

Testing claims of Pretribulationism in the early Church

Part 2

Pseudo-Ephraim (Part 1)

In this presentation, we will discuss the misrepresentation of Pseudo-Ephraim to claim Pretribulationism in the early Church.

Author and Bible teacher Lee Brainard claims to have discovered several “CHRYSTAL-CLEAR PRE-TRIB RAPTURE PASSAGES” in Pseudo-Ephraim.

He claims they all have “timing elements in their context that demanded a pre-trib rapture.”

**Let's consider a quote from Pseudo-Ephraim's
*Sermon on Repentance and Judgment and the
Separation of Soul and Body***

“For the elect shall be gathered prior to the tribulation, so they shall not see the confusion and the great tribulation coming upon the unrighteous world.” —Pseudo Ephraim

First, we note that this is Brainard's translation. The Greek phrase which he translates as "shall be" is not actually in the future tense. Koine Greek does not contain tense. A more accurate translation is presented by Roger Pearse:

"The elect are gathered together before the tribulation so that they do not see the confusion and the great suffering to come over the whole world."

Brainard and other Pretribulationists believe this to be an absolute slam dunk. As we will show however, it's simply talking about those saints who have already died and have been gathered to the Lord, who will thus not see the coming tribulation.

***Repentance and Judgment and the Separation
of Soul and Body.***

“Blessed is the one who finds grace at the time of separation, when the soul is separated from its own body; for the Angels come to take the soul, and when it is separated from the body.”

Again, if one simply reads the whole sermon in context, it is clear that Ephraim is simply saying that the saints that have already died have been gathered to the Lord and will thus not see the coming great tribulation. That's it. It was nothing to do with any Pretribulation rapture.

This statement is identical to Pseudo-Ephraim's other famous statement popularized by Grant Jeffries from the Latin sermon *On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World.*

“See to it that this sentence be not fulfilled among you of the prophet who declares: ‘Woe to those who desire to see the day of the Lord!’ For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins.”

This line is also speaking about those saints who have died who are gathered together in heaven.

The same sermon in which this statement is found also has very clear Post-tribulational comments:

“And when the three and a half years have been completed, the time of the Antichrist, through which he will have seduced the world, [then] will come the sign of the Son of Man, and coming forward the Lord shall appear with great power and much majesty ... as the angelic trumpet precedes him, which shall sound and declare: ‘Arise, O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his hour of judgment has come! Then Christ shall come and the enemy shall be thrown into confusion, and the Lord shall destroy him by the spirit of his mouth.’”

Ephraim expresses his view that the dead in Christ will be resurrected after the tribulation. Some Pretribulationists may disregard this statement claiming it is only speaking specifically of the deceased “tribulation saints” and not a more general resurrection of the dead in Christ.

The Bible however, says there is only one resurrection of the just, not “resurrections” and it happens after the tribulation:

Then ... I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years... This is the

first resurrection.

(Revelation 20:4–5)

Jesus said the resurrection will take place on “the last day” not seven years before.

“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

(John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48)

Again, Ephraim was simply speaking about escaping the tribulation by dying beforehand. From the Syriac version of the sermon by the same name, discussing the tribulation:

**“People will flee to cemeteries and hide themselves among the dead, pronouncing the good fortune of the deceased who had avoided the calamity:
'Blessed are you for you were borne away (to the grave) and hence you escaped from the afflictions!'”**

In conclusion, whether we are speaking of Pseudo-Ephraim's statement in the Greek "*Sermon on Repentance and Judgment and the Separation of Soul and Body*" or the Latin "*Sermon On the Last Times, the Antichrist, and the End of the World*" both are referring to the grace of dying and being gathered to the Lord prior to the tribulation, thus escaping its horrors.

**Neither text has anything to do with a
Pretribulational rapture, a concept that was
entirely unknown in the Church for close to two
thousand years.**