
RECENT PRE-TRIB RAPTURE FINDINGS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

LEE W. BRAINARD

Researcher, Prophecy Teacher, Pastor/Elder
Harvey, North Dakota
leebrainard@soothkeep.info

<https://soothkeep.info/>

SLIDES

SLIDE #1

A. RECENT PRE-TRIB RAPTURE FINDINGS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

- 1) These passages were found in Greek works and fragments of works. The vast majority of these works are untranslated.
- 2) The translations of the Greek texts and the Latin titles are my own.

SLIDE #2

Before we examine my findings, lets take up five relevant questions. The first is:

A. WHY INVESTIGATE & PRESENT THE PRE-TRIB RAPTURE IN THE EARLY FATHERS?

AFTER ALL:

- 1) Who cares whether or not there are pre-trib rapture references in the early fathers?
- 2) We know patristic references can't and don't PROVE the pre-trib rapture!
- 3) The proof is in the Bible — the types in OT, the allusions and foretastes in Gospels, the revelation of the mystery in Paul, the portrait of the rapture and the churchless tribulation in the book of Revelation.

B. The answer to the *why* question is APOLOGETICS!

C. THE DEFENSE OF **THE HISTORICAL FACT THAT THE REVELATIONAL TRUTH OF THE PRE-TRIB RAPTURE HAD STRONG TESTIMONY IN THE EARLY CHURCH**

- 1) this testimony vital part of the chain of historical evidence that connects the pre-trib rapture teaching of the Bible to the revival of pretribulation rapture teaching that began in early 1800s:
- 2) The chain of evidence runs:
 - One, the clear teaching in the Bible
 - Two, the clear testimony of the early church
 - Three, the dark ages when Bible and pretribulationism (and premillennialism) were largely buried under the rubble of a militant amillennial, allegorical theology that dominated the doctrinal scene for over a thousand years.

—Four, the rise of pretribulation testimony again in the rise of the Reformation with its principle of literal interpretation. [NOTE --- This rise is documented by William Watson in *Dispensationalism Before Darby*.]

— Five, the rise of modern pretribulationism in the early 1800s.

D. PATRISTIC PRE-TRIB EVIDENCE ANSWERS THE COMMON REPROACH THAT THE PRE-TRIB RAPTURE IS NEW TEACHING

- 1) It is a mere libel that the pre-trib rapture was introduced by J.N. Darby in 1830 under dubious circumstances.
- 2) There is clear patristic and post-Reformation testimony for the pre-trib rapture that long precedes Darby.
- 3) Moreover, it is an easily verifiable historical fact that Darby came to believe in the pre-trib rapture in 1827 and that Margaret McDonald's rapture followed 3.5 years of tribulation.

NOTE — For more information, see my YouTube video on Margaret MacDonald to find out what she and the Irvingites really believed — <https://soothkeep.info/margaret-macdonald-what-she-really-taught/>

SLIDE #3

How did I find these passages?

A. THE CHAIN OF EVENTS ON MY PATRISTIC FINDINGS

B. RESEARCH — APOSTASIA RESEARCH RELATIVE TO DEBATE ON 2 THESS 2:3

- 1) My project was examining and categorizing every instance of *apostasia* from its first use (which proved to be around 250 BC in Archimedes) to AD 500.

NOTE — Over this 750 year stretch, there were 283 instances: secular, biblical, Jewish, and patristic.

NOTE --- For the results of my research into the Koine usage of *apostasia* and into the meaning of *departure* and *departing* in early the English, Latin, and German versions, see my book *Apostasia in 2 Thessalonians 2:3—Rapture or Apostasy?* It is available on Amazon (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09LXRHHK8>) as well as Google Play, iTunes, and B&N.

C. DISCOVERY — STUMBLED UPON A PRE-TRIB RAPTURE PASSAGE IN EPHRAIM

- 1) While examining an *apostasia* reference in Ephraim's work, *Fifty-Five Beatitudes*, I chanced upon the line, "Blessed is he who unceasingly remembers the fear of Gehenna and hastens to sincerely repent ... for he shall be delivered from the great tribulation."
- 2) I was stunned. It wasn't the Ephraim passage I was familiar with that Grant Jeffrey had discovered in 1994 in the Latin work *On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World*. "For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins."

D. VERIFICATION — CHECKED THE PUBLISHED LISTS OF KNOWN PATRISTIC PRE-TRIB REFERENCES.

- 1) My discovery wasn't mentioned. There was only the one known Latin Ephraim reference. I was trembling with anticipation. Was it possible there were more?

E. INITIAL SEARCH — SEARCHED A SELECT POOL OF PROPHETIC WORKS

- 1) searched through the titles of all 150+ works, all of which were in Latin
- 2) selected a half dozen works with obvious focus on prophecy
- 3) read these works start to finish and discovered a half dozen rapture passages

F. FULL SEARCH — SEARCHED THE ENTIRE BODY OF 150+ WORKS

- 1) Made a list of prophetic terms that I had found in the rapture passages, searched the entire body one term at a time, and added new terms to my search list as I uncovered them.
- 2) Ultimately, I found 10 crystal-clear pre-trib passages and 20 further rapture passages. Gold mine!

G. COMMUNICATION — COULDN'T KEEP THE NEWS TO MYSELF.

- 1) Sent a letter outlining my finds to Gary Stearman. Gary forwarded it to Mondo Gonzales. Mondo forwarded it to Tommy Ice.
- 2) So here I am today. Late addition to the Pre-Trib Study Group Conference.

SLIDE #4

Where am I searching or planning to search?

- A. THREE CLASSES OF FATHERS BEING SEARCHED
- B. KNOWN PREMILLENNIALISTS AND PRETRIBULATIONISTS — IRENAEUS, CYPRIAN, CHRYSOSTOM
- C. EASTERN/ANTIOCHIAN FATHERS — EPHRAIM OF SYRIA, THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA
- D. PROVOCATIVE AMILLENNIALISTS NOT IN LOCKSTEP WITH "ORTHODOXY" — EUSEBIUS, ORIGEN

SLIDE #5

How am I searching? Largely through search terms.

A. MAIN SEARCH TERMS

- harpazō (to seize)
- apantēsis (meeting) — from 1 Thess. 4:17, "MEET the Lord in the air"
- analambanō (take up) — common rapture term in early fathers
- paralambanō (take) — from Luke 17:34, "one SHALL BE TAKEN"
- parousia (royal entrance) --- from 1 Thess. 4:15 and 2 Thess. 2:1
- sunagō (gather) — same root as synagogue (gathering)
- anabainō (ascend)
- petomai (fly) --- "I'll fly away O glory, I'll fly away"
- nephelai (clouds)
- salpingx (trumpet)
- kibōton (ark) — from the analogy of Noah's ark, usually "heavenly ark"
- antichristos (antichrist)
- thērion (beast)
- drakōn (dragon) — used of both Satan and the antichrist
- ōra (hour) — from Rev. 3:10, "the hour of testing"
- peirasmos (trial) — from Rev. 3:10, "the hour of testing"
- orgē (wrath)
- thumos (anger)
- thlipsis (tribulation)
- tēreō (keep) — Rev. 3:10, keep from the hour of trial
- sōzō (save)

SLIDE #6

What are my recent discoveries?

A. RECENT DISCOVERIES

B. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN — 10 CHRYSTAL-CLEAR PRE-TRIB RAPTURE PASSAGES

1) Also found 20 further obvious rapture passages (meeting in the clouds, etc.) but with no timing elements in their context that demanded a pre-trib rapture.

C. IRENAEUS, AGAINST HERESIES 5.29.1 — GREEK FRAG. CLEARER THAN THE LATIN

1) Found the Greek fragment of this well-known rapture passage, and it appears to be an even stronger testimony for the pre-trib rapture than the Latin passage found in the Latin translation used to make the English translation.

D. EUSEBIUS — FOUND SEVERAL PROVOCATIVE PASSAGES

1) But I haven't finished analyzing his eschatology, so I'm not quite as bold here compared to the absolute confidence I have in the Ephraim discoveries.

2) Nonetheless, they look pre-trib to me and are definitely worth bringing to your attention.

SLIDE #7

A. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

B. AKA EPHRAEM OR EPHREM

C. BORN IN 306 AND DIED IN 373

D. BORN IN NISIBIS, LIVED IN EDESSA [the last decade of his life]

E. IMPORTANT AND PROLIFIC SYRIAN FATHER IN 4TH CENT.

F. MAINTAINED PRETRIBULATIONAL TESTIMONY

G. WROTE THREE MILLION LINES OF HYMNS, [POETRY], SERMONS, PROSE

H. WROTE IN SYRIAC, WORKS TRANSLATED INTO GREEK

1) most were translated in his lifetime according to Sozomen, 5th cent historian

I. GREEK TRANSLATIONS WERE ACCURATE

1) according to Sozomen

J. ADMIRER AND READ FOR CENTURIES AFTER HIS DEATH

1) for all practical purposes, Ephraim was the Spurgeon of his day

NOTE — I won't go into the Pseudo-Ephraim controversy, but I have included my thoughts on the matter in the Extra Material section at the end of this outline. In short, I think the Pseudo-Ephraim argument is way overblown.

NOTE — All of Ephraim's Greek rapture passages that are in this study are available on my website (www.soothkeep.info) in their entirety in both the Greek and the English.

SLIDE #8 — Ephraim Quotation #1

A. "Blessed is he who unceasingly remembers the fear of Gehenna and hastens to sincerely repent ... for he shall be **delivered from the great tribulation.**"

1) This is the first rapture passage I discovered, which started me on this amazing odyssey in the untranslated and obscure Greek writings of the early fathers

2) Notice the clear statement that the church "shall be delivered from the great tribulation." This is an indisputable reference to the time of persecution under the antichrist mentioned in Matthew 24.

3) NOTICE the hint of a performance-based gospel. This is common in Ephraim and many others in early church. Don't let this problematic tendency in his gospel get in the way of enjoying his clear pre-trib testimony. Soteriology and Eschatology are different things.

B. *Fifty-Five Beatitudes*

1) Latin title — *Beautitudines, capita quinquaginta quinque*

- 2) Roger Pearse #30, TLG #29
- 3) Access Ephraim's texts at <https://www.roger-pearse.com/weblog/ephrain-graecus-works/>
- 4) Access Ephraim's texts at TLG (Thesaurus Linguae Graecae) — <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/>
- 5) The Ephraim text used in my research and presentation is Phrantzolas' Greek edition.

SLIDE #9 — Ephraim Quotation #2

A. "For the elect shall be gathered **prior to the tribulation**, so they **shall not see the confusion and the great tribulation** coming upon the unrighteous world."

- 1) Again, notice the use of the term "great tribulation."
- 2) "Gathered prior to the great tribulation" is clear presentation of a pretribulation rapture.
- 3) Notice, he expected the rapture *before* (not at) the beginning of the tribulation, "*prior to the tribulation*".
- 4) Notice the clarification, "so they shall not see the confusion and the great tribulation." This in itself implies he believed that the church won't be down here on earth.
- 5) Notice the understanding that the great tribulation comes upon the world, not merely upon believers.

B. *Sermon on Repentance and Judgment and the Separation of the Soul From the Body*

- 1) Latin title — Sermo de paenitentia et iudicio et separation animae et corporis
- 2) Roger Pearse #60, TLG #61
- 3) Accessed at TLG, Phrantzolas' Greek edition

SLIDE #10 — Ephraim Quotation #3

A. "The righteous ... shall be **seized up in the clouds** to meet him. While those who are lazy and timid like me shall **remain on earth trembling**."

- 1) Clear pretrib testimony based on 1 Thess. 4.
- 2) Clear distinction between those who go up to meet the Lord in the air and those who are left behind, terrified because they are going into the tribulation.
- 3) Notice that this also addresses the issue of false professors and true believers
- 4) Notice also the pseudo-humility that characterized Ephraim and many of the ascetics in the early church. False debasing of one's self. "remain on earth trembling"

B. *On the Second Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ*

- 1) Latin title — In secundum adventum domini nostril Jesu Christi
- 2) Roger Pearse #49, TLG #48
- 3) Accessed at TLG, Phrantzolas' Greek edition

SLIDE #11 — Ephraim Quotation #4

A. "Again, when we see **the saints in glory flying off** in light in the clouds of the air to meet Christ, the king of glory, but see **ourselves in the great tribulation**, who shall be able to bear that shame and terrible reproach?"

- 1) Once again an allusion to 1 Thess. 4. Note the use of the term "great tribulation."
- 2) Separation of the saved and unsaved; church going up and the unsaved remaining behind.
- 3) Note again the infiltration of a pseudo-humility which falsely debases one's self

B. *On the Fathers Who Have Completed Their Course*

- 1) Latin title — Sermo in patres defunctos
- 2) Roger Pearse #16, TLG #15
- 3) Accessed at TLG, Phrantzolas' Greek edition

SLIDE #12 — Ephraim Quotation #5

A. "Watch always, praying continually, that you may be worthy to **escape the tribulation** ... if anyone has tears and compunction, let him pray the Lord that he might be **delivered from the tribulation** which is about to come upon the earth, that he might **not see it all, nor the beast himself, nor even hear of its terrors.**"

1) Notice the language! The qualification "that he might not see it at all, etc." demonstrates emphatically that he was using "escape" and "delivered from" in the sense of removal before the tribulation, not protection through it.

B. *Sermon on the Advent, the End, and the Coming of the Antichrist*

1) Latin title — Sermo in adventum domini, et de consummatione saeculi, et in adventum antichristi

2) Roger Pearse #53, TLG #52

3) Accessed at TLG, Phrantzolas' Greek edition

SLIDE #13 — Ephraim Quotation #6

A. "Let us take up ... the full armor ... that we may be able to fight the good fight ... that we might be **delivered from the wrath** coming upon the sons of disobedience."

1) Here we see the term "wrath" used

2) On the positive side of his gospel, he definitely had not given in to the antinomian error. He understood that faith involves a fight — swimming against the current of the sewer not contentedly drifting with it.

B. *On Patience and the Consummation of this Age, and on the Second Coming*

1) Latin title — De patientia et consummatione huius saeculi, ac de secundo adventu

2) Roger Pearse #55, TLG #54

3) Accessed at TLG, Phrantzolas' Greek edition

SLIDE #14 — Ephraim Quotation #7

A. "Count us worth, Lord, of **the rapture of the righteous**, when they meet you the Master in the clouds, that we might **not be tried by the bitter and inexorable judgment.**"

1) This passage is loaded with useful information for pretrib scholars.

2) "Rapture" is *harpagē*, the noun associated with the verb *harpazō* (rapture, seize, snatch)

3) Notice the use of the term "judgment" here; so far Ephraim has the rapture preserving men from the great tribulation, from the tribulation, from wrath, and now from judgment.

4) The verb "tried" is the passive of *peirazō* (prove, try), which alludes to Rev. 3:10 and "the hour of trial" or "the hour of proving." That week will prove every man ultimately as either a beast marked unbeliever or a God marked believer.

5) Notice the phrase "not be tried." Ephraim did not see the last days deliverance promises as a guarantee that the church will pass the test when tried by the hour of trial, but a guarantee that she won't be tried by the hour of trial.

6) Here again we have the pretribulation rapture stated in the strongest terms possible.

7) RABBIT TRAIL — The rapture is not escapism. The church has suffered tribulation for nearly 2000 years. It is her place to suffer tribulation. The rapture is removing the church from her time of trial so God can place Israel and the world in their own unique time of trial, a time when eschatological judgment will be quickly scaled up. His purpose is to purify Israel and bring the nation into the New Covenant, use the motive of fear to save as many as possible out of the world, and judge the world at large.

B. *Sermon on the Resurrection of the Dead*

- 1) Latin title — De resurrectione mortuorum sermo
- 2) Roger Pearse #62, TLG #63
- 3) Accessed at TLG, Phrantzolas' Greek edition

SLIDE #15 — Ephraim Quotation #8

A. "Take us out from the coming fear, and count us worthy of that rapture (snatching away) when the righteous are raptured (snatched) in the clouds to the air to meet the King of glory."

- 1) "Remove us from the coming fear." The Greek language used *phobos* (fear) objectively and not merely subjectively. Think *coming terrors* or *coming horrors*. The Lord will remove us from this planet prior to the coming terrors.
- 2) Again notice the noun *harpagē* (rapture, snatching). And the verb *harpazō*.
- 3) Also notice the noun *apantēsis* (meeting). This is the word used for the meeting in the air in 1 Thess. 4:17.
- 4) RABBIT TRAIL — *Apantesis* is helpful term. We talk about two comings in a pragmatic or practical sense to distinguish the rapture and the second coming. This is not wrong. Indeed, it is necessary. But technically, there is only one coming (one parousia), the glorious appearance to establish the kingdom. The rapture, as we see in 1 Thess. 4:17, is the *apantesis* of the *parousia*, the going out to meet the king in his train to accompany him in his royal parousia, his royal entrance.

B. *The Destruction of Pride*

- 1) Latin title — Ad eversionem superbiae
- 2) Roger Pearse #3, TLG #3
- 3) Accessed at TLG, Phrantzolas' Greek edition

SLIDE #16 — Ephraim Quotation #9

A. "Blessed are those who cry day and night that they should be delivered from the coming wrath."

- 1) Here the time of judgment again referred to as "wrath."
- 2) Notice this is not deliverance *through* but deliverance *from*
- 3) "Should be delivered" is aorist subjunctive

B. *How the Soul Ought to Pray God with Tears*

- 1) Latin title — Quomodo anima cum lacrymis debeat orare deum
- 2) Roger Pearse #23, TLG #22
- 3) Accessed at TLG, Phrantzolas' Greek edition

SLIDE # 17 — Ephraim Quotation #10

A. "Blessed are those who cry day and night because they shall be delivered from the coming wrath."

- 1) Once again the time of judgment referred to as "wrath."
- 2) Very similar to above except "shall be delivered" is the future indicative while the prior passage stated the same thing with the aorist subjunctive.
- 3) For the Greek mavens, great example that the future indicative and the aorist subjunctive have significant semantic overlap in promises and purpose clauses.

B. *On the Blessed and the Cursed*

- 1) Latin title — De beatitudinibus atque infelicitatibus
- 2) Roger Pearse #41, TLG #40

3) Accessed at TLG, Phrantzolas' Greek edition

SLIDE #18

A. OBSERVATIONS ON EPHRAIM'S RAPTURE POSITION

- 1) He employed great tribulation, tribulation, wrath, judgment, and the coming confusion as synonyms.
 - a. All of these terms refer to the hour of trial that shall come upon the whole world to try those that dwell upon the earth.
 - b. The case that he taught a pre-trib rapture is a well-rounded case is built on a variety of expressions and qualifications. It isn't built on a single technical term.
 - c. Many will question the wisdom of equating the great tribulation and the tribulation. I would point out that many early fathers only knew the 3.5 year tribulation. Understanding this will clear up several difficulties.
- 2) He didn't make a quibbling distinction between tribulation and wrath.
- 3) He expected false Christians to be left behind at the rapture, with the world at large, to face the horrors of the tribulation.
- 4) He used a broad selection of terms for the rapture: gather (*sunagō*), fly (*petomai*), seize (*harpazō*), deliver (*ruomai*), meet (*apantaō*), and remove (*exaireō*). Again, the case that Ephraim was pre-trib isn't based on a single technical term.
- 5) He regularly employed the prepositions *ek* (out) and *apo* (from) to emphasize the church's exclusion from the tribulation.
- 6) He expected the rapture to happen before (not at) the beginning of the tribulation. See "prior to the tribulation" on slide #2.

SLIDE #19

A. LATIN EPHRAIM AND GREEK EPHRAIM COMPARED

B. Ephraim's Latin work, *On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World* — the source of the well-known rapture passage discovered by Grant Jeffrey — features the same terms, the same turns of expression, the same eschatology as the Greek Ephraim works that I have been examining.

- 1) both have a three and a half year long "great tribulation" with literal antichrist
- 2) both use "confusion" as a term for the time of tribulation
- 3) both use "dragon" for the antichrist as well as for Satan
- 4) both regard tribulation as both persecution of the saints and judgment on the world
- 5) both mention plagues, famines, droughts, and earthquakes in the tribulation
- 6) both have Elijah and Enoch returning in the tribulation
 - a. In his Greek work, *Sermon on the Advent, the End, and the Antichrist*, he has Enoch and Elijah evangelizing during this time, and the saved souls are preserved through the tribulation because the Lord hides them in covert locations.
- 7) both have the church returning with Christ at the second coming

NOTE — This is telling. It implies that both works were penned by the same author.

NOTE — For more information on the eschatology of Ephraim, see my translation of his work *Sermon on the Advent, the End, and the Antichrist* (#53 Pearse, #52 TLG) at <https://soothkeep.info/ephraim-the-syrian-sermon-on-advent-end-age-antichrist-english/>.

NOTE — See also my observations on the above work at <https://soothkeep.info/ephraim-the-syrian-sermon-on-the-advent-of-the-lord-the-consummation-of-the-age-and-the-advent-of-the-antichrist-observations/>.

NOTE — See also my observations on his eschatology in general at <https://soothkeep.info/ephraim-the-syrian-observations-on-his-eschatology/>.

SLIDE #20

A. IRENAEUS

- 1) born c. 130 and died c. 202
- 2) born in Smyrna (modern Izmir, Turkey)
- 3) bishop of Lugdunum (modern Lyon, France)
- 4) maintained premillennial and pretribulational testimony
- 5) knew Polycarp from Smyrna (Polycarp was a disciple of John)
 - one generation removed from apostolic age
- 6) his premier work was *Against Heresies* — hammered error, especially gnosticism
- 7) most of his works have not survived
 - they suffered the same fate as many chiliast works in the early church, being burned and suppressed by the dominant allegorical school

SLIDE #21

A. AGAINST HERESIES 5.29.1 — GREEK STRONGER

B. “**When** in the end the Church **shall be** suddenly **caught up** from this, it is said, ‘There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.’ For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.” ~ Irenaeus

- 1) This is one of the strongest pre-trib rapture passages in the early fathers

C. Latin — **cum** ... Ecclesia **assumetur**
when ... the church **shall be caught up**

D. Greek — τῆς ἐκκλησίας **ἀναλαμβάνομένης**
 of the church **being caught up**

E. Latin has “**when**” with regular verb “**shall be caught up**”

F. Greek has the participial phrase “**being caught up**”

NOTE --- *assumetur* in Latin is an allusion to "one *shall be taken*, the other left" in Luke 17:34 in the old Latin. Many early fathers handled this passage the same way as most pre-tribbers today do. The church is taken and the ungodly left.

SLIDE #22

Let's take a closer look at the Greek.

A. AGAINST HERESIES 5.29.1 — CLOSER LOOK

REVIEW FULL PASSAGE — “When in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, ‘There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.’ For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.” ~ Irenaeus

B. Greek — τῆς ἐκκλησίας **ἀναλαμβάνομένης**, ἔσται ... **θλίψις**
 of the church **being caught up** there shall be ... **tribulation**

- 1) ἀναλαμβάνομένης = present indicative passive participle = “the church being caught up”
 - a. This is a circumstantial participial phrase that qualifies the main verb "there shall be tribulation"
 - b. This participial phrase portrays the rapture as a defining circumstance that flags the nearness of the tribulation.

- c. "the church being caught up, there shall be tribulation" = "once the church is caught up, there shall be tribulation"
- d. Some might press this as *present action* and claim that this construction technically means that the tribulation shall begin while the church is enroute to the clouds, "while the church is being caught up, there shall be tribulation." But I think this is a mistake. I think the present tense is being used to communicate the *present fact* of the rapture. The coming of the tribulation shall not come until after the rapture of the church is an accomplished fact, a done deal.
- e. A similar example in English would be, "The lumber being purchased, they shall start building." This does not mean they will start building while the lumber is in the process of being purchased. It means after the lumber is purchased and delivered, they will start building.

NOTE — The present tense is used in Greek to communicate present facts as well as present action. (This use of the present tense overlaps with both perfect and the aorist)

C. The Greek paints the contrast between the rapture and the tribulation more emphatically than the Latin.

- 1) Some ambiguity with Latin — "when the church shall be caught up, there shall be tribulation" could mean the church will be raptured during a time of tribulation, though we know from the context and other Irenaeus passages that this is not the case.
- 2) No ambiguity with Greek. It plainly communicates conditionality or temporal succession.
 - a. "the church being caught up, there shall be tribulation"
 - b. "upon the rapture happening, the tribulation shall happen"
 - c. "once the rapture happens, then the tribulation shall happen"
- 3) The circumstantial participial clause clarifies the temporal distinction between the rapture and the tribulation.
- 4) The circumstantial participial clause clarifies the distinction between the raptured church and the trib saints in the last contest of the righteous.

NOTE — The final contest mentioned is not the church's final contest, but the saints' final contest. There was a contest prior to the flood, a contest in patriarchal era, and a contest during Israel's era. There is a contest during the church age. And there will be a contest in the tribulation.

SLIDE #23

A. EUSEBIUS

- 1) born 260-265 and died 339-340
- 2) bishop of Caesarea by the Sea
- 3) influential scholar, regarded as the most learned man of his day
- 4) most well known work is *Ecclesiastical History*
- 5) suspected of Arianism, influenced by Origen
- 6) enjoyed the favor of Constantine
 - a. through Constantine's favor, saw orthodox men like Eustathius and Athanasius deposed
- 7) employed allegorical method and was apparently amillennial
 - a. nonetheless, found several provocative passages in his writings

SLIDE #24

A. FRAGMENTS IN DANIEL, FRAG ε

- 1) Migne 24.528

B. "From which I conclude that the apostle Paul was moved to write in this manner on the second coming of Christ. «For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a command, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God,» and so forth. But the same apostle also **set forth in order** in his prophetic writings the **ultimate** coming of the antichrist and his depravity, and **after this** the glorious appearing of our Saviour." ~ Eusebius

— Ἐντεῦθεν οἶμαι τὸν ἀπόστολον Παῦλον ὀρμᾶσθαι περὶ τῆς δευτέρας ἀφίξεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ γράφοντα τοιάδε· Ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ Κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι Θεοῦ καταβήσεται ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς. Ὁ δ’ αὐτὸς ἀπόστολος καὶ τὴν ὑστάτην τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου ἀφίξιν τὴν καὶ ἀπώλειαν, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τὴν τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν ἐνδοξον παρουσίαν ἀκολουθῶς τῇ προφητεία παρίστησι λέγων· ~ Eusebius

C. Notice the statement that these things are **set forth in order** in Paul's prophetic writings.

1) Greek *akolouthōs*, adverb, *following each other* (1, 2, 3, or A, B, C). Consecutive.

D. Notice the order.

1) The rapture — the Lord's descent from heaven to gather his church

2) the coming of the antichrist

3) the glorious appearance when the antichrist is destroyed.

E. The "**ultimate** coming of the antichrist" is not ultimate in the sense that it is the antichrist's final coming. It is ultimate in the following senses:

1) the coming of the antichrist follows the coming of Christ for the gathering of the church.

2) the coming of the antichrist is the ultimate goal of the mystery of iniquity.

3) the coming of the antichrist is slated for the end of the world.

NOTE --- defense of "ultimate" as the translation of ὑστατος (hustatos) which is the comparative of ὕστερος (husteros) "latter, coming after, later, following"

1) Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.2.26 --- τὴν **ὑστάτην** ἐνανθρώπησιν αὐτοῦ, "his **ultimate** incarnation" --- this is where the program of redemption was headed

2) Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 8.9.5 --- μετὰ τε χαρᾶς καὶ γέλωτος καὶ εὐφροσύνης τὴν **ὑστάτην** ἀπόφασιν τοῦ θανάτου καταδεχόμενοι, "with joy and laughter and gladness receiving the **final** sentence of death" --- not the last time they die, more likely the **ultimate** sentence of death, think capital punishment.

3) Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 9.P.1 --- Περὶ τῆς **ὑστάτης** ἀπωλείας τῶν τῆς θεοσεβείας ἐχθρῶν. "Concerning the **ultimate** perdition (punishment) of the enemies of godliness"

NOTE --- Defense of translating ἀπώλεια (apōleia) by "depravity" rather than "perdition"

1) "Depravity" was a common meaning for ἀπώλεια (apōleia) in the church fathers according to Lampe's *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*.

2) Anyone seeking to read the fathers later than the Apostolic Fathers needs to use Lampe's *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Not infrequently you will find words used in the fathers, especially in the fourth and following centuries, in senses we don't see in the NT or Koine in general.

SLIDE #25

A. COMMENTARY IN PSALMS, 75

1) Migne 23.876

B. "Then they shall be exalted when they shall reign with their own king according to the apostle who said, «For the **first fruits** is Christ, **then** those who are Christ's in his parousia, **then the end**, when he shall deliver the kingdom to his God and Father, when he shall destroy all authority and power." ~ Eusebius

—Τότε δὲ ὑψωθήσεται, ἐπειδὴν συμβασιλεύῃ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ βασιλεῖ κατὰ τὸν Ἀπόστολον, ὃς φησιν· «Ἀπαρχὴ γὰρ Χριστός· εἶτα οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ· εἶτα τὸ τέλος, ὅταν παραδιδῶ τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ Θεῷ καὶ Πατρὶ, ὅταν καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν.» ~ Eusebius
C. Notice Eusebius' near verbatim citation of Paul's delineation of God's prophetic order in 1 Corinthians 15:23-24.

- Christ the first fruits
- those who are Christ's at his parousia (rapture)
- the end, when everything is set permanently right

D. Now factor in that Eusebius is amillennial — With the school of thought as a whole, he holds that at the 2nd coming there will be a general resurrection of all the dead, godly and ungodly.

E. This order + amillennialism = a pretribulation rapture that is distinct from the second coming

NOTE — In the search for pre-trib references in the early fathers, amillennialism can be your friend.

NOTE — This seems to demand a pre-trib rapture. This appears to validate every seeming pre-trib rapture passage in Eusebius' writings. It gives them a rigid theological backbone.

SLIDE #26

A. FRAGMENTS IN LUKE, 17:26 ff.

1) Migne 24.584-585

B. As all perished then except those gathered with Noah in the ark, so also at his coming, the ungodly in the season of apostasy ... shall perish ... while those men found of God are to be gathered into the heavenly ark and saved according to the pattern of Noah ... all the righteous and godly are to be separated from the ungodly and gathered into the heavenly ark of God. For in this way [comes the time] when not even one righteous man will be found any more among mankind. And when all the ungodly have been made atheists by the antichrist, and the whole world is overcome by apostasy, the wrath of God shall come upon the ungodly. ~ Eusebius

— Ἀλλ' ὥς τότε πάντας μὲν ἀπόλεσεν, οὐ μὴν καὶ τοὺς συνηγμένους ἅμα τῷ Νῶε ἐν τῇ κιβωτῷ, οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ παρουσίας οἱ μὲν ἀσεβεῖς κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς ἀποστασίας ... ἀπολοῦνται. ... συναχθῆναι εἰς τὴν ἐπουράνιον τοῦ Θεοῦ κιβωτὸν, καὶ διασωθῆναι τοὺς τότε εὐρεθησομένους τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀνθρώπους, κατὰ τὸ παράδειγμα τὸ ἐπὶ τοῦ Νῶε· ... οὕτως καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος ... πάντας τοὺς ἐπὶ γῆς δικαίους καὶ θεοσεβεῖς ἀφορισθῆναι τῶν ἀσεβῶν, καὶ συναχθῆναι εἰς τὴν ἐπουράνιον τοῦ Θεοῦ κιβωτὸν· οὕτω γὰρ μηκέτι μηδενὸς δικαίου ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὕρισκομένου, πάντων δὲ ἀθέων ἀσεβῶν τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου γεγονότων, τῆς τε ἀποστασίας καθ' ὅλης τῆς οἰκουμένης κρατησάσης, ἢ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὀργὴ τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς μετελεύσεται. ~ Eusebius

C. Notice the order.

- Gathered into the ark!
- Not one righteous man left. (introduces the season of apostasy)
- The visitation of wrath.

NOTE — The "season of apostasy" here corresponds with "the time of the antichrist" in the Daniel fragment.

SLIDE #27

A. INSIGHT ON PATRISTIC AMILLENNIALISM

- 1) In our day amillennialism and the rejection of pre-tribulationism go hand in hand.
- 2) For some in the early church, the thousand years was regarded as a different issue than the tribulation and the rapture.
- 3) Eusebius was amillennial, yet appears to hold a pre-tribulation rapture.

- 4) So far, evidence in his Greek works suggests that Ephraim of Syria was amillennial, yet I found indisputable pretribulation rapture passages in his works.
- 5) This aspect of patristic eschatology needs to be investigated much more thoroughly. I suspect we will find more pre-trib amillennialists if we do more digging.

SLIDE #28

A. CONCLUSION

- 1) These passages greatly enlarge the known body of evidence for a pre-trib testimony in the early church.
- 2) These passages suggest that the pre-trib testimony in the early church was deeper and broader than most of us suspected.
- 3) The works of Ephraim and Eusebius add a significant body of material for framing a theology of pre-tribulational eschatology in the early church.
- 4) These works suggest that the eschatology of Ephraim preserved in the known Latin work is not a fluke, but indicative of a lively and extensive pre-trib testimony in the 4th century.

SLIDE #29

A. One short life to be a good soldier; One long eternity to be a fulfilled human being.

- 1) "endure hardship as a good soldier" (2 Tim. 2:3)
- 2) "do exploits" (Dan. 11:32)

EXTRA MATERIAL

CLAIMS OF PSEUDO-EPHRAIM

- 1) It is often claimed that hundreds of Ephraim's works are forgeries that were made two to three centuries after Ephraim passed away. Most of his Greek and Latin works and some of his Syriac works are regarded as having been written by many different pretenders. They are all summed up under Pseudo-Ephraim, and are generally dated in the 6th or 7th century. Sometimes later.
- 2) The theory claims that the many overlaps between distinct Ephraim works in Greek, Latin, and Syriac suggest that scribes and pretenders were borrowing from each other.
- 3) One of the common arguments made is that the Latin work *On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World* and the Syriac work *On the End of the World* are the same work, and that they are so hopelessly muddled that neither can be trusted.

RESPONSE TO PSEUDO-EPHRAIM CLAIM

- 1) This is not a linear argument, but a number of observations made in no particular order.
- 2) In my estimation, these differences are not based on substantial and reasonable internal criticism that examines the theology, soteriology, eschatology, asceticism, and vocabulary of the Greek, Latin, and Syriac works of Ephraim. It is based on the same irrational skepticism that casts doubt on a single author of Isaiah, the historicity of Daniel, the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible, ad infinitum.
- 3) The differences between the many unique works in Greek, Latin, and Syriac is not best traced to a multitude of unscrupulous scribes and pretenders but to the fact that many of his works are sermons not theological works. There is, by the very nature of the case, tons of overlap between messages. Seeing how historical criticism works when it is executed with prejudices rather than judicious principles, I can easily imagine how some scholar a thousand years down the road could spawn a

theory that most of my sermons are forgeries, being the work of a half dozen forgers, who are all lumped together as Pseudo-Brainard. Some of my distinct sermons have extensive overlapping in themes and passages cited. Even when I follow my sermon outlines, I often give vastly different messages. Which ones are the real Brainard and which ones are Pseudo-Brainard?

4) While there may well be a few forgeries or unidentifiable works or mislabeled works out there, these should be identified by a broad and full internal criticism, not by a method that would reject most of Spurgeon's works as forgeries.

5) It must be borne in mind that Ephraim wrote over three million lines of hymns, poetry, sermons, and prose, that most of these works were translated into Greek during his lifetime (per Sozomen), that these translations were accurate (per Sozomen), and that they were loved and read for centuries. How could hundreds of forgeries be passed off in such an environment and the genuine works disappear? That seems as difficult for me to believe as that Pharaoh's army was drowned in four or five feet of water in the Reed Sea. While eschatology-bearing works appear to have been purged from the ranks of his Latin works, this is definitely not the case in his Greek works. They are still read today in some Greek-speaking Orthodox circles.

6) Another problem that comes into play in the Ephraim question is that replacement-theory unbelief quashed many of the works of the chiliasts (pre-millennialists) and attempted to take them out of circulation. Ephraim's works suffered this fate too. Particularly in regard, apparently, to his Latin works. But the Greek works were preserved in Eastern locations.

7) The differences between the Latin work *On the Last Times, the Antichrist*, and the Syriac work *On the End of the World* are best explained as their being two distinct works. The Latin work addresses the pretribulation rapture and the Syriac work is focused on the Gog and Magog prophecy in Ezekiel 38-39. There is zero reason to believe, if we employ sober internal criticism, that the Syriac work was not prophetic interpretation but rather news commentary on the Islamic horde. This is the schlock of rationalist unbelief being paralyzed by the anti-dispensational camp.

8) Another consideration to bear in mind is that similar or even the same titles don't necessarily mean the same work. Bear in mind that these are sermons, not theological books.

9) Another thing that should be taken into consideration is that the Ephraim works I have read—the Greek translations, English translations of the Latin, and English translations of the Syriac—bear testimony that suggests the same author. They bear the same ascetic tone, the same performance-based gospel, the same eschatology, the same eschatology terminology and themes, the same diction and turns of expression. This militates against multiple unidentified persons forging works in Ephraim's name. Forgers typically perpetrate false doctrine, not perpetuate true doctrine. They exploit a name to perpetrate their own errors.

10) As for dating, if you place most of the Greek works in the 6th or 7th century, and regard them as a multitude of authors, then you face an even greater pretribulation rapture problem, for now rather than having one pre-trib preacher in the 4th century, now you have a half dozen or dozen in the 6th or 7th century. This is a massive dispensational testimony that is entering into the Byzantine era.

11) I suspect that any full and honest effort at internal criticism and historical criticism will be forced to conclude that the majority of the Latin, Greek, and Syriac works are written by the same author—genuine Ephraim.

CHALLENGE RAISED TO NAYSAYERS

1) As a man is innocent in the court of law until proven guilty, so works professing to be genuine Ephraim should be regarded as genuine until PROVEN false.

2) Please forward quotes from trusted 6th and 7th century sources that there were many fake Ephraim works in circulation, and that the hundreds of genuine Ephraim works were quickly going the way of the dinosaur. Not to be found even in the Greek and Syrian communities of the East.

3) Please forward a credible argument showing that the soteriology and eschatology amongst the Greek works, amongst the Latin works, and between the Greek and Latin works are hopelessly contrary. Please demonstrate that their themes, approaches, conceptions, and expressions are so foreign to each other that they can't possibly be the same person.

4) Why should I trust your handling of church fathers like Ephraim when I can't and don't trust your handling of the word of God, i.e. the Bible? If I can't trust you with the greater matters, why should I trust you with lesser matters? If I can't trust you with the prophets and apostles, why should I trust you with the preachers who tremble at the prophets and apostles?

5) Please explain how hundreds of forgeries could be passed off in the two centuries following Ephraim's call home when he was extremely popular and widely read during that time. He was, for all practical purposes the Spurgeon of his day. This would make for an interesting read. If this can actually be done, I could make a fortune writing newly discovered Spurgeon works.

Lee W. Brainard

Nov. 24, 2021

“Eyes wide open, brain engaged, heart on fire”