

LEFT BEHIND

S E R I E S

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ASSASSINS

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To Dr. John F. Walvoord
For more than fifty years, he has helped keep
the torch of prophecy burning.

PROLOGUE

From Apollyon

A VAST NETWORK of house churches had sprung up—seemingly spontaneously—with converted Jews, clearly part of the 144,000 witnesses, taking leadership positions. They taught their charges daily, based on the cyberspace sermons and lessons from the prolific Tsion Ben-Judah. Tens of thousands of such clandestine local house churches, their very existence flying in the face of the all-inclusive Enigma Babylon One World Faith, saw courageous converts added to the church every day. . . .



Buck Williams had long been anonymously broadcasting his own cyberspace magazine, *The Truth*, which would now

be his sole writing outlet. Ironically, it attracted ten times the largest reading audience he had ever enjoyed as senior staff writer for *Global Community Weekly*. He worried for his safety, of course, but more for his wife Chloe's. . . .



Nicolae Carpathia's litany of achievements ranged from the rebuilding of cities and roads and airports to the nearly miraculous reconstruction of New Babylon into the most magnificent city ever built. "It is a masterpiece I hope you will visit as soon as you can." His cellular/solar satellite system (Cell/Sol) allowed everyone access to each other by phone and Internet, regardless of time or location. All this merely ushered in the superstructure necessary for Nicolae to rule the world. . . .



The day would come when the sign of the cross on the forehead would have to say everything between tribulation saints. Even pointing up would draw the attention of enemy forces.

The problem was, the day would also come when the other side would have its own mark, and it would be visible to all. In fact, according to the Bible, those who did not bear this "mark of the beast" would not be able to buy or sell. The great network of saints would then have to develop its own underground market to stay alive. . . .



Global Community Supreme Commander Leon Fortunato introduced His Excellency, Potentate Nicolae Carpathia, to the international television audience. Tsion Ben-Judah had warned Rayford that Nicolae's supernatural abilities would be trumpeted and even exaggerated, laying a foundation for when he would declare himself God during the second half of the Tribulation. . . .



Raucous laughter or silliness just didn't have a place in the lives of the Tribulation Force. Grief was wearying, Rayford thought. He looked forward to that day when God would wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there would be no more war. . . .



"I feel such compassion for you," Tsion told Hattie, "such a longing for you to come to Jesus." And suddenly he could not continue.

Hattie raised her eyebrows, staring at him.

"Forgive me," he managed in a whisper, taking a sip of water and collecting himself. He continued through tears. "Somehow God has allowed me to see you through his eyes—a scared, angry, shaken young woman who has been used and abandoned by many in her life. He loves you with

a perfect love. Jesus once looked upon his audience and said, ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!’

“Miss Durham, you know the truth. I have heard you say so. And yet you are not willing. . . . I look at your fragile beauty and see what life has done to you, and I long for your peace. I think of what you could do for the kingdom during these perilous times, and I am jealous to have you as part of our family. I fear you’re risking your life by holding out on God, and I do not look forward to how you might suffer before he reaches you.”



Rayford’s life as an accomplished commercial pilot seems eons ago now. It was hard to comprehend that it had been fewer than three years since he was just a suburban husband and father, and none too good a one, with nothing more to worry about than where and when he was flying next.

Rayford couldn’t complain of having had nothing important to occupy his time. But the cost of getting to this point! He could empathize with Tsion. If the Tribulation was hard on a regular Joe like Rayford, he couldn’t imagine what it must be like for one called to rally the 144,000 witnesses and teach maybe a billion other new souls. . . .



Buck loved talking with Tsion. They had been through so much together. It hit him that he was whining about his wife's complicated pregnancy to a man whose wife and children had been murdered. Yet somehow Tsion had the capacity for wisdom and clear thinking and had a calming effect on people. . . .

"So Trumpet Judgment Six is next," Buck said. "What do you expect there?"

Tsion sighed. "The bottom line, Cameron, is an army of two hundred million horsemen who will slay a third of the world's population."

Buck was speechless. He had read of the prophecy, but he had never boiled it down to its essence. ". . . Whatever we have suffered," Tsion continued, "whatever ugliness we have faced. All will pale in comparison to this worst judgment yet."

"And the ones after this get even worse?"

"Hard to imagine, isn't it? Only one-fourth of the people left behind at the Rapture will survive until the Glorious Appearing, Cameron. I am not afraid of death, but I pray every day that God will allow me the privilege of seeing him return to the earth to set up his kingdom. If he takes me before that, I will be reunited with my family and other loved ones, but oh, the joy of being here when Jesus arrives!"



“One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things. Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.’



“So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released. . . .”

REVELATION 9:12-15

CHAPTER 1

RAGE.

No other word described it.

Rayford knew he had much to be thankful for. Neither Irene—his wife of twenty-one years—nor Amanda—his wife of fewer than three months—had to suffer this world any longer. Raymie was in heaven too. Chloe and baby Kenny were healthy.

That should be enough. Yet the cliché *consumed* came to life for Rayford. He stormed out of the safe house in the middle of a crisp May Monday morning, eschewing a jacket and glad of it. It wasn't anyone in the safe house who had set him off.

Hattie had been her typical self, whining about her immobility while building her strength.

"You don't think I'll do it," she had told him as she raced through another set of sit-ups. "You way underestimate me."

"I don't doubt you're crazy enough to try."

"But you wouldn't fly me over there for any price."

"Not on your life."

Rayford stumbled along a path near a row of trees that separated a dusty field from what was left of the safe house and the piles of what had once been neighboring homes. He stopped and scanned the horizon. Anger was one thing. Stupidity another. There was no sense giving away their position just for a moment of fresh air.

He saw nothing and no one, but still he stayed closer to the trees than to the plain. What a difference a year and a half made! This whole area, for miles, had once been sprawling suburbia. Now it was earthquake rubble, abandoned to the fugitive and the destitute. One Rayford had been for months. The other he was fast becoming.

The murderous fury threatened to devour him. His rational, scientific mind fought his passion. He knew others—yes, including Hattie—who had as much or more motive. Yet Rayford pleaded with God to appoint him. He wanted to be the one to do the deed. He believed it his destiny.

Rayford shook his head and leaned against a tree, letting the bark scratch his back. Where was the aroma of newly mown grass, the sounds of kids playing in the yard? Nothing was as it once was. He closed his eyes and ran over the plan one

more time. Steal into the Middle East in disguise. Put himself in the right place at the precise time. Be God's weapon, the instrument of death. Murder Nicolae Carpathia.



David Hassid assigned himself to accompany the Global Community helicopter that would take delivery of a gross of computers for the potentate's palace. Half the GC personnel in his department were to spend the next several weeks ferreting out the location of Tsion Ben-Judah's daily cyberspace teaching and Buck Williams's weekly Internet magazine.

The potentate himself wanted to know how quickly the computers could be installed. "Figure half a day to unload, reload, and truck them here from the airport," David had told him. "Then unload again and assume another couple of days for installation and setup."

Carpathia had begun snapping his fingers as soon as "half a day" rolled off David's tongue. "Faster," he said. "How can we steal some hours?"

"It would be costly, but you could—"

"Cost is not my priority, Mr. Hassid. Speed. Speed."

"Chopper could snag the whole load and set 'em down outside the freight entrance."

"That," Carpathia said. "Yes, that."

"I'd want to personally supervise pickup and delivery."

Carpathia was on to something else, dismissing David with a wave. "Of course, whatever."

David called Mac McCullum on his secure phone. "It worked," he said.

"When do we fly?"

"As late as possible. This has to look like a mistake."

Mac chuckled. "Did you get 'em to deliver to the wrong airstrip?"

"Course. Told 'em one, paperworked 'em another. They'll go by what they heard. I'll protect myself from Abbott and Costello with the paperwork."

"Fortunato still looking over your shoulder?"

"Always, but neither he nor Nicolae suspects. They love you too, Mac."

"Don't I know it. We've got to ride this train as far as it'll take us."



Rayford didn't dare discuss his feelings with Tsion. The rabbi was busy enough, and Rayford knew what he would say: "God has his plan. Let him carry it out."

But what would be wrong with Rayford's helping? He was willing. He could get it done. If it cost him his life, so what? He'd reunite with loved ones, and more would join him later.

Rayford knew it was crazy. He had never been ruled by his feelings before. Maybe his problem was that he was out of the loop now, away from the action. The fear and tension of flying Carpathia around for months had been worth it

for the proximity it afforded him and the advantage to the Tribulation Force.

The danger in his present role wasn't the same. He was senior flyer of the International Commodity Co-op, the one entity that might keep believers alive when their freedom to trade on the open market would vanish. For now, Rayford was just meeting contacts, setting up routes, in essence working for his own daughter. He had to remain anonymous and learn whom to trust. But it wasn't the same. He didn't feel as necessary to the cause.

But if he could be the one to kill Carpathia!

Who was he kidding? Carpathia's assassin would likely be put to death without trial. And if Carpathia was indeed the Antichrist—and most people except his followers thought he was—he wouldn't stay dead anyway. The murder would be all about Rayford, not Carpathia. Nicolae would come out of it more heroic than ever. But the fact that it had to be done anyway, and that he himself might be in place to do it, seemed to give Rayford something to live for. And likely to die for.

His grandson, Kenny Bruce, had stolen his heart, but that very name reminded Rayford of painful losses. The late Ken Ritz had been a new friend with the makings of a good one. Bruce Barnes had been Rayford's first mentor and had taught him so much after supplying him the videotape that had led him to Christ.

That was it! That had to be what had produced such hatred, such rage. Rayford knew Carpathia was merely a

pawn of Satan, really part of God's plan for the ages. But the man had wreaked such havoc, caused such destruction, fostered such mourning, that Rayford couldn't help but hate him.

Rayford didn't want to grow numb to the disaster, death, and devastation that had become commonplace. He wanted to still feel alive, violated, offended. Things were bad and getting worse, and the chaos multiplied every month. Tsion taught that things were to come to a head at the halfway point of the seven-year tribulation, four months from now. And then would come the Great Tribulation.

Rayford longed to survive all seven years to witness the glorious appearing of Christ to set up his thousand-year reign on earth. But what were the odds? Tsion taught that, at most, only a quarter of the population left at the Rapture would survive to the end, and those who did might wish they hadn't.

Rayford tried to pray. Did he think God would answer, give him permission, put the plot in his mind? He knew better. His scheming was just a way to feel alive, and yet it ate at him, gave him a reason for breathing.

He had other reasons to live. He loved his daughter and her husband and their baby, and yet he felt responsible that Chloe had missed the Rapture. The only family he had left would face the same world he did. What kind of a future was that? He didn't want to think about it. All he wanted to think about was what weapons he might have access to and how he could avail himself of them at the right time.



Just after dark in New Babylon, David took a call from his routing manager. "Pilot wants to know if he's to put down at the strip or at—"

"I told him already! Tell him to do what he's told!"

"Sir, the bill of lading says palace airstrip. But he thought you told him New Babylon Airport."

David paused as if angry. "Do *you* understand what I said?"

"You said airport, but—"

"Thank you! What's his ETA?"

"Thirty minutes to the airport. Forty-five to the strip. Just so I'm clear—"

David hung up and called Mac. Half an hour later they were sitting in the chopper on the tarmac of the palace airstrip. Of course the computer cargo was not there. David called the airport. "Tell the pilot where we are!"

"Man," Mac said, "you've got everybody chasin' their tails."

"You think I want new computers in front of the world's best techies, all looking to find the safe house?"

Mac tuned in the airport frequency and heard the instruction for the cargo pilot to take off and put down at the palace strip. He looked at David. "To the airport, chopper jockey," David said.

"We'll pass 'im in the sky."

"I hope we do."

They did. David finally had pity on the pilot, assured him he and Mac would stay put, and instructed him to come back.

A crane helped disgorge the load of computers, and Mac maneuvered the helicopter into position to hook up to it. The cargo chief attached the cable, assured Mac he had the size and power to easily transport the load, and instructed him how to lift off. "You've got an onboard release in case of emergency, sir," he said, "but you should have no problem."

Mac thanked him and caught David's glance. "You wouldn't," he said, shaking his head.

"Of course I would. This lever here? I'll be in charge of this."

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



JERRY B. JENKINS, former vice president for publishing at Moody Bible Institute of Chicago and currently chairman of the board of trustees, is the author of more than 175 books, including the best-selling *Left Behind* series. Twenty of his books have reached the *New York Times* Best Sellers List (seven in the number-one spot) and have also appeared on the *USA Today*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Wall Street Journal* best-seller lists. *Desecration*, book nine in the *Left Behind* series, was the best-selling book in the world in 2001. His books have sold nearly 70 million copies.

Also the former editor of *Moody* magazine, his writing has appeared in *Time*, *Reader's Digest*, *Parade*, *Guideposts*, *Christianity Today*, and dozens of other periodicals. He was featured on the cover of *Newsweek* magazine in 2004.

His nonfiction books include as-told-to biographies with Hank Aaron, Bill Gaither, Orel Hershisier, Luis Palau, Joe Gibbs, Walter Payton, and Nolan Ryan among many others. The Hershisier and Ryan books reached the *New York Times* Best Sellers List.

Jenkins assisted Dr. Billy Graham with his autobiography, *Just As I Am*, also a *New York Times* best seller. Jerry spent 13 months working with Dr. Graham, which he considers the privilege of a lifetime.

Jerry owns Jenkins Entertainment, a filmmaking company in Los Angeles, which produced the critically acclaimed movie *Midnight Clear*, based on his book of the same name. See www.Jenkins-Entertainment.com.

Jerry Jenkins also owns the Christian Writers Guild, which aims to train tomorrow's professional Christian writers. Under Jerry's leadership, the guild has expanded to include college-credit courses, a critique service, literary registration services, and writing contests, as well as an annual conference. See www.ChristianWritersGuild.com.

As a marriage-and-family author, Jerry has been a frequent guest on Dr. James Dobson's *Focus on the Family* radio program and is a sought-after speaker and humorist. See www.AmbassadorSpeakers.com.

Jerry has been awarded four honorary doctorates.

He and his wife, Dianna, have three grown sons and six grandchildren.

Check out Jerry's blog at <http://jerryjenkins.blogspot.com>.

DR. TIM LAHAYE (www.timlahaye.com), who conceived and created the idea of fictionalizing an account of the Rapture and the Tribulation, is a noted author, minister, and nationally recognized speaker on Bible prophecy. He is the founder of both Tim LaHaye Ministries and The PreTrib Research Center.



Dr. LaHaye speaks at many of the major Bible prophecy conferences in the U.S. and Canada, where his prophecy books are very popular.

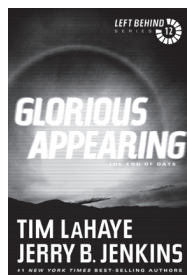
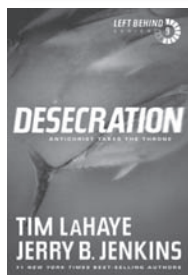
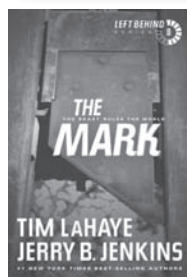
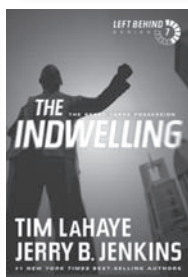
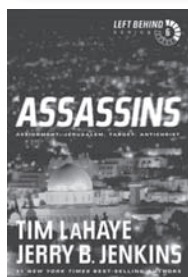
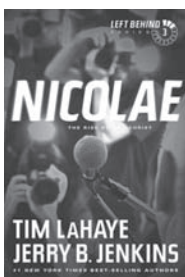
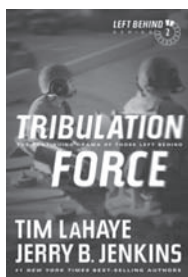
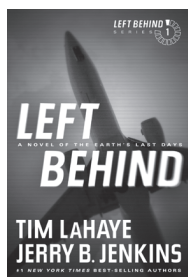
Dr. LaHaye earned a doctor of ministry degree from Western Theological Seminary and received an honorary doctor of literature degree from Liberty University. For 25 years he pastored one of the nation's outstanding churches in San Diego, which grew to three locations. During that time he founded two accredited Christian high schools, a Christian school system of ten schools, and San Diego Christian College (formerly known as Christian Heritage College).

There are over 59 million copies of Dr. LaHaye's 50 nonfiction books, some of which have been published in over 37 languages. He has written books on a wide variety of subjects, such as family life, temperaments, and Bible prophecy. His fiction works include the Left Behind series

and the Jesus Chronicles, written with Jerry B. Jenkins. LaHaye's other fiction series of prophetic novels consist of the Babylon Rising series and The End series. Dr. LaHaye is the father of four grown children, grandfather of nine, and great-grandfather of eleven.

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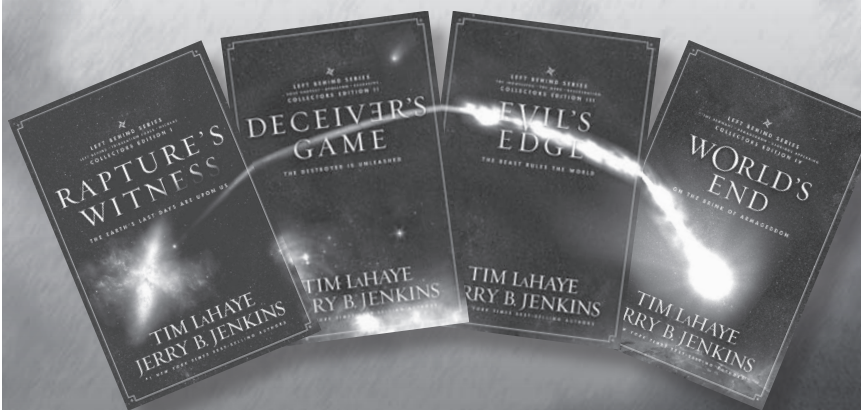
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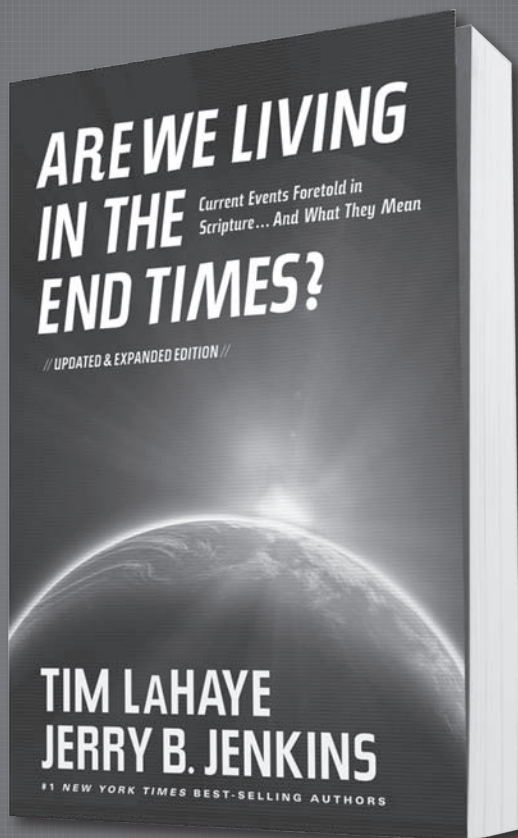
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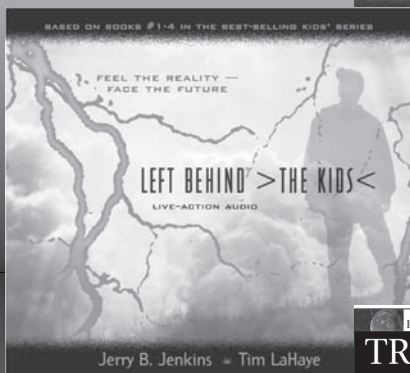
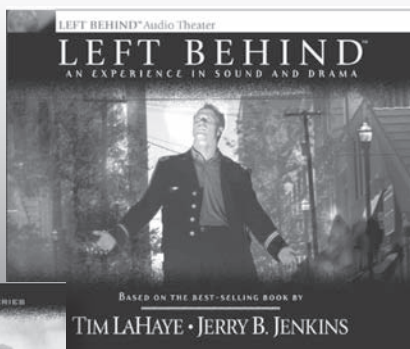
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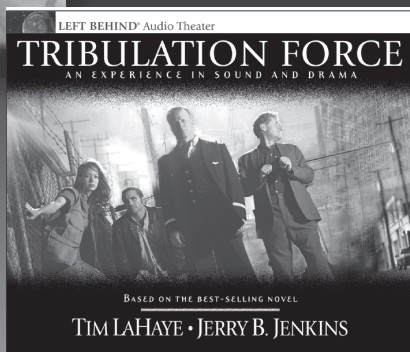
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