A vibrant sunset scene with a bright sun low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over a layer of white clouds. The sun's rays are visible, creating a starburst effect. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a darker, blueish-purple at the top.

The
HARVEST
HANDBOOK™
OF BIBLE
PROPHECY

*A Comprehensive Survey
from the World's Foremost Experts*

ED HINDSON
MARK HITCHCOCK
TIM LAHAYE
GENERAL EDITORS

The
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PROPHECY**

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Introduction

Bible prophecy reveals God's plan for the future in various passages throughout the Scriptures. The study of eschatology ("last things") especially focuses on the prophecies of future events that are yet to be fulfilled. As the apostle Peter said, "Holy men of God [the prophets] spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21 NKJV , insert added for clarification). The accuracy of their inspired writings has captured the minds and hearts of believers throughout the centuries. Their prophecies affirm the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. They give us guidance for the present and hope for the future.

This edition of *The Harvest Handbook of Bible Prophecy* expands on the earlier edition of *The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy* co-edited by Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson, originally published in 2004. This new handbook includes many of the original articles and contributors (some of whom are now with the Lord). The current volume also includes several new articles, new contributors, and revised and expanded versions of several original articles.

The legitimate study of Bible prophecy seeks to let Scripture speak for itself. Thus, this volume avoids the kind of reckless speculation that all too often is found in some prophetic circles. Rather, we have asked each contributor to focus on the basic elements of their topic as it is expressed in the pages of the Bible itself. Scripture's timeless truths are as valid today as when they were first written. They look down the corridor of time into the

distant future with clear and precise accuracy. Thus, they give us a complete picture of our amazing future destiny.

We compiled a team of prophecy experts who have written on the most important subjects of prophetic study. They may differ slightly on minor points of discussion, but they are all in agreement with the major issues of biblical eschatology, particularly in terms of holding to the pretribulational, premillennial view of the end times.

The topics covered in this handbook have been arranged alphabetically for ease of study, page numbers have been included for ease of reference, and the articles have been written to appeal to both those who are new to prophecy and those who are experienced students of the subject. We hope this new volume will inspire you to search the Scriptures and become, as the apostle Paul admonished, "Approved to God...rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV).

Our sincere prayer is that these articles will inform your mind, bless your heart, and stir your soul with the blessed hope of Jesus' coming. As our Lord Himself instructed us, we are continually watching for His imminent return to call us home to be with Him. In the meantime, we are challenged and admonished to keep watching, be ready, and continue serving Him until He comes (Matthew 24:42-46).

Ed Hindson
Mark Hitchcock

presents them as two separate groups (see Hitchcock and Ice, *The Truth Behind Left Behind*, 77). In verse 9, we read about a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people, and language. In verse 14, this multitude of people wearing white robes is identified as those who will come to salvation in Christ during the Tribulation period. Because John uses four terms (nations, tribes, peoples, and languages) to demonstrate the universality of this multitude, there is little doubt that these verses are describing a future harvest of souls rather than a regional revival that has already transpired in world history.

Because this multitude in Revelation 7:9-17 is mentioned immediately after the 144,000 in Revelation 7:1-8, it becomes apparent that the evangelistic efforts of the 144,000 will serve as the catalyst that brings the vast multitude to faith in Christ. It is likely that they are the very preachers alluded to by Jesus Christ in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25) when He predicted, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). That these Hebrews are the vessels God will use to reach the world with the gospel would fit God's pattern and plan, because His original intention for the nation of Israel (Isaiah 43:1,15) was that the people be a source of spiritual light to the surrounding nations (Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). Thus, the world evangelization that remains to be done after the church is raptured will be completed by these 144,000 evangelists.

144,000 Apostle Pauls

When the apostle Paul, who was a Hebrew and Pharisee (Philippians 3:3-6), received Christ as Savior and Lord, the Holy Spirit revealed to him (Galatians 1:16-18) that all the Hebrew Bible, otherwise known as the Old Testament, pointed to Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah (Luke 24:27,44; Acts 17:2-3). Consequently, Paul realized that he had

been in spiritual darkness for his entire life (Romans 11:7-10,25; 2 Corinthians 3:14-16). This new insight created within Paul a zeal to evangelize and share Christ with others. Paul then spread the message of Christianity throughout the known world and became the greatest missionary of all time.

Similarly, at some future point, 144,000 Hebrews will come to the same conclusion. They will realize by God's Spirit that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah and that they had spent their lives in spiritual darkness by rejecting Him. This stunning realization will give them the same passion that Paul exhibited when he reached the world for Christ. To best understand the evangelistic zeal of the 144,000, imagine the evangelistic fervor of the apostle Paul multiplied in 144,000 people.

First Fruits

Revelation 14:4 describes the 144,000 as "first fruits to God." In the Old Testament, the first fruits of various crops were collected first and offered as a sacrifice to the Lord before the general harvest was collected (Leviticus 23:9-14; Proverbs 3:9). Similarly, during the Tribulation, the 144,000 will be converted to Christ first. Then God will use them to evangelize the rest of Israel (Zechariah 12:10; 13:8-9; Matthew 23:38-39; 24:31; Romans 11:25-27) as well as Gentiles worldwide (Revelation 7:9-17).

Single Males

Because Revelation 14:4 says the 144,000 will not have been "defiled with women," we know they will all be virgin, unmarried males. Although marriage is God's will for most believers (Genesis 2:18; 1 Corinthians 7:9), Paul also explains that in some circumstances it is easier to devote one's time and resources to serving the Lord as a single person than as a married person (1 Corinthians 7:7,32-34). That's because the single person remains unencumbered by marriage and family responsibilities. We are told that the 144,000 will be persecuted and perhaps even martyred

during the Tribulation. Because such dire circumstances are obviously not optimal for a marriage relationship, God will providentially allow these men to remain single.

In addition to the practicality of their singleness, their Jewishness will also serve a purpose. As Jews, they will likely have already been steeped in a deep study of the Hebrew Bible prior to their conversion. Thus, other than understanding how the Hebrew Bible points to Christ, they will be exempt from the vast investment that is necessary to more thoroughly learn Scripture. Such an investment of time prior to actual ministry is typically required of Gentile converts who come to Christ from pagan traditions devoid of a solid scriptural foundation. But the Hebrew background of the 144,000 will enable their rapid transition into worldwide ministry, which seems to be the prophetic pattern that is revealed in Revelation 7 (see Fruchtenbaum, *Footsteps of the Messiah*), 178-79.

They Follow the Lamb

The 144,000 will be wholly consecrated to God. Revelation 14:4 says that they will follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Also, they will live holy lives. Revelation 14:5 states, "No lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless." In fact, so loyal are they to Jesus Christ that they apparently will follow Him into martyrdom.

Some people contend that Mount Zion, as mentioned in Revelation 14:1, is earthly, indicating that the 144,000 will safely arrive in the millennial kingdom having been supernaturally spared via their protective mark (Revelation 7:1-3). However, others contend that Mount Zion is heavenly, indicating that the 144,000 will be removed from earth to heaven through martyrdom. The latter seems more likely given the fact that the scene also includes the four living creatures and the elders (Revelation 14:3) that, elsewhere in Revelation, are always referred to as heavenly entities (5:6,8,11,14; 7:11; 19:4). In addition, the scene also includes the throne of God (14:3), which is also portrayed as being

in heaven (4:2-3; 5:1,7; 19:4). Furthermore, the Lamb is depicted as standing (14:1), which also transpires in heaven (5:6) (see Tony Garland, *A Testimony of Jesus Christ*, 542-43).

Whichever view one holds, it remains apparent that the 144,000 will have already fulfilled their purpose of blanketing the world with the gospel prior to Christ's return to earth and the establishment of His kingdom.

—ANDY WOODS

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One Thousand Years

Following the second coming of Christ, Satan will be captured and bound with a great chain (Revelation 20:1-2). He will then be incarcerated in the abyss, which will be shut and sealed (20:3), and thus Satan will not deceive the nations for 1000 years. Meanwhile, the Tribulation martyrs will be resurrected to reign with Christ (20:4-6). When the 1000 years end, Satan will be released for a short time to once again deceive the nations (20:3,7-8).

Some believe that the 1000 years are already occurring figuratively and that Satan

is already bound by the cross of Christ and the church. However, the New Testament never states that Satan has already been bound. Nor has Satan been incapacitated on earth as Revelation 20:1-2 describes. He still entices men to lie (Acts 5:3), he still blinds the minds of unbelievers to the glorious gospel of Christ, and he is called the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan currently disguises himself as an angel of light to deceive the church (2 Corinthians 11:2-3, 13-15). The devil hinders ministers of God (2 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:18) and roams about the earth to devour its population (1 Peter 5:8). He has unbelievers under his dominion (Acts 26:18), he tempts believers (1 Corinthians 7:5), and he seeks to deceive them as he battles against them (Ephesians 6:11-12). He is at work in unbelievers to influence them to live as they do (Ephesians 2:2). He deceives and traps unbelievers and holds them captive to do his will (2 Timothy 2:26) and remain in his power (1 John 5:19).

Satan cannot be bound and so active at the same time. Clearly Revelation 20 looks forward to a future time when Satan will be bound.

Numbers and Time

The essential question is this: Does *chilia ete* (1000 years) in Revelation 20 really mean a literal 1000 years? A basic rule of hermeneutics states that numbers should be accepted at face value—that is, as conveying a mathematical quantity—unless the context includes substantial evidence to warrant otherwise. This rule holds true throughout the Bible, including the book of Revelation. A survey of numbers in Revelation supports this. For instance, the seven churches and seven angels in Revelation 1 refer to seven literal churches and their messengers. Twelve tribes and 12 apostles are actual, historical numbers (21:12, 14). Ten lamps (2:10), five months (9:5), one-third of mankind (9:15), two witnesses (11:2), 42 months (11:2), 1260

days (11:3), 12 stars (12:1), ten horns (13:1), 1600 stadia (14:20), three demons (16:13), and five fallen kings (17:9-10) all use numbers in their normal sense. Out of the scores of numbers in Revelation, only two (seven spirits in 1:4 and 666 in 13:18) are conclusively used in a symbolic fashion.

Numbers are generally to be taken at face value in Revelation, and this is more specially true with numbers referring to time. Revelation 4–20 includes at least 25 references to measurements of time. Only two of these should be understood figuratively. The “day of His wrath” (6:17 ΝΚΙΥ) would likely exceed 24 hours, and “the hour of His judgment” (14:7) seemingly extends beyond 60 minutes. However, nothing in the phrase “one thousand years” suggests a symbolic interpretation.

Never in the Bible is “year” used with a numerical adjective when it does not refer to the actual period of time that it mathematically represents. Also, the number 1000 is not used elsewhere in the Bible with a symbolic sense. One thousand and its varied combinations are used frequently in both Testaments. No one questions the literal interpretation of 5000 believers (Acts 4:4), 23,000 men killed (1 Corinthians 10:8), or 7000 killed (Revelation 11:13). Likewise, we find no exegetical reason to question the normalcy of 1000 years in Revelation 20.

The Testimony of History

From the earliest post-apostolic era, the church understood the millennium of Revelation 20 as a literal 1000 years. Papias, Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian all gave evidence of this fact in their writings. The church taught nothing else until the fourth century. When some theologians distorted biblical teaching about the millennium and described it as a time for the enjoyment of man rather than for the glory of God, other teachers attempted to correct this error by proposing a more spiritual interpretation of the 1000 years.

In the fifth century, Augustine popularized this reaction, which reasoned that the church inherited the blessings promised to Israel and that those blessings are spiritual, not earthly. He taught that Revelation 20 referred to this time. However, even Augustine, called by many the father of amillennialism, understood from Revelation 20 that this period would last 1000 literal years. To not hold to a literal interpretation is to do injustice to the text.

An unmistakable bridge links the Old Testament promises of a restored earthly kingdom of Israel with the distinctive statements of Revelation 20. It is the rule and reign of Jesus Christ on the throne of David in the city of God (see 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 2:1-12; Isaiah 2:2-4; 9:7; Jeremiah 33:14-18; Ezekiel 34:23-24; Daniel 2:44-45; Hosea 3:5; Joel 3:9-21; Zephaniah 3:14-20; Zechariah 14:1-11; Revelation 20:4,6).

Textual Chronological Clues

Amillennialists and postmillennialists normally conclude that the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, the destruction of this world, and the rise of the new heavens and the new earth will all occur at the time of the second coming. They leave no room for a literal 1000 years before or after the second coming (see Kuyper, p. 272). Furthermore, they allege, “The text only reveals the order in which John *saw* the visions, not necessarily the order in which the events were to take place” (Mathison, p. 131).

Both of these assumptions rest on faulty hermeneutics. The sequence of events in Revelation will also be the sequence of their prophetic, historical fulfillment. Walvoord says that this is “based on the natural sequence of events in chapter 20 following chapter 19, viewing them as sequential and as stemming from the second coming of Christ. Many passages speak of the second coming of Christ being followed by a reign of righteousness on earth” (Walvoord, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 978).

With the exception of two verses (Revelation 20:5-6), every verse in chapter 20 begins

with the connective “and” (Greek, *kai*). All but 5 of the 21 verses in chapter 19 use the same grammatical feature. The constant usage of the connective demonstrates the flow of narrative action. John saw one event after another unfold before his very eyes. The continuation of the connective from chapter 19 into chapter 20 gives the impression that the events of chapter 20 follow those recorded in chapter 19. To conclude that the events of chapter 20 precede those in chapter 19 is to violate the hermeneutical principle of observation before interpretation and the normal grammatical usage of the connective in a narrative passage.

In addition, the usage of the adverb “no more” (Greek, *eti*) in the purpose clause of Revelation 20:3 strongly suggests that the events described in 20:1-3 follow those described in 19:11-21. The use of the adverb indicates an interruption of something that was already taking place—namely, the deception of the nations by Satan. The action of binding Satan, thus, could not occur before the second coming.

The beast and the False Prophet are cast into the lake of fire at the second coming (Revelation 19:20). Satan is cast into the lake of fire 1000 years later (Revelation 20:10). In the lake of fire, Satan is reunited with the beast and the False Prophet. This narrative action makes no sense if Satan is cast into the lake of fire at the same time as the other two. In fact, the phrase “where the beast and the false prophet are” presupposes an earlier judgment upon the beast and the False Prophet (Revelation 19:20) and also suggests a chronological sequence of Revelation 20 events following those in chapter 19.

Literal Interpretation

Some argue that (1) the time designator “thousand years” does not occur anywhere else in New Testament eschatological teachings; (2) Jesus did not mention it in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25); and (3) no epistle refers to the 1000-year reign of Christ on earth, so the reference to this length

of time in Revelation 20 should be understood symbolically (see Kistemaker, p. 535). They further advocate that the book of Revelation is a book of symbols, and the numbers must also be understood symbolically. Kistemaker, for example, states that "one thousand is ten to the third power and denotes fullness. It is therefore more in line with the tone and tenor of Revelation to interpret the term metaphorically...to refer to an indefinite period between the ascension of Jesus and his return" (Kistemaker, pp. 535-36).

However, the normal, ordinary meaning of "1000 years" is 1000 years. This is the essence of literal interpretation. If the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense. As Walvoord observed, "This chapter presents the fact that Christ will reign on earth for a thousand years. If this chapter is taken literally, it is relatively simple to understand what is meant" (Walvoord, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 977).

Besides, John knew how to describe an indefinite brief period of time as such. In 20:3 he wrote that Satan would be released from the abyss for "a little while" (Greek, *mikron chronon*). The Holy Spirit could have guided John to write that Christ and the saints would reign for "a long time" (Greek, *polun chronon*), the same phrase used in the parable of the talents to indicate the period of the master's absence (Matthew 25:19). But God led John to contrast a definite period ("thousand years") with an indefinite period ("a little while").

In fact, all time designations in the book of Revelation are literal, having significance only if their temporal meanings are accepted in the normal sense. The nonliteral view makes Revelation 20 to be the exception.

Occasionally, some will reference 2 Peter 3:8 and Psalm 90:4 in defense of a nonliteral meaning. Peter wrote "that with the Lord one day is a thousand years, and thousand years as one day." For this comparison to make sense, the time phrases must be taken literally. The infinite, eternal God does not view time as we do, but He does know the distinction

between a 24-hour day and a millennium. Psalm 90:4 conveys the same idea.

Robert Thomas has noted that "no number in Revelation is verifiably a symbolic number" (Thomas, p. 408). All numbers should be accepted literally, at face value. The distinctions in numerical value must be maintained throughout the book. They remain a literal constant in a book of symbols and metaphors. (See the article titled "Millennium.")

—RICHARD L. MAYHUE
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Partial Rapture

Some Bible commentators have suggested that the rapture, spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, will only be a partial rapture, not a rapture of all who believe. They reason that participation in the rapture is not based upon one's salvation but rather is conditional, based upon one's deserving conduct.

This theory rests on New Testament passages that stress obedient watching and waiting (such as Matthew 25:1-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8; and Hebrews 9:28). In this view, only part of the church is raptured, and

those who are not raptured endure a portion of or the entire Tribulation. However, these biblical texts are better understood as differentiating between true believers who are raptured and merely professing ones who remain behind. Texts that refer to Christ's second coming are often also used mistakenly to support the partial rapture theory.

The Basis of the Partial Rapture View

The rapture could occur at any moment and will include every believer (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). Our faithfulness to Christ and our obedience to His Word definitely determine our reward, but Scripture never indicates that some Christians might be in danger of losing any part of their salvation (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Some people accept the partial rapture theory because they believe that sin or disobedience makes Christians unfit to go with Christ, so they must be punished during the Tribulation. Explaining this view, Waugh (p. 108) wrote,

But there are not a few—some of them deep and prayerful students of the Scriptures—who believe that only a prepared and *expectant section* of believers will then be translated. They believe that a clear inference from Luke xxi. 36 is that those Christians who do *not* "watch" will *not* "escape all these things that shall come to pass," and will *not* be accounted worthy "to stand before the Son of Man." They gather from such passages as Phil. 3:20, Titus 2:12-13, 2 Tim. 4:8, Heb. 9:28, that those only will be taken who "wait," "look for," and "have loved His appearing."

One of the chief problems with this view is that it necessarily denies part of the value of the death of Christ. According to the partial rapturist, good works of a Christian give him a standing with God and make him eligible for the rapture. Some who hold this view base it on a Wesleyan view of full sanctification as the basic qualification for being

taken in the rapture. But the proper meaning of redemption is that Christ has paid the complete price for every sin. Because every sin has been punished and paid for, God will not punish sinning Christians again by omitting them from the rapture.

Partial rapturists appeal to other passages to prove their view (Matthew 25:1-13; Ephesians 2:21-22; 5:27,30; 1 Corinthians 15:23). However, when these Scriptures are understood in their contexts, they do not support a partial rapture view. After studying the principle proof texts of the partial rapturist, Dawson (p. 46) concluded, "These Scriptures clearly show that every member of the Church, which is His Body, every truly born again person, will be raptured at our Lord's return."

Problems with the Partial Rapture View

The partial rapture theory fails to be convincing for numerous other reasons. First, 1 Corinthians 15:51 says that "all" will be changed. Second, a partial rapture would logically demand a parallel partial resurrection, which is nowhere taught in Scripture. Third, a partial rapture would minimize and possibly eliminate the need for the judgment seat of Christ. Fourth, it creates a "purgatory" of sorts on earth for those believers left behind. Fifth, a partial rapture is nowhere explicitly taught in Scripture. The rapture will be full and complete, not partial.

Dwight Pentecost (pp. 158-61) opposed the partial rapture because it rests on the following "misunderstandings":

1. The partial rapturist position is based on a misunderstanding of the value of the death of Christ as it frees the sinner from condemnation and renders him acceptable to God.
2. The partial rapturist must deny the New Testament teaching on the unity of the body of Christ.
3. The partial rapturist must deny the completeness of the resurrection of the believers at the translation.

4. The partial rapturist confuses the Scriptural teaching on rewards.
5. The partial rapturist confuses the distinction between law and grace.
6. The partial rapturist must deny the distinction between Israel and the church.
7. The partial rapturist must place a portion of the believing church in the tribulation period.

Many partial rapturists sincerely believe we need to urge other believers to be ready for the rapture and not just assume they are going, regardless of how they live. This caution is certainly needed, but it has nothing to do with determining who will or will not be raptured. The ultimate resolution of this issue rests upon a proper understanding of the doctrine of salvation and a clear exegesis of the biblical passages about the rapture.

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RICHARD MAYHUE

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Patmos

The small volcanic island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, off the coast of Asia Minor, is mentioned only once in the Bible. In Revelation 1:9, readers are told that this 15-square-mile island, the northernmost in the

Dodecanese archipelago, was the location where John's revelation occurred and where the book of Revelation was written. John states, "I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus".

The crescent-shaped island of Patmos is about 40 miles west of the coastal city of Miletus (Acts 20:15,17; 2 Timothy 4:20). Because of its natural harbor facing eastward, it was a safe haven for ships during storms. It was also strategically located along commercial sea lanes. Patmos was the last stopping place when traveling from Rome to Ephesus and the first for the return trip (Thomas, p. 87). During New Testament times, the island had a large administrative center, at least three pagan temples (one each for the gods Artemis, Apollo, and Aphrodite), and a hippodrome for horse racing. It was governed by the proconsul of Ephesus (Franz, pp. 115, 118).

By his own testimony, John was exiled there. But the nature of his presence on the island has been disputed, resulting in three interpretations of Revelation 1:9. Some argue that John was sent there by God specifically to receive the revelation. Others believe that he went voluntarily to Patmos to preach the gospel. Most understand his presence on the island to be the result of banishment by the Roman government because of his preaching of the gospel. This exile occurred during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96) about the year A.D. 95 (Thomas, pp. 87-89).

Although John was in exile, he was probably not imprisoned on the island. Nor was he under house arrest as Paul was in Rome. Rather, he likely had free access on the island as a temporary exile. He was probably only there for about 18 months and allowed to go to Ephesus in a general amnesty by the emperor Nerva in A.D. 96 following the death of Domitian (Osborne, pp. 81-82). The early historian Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-340) states that "the sentences of Domitian were

annulled, and the Roman senate decreed the return of those who had been unjustly banished and the restoration of their property... The apostle John, after his banishment to the island, took up his abode at Ephesus" (Lake, p. 241).

Passages throughout Revelation conform to and reflect aspects of daily life on Patmos. For example, weather phenomena like white clouds (14:14), thunder and lightning (11:19; 14:2), hail (8:7; 11:19; 16:21), and rainbows (4:3; 10:1) are common on Patmos. Revelation mentions the sea at least 22 times, and the island has one sandy beach that may correspond to Revelation 13:1. Volcanic activity and earthquakes have also been part of the island's history (Franz, Part 2, pp. 121-22).

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Paul, Eschatology of

The apostle Paul wrote extensively on many prophetic subjects in his letters. He wrote literally and historically, and his comments were extremely practical and addressed his readers' current concerns. Among the topics he addressed was religious apostasy.

The Apostasy of the Church

Though some liberal scholars may disagree, Paul distinctly prophesies about a religious apostasy coming at the end of the church age. The word *apostasia* means "to stand or fall away from" and Paul uses it only once (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He says he is writing to the Thessalonian church concerning "our gathering together to Him [probably a reference to the rapture of the church], that you not be quickly shaken from your composure... by... a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come" (2:1-2). The Thessalonian Christians mistakenly thought the terrible Tribulation was imminent. Paul assured them, "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction." He is referring to the Antichrist. Some readers believe the "apostasy" (or "departing") may refer to the rapture of the believers to glory, but the larger consensus is that it has in view a spiritual turning away ("departing" from the faith) that takes place in the final stages of the church age.

In his letters to Timothy, Paul is specific about what constitutes this falling away. He writes, "The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron" (1 Timothy 4:1-2). Since he writes they "fall away from the faith," he implies that these apostates remain "religious" but deny the body of truth in the faith concerning Christ and salvation. "Fall away" here is a future, middle, indicative of the verb *aphieemi* and means to leave or depart. Thus, men will themselves depart from the truth and buy into the doctrine of evil spirits and the teachings of demons. Paul writes of this apostasy again in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. He says, "In the last days difficult times will come" with men loving self and money. They will be "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." He speaks of this in the future tense, but he

ABOUT THE PRE-TRIB RESEARCH CENTER

In 1991, Dr. Tim LaHaye became concerned about the growing number of Bible teachers and Christians who were attacking the pretribulation view of the rapture as well as the literal interpretation of Bible prophecy. In the process of writing the book that would become what is now titled *Who Will Face the Tribulation?*, Tim was impressed by the Christian leaders who, in Great Britain during the 1820s and 1830s, set up conferences for the purpose of discussing Bible prophecy. In 1992, Tim contacted Thomas Ice about the possibility of setting up similar meetings, which led to the first gathering of what is now known as the Pre-Trib Study Group in December 1992.

In 1993, Dr. LaHaye and Dr. Ice founded the Pre-Trib Research Center (PTRC) for the purpose of encouraging the research, teaching, propagation, and defense of the pretribulation rapture and related Bible prophecy doctrines. It is the PTRC that has sponsored the annual study group meetings since that time, and there are now over 200 members comprised of top prophecy scholars, authors, Bible teachers, and prophecy students.

LaHaye and Ice, along with other members of the PTRC, have since produced an impressive array of literature in support of the pretribulation view of the rapture, as well as the literal interpretation of Bible prophecy. Some of these members are among the contributors to this encyclopedia.

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