

## **Preterist Parini and Tom Perrotta Reveal Their Theological Error**

[Following is **bracketed [ ] commentary** inserted within an article featuring the opinions of professor Jay Parini —one of numerous individuals lacking accurate understanding —and therefore exemplifying their inability to correctly teach biblical prophecy. Uninspired (post-canon) poetry and fiction do not adequately teach or explain supernatural events as revealed in the Bible. (Note: this commentary capitalizes pronouns for deity where they originally appear in lower case in the original —which also indicates inaccurate teaching of theological truth.)]

Commentary on the article is offered by M. J. Greene, **Paraclete Press Research Service, Inc.**, [www.pprsinc.com](http://www.pprsinc.com). The article appears at <http://www.cnn.com//2014/07/06/opinion/parini-rapture-real/index.html>, accessed 6 July 14.

CNN Editor's note: Jay Parini, a poet and novelist, teaches at Middlebury College in Vermont. He has just published "Jesus: The Human Face of God," a biography of Jesus. Follow him on [Twitter@JayParini](https://twitter.com/JayParini). The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of the author.

(CNN) -- HBO has just launched a new TV series based on a novel by Tom Perrotta called "The Leftovers," which in turn is based on the fundamentalist Christian idea of the rapture. Apart from the title, which suggests a refrigerator full of stale food, the series looks promising.

**[Most proponents of the pre-trib gathering of the saints are not self-identified as “fundamentalists” —unless by this the critic indicates Premillennial theology. Pretrib Rapture is identified as normative for this theology. Rather than what Parini states, the doctrine of the gathering of the body of Christ to heaven was first introduced 2,000 years ago —by Paul. Expectation of the 1 Thess 4 gathering Home sources to him. ]**

It's a terrific premise: Jesus returns and calls to heaven 140 million people, leaving behind billions of stupefied, confused, and grief-stricken others. In the show, a mother loses her baby, who disappears. A boy's father seems to have vanished as he pushes a shopping cart. Cars collide as drivers go missing. Chaos strikes in the fictional Mapleton, New York -- and throughout the world. How to cope?

**[An inaccurate teaching regarding the gathering of the saints is the notion that Jesus actually returns to earth at that event. But correct exegesis states otherwise. Departed saved souls are simply missing from earth —transformed “in the twinkling of the eye” — and not observed in their change by those left behind —or leftovers —as they’ve come to be identified. No lost soul will have any sense the gathering has taken place. Often, the confusion in stating “Jesus returns” is caused by mixing facts about the silent, unseen gathering —with facts about Christ’s physical return at the end of the Tribulation —which is seen by all on earth. “140 million” is based on a 2% calculation of the earth’s entire population. But no biblical text indicates any way to determine that calculation. It is curious to note Perrotta’s use of “140” since that number is close to “144”. That number is key in prophecy —referring to 144,000 Jewish missionaries operating during the**

**Tribulation. Often, in the superficial communication of facts details such as this are confused on purpose...due to the influence of the adversary whose style is to confuse.]**

The famous "Left Behind" series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins was already out there. It consisted of 16 best-selling novels on the same premise, and it's about to come to the big screen again, in a film starring Nicholas Cage. The original film adaptation (of three) appeared in 2000. And then there is the Christian real-time strategy video game called "Left Behind: Eternal Forces." If anyone hasn't noticed, the rapture has become a commercial juggernaut endlessly shape-shifting, finding new and highly entertaining outlets. **[This statement reflects the only accuracy of the article —the shameless commercialization of prophecy. The Left Behind industry has not clarified true prophecy but has interjected the false teaching that the “leftovers” will be given a second chance to recognize what they previously rejected. Rather, 2 Thess 2:8-12 describes the strong delusion that will be experienced by previous Christ-rejecting souls after the body of Christ is gathered Home —thus sealing their fate.]**

But what about the theology behind this industry?

**[Remember who writes this article. Parini's education, work experience, and the majority of his body of work are not theologically grounded enough to qualify his opinion.]**

The rapture notion goes like this: Jesus is coming back [see above to clarify distinct gathering of the saints from Christ's Second Coming], and when He does, He will first return before a time of so-called tribulation begins [See Jacob's Trouble], calling up into the clouds with Him those who are "saved" [those born again according to John 3:3, 5, and 7.] Horrible suffering will then occur on the miserable Earth for seven years. Then Jesus will come yet again, for a final judging. **[No, His Second Coming is not the time of the Great White Throne Judgment. It is the establishment of His thousand year earthly reign].** There are many different versions of this scenario, so it's difficult to summarize. **[No, all the error, alongside the truth, is not difficult to summarize. It is widely available in several theological and popular works. Further, 2 Tim 2:15 Bible students have no trouble sorting out biblical truth from the many faces of error].** It's fair to say, however, that only fundamentalist Protestant churches bother to think about the rapture at all. (Catholics discount the idea completely.) **[How embarrassing that Parini writes such an inaccurate statement. What does this say about those Catholics who do believe in the gathering of the saints? Parini must be referring to official Roman Catholic doctrine. But that doctrine does not equate with the wide range of beliefs held by all those who claim Roman Catholic membership.]**

The rapture concept is relatively new. It started with an Anglo-Irish theologian, who in the 1830's invented the concept. This may be a shocker to many, but it's a fact: Before John Nelson Darby imagined this scenario in the clouds, no Christian had ever heard of the rapture. **[Rapture is integral to Paul's 2,000 year old teaching of dispensations. The gathering of the saints is the great divide between the end of the church dispensation and the resumption of the prophetic calendar with Jacobs's Trouble that precedes the last dispensation —the literal**

**1,000 year reign of Christ. Careful research reveals extensive theological writings going back at least to Augustine that teach the pretrib gathering of the saints. Again, how embarrassing for Parini. See *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* and other credible resources for correction of this CNN article and the HBO series.]**

The idea was popularized by Cyrus I. Scofield, an American minister who published a famous reference Bible in 1908, one that developed the idea of an elaborate series of final periods in history known as dispensations. Scofield, like Darby, read the Book of Revelation as a vision of the future, not a fiery dream of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. **[As noted above—historicist, idealist, preterist, and futurist understandings of the Book of Revelation—are easily accessed by serious Bible students. But Parini fails to reveal his position as that of preterist because no preterist is able to refute the many questions left unanswered. Christ is not now on the throne in Jerusalem; evil has not been quelled; the saints have not yet been resurrected. Preterist, pop journalism serves only to confuse.]**

The latter view[**that Revelation is about Jerusalem's fall in AD 70**]remains, in fact, the most common interpretation of the Book of Revelation by mainstream theologians and was described recently by Princeton scholar Elaine Pagels in "Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation." **[Gnostic Elaine Pagels is by no stretch of the imagination, "mainstream." Preterism is not the leading interpretation held by theologians; it lags in following behind historicist, idealist and futurist.]**

It's a problem, however, for rapture-minded Christians that the word "rapture" doesn't appear anywhere in the Bible, unless you're willing to think in broadly metaphorical terms. **[Many false teachers have coined that term rather than using the correct biblical word, *apostasia*, or departure. See 2 Tim 2:3 correct interpretation.]** Rapture thinking is most often traced back to the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, **[yes]** where he writes: "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ will rise first; then we, who are left alive, will be snatched up with them on clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) **[Citing this Scripture should enlighten Parini to the truth of its meaning. Spiritual delusion hides truth from those who misappropriate the Word.]**

First, it's important to note that Jesus Himself never talked about the rapture, ever. **[That is because Jesus came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel—the unconverted Jew. Paul is the teacher and doctrine-bearer for the church—personally appointed by Christ.]** We read in Mark about the "Son of Man coming in the clouds," but this is a reference back to the Old Testament Book of Daniel, where we get the image of a "son of Man" who is actually going the other way, up to meet the Ancient of Days. **[This is not an accurate explanation of Daniel's key prophetic Scripture on Christ's future reign. See Dan 7 regarding the Seventy Weeks.]**

It's all broadly metaphorical, a kind of dream. In Mark, the oldest gospel, this passage is about the vindication of Jesus as He comes to heaven and is recognized as a true Son of the Father. In

Luke 19, we read about a returning King, but close study of this passage suggests that Luke is talking about God coming back to Jerusalem, not about Jesus returning to Earth. **[Luke 19:15 is about Christ's future, earthly reign; not His current seating at the right hand of the Father. Parini's statement misidentifies Scripture. The verse is about His Second Coming, not a prior return to Jerusalem while on earth during His first coming.]**

It's clear from looking carefully at everything Paul says about the future, as in I Corinthians 15:51-54 or Philippians 3:20-21, that he believes only that some day Christians will experience a kind of physical and spiritual change. They will be resurrected, but this is a complex term that suggests not necessarily resuscitation but evolution, a thorough transformation. **[This is the description of the pre-trib translation of the saints, minus any reference to an "evolution." Again, due to spiritual deception, Parini does not understand the subject he is covering.]**

In Thessalonians, Paul is writing like the poet he is, **[This may be Parini thinking he shares in common with Paul the genre of poetry...but Paul is a writer of legal treatise, declaration, and argument, not poetry.]** creating a spectacular vision of a returning lord who will be given a great reception in the air. The crucial word in the relevant verse is "meet": Those who are left alive will be caught up on clouds to meet the Lord in the air. **[Yes, along with those who are in the grave; this will occur at the pre-trib gathering Home of Christ's body.]**

The word "meet" in Greek is "apentesis," and it means to gather for a reception for visiting dignitaries. Even the idea of being "snatched up" is thoroughly inadequate for the Greek word "harpazo," which is better translated as "gathered" -- a point made by many biblical scholars over the years. **[Parini makes my case regarding true believers' future gathering Home.]** In any case, Paul is being dramatic, imagining a holy reception committee that will greet the returning Christ. And why not?

Yet it's amazing how scriptures get misused, and relatively new theological ideas -- such as the rapture -- get deeply embedded in certain circles. **[But Solomon reminds us that there is nothing new under the sun.]** The rapture is really a plot device for popular entertainment and a bizarre theological teaching in fundamentalist circles, where it functions in a variety of ways. But it's bad theology, and Jesus Himself would have been astonished to learn that thousands of years after him there were such notions afloat. **[Regarding this (2 Pet 3:3-4) scoffing, I once asked an internationally recognized theologian about these "rapture deniers." "If they are truly saved will they be left behind since they are not looking for the Lord to take them?" He told me, "No. All who are of the body will be translated. Christ has only one body — not the one that is ready and looking for Him and other bodies that will follow. But saved scoffers will fail to gain the 2 Tim 4:8 crown and they will experience other loss of reward for incorrect witness to biblical truth." Finally, Jesus is "astonished" at nothing! He is omniscient....Theology 101 is greatly lacking in this article.]**

At least He won't have to watch "The Leftovers" on TV. **[The Leftovers will succeed in moving past the now worn-out denial of the fact of the rapture —and will indoctrinate with false**

**teaching about what is going to transpire in the lives of those not gathered to Heaven. To counter this error the wise Berean need only start with the Word, stay with the Word, and stray not from the Word to correctly learn the truth of Scripture. Great reward awaits those who are not intimidated by the world, the flesh and the devil—all of which account for this and other false teachings about biblical prophecy.]**