

OECUMENIUS AND BEDE: REFUTING THE FALSE CLAIMS OF PRETRIBBERS

WATSON IS TRYING TO SHOW THAT VARIOUS DISPENSATIONAL IDEAS AND DOCTRINES HAVE BEEN WIDELY TAUGHT AND BELIEVED THROUGHOUT CHURCH HISTORY. TO BE VERY CLEAR, I AGREE WITH THAT PREMISE - MANY OF THE FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINES OF DISPENSATIONALISM HAVE BEEN HELD FROM THE VERY BEGINNING. HOWEVER, WHAT I STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH IS THE NOTION THAT THE PRETRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE WAS EVER TAUGHT IN CHURCH HISTORY. UP UNTIL RECENTLY, ACADEMIC CONSENSUS HELD THAT ALL OF THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS WERE POST-TRIB.

I. OECUMENIUS

- A. In *Discovering Dispensationalism*, William Watson claims to have found a Pretribulationist in Oecumenius, a sixth century writer. Unfortunately, he continues his pattern of poor scholarship.
- 1) "Oecumenius believed that many will already be in heaven while the future tribulation period is continued on the earth. Concerning the great multitude before God's throne in Revelation 7, Oecumenius' "dispensational" eschatology is perhaps clearest with its pre-tribulational inferences." - William Watson
- B. In fairness to Watson, Oecumenius does make one statement which, in isolation, could be confused as a Pretribulational statement. But Watson very much misunderstood Oecumenius. Below is the comment in question.
- 1) "The previous discourse explained what was revealed to the holy Evangelist concerning those from the nation of Israel [the 144,000] who were sealed and therefore were saved and who afterward also had come to faith. *But, lest something be lacking in what was revealed to him, the vision also shows to him the countless thousands of Gentiles who later embraced the faith and being with the Lord stand before the throne of God. However, since the prophetic vision has not yet depicted the second coming of the Lord when the saints "are caught up in the clouds to meet" the Savior, as the holy apostle says, the vision shows them as caught up beforehand and as having already obtained the blessedness that awaits them.*"
- Oecumenius, Revelation 7:1
 - a) Oecumenius was simply saying that although the

revelation itself had not yet gotten to the part about the return of Christ, it jumped forward and shows the saints in heaven after His return. If one simply rereads the quote, it is absolutely a Post-tribulational statement

- i. "...since the prophetic vision has not yet depicted ***the second coming of the Lord when the saints 'are caught up in the clouds to meet' the Savior***, as the holy apostle says, the vision shows them as caught up beforehand and as having already obtained the blessedness ***that awaits them.***"

- C. This all becomes even more clear if one simply continues reading:
 - 1) "One of the elders asked the Evangelist who those were who were from the nations and were clothed in white robes. He asked this not because he did not know but rather to urge the Evangelist to know about them more fully. ***And so he says, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation." For the righteous endured not a small struggle but indeed an exceedingly great struggle during the rule of the antichrist.***"
- Oecumenius, Revelation 7
 - 2) "***And what is the loosing of the seventh seal? It is the second coming of the Lord and the giving of blessings as rewards.*** For although some are handed over to the punishment of sinners, nonetheless it is the aim of Christ and the intention of the incarnation that everyone become an heir of his kingdom. Therefore, when the seventh seal was loosed, "there was," it says, "silence for about half an hour," since the king of creation was coming and every angelic and supernatural power, astounded at the exceeding greatness of the glory of him who was coming, for that reason became silent. ***Then, it says, seven trumpets were given to the seven angels, so that they might sound the signal that the king was arriving. But by these very trumpets the angels will also awaken those who are dead.*** For the apostle, who is wise in divine things, wrote in his first letter to the Thessalonians that ***"the Lord himself will descend at a command, at the call of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God."*** ***And again, "The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible."*** - Oecumenius Revelation 8:1
 - 3) "'These (the ten kings) will make war on the Lamb,' it says. ***For before they are wholly destroyed by the antichrist, these kings, about whom the passage is speaking, will persecute the***



church... And Christ will triumph in another way also, since his servants struggle to death for their faith in him.” - Oecumenius, on Revelation 17

II. VENERABLE BEDE

- A. “From his exposition of Revelation 3:10, the Venerable Bede believed the church would escape the hour of temptation, but the unsaved Jews would remain on earth to endure the Antichrist... As can be seen, Bede’s eschatology reflects what is taught today in dispensational premillennialism.” - William C. Watson
- 1) Bede never used the word “escape” in speaking of the tribulation. To the contrary, he said the Lord will “preserve” us during the Great Tribulation. He does not speak of being removed from the great test, either
 - a) “Because you have kept the word of my patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming. Because you have kept my example in enduring adversaries, *I will also preserve you from the impending sufferings. This does not mean that you will not be tempted but that you will not be overcome by your adversaries. And although the church is always struggling against adversaries, it is possible in this passage that the hour of temptation and the humiliation of the Jews at the time of the antichrist are indicated.* For just as is often the case in the sixth place in the order of that which follows, so also here in the sixth angel the final persecution may be signified. During this persecution, certainly those of the Jews who are wicked will deceive as well as be deceived, yet others will come to understand the Law spiritually through the teaching of that great prophet, Elijah, and being incorporated with the members of the church, they will believe and courageously conquer the enemy. The letter to the angel of Philadelphia is the sixth out of the seven letters.”
- Venerable Bede, on Revelation 3:10
 - 2) note some of Bede’s other comments clearly showing to be Post-trib:
 - a) “*By the opening of the sixth seal the last persecution is announced,* and that the world is shaken with darkness and fear, as when the Lord was crucified on the sixth day

MARANATHA GLOBAL BIBLE STUDY
RAPTURE SERIES// JOEL RICHARDSON

of the week. *This is... when the servants of Antichrist are brought to attack the servants of Christ. The Church, more than is wont, will shed her blood for Christ.* And he said “the whole,” because the last earthquake will be in the whole world. But before that, as it is written, “there will be earthquakes through diverse places.” - Venerable Bede, The Explanation of the Apocalypse

- b) “It is believed that *after the death of Antichrist*, there will be a short rest for *the Church*, which Daniel thus foretold: “*Blessed is he who waiteth and cometh to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.*”
- Venerable Bede, The Explanation of the Apocalypse
- c) “Observe that *at the sixth seal, he (John the Apostle) sees the greatest afflictions of the Church.*” - Venerable Bede, The Explanation of the Apocalypse
- d) “*The sixth [trumpet is] the open war of Antichrist and his followers against the Church*” - Venerable Bede, The Explanation of the Apocalypse