

What follows are seven articles critiquing the *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. The first six were written in 2001, before this book (*Survivors*) was written. Much of the material from the first article (Appendix A) has already been covered in 'Survivors'. However, the other articles (in particular, Appendix D: *Servants of the Antichrist*) give some interesting insights into the real message behind the *Left Behind* series.

### Appendix A: Left Behind... Who?

In the past, terms like "The Second Coming", "The End of the World", and "Armageddon" were used to describe the overall message of *The Revelation*, the last book of the Bible. But, in recent years, "Left Behind" is the term many Bible expositors believe captures the most immediately significant event in connection with endtime prophecy.

They paint a picture of a world in which tens of millions of professing Christians suddenly disappear. The entire planet is left in shock, as it wakes up to find friends, neighbours, and relatives gone, and themselves "left behind".

If this is how it is going to happen, then being "left behind" does encapsulate the significance of what follows, to the rest of the world, that is, to those who are left. The story could start with instructions on what the rest of the earth's population should do to make up for having missed out on the much vaunted "secret rapture" that passed them by.

And that is pretty much what the *Left Behind* series does.

But there is one small problem: It is not going to happen. What the Bible teaches is that the ones who will be caught most off-guard and most confused when things start happening will be professing Christians themselves. Having for decades been fed on a line about floating to heaven on flowery beds of ease, these same people will find themselves totally unprepared for the realities of the Great Tribulation.

Listen to this description of the confusion that Jesus spoke of when the various endtime events begin (and in particular, when the Great Tribulation begins) to take place: "*Listen! I have told you this ahead of time. If people should tell you, 'Look, he is out in the desert!' don't go there. Or if they say, 'Look, he is hiding here!'*

*don't believe it. For the Son of Man will come like the lightning which flashes across the whole sky from the East to the West.*" (Matthew 24:25-27) The picture given is not one of raptured saints celebrating in heaven, but rather it is one of disillusioned believers, who had thought their Saviour would have already arrived and taken them away; and the warning that Jesus gives is that there will be no such thing as a "secret" vanishing.

To be more specific, Jesus says, "*Immediately after the Tribulation of those days... the Son of Man will appear in the sky; and all the peoples of earth will weep as they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The great trumpet will sound, and he will send out his angels to the four corners of the earth, and they will gather his chosen people from one end of the world to the other.*" (Matthew 24:29-31)

When I was in my early 20s, I asked a wise old pastor to tell me whether Christians were going to go through the Great Tribulation or whether they were going to escape it through the "rapture". He said, "I'm going to ask you one question, and when you answer that question, you'll answer your own question as well. Here it is: How many trumpets are there after the *last* trumpet?"

I was such a novice at the time that his question only confused me. "Of course there are *no* more trumpets after the *last* one," I said. But what did that have to do with the rapture? I turned to I Corinthians 15:51-52, which is accepted by both sides as a description of the rapture. It says, "*Listen to this secret truth: We shall not all die, but when the last trumpet sounds, we shall all be changed in an instant, as quickly as the blinking of an eye. For when the trumpet sounds, the dead will be raised, never to die again, and we shall all be changed in the twinkling of an eye.*"

This verse clearly says that the rapture will take place at the sound of the "last trumpet". But what does that mean? It was some time later that I learned that the "Great Tribulation" is punctuated in *The Revelation* by blasts from seven different trumpets. This, too, is accepted to be true by both sides in the argument. They agree: The seven trumpets mark seven aspects of the Great Tribulation.

Even the "secret rapture" people agree that I Corinthians 15:51-52 refers to the Rapture, and the Seven Trumpets of the Revelation (chapters 8-11) refer to the Great Tribulation. Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins themselves would agree. Together, these two passages of scripture clearly place the rapture at the sounding of the "last trumpet". And yet the most widely accepted teaching about the endtime today is that the rapture will not happen at the last trumpet, but rather that it will happen even before the FIRST trumpet of the Great Tribulation has sounded. Why is this?

The answer is quite simple: Popularity. People in today's pampered Western world do not want to even think about the possibility that they may have to suffer and die for their faith. So any teaching (and any teacher) that tells them they can escape it all by saying a little prayer, is going to be terribly popular. It is doubtful that any book which teaches otherwise would ever make it to the *New York Times* bestseller list.

The secret rapture teaching is the great escape from sacrifice, persecution, suffering, obedience, and discipline. According to these people, all you have to do is say the magic word ("Lord, Lord!") and in return you will get unbridled wealth, health, and popularity.

As we have said, it is good that the *Left Behind* series is getting people thinking about the return of Jesus. But until people face up to the fact that they are going to have to make some rather costly changes to their lifestyle, they are going to end up just as lost when they have finished reading the series as they were when they started... and maybe even moreso.

Mind you, if we are wrong, and there should actually be a secret rapture before all the trouble begins, we will have lost nothing. We will have been prepared for a trial that God never asked us to endure. But what about the reverse? What about the possibility that the people believing the Great Escape theory are misguided? If they are wrong, there will be hell to pay for it. Literally as well as figuratively! Isn't it worth some serious consideration?

## Appendix B: The Prince of Peace

The *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins makes repeated reference to the Antichrist being a pacifist. I presume the reason for this is that Bible prophecy says the Antichrist will "through peace destroy many", and it warns that "when they say 'Peace! Peace!' then sudden destruction will come." As you read through the series it becomes clear that the Antichrist's outward talk of peace masks a personal delight that he takes in making war. We agree that there will be (and is) a lot of deception that hides behind a facade of supposed pacifism. The old Soviet Union would, for example, support peace marches in the West, even though they themselves were actively preparing for war against the West. In our article *Anarchy and Pacifism* we discuss a number of weaknesses in the pacifist philosophy.

However, we are deeply concerned that the *Left Behind* series says almost nothing in support of *real* pacifism, as taught by Jesus. What is even more disturbing is the book's assumptions about violence on the part of Christians. In *Nicolae* (volume 3), on page 191, a Christian boatman says to Buck Cameron, "*I have twice within the last forty-eight hours fired this weapon into the heads of people I've believed were enemies of God.*" (He does it because he is protecting a spiritual leader, TSION Ben-Judah.)

The boatman goes on to say, "*People coming up this river looking for someone I don't want them to find wind up dead. If you're the third to go, I'll still sleep like a baby tonight.*"

Buck asks him how he justifies such murders, and he says, "*Those were the wrong people looking for the wrong person.*"

Later, on page 194, he explains further: "*I do not consider it murder. Better their bodies than his.*"

That is all the explanation that Buck (and presumably La Haye/Jenkins' readers) need to be at peace about such killings. And this is just one of many such comments with regard to violence by Christians throughout the series.

In *Assassins* (volume 6) the book's other hero, Rayford Steele, plans to assassinate the Antichrist, as part of his service to God. He

even prays for divine assistance in his task. Such is the reasoning of other supposedly Christian characters in the book whenever they are backed into corners, or faced with opportunities to kill their opponents.

This tendency for Christians to meet violence with violence is only marginally questioned throughout the book. There is some consideration about whether or not the victim is ready to meet God, and the exercise is occasionally seen as distasteful; but on the whole, the idea of "kill or be killed" goes pretty much unchallenged.

The American militia movement is mentioned several times throughout the series, and it is done with a hint of conviction that they are brave heroes, who are making a gallant last stand against the armies of the Antichrist. On page 324 of *Nicolae* (volume three) there is reference to the war between the militia forces and the Antichrist, and the book's hero says, "Many of those who have died in the world war, and are yet to die until a quarter of the world's population is gone, are considered tribulation martyrs." How different to the martyrs of the First Century!

A few pages later (p. 359) one of the world's false religious leaders says, "I have not seen anyone die for their religion. I haven't seen anyone 'slain for the Word of God.'" Indeed, the way LaHaye tells the story almost no one does. The "saved" saints continue living pretty much the same as they do now, even serving the Antichrist. No one is forced to deny their faith, because the difference between the good guys and the bad guys is fairly indistinguishable.

In what I have read of the series so far, I do not recall anything being said which would suggest that pacifism is the proper Christian way to deal with injustice in the world, nor do I recall any criticism of the militia movement. This assumption that pacifism is evil *en toto* and militancy is righteous is deeply disturbing.

To begin with, it must be made clear that the Antichrist will not be a pacifist. He may profess to being one, but that is quite a different matter. The problem is not pacifism. The problem is counterfeit pacifism, i.e. pretending to believe in the Christian principle of turning the other cheek while actually believing in violence and revenge.

By assuming that pacifism is evil, and that military might is the way of true believers, Tim and Jerry generate a picture of the endtime in which Jesus himself would almost certainly be viewed as the enemy, because he would be quite openly pacifist. Yet a fundamental lesson of *The Revelation* is that the forces of evil use carnal weapons, while the "Lamb that was Slain" uses love to conquer the world.

What we are doing in this series of articles about the *Left Behind* series, is trying to correct such errors and point people to the *truth* about the second coming of Jesus. Yet there is widespread teaching amongst those in the churches who know of me, that I am a false prophet, trying to lead people astray through talk about peace and love. Only those who are able to confront their fears about the Antichrist killing them will be able to see through the lies and hear the truth of what I am saying here, and what Jesus has said in the Bible.

The answer that comes from Jesus is one of faith and love, whereas the spirit behind so much of the reactionary right-wing approach to prophecy is one of fear and hate. Once anyone starts down the path of fear, it begins to create a whirlpool of paranoia that spreads and spreads, until they sense conspiracies behind almost everything. The biggest problem is that the ones they will fear the most will be those who come with the truth. A person motivated by fear does not want to hear talk of love and faith. It will, to them, only be seen as a trick to get them off guard. And as a consequence, genuine Christianity and the real Christ will be opposed, feared, and hated by such people... often in the name of Christ himself!

Perhaps the most fundamental message of *The Revelation* is that laying down your life willingly, i.e. turning the other cheek, is God's answer to all the weapons of the Antichrist. *The Revelation* features a collection of 'beasts', which represent the various empires of the world. These beasts culminate in the ultimate Beast -- the Antichrist himself, and the world empire that he leads. But *The Revelation* teaches that all of this evil will not be overcome through weapons, plots, retaliation, or force. Instead, they will be overcome by One who is represented as "The Lamb that was Slain". This spiritual Conqueror is the ultimate pacifist, the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Unfortunately, LaHaye and Jenkins write from the political perspective of right-wing fundamentalist Christianity, assuming that this section of the church (because it is the section most interested in Bible prophecy) will be the section most prepared for the events of the endtime. Whether or not they personally agree with such things as the militia movement, Time & Jerry know that their books will not sell to these people if they take a stand against violence. Consequently, the series indirectly supports the philosophy of violence, and passively condemns pacifism, by suggesting that pacifists are naive wimps who have been conned by the Antichrist.

If the *Left Behind* series is going to be truly Christian, it must be clearer about preaching the message that Jesus actually taught. Yes, Jesus warned that there would be persecution and tribulation. He also told us that God himself will eventually punish evil doers. But the Bible is clear about the fact that "the wrath of man does not accomplish the will of God." (James 1:20) Vengeance belongs to God and not to us. We have been instructed to love our enemies, and to pray for those who spitefully use us. This love will be the hallmark of a true Christian. It is the one thing that distinguishes the kingdom of heaven from all of the other kingdoms of the world.

In all the wars that have ever been fought, troops have been told that they are killing others for a sacred cause. They have demonised the enemy in an attempt to numb their conscience to the seriousness of what they have done. If so-called Christians do the same things, then there is no real difference between us and the ones we resist.

The way of the cross is one of love and self-sacrifice. It is not easy, and because it is not easy, we need to do all that we can to encourage one another to hold true to the message of love even in the face of torture and death.

The extreme patriotism of the militia movement in particular, and of American evangelicals in general, is based on the belief that America has a special Christian heritage that has come from God and that must be preserved. Certainly the history of America is an inspiring one in many ways. Persecuted Christian minorities fled to this new world where they were able to live out their faith in peace.

But it seems that these present-day patriots have forgotten what is most Christian about the American system and its origins. Let me explain:

There are few Christian denominations anywhere in the world today which officially teach pacifism. The main ones are the Amish, Quakers, and Mennonites. All three of these denominations are most prevalent in the state of Pennsylvania, which is called the Quaker State. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania became the birthplace of many of the ideals that Americans consider to be most sacred, including religious freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of the Press. In other words, America's Christian heritage grew out of a heritage of pacifism, in a state where loving one's enemies was the rule, rather than the exception. And yet the militia mentality professes a form of patriotism that runs counter to almost all of those ideals. The greed, fear, hate, and racism that characterises the militia movement were anathema to the Quakers, who established the city of Philadelphia (which comes from *The Revelation*, and literally means "The City of Brotherly Love").

Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahom City bomber, is a hero to the militia movement. [At the time this article was written they were] actively campaigning for his release on the grounds that the bomb was not as big as the prosecution claimed it was. In other words, they admitted that he set the bomb off, but wanted freedom for him on the basis of a technicality. Support for terrorism is wrong, regardless of what one's political beliefs are.

In conclusion, I feel that the *Left Behind* series has distorted the message of love and peace that Jesus taught, and that it has done this in an effort to increase book sales. The end result is that many (if not most) readers will be inclined to suspect genuine Christians of being Antichrist dupes, simply because we preach and practise pacifism. The error comes from too much focus on the counterfeit pacifism of the Antichrist, and too little respect for the genuine pacifism of Jesus Christ.

## Appendix C. The Jews

*Note: What follows is not meant to be taken as justification for anti-semitic teachings or practices. While it argues that God does not love the Jews any more than he loves any other race, or the members of any other religion, it should be noted that he does not love them any less either.*

The Apostle Paul was vexed by so-called Christians who could not tell the difference between Christianity and Judaism. Although Paul himself had been raised as one of the strictest of the strict Jews, and although he had rabidly fought against Christianity, when he finally had a powerful personal encounter with Jesus, he saw clearly that his old religious life was, in his own words, a heap of dung by comparison to what he had in Jesus and in what Jesus taught. Read it for yourself in Philippians 3:3-8.

The topic of the Jews is a recurring one in the writings of Paul. He taught that all of the promises of God are fulfilled in Jesus (II Corinthians 1:20). In other words, the New Promise (or "Testament") is the fulfillment of the Old Promise (or "Testament") God's promise to Abraham that he was going to be the father of many nations was not to be fulfilled through the sum total of Abraham's physical descendants, but rather through one of his descendants (or through one 'seed'). (Galatians 3:16) That one descendant of Abraham was Jesus, the *Christ*, or the Anointed One of God. And the nations (or tribes) that he started are those who respond to God and to his Anointed One in faith. (See Romans 4:16-17, Galatians 3:7-9, and James 1:1.) The follower of Jesus have become the "elect" or "chosen" people. (Titus 1:1, I Peter 1:2)

Without Jesus, the rest of Abraham's descendants were no more chosen, or elect, than was Ishmael, who was also a descendant of Abraham. (Galatians 4:22-28) Paul compared Ishmael to the Old Testament (i.e. Jewish) "law", which contrasted with the New Testament message of salvation by faith alone (rather than religious affiliation). Obviously,

if a person has genuine, childlike faith in God, then that person will be able to recognise and accept someone sent by God, and in particular, they would recognise and accept the only begotten Son of God.

So those Jews who have not accepted Jesus the Messiah are just as lost as any heathen on the face of the earth. In fact, they may be more lost, for they have had more light and more opportunity than anyone else, apart from the churches which reject his teachings. Jesus said it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than it would be for the Jews who rejected him, and who rejected his disciples. (Matthew 10:15) Jesus called those Jews who rejected him "children of the devil". (John 8:39-44) He prophesied that people would come from the East and from the West to enter the kingdom of heaven, but that the physical descendants of Abraham would be thrust out. (Luke 13:28-29)

God is finished with the Old Testament. We are living in the New Testament now. And the New Testament teaches that the true children of Israel, the true Chosen People are those who have accepted Christ, and not those who continue to crucify him. (Acts 7:51-52) Paul was deeply offended by professing Christians who sucked up to flesh Jews and flesh Judaism. (Galatians 3:1) The whole Jewish thing is over... finished... gone!

If, by some miraculous act of mercy, God should ever choose to do something through the Jews who are still present on the earth, he would only be willing and able to do it if/when they became overcome with the truth of their sinfulness in having rejected the Messiah. Such a conversion will not come about through the misguided ravings of Christians who try to teach that unchristian Jews are still "God's Chosen People".

Yet, when one reads the *Left Behind* series, one gets the distinct impression that there are two ways to heaven -- one through Christ, and the other through being born a Jew. The book suggests that it would be nice if the Jews eventually accepted Jesus, but with or without Jesus, they are still following the on true God. We hate to burst the

bubble, but this is a lie. Being related to someone who was chosen by God does not make someone chosen by God. God chooses those who choose him. Muslims are as close to being God's chosen people as are Jews who have not accepted Jesus. After all, both religions claim to follow the God of Abraham, with or without the faith of Abraham. They just don't accept Jesus as God's Son.

On page 379 of Volume 3 (*Nicolae*) the leader of the false church, which has united all of the religions of the world, says that only two groups are holding out -- the tribulation saints and the Jews. The false church leader says of the Jews, "They still believe in the one true God and a Messiah who's supposed to come in the sky by and by." The implication is that the Jews actually believe in God and also believe in "Christ" (the Greek word for Messiah) except that their Messiah is the Christ who will soon return... whether or not they accept the Jesus who came the first time. What rubbish! If they are so sincere about believing in their Messiah, then whose fault is it that they have not accepted him? Did God fail? Did Jesus blow it? Or did the Jews reject God and Jesus both? Sadly, their stubborn rebellion against God and Jesus continues to this day. And because of this, they are as much "anti-Christ" as any other religion on earth. Orthodox Jewish teaching is that Jesus is the ultimate deception of the devil. (At least Muslims teach that Jesus was a genuine prophet!) So how do people like Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins think that the Jews are something special in God's eyes?

The *Left Behind* series again confuses the good guys with the bad guys, by suggesting that the agreement between the Antichrist and the Jews to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem is a sacred agreement, involving God. Again, one of the most basic lessons of the New Testament is totally overlooked. That lesson is that God does not live in temples made with hands. (Acts 7:20) Our bodies have become the temple of the Holy Spirit now (I Corinthians 3:16). Part of the message of Jesus is that true worshippers no longer see anything special about worshipping in the temple in Jerusalem. (John 4:21-23)

The New Jerusalem is a spiritual and heavenly city (Revelation 21:10), while Jerusalem where the Temple will be located is spiritually referred to as Sodom in Revelation 11:8. The Temple in Jerusalem and the covenant with the Antichrist are demonic counterfeit of the covenant that has been established between the true Messiah and his spirit-filled followers. So lumping unrepentant Jews and the tribulation saints together in one camp is a monstrous lie.

But what about the twelve tribes mentioned in *The Revelation*, with total membership of 144,000? Ask yourself "How many tribes of "Jews" are there?" The name "Jew" comes from the tribe of "Judah" Ten of the tribes of *Israel* died out thousands of years ago. Assuming that all twelve endtime tribes come from the one (or two, counting the tribe of Benjamin) remaining tribes just doesn't make sense.

And there is no way you could bring those other extinct tribes back into existence, nor is it possible to prove that even one individual claiming to be from one of those tribes really is from that tribe. James, the brother of Jesus, addresses Christian believers as "the twelve tribes scattered abroad". (James 1:1) The New Testament testifies to the fact that the "twelve tribes" mentioned in *The Revelation* are members of a spiritual kingdom, called the kingdom of heaven, as opposed to the "kingdom of Israel". The headquarters for the kingdom of heaven is in a spiritual Jerusalem "come down from heaven", not the geographical Jerusalem of the Jews.

It is convenient for Christians who do not want to face the horrors of the Great Tribulation, to pretend that they will be whisked away before all the trouble starts and to say that *The Revelation* has primarily been written for the tribe of Judah (i.e. Jews). But that is a contradiction, both literally and spiritually. Until and unless the Jews accept Jesus Christ, they are the Opposition. Kissing up to them has been a source of great confusion throughout the history of the institutional church. It is time that we left the Old Testament behind and moved into the New Testament, with a new Saviour. The law came through Moses, but grace and truth come through Jesus Christ! (John 1:17)

## Appendix D: Servants of the Antichrist

The *Left Behind* series is inspiring, in terms of making people think about serious life-and-death situations. Yet it tends to assume that, even in the face of disaster, life for conservative, fundamentalist, American Christians will pretty much revolve around the same values and goals that have characterised their lives up until now.

In other words, people will continue to go to church on Sundays, and to work in system jobs the rest of the week, right through the Tribulation and all that comes with it. The book suggests that people will get to mid-week meetings only if it does not interfere too much with their job, that they will continue to have plenty of cash to throw around, and that they will continue to jet around the world at will. There is nothing in the book that speaks to the condition of poor Christians, or Christians living in poor countries. Most startling is that all of this materialistic philosophy is preached at a time (in the story) when people should be seriously reconsidering whether the values that they lived by before the trouble started were really the correct ones.

The beauty of any good disaster story is that it gives the author opportunity to get people thinking past the mundane assumptions of everyday life. In desperate circumstances, people discover the futility of so much that they did before the disaster struck. But the *Left Behind* series lacks the courage to even suggest that there may be something wrong with the materialism of evangelical fundamentalism. Even in the face of the ultimate choice between serving Jesus or serving the Antichrist, the book's two heroes both find themselves very much in the employ of the Antichrist.

There is reflected in them the same double-mindedness that professing Christians face today when it comes to their efforts to work for God and work for money at the same time. They are forced to admit that they work for money because they fear being without it, and they justify being in their present jobs, usually on the grounds that they may one day be a "witness" where they are.

In most war type movies, where people are displaced and fighting for their lives, any talk of paid employment becomes fairly meaningless. However, at least the first six books in the *Left Behind* series suggest that paid employment is the norm for Christians during the time of great trouble. Not only are Christian heroes expected to continue working for money, but they are seen as getting the best jobs with the highest rates of pay. Against all reason, they are seen as being divinely protected in their work for the Antichrist himself, who, for no clear reason, keeps them on his staff even when he knows that they are supposed to be representing his arch enemy, Jesus.

While Rayford Steele and Buck Cameron (the two heroes of the *Left Behind* series) continue to serve the Antichrist, they really do not learn anything that makes a great deal of difference in their ability to serve Jesus during the years that they stay employed by the A.C. Because they fear opposition if they speak out openly for their faith, their on-the-job "witness" is also relatively ineffective. They appear to be there for one reason, and that is for the money and other material benefits that it represents. The book itself is fairly clear about that, as we will show shortly.

We could appreciate the possibility that God might call someone to infiltrate the enemy's camp for a specific purpose. But that is not the case with Buck and Rayford. They go on year after year doing and saying nothing of any great spiritual significance. As a consequence, they are tormented by the guilt that they know they should feel, but which they (or their authors) try to brush away with faint suggestions that God may want them where they are.

The first chapter of *Soul Harvest*, (volume four) is amazingly honest in depicting this angst and double-mindedness that Rayford Steele goes through with regard to his service to the Antichrist. But, because he is the hero of the series, the end result (his caving in to fear and selfishness) tends to justify similar gutlessness on the part of other Christians, both now and presumably in the future when the real Tribulation begins.

*Soul Harvest* begins with these words: “Rayford Steele wore the uniform of the enemy of his soul, and he hated himself for it.” Rayford rips the coat off and beats it on the ground, in anger at the fact that the Antichrist has just destroyed thousands of lives in a needless war. A strange sentence appears on the next page: “Rayford considered abandoning all vestiges of his connection to Nicolae Carpathia’s regime, but his attention was drawn again to the luxuriously appointed arm patches.” Why should luxurious arm patches cause him to change his mind?

Then another explanation is given for Rayford’s change of mind: “As he knelt to retrieve his coat, Rayford’s maddening logic returned — the practicality that made him who he was. Having no idea what he might find in the ruins of his condominium, he couldn’t treat as dispensable what might constitute his only remaining set of clothes.”

So, whether Rayford decides to continue serving the enemy of his soul because he needs the clothes or because he craves the luxuries and power that go with them, the point is that he never really faces the possibility of totally trusting God to provide him with his material needs. Nor has he faced the possibility that God might ask him to survive *without* luxuriously appointed arm patches.

Then, on pages three and four, Rayford bravely threatens to tell the Antichrist what he thinks of him. But when faced with the opportunity to do so, he caves in again. Here is the phone dialogue between himself and his co-pilot:

“Don’t put Carpathia on or I swear I’ll...”

“Stand by for the Potentate.”

Rayford switched the phone to his right hand, ready to smash it on the ground, but he restrained himself. When avenues of communication reopened, he wanted to be able to check on his loved ones.

First it was clothing, then it was his loved ones. In both situations, the Antichrist had him in his grip. Rayford, like so many professing Christians, had never seriously considered the teachings of Jesus, which ask us to put him before loved ones, before clothing, and even before food.

Food, too, gets a mention. On page 62 of the same volume, Rayford is tucking into a sumptuous buffet at the secret hideout of the Antichrist, while the rest of the world is being decimated by the Antichrist army. Referring to his Christian faith, Rayford says to Mac, “Carpathia knows where I stand.” And Mac replies, “He likes you. Maybe he feels secure knowing you don’t hide anything from him.”

Rayford then thinks to himself about the food: “It might be the enemy’s food, but it **does the job**.” The emphasis is not mine; it was put there by the authors. They obviously want readers to get the point. The “job” is his need for food. Compromising with the enemy had met that need, whether or not it was what God wanted, or what Jesus taught about real faith.

The decision to join with the Antichrist in the shelter in the first place, was made with full knowledge that Rayford was turning his back on the suffering that was taking place outside of it. The closing words to the first chapter of *Soul Harvest* state: “He’d seen awful things in his life, but the carnage at this airport was going to top them all. A shelter, even the Antichrist’s, sounded better than this.”

Food, clothing, shelter, loved ones. In every situation, Rayford Steele succumbs to the Antichrist. In his “heart”, of course, he is convinced that his true loyalty is to Jesus. But in his actions, everything he does is a total contradiction. His guilt leads him to experience a growing hatred for the Antichrist, until he finally convinces himself that he would be doing God’s will by killing him. Often religious people compensate for flaws in their own faith by hating others who don’t measure up to what they preach.

Although a “deadly wound” was prophesied for the Antichrist, there is nothing in Bible prophecy to indicate that it was to be inflicted by a Christian, nor that it had any significance in terms of promoting Christianity. But the *Left Behind* series overlooks all that. Powerless to wage a proper spiritual battle for the truth, Rayford Steele must content himself with fighting a totally useless carnal battle against the Antichrist, wielding a carnal weapon.

When seeking to find the underlying lesson of any novel, it pays to observe the behaviour of the “hero”. Yet, if we do this with the *Left Behind* series, the underlying message that comes through is that Christians can (and probably should) serve the Antichrist in order to save themselves and their loved ones, and in order to live a more comfortable life in this evil old world. As long as they proclaim loyalty to Jesus with their lips (out of earshot of the AC of course), it doesn’t much matter what their actions say.

Of course, the enemy of our soul wants us to praise him as well, and the *Left Behind* series is loaded with references to the titles that the Antichrist and his cohorts give themselves, each one more grandiose than the one before. This too angers Rayford, but he continues to give in when it becomes clear that not doing so could cost him his job.

Rayford takes a slight stand against the Antichrist when he refuses to return to base immediately, because he is searching for his wife amongst the ruins. The Antichrist says that he will overlook such insubordination, but he notices that Rayford has not used the term “Potentate” (most powerful one) when referring to the world leader. Carpathia says: “*Now is no time to neglect protocol, Captain Steele. A pardoned subordinate is behooved to address his superior...*”

Rayford shoots back, “*All right **Potentate** Carpathia...*” (Again, the emphasis is not mine.)

On page 142 of *Soul Harvest*, Rayford objects to calling Carpathia His Excellency: “*You are using a title that has for generations been limited to religious leaders and royalty,*” he says to an A.C. assistant.

But it isn’t long before Rayford is using that title as well. (e.g. page 423: “*Your Excellency,*” he said, *swallowing any vestige of pride, “I’m assuming you’ll need Mac and me to get you to Israel tomorrow.”*)

Rayford and his co-pilot discuss the expediency of sharing their faith on their job, and they decide that they should not, despite an earlier statement that Christians must be prepared to confess their faith publicly in order to be saved (Romans 10:9-10) “*You’re supposed to tell lots of people,*” Rayford had said. (page 133)

But then he admits that the other hero, Buck Cameron, kept his faith secret outside of church meetings. “*He thought it best to keep that to himself, so he could be more effective,*” Rayford explained. And then he suggests that Mac do the same. (page 183) His co-pilot asks, “*What about that verse about confessing with your mouth?*” Rayford replies, “*I have no idea. Do the rules still stand at a time like this? Are you supposed to confess your faith to the Antichrist? I just don’t know.*”

After a particularly sinister speech from the Antichrist, their fellow employees are drawn to almost worship him. This is recorded on page 214: “*When the Global Community employees in the mess hall leaped to their feet, cheering and clapping, Rayford and Mac stood, only to keep from appearing conspicuous. Mac’s attention was drawn to someone else who was slow to stand, and that was their first clue that the other employee must also be a secret believer.*”

One wonders what men like Shadrach Meshach, and Abednego would have thought of such faith. After all, if they had merely gone through the motions (somewhat hesitantly) when ordered to bow down to the image of the Antichrist of their day, they could have escaped the fiery furnace. But what kind of a witness would it have been?

The kind of faith that Rayford Wetnoodle preaches and practises is the kind of faith that the Devil himself would like to see more of in the church. And so we have to conclude that the *Left Behind* books are just another part of his great worldwide deception, subtly teaching even the supposedly staunch fundamentalists that it is okay to compromise in any situation where it may cost you something as a Christian.

Are you willing and able to see past the lies being promoted by such weak faith? Are you serious about finding what God’s will is for Christians in the years ahead? Or are you one of the many millions who *want* to be deceived into complacency about lukewarm faith? Make your choice and make it soon, because if you can’t decide, you already have.

## Appendix E: The Supernatural

A subtle concern that I had while reading through the *Left Behind* series was the authors' treatment of the supernatural. Fundamentalists argue that Liberal Christians do not believe in the almighty, supernatural, miraculous aspect of God. Liberals talk of a force, of morality and ethics, of the God within, but they fail to grasp the concept of a personal relationship with a personal God who is bigger than themselves.

There is some validity in being concerned about an overall lack of faith in the supernatural. However, something goes wrong when it comes to the particular aspects of this almighty, personal, miracle-working God which seem to be most important to fundamentalists, especially in the area of Bible prophecy. At times, for instance, when I would have expected the authors to be producing strong scriptural support for world events (showing that they were supernaturally predicted), they seemed vague or totally silent. But at other times, when there appeared to be no need for predicting something that would be contrary to the laws of nature, including human nature, the *Left Behind* books launch into such supernatural fantasies they tend to ruin their own credibility.

Some of the most sensational aspects of the series, and thus the things that will be most remembered after people have read the books or seen the movie(s?) are God wiping out the entire Russian Air Force with meteors just when they were attacking Israel (including every scrap of wreckage landing in vacant blocks or empty streets, so that no one in Israel suffers so much as a scratch either from debris or from the meteors); millions of people vanishing in a fraction of a second; the two witnesses appearing out of nowhere, speaking almost exclusively through quotes from the Bible (some of them horribly out of context) which can be understood by anyone in the world in their own language, and being almost totally unapproachable; and the Antichrist not only rising from almost total obscurity to become world ruler in the space of a couple of days, but also restructuring the entire

geopolitical world, bringing in one world currency, and shifting the United Nations to "New Babylon" (Iraq) in the process. Finally, there is this ability of the Antichrist to "hypnotise" people at will, that enables him to commit murder in front of witnesses and still get away with it. All of these points in the overall plot of the book need to be taken with some fairly large grains of salt. Yet, without them, the book pretty well lacks a plot.

We will now look at them one by one.

The Russian Air Force demise is one of the few sensational aspects of the series that comes with a Bible reference to supposedly support it (Ezekiel 38 and 39, as referenced on page 11 of volume 1, *Left Behind*). Yet these chapters from Ezekiel, about someone named Gog and Magog, are (according to Revelation 20:7-8) actually referring to a battle that takes place after the thousand year reign of Christ on earth. The book wants us to believe (page 10, volume 1) that the earthquake mentioned in Ezekiel 38:19-20 somehow destroys the Russian Air Force flying overhead, without injuring anyone on the ground! It tells us that the "bows and arrows and hand staves and spears" which are described in Ezekiel 39:9-10 are actually the remains of Russian fighter jets, and that people in Israel will be able to burn them for fuel for six years! Incredible stuff.

We have already said plenty about the instant vanishing myth, which is based almost entirely on Matthew 24:40-41 [*There shall be two in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left.*] One need only compare that with the account in Luke 17:31-37 to see that there is nothing instantaneous about it at all, or even miraculous, apart from some people hearing God's voice and being instantly obedient, while others choose to ignore him. Here is Luke's account: *In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever*

*shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, "Where, Lord?" and he said unto them, "Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together."*

This is a description of true believers being called to drop everything and follow Jesus, who will lead them to a place of refuge. Nothing more supernatural than the still small voice of the Spirit, and the obedience of true believers.

So what about the Two Witnesses? They will have miraculous powers that will help protect them from their enemies. But there is nothing in scripture to suggest that they will not be otherwise normal human beings, with real parents, speaking in only one language at a time. They most likely will live in a house, eat normal meals, and sleep regular hours, preaching a message of warning and judgment to the world, but probably in their own words.

The fact that they are described as being Elijah and Moses does not mean that they must physically descend from heaven as full-grown supernatural adults. Jesus himself said that John the Baptist was Elijah in his day, and yet John was born as a baby and grew up like other children. Saying that John was Elijah (Matthew 11:11-14) may mean that Elijah was somehow re-born in the form of John the Baptist, or it could be that John the Baptist merely had the same spirit and ministry that Elijah had. Similarly, I expect that the Two Witnesses will be two fairly normal people... if you can call fire-breathing normal! (Revelation 11:5) Even their powers to stop the rain and to cause plagues will more than likely mean that they, like Moses, will only predict something that God himself actually does. This supernatural element of their ministry will not be so totally overwhelming that there is not plenty of room for doubt. When it comes to the supernatural, God has always allowed room for doubt.

Interestingly, when Buck Cameron and Tsion Ben-Judah start broadcasting to the world via the Internet, their ministry becomes fairly consistent with what may well be the bulk of the ministry of the Two Witnesses. Such a clandestine operation, with them largely out of sight in the anonymity of the Internet could explain how the Two Witnesses would be able to survive without overuse of the fire-breathing phenomenon. But it is also possible, as La Haye and Jenkins have suggested, that they will stand right out there in public and goad the authorities for three and a half years, thus giving themselves worldwide TV coverage each time they supernaturally repel an attack by the authorities. Only time will tell.

The final area where I feel the *Left Behind* authors have overdone the miraculous is the subject of the Antichrist, Nicolae Carpathia (their fictional name for the character in their series). Although Carpathia may rise suddenly and dramatically to power, we know of nothing in scripture which says that this will necessarily be how it happens. And there certainly does not need to be a complete re-structuring of the United Nations Security Council in order for Bible prophecy to be fulfilled. The Bible says that the Antichrist will be assisted by ten "kings" or kingdoms: *The ten horns which you saw are ten kings which have received no kingdom as yet, but they will receive power as kings one hour with the Beast. These have one mind, and they will give their power and strength to the Beast. These will make war with the Lamb and the Lamb will overcome them. For he is King of kings and Lord of lords.* (Revelation 17:12-14)

Daniel also spoke about these kings. He said: *The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise, and another shall rise after them, and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.* (Daniel 7:24)

Now consider this: The thing that makes the ten rotating member of the U.N. Security Council so powerful is that they are controlled by the other five members of the Council, who are permanent members, and who all have a veto power over one another.

Three of those five permanent members are non-communist: The United States, Britain, and France. The other two are (or were) communist: Russia and China. If three of those permanent members could be “subdued” by the communist powers, then dramatic changes could take place in the United Nations such as those suggested in LaHaye and Jenkins’s books.

As for the one world currency, there is no real need for a single currency, as long as there is a single world “mark”. Regardless of what people may call their local currency, if they are all part of a worldwide computer system, and they all use an electronic micro-chip whenever buying and selling, the worldwide computer will be able to process all transactions as though they were using the same currency. The real point is that in a cashless society such as that predicted in *The Revelation*, there is no cash or currency anyway. And whether people choose to advertise their prices in shekels or rupees, it does not take much for a single computer system to process them all according to a single exchange rate stored in its hard drive.

The shift of the United Nations to a place called “New Babylon” (in Iraq) is one of the most contrived aspects of the *Left Behind* plot, as well as one of the saddest indicators of the authors’ lack of spiritual understanding with regard to the overall message of *The Revelation*. The original Babylonian Empire is dead and gone as far as human history is concerned. But spiritually, the empire lives on in each succeeding empire (which is why it is described as having several different “heads”). Part of the message of The Revelation is that no matter how much we may change the leaders, we still get the same beast underneath. Even today, Christians continue to delude themselves into thinking that one candidate or another can turn the American system (or some other country’s system) into the kingdom of heaven. But that will never happen. The kingdom of heaven is totally alien to all the other systems of the world, primarily because it is built on faith in God rather than faith in money. (Matthew 6:31-33) But the term Babylon could be linked with them all, because of its biblical meaning.

The new world government is called Babylon in the Bible, not because it is headquartered in Iraq or Rome or Athens or Cairo, but it is called Babylon simply because it is the new world government, on whom the mantle of Babylon falls, just as it fell on Rome during Bible times.

Most disturbing of all the supernatural exaggerations in the *Left Behind* series is talk of the Antichrist being able to hypnotise or brainwash people. The book suggests that Buck Cameron was able to escape the Antichrist’s hypnotic power after being ‘born again’; yet, it has been my experience that people professing to be born again are usually the most fearful of being brainwashed. They run in fear from anyone labelled a cult, on the grounds that cults are able to brainwash people. They refuse to read anything that anyone labelled as a cult member offers them to read, and they warn everyone whom they love not to listen to such people because they may be brainwashed or hypnotised. This fear, of course, leads them in the opposite direction to faith, as it creates divisions where there really is no need for them..

We have no doubt that the Antichrist is extremely deceptive. The Bible says that he and his false prophet will be able to deceive everyone on earth, *except* those who have chosen to put God first in their lives. But he does not do it through anything so other-worldly as hypnotism or brainwashing. He does it through such subtle tricks as writing stories about the return of Jesus which generate fear of the Antichrist in its readers. Through such fear he will be able to totally control them. For every time someone like ourselves comes along teaching people to obey the teachings of Jesus, he will simply tell them that they already have enough religious books, thank you, and besides, if they listen to what we are saying, we will suck their brains out of them and turn them into zombies.

Now, after having suggested that the La Haye/Jenkins series has exaggerated the supernatural, we want to say that they have also stripped God of his power in areas where he really promised to take care of us. We will include more of this in a later article on the series.

But suffice it to say that throughout the series, the underlying lie of the devil's system prevails, i.e. that the kingdom of heaven cannot be built without money, and that the answer to the Mark of the Beast or prophesied famines is simply to buy gold or stockpile food and other supplies. This was the philosophy of the rich fool, who tore down his barns to build bigger ones. Yet that is the message (i.e. Store up wealth.) that comes through in the *Left Behind* series.

On page 89 of the first volume, when Rayford Steel is about to make a decision to become a Christian, he states that he will attend church on Sunday if he is not rostered to work on that day. On page 159, the re-born pastor of the re-born New Hope Church says, "We will not be taking any offering [today], though we will have to start doing that next week to meet our expenses. The church has some money in the bank, but we do have a mortgage and I have living expenses." On page 228 we are told that only the Jews (well, 144,000 of them) will be preaching during the Great Tribulation. Other Christians are pretty much free to go on living as they always have. And, indeed, our two heroes (Buck and Rayford) do exactly that, working for none other than the Antichrist himself! On page 306 there is reference to Jesus saying that we cannot serve two masters, but no hint that the other master (besides God) is money, as stated in the Bible.

And finally, when it comes to the Mark of the Beast itself (the most significant of all the prophecies in *The Revelation*) the same book that proclaims (page 309, volume 1) without a hint of scriptural evidence, that the execution of two bankers by the Antichrist was foretold in prophecy, says only that there are "many theories" regarding the Mark. It is as though the series wants right from the start, to cast doubt on the veracity of prophecies about the Mark of the Beast, while, at the same time, generating blind faith in the myths that it has put together to make a great blockbuster.

In fact, the prophecy about the Mark of the Beast is one of the most irrefutable prophecies in the whole Bible... one that is coming to pass before our very eyes. But we will say more about that in the next article.

#### Appendix F: The Mark

It takes eight expensive volumes for readers of the *Left Behind* series to finally reach the one that deals with the most obvious and indisputable prophecy in *The Revelation*... the prophecy about the Mark of the Beast.

We are told in Revelation 13:16-18 that the coming world ruler will "cause all... to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads, that no one might buy or sell save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name... for his number is six hundred threescore and six." In Revelation 14:9-11, an angel says, "If anyone receives his mark in their forehead or in their hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God... They shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb."

Yet, in the 380 pages of this volume, there was not one mention of the number 666, and there was only one brief reference to the Mark being used for buying and selling, as though that is incidental to the real purpose of the Mark, which, supposedly, is to brand all loyalists to the Antichrist, and to expose all believers by making them conspicuous through the absence of any visible mark on their forehead. (Note: The Bible says nothing about the mark being visible.)

The book contains a couple of descriptions of Christians dying as martyrs for refusing to accept the mark. Hopefully this will inspire some as they read the book. But there is a more subtle and spiritually dangerous message that recurs throughout the book, which generally suggests that there will be ways around having to suffer (or even be significantly inconvenienced) for not taking the Mark. Either God will provide you with spacious accommodation in a skyscraper and an unlimited choice of luxury cars to drive, or he will send in a member of the Tribulation Force to rescue you at the last minute with thundering jets or convenient helicopters, or you will simply be able to deny Christ and get away with it because of the "grace of God".

Yes, believe it or not, the strongest and most repeated message of the entire book is that anyone who has said the “sinner’s prayer” can do anything they like, and they can get away with it, because God’s hands are tied. All of the warnings in *The Revelation* about eternal damnation for anyone who takes the Mark are cancelled out in the climax of volume eight (The Mark), which is a report to the world from Tsion Ben-Judah that you “cannot [i.e. that you will be unable to] change your mind,” that you “cannot [i.e. that you will be unable to] take the mark,” and that you will be “unable” to deny Christ (page 339). No need to have any courage, character, commitment, or willpower, because such things are unnecessary. Fate will protect you.

The climactic essay raves on about God’s grace being irreversible, and about God not being able to blot your name out of the Book of Life even if he wanted to. The most amazing thing is that the authors have the audacity to quote the same Bible verses which refer to God actually blotting names out of the book of life, but they dismiss them with the weakest of arguments, i.e. that there are two books of life, one that belongs to the Lamb, and one that belongs to his Father, and that the one belonging to his Father has nothing to do with eternal life. Being blotted out of that book, according to LaHaye and Jenkins, merely means that you will die one day (in which case we will all be blotted out of it eventually, so the verses about being blotted out of it become meaningless).

And then they produce a ludicrous proof text about not being blotted out of the Lamb’s book of life, and they quote it without any reference to the key word in the verse. See if you can find it in the verse as quoted below: “*He who overcomes... I will not blot out his name from the book who overcomes... I will not blot out his name from the book of life.*” (Rev. 3:5) (pages 342-3) Anyone who has ever read *The Revelation* (at least in the King James version) would have seen that word “overcome” many times throughout the book. All of the promises in the book are made to the “overcomers”. They are not made to those who “say the sinner’s prayer” and then turn back.

It is true that *The Revelation* speaks of God “sealing” 144,000 of his faithful servants, and protecting them throughout The Tribulation. But there is nothing in *The Revelation* to indicate that this is a visible and indelible seal that comes the instant someone says a magic prayer or that it cannot be taken away if someone turns back on God. God, who knows the end from the beginning, would know in advance who will NOT deny him, as well as those whom he will assist to survive the period of Great Trouble. But LaHaye and Jenkins have turned that seal, visible to God alone, into a magical mark that appears on the foreheads of anyone who says the ritual prayer, and then they have used the magical mark to suggest that your will has nothing further to do with whether or not you will be saved.

Obviously, this contradicts all human experience. We all know that every one of us still has the capacity to sin. But we also know that we at least have the capacity to fight against temptation. But what God is looking for are people who will do their best and then trust his mercy for those areas where we fall short. The “eternal security” teachers argue that no amount of sin on our part will make any difference to our salvation, and even those who wilfully and rebelliously turn against God after having said the sinner’s prayer will either return to God in the end, or else they were not really saved in the first place. (Presumably people in the second group slipped up on part of the magic prayer.) There is, of course, no way to know until they finally die, and even then we can convince ourselves that they returned to the fold while lying in a coma or in the split second before the car crash took their life.

But, of course, with the *Left Behind* series putting tattoos (which only other believers can see) on the foreheads of everyone who says the sinner’s prayer, and with the promise that anyone who takes the Mark of the Beast is going to be lost, the authors have a dilemma of a different sort. They have made salvation objective and visible, at the same time that there are likely to be some of these people who will turn back. So they tell their readers: “We guarantee that you’ll do the right thing without any effort on your own part. Trust us. Everything

else we have taught you has been a breeze (loaded with Western luxuries) and so dying for your faith will not require effort on your part if it happens at all. Fear and trembling in desperate prayer before God? Practice in taking a stand for Christ now, or in learning how to say No to the devil? Not necessary. The sinner's prayer has done it all for you. Courage? Character? Backbone? Those are only for heretics who are trying to work their way to heaven!"

But we have to tell you that such a teaching is a damnable lie, that has sent literally millions to hell. Suffering is not always for the other guys or for the Jews. Suffering is a real part of God's testing. He wants to know whether our faith is real, and he allows us to be tested to determine who has real faith in him, and who has faith in the fairytales of the charlatans.

Some will feel that I have been unkind to the deceptive duo, because, after all, they showed some who died for their faith, and they will undoubtedly show more. But my response is that the sufferers are always the "other guys". The heroes of the book repeatedly deny Christ for the sake of expediency. In the latest book, LaHaye and Jenkins have the Antichrist initiating another "loyalty test" in which his loyal followers greet one another with the phrase, "He is risen," in reference to A.C. himself. The required response is "He is risen indeed". As has happened at every similar test of loyalty through the series, the "heroes" have convinced themselves that they can lie, cheat, steal, and even deny Christ as long as they cross their fingers and make up some justification for it. So they tell themselves that they are not really talking about the Antichrist when they say, "He is risen indeed", but rather they are secretly talking about Jesus. Never mind that, to the rest of the world, they are denying Christ. In the secret place of their heart, they believe that they have NOT denied Christ. And who is God to believe otherwise?

Jesus said, "Whosoever will be ashamed of me and of my words, I will be ashamed of him when I return." Imagine Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego bowing down to the image of Nebuchanezzar and

telling themselves that "in their hearts" they were really bowing down to the God of Abraham! Such faith is not faith at all. While LaHaye and Jenkins have loaded their books with sensational miracles that require no faith on the part of the people being wowed by them, when it comes to a God who can take care of them if they simply open their mouths and say that they are Christians, it appears that their God is pretty near useless.

The book's hero, Rayford Steele reads the climactic essay stating that there is nothing you can do to lose your salvation, and the book says that he finds comfort and encouragement from it because he had wondered "*if he failed and proved a coward, would he lose his standing before God.*" (page 344) It appears here that the authors have moved from a hint that he would not prove to be a coward, to a suggestion that if he did (since obviously, a lot of people will, despite all the LaHaye/Jenkins promises to the contrary), he would still be saved.

Then the book moves straight into the story of a teenager who is forced to take the mark. This young man blurts out "Christ is risen indeed!" in response to the Antichrist loyalty test, but the heroes of the book condemn such a statement as "teenage recklessness" (page 346), and breathe a sign of relief when no one heard the boy. On page 353, one of the book's heroes compliments the boy for not declaring his faith when forced to take the Mark. He says, "I'm glad you didn't just scream out that you're a believer!" (Do you see how such stuff aggressively teaches that it is "right" to deny Christ?)

The kid gets the Mark, right over top of his "seal". What the authors are doing here is moving from their statement that there is nothing that we can do to lose our salvation once we have it, to a test case, where someone has been supposedly "forced" to take the mark (as though God was powerless to stop that from happening). And then they justify this action, not on the grounds that it was forced, but on the grounds that a loving God will just have to put up with the Mark. Here is what they say: "*The Bible says nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, and that has to include our own selves.*" (page 354)

Then suddenly, out of this apparent tragedy, the Tribulation Force discovers that they have just what they need to continue their life of luxury. They have someone who can continue to work for them from inside the enemy camp. Because the enemy cannot see Chang's "seal", they will only see the Mark. But because he has the "seal", God won't see the "Mark". How convenient! They even give it a name: bi-loyalty. The young man says, "I love that term, bi-loyal," and he goes on to show what an advantage it will be to him. (pages 355-356)

Yes, *Bi-loyalty* could just about be the name for the entire series. From beginning to end, there has been no evidence of any commitment to the teachings of Jesus. For if there had been, the heroes would not have had to hide their faith and compromise with the Antichrist. They would have simply trusted God to feed them, stopped working for the Antichrist, and gotten busy serving God with their whole hearts.

Jesus did not talk about us choosing between working for God and working for the Devil. Instead, he said that we must choose between working for God or for Mammon. Mammon includes money and all that it can buy. The Babylonian Empire invented money, and money has gone through various changes over the years, from gold coins to lesser coins, to paper money, to plastic money, to electronic money, and finally... the Mark. But there is no mention of that in the LaHaye/Jenkins book. Their goal is to sell as many books as possible for as much money as possible (\$45 Australian for a hard cover copy in a series that includes eight volumes so far, and it has only progressed to halfway through the last seven years at this stage!) You don't sell millions of volumes to people at those prices by telling them that they must forsake all and live by faith in obedience to Jesus if they want to be one of his disciples. Instead, you teach the lie that the church has been teaching for many decades now, and that is that you can do whatever you like (including taking the Mark of the Beast) and it won't hurt you, because you said a ritual prayer at some time in the past.

Time for true Christians to wake up and smell the rot in this series and in the churches as a whole.

### Appendix G: Wells Without Water

Peter wrote about false prophets whom he described as "wells without water". (II Peter 2:17) Jude said much the same thing, calling them "clouds without water". (Jude 12) The thought being expressed in both passages is that these are people whom others turn to, hoping to find something that will quench their thirst, but they go away feeling cheated.

Unfortunately, that appears to have been a conscious part of the marketing strategy behind the *Left Behind* series. What could have been said in one book has been spun out over an interminable number of books (all selling at exorbitant prices that are raking in tens of millions of dollars of profits for the "prophets" who have set the whole thing up). And each book has offered only a few drops of really helpful information for the thirsty millions who have turned to them.

I have, for example, just finished reading "Apollyon", which I somehow skipped when I went through the series earlier. I was particularly interested in finding out what LaHaye and Jenkins had to say about the fifth trumpet in *The Revelation*, from which we get the word Apollyon. (Revelation 9:1-11) I read nearly 300 pages of that book before coming across any reference at all to the fifth trumpet. And that has been much the same with each of the other books in the series. We get romances, car chases, airplane chases, and lots of special effects, but very little that will really solve the deeply rooted spiritual problems of the age in which we live.

So what was the real thrust of "Apollyon"? The bulk of the book is taken up with a three-day church convention in Jerusalem. (wow!) At a time when the world is recovering from several of the worst disasters and wars in its history, and is about to head into even worse disasters, the greatest spiritual giants on earth... the 144,000 faithful witnesses who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, are summoned to a huge stadium in Jerusalem, so that they can have a convention for three days.

Some of the wealthier members of the audience fly in on private jets, while the Antichrist clears the way for them to proceed with their

celebration. (Seriously!) The convention starts with cheerleaders getting the audience to spell out J, E, S, U, S, rah! rah! rah! (page 43) The crowd goes wild with enthusiasm at their chance to see their great leader, Tsion Ben-Judah, in the flesh. (page 46) Supposedly they have been reading Brother Tsion's teachings on the Internet every day now for quite a few months, but they have all left their callings around the world to participate in the spectacle of a mass rally in Jerusalem with the learned Rabbi. (NOTE: There is not a shred of evidence in scripture for such a foolhardy act on the part of the 144,000... and certainly not right under the nose of the Antichrist.) Presumably they come expecting to hear something really special... something they would not have been able to get over the Internet in the months leading up to the convention, something that would make all of the risk and expense worthwhile.

I will repeat what I've said previously: It is the aim of any good disaster story, to break people out of their comfortable, middle-class existence and to get them to question fundamental issues. Yet LaHaye and Jenkins find it hard to pull themselves away from the myths of traditional Christianity... the idea that Christians are mostly American, that they drive fast cars, jet around the world, use the best computers and cell phones, just generally make a lot of money and find their greatest joy in crowds... the bigger the better. They continue to preach that Christians are people who say a little prayer asking Jesus into their hearts, and then go on living pretty much the same as everyone else... well, the same as everyone else in middle-class (or better) American society, even when the world around them is in ruins.

Notice that we are hardly ever told what the great Tsion Ben-Judah says each day on his website. What he IS reported as saying is little more than what the average Christian would have heard before. It has been our experience all over the world that there is a kind of Emperor's New Clothes approach to most sermons, where the audience, too embarrassed to admit that they haven't really understood what has been said, all praise the preacher incessantly, to cover for their ignorance. No one ever considers that maybe others are just as confused as they are.

I've had people rave to me about a religious book or a religious speaker, and I ask them what it is that the speaker or book says (in their own words) and they become speechless. "I can't say it like they do," they confess. "You just have to hear it for yourself." This approach leaves the masses incapable of preaching (or even thinking) for themselves. They just invite people to come and hear what the latest religious spin doctor has to say.

What I am saying is that this "wells without waters" syndrome happens every Sunday at church, that it happens in the *Left Behind* books in general, and that it happens with regard to the great Tsion Ben-Judah's teachings in those books. People go to church expecting to hear something new; buy the books hoping to find some real answers; and in the LaHaye/Jenkins book they ooh and ahh over what a mighty man of God Tsion is, yet when it comes time for him to actually do whatever it is that a mighty man of God does at a time like that, he quotes John 3:16.

I have nothing against John 3:16, and there is always the chance that there will be someone in a meeting, and especially in a meeting in a huge stadium, who has not heard it before. But why is it that the saved, the sealed, the chosen 144,000 still get the same pabulum over and over and over again? Tsion preaches it at both the opening and closing meetings of his convention. (Pages 48, 68, and 188) Remember that even if there are unsaved people at such a meeting, virtually everyone else in the audience should be able to tend to their need to hear John 3:16. But what do the people who have already heard (and accepted) John 3:16 most need to hear at a time like that?

It would be safe to say that 99.9% of those who fork out good money for the *Left Behind* books have also heard the simple salvation message. Maybe the percentage was lower on the first book in the series, and so it was understandable that the message was included in that volume; but considering that it was preached several times in that one alone, it seems strange that it goes on and on and on in each succeeding sequel, like God doesn't have anything else to say to the world.

Of course John 3:16 is not heresy. The wells are not entirely without water. There is some moisture there. But the truth of John 3:16 seems to be lost in the fact that "faith in Jesus" as being taught by these sorts does not go so far as to take seriously the rest of what Jesus taught. Because of this even John 3:16 begins to sound hollow. How can people "believe on him" if they are not being told what he said?

In *Apollyon*, Christians are shown ridiculing, hating, and seeking to kill the bad guys (pages 3, 20, and 256), fretting over the loss of their incredibly high-paying jobs with the Antichrist (pages 19 and 26), and haggling with each other over massive wealth (page 340). One hero boasts that he has "*never been good at leaving things with the Lord,*" and he is told by an even greater hero that it doesn't matter, that "*the Lord himself allows some latitude on that during The Tribulation. The admonition to not worry was written to people who lived before all the judgments.*" (page 374) What kind of faith is that? Sadly, that is what the church does with virtually everything that Jesus taught... they say that he taught people who didn't have the problems that we in the Twenty-First Century have.

The book jumps from totally unbelievable fiction (It cannot even be called science fiction, when we are told that all over the world, the sun comes up two hours late and sets two hours early! Where does it go for the missing four hours if it cannot sneak to the other side of the world?) (page 262) ...it jumps from incredible displays of magic, which break all the laws of nature, to a statement from the great Tzion Ben-Judah himself (about his own physical safety) that "one man can't be too careful". (page 152)

The most amazing thing is that this same God who is able to make the sun disappear from one side of the world without appearing on the other side, is portrayed as totally useless when it comes to feeding his children. The authors resort to a Huckleberry Finn type plot, where the good guys dig up treasure chests full of gold to get them through the Great Tribulation... as though the local grocery store would accept gold coins in lieu of the Mark of the Beast! Truly, all the evidence suggest that faith in gold, rather than faith in God is what the LaHaye/Jenkins

"well" has to offer as consolation for the coming troubles on the earth. (Maybe they need to get the "L" out of their false God!)

On the other hand, the gold coins may be what the Christians themselves are supposed to use as a medium of exchange in their own alternative economy, complete with their own private banks (page 198), and their own buying and selling (page 258), as though that is how life will function in the kingdom of heaven. Really now! The only reason for money in the first place was because of fear and distrust. If Christians are truly living by faith, and dealing with other Christians who are truly living by faith, then why would one of us need a gold coin to get the others to share some of their fish with us?

The best I can say for LaHaye and Jenkins is that they may have just not had enough experience of either life in the real world or of the teachings of Jesus to know that God has given us the answers in Jesus' teachings. Jesus said that when the storm (i.e. the Great Tribulation) comes, if we have heard his teachings and if we have obeyed them (Matthew 7:24-25) we will be ready for it. And what do his teachings say? They say, "Consider the flowers. They don't have jobs. Consider the birds. They don't have jobs. So why are you concerned about things like food and clothing? If God can take care of the flowers and the birds, he can take care of you. Work on building his kingdom and let Him take care of your provisions." (Matthew 6:25-33)

I am in the process of writing a revised version of the *Left Behind* story. It is an attempt to tell a similar story, but based on genuine faith in the teachings of Jesus. I won't be charging exorbitant prices for it, and I'm hoping to squeeze it into one volume. I hope to make it available for free on the Internet, and I'll be happy to get a dollar or two to cover the printing cost for hard copies. (Update: I have sold over a million copies of *Survivors* now, and it's available for free on the Internet. Just search for my name on [smashwords.com](http://smashwords.com) I did end up writing two sequels to it, though they cover the same time period but on different continents. I have made no money out of this, but I've always received enough in donations to order another print run of 100,000 copies of so when the previous lot has run out.)

## Appendix H: Torture and the Virgin Army

I have only just found the time to read *Armageddon*, the latest volume in the *Left Behind* series. It's almost 400 pages long, and I have only read as far as page 353 so far. I don't know when I'll have the time (or the inclination) to finish it, so I have decided to say some things about what I have read so far.

As happens in each issue of the series, the subject in the title (this time, the Battle of Armageddon) hardly gets a mention for more than half of the book. In fact, it all starts on page 299.

Prior to that, readers encounter the predictable blossoming of new romances, but they also encounter something that has not been so predictable in the series so far. It is the amazing torture of Chloe Steel. To be fair to the suspense of "Armageddon" we will not say whether or not Chloe is actually executed. You can read that for yourself. But we will say that 300 pages of torture amounts to little more than missing a few meals on the part of our brave heroine. In fact, Chloe herself sums it up when the Antichrist guards protest that they have treated her quite well. She says that they have taken her away from her family, made her miss a few meals, given her a sleeping tablet, and flown her halfway across the country. How can they possibly feel that such behaviour is anything short of torture? (p. 239) On top of that, she is later made to stand for an hour in the sun without water. (p. 255)

This is consistent with the theme from the start of the series (i.e. that true believers should be able to escape all of the inconveniences, which are reserved almost exclusively for Jews and non-Americans). Like so much of what appears in the other volumes in the series, Chloe's torture reflects the pampered confusion, escapism, and lukewarmness of middle-class American churchianity.

Here is what happens.

Chloe finishes dinner at 7pm one night, and eventually goes to bed. Her husband, Buck, is on night watch. This means that, from the comfort of their well-equipped underground apartment in Southern

California, he operates a periscope which (hidden by a bush) is able to view any movements on the surface. Lest Buck suffer too much while on watch, we are told that his periscope does not even require him to move in order to operate it over a 360 degree viewing circle. Just press a button and the top part rotates while Buck sits still. (It's done through a lot of mirrors, we are told.)

In the middle of the night, Chloe starts to feel sorry for Buck. She offers to take his place, so that he can get some sleep. Buck agrees, and after he has fallen asleep, Chloe spots a military vehicle outside. Rather than tell anyone else what is happening, she makes a decision to leave the underground hideout on her own. With no walkie talkie and one sub-machine gun, she sets out to take on the invaders single-handedly.

Naturally she gets caught and dragged off to jail in San Diego. When the Antichrist forces discover that she is one of the top leaders in the Christian underground movement, they decide to torture her in order to get information on the whereabouts of others in her movement.

The torture does not begin until later that morning. Her captors bring in a good old-fashioned American breakfast of pancakes, syrup, bacon, and eggs. But they tell her that she must spill her guts about her family and friends before they will give it to her. At first, Chloe is rock solid. No way is she going to betray anyone. But after half an hour without food, she slips and lets them know that she has a son. The text says that she realises from that, that hunger is an effective tactic for getting secret information.

To her credit, she does go without breakfast in the end... and lunch... and dinner. Well, not entirely. You see, the authors apparently feeling sorry for Chloe and not wanting to shock American believers into thinking that they would ever have to go through anything so painful, have Chloe's captors telling her that they will give her one energy bar, just to keep from dying on them! I'm not joking. Jenkins and LaHaye apparently think that a day without food could result in death. Because the energy bar is healthy, and not junk food, it is apparently regarded as consistent with the "torture" that she is undergoing.

Fasting (or even eating small portions) is not my strong point. But surely, there must be Christians somewhere in America who know that a few days without food is actually GOOD for us physically, and that it is supposed to be more or less part of our routine training in Christian discipline. But, of course, discipline is a dirty word to modern-day, lukewarm, middle-class comfortable American Christians... the kind being targeted by LaHaye and Jenkins. Their books are big on miracles (including all-you-can-eat scrumptious manna that rains down in bucket loads three times a day if you are Jewish), but anything so extreme as fasting is virtually unheard of. It may have been okay for Jesus and for his early disciples, but not for overweight America... not even in the middle of the Great Tribulation!

You would, of course, imagine that the bad guys were doing many other unspeakable things to Chloe (besides just failing to serve her food) during the course of that first horrible day when she was in their custody. After all, they had threatened to make her suffer. But no way. They just left her sitting in her cell, suffering only from such atrocities as the fact that her toilet did not have a proper seat on it.

I can well imagine anyone who has not read the book thinking that I am exaggerating about what happens. But I am not. And what I have summarised above is the primary action that takes place over those first 228 pages.

There is a threat or two of real torture, but it never happens, and I'll explain why. The bad guys threaten to come into Chloe's cell and do horrible things to her, but she tells them in no uncertain terms (and on several occasions) that if anyone comes into the cell to oppress her, "One of us is going to die." No self-respecting torturer wants to be killed by an unarmed woman while entering her cell, and so the entire force of the Antichrist is left powerless to do anything to Chloe Steele except refuse to give her food. Stop laughing! This really is how it goes.

There is one other little side problem for the bad guys, which helps to keep those first 220 pages from getting too dull. You see, they want to switch Chloe to another prison (apparently fearing that her husband

will storm the San Diego prison single-handedly and free her); but considering that she has threatened to kill them if they enter her cell, they are powerless to get her out. So that evening after she has been some 24 hours on just a health bar, they come up with an ingenious way to get her out without anyone being killed.

They offer her a chocolate milk shake with a sleeping tablet in it. (Apparently Jenkins and LaHaye were thinking that just one energy bar in 24 hours might be a bit more than their audience could take, and junk food junkies might depart the faith in droves if she didn't get at least a little junk food during her stay.)

So Chloe enjoys the milkshake, and then passes out, only to wake up on her way to the new prison.

It is then that she is told that she has broken the will of her torturers. She has lasted more than 24 hours on very little food, and they say that experience has shown them that anyone who can go for 48 hours without food is virtually impossible to break through any other form of torture, so why bother?

Chloe is praised to her face by the torturers as an extremely courageous woman, and told that they will have to execute her at the end of the 48 hours, without any further torture, because her willpower is obviously unbreakable.

What the co-authors do for 220 pages is what church leaders all over America have been doing for decades, and that is to expertly, dramatically, and awesomely say nothing. The *Left behind* series started out as promising to give answers to the general public about the meaning of Bible prophecy. But it has gradually deteriorated into nothing but drivel. "Dry wells," or "clouds without water" as Peter and Jude called them. (II Peter 2:17, and Jude 12)

A columnist in Australia complained recently because Hollywood producers made two parts (and thereby, two admission prices) out of a single move in the Matrix series. But La Haye and Jenkins have been going on for more than ten volumes now without giving any real answers. It could all have been said in one volume (as I have done in

*Survivors*) if warning (or even instructing) the world had been the real motive. But surely by now, there could be no one fooled into thinking that the series aims to teach anything urgent or practical with regard to Bible prophecy. Each new volume is just another gimmick to make a few more million bucks.

Or, as some churches have said to me in defence of the series, "It was never supposed to be teaching anything. It's just good Christian entertainment."

Everywhere you turn in America there are people who boast of having read the entire series. But ask them, after having read nearly 4,000 pages of print, to summarise what the overall message of the *Left Behind* series is, and you'll probably find them all lost for words. The books teach little, if anything, that people did not already know before they started reading them, and the real message of bible prophecy suffers as a result.

Paul said that some people are "ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth". (II Timothy 3:1-7) A good description of what is happening with so much so-called religious "teaching".

In the latest book, there is one laughable situation where some German Christians supposedly read a verse in *The Revelation* about God's people being told to come out of Babylon, because the city was going to be destroyed "in one hour", and so they travelled to the Antichrist headquarters in Baghdad just to save God the embarrassment of not having anyone inside to "come out" when the time came. Seriously! This is exactly how contrived the so-called fulfillments of various prophecies are, as far as Jenkins and LaHaye are concerned. Find a verse, weave it into a good car or plane chase, and then pretend that it is what the Bible was talking about all along.

But back to the torture of Chloe Steel...

We hesitate to say anything so egocentric, but it does sound like our tiny little band of believers (people distributing this book in various places around the world) are actually being addressed in the opening pages of *Armageddon*.

We know for a fact that Jenkins and LaHaye are upset about *Survivors*, because their lawyers wrote to me, threatening to take action to stop my book. So it is understandable that they would be doing what they could to paint me as an extremist. I will explain...

Before Chloe takes off on her escapade with the intruders, she gives some thought to people who think that she was wrong to have a baby in the middle of the final seven years, or who question whether or not people should continue getting married so close to the end. (cf Luke 17:27.) The book twice expresses the thought that it is no one's business but the couple themselves whether they have kids or whether they get married. Where is anyone teaching these days that people should consider birth control and celibacy as forms of preparation for the coming Tribulation? I have addressed the benefits of both in articles on our website. So who were Jenkins and LaHaye having a shot at?

*Armageddon* could have easily dealt with the sobering consequences of having kids during the Tribulation. The soldiers could have captured Chloe's young son, tortured him, and in so doing, extracted information from her which she would not have otherwise given. It would have naturally led to a conclusion that having kids at that time could have risked the security of others around her because of that.

But nothing so thought-provoking ever happens in this volume. The soldiers make a few threats about punishing Chloe through her son, but they fall as flat as their threats to come into her cell and do her harm. Nothing ever results, and the authors just seem to lose interest in the whole subject after that.

And when the Chloe story is finished, the very next thing that happens is the marriage of yet another couple (Ming Toy and Ree Woo), and further plans for marriage by another couple (Chang and Naomi) (p. 267), with a clear understanding that if they survive Armageddon, they'll be able to stay married for a thousand years and "have lots of kids". (What ever happened to Matthew 22:30... "*In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.*")

One of the other annoying things about the book is that no one with any faith in God seems capable of speaking for themselves. Whether they be American heroes or 15-foot angels, all they can do is quote verses from the Bible. The Bible is a great book, and God often speaks to us through it, but if I were facing death, I should think that I could give a personal testimony and not have to quote something Paul said as though it was coming from me.

There is a disturbing scene where Chloe hankers to be able to speak on television (even though the oversized angel has already spoken on TV at great length, during which the bad guys were entirely powerless to pull plugs anywhere in the world in order to interrupt his broadcast). Chloe wants so badly to jump on the same bandwagon that she can just about taste it. So her captor offers her a microphone and says, "Taking this microphone also means taking the mark..." The very next line says: "She took the microphone." How pathetic! And how brazen of the authors to suggest that one could give the impression that they have denied their faith in order to win such favours from the Antichrist. (p. 258)

By page 270, the believers are bidding for a contract with the Antichrist, installing wiring in his palace, and even collecting payment for their services, despite the fact that they do not have the Mark of the Beast, without which Christians are not supposed to be able to buy or sell. "We are on [the Antichrist] payroll," Chang boasts to Rayford. (p. 270)

A few pages later, we learn that Chang, who is still in his teens, has such complete control over the international television broadcasts of the Antichrist, that he can totally take them over, and even override efforts by the enemy to shut stations down to prevent the public from hearing what the Christians have to say. But what is most astounding is that, having all of this power, Chang chooses to let the Antichrist continue to use it for his own blasphemous broadcasts virtually 24 hours a day. Chang even produces an ad which tells the rest of the world that what the Antichrist teaches has been *sponsored* by the Christians, as an expression of their "mercy". (pp. 285, 287)

One of the saddest incidents in the book is when their spiritual leader, Tsion Ben-Judah (from whom my pen-name of Zion Ben-Jonah is taken) announces that he is going to abandon his teaching in order to take up a weapon and kill enemy troops in defence of Jews who have not even accepted Jesus. He says, "*I want to be taught to fight, to use a weapon, to defend myself... I hope to be [a warrior].*" (Note: I say that this is a sad scene, but it is seen as heroic by the authors.)

Tsion is told that the elders are praying about whether it is the right thing that he is doing, and will he wait to hear from them. His reply: "*Do I care what they come back with? Only if it is a yes.*" The next line: "*Buck couldn't believe it.*" And neither could I!

There are so many little hints like this that the authors themselves do not believe what they preach. They, like Tsion, do not really care about what God's will is, if it does not conform with their own. Even talk of heaven, eternal life, and resurrected bodies offer the heroes cold comfort, because of their stubborn unbelief.

For example, Chang talks about joining in the battle to save the earthly city of Jerusalem, and possibly being killed. He says that he must do so to obey his conscience. His girlfriend, Naomi, says, "*We want to survive so we can be together for a millennium. Let's not risk that for the sake of your conscience.*" And once again, there is no suggestion that there is anything wrong with this reasoning! (p. 311) The authors consistently accept that such behaviour is Christian.

Rayford tells the supposedly Christian commander of the so-called Christian troops who are assigned to protect a million people at Petra, "*We could be among the first to witness the Glorious Appearing.*" Their leader shoots back, "*Tell that to a fighting force outnumbered 1,000 to one.*" (p. 339) The wife of that same leader gives a similar response when Rayford tries to assure her that even if the troops die, they will be resurrected. She says, "*Don't say it. Too many of the wives try to comfort themselves with that stuff about how their man will be in heaven a day or two, maybe less; then [Jesus] is coming back. That doesn't help.*" (p. 353)

All of these comments are made without any suggestion that there is something wrong with the people saying them. And these are not some lukewarm new recruits who are saying these things. These are the top leader and their wives/girlfriends... the heroes of the book.

The fact that Rayford has been married twice gives him some pause for thought about how he is going to go about joining in on all of the marital activity that everyone else is looking forward to in the Millennium (p. 346). He does not come up with any answers at that time. Certainly the theme of this volume, if it can be said that there is one, must be to get married and have kids, and not let anyone tell you that there is anything worth forsaking those pleasures for.

How sadly contrary to the message of the One whose "glorious appearing" we truly can look forward to, and for which we can gladly suffer whatever God calls on us to suffer!

For a more detailed explanation of Bible prophecies  
and how they relate to world events today,  
please send for our book

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