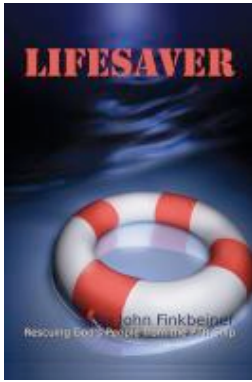


LIFESAVER



by John Finkbeiner
Rescuing God's People from the PTR Ship



*In the battle for which view of the end times is most popular among Bible-believers, Pre-tribulation Rapture (PTR), or the "any moment rapture" teaching, is the clear winner. Yet, is it accurate or is it a clever deception? Lifesaver proves PTR is a fraud while it highlights the truth. With Scripture, **Lifesaver** warns would-be passengers for the PTR ship. If ever Christians needed a compelling book on what's coming, it is now; it is **Lifesaver**!*

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Rescuing God's People From the PTR Ship



John F. Finkbeiner

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-Torpedo #1- Do Not Confuse Me!

Do you suppose that everyone who says they care really has your interest at heart? Does every salesperson or politician want to help you with your problem? Were the ticket agents for the *Lusitania's* May 1915 voyage offering their service with a smile as they led their customers to their deaths? Not everyone that is friendly is our friend.

A friend will not lie and say "All is well" when all is not well. Years ago, I had an experienced pastoral leader encourage me to take on a challenge. He had shown a personal interest in my ministry so I was encouraged by his proposition. The challenge he offered involved planting a church in a suburb of a large city. I was young and trusting. I believed in the pastoral leader. I should have known better.

In a conversation, early in the process, I asked this respected leader why preliminary steps outlined in a church-planting manual were not followed. His answer struck me as odd; especially considering the difficulties of the task ahead. The pastor took it as a personal attack on his leadership. He said sharply, "We don't read books; we write them!"

He rebuked me for examining material on church-planting. A few years later, he sat in his comfortable office and watched my ship sink. Before I went under, God threw a vocational opportunity my way.

Leaders who take exception to relevant information or facts are dangerous! Their followers are probably headed for disaster. I now interpret the pastor's response as, "Don't confuse me with the facts!"

We are marching to the future believing our spiritual leaders. Instead of encouraging the reading and study of the prophets, we are asked to listen to them. When we find a conflict with their views in Scripture, we hear something like, "Don't confuse me with the facts!"

A God of order

Attack the character of God or take away from his glory and we commit a traitorous act (*Matthew 25:24-30, Mark 3:29*). Deny the Creator his role in creation or suppress the truth about what He did in six days (cf. *Exodus 20:11*) and the Lord's anger will burn (cf.

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Romans 1:18-32). Alter the sacred word by attributing something to the Almighty he did not say, and it is like slapping him in the face (cf. *Revelation 22:18-19*). The God of Heaven is the Great God. He spoke everything into existence. He has given order to all there is; so, no one should try to detract from His Sovereignty. To do so is to invite severe punishment.

*"I am the LORD; that is my name!
I will not give my glory to another
or my praise to idols.
See the former things have taken place,
and new things I declare;
before they spring into being
I announce them to you."*

Isaiah 42:8-9

Want to know how God feels when false prophets attempt to turn his people away from his warnings? Read the order he gave to Israel:

*"But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, **must be put to death.**"*

Deuteronomy 18:20

*"That prophet or dreamer **must be put to death**, because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery; he has tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. **You must purge the evil from among you.**"*

Deuteronomy 13:5

Allow for the gravity of the above to take hold. If God commanded the death penalty, if he ordered executions for any Israelite who said they were speaking for God but, in fact, did not speak for him; then it behooves us to use extreme caution when it comes to prophecy.

We do not want to be on a ship because of a false prophet. By granting assurance that all would be well, they comforted those who boarded the *R.M.S. Lusitania*.

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Do not travel in the company of false prophets. These dreamers attribute to God things he never said. The Lord will direct the U-boat and the torpedo. His word will stand. It will be as He has spoken.

Watch out!

The Word declares there will be false prophets and deceivers in the last days (cf. *2nd Peter 2:1-3*). They will cause many to fall away (cf. *Matthew 24:10*). As Jesus warned, these dreamers will presume they are speaking for God, but, in fact, they are not.

He [Jesus] replied, "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away."

Luke 21:8-9

"Watch out!" is a warning coming from Jesus. If our Lord says *"Do not follow them!"* (*"them"* meaning false prophets) will we listen? When our Master and Teacher says, *"These things must happen first,"* is he not speaking of the pre-ordained events in the last days? *These things* are signs that the Sovereign Lord has established by decree. It will happen in the way he declared before anything was made. This is to the glory of our God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prophecy is the revelation of God's perfect order strategically placed throughout Scripture. The saints understand this perfect order and they glorify the Lord because of it. Despite the chaos, insanity, and deceit prevalent in the last days; they know God's Word will forever stand.

Perhaps, the most grievous error committed by PTR teachers is that, by their teachings, they rob the Sovereign Lord of this testimony to his glory. They reject the truth that God has created an order to everything, including the events of the last days. They invoke God's name while making false statements about prophecy such as Jesus can come at any moment.

Despite the complete absence of any Scripture where the Sovereign God said "no more signs", they pretend their view is Christian dogma. They act presumptuously by attributing to God something he never said or intended for any to believe. Again, Jesus

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never said his Coming was imminent. What he did say was watch out for deceivers that would come in his name and deceive many.

PTR leaders deny the signs that Jesus has described in detail. They declare Christ's teaching on the Mount of Olives has no relevance for the church. They argue Jesus' signs belong solely to the Jews. Three places in the Gospels we find the Olivet Discourse (*Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21*). Yet, with one stroke of the pen, PTR teachers make each of Jesus' words of warning irrelevant. Does this parallel the *Lusitania's* owners who ignored the German embassy's warning? They lured passengers, perhaps using them as cover for their arms shipment.

God's wrath will be revealed in the last days against everyone who robs him of glory. Knowingly or not, supporters of PTR are doing exactly that. Jesus spoke the precise words the Father gave him to say, while this group claims there are no signs. The Father will hold to account all failing to heed the promises of his Son, the Prophet.

Israel's error

The Israelites seriously miscalculated. They thought they could disobey God without consequences. When the Lord ordered them to execute false prophets, Israel tolerated them, allowing dreamers to spread their influence among God's people. As a result, many turned away. After Moses and Joshua died, Israel's elders refused to purge evil from their midst. Israel paid for it later because they lost the ability to discern which prophet actually spoke for God.

Have false prophets infiltrated our church fellowships? If so, their job would be to prevent an accurate interpretation of prophecy. As we near the end, many will fall away on account of Jesus (cf. *Matthew 24:10*). Many want to believe their Jesus would not allow them to suffer. Only those who stand firm will be saved (cf. *Matt. 24:14*).

Christ's warning to watch for deceivers and their deception takes the enemy's plan to infiltrate into account. God knew that false prophets will cause compromise in his Church. In fact, if we carefully read his alert to his disciples, we find that these deceivers are going to invoke Jesus' name to gain credibility—the precise thing God warned Israel about in *Deuteronomy 18:20*, “*But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded...*”

Do Not Confuse Me!

Recently, I received an electronic warning from a prominent host for email services—or at least I thought so. It looked genuine. It presented the logo of the host to win my confidence. The message took the form of an emergency alert. “Security,” they said, “detected someone attempting to access my account.”

I was supposed to be grateful for their security. Then, they asked for my password so they could verify no security breach had occurred—and they needed it in 24 hours!

They invoked the name with which I was familiar; they gained my confidence by sounding and looking credible and they made it sound urgent so I would be too hurried to check them out. Anyone taking the time to investigate their claim would soon discover a popular scam. The culprit wanted to hijack my email address and then use it to solicit

funds from my unsuspecting friends with a fictitious emergency.

This is what false prophets do. They are wolves who pose as sheep. (Israel and Judah were victimized when deceivers appeared as priests and prophets but were not of God. They were unprepared for these deceivers.) With their words false prophets win the confidence of the naïve. They warn of an urgent situation and hijack the credibility of Jesus’ name so they can influence a circle of friends.

Watch out! Frauds will invoke Jesus’ name and speak the language used by his faithful followers. (“*Many will come in my name claiming ‘I am the Christ.’*”) This is the confidence (con) game they play to fool sincere yet gullible followers. They will sound entirely credible. They will use certain Scripture. They will look and sound the part of one familiar with prophecy. They may even believe in their mind they are speaking for the Lord, but they are wrong! What they say will never come to pass.

Jesus warns his disciples; the perfect situation for deceivers and false prophets is approaching. He has written the end upon the hearts of all humanity. Well-intentioned followers of Jesus know a little about prophecy but, as the poet Alexander Pope observed, *a little learning is a dangerous thing*. Most Christians lack the know-how to investigate for accuracy the claims of prophecy teachers, using the “Five Basic Rules of Bible Interpretation” or owning a quality Bible concordance.

Many Christians believe studying prophecy is pointless. Others think studying is pointless because the two most prominent views

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influencing the Christian Church suggest it is not necessary. One, “Amillennialism”, says prophecy, such as *Revelation*, is allegorical or symbolic, so it should not be taken literally. Like robots, multitudes repeat this mantra. PTR followers disregard signs. As a consequence, many are unprepared. Lack of readiness will be God’s way of holding to account those who ignored the words of Jesus. It was Israel’s error. It’s ours as well—that is, if we fail to act decisively!

How do we know?

How do we know Jesus will not come “any moment”? PTR teachers speak with urgency, speak about visions or dreams from God and utilize the language of the Bible. They gain our confidence by saying many things on which all Christians should agree. So how do we know the Doctrine of Imminency is not from God?

When those who name Jesus as their Savior and Lord are plunged into a time of severe testing and great distress, then they will figure it out. Too late, they will know they were sold on a lie.

We become angry when we are played for fools or duped. By the time we realize it, the harm has been done and the deceivers are long gone. This happened to Judah and Israel. All those who prophesied things would go well could not be found when Assyrian or Babylonian soldiers marched on their cities and took Jacob captive. They should have listened to Hosea, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. Are we listening to them now or to the false teachers littering the landscape?

A name synonymous with PTR is J. Dwight Pentecost (b. 1915-) the Distinguished Professor of Bible Exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas. His popular books on prophecy have earned him the reputation of being an expert on the subject of the last days.

His article *The Rose of Sharon is Jesus* appeared online in April of 2007. In it, Dr. Pentecost argues for the rapture taking believers (i.e. the Church) away just prior to the seven years of tribulation. Then, he states, at the end there is a subsequent coming of the Lord. If we read his material, he makes these two comings sound credible. However, let no man separate what God has joined together.

To distinguish the two comings, Dr. Pentecost explained:

“Rapture: No sign given for His coming.

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Second Coming: A sign is given (Matt. 24:30)"

(From *Sharon's Rose is Jesus* blogspot)

How can anyone disagree with a distinguished professor of Bible Exposition at a prestigious seminary that turns out so many fine pastors? Jesus disagrees. Is it not curious how easily people throw out Jesus' teaching on the signs when a man tells them they must?

Come let us reason together. We do not have to shout or talk down to one another. Would not Dr. Pentecost benefit by knowing the truth? Is that not what we all want? In the classic rapture passage (i.e. *1st Thessalonians 4:15-18*), *according to the Lord's own word*, the rapture and Christ's Second coming are described as if they will happen simultaneously, not seven years apart. Read it for yourself:

*According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left **till the coming of the Lord**, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. **For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.***

1st Thessalonians 4:15-16

Do the above words not sound like they are also describing Christ's Second Coming? Through Paul, we learn they happen at the same time or simultaneously, precisely what Jesus taught!

Do not allow clever talkers to mislead you. In Dr. Pentecost's *The Rose of Sharon is Jesus*, he mockingly states we ought to know the difference between up and down. He uses sarcasm to separate the rapture and Jesus' Second Coming by seven years.

This PTR expert presumes to know more than Jesus; the One he proclaims as his Lord.

*They will see the **Son of Man coming** [down] on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and **they will gather his elect** [up] from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.*

Matthew 24:30b-31

What is *gather his elect from the four winds*, if this is not the rapture at Christ's coming? Dr. Pentecost acknowledges that *The*

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Rose of Sharon is Jesus yet he deceives many by declaring there are “two comings” separated by a period of seven years.

Dr. Pentecost demonstrates that he is a Dispensational theologian first and Bible interpreter second. He should say as much. As a Dispensationalist theologian, he forces the interpretation of Scripture into the framework of Dispensationalism. It doesn't fit!

Since PTR is the product of Dispensational theology's teaching that the Church Age ends abruptly or suddenly with the rapture, they must defend it all costs. Dispensationalism maintains the seven-year tribulation period is the same as the 70th week of Daniel and marks the completion of the Jewish Age, so Dr. Pentecost and others of his persuasion must offer another coming. The only option is (ugh!) admitting their view on the rapture's timing is wrong.

Is it possible some of Dispensationalism's conclusions could be in error? Those conflicting with Jesus' words are most assuredly wrong!

How do we know? What if a thousand distinguished doctors who happen to be Professors of Biblical Exposition agree with Dr. Pentecost and the Doctrine of Imminency he so articulately defends? Then I would say Jesus' prophetic warning is being fulfilled.

“Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near’. Do not follow them.”

Luke 21:8

Until the rebellion occurs

After false teachers misled the Thessalonians about the Second Coming and the Day of the Lord, Paul tried hard to repair the damage. In his second letter, the apostle reminded the saints of his instruction while he was with them. In reference to *before that day*, he wrote:

Do not let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come, until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

2nd Thessalonians 2:3

Does ...*that day will not come until*, followed by two signs (i.e. the emergence of the man of lawlessness plus the rebellion or apostasy) appear to be in conflict with the PTR Doctrine of Imminence or “any moment” rapture? It is indeed a conflict, yet this passage does not

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dampen the passions of PTR teachers who eagerly hide this huge hole in their viewpoint. Instead, they ignore the above evidence.

Recall Rule #1 of the “five rules of interpretation” cited above:

“Accept the meaning of Scripture in its most normal, natural and customary sense.”

To what “day” was Paul referring? He wrote of the coming Day of Judgment or *the day of the Lord* (*2nd Thessalonians 2:1*).

In *verse 4* (below), we find more explanation of *the rebellion* (“the falling away” or “the apostasy”). It appears to occur simultaneously to, or along with, the revealing of *the man of lawlessness*.

He will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

2nd Thessalonians 2:4

Has this already occurred? Has the Day of the Lord come and we missed it? That was what false teachers in the church argued. False teachers are skilled talkers. They can make wrong ideas, such as “no more signs,” seem right.

The Thessalonians began at a disadvantage. We know from *The Book of the Acts of the Apostles* they lacked what the Bereans had—nobility (cf. *Acts 17:11*). The Bereans listened eagerly to Paul’s teaching then examined God’s Word intently in order to verify or reject what the apostle said. The Thessalonians, however, listened uncritically. They took it all in without examination. Look what their laziness cost. Without the foundation of Bible truth, false teachers took over their church.

Another gospel

We should agree *the day of the Lord* has not yet come. As of this writing, the antichrist (the man of lawlessness) is yet to be revealed. That means, as of now, there are still unfulfilled signs!

In *Daniel* (sp. *9:27, 12:11*), as well as in the teaching of Christ (cf. *Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, Luke 21:20*), a specific prophecy of a still future event—“the man of lawlessness” will enter a wing of Jerusalem’s temple, defile the altar and proclaim himself to be God.

If, as PTR teachers adamantly declare, no more signs are needed, don’t we need a rebuilt temple for the lawless one to enter

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and then desecrate? If Christ will come at any moment, don't we presently need an identifiable antichrist to defile the most holy place?

"Just a minute," PTR teachers say. "This prophecy pertains only to the Jews still on earth following the rapture of the church."

Is that right? Does the Olivet Discourse, Jesus' primary word regarding the signs in the last days, only apply to Jews? Then why is it in our New Testament section of the Bible? Jews do not have the first three Gospels in their Torah, Talmud or Rabbinic writings.

Regarding *the abomination that causes desolation* entering a wing of the temple: Why would Jesus say, "*Let the reader understand*" (Mt. 24:15)? If those who are to understand do not have New Testaments, what sense does that make? If it is a sign for Jews, how are they to have knowledge of what they will never read? This is beyond illogical; saying, 'this applies only to Jews', stretches the limits of reason.

This is serious stuff! PTR teachers are presenting another gospel, other than the one given to us by Christ and his apostles. Those who do such things are under God's curse (cf. *Galatians 1:9*).

Even if a third temple is ready for construction, as of now it is not standing. When the man of lawlessness demands universal worship, it is *before* the Day of the Lord. Preparations for a third temple are what PTR teachers call "indications". They are playing word games. They use double-speak such as this to defend the indefensible.

Another gospel has to be constructed that omits Jesus' Church from the last days. We were warned that omissions would occur.

At any moment?

Will the sun rise tomorrow at any moment? Was Jesus' coming as a baby to Mary at any moment? That is not how God operates.

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Galatians 4:4-5

What does "*When the time had fully come*" imply? It means God had a time table that he fulfilled at the birth of Christ. When the souls under the altar cried out for vengeance in *Revelation 6*, they were *not* told "any moment".

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Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

Revelation 6:11

Something else is afoot or the above would sink the Doctrine of Imminence. Common sense and the plain meaning of Scripture demonstrate the “any moment” position is untrue. It is a lie that must be exposed before another soul boards the ill-fated PTR ship.

*

In Summary- Scripture directly contradicts The Doctrine of Imminency or any moment rapture, the teaching of PTR supporters who state “The rapture can come at any time. No more signs need to be fulfilled”.

Going Deeper- Study *Matthew 16:21-22*. What signs did Jesus give his disciples that, had they listened, would have kept them from falling away? Notice the formula that appears with Jesus’ warnings: He ends them with a promise for those who obey (*Matt. 16:24-27, 26:31-32*)? Investigate to see if this is not God’s way (i.e. warnings as well as promises) throughout the Bible (ex. *Deuteronomy 28*).

For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Ephesians 6:12-13

-Torpedo #2- Unreal

Sometimes it needs said, "If you do not want to hear the answer, do not ask the question". When a Christian sincerely desires to understand the last days, they also must have the courage to receive God's answer. Don't we want the doctor's honest appraisal when we have a strange symptom? If we seek the truth about other things, then why shouldn't we want it when it comes to prophecy? Why then do we seek teachers who will only give us what we want to hear, not what we need to hear?

If we really want to know what is happening in our culture and world, then we may need to take a seat. We may need to brace ourselves while we read Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos or another prophet. Then we will know God's diagnosis for the sickness we feel.

We need to study prophecy in the Bible as the infallible Word of truth. It is God's script for the last days and beyond. God told his servants, the prophets, what he will do. They recorded it without altering a syllable. They searched intently and discovered that what the Spirit revealed was not for them, but for us (cf. *1st Peter 1:10-12*).

The litmus test

Our complete trust in God's sovereign power is required before we can understand and accept what God wants us to know. However plush or well-stocked our homes may be, the iceberg that sinks us all is in the rearview mirror. As a culture, our destination is not safe harbor. Our ship of state is headed to the deepest part of the sea.

Politically, many argue the above is not true. It is said that we have only hit a bump in the road. Yet the hole in our ship is below sea level. It was an iceberg, not a bump. We hear from the pundits that we need our ship's captain at the helm for another four years. Others say the captain must be replaced by someone more able. Does it really matter now?

If our ears refuse to accept that our ship is doomed, then how will we survive? The prophet is being sent by God as a *lifesaver*. His task is to expose the unreal. By doing so he pronounces doom to some. The only person who wants to see a lifesaver cast in their direction is the one who realizes they are in trouble and will drown without it.

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False prophets bear good news while God is decreeing disaster. They say, "You will have success!" (cf. *1st Kings 22:6*)

How do we know which prophet is from God and which one speaks presumptuously? *Jeremiah* offers a litmus test for prophets.

"From early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms. But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true."

Jeremiah 28:8-9

In this account, Hananiah was prophesying to Judah and Jerusalem. He prophesied that within two years, Babylon's king would return the first Jewish exiles as well as the treasures from the temple. Hananiah had many fans while Jeremiah had few. Jeremiah earlier declared that because of the people's idolatry and rebellion, God was sending them a destroyer.

Who would the Jews believe? Was Hananiah's "good news" directly from God? No! History proved Hananiah was a false prophet. He was a crowd pleaser. Jesus warned: Beware of crowd pleasers!

*Woe to you when all men speak well of you,
for this is how their fathers treated the false prophets.*

Luke 6:26

In the showdown between prophets in *Jeremiah 28*, Hananiah felt strong. He was not persuaded by Jeremiah's litmus test for prophets.

Instead, Hananiah announced Judah would soon break Babylon's wooden yoke (*Jeremiah 28:10-11*). He should have held his peace.

Jeremiah expressed God's wrath.

"Listen, Hananiah! The LORD has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies. Therefore, this is what the LORD says: 'I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you are going to die, because you have preached rebellion against the LORD.'"

In the seventh month of that same year, Hananiah the prophet died.

Jeremiah 29:15b-17

Unreal

In the showdown of our day, we have PTR teachers staunchly maintaining that God's people, the elect, will escape Satan's wrath. There will be no time of great tribulation for the Church, they say. On the other side, we have Pre-Wrath Rapture (PWR) teachers declaring the saints will indeed endure a global period of testing at the hands of the antichrist. At least one side will be proved false. One side is popular while the other is not, yet both say they speak for God.

We should lean toward those predicting hardship for the saints. Crowds flock to PTR leaders who promise we will be taken out before the evil one comes to steal, kill and destroy. Have these preachers read Jesus' final request to the Father?

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

John 17:15

The Bible

At the very least, one side is deceived. Both sides of the rapture debate cannot be speaking for God. Will the saints escape Satan's wrath or will they be asked to endure it with patience—and overcome? The PWR stands with the latter. I do as well.

How would Daniel answer if the question was escape or endure?

*“After them, another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. **He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints** and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.*

Daniel 7:24b-25

Is there another witness in *Daniel* to establish this testimony?

“In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power.

Daniel 8:22-25

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What does the prophet say? Will God's people escape tribulation or be persecuted, put to the sword, taken captive and burned? What is Jesus' testimony, the true and faithful witness of God?

Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Revelation 12:17

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation...

He who has an ear, let him hear.

*If anyone is to go into captivity,
into captivity he will go.*

*If anyone is to be killed with the sword,
with the sword he will be killed.*

This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

Revelation 13:5-7, 9-10

Ignore if you wish the holy words of prophecy sent from heaven for the saints. Retreat to a happy but unreal place where all is well. This is the spirit of this age. But, how will they escape if they neglect so great a salvation (cf. *Hebrews 2:3*)?

If *patient endurance* is what is called for on the part of the saints, does that not mean they will be the first in the fire? If the beast wages war against the saints, does that not mean we will be hard-pressed?

Whom shall we believe?

Every PTR teacher is in agreement that, at the end of this age, believers will not endure the seven years of tribulation. Look into this issue for yourself. It is a major point on which they are all unified.

Unreal

They produce various Scripture verses—albeit out of context—to prove it.

Some on the PTR side deride their opponents by attributing false bravado to those who see great suffering coming. They mockingly claim PWR teachers have a martyr's complex or some sort of morbid desire to die for Christ. Have they not read Jesus words about being willing to pick up our cross and following him to the death?

With all the escape scenarios that PTR teachers paint before the tribulation starts, who are we going to believe? Do we want to risk our eternity based on promises of peace and security given by those who lives have been free of persecution?

It is easy to sit in an ivory tower picking and choosing verses or proposing theories for peer approval. But what do those who have been in hellish places have to say about a theology of escape?

Corrie ten Boom (1892-1983) and sister Betsie spent time in a World War II German concentration camp. They were imprisoned for the crime of hiding and aiding the escape of Dutch Jews. The ten Booms were arrested and sentenced to a death camp. Betsie died among millions of others in prison during the Nazi holocaust. Corrie survived to tell the story.

In 1974, Corrie ten Boom offered insight into the Scripture's teaching on "escape" in her *Will Christians Escape Tribulation*:

"There are some among us teaching there will be no tribulation, that the Christians will be able to escape all this. These are the false teachers that Jesus was warning us to expect in the latter days. Most of them have little knowledge of what is already going on across the world. I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution.

"In China, the Christians were told, 'Don't worry, before the tribulation comes you will be translated—raptured.' Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a Bishop from China say, sadly, 'We have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution rather than telling them Jesus would come first. Tell the people how to be strong in times of persecution, how to stand when the tribulation comes—to stand and not faint.'

"I feel I have a divine mandate to go and tell the people of this world that it is possible to be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. We

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are in training for the tribulation, but more than sixty percent of the Body of Christ across the world has already entered the tribulation. There is no way to escape it. We are next.”

(From *Will Christians Escape Tribulation?* 1974)

Escapists or overcomers?

The Bible says that “overcomers” not “escapists” will inherit the Kingdom (cf. *Matthew 24:12-13, Acts 14:22, Revelation 21:7*). The term “overcomers” is used often indicating a time of severe adversity (i.e. persecution, trials, tribulation, afflictions, suffering and tests). Saints are called to *endure patiently* at the end of this age (cf. *Matthew 24:13*).

Pastors supportive of the PTR position assure their congregations that “the Church” will not suffer the antichrist’s persecution. This teaching denies the obvious; namely, that the spirit of antichrist is already in the world and has been since the beginning (cf. *1st John 2:18*). The antichrist will afflict the people of God with a fiery ordeal; in fact as we read above, he is already doing just that. The only distinction between the persecutions seen through the ages and those that are still to come is the extent of the persecution. What is yet to be is global. No earthly sanctuary will exist for those belonging to Jesus.

When has the Church escaped Satan’s wrath? For the true Church, the answer is “Never!” Believers have always overcome by trusting Christ even unto death. Believers embrace affliction rather than escape it. The “compromising” Church escapes Satan’s wrath by becoming fearful, weak, worldly and adulterous. Those avoiding Satan’s temporary wrath will incur *God’s* eternal wrath.

Men and women influenced by the PTR foolishly run from the “ferocious” roar of Satan. Those who follow Christ’s example run to his roar and face adversity with rejoicing (*James 1:2*).

In an edition of *The Voice of the Martyrs* newsletter, it was revealed that a Chinese Christian leader was overseeing a network of about eight million worshippers in the underground church. In an interview, this leader was asked about his many persecutions, his beatings at the hands of police and his incarcerations for his “illegal religious activities.”

Unreal

The article stated,

“While he took a small piece of melon in his chopsticks, he said, ‘Jesus loved me so much that he sent me to prison.’”

This brother, nameless to most of the world, is a true overcomer. Many Christians express their fear of persecution. From a human perspective, this is understandable. Yet from God’s perspective it signifies weak faith (*Proverbs 24:10*). Proper love for God eliminates other fears, including fear of those who kill the body and after that can do no more (*Luke 12:4-5*). We must pray for stronger backs, not for lighter burdens.

Shrinking from persecution is akin to refusing to carry our cross. What are the consequences of not following Jesus’ example?

“...and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Matthew 10:38-39

Where is it taught that God’s people escape from the furnace of affliction? Our salvation comes when we *walk through the fire* (*Isaiah 43:2*) not run from it. It is the example of Jesus and his apostles.

Avoidance behavior

I ask a needed question: “Has the Doctrine of Imminency become a convenience for those who wish to avoid sacrifice?” Or “Has ‘any moment rapture’ become a desired alternative to Bible prophecy revealing global suffering is ahead for God’s people?” Is the necessity of carrying our cross the reason we reject the plain teaching that Christians suffer intense persecution in the last days? Despite the knowledge that fellow believers are enduring great hardships currently, does the PTR view allow for avoidance behavior? Does it give an alternative for those wanting to reject or ignore sound doctrine and the plain teaching of Christ to acquire what they believe is escape?

Those who hold to the PTR and PWR agree; the rapture happens before the dreadful Day of the Lord at the end of this age. Believers are not appointed to wrath but to salvation (*1st Thessalonians 5:9*). PTR adherents refuse to recognize when God’s wrath begins.

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A great earthquake will signify its arrival.

They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand?"

Revelation 6:16-17

In *Revelation*, in the context of the seven seals, before the sixth is opened, we find no reference to God's wrath. Not until we read of the great earthquake is there mention of *the wrath of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:16-17)*. This shows God's wrath does not begin until the seventh is removed (*Rev. 8:1*).

In *Zephaniah 1* we have this parallel:

***Be silent before the Sovereign LORD,
for the day of the LORD is near.***

*The LORD has prepared a sacrifice;
he has consecrated those he has invited.*

Zephaniah 1:7

The "silence" is confirmed in *Revelation 8:1*, "*When he [the Lamb] opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.*" When we compare all Scripture, we find that the Day of the Lord begins with the removal of the seventh seal and the opening of the scroll with writing on both sides. There will be no escape; nor any exceptions. The wrath of God is coming on the wicked.

Not persuaded

For some readers, nothing thus far has jarred your PTR beliefs. You plan to ride the PTR ship to the end. For you, this book is not about obtaining understanding, but mounting a counterattack.

The subject of end times has become a game, a debate that goes on and on. As with a defense attorney representing a guilty client, it is not about justice, it is about finding the loophole. Some love to argue. No doubt, there were arguments among passengers as they boarded the *Lusitania*. Nothing could have persuaded the man with the made-up mind that something bad could happen—not to them anyway.

*There is a way that seems right to a man,
but in the ends it leads to death.*

Proverbs 14:12

Unreal

If there was something that Noah could have said to persuade his friends and neighbors to join him on the Ark, would he not have said it? Why did they not believe him, or at least believe the signs? It is possible that they did believe, but not enough to board the Ark.

The start of the deluge probably changed their minds. But, by the time the rains came, it was too late. They may have knocked urgently but the Ark's door remained shut. Those who turned down Noah's invitation may have pounded until their fists bled. "*Open the door for us!*" They did not know that it was God, not Noah, who shut the Ark's door. They may have reminded Noah they were his neighbor or his relative as they cried out to him for mercy. Finally, the answer comes, "*I tell you the truth, I don't know you.*" (*Matthew 25:11-12*)

When those on the *Lusitania* saw that the warnings from the German embassy were for real, it was too late. When those who boarded the ship realized they had erred, there was no time to backtrack. The torpedoes exploded the ammunition in the ship's hold. It was time to face disaster. The ship sank in eighteen minutes.

PTR zealots will not be persuaded no matter how much Bible is placed before them. When the righteous, who have prepared like the ant prepares for winter, are secured in a place of safety, the PTR side will have nothing. They rejected God's warnings.

They will be left outside like the five virgins who did not have their lamps trimmed and burning in *Matthew 25:7-13*. By the time they ready themselves, it will be too late.

When Daniel's 70th week begins, PTR teachers will be hard to find. While their bamboozled followers are left with little prospect of survival, their hireling leaders will have disappeared (cf. *John 10:12*).

A lament will rise from those who scoffed at a coming time of trial.

*"The harvest is past,
the summer has ended,
and we are not saved."*

Jeremiah 8:20

A dose of reality

How cloistered does one have to be to steadfastly maintain the saints will not endure tribulation? How would a visit to over fifty nations where Christians are systematically persecuted alter their

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view of reality? What do we call it when non-Westerners are imprisoned, tortured and killed for their faith in Christ? It cannot be tribulation, since in countries like the U.S., the teaching that believers will not endure Satan's wrath continues unabated.

Having lived through the horrors of Ravensbrück, a World War II Nazi death camp in which just twenty percent of the women survived, Corrie ten Boom was entitled to her strong opinion on Christians and suffering. Hers was not a theoretical belief gleaned from a professor.

"In America, the churches sing, 'Let the congregation escape tribulation,' but in China and Africa the tribulation has already arrived. This last year alone, more than two hundred thousand Christians were martyred in Africa. Now things like that never get into the newspapers because they cause bad political relations. But I know. I have been there. We need to think about that when we sit down in our nice houses with our nice clothes to eat our steak dinners. Many, many members of the Body of Christ are being tortured to death at this very moment, yet we continue right on as though we are all going to escape the tribulation."

(From *Will Christians Escape Tribulation?* 1974)

Beside the fact that escape is not promised, we see that it is not reality for most of the persecuted body of Christ. What will it take to convince all believers to prepare for Satan's worst? If Jesus' testimony does not alert us and jolt us to action, what will? He has told us everything ahead of time (cf. *Matthew 24:25*).

*

You may be uncomfortable with where you think this book is going. I understand the concern. I flinch at the vicious attacks a few Christians level at other believers. I love my Christian family but that does not mean you and I should remain silent while our brothers publicly promote dangerous ideas. I am no one's judge but everyone of faith needs to be critical thinkers when it comes to prophecy. There is too much at stake.

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In Summary- Scripture directly contradicts the PTR position that the saints will escape Satan's wrath or antichrist's persecution.

Going Deeper- In *Acts 9:15-16*, was the new convert Saul—later the Apostle Paul—kept in the dark by God as to his mission and what he would suffer for Christ's sake? What approach did Paul take with his disciples regarding the subject of suffering (cf. *Philippians 3:7-21*)?

Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

Matthew 19:27-29

-Torpedo #14- Crowns

In competition, athletes vie for the crown. The crown will only be realized if they train, practice and compete with maximum effort. Those who rise to great heights must master fundamentals and do their best. Rewards follow the one with the crown.

Champions wear crowns. This is the accepted norm in life as well as in God's kingdom. We are to labor in a way that demonstrates we desire the crown. With this relentless pursuit, God is pleased.

Cheap crowns

A popular fast-food restaurant chain offers a paper crown to all who ask. Anyone can wear the symbol of royalty while they eat their hamburgers and fries. The only requirement is that one must set foot inside their restaurant. Their crown is only advertising.

God is not in the business of handing out paper crowns. Any crown the Lord bestows will not be cheap. Glory will be attached to it. If everybody had a crown; then what would be the purpose?

If you have difficulty relating this principle of crowns for a few, but not all Christianity, it might be due to an overexposure to PTR. Chief among the promoters of the notion that crowns await everyone who is raptured are PTR teachers.

An example of PTR's view of crowns is in Dr. Nathan Meyer's online article, *Receiving a Crown at the Appearing of Jesus Christ*.

"At the time of the Rapture every New Testament saint (the Bride, the Body of Christ) will love His appearing and they will receive a crown shortly after entering Heaven."

("Sequence of Prophecy" website)

For backup, Dr. Meyer cites 2nd Timothy 4:8 in the KJV. I quote it in the NIV: *"Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."*

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I know “all” means “all” but Paul was writing to Timothy. It was a personal letter of encouragement to his spiritual son. It was Paul’s last will and testament, not a general letter to the church. His words prior to v. 8 were omitted so Dr. Meyer could make his case:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness,...

2nd Timothy 4:7-8a

There was a fight that Paul endured to earn his crown. (This does not sit well with PTR teachers, so they neglect this section of Paul’s words.) There is a race which must be run to the end. There is a faith that must be severely challenged by trials, yet still kept.

Paul wanted Timothy to lead by example so others could earn a crown also. What is Paul teaching about crowns in *2nd Timothy* other than they are conditional? Note the *if-then* of a condition in 2:11:

Here is a trustworthy saying:

*If we died with him,
we will also live with him;
if we endure,
we will also reign with him.
If we disown him,
he will also disown us;...*

2nd Timothy 2:11-12

What does it take to wear the same crown the righteous Jesus wears? Among other things, it takes patient endurance. Not everyone will be up to the challenge. They will be disowned because they failed the test and disowned Christ. Again, it is not likely that you will have heard this doctrine taught in a PTR Bible school or church.

Those who wear crowns are exceptional saints. What is placed on the head will be a crown of gold, not cardboard. We have to look deeper than one verse in *2nd Timothy 4:8* to understand the heart and mind of Paul, and of the Lord who called him to be his apostle.

We must ask, “Was Timothy aware of his mentor’s teaching elsewhere on excellence, endurance, sacrifice and the crown?” It is to *1st Corinthians 9:24* we turn to find the answer. There Paul, the Apostle of Christ, wrote to the saints in Corinth.

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To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.

*Do you not now that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; **but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.***

1st Corinthians 9:22-25

In a race, do all get the prize or does it belong to the victor? Who receives the crown in the games? Do all who participate or the one who competes according to the rules and finishes ahead of the others? Why do they compete? They do it for the crown. Why did Paul and the others who followed Jesus' example suffer in the way they did? It was in order to gain a crown that lasts forever.

What meaning does Paul's writing have to Christians who believe they receive a crown just for showing up? Since the Lord gave no assurances every saint wears a crown, Dr. Meyer is making promises Christ will not honor. There will be crowns because crowns represent rule and authority granted by the Father. It is crazy to think everyone in the Millennium rules or receives crowns. They would have no significance. If all receive the prize, why should I strive for it?

Did Timothy know what was written to the Corinthians about crowns for excellence, endurance and sacrifice? Since *2nd Timothy* is commonly accepted as the last of Paul's letters; then the letters written to the Corinthians provided a basis for the subject. Would Timothy know what was in these letters? He may have delivered them (cf. 4:17). If not, Timothy was ready to explain everything in the letter to the church in Corinth on Paul's behalf (cf. 16:10).

Before they speak, why do PTR teachers not compare Scriptures to arrive at truth? Why do not all the relevant passages enter into the discussion? Why is some evidence left out? The reason—this will be hard for some to hear—is because PTR teachers who refuse to examine everything fairly are more interested in persuasion than they are in truth-telling. This, my friends, is extremely dangerous.

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How long have those of us who grew up in the church heard it: those who are saved, who prayed the sinner's prayer or who went forward in a service, will be in heaven wearing a crown? We cannot simply agree any longer. It is not about who said it; it is about truth.

"Everybody gets a crown" is the type of liberal thinking that nixes keeping score. Without a score, losers do not have to feel badly losing because everyone's a winner. Every competitor can have a paper crown. Instead, why not seek to earn a golden crown?

Saul v. David

In *1st Samuel 16:13*, the prophet Samuel anointed David ruler over Israel. Did Samuel place a crown on the young man's head? No, he only anointed him. The crown belonged to Saul as long as he was living. Meanwhile, David had to prove his worthiness as a king, and did so on many occasions and in many ways. The line of succession was established, yet there was still one king over one nation.

Two kings ruling the same kingdom is a contradiction. There can only be one king. Did David rise to sit on Saul's throne after killing the giant Goliath? What David did was establish the case for wearing the crown by earning it. David acted more like a ruler than King Saul. It was Saul who should have taken Goliath on for the championship. Did Saul fear the giant? It seems he did. His fear cast a shadow over his entire army. David's courage emboldened the troops.

Boldness for Christ is a characteristic for this age of those who will wear the crown in the next age. They are establishing their identity and fulfilling their destiny. They are making a case by earning their future authority. They model Christ-likeness, endurance and sacrifice. They may currently be in prison, or in a cave or in a hole in the ground, yet, in a little while, they will be sitting on a throne.

In a short time, there will be kings and rulers that need replaced. As the possibilities are considered, which résumé may have more weight with King Jesus as the next age begins: one coming from a pastor who always played it safe or that of a servant of Christ who risked his life and suffered for his faith? I think I know which one.

No one else need apply for the opening. Crowns are for those who endured afflictions, slept in the open and suffered long separations from their family—all for Jesus' sake! If I am right on this—and I would not offer it unless I believed it was true—it means

Crowns

PTR adherents will not be wearing crowns (cf. *2nd Timothy 2:12*). If escaping tribulation is a priority of their position, it means opportunity to make our case for our love and loyalty to Christ will be lost. For this reason alone, trials are something we should count as *all joy* when they are sent our way (cf. *James 1:2*).

Church letters

When an objective Bible student reads the letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor (*Revelation 2-3*), they see them for what they are: Christ's judgment on real fellowships that bore his name. Though the messages were specifically addressed to people and churches near the end of the first century, their application to the Church in today's world is unmistakable. *He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*

Then why do PTR teachers insist on taking the prophecy out of these judgments of Christ and make them something else. From PTR Bible school classrooms and pulpits we are taught each church represents one of the seven different dispensations. With this, we are informed the seven messages are more historical than prophetic.

Those committed to Dispensationalism see it in everything. Such is the nature of "an ideologue"—a person fully devoted to an idea or principle. Ideologues view the world through the prism of their belief system. If someone presents an argument against their position or challenges one of their assertions, they become an enemy who must be neutralized. When ideology controls our thinking, objectivity is lost. Exposing the holes in PTR angers its dedicated proponents. It is my hope some will see their error and abandon their fatally flawed system before it sinks.

Keep in mind when we study *Revelation* generally, and the seven churches in Asia Minor, in particular, we must search for the intended meaning. To discover what God is really saying we employ common sense and the five basic rules of Biblical interpretation. For example, Rule #5, "Watch for near/far prophetic applications in Scripture." As an example of intended meaning vs. changed meaning in order to fit an agenda or ideology, let's look at *Revelation 3*.

"To the angel of the church of Philadelphia write: ..."

"Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth."

Revelation 3:7, 10

How have certain PTR teachers interpreted this verse? In his *Verse-by-Verse Commentary* online, Dr. Grant C. Richison, gives a commonly held PTR explanation, (“... *I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come...*”)

Dr. Richison writes,

“The ‘hour of trial’ is the trial of tribulation (chapters 6-19)...

God not only keeps this church from trial but from a worldwide ‘hour of trial.’ Not only does not [sic] deliver us from trial, but He delivers us from a specific time of trial. We call this the tribulation period...

Jesus promises to save the church from this time of trouble.

(*Revelation 3:10*, versebyversecommentary.com/revelation)

What would we think of a commander-in-chief who told one band of followers they will escape “the tribulation” while earlier, in the body of the same letter, they were commended for their endurance (cf. *Rev. 3:8*)? We might say the leader was confused or unfair. None of this can be said about Christ, our God and King.

To the church in Smyrna the Lord offered these words,

*“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the **churches**. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.”*

Revelation 2:10-11

The similarities between the Philadelphia and Smyrna churches are striking. Why are they not compared by PTR scholars as part of the interpretation process? It is because it will not give them the argument they desire. Using Scripture to interpret Scripture will make *Revelation 3:10* useless, even supportive of a Pre-Wrath Rapture.

If escaping tribulation was the plain meaning of *3:10*, then what sense do the next few verses make? *“I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God... He who has an ear, let him hear...”* (*Rev. 3:7, 11-12a*)

Crowns

How does one hold on at the same time they are going up? Does anyone care to examine the context of *Revelation 3:10* to find whether PTR prophecy experts are accurate or are sadly mistaken? We cannot fairly render a verdict if we are not willing to pour over the evidence, objectively, rationally and without any preconceived ideas.

“To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

*These are the words of him who is holy and true, ... I know that you have little strength, yet you **have kept my word and have not denied my name**. I will make those who are of **the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not**, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.”*

Revelation 3:7a, 8b-9

Certain phrases found in this message are seen in letters to other churches. Why would this not be so? It is called *consistency*. The church in Philadelphia was tested similarly to the disciples in Ephesus (cf. *Rev. 2:2-3*), Smyrna (cf. *Rev. 2:9*) and Pergamum. What kind of trial did Christ’s *faithful witness* Antipas of Pergamum have to endure?

*“I know where you live—where **Satan has his throne**. Yet **you remain true to my name**. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—**where Satan lives**.”*

Revelation 3:13

Antipas became a martyr for the sake of Christ’s name. When called upon, that’s what faithful witnesses do to receive their crown. The adversary in Pergamum was the same as in Smyrna and Philadelphia and every other church belonging to Jesus Christ; it was Satan himself.

Laodicea

What is at stake? It is all part of God’s plan that we keep his word, remain true to his name and receive the crown of life. But how can we defeat so great a foe? Is there an option to doing battle with Satan? We might ask Job when we see him. Or ask Jesus.

Is a free ticket home without a fight what PTR teachers are selling to their students? We have brothers and sisters presently fighting

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Satan, right where he lives. They are in places of great danger with names such as Pyongyang, Karachi, Tunis, Kuala Lumpur, Katmandu or Teheran. They are in the nations making up the horn of Africa or Belarus, Afghanistan, the emirates on the Arabian Peninsula, as well as parts of Nigeria, Colombia, China, India, Indonesia and Kenya. There are places unfriendly to Christians too numerous to list here.

Christ's promise to bestow the crown of life on those faithful unto death is not hypothetical for witnesses in the above areas. They take the Good News on foot or bicycle into the jungles of Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. Americans, who have never been in a minor skirmish let alone a real spiritual battle, may believe they receive a crown like Brother Yun, the "Heavenly Man" of China, but how could they?

God's people are, by definition, overcomers. This is more than overcoming the desire to sleep in and miss a worship service. We are talking about engaging Satan in all-out warfare—and winning!

The problem PTR has is illustrated by the church in Philadelphia, particularly with one verse (i.e. *Rev. 3:10*). They do not belong with those honored souls with crowns in Philadelphia. Instead, PTR stalwarts should heed Christ's warning to the church in Laodicea:

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked...

Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

Rev. 3:14-17, 19

Christ loved the Laodiceans. Perhaps this explains the stinging rebuke they received. In his message, Christ makes no mention of Satan or trials or opposition. Why would Satan bother the Laodiceans? They were already outside the battle. Why afflict those on his side? There was an arrangement: As long as these self-sufficient saints stayed in their comfortable church counting their

Crowns

money and admiring their status, the enemy left them alone. However, they acquired a more formidable enemy than the devil, Christ himself.

In the Lord's message to the Laodiceans, there is no mention of perseverance or endurance since living the good life requires neither. They are not in the conflict. At worst, they might be caught in the crossfire. The Laodiceans were neutralized. They were not *for* or *against*. They were pacifists, allied with no one but themselves.

The term Christ used to describe the Laodiceans is "lukewarm." What the word "lukewarm" suggests in this context is that the Christian brothers and sisters in that fair city were good for nothing. Like their water, they were too warm for a refreshing drink or too cool for a refreshing bath. One might put some lukewarm water in the mouth, swish it around; then spit it out. (Yuck!)

As far as the Church in Smyrna or Philadelphia is concerned, Dispensationalists should not go there for any comparisons! Since they claim they are "Tribulation proof," they have nothing in common with the saints who stood against the devil. I can talk tough about what I would do to the enemy, but it would be best if I kept silent in the presence of warriors who actually overcame him.

It's the Greek

We are all subject to error or we may come to a wrong conclusion as a consequence of our bias. But what I address next has a much more sinister side to it—or so it seems.

PTR advocates are not stupid. In fact, most are very intelligent. Several PTR scholars spent years of intense study in fields such as New Testament Greek. They should know what the Greek *parousia* means. They should certainly know what the common preposition *ek* means (*from, as in out of the midst*) and what the Greek preposition *apo* means (*from, as in outside or away from*). The preposition chosen by God in *Revelation 3:10* is "ek" not "apo." If they are not sure, why not consult a Greek-English Lexicon of New Testament words before they assert this verse supports a PTR? That's all it would take to realize no such support for a Pre-Tribulation rapture is present in *Revelation 3:10*. In fact, it is the opposite.

For a thorough treatment of *Revelation 3:10*—and I believe an objective one as well—I highly recommend Robert van Kampen's

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The Rapture Question Answered: Plain and Simple (pgs. 168-178). The Greek is explained and major questions are answered.

It is perhaps the New Living Translation (NLT) that did the best work with *Revelation 3:10*. Their translation reflects the context and eliminates the controversy for all who are objective.

“Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world.”

Revelation 3:10

Think about that: If PTR teachers really had our best interest at heart or if they really sought only the truth, why would they ignore or hide certain evidence from a credible translation like the NLT?

If they knew of the danger, why did the Cunard Lines' owners tell their clerks in April 1915 to ticket passengers for the *Lusitania*? They ignored the German embassy's alert because they had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. The owners were not on the May 1915 voyage. If the worst happened, they were insured.

The plain and simple truth is that those who believe they are not in any danger are living in Laodicea, far away from the persecuted saints in Smyrna and Philadelphia. Those subscribing to PTR teaching are most likely to fall away when trials come.

If we say we are prepared either way, that's fine. But what about our children, families and those with whom we have influence? Do we care if they board the PTR ship? How has our lack of conviction left them subject to false prophets and unprepared for what happens immediately prior to Christ's return? More on that is ahead.

*

In Summary- To support their views, PTR teachers use *Revelation 3:10* as evidence God will “remove” his people (i.e. the Church) from the world prior to the tribulation. They misinterpret the passage while ignoring the Bible's pattern God allows trials to prove our worthiness.

Going Deeper- As the saying goes, “A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text.” Proof texts are used by ideologues to make it

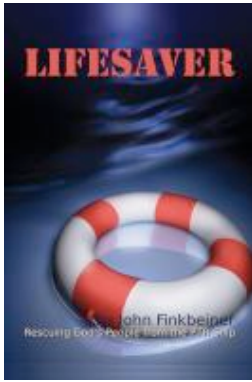
Crowns

look like Scripture is offering supportive evidence, yet, if we read carefully, it really is not.

“No one knows the day or the hour, not even the angels ...but only the Father.” (Matthew 24:36) This verse is often repeated by PTR followers. What is the context of Jesus’ words? This chapter of *Matthew* (24) and the next (25) provide the Lord’s answer to his disciple’s question in 24:3, *“What will be **the sign** of your coming and of the end of the age?”* (cf. *Mark 13:4* and *Luke 21:7*) Does this prophecy support or help undermine PTR?

*This is what the LORD says:
“Sing with joy for Jacob;
shout for the foremost of the nations.
Make your praises heard, and say,
‘O LORD, save your people,
the remnant of Israel.’
See, I will bring them from the land of the north
and gather them from the ends of the earth.
Among them will be the blind and the lame,
expectant mothers and women in labor;
a great throng will return.
They will come with weeping;
they will pray as I bring them back.
I will lead them beside streams of water
on a level path where they will not stumble,
because I am Israel’s father,
and Ephraim is my firstborn son.*

Jeremiah 31:7-9



*In the battle for which view of the end times is most popular among Bible-believers, Pre-tribulation Rapture (PTR), or the "any moment rapture" teaching, is the clear winner. Yet, is it accurate or is it a clever deception? Lifesaver proves PTR is a fraud while it highlights the truth. With Scripture, **Lifesaver** warns would-be passengers for the PTR ship. If ever Christians needed a compelling book on what's coming, it is now; it is **Lifesaver**!*

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