

and a covenant theologian with no more dispensational convictions than those of the Westminster Divines; who held that the one Covenant of Grace (God's single Plan of Salvation) was unfolded under different dispensations and by means of various historical covenants!

However, let us see whether it is possible to make good the claim that the fears of some that belief in the unity of the one body in all ages (with dispensational distinctions) will destroy any understanding of God's prophetic program are indeed groundless. Let us, for examples, take two dispensational arguments for pre-tribulational Rapture, and see what happens eschatologically if we remove the dispensational assumptions in these arguments.

Let us take, first of all, the argument from Daniel's vision of the 70 weeks. The argument goes as follows:

- (a) The whole vision of Daniel 9:24-27 pertains to Israel.
- (b) The church does not appear in the first 69 weeks of Daniel's prediction; therefore it cannot appear in the 70th week.
- (c) Daniel's 70th week is the Tribulation Period
- (d) Since the church does not appear in the 70th week, it must be raptured before the 70th week begins.
- (e) Thus the Rapture of the church must be pre-tribulational.

And let us take, secondly, the argument from the "restrainer" of II Thessalonians 2. The argument runs as follows:

- (a) The "restrainer" of II Thessalonians 2:7 is the Holy Spirit indwelling the church.
- (b) The "restrainer" must be taken out of the way before the Man of Sin is revealed.
- (c) The Man of Sin is revealed in the Tribulation Period.
- (d) The "restrainer" (and therefore the indwelt church) must be taken out of the way before the Tribulation Period.
- (e) Thus the Rapture of the church must be pre-tribulational.

In the first argument let us remove the assumption that the church cannot appear in the 70th week by simply dropping the hermeneutical fallacy: that simply because the church is not revealed in the prediction of the 70th week, that therefore the church cannot exist (side by side with Israel) during the 70th week on earth. Does this cause us to immediately conclude to a post-tribulational view? Hopefully not! In fact, if the church is viewed as comprised of all believers of all ages, and if a great many people become believers during the 70th week (during the Tribulation Period), and if these are members of the Tribulation form of the church, it does not follow that the New Testament believers cannot be raptured prior to the Tribulation Period! The point is, that simply recognizing the Tribulation believers as members of Christ's church does not settle the issue as to when the Rapture occurs in relation to the Tribulation.

In the second argument let us remove the assumption that if the Holy Spirit is "taken out of the way" He must be removed from earth to heaven. Let us also remove the assumption that, since "indwelling" means spatial presence in the believer's body, and since the Holy Spirit as indwelling the church will be "taken out of the way," therefore the church must also be "taken out of the way," i.e., raptured. If the restrainer is indeed the Holy Spirit (as I believe He is), His restraint upon the full expression of human depravity can be "taken out of the way" at the same time that He continues to be omnipresent (as He always has been, in all dispensations!), and at the same time that He regenerates and sustains Tribulation believers. And if the indwelling of the Spirit refers to that special saving relationship which the omnipresent Spirit maintains to the believer, then it is possible for Tribulation believers to be indwelt by the Spirit, and for New Testament believers to be raptured prior to the Tribulation Period (on some other ground, of course).

A recognition of the unity of Christ's church in all ages does not dictate our eschatological position on the millennial question or on the tribulation issue!