



## Book Review

Charles C. Ryrie. *Dispensationalism Revised and Expanded* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 224 pages. Paperback 9.95.

After 30 years, the dean of dispensationalism, Charles Ryrie has revised and expanded what many believe to be his best theological work introduced in 1966 *Dispensationalism Today*. What motivated the retired Dallas Seminary professor to rework this book? The answer appears to be the development of a supposed new brand of dispensationalism known as "progressive dispensationalism." Why do we think that? Because the only new chapter in the book is the one examining this new trend which is spearheaded by two current Dallas Seminary faculty Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock.

Friend and foe alike, need to read *Dispensationalism* in order to really understand the significance of this influential Bible study movement. Ryrie gives a cogent presentation of dispensationalism: a definition and description, its origins, its hermeneutics, its view of salvation, the role of Israel and the church, its eschatology, and how dispensationalism relates to progressive dispensationalism, ultradispensationalism, and covenant theology.

In contrast to the trends of the last few years, Ryrie's need for revision is not because he believes traditional dispensationalism has failed and needs reworking as do the progressive dispensationalists. Instead, he believes that traditional dispensationalism needs to be reaffirmed in light of its critics of the last 30 years, both within and outside of dispensationalism.

Ryrie, in this revised and expanded work, did not just tack on a new chapter on progressive dispensationalism, instead he has thoroughly reworked the whole book, bringing each chapter up to date, where needed, by including in his interaction the past 30 years of responses to his original work. This is why everyone, even those who have read the original work, will want to obtain and read the new edition.

It is significant to note that Ryrie has not backed off of his three essentials for dispensationalism: 1) A consistently applied literal hermeneutic leading to 2) a distinction between God's plan for Israel and the church, resulting in 3) the glory of God as the focus of God's plan. He shows that many within the dispensational camp have been backing off of these essentials partly because they have sometimes misunderstood them.

At a number of points, Ryrie has even sharpened his original arguments in the revision. This should not be surprising that any work can be improved through the digestion of material from both friend and foe alike. This new revision should insure that *Dispensationalism* will remain the standard polemic for dispensationalists and the target of its opponents. Perhaps many nondispensationalists will have to revise their books in light of Ryrie's revision.

Anyone wishing to stay current on the subject of dispensationalism must read this book. Ω

pretribulational and the tribulation is future to the time in which Pseudo-Ephraem wrote.

• The purpose for the gathering was so that they would not "see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of their sins." Here we have the purpose of the tribulation judgments stated and that was to be a time of judgment upon the world because of their sin, thus, the church was to be taken out.

3) Finally, the Byzantine scholar Paul Alexander clearly believed that Pseudo-Ephraem was teaching what we call today a pre-trib rapture. According to Alexander, most Byzantine apocalypses were concerned with how Christians would survive the time of severe persecution by Antichrist. The normal approach given by other apocalyptic texts was a shortening of the time to three and a half years, enabling the survival of some Christians.<sup>19</sup> Unlike those texts, this sermon has Christians being removed from the time of tribulation. Alexander observed:

It is probably no accident that Pseudo-Ephraem does not mention the shortening of the time intervals for the Antichrist's persecution, for if prior to it the Elect are 'taken to the Lord,' i.e., participate at least in some measure in beatitude, there is no need for further mitigating action on their behalf. The Gathering of the Elect according to Pseudo-Ephraem is an alternative to the shortening of the time intervals.<sup>20</sup>

### Conclusion

Regardless of what else the writer of this sermon believed, he did believe that all believers would be removed before the tribulation—a pre-trib rapture view. Thus, we have seen that those who have said that there was no one before 1830 who taught the pre-trib rapture position will have to revise their statements by well over 1,000 years. This statement does not prove the pre-trib position, only the Bible can do that, but it should change many people's historical views on the matter. Ω

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Dave MacPherson, *The Great Rapture Hoax* (Fletcher, NC: New Puritan Library, 1983), 15. For a refutation of MacPherson's charges see Thomas D. Ice, "Why the Doctrine of the Pretribulational Rapture Did Not Begin with Margaret Macdonald," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (1990): 155-68.

<sup>2</sup> John L. Bray, *The Origin of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Teaching* (Lakeland, FL: John L. Bray Ministry, 1982), 31-32.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Van Kampen, *The Sign* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1992), 445.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Ice, "Is The Pre-Trib Rapture A Satanic Deception?" *Pre-Trib Perspectives* (II:1; March 1995):1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Gary North, *Rapture Fever: Why Dispensationalism is Paralyzed* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1993), 105.

<sup>6</sup> William E. Bell, "A Critical Evaluation of the Pretribulation Rapture Doctrine in Christian Eschatology" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1967), 26-27.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the Pseudo-Ephraem statement see Grant R. Jeffrey, *Final Warning* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1995). Forthcoming, Timothy Demy and Thomas Ice, "The Rapture and an Early Medieval Citation" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (July 1995): 300-11. Grant R. Jeffrey, "A Pretribulational Rapture Statement in the Early Medieval Church" in Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, ed., *When the Trumpet Sounds: Today's Foremost Authorities Speak Out on End-Time Controversies* (Eugene, Or: Harvest House, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Grant Jeffrey found the statement in Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, by (Berkeley: University of California Press,