

The Imminent Appearing of Christ by J. Barton Payne.

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Everything seems to be growing more and more complex today--
including theology. ^{included} Formerly most everybody could be classified
as either a pre, post, or amillennialist. And if you were a
premillennialist, it was assumed that you also believed that the
church would be raptured before the tribulation begins. But ^{when} then
that ~~would~~ ^{could} no longer be assumed and one had to declare whether
he was a pre, mid, partial, or posttribulational premillennialist.
Of course, if you were posttribulational you had to be careful
to distinguish whether you were premillennial or amillennial
because both are posttribulational. But now to add to the
eschatological complexities ^{-- if not confusion -- also} Dr. Payne, Associate Prof of OT
at Wheaton College, offers another view--imminent posttribulationism
with potentially present antecedents. Such a long title seems to
be required though the author would probably like to have his
view become known as "classical" posttribulationism in order to
align himself with what he considers ^{to be} the ^{teaching} view of the early church.

The thesis of the book is three-fold: (1) dispensational
pretribulationism is a redefining of the blessed hope and therefore
unscriptural; (2) modern posttribulationism in reality denies
the imminency of the Lord's return because of its "rigorous
futurism"; ^{to them is in error;} (3) therefore, the true view is an imminent posttrib-
ulational ratprue kept immenant by this idea of potentially
present antecedents.

The only thing good about pretribulationism, according to
Dr. Payne, is that it does preserve the immenency of the hope of

Christ's return. Everything else about it seems to be wrong, and at times the author is hardly fair in his ~~statements~~ presentation of ^{it} dispensationalism. He admits that the idea of a secret rapture is ^{in position} passé with dispensationalisms, (p. 35) and yet the reviewer counted no less than 5 ^{statements} statements of it later in the book (pp. 44, 67, 82, 92, 156). The bad thing about posttribulationism, according to Payne, is that it is illogical. How, ~~if~~ can the rapture of the church ^{if it occurs} occurring after the tribulation really be imminent if a "rigorous" futuristic interpretation outlines the events which occur in the 7 years which precede the ^{or this gives warning that the rapture is only} rapture? This is a good question, and ^{Dr.} Payne has ~~plunged~~ ^{weak} plunged a dagger into the ^{spot} heart of posttribulationism and twisted the dagger vigorously. The problem, therefore, is to retain ^{Dr.} genuine imminency in a posttribulation outline which ^{attempts to} problem Payne attempts to solve with his potentially present ~~antecedents~~. This simply means that many of the predicted antecedents of Christ's coming could be being fulfilled today if the Lord comes immediately, but could also have a more complete future fulfillment if He doesn't come for another generation or so. ^{But we can't know} ^{For instance,} Thus, the author suggests, ^{That} the destruction of 3 of the 10 states by Antichrist (Dan. 7:8,24) might be ^{have} ~~being~~ fulfilled before our eyes in what has happened to Hungary (p. 108). A further example is to be found in what has happened to iron country churches--this is a potential fulfillment of the ^{tribulation} tribulation (p. 114). ~~Now,~~ of course, ^{this proposal} to propose such a solution to the problem of retaining imminency in a posttribulation framework involves ^{at least} ~~two~~ other ~~compromises~~. ^h problems. One ~~is, now~~ concerns literal interpretation, for suffering how can the churches in China fulfill the world-wide tribulation unless "rigorous futurism" is toned down to the extent where

it ceases to be literal interpretation of any brand? ^{and}

The other concerns the passages which teach certain antecedents that precede the Lord's coming which could not possibly be potentially fulfilled by any stretch of the hermeneutical principle of of the interpreter's imagination. To have anything that even resembles a literal interpretation, certain of the judgments of the Revelation which Payne believes will be fulfilled literally will have to await their fulfillment until just before the Lord comes. But it will have to be just a very little before otherwise imminency is lost. Thus, even this new twist to posttribulationism has to have its interval between the rapture and the second coming (p. 135) ^{is} -- though a very short one to be sure!

~~There is~~ ^{is} One regrets to see so many thoughtless statements in a book by one whose scholarly ability ^{is} one respects highly.

For instance, the author's assertions that the doctrine of the millennium is of little consequence to this subject (p. 6).

^{Especially} Too often his tone is too loud an echo of Reese in calling dispensationalists theorists, etc. This will do little to which plea practically says "You be tolerant of me even if I'm not ^{Ken} help implement his plea for tolerance (p. 168). Many will ^{blatantly} ~~blatantly~~ ^{oppose}

have difficulty in accepting his idea that ~~the~~ Daniel's 70 weeks terminated ~~exactly~~ ^{is} in A.D. 33 with the ~~conversion~~ ^{stoning} of Stephen.

To sum up: this book is a sharp rebuke of Ladd's posttribulationism, but the confusing alternative of posttribulationism with potentially present antecedents is hardly the answer to ^{preserving} ~~how to maintain~~ imminency. Perhaps pretribulationists ^{are} right after all! ^{This book does not prove them wrong.} At least they should find interesting the spectacle of posttribulationists debating the basics of posttribulationism among themselves!