less of an “escape” than Methuselah had, who died the day the flood began? Whether by death, protection, or translation, the men who loved God escaped God’s judgment.

The next incident which I would like to place before you is that of Elijah. We have the prophet going to heaven in 2 Kings 2:11. In verse 10, Elijah tells Elisha: “And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken up from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.” It just so happens that the words “taken from” is that Hebrew word “laaqach.” In verse eleven, the Bible explains how this happens. “And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” The Hebrew word for “went up” is “waya’al,” which means to go up, to ascend, to climb. It is the same word translated “ascending” in Genesis 28:12 (“And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”)

Let me sidetrack for a moment and address the false idea that some sort of physical judgment here on earth which causes physical pain or death is more severe than the spiritual punishment and loss of rewards when we stand before Christ our Lord. Somehow, getting out of physical pain down here and receiving spiritual pain at the Judgment Seat of Christ is “escaping???”

Another rapture-like episode occurred in Acts, chapter one, when Jesus was taken up into heaven. Verse nine states: “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.” The Greek word for “taken up” is “epeerthee,” and means to lift up, raise up, raise on high. Notice that Jesus did not just fly away. Someone else took Him. God the Father took Him up. Verse ten states: “And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel.” The phrase “he went up” is the Greek word “poreuomenou,” which means to lead over, to carry over, to transfer. Verse eleven continues the fact with: “Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” The Greek word for “taken up” here is the word “analeemftheis,” which means to take up, to raise. In this one section we have three different words which give the same description of the same event.

Now, you are suggesting to me that I not use the word “rapture” to describe when someone is caught up by God into heaven, because rapture is not a word found in Scripture. I would point out to you that I used the word in your letter first. Was it because you and I both knew what the connotation of the word was? In your letter, you used the word “theological.” That word is not in Scripture. You might be interested to know that the word “coward” is not in the Bible either.

Another rapture-like event even happened in Revelation, chapter four, and verse one. “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.” The word for “come up” is “anaba,” which means ascend, to go up, to rise, to mount, to be borne up, to spring up. I submit that John was caught up into heaven. You may come back that John was caught up in the spirit and not in the body. According to Scripture, it is very difficult to understand the difference between being caught up in the body or out of the body. And, discounting the others I have mentioned being a bodily or physical catching away, Paul explained that he knew a man that was “caught up” into heaven. His explanation goes like this: 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 – “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” This is an interesting section which Paul tells of a man (I believe he was speaking of himself) who was “caught up to the third heaven.” Would this qualify as a rapture-like episode? Paul couldn’t tell if he was “caught up” in the body or out of the body.

The next rapture occurs in Revelation, chapter eleven, and verses eleven to twelve: “And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.” These are derivatives to the word in chapter four, verse one. “Come up (anabate)...ascended (anabeesan).” Notice the similarity between this catching away and the Lord’s in Acts, chapter one.

I am not done yet. Do you believe the Bible teaches any raptures? How about Revelation, chapter twelve, and verse five, which says: “And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up into God, and to his throne.” We may differ as to who the woman is – I believe it is physical Israel – but we must agree on who the “man child” is. It is the Lord Jesus who came out of Israel. He is going to “rule all nations with a rod of iron. (Revelation 19:15). This verse says that the man child was “caught up unto god, and to his throne.” The word for “caught up” is the Greek word “harpazo,” which means catch (up, away), pluck, pull, take by force. I know I already discussed Jesus being “caught up,” but I’ll need the Greek word “harpazo” next, so I thought this would introduce it nicely.

This phrase “caught up” in Revelation 12:5 and also in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 is the same phrase that is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” If I am consistent in my logic – understand that the word “theological” has the word “logical” in it – someone in this verse is “caught up” (harpazo) just like Christ was “caught up” and Paul was “caught up” in Corinthians. Are these possibly the same ones as those “which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord” in verse fifteen? It seems to me that the Christians who are alive and remain will be “caught up” with those who have died in Christ, to meet the Lord in the air.

Question 2: If so, why don’t you teach it at the church?

Answer: I taught “Eighteen Reasons Why I Believe We are in the Last Days” in the Adult class. Also, I taught on the characteristics of the Antichrist. I preached on the “Speedily Return of Christ” in Revelation, chapter one. I preached a message entitled “The Antichrist Shall Come” from 1 John 2:18. I preached on the “Judgment Seat of Christ” where every Christian will be judged. However, I am not a preacher who rides hobby-horses. I believe in the King James Bible being God’s Word, but I don’t preach that subject every week, or once a month. I believe the local church should be unincorporated, but I spend maybe an hour every few years expounding on it. I am focused upon helping create a generation of believers who trust in God supremely, who understand God’s purpose for their lives, and live in a daily relationship with Him. I am not like those so-called preachers who preach only one type of message and see the Antichrist in every license plate or Social Security number. I am not looking for the Antichrist. I am looking for Christ.

Question 3: “No one remembers you teaching it. If you believe it is true should’nt (sic) you teach it. The word rapture isn’t even in the Bible.”

Answer: I do not doubt your first statement. If you were to ask most Christians who attend church what their preacher preached about last Sunday, they could not tell you. Just because I believe something is true does not mean that God will lead me to preach or teach it. I do try to meet the needs of the people to whom I preach. Anyone who tries to tell you he knows beyond a shadow of a doubt what is going to happen in the end times is not a person whom I would trust. Even Jesus said that: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” (Matthew 24:36) Really, if you want sincere Christianity, you would realize that if a Christian who believes in the “church” going “through the Tribulation” found out that I was right, and he was “raptured” out, would not be mad at me one bit. Nor, by the way, would I look over at him and say, “I told you so.”

You say, “The word rapture is not in the Bible.” For your information, the word “Bible” is not in the Bible. You used the word “Bible” two times in your letter.

I am skipping to your next question. The verses you provide for proof of your theology are not known for their ease of interpretation. I respectfully submit that your verse “Judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17) bolsters my belief that the Judgment Seat of Christ, where all Christians will be judged for what they did here on earth, “whether it be good or evil,” will take place before this world is judged by God in the Great Tribulation (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10). I would differ as to your belief that a Jew cannot know Jesus Christ. If the Disciples were not Jews, what were they? If the 144,000 are literal Jews out of the twelve tribes, then they most certainly can know the “testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Question 4: “Why do you think you will escape judgment by being raptured?”

Answer: First, I do not think I will escape judgment. I am being judged by God every day. 1 Corinthians 4:4 states: “For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.” I am not, however, under the condemnation of God (Romans 8:1 – “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”). I am not under the “wrath of God” (1 Thessalonians 1:10 – “And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he

raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.” I Thessalonians 5:9 – “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.). Christians have been persecuted from day one until the present. This persecution has been from man, and not God. I may be persecuted by this world. I may even suffer for what I believe, but it will not be at the hand of God. When I stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, I will “suffer” loss, but this is far different from suffering judgment with the world and the ungodly.

As far as “escaping” judgment, maybe you can have a good talk with Enoch when you get to heaven about his “escape.” Speak to Joseph and Mary about their “escape” to Egypt. Consider those who “escaped the edge of the sword” in Hebrews eleven. Sometimes, God’s will is escape. Sometimes, it is being a witness for Him as we burn at the stake at the hands of men. Whatever it is for me, I leave that to God. Never have I said that this generation will be the one raptured. I do not know that. I do know that these are rewards for those who love His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8 – “Henceforth there is laid u for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.” 1 John 3:2 – “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: bet we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”).

Question 5: “Do you follow the teachings of Darby? Don’t you know that he got his rapture from a woman who had a vision? No one down thru (sic) history believed in this doctrine.”

Answer: I do not believe I follow the teachings of Darby, albeit I have never read anything Darby ever wrote. I believe I follow the teachings of Scripture. However, the following understand about your belief of a tie between Darby and a “woman who had a vision” should help your view on the subject.

Brethren writer, Roy A. Huebner claims and *documents* his belief that J.N. Darby first began to believe in the pre-tribulation rapture and develop his dispensational thinking while convalescing from a riding accident during December 1826 and January 1827. (R.A. Huebner, *Precious Truths Revived and Defended Through J.N. Darby*, Vol. 1, Morganville, N.J., Present Truth Publishers, 1991) If this is true, then all of the origin-of-the-rapture-conspiracy-theories fall to the ground in a heap of speculative rubble. Darby would have at least a three-year jump on any who would have supposedly influenced his thought, making it impossible for all the “influence” theories to have any credibility.

Huebner provides clarification and evidence that Darby was not influenced by a fifteen-year-old girl (Margaret Macdonald), Lacunza, Edward Irving, or the Irvingites. These are all said by the detractors of Darby and the pre-tribulation rapture to be bridges which led to Darby’s thought. Instead, he demonstrates that Darby’s understanding of the pre-tribulation rapture was the product of the development of his personal interactive thought with the text of Scripture as he, his friends, and dispensationalists have long contended.

Darby’s pre-tribulation and dispensational thoughts, says Huebner, were developed from the following factors: 1) “he saw from Isaiah 32 that there was a different dispensation coming ... that Israel and the Church were distinct” 2) “During his convalescence JND learned that he **ought daily to expect his Lord’s return.**” 3) “In 1827 JND understood the fall of the church... ‘the ruin of the Church’” 4) Darby also

was beginning to see a gap of time between the rapture and the second coming by 1827. 5) Darby, himself, said in 1857 that he first started understanding things relating to the pre-tribulation Rapture “thirty years ago.” “With that fixed point of reference, January 31, 1827,” declares Huebner, we can see that Darby “had already understood those truths upon which the pre-tribulation rapture hinges.”

As far as “no one down through history” believing in a doctrine of a rapture before the Tribulation, may I suggest that you study the writings of Morgan Edwards, a Baptist pastor, who started preaching in 1745?

During his student days at Bristol Baptist Seminary in England (1742-1744), Morgan Edwards wrote an essay for eschatology class on his views of Bible prophecy. This essay was later published in Philadelphia (1788) under the following title: “Two Academical Exercises on Subjects Bearing the Following titles; Millennium, Last-Novelties.” This is actually one of the shorter titles for a book published in his day. The term in the title, “Last-Novelties” refers to the new conditions of the future new heavens and new earth. Upon reading the 56 page work myself in the Library of Congress Rare Book Room, it is clear that Edwards published it unchanged from his student days. Thus, it represents a view developed by the early 1740’s.

Morgan Edwards taught some form of pre-tribulationism as can be gleaned from the following statement in his book”

“II. The distance between the first and second resurrection will be somewhat more than a thousand years. I say, somewhat more--, because the dead saints will be raised, and the living changed at Christ’s ‘appearing in the air’ (1 Thessalonians iv.17), and this will be about three years and a half before the millennium, as we shall see hereafter: but will he and they abide in the air all that time? No: they will ascend to paradise, or to some one of those many ‘mansions in the father’s house’ (John xiv.2), and so disappear during the foresaid period of time. The design of this retreat and disappearing will be to judge the risen and changed saints; for ‘now the time is come that judgment must begin’ and that will be ‘at the house of God’ (1 Pet. Iv.17)...” (The spelling of all Edward’s quotes have been modernized.)

What has Edwards said? Note the following:

He believes that at least 1,003.5 years will transpire between resurrections.

He associates the first resurrection with the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, occurring at least 3.5 years before the second coming of Christ at the start of the millennium.

He associates the meeting of believers with Christ in the air and returning to the Father’s house with John 14:2, as do modern pre-tribulationists.

He sees believers disappearing during the time of the tribulation, which he goes on to talk about in the rest of the section from which the rapture statement is taken.

He, like modern pre-tribulationists, links the time in heaven, during the tribulation, with the Judgment (“bema”) Seat of Christ.

The only difference, at least as far as the above statements go, between current pre-tribulationism and Edwards, is the time interval of 3.5 years instead of seven. In fact, anti-pre-tribulationist John Bray wonders, “It would be interesting to know what, in those early years at the Academy, led Edwards to his concept of a pre-tribulation rapture. One could almost think he had been studying at one of our modern dispensational-entrenched schools, the teaching is so similar to that which is being taught today. (John Bray,

Morgan Edwards and the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Teaching (1778) (Lakeland, FL: John L. Bray Ministries, 1995)

It would be interesting to know what he studied at Bristol, but Edwards says in the introduction that his views are not those normally held in his day and that he was approaching eschatology with a literal interpretation of Scripture. Such an approach is said by modern pre-tribulationists to be the primary determinative factor leading to pre-tribulationism.

And I restate what you said: “No one down thru (sic) history believed this doctrine.”
Answer: Where do you suppose the following message was preached? By whom? And when?

“All the saints and elect of God are gathered together before the tribulation, which is to come, and are taken to the Lord, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins.”

Before I reveal to you who it was who preached this, it may be good to tell you about the title and essence of this sermon. The sermon is built around the three themes of the title “On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World” and proceeds chronologically. The fact that this statement occurs in section two, while the antichrist and tribulation are developed throughout the middle sections, followed by Christ’s Second Coming to the earth in the final section supports a pre-tribulation sequence. Thus, phase one is the rapture statement from section two; the interval of 3 ½ years, forty-two months, and 1,260 days, said to be the tribulation in sections seven and eight; the second phase of Christ’s return is noted in section ten and said to take place “when three and a half years have been completed.”

The message was given and written by Ephraem of Nisibis (306-373 A.D.), considered to be the greatest figure in the history of the Syrian church (Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, by Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985) the late Alexander found the sermon in C. P. Caspari, ed. *Briefe, Abhandlungen und Predigien aus den zwei letzten Jahrhunderten des kirchlichen Altertums und dem Anfang des Mittelalters*, (Christiania, 1890). This German work also contains Caspari’s commentary on the sermon on pages 428-472.)

Lest you think that this is a hoax from the 1800’s, the sermon consists of just under 1500 words, divided into ten sections, and has been preserved in four Latin manuscripts. Three of these date from the eighth century and ascribe the sermon to Ephraem. A fourth manuscript from the ninth century, claims not Ephraem, but Isidore of Seville (died 636) as author. Perhaps Isidore preached this message as well.

I trust this answers your question that no one down through history believed this doctrine.

Question 6: No one knows what you believe. Why don’t you answer what you believe so all of us will know. Are you a coward?

Answer: You now know a fraction of what I believe. You probably know enough to criticize me more than what you have already. However, when you start criticizing what I have written here, then I will know who you are and can invite you to sit down with me and ask any questions you may have concerning my Biblical beliefs. Then I may have the opportunity of asking you what you base your beliefs on. As far as the “all of us” you mention, it would be curious to me to know who all you represent. Any one of the “all of

us” you mention have the same opportunity to sit down with me and discuss our biblical understanding together. I do not mind. It is refreshing to me to be able to talk with a Christian and find out what the Lord has revealed to them in the Scriptures. As far as being a “coward,” I do not know how to answer you. I will let others judge me for what they see. Since it is in the form of a question, I do not accuse you of calling me a coward. Simply asking a question is not an accusation.

Question 7: The rapture is heresy and a doctrine of Satan. If you believe it, then you are a heretic.

Answer: Which rapture is heresy? Enoch? Elijah? Christ? Paul? John? The Two Witnesses in Revelation eleven? Or are you just speaking about the Christians who are alive when Christ comes back, which He gathers to Himself in the air?

When Enoch escaped the judgment of the flood, was that considered heretical by Noah, who also escaped judgment by floating on top of the flood? Was it Satanic for Christ to be caught up into heaven? I do not believe it was. Besides, what difference does it make if you are here during the Great Tribulation and being protected by God, and me being in the clouds with Christ being protected (but judged) by God? Are we not both protected by God? Do not worry, the false Church will be here to be judged by God when He pours out all His wrath. Is that not what you really are concerned with, that all those lazy, no good, lousy, professing believers who have never been persecuted will finally get what is coming to them by God? Are you so bitter that you could not stand to have any of them get off “scot-free?” I suppose you would say, “Those wicked Christians who do not believe like me deserve to be judged by rocks falling, and plagues, and locusts, etc.”

Whether something is heretical is in the eyes of the beholder. There are others who believe that the doctrine of the rapture of living believers is heretical. Some are: The Catholic Church, the Mormons, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Church of Satan, and many, many more, including some Christian brethren who are genuinely saved and will be in heaven. Anything that you do not believe is heresy to your beliefs. Paul was accused of heresy in Acts 24, verses 14-16. Heresy is really not a bad word.

About it being a “doctrine of Satan” as you suggest, I disagree with your analogy. Your study must have come at the hands of another. Recently, pre-wrath rapture advocate Marvin Rosenthal wrote that the pre-tribulation rapture was of Satanic origin and unheard of before 1830. “To thwart the Lord’s warning to His children, in 1830,” proclaims Rosenthal, “Satan, the ‘father of lies,’ gave to a fifteen-year-old girl named Margaret McDonald a lengthy vision.” (Marvin J. Rosenthal, “Is the Church in Matthew Chapter 24?” Zion’s Press, 1994. Is this where you got your information? Have you ever read the vision of Margaret McDonald? You really have to stretch her vision to get it to sound like the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine, especially since I have demonstrated that Darby believed it is 1827, Edwards in 1742, and Syrian preacher Ephraem of Nisibis in 373 A.D.

To call something which disagrees with your theology Satanic, you probably have few friends. Someone can be “wrong” in their theology, but do you equate this with being “Satanic?” If I am “wrong,” please show me what the Bible says. If you continue on, you would have to say the following things about me and what I preach. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their

conscience seared with a hot iron, Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which god hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.” (1 Timothy 4:1-3)

If I preach a doctrine which Satan has espoused, you would have to categorize me as departing “from the faith,” “giving heed to seducing spirits,” “speaking lies in hypocrisy,” “having” my “conscience seared,” “forbidding to marry,” and “commanding” others to “abstain from meats,” Now, am I doing any of those things?

I believe your problem is that you think you know everything. I know I do not know everything, and I am constantly learning all the time. I know some dear Christians who hold some of your views whom I respect because of their Christian behavior and way of life. They would never try to coerce or shame someone to believe like they do. They would simply pray and ask the Holy Spirit to teach them what God wants them to know from the Bible. I respect that. I believe they respect me. If they think I am wrong, they give me the liberty to receive truth from the Holy Spirit also. I am sure we will all have our eyes opened when all is said and done with this life, and we realize the things we missed in Scripture. Wesley may see that he missed eternal security. Calvin may see that he missed unlimited atonement. Knox may see that he was too severe on instruments. Luther may see that he should not have killed Anabaptists. And Townsend may see that he missed understanding the rapture. And you may see that you missed understanding brotherly love, kindness, and compassion.

In that day the Lord will come to me and say something like, “You can stop trying to figure everything out now, just come and enjoy heaven and Me. Here’s your mansion.”

“Wow, Lord, it’s bigger than I expected!”

“Well, with the finite mind you had, I can understand that.”

Are you going to complain to Him at that time that I was wrong or you were right? I do not think so.

I trust this letter has answered some of your questions. You may say that my answers just raised more questions, but I tried to do my best. I will leave that up to those who read my response to determine if I dodged any questions or answered then honestly. I believe bitterness prompted your letter; perhaps bitterness toward a former pastor or a group of Christians. I hope you can get this right. According to Hebrews 12:15, bitterness will trouble you and will defile many others.