

Christ in Prophecy

Pre-Trib 35: Interview of Tim LaHaye

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: One of the best known names in the field of Bible Prophecy is Tim LaHaye. He is the author of many best-selling books about prophecy. He is perhaps best known for his remarkable series of Left Behind books, consisting of a total of 16 volumes about the end times that have sold more than 60 million copies. I recently had the opportunity to sit down with him and talk about Bible prophecy. Stay tuned for that interview.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. For the past two weeks, we have been featuring interviews with Bible prophecy experts. If you have missed seeing those interviews, you can find them on our website at lamblion.com, where we store all our recent TV programs and where you can call them up to watch them on demand.

This week I have a very special treat for you. It is an interview I conducted recently with a legendary person in the field of Bible Prophecy namely, Dr. Tim LaHaye, the author of the remarkable Left Behind series of books.

When I first started studying Bible prophecy intensely in the late 1960s, I prayed for the Lord to lead me to a good book about Bible prophecy. That prayer was answered when I ran across this book by Tim LaHaye entitled, "Revelation, Illustrated and Made Plain." It was from Dr. LaHaye that I learned the danger of interpreting prophecy symbolically instead of for its plain sense meaning. I consider him to be my Bible prophecy mentor, and I dedicated my most recent book to him in appreciation of all the help and encouragement he has provided me over the years. I've had the opportunity to interview Dr. LaHaye several times and today I want to share with you my most recent interview of him. It was conducted at a hotel in Dallas during the annual meeting of the Pre-Trib Research Group. Here now is that interview.

Interview of Tim LaHaye

Dr. Reagan: Tim from the viewpoint of Bible prophecy what is the greatest burden on your heart today?

Dr. LaHaye: I would say, and let me add a proviso to that I in addition to my love for the Bible and love for Jesus Christ and souls of men I have a passion for America. I've always loved--you know I was 17 years old and I volunteered for the Air Force in World War II because I just loved America. But I look back on it and I see that in the church that has always taught at least in my background that they believed in the fundamentals and they believed in obeying the Scripture and you had to take the Bible literally. And when you apply prophecy to a literal interpretation it makes sense. If you don't use it literally it doesn't make any other sense. And to me the signs of

the times are evident that we are in the last days. In fact I call them the last days of the last days.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. LaHaye: And here is what Jesus said in Matthew 24 as you know and I'm so proud of the way you teach this faithfully. Is in Matthew 24 Jesus gave the greatest prophecy in all the Bible in my opinion. And He said after the Olivet Discourse He said, "Now, learn the parable of the fig tree. When its branches already become tender and put forth leaves you know that summer is near. So, you also when you see all of these things know that it is near. Assuredly, I say to you this generation will be no means pass away until all of these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth will pass away but My Words will never pass away." And He has said, "The sign that we need to look for is when Israel is gathered back into the land." And our mutual friend Dr. David Hockings who is a Jew, or he is partially Jew. He is the biggest Jew I have ever met, he is 6 foot 4, looks like a middle linebacker on a football team. Well his mother was a Jew and he loves Israel and he has gone there many times. And David is convinced that there are 170 nations that have had Jews gather up and make the trek to Israel. 170 in a little nation that has less than 7 million Jews. So, you begin to realize that the promises where God said He would bless those who bless Israel, and curse those who curse Israel. My passion as an American that America will never turn its back on Israel. And we have an Administration as you know today that they are trying to find any excuse to throw Israel under the bus. And if it were not for Israel, pardon me if it were not for America humanly speaking Israel would not exist. But, America has had the privilege of being the nation that God has used. And God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, "I'll bless those that bless you and curse those who curse you." And when you see--

Dr. Reagan: It seems to me Tim, that two great things that God has done through America, through this nation is number one to use our ingenuity and resources to spread the Gospel all over the world. And number two to be the ones to give birth to the nation of Israel and protect Israel. And I think He's greatly blessed us for that. But I see us turning against God now.

Dr. LaHaye: I do too. That's why Dr. Ed Hindson a friend of yours and mine part of the Pre-Trib Research Center. Dr. Ed and I have written a book that will be out in about half a year called, "Target Israel." We are showing a map of the 21 nations around Israel that hate Israel and are trying to drive them into the sea. And the United Nations finally was badgered by the Holy Spirit and Harry Truman to sign Israel up as a nation in the spring of 1948. And anyway the important thing about that is that Israel is the sign of the fig tree. One of the chapters I wrote in the book has to do with three Minor Prophets that quoted Israel as the sign of the fig tree, or the fig tree is the sign of Israel. So, we are on right ground. And Jesus said when you see that happening. Well, David we have seen it to a 170 nations expelling Jews, or Jews being enticed to the land. And it is not a perfect nation, no nation is. But, the sign is crystal clear and the world is closing in and coming around, and coming around setting the stage for Ezekiel 38 & 39.

Dr. Reagan: Well, it is amazing never before in the history of mankind has there been people scattered to the four ends of the earth and regathered back as they have been. And even a person who doesn't know prophecy or doesn't believe in the Bible would have to stop and say this is something spectacular. This is something supernatural.

Dr. LaHaye: That is a very good point and it proves the fact that prophecy is a supernaturally revealed message from God. And the Lord used Himself and His fulfilled prophecy as an evidence of He is the one and only God. In Isaiah chapter 46:6-11 He said, "I am the Lord, declaring the end from the beginning." Well who could record the beginning? Nobody was there. Only God could reveal the beginning. And who can record about the end but God. And when you see fulfilled prophecy. This is one of the reasons I like Dallas Seminary here in Dallas is the

fact that they have emphasized teachings like Dr. Walvoord who helped us in starting the Pre-Trib Research Center. And Dr. Walvoord has gone through every prophecy in the Bible and has found that there are almost 1,200 prophecies in the Bible; half of which have already been fulfilled. That is why we know that Jesus is the one and the only Son of God, all of the prophecies about Him have been fulfilled. And I know the skeptic listening might say, "Well, what about the other half?" Those are the prophecies of the end times and we are rapidly closing in. And he who understands prophecies sees the times of the signs coming along as the world is getting set. And the antagonism of even some Christians toward Israel is appalling to me because if America turns her back on Israel God will take His hand of blessing off of America. And we deserve to be judged, we are no holy nation. We are the porno capital of the world and sin capital of the world. And unfortunately the leadership of this country are so secular they don't have any confidence that there is a God. If they'd only understand prophecy they would understand that you cannot describe any other source than the author of prophecy and have it fulfilled.

Dr. Reagan: Well you began by talking about one of the burdens on your heart was America. And you've come back to that and I want to develop that for just a moment. You and your wife have spent your lives speaking out on behalf of America and trying to keep us on a straight and moral path. And your wife has done a great job in that field. You have done everything that you can to keep us on a straight moral path. As you see America literally falling apart before your eyes today in increasingly immorality, violence, defiance of God it must break your heart to see your nation dying on your watch.

Dr. LaHaye: Yes, and it is unnecessary because we Christians make up the largest minority in America, there are more-- this country is filled of minorities, it is made up of minorities and if we Christians would get informed and register and get out to vote and get our church people out to vote. And personally, David I am convinced that the next election, Presidential election will be the most important election in my lifetime, and yours and probably in the last 100 years. And we need some people who will catch the vision and recognize the church, the spiritual leaders have a responsibility to lead their church to become active, not in politics necessarily but in voting. We are citizens and we are entitled to vote and every Christian should get out and vote and become concerned. And what should be the basis? Not Democrat or Republican it is whether the person stands for the principles of the Bible.

Dr. Reagan: Well you know I think the problem that, one of the problems that exists is that people are so focused on just one thing financial issues.

Dr. LaHaye: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: How much money am I making? How much money I am going to make? Is the economy going to be stable or not? And they don't understand that when you rebel against God and you give into immorality that one of the ways that God deals with that is by putting a curse upon your economy.

Dr. LaHaye: That's right.

Dr. Reagan: And so the economy is never going to be good until we get right with God.

Dr. LaHaye: Exactly. I couldn't say it half that good. That is just a wonderful testimony that God is faithful. And when we obey God He blesses us. And when Christians turn their back on Israel as some people at our conference here are turning, spiritual leaders who should know better. They understand that God has a future for America, the Church does not replace Israel.

Dr. Reagan: That's right.

Dr. LaHaye: We have to understand that God has a place for the Church and He has a place for Israel. And you say, "Well what happens when a Jew becomes a Christian?" Well they become part of the Church. So when the Rapture comes He is going to take him off.

Dr. Reagan: Another burden on my heart today is the silence in the pulpits about Bible prophecy, about the soon coming of Jesus. It's as if so many pastors don't care.

Dr. LaHaye: You know what happened David? In my estimation I started a school system for young people in Christian college and I know a little bit about education. And we've gone through a time in America when seminaries for some weird reason or other have adopted the idea that we've got to get accredited. Well to get accredited you have to have a Ph.D. degree. So you got a secular school and then you hire these people to be professors in a seminary to train young preachers. Well the best training for a preacher is pastoring a church.

Dr. Reagan: Amen.

Dr. LaHaye: You know I was a pastor for 37 years of my ministry. And I thank God for the lessons that I learned. And then you are qualified by experience and learning. But what we need to do is fire some of the faculty members we've got and send them out to wherever they want to go and find seminary professors that love the Word of God.

Dr. Reagan: Amen.

Dr. LaHaye: Love the Christ of the Word. And teach with a passion and be faithful to preach the Word in season, out of season.

Dr. Reagan: Well you really put your finger on a major problem because I heard Howard Hendricks one time give a speech and at the end he opened up for questions. And a lady said, "My son is getting ready to go to seminary. Where should I send him? Where should I not send him?" He said, "I don't want to get into that in the public. I'll talk to you privately later. But I will tell you this you need to be very, very careful because," he said, "the average seminary in America today has an impact upon the student that could be described as putting a live egg under a dead hen."

Dr. LaHaye: I've never heard that before. That is very descriptive.

Dr. Reagan: And it is so true. I was teaching in a seminary up in Seattle and I had a young Lutheran pastor who had just gotten out of seminary, got his first church and he was in there and I'm teaching Bible prophecy. And he comes up to me at the end of the first day and he says, "I've never heard any of this, any of this in seminary. I just don't know what to do with it." I said, "Just relax we are going to study the Word." He came back the next morning and he said, "I called my bishop last night. I said, 'What do we believe about Bible prophecy.' And he said, 'He didn't know.' The bishop. He said, 'I'll call another person.' He said he called another person and another person and they finally called back and said, 'We're not sure what we believe but we don't believe what he's teaching so you better be careful.'" I said, "Well why don't you just relax." He said, "I don't want to get in trouble with my superiors." I said, "You know what? If Martin Luther the founder of your church had had that attitude the Lutheran Church would never exist."

Dr. LaHaye: Good answer.

Dr. Reagan: But, it is just so sad there is such ignorance of Bible prophecy and most preachers today I have found feel that Bible prophecy is pie-in-the-sky of no relevance to the here and now.

Dr. LaHaye: Oh, boy I found as a pastor for so many years the greatest motivating force in the congregation, it gives people a concern to share their faith with other people and get them saved.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, I've often said to pastors is if you'll ever convince people of two things you'll change your congregation. The two things; number one convince them Jesus is really coming back. The average Christian believes that here but not there. He is really coming back and number two that could happen any moment.

Dr. LaHaye: Amen.

Dr. Reagan: You convince them of that and you know what they'll do? They will be motivated to holiness and to evangelism.

Dr. LaHaye: Exactly.

Dr. Reagan: What more practical thing could there be than that?

Dr. LaHaye: I agree 100%.

Dr. Reagan: Well we have appreciated so much the years that you have spent in dedicated service to the Lord in preaching God's prophetic Word. And also in emphasizing the importance of the Rapture of the Church. You know Tim when I first--I grew up in an Amillennial Church and I didn't I never even heard of the Rapture. At 35 years old if you asked me what the Rapture was I would say that it was a sensation you feel when your girlfriend kisses you. I didn't know anything about it. But when I started studying, and you'll admit this Bible prophecy isn't the easiest thing in the world to study, I mean you really have to study. And when I started studying it I prayed, "Lord, I am going to focus on your Word, but I need some help and I want you to lead me to a book that will help me." And He led me to a book called, "Revelation, Illustrated and Made Plain."

Dr. LaHaye: Praise God.

Dr. Reagan: And that was the very first book I ever read on Bible prophecy and you were the author.

Dr. LaHaye: Is that right?

Dr. Reagan: That's right. And I loved it and it began to open up everything for me. And to help me understand that the Bible just means what it says. Henry Morris wrote a commentary on the book of Revelation.

Dr. LaHaye: Oh, yeah.

Dr. Reagan: And at the beginning he said, "I am writing this because people tell me the book of Revelation is hard to understand." He said, "It's not hard to understand. It is hard to believe. If you will believe it you will understand it." And that is so true, Tim. I mean at one time I looked through commentaries and I found that 85% of the commentaries that I picked up said that the 144,000 Jews in Revelation chapter 7 is the Church. What would God have to do to convince us that it is 144,000 Jews?

Dr. LaHaye: That is what the Jehovah's Witnesses used to say until they got more than a 144,000 members. And they said, well I guess we have to open it up.

Dr. Reagan: I just cannot tell you how much appreciate you. How much I appreciate the great teaching you've done over the years. How you've never wavered in teaching that the Word of God means what it says from beginning to end.

Dr. LaHaye: Amen.

Dr. Reagan: And that's one of the problems we have in the Church. If you start spiritualizing the creation story you end up spiritualizing the end of the Bible as well. And as W.A. Criswell said, "Those are leopard theologians, they claim that only spots of the Bible are inspired and they know where those spots are."

Dr. LaHaye: You have enough bruises on your body from the liberals. And the thing that I've admired about you because I read that chapter in our book about how you were insulted and commanded not to teach the salvationism.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah.

Dr. LaHaye: I've never heard that expression before because in my circle everybody taught it. But things have changed. And yet this denomination claimed to believe the Word of God. When the Word speaks we teach.

Dr. Reagan: Let me just mention one other burden on my heart and that is that I speak at Bible prophecy conferences all across America. And Tim sometimes those conferences have 800-1500 people there. I can count on one hand the number of people below the age of 60. What's wrong Tim? What's wrong? Because I guess it is ignoring it in the churches and they don't know anything about it so therefore they are not interested in going to a Prophecy Conference because I know if they came they would be interested.

Dr. LaHaye: Amen. Amen. And if they are right about Creation and right about the Pre-Trib Rapture they will be right about most of the doctrine.

Dr. Reagan: There you go. Amen.

Dr. LaHaye: Well we need to pray for our nation as we've never prayed for it before.

Dr. Reagan: Amen. That is so true.

Dr. LaHaye: Thank you and God bless you. And give my regards to your precious wife.

Dr. Reagan: You do the same.

Dr. LaHaye: Thank her for all the great work she has done over the years for America.

Dr. Reagan: God Bless you.

Part 2:

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy. I hope you were blessed by that interview with Dr. LaHaye. He is a great man of God with a very humble spirit. You know folks, it's sort of mind-boggling to think that over 60 million copies of his Left Behind series of books have been sold worldwide. And that fact prompts me to share with you for a few minutes about the great publishing classics in the field of Bible Prophecy.

The first Bible prophecy book that ever became a national best-seller was this one by William Blackstone called "Jesus is Coming." The book was published for the first time in 1878, and

over the next 50 years, it sold multiple millions of copies worldwide and was translated into 48 languages. It is still in print today, and we offer it through our ministry. Blackstone was a meticulous student of the Bible, and he does not present a single idea in this book that is not backed up by voluminous biblical citations. The book introduced many Americans for the first time to the Pre-millennial view of Bible prophecy and the Pre-Tribulation concept of the Rapture. But its most remarkable feature was the author's declaration that God would one day restore the Jewish people to their homeland. In a chapter titled "Israel is to be Restored," he declared that "surely nothing is more plainly stated in the Scriptures" as the promise of God to restore the Jews to their homeland in the end times, right before the return of the Messiah. Now I want you to keep in mind that he made this declaration at a time when the Jews were still scattered worldwide and there seemed to be no hope whatsoever that they would ever be regathered to Israel or Palestine, as it was called at that time. It was also 18 years before Theodore Herzl published his famous book, "The Jewish State," in 1896, in which he called for Jews worldwide to return to their homeland. But Blackstone believed God's Prophetic Word, and he showed clearly in his book that the Bible prophesied that in the end times, the Jewish people will be restored to their homeland.

The next Bible prophecy book to become a sensational best seller was one that was produced by a pastor of a church in Dallas, Texas in 1909. His name was Cyrus Scofield, and the book was called "The Scofield Study Bible." It consisted of the King James Version of the Bible with prophecy related study notes by Scofield that were scattered throughout the book. Like Blackstone's book, the Scofield Study Bible is still in print. It had sold 2 million copies and it sold that many by the end of World War II, and it continues to be a best-seller to this day. And like Blackstone, Scofield interpreted prophecy for its plain sense meaning, even when he did not understand it. For example, when commenting on Ezekiel 38 & 39 and its description of the end time War of Gog & Magog, Scofield said it was describing a Russian invasion of Israel although he could not explain it, since Russia was a Christian Orthodox nation at the time, and Israel did not even exist, nor did it seem possible that Israel ever would exist again. Basically, his attitude was "The Bible says it, and therefore I believe it, whether I understand it or not." I love that attitude.

Another classic Bible prophecy book was published in 1918, just nine years after Scofield's Study Bible. It was called "Dispensational Truth" by Clarence Larkin and it contained a series of remarkable and fascinating charts which presented the Premillennial, Pre-Tribulational view of the end times just like the books by Blackstone and Scofield. And just like those books, it has remained in print to this day and continues to be a best seller.

The next book to become a phenomenal best seller was one by Hal Lindsey called "The Late Great Planet Earth." Time Magazine has verified that this book was the best-selling book in America, with the exception of the Bible, for ten consecutive years, from 1970 to 1980. And like all the others, it remains in print to this day. What set this book apart, once again, was its plain sense interpretation of Bible prophecy. And like all the others I have mentioned, it presented a Pre-Millennial, Pre-Tribulational point of view. In that regard, when you consider the fact that all the best-selling Bible prophecy books in history have been Pre-Millennial and Pre-Tribulational, you get the distinct feeling that God has anointed the distribution of these books for a reason. And I think that reason is because these books contain the proper interpretation of what the Bible says about the end times namely, that before the Tribulation begins, Jesus is going to appear in the heavens for His Church and take them out of this world. Then, at the end of the Tribulation, Jesus is going to return to earth with His Church to reign over all the world from Jerusalem for 1,000 years during which time the earth will be flooded with peace, righteousness and justice.

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Before we bring our program to a close, there is one other Bible prophecy publishing classic that I feel I should mention. It's a book called, "Things to Come" by Dwight Pentecost. It is different from the other books I have mentioned because it is a scholarly book aimed at seminary students and not the general public. If you are interested in in-depth study of Bible prophecy, I highly recommend it to you.

I myself have written many books about Bible prophecy that are designed for the general public. And the one that has been blessed the most by the Lord is this one called "Wrath & Glory," the subtitle is, "Unveiling the Majestic Book of Revelation." We have produced many, many printings of it, and it has been translated into more than a dozen languages. The book takes you through the book of Revelation, chapter by chapter, explaining the meaning in down-to-earth, easy-to-understand language. You can find a complete listing of all our books and videos at our website at lamblion.com. And when you go to our website, check out this particular book called "Jesus is Coming Again!" This book is designed for pre-school and elementary school children. It is printed in full color from beginning to end, and it focuses on the positive promises of God concerning the end times.

Well, folks, that's it for this week. I hope the program has been a blessing to you. Until next week, the Lord willing, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near."

End of Program