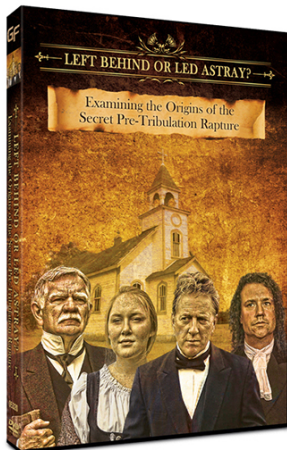


# Left Behind or Led Astray - Exposed



A new DVD documentary has just been released by Good Fight Ministries entitled, “Left Behind or Led Astray? Examining the Origins of the Secret Pre-Tribulation Rapture.” Good Fight Ministries is run by post-tribulationist Joe Schimmel, the senior pastor at Blessed Hope Chapel in Simi Valley, California. Schimmel’s documentary is endorsed by evangelist Ray Comfort and Kirk Cameron, star of the original “Left Behind” movies. The following write-up appears on the back cover: “Take a fascinating journey with us as we examine the shocking origins of the secret, pre-tribulation rapture doctrine.... Featuring expert commentary from David M. Bennett, Dr. Mark Patterson, Jacob Prasch, Joel Richardson, and Dave

MacPherson.” The truth of the matter is that the 4½ hour film seriously distorts the historical evidence and is full of false accusations, unsubstantiated myths, and lies. These include the following:

- A pre-tribulation Rapture cannot be proved from the Bible.
- The history of belief in the pre-trib Rapture is “sordid” and “scandalous”.
- The origins of the doctrine of the pre-trib Rapture are “occultic” and “demonic,” having been inspired by “the spirit of Antichrist”.
- Pastors who are preparing their flock to meet Jesus Christ, rather than the Antichrist, are “failing in their role as a shepherd and a pastor” and leading millions of believers into apostasy.
- The founder of the Plymouth Brethren, John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), who is widely credited with having revived and popularised the doctrine of the pre-trib Rapture in the nineteenth century, was “an opportunist” who effectively stole and developed the notion of a *secret* pre-trib Rapture after hearing a fifteen-year Scottish girl called Margaret MacDonald give a ‘prophetic utterance’ in Scotland in 1830. The documentary claims that MacDonald “engaged in occult activity”:
- The DVD dramatizes the alleged moment when Darby and co-leader, Benjamin Wills Newton, heard MacDonald give the utterance in question. As I demonstrate comprehensively and conclusively in Chapter 6 of my edited PhD thesis, *For Zion’s Sake* (2007) / *Understanding Christian Zionism* (2013), Newton was not even in Scotland at the time of the alleged utterance, a fact which greatly undermines the credibility of Schimmel’s historical research. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Darby ever heard the alleged utterance.
- Having been deputed by Newton and the Brethren to investigate the so-called move of God in Scotland in 1830, there is overwhelming evidence that Darby rejected *all* the utterances that he did hear in the various meetings he attended. He reported this, in the clearest of terms, in his own written account.
- The MacDonald utterance itself, which forms the basis of the entire documentary, does not in any way lend itself to a pre-tribulation Rapture! As leading 19<sup>th</sup>-century Brethren scholar William Kelly asked, “Can any fair mind in God’s presence, if he knew no other facts, conceive a greater improbability than J.N.D. [Darby] adopting the utterance of what he believed a demon as a truth of God?” Yet this is what the documentary claims.
- That if the Apostles had taught a pre-trib Rapture, then “we would see it in the writings of the early Church writers” i.e. those commonly referred to as the Church Fathers, who were prominent theologians and bishops in the Church after the Apostles. If that line of reasoning has merit, which it does not, then we would surely expect to find the doctrine of Israel’s future national restoration in the writings of the Church Fathers as well, but it’s not there. In fact, most of the Church Fathers made numerous derogatory, and often anti-Semitic statements in their sermons and publications, claiming that the Jews had been “disinherited from the grace of God”.
- That the doctrine of an any-moment, pre-trib Rapture can be traced back, in some form, to the Jesuits, notably to a “deceitful Jesuit” by the name of Manuel Lacunza. I have shown from his own writings that Lacunza himself contended that the Apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians to correct

their “error...of expecting every moment the coming of the Lord.” Lacunza was hardly a proponent of the any-moment, pre-trib Rapture.

- Scottish Presbyterian minister Edward Irving and his circle, known as “the Irvingites,” are the real progenitors of the pre-trib Rapture, having been fully persuaded by Lacunza’s writings, and that they were “prone to dabble a little bit with the occult” and were “notorious for their channelling of lying spirits”.
- That Darby and many of the Brethren were greatly influenced by Irving and the Irvingites, borrowing from and proliferating their pre-trib teaching. I have conclusively shown from Darby’s own writings and the testimony of his contemporaries, that Darby believed that “the positive work of the enemy” was “most manifest” in Irving’s church, and that Darby lamented “all poor Irving’s heresies and wanderings”. William Kelly later testified that “no serious brother” regarded the utterances among the Irvingites “with less than horror, as emanating not from human excitement merely but from a demon accredited with the power of the Holy Spirit.”
- That Darby taught “another Gospel and two ways of salvation”.
- That “John Nelson Darby was... a confused extremist... a cult leader... a dangerous despot... a crazy man who hurt people”.
- Chapter 9 of the documentary is entitled “Demon Deception” and Chapter 11 “Pre-Trib, the Occult, and the 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> Centuries”. The accusation is made that Darby “espoused a socially cultic mentality that was similar to that of Charles Taze Russell, who founded the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Joseph Smith, the prophet of Mormonism in the same century.” To give weight to the lie, Darby’s photograph is positioned between those of Russell and Smith. Schimmel cites Dave Hunt, the late founder of The Berean Call ministry, who, he states, “has done a great job exposing cults and aberrations within the church through the years, [but] missed the occult history of the secret Rapture that he himself vigorously promoted.”
- A number of Darby’s critics, mostly former Brethren colleagues of his, are quoted in the documentary, but not a single mention is made of his numerous advocates, who, as I summarise in *Understanding Christian Zionism*, described him as

“a great and good man, an uncompromising champion for Christ’s glory and God’s truth,” “one of the most remarkable servants of Christ that this country has produced,” “a great man and ever greater servant of God,” “a really good man” whose “largeness of heart... showed itself in many ways,” “a man of commanding intellect” who was “tireless in his missionary zeal to teach the Bible,” a man of “simple and unaffected piety; combined with the ripest scholarship and unequalled ability in expounding the Word of God,” “a man of one aim – the glory of God” who was “always maintaining that close communion with the Lord that gave lustre to his testimony and fragrance to his life,” “a man of overwhelming devotion, whose charismatic personality galvanised disciples throughout his long life,” a man who was “generous to the wasting of his substance, and possessed of more than martyr courage,” a man capable of “remarkable humility” who demonstrated “an especial sympathy” with children, and a man used by God “to bring cosmos out of chaos for the church of God.”

Even Darby critic Max Weremchuk, who is quoted by Schimmel on the DVD, writes in an article that he remains impressed by Darby’s “devotion to Christ and his high level of personal holiness.”

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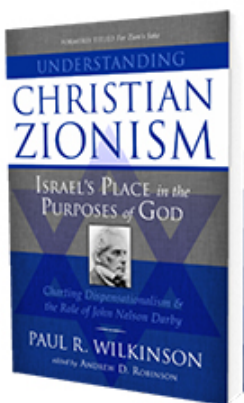
## Endorsements

"None of the attacks and accusations against Dr. Paul Wilkinson, and his classic documentation and support of John Nelson Darby, ever had anything to do with my support and belief in the pre-tribulation rapture of the church. I came to my conviction by studying God's Word and especially the Greek manuscripts. I have believed, preached and taught the pre-tribulation rapture of the church long before my connection with the Pre-Trib Research Center in Dallas, Texas.

The supreme issue of all (in my opinion) is the "new song" of Revelation 5:9-10. The usage of the second person plural pronoun ("us") forces any Bible scholar to support pre-tribulationism (the Greek manuscript evidence reveals that out of the 24 manuscript readings available today, 23 read "us" and the only manuscript reading otherwise is Codex Alexandrinus.) In addition to the usage of "us" in the phrase of verse 9 ("redeemed us"), the reading of verse 10 is identical to Revelation 1:6.

The anger and hostility evidenced in the writings and messages of these men is not only revealing, but exposing them. The truth of I Thessalonians 4:13-18, along with I Thessalonians 5:1-9 is overwhelming in its support of pre-tribulationism. It is time to stop the bitterness and to learn the grace and love of our Lord in speaking of Biblical truth. Our viewpoints do NOT authenticate Biblical truth – It is the BIBLE, the whole BIBLE, and nothing but the BIBLE – it is God's infallible and inspired word!"

*Dr David Hocking, Hope for Today*



"Wilkinson's impeccable documentation and reasoning from Scripture thoroughly refute the myth that Darby got his doctrine of the Pre-tribulation Rapture from a Scottish girl and two Jesuit priests. Primary historical sources cited herein clearly demonstrate the contrary truth. I highly recommend this excellent treatment of a controversial subject that has confused many."

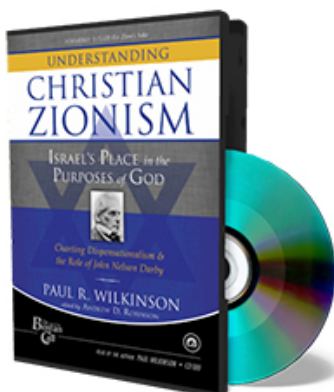
*Dave Hunt, Founder of The Berean Call, Bend, Oregon*

"Due to the personal attacks on John Nelson Darby, many believers are confused on whether they should support Israel.... This work by Dr. Wilkinson is a work greatly needed to clarify these issues for many believers and it should be read by all to understand Darby, Zionism, and Israel."

*Dr Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Director of Ariel Ministries, San Antonio, Texas*

"Few dedicated Christian scholars with an evangelistic ministry have been attacked more unfairly than John Nelson Darby, who did more to promote the doctrine of the pre-tribulation Rapture of the Church than any other person. Darby did not invent it, of course, for it is both Biblical and ancient, but he popularised it during the nineteenth century. This well researched and readable book carefully sets the record straight and makes a valuable contribution to prophetic studies."

*Dr Tim LaHaye, Chairman of the Pre-Trib Research Center, Dallas*



"In the final analysis, Dr. Wilkinson has restored Darby's reputation as having been a pious visionary used by God at a crucial time in history to formulate for His Church a comprehensive and coherent theological system that provided the Biblical foundation for Christian Zionism. For any student of ecclesiastical and political history, as well as systematic and historical theology, this book is essential reading."

*Dr Randall Price, Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia*

"With so much confusion and misinformation today concerning dispensationalism, Christian Zionism, and the role of J.N. Darby, Wilkinson's work is a breath of theological and historical fresh air. I am deeply grateful for his fine scholarship and the balanced way in which he makes his case. This work should quickly become a standard on Christian Zionism and Darby's influence on this important movement."

*Dr. Mark Hitchcock, Senior Pastor of Faith Bible Church, Edmond, Oklahoma*