

THE END TIMES

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NO ONE LEFT BEHIND! *Hope Beyond Armageddon*

The LEFT BEHIND series of religious novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, and the movie based upon these books promote an overly dramatic and sadistic view of end time prophecy. The authors tell of the horrors of a vindictive God destroying three billion people by fire and earthquakes. The LaHaye/Jenkin's series places the majority of the world's inhabitants into a literal lake of fire to suffer eternally. On national television, these authors have admitted that they feel fear is an acceptable strategy to motivate people into accepting Christ. God, however, would never endorse conversions out of fear. *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."* 1 John 4:18

FICTION IT IS... BIBLICAL TEACHING IT IS NOT

These fictional depictions of prophecy ignore the *"Good News"* of the Bible and paint a picture of a cruel and unsympathetic God who battles a superhuman Antichrist for the souls of men. If the LaHaye/Jenkin's interpretation were true it would seriously call into question the clear, scriptural teachings that *"God is love"* and that *"His compassions fail not."* (1 John 4:16; Lam. 3:22) With their interpretation, one is forced to conclude that if over three billion people are lost, the adversary must have won the battle—proving God powerless against the superior skills of Antichrist at winning souls!

LEFT BEHIND is sensationalized drama, disowning the historic Protestant teaching expounded by Luther, Calvin

and Wesley that Antichrist was not an individual but a church/state system. It embellishes the Catholic Jesuit Counter Reformation concept of the book of Revelation put forth between AD 1580 and 1595. No Protestant embraced the secret rapture, seven-year tribulation literalism before 1829. This concept did not even become popular among born-again Christians until after World War II.

Another issue contrary to Scripture in LEFT BEHIND theology is the harsh, literal interpretation of the highly symbolic language found in Revelation and other Scriptures. Many Bible scholars, including historic Evangelicals like the respected Baptist, John Gill (1697-1771), believed that Revelation was indeed symbolic and not literal. Mountains are symbolic of nations (Isaiah 2:2-4), stars symbolic of teachers (Jude 13) and earthquakes symbolic of revolutions which

shake society. (Rev. 11:13 KJV margin) The beast is symbolic of Antichrist which again, is a church and state system. Rev. 13:1-3

MORE FICTION—AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

In their dramatic depictions of God's anger, there is one issue of mercy which LaHaye and Jenkins merit to God's character. Their scenario is that children under an undefined *age of accountability* are spared because of ignorance. Man's own compassion can not abide the thought that innocent children will be sentenced to an eternity of torture for having not had the chance to knowledgeably accept Christ. But we point out that there



LaHaye/Jenkins' novel LEFT BEHIND does not support the views presented herein

is nothing in Scripture which exempts children from the condemnation of Adamic sin. Nothing gives a person of any age a free entrance into heaven if they have not fully given their life to Christ. According to the LeHaye/Jenkin's limited interpretation, children, upon reaching adulthood, have a 60 percent chance of not accepting Christ and thus, will burn eternally. If, in their concept, children are spared because of their innocence, then we would all have to conclude that it would be better for our children to die before they reach this supposed *age of accountability*. This conflict shows that there must be something wrong with their interpretation. The Scriptures reveal that God has a more merciful plan for not only the little children, but also, **all** of this "poor groaning creation" in due time. Rom. 8:19-23

A "DUE TIME" FOR SELECTING THE CHURCH AND A "DUE TIME" FOR CONVERTING THE WORLD

Christ himself stated that the Bible was purposely written in parables and symbols so that the majority would **not** be converted at this time. *"Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."* (Mark 4:11-12) If now is the time for all to be converted, we would ask why Jesus did not give a clear message so that all could have an equal opportunity to understand his words of salvation? If Jesus tasted death "for every man" (Heb. 2:9), but only a small proportion of the six billion living today are saved, is not the redemption a comparative failure?

The key to understanding these seeming contradictions is found in the words of 1 Timothy 2:6: *"Christ Jesus ... gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time[s]."* The Greek word here translated is plural—"times." Now is not the time for **all** to hear and accept the name of Jesus. God is not trying to convert the world

between the first and second advents of Christ. If He was, then He has failed, for only one-third of the world's population living today even profess to be Christian.

God has not attempted to convert the world but is only calling and testing a "little flock" at this time. (Luke 12:32) Acts 15:14-17 reveals that God is now visiting *"the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name [not to convert all]... After this I will return and build again the tabernacle of David [set up the kingdom of God]...that the remainder of men might seek after the Lord and all the Gentiles..."*

The due time for the "little flock" to hear and believe on the name of Jesus is between the first and second advents of Christ. The due time for "the remainder of men" to hear and believe is in the thousand year Kingdom of Christ. The "little

flock" or "Church of Christ" will *"reign along with him during the thousand years [to bless and judge the world in righteousness]."* Rev. 20:6 Moffatt translation; 1 Cor. 6:2; Psa. 96:13

The Bible uses two definitive words to clarify the scope of salvation—**all** and **every**. In Luke 2:10 the angel who announced the birth of Jesus said, *"Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people."* Verses 30 and 31 speak of salvation for **all** people." 1 Timothy 4:10 states that God *"is the savior of all men, specially of those that believe."* The Apostle Paul states in 1 Cor. 15:22, *"As in Adam all die so in Christ shall all be made alive."* Similarly, Romans 5:18 shows that *"by the offense of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Christ] the free gift came upon all men."* Since **all** were lost in Adam, it was necessary that Jesus *"by the grace of God should taste death for every man."* Hebrews 2:9

THE RAPTURE: A SCRIPTURAL EXAMINATION

The popular doctrine of the *secret rapture* is that Christ will return to earth, unknown to the world, and will take those who have accepted salvation through



Jesus Christ "...by the grace of God should taste death for every man..." woman and child. Heb. 2:9

him up to heaven before the “*great tribulation*.” The LEFT BEHIND series dramatically depicts the common view that all are taken up to heaven in one instant, leaving cars driverless or airplanes pilotless to crash.

The term *rapture* does not appear in Scripture but has been used by some to denote the “*first resurrection*” spoken of in Revelation 20:5 and described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. In verse 15 Paul speaks of Christ’s return and the resurrection of his saints: “...*we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*” In this verse, the word “*coming*” is translated from the Greek word *parousia* meaning *presence* and is so rendered in several respected translations. The word “*prevent*” is the 16th century word for *precede*—to come before in time. Thus, the Scripture should read: “...*we which are alive and remain unto the presence of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep.*”

The resurrection of the Church, then, takes place at the Lord’s return starting with those who have been sleeping in Christ—faithful Christians who have died (slept) before the Lord returns. These will be taken to heaven first. After the Lord’s return, the remaining Church members are resurrected one by one as they die. Because it is the spiritual body that is resurrected, this event is not visible to the human eye. 1 Cor. 15:35-44; 1Thess. 4:15-18

And what of those who are not taken with Jesus at his return? After the completed Church is resurrected, then Jesus and the Church will begin the resurrection of the world at large who have yet to learn righteousness.

HOPE BEYOND ARMAGEDDON

The LEFT BEHIND series concentrates on the *tribulation* upon the people, and yes, the Scriptures do speak of a momentous time of trouble coinciding with the return of Christ and culminating in Armageddon. However, the true

purpose of Armageddon is to cleanse the earth of the systems of corruption which have been under the control of Satan and his servants. It is important to understand that the corrupt ecclesiastical and civil systems need to be destroyed—not the ignorant people misled by these systems. “*Every valley [the poor, suffering world of mankind] shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill [kingdoms of this world] shall be made low...*” (Isa. 40:4) This is not a time to burn in eternal flames billions of good-

hearted people because they have not known and accepted Jesus. The conversion of these people—“*the remainder of men*”—will be after the cleansing work of Armageddon. This leveling destruction will prepare the way for the righteous kingdom of Christ and his Church. Then, under their benevolent reign, “*the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness*” without the fetters of selfish and oppressive powers. Isa. 26:9

Of this time, 1 Timothy 2:3-4 states, God “*will have all men to be saved and to come unto the [Greek—full discernment or accurate] knowledge of the Truth.*” Christ’s “*ransom for all*” guarantees that *all* who died in Adam will be saved from Adamic death. That is, *all* will be awakened from the

sleep of death and given a full opportunity to learn the Truth of God and His loving character.

In the thousand-year kingdom of Christ “*the earth shall [gradually] be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*” (Isa. 11:9) Also Jeremiah 31:34 says of that time, “*for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest.*” Verse 29 shows that, for the majority of mankind, the kingdom will provide the **first full, fair opportunity** for salvation through the knowledge of Christ. They will no longer die for the inherited sins of their fathers but for their own iniquity (Jeremiah 31:29, 30). Jesus’ ransom sacrifice for “*all*” guarantees this full and fair opportunity for “*all*”—praise the Lord! **NO ONE will be left behind!**

