

# TRINITY LECTURE 1 - Left Behind

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, it's great to be here with you, and I've had great fun reading the Left Behind books. Can I just have an indication of folk who have actually read the Left Behind books?

Well, quite a few. That's great. Well, you might know more about them than me, but I've had fun. And I hope that as I try and give you an overview of them and my comments on them and the theology behind them, that that will be helpful.

There's a lot of material to get through, so let's begin. The Left Behind books have been on the New York bestseller list and have sold well over 60 million copies.

That's extraordinary, isn't it? The books have been written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. Now, Tim LaHaye is considered a prophecy scholar, and he supplies the theological message of the books.

With Jerry Forwell, he helped found the moral majority in America, and their goals were to take back America through a dedicated political agenda.

[ 1 : 13 ] Jerry Jenkins is the author. Jerry Jenkins is the other author. He's the writer at large for the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. He does the writing of the Left Behind books while LaHaye provides the theology.

And Jerry Jenkins is the author of some 150 books. That includes biographies, sports, about sports figures, marriage manuals, fiction for children and adults.

You name it, he writes it. Now, since 1994, 12 volumes of the Left Behind books have been written and a prequel, as well as two movies have been made.

There's a children's series. There are comic book form as well, and there's an endless flood of apocalyptic merchandise. You can actually get clothing that's Left Behind clothing.

Sounds funny, doesn't it? More than that, there is still a sequel to the Left Behind books to be published, and Jerry Jenkins has a new rapture novel series of his own, and Tim LaHaye is overseeing the creation of more end-time fiction.

[ 2 : 30 ] And these include Babylon Rising. There's also a military-orientated book called Apocalypse Dawn, and then there's another one that's more of a politically inclined called End of State.

Now, the Left Behind books and the view they represent are best described as popular dispensationalism or pre-tribulation, pre-millennialism.

It's a bit of a mouthful. And I'll say more about that later. Now, what's the plot of the Left Behind books if you haven't read them or if you need a review?

Now, the Left Behind books are the story of the end times and what will happen in those times. At some point in the near future, the rapture will occur.

And according to the Left Behind plot, Jesus will descend from heaven and call all true believers to his side. Now, the faithful dead will also be resurrected, and the living faithful will be caught up in the air, and this is known as the rapture.

[ 3 : 43 ] Now, those people who are left behind won't see the rapture, according to the Left Behind theology, and nor will they understand what's happened.

Now, the believers will go to heaven for seven years. During this period, though, back on earth, it will be a time of tribulation, a time of suffering.

So what the Left Behind books deal with is the last days and that period of tribulation. Now, book one of the Left Behind books has the title Left Behind, but books one to six cover the first half of the tribulation, the first three and a half years.

In book one, the story begins quite dramatically. It actually begins in an aeroplane, which is quite dramatic. It's very good that in this plane, the pilot wasn't one of the ones that was raptured.

He was left behind. But in one cataclysmic moment, millions of people disappeared as a result of the rapture. And it threw the world into instant chaos.

[ 5 : 03 ] So pilot Rayford Steele is left behind. So are other people. Journalist Buck Williams, a minister back at where Rayford Steele comes from, Bruce Barnes, is also left behind.

So not all ministers made it. And Rayford's daughter is also one of the ones who was left behind, although the rest of his family were taken.

So this group, our heroes, become Rayford Steele, Buck Williams, Bruce Barnes and Chloe Steele. And they all begin searching for answers. And the answers they discover are that they are entering into the seven-year period called the Tribulation.

And as I said, as a result of the rapture and the commencement of the Tribulation, the world is thrown into absolute confusion. For Tim LaHaye in this series, the Tribulation starts with a sneak attack on Israel, led by Russia.

And the forces are defeated by Israel and their weapons are gathered and then burned for fuel for the next seven years. I'm not quite sure how you do that, but they were able to do it.

[ 6 : 15 ] In fact, Tribulation and judgments are depicted throughout the series following, using the Book of Revelation as the map for that, as the guidebook.

And so there are a series of judgments will occur. Jesus will remove seven seals from a scroll. Seven angels will blow trumpets.

And seven angels will pour out seven bowls. And the Great Tribulation appears in this period. And so these are spectacular judgments.

So the first set occurs as Jesus removes the seven seals from a scroll. The seal judgments in Book 1 of Left Behind show us a white horse with the Antichrist who comes in conquering power and promises peace.

And as a result of the Antichrist's activity, a one world government that controls the entire planet is set up.

[ 7 : 22 ] Now, LaHaye identifies this as a likely outgrowth from the United Nations and holds that it will be located in the rebuilt city of Babylon in Iraq, of course.

And it will also be headed by the sinister figure known as the Antichrist or Beast. Now, paralleling this one world government will be a one world religion as well.

And all will be expected to join this syncretistic blending of all religions. And it will likely, according to LaHaye, be headed by the Pope.

You can understand that Catholics aren't particularly wrapped in this view. And it will be a time of revived Babylonian paganism. And also during this time, the Jewish temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem itself.

In Book 2, our heroes, Rayford Buck, Bruce and Chloe, band together to form the Tribulation Force.

[ 8 : 33 ] So the Tribulation Force takes on the story a bit further. And they're trying to work out what to do in this situation. They weren't believers, but they have become believers.

And their task is to warn the world of the deception being carried out by the enemies of God. And they're trying to work out how can they expose the deceivers for who they are.

Now, as part of the seal judgments that come in this part of the Left Behind books and from the Book of Revelation are the four horsemen.

And they come unleashing terrible destruction, a series of destructions. During Book 2, the seal judgment of the red horse and the black horse occur.

The red horse brings warfare and the black horse brings famine and shortages. In Book 3, we see the rise of the Antichrist.

[ 9 : 39 ] Who is the Antichrist? Well, he's identified as Nicolai Carpathia. And he rises from the Romanian House of Assemblies to become the Secretary General of the United Nations.

And he becomes the potentate of the global one world government community. In Book 3, which is entitled Nicolai, we then recognize who the Antichrist is.

And so the tribulation force presses on in its mission to win as many people to Christ as possible in these dreadful times. And through God's providence, in the book, we're told that Rayford actually becomes the ears of the tribulation force.

And this happens by being appointed as the president's very own pilot. And so he gets to be the ear of all that's going on.

And we discover that there's an incredible rescue mission that is enacted out in Book 3. We also have more seal judgments taking place.

[ 10 : 51 ] There's the pale horse of pestilence and death. There are martyrs. There is a great and incredible earthquake and other phenomenon going on.

And so we see death riding a pale horse, the great earthquake, and the lightning and earthquakes that accompany the judgments. In the premillennial view, the series of judgments follow chronologically one after the other.

So that's something to bear in mind. The next series of judgments then, so this is a chronological order, become the seven trumpets. And they are played out in Books 4 to 6 of the series.

So we have hail and fire and blood. We have burning mountains. We have a star called Wormwood falling upon rivers. The sun and the moon, the stars are darkened.

There's a plague of locusts. There's a plague of horsemen that kills a third of the people. And there's more lightning and earthquakes and hailstorms. Pretty serious, heavy stuff.

[ 12 : 01 ] Book 4 is called Soul Harvest. And it takes place after the great earthquake. Here, the tribulation force prepares for even greater suffering. They prepare for this in the aftermath of the terrible earthquake.

And in that time, a great soul harvest is predicted, despite the fact there will also be intense and terrible suffering. And again, Book 4 also sees devastating judgments upon the earth, hail, fire, and so forth.

And so we see in the next slide the star Wormwood falling. Well, we're not seeing... Yes, there it is, the star Wormwood falling. And as it does, the waters turn bitter.

Now, the tribulation force has more problems ahead of it.

Also, we see at this time a period. Let's just make sure I've got the right page. No, I haven't. We've lost a page. It must have happened in the photocopy.

[ 13 : 12 ] Well, we won't worry about that. We move to Book 5, and it's entitled Apollyon. And that means destruction. By Book 5, more Jews have converted to Jesus.

And that's one of the views of the books, that many Jews will return to Jesus and recognise him as the true Messiah. So the tribulation force, a spiritual mentor, by this stage is Sion ben Judah.

And together with the tribulation force, they're boldly defying the Antichrist. As tension mounts, the fifth trumpet judgment releases a plague of scorpion-like locusts.

And the torture they inflict is absolutely horrifying. We have further trumpet judgments here. And the sun and the moon and the stars darken.

And as I mentioned, the plague of locusts. Book 6 is the final book in the first half of the tribulation. And it's entitled Assassins.

[ 14 : 20 ] And it's really very dramatic. There are four significant murders that happen in Book 6. The two witnesses.

Now, through the story so far, there have been two witnesses, Elijah and Moses-like figures, who have witnessed to the truth about Jesus.

And they can't be destroyed. Or they haven't been able to be destroyed to this point. But here they are murdered. The head of the Antichrist's one world faith is also murdered.

And more incredibly, the Antichrist himself is murdered. He suffers a lethal head wound. So world history and prophecy collide in this chapter and this book.

And it's all happening in Jerusalem. So we've got more trumpet judgments here. We have the plague of horsemen in Book 6, killing a third of the people.

[ 15 : 21 ] And we have more lightning and earthquakes and hailstorms. Now we move into the second half of the tribulation period. And this is covered in Book 7 to 12.

So I'm giving you a pre-millennial, pre-tribulational view of the last days as we move through this. And Book 7 is entitled The Indwelling. And it marks the midpoint of the tribulation.

Now in The Indwelling, we find the world is in deep mourning because of all these assassinations. But the greatest mourning is because of the assassination of Nicolai Carpathia.

The larger-than-life leader they looked for for guidance and people loved him is dead. All their hope is gone. Now the tribulation force, and Christians will be blamed, but particularly the tribulation force.

And so they now face the most dangerous challenge ever. And they become fugitives, and a great high-tech manhunt takes place. This also marks the commencement of a new series of judgments, bowl judgments, which are found in Book 7 to 11.

[ 16 : 40 ] And these bowls are full of plagues. There's painful sores, there's rivers and springs that turn to blood, the sun scorches people, there's darkness, the Euphrates dries up, and we have an even greater earthquake than before, and this becomes the greatest earthquake in history.

Book 5 is entitled The Mark, and depicts the beast ruling the world. In The Mark, guess what?

Potentate, Nicolai Carpathia, is back, resurrected, and indwelt by Satan himself. Not that other people realise that.

And every person alive must make a choice. Receive the mark and live, or reject it and die. And so the battle for the souls of people now reaches a fever pitch.

And the tribulation force must resist. Book 9 is entitled The Desecration. Nicolai Carpathia has been bold in asserting his authority, but now he goes on one step further and declares himself to be God.

[ 18 : 05 ] At the same time, a new series of judgements are unleashed upon the earth, with a fury never before known. And so, we're asking all through this book, will the tribulation force be able to awaken people to the identity of the one true God, and not Nicolai?

Carpathia sets himself up to rule in the rebuilt temple of Jerusalem. And so now, we have being lived out, as far as this end time theory view, the desecration that's been, we looked at earlier, the abomination of desolation in Daniel 9, and as it's referred to in Matthew 24.

And so the desecration is now seen as the Antichrist seating himself in the temple. And declaring himself God. Now, those who refuse to honour him as God are killed.

And there's a lot of killings that go on throughout these books. They're quite violent, really. And his followers must take the mark of the beast on their forehead or on their right hand.

In the left behind books, economic pressure is applied to all people. You see, the world has, in the books, has adopted a cashless society with a microfiche under the skin.

[ 19 : 39 ] The 666 is there somehow. And those who have not received the mark of the beast won't be allowed to buy and sell. But despite the coercion, many believers won't take the mark.

And this means great suffering and for many, death. Now, technically, these believers are not known as Christians since the church, according to premillennialism, was raptured to heaven.

So, they are the tribulation saints as they become believers for the first time during the tribulation. So, they are tribulation saints.

In books 8 and 9, the bold judgments are of dreadful malignant sores and the sea turning to blood are experienced.

And so, there's some slides coming up of some malignant sores I found and some, the sea trying to turn red. In book 10, the remnant tells the story of the remnant of believers holed up now in Petra and everything's moved really to the Middle East.

[ 21 : 00 ] It is 43 months into the tribulation and one month into the great tribulation. And the remnant of the believers are there in Petra and the global potentate and Antichrist Nikolai has the rebels within the range of two bombs and a missile with no chance of escape.

It's a dreadful time for them. But, in the book, the remnant, God's power to protect is revealed and despite all the powerful weapons, the remnant are saved.

Book 10 sees the following judgments. The river turning to flood, the sun burning with intense heat that is terribly scorching and killing of people.

Six years of tribulation have now passed. You must be feeling very tired of it by now. And it has meant great suffering, intense suffering for the saints.

But matters have come to a climax. Book 11 depicts the battle of Armageddon and it takes almost 12 months.

[ 22 : 08 ] In fact, it takes 364 days. And so, when Armageddon begins, there's one year left until the glorious appearing of Jesus.

The great battle takes place in Israel and the judgments depicted in Book 11 are the plundering of the Antichrist kingdom and the drying up of the crucial water supply.

Finally, in Book 12, the period of tribulation ends with the glorious appearing of Christ who descends from the sky with his heavenly hosts and this time he's recognised and he slays the Antichrist.

So, the King of Kings comes riding as a conqueror on a great white horse and years of humanist history comes to an end. Book 12 sees the judgment of the greatest earthquake in history and the armies of the world destroyed.

It also sees the destruction of the beast and the false prophet who are cast into the lake and Satan, the dragon, is bound, not totally destroyed, but bound and thrown into the abyss.

[ 23 : 36 ] So, here we have the judgments of the earthquake as I said and the battle of Armageddon and Satan's end for the time being.

and when Jesus came, he came with those that were raptured seven years before with him. He brings the believers with him.

And now Christ rules from Jerusalem for a thousand years, that is, the millennium, because according to pre-millennialists and the Left Behind series, the thousand years reign of Christ now begins.

Notice, too, that in Revelation 23 there's a little statement, but after these things, Satan must be released for a little while. So, there'll be the thousand years reign and then Satan will be released for a little while.

So, this is where the Left Behind series concludes with the promise that doesn't move into the thousand years, but with the promise of the thousand years reign, and then that Jesus will usher in the final victory over Satan and all evil and the day of judgment will finally take place.

[ 24 : 56 ] And final victory and judgment day will occur, the forces of evil will be unleashed again and that will be terrible, but the final rebellion is short, as fire will fall from the sky and consume the rebels, the remaining dead then will be raised, and judgment day will occur and God will inaugurate his eternal order of a new heaven and a new earth.

And Satan, as I said before, is finally defeated and he too is thrown into the fiery lake. Well, it's quite a story, isn't it?

Well, the events of the Left Behind series are based on interpretation of scripture known as dispensational pre-millennialism, sometimes just called dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism is an umbrella term for a wide variety of viewpoints within that tradition, so you might be used to some varieties in it, it is a wide term.

Dispensationalism is a system of biblical interpretation, formalised in the 19th century by John Nelson Darby, and then it was later popularised by the publishing of the Study Bible of Scofield, and also the establishment of Dallas Theological Seminary by Lewis Chafer.

[ 26 : 31 ] 20th century writers such as John Walford, Dwight Pentecost, Charles Ryrie, brought the doctrines of dispensationalism into mainstream scholarship, and they are often summarised by three primary tenets of the system, so let me just tell you what they are.

These are a clear distinction between Israel and the church, so God has a destiny for Israel and he has a destiny for the church and they are not one and the same.

Secondly, they are based on a liberal interpretation of scripture at every possible point, and the glory of God is another of the primary tenets, that the primary goal of history is the glory of God, which I'm sure none of us would disagree with.

Dispensationalism is the foundation of what is known in eschatological studies as pre-tribulational pre-millennialism, and that is the left-behind view, and it involves the division of history into usually seven distinct periods of time known as dispensations.

To understand and evaluate the left-behind series, positioned more fully in its scenario, we actually need to look at some alternate views, although the left-behind views, remember, are pre-tribulational, pre-millennialism, and that's sometimes shortened, which makes it easier to pre-trib, pre-mil.

[ 28 : 15 ] But what are the alternate views? Well, there are various positions, but three of them are pre-millennialism, and this includes pre-tribulationism, which I've talked about, it also includes mid-tribulationism, and I'll say a little bit about that, and post-tribulationism, and post-millennialism, and amillennialism.

So how are you going? This diagram that's coming may prove helpful, if you can see it.

Pre-millennialism, let's just go over, is the view that Christ came, comes back before the thousand-year reign, before the millennium. And that period, when Jesus reigns on earth, is conceived as a wonderful golden age.

The main alternatives to that view, as I said before, are post-millennialism, and amillennialism. Now, post-millennialism views this millennium as something still in the future.

It sees it as a future golden age, in which virtually everyone will be Christian, but it comes, it comes, it doesn't come before the second coming, it comes, sorry, it comes before, you have the thousand-year reign and then the second coming of Christ.

[ 29 : 54 ] Does that make sense? amillennialism? Amillennialism identifies the millennium with the church age. You could put instead of a non-millennialism, if that helps, although it identifies the thousand-year reign symbolically, and so the thousand-year reign becomes the time between the resurrection of Jesus and the time of his second coming.

So you might be beginning to try and work out what you think you are in these views. Now, pre-millennialism is the first and most basic tenet of the left-behind scenario.

The second most important is pre-tribulationism, and it only occurs in the pre-mill circles. And pre-tribulation is the view that the rapture, that is the secret coming of Christ where he takes people up to be with himself.

This is in the pre-millennial view, precedes the second coming. Now, there is a mid-tribulationism which says that the rapture takes place in the middle of the tribulation, and there's a post-tribulationism which says it happens at the end.

So that's why there's a difference there. But we won't worry with that jargon anymore. How do we respond to the left-behind books? I've tried to give you a view there and tried to give you an understanding of what's going on.

[ 31 : 28 ] So what's going on in the left-behind books is pre-mill, pre-trib. Okay? Well, many people have embraced the books and their theology holder-heartedly.

Others have been quite sceptical, putting them in the category of the Da Vinci Code. And like the Da Vinci Code, parodies have been written. So someone's written a Valinci or a is it Vadinci Cod?

And also someone has written a Kiss My Left Behind book. However, what's a balanced response to this pop Christian literature?

What's a response from a conservative, evangelical, biblical viewpoint? point? Well, the first thing I want to say is how we view the end times is a question of interpretation, obviously.

Now, much of the position in the left-behind books is based on the literal interpretation of the book of Revelation and various passages from the Old Testament. And this is without any regard for the genre of the biblical text from which they are drawn.

[ 32 : 41 ] So this is following from some of the things that Paul was saying earlier. So prophetic and biblical literature, without regard to whether symbolism or poetry is being used, are red-light tomorrow's newspaper.

And much of the theological position popularised in the left-behind books is based on the literal interpretation of the book of Revelation, as you've seen, and certain Old Testament passages.

and without regard then for their genre. Now, these interpretations are then turned into narrative by Tim LaHaye.

And someone has said, we can't hear the message of scripture when we don't carefully consider the genre of the literature we're working with. So how should we interpret the book of Revelation?

Well, let me give you some principles that you may find helpful. First of all, we need to be concerned with its genre. Its literary form is apocalyptic.

[ 33 : 48 ] Such literature, apocalyptic literature, is characterised by symbolism and is frequently presented in visions, which is where this fits so well.

We need to be concerned with the context of the book of Revelation. It was intended to speak to the people of the time and method of interpretation.

And the purpose of the book of Revelation is ultimately to show the sovereignty of God and the certainty of the overthrow of evil. So in the face of the overwhelming power of the emperor, Christians are shown, what are they shown?

that the glory and the majesty of the king is real. And they're told of the victory, which is already won.

They don't have to wait. It is already won. And then they are told of the judgment, which he will execute upon his enemies.

[ 34 : 56 ] So Christians still have much to suffer, but the purpose of the book of Revelation is to assure them that the outcome is already secured. They don't have to worry.

They will be forever in the presence of God himself. It's a wonderful book. So Revelation is about the already won victory of Christ.

We don't need to fear. And fourthly, when we come to interpreting the book of Revelation, it is full of Old Testament allusions.

And the Old Testament then frequently gives us the key to the interpretation of the book. But in any case, details must be interpreted in line with the general purpose of the book.

And Old Testament allusions are used by John the author with great freedom to his own ends to fulfil his goal in showing us the great sovereignty of God and encouraging his readers.

[ 36 : 02 ] Let me give you some helpful keys to understanding Revelation. Firstly, it's written in symbolism. Revelation uses stock of images, of colours, of numbers, of animals, of precious stones, crowns, robes, parts of the body.

And we're to ask ourselves, what do these symbols mean? Why are they here? What does it mean in this episode of the story? They each stand for something.

The one thing we may not do is take this symbol literally. Secondly, we need to be aware of the structure.

And this is a very important thing to know about the book of Revelation. Revelation. It is the most carefully structured book, I believe, of the whole of the New Testament.

It's best interpreted as a series of overlapping pictures, one upon the other. So it's not one thing happens and then another, but it keeps telling you about the same series of events and builds up a picture that way.

[ 37 : 20 ] So there are seven sections that run parallel to each other. And each depicts the church and the world from the time of Christ's first coming to the second coming.

So the section one, we've got the vision of the glorified Christ and the letters to the churches. And we have teachings there that are of value to people at all times. Then in section two, we've got in chapters four to seven, the seven seals.



And John is caught up into heaven. And the seals are shown. And divine judgment on the world is described. And here we see the church suffering trial and persecution against the background victory of Christ.

And in fact, that's what's enacted out in each of them. In eight to eleven, there are seven trumpets of judgment. The church is avenged and protected.

It's victorious. Chapters 12 to 14, section four. It's the birth of the son and the dragons waiting to devour him.

[ 38 : 25 ] And again, the church suffers persecution. Chapters 15 to 16, there's seven bowls of wrath and the final visitation of God's wrath.

Section six, we see the fall of Babylon and the beasts. And then in section seven, it's the doom of the dragon and it describes the final judgment. So the book of Revelation is a struggle between Christ and his church and the enemies of Christ and his church.

And these episodes don't follow one another end on end, but rather they overlap. Each series of seven displays tyranny, chaos, persecution, destruction, and these occur right through the historic period, which I believe is the period of the church age and which separates Christ's resurrection from his return.

And once we understand the layout of the revelation, that its episodes are concurrent, rather than consecutive, many of our difficulties disappear, I think. And the centre of it all, and this is a key to understanding it, is Christ and Christ's already completed victory.

The great end time battle is not in the future, it's in the past. And the message of the revelation doesn't lie in the future. In the last great battle between God and his enemies in the coming cataclysm called Armageddon.

[ 39 : 52 ] I want you to know that Armageddon is not a major topic in this book. It is only mentioned once in passing in chapter 16, verse 16, and with no more significance than any other minor references scattered throughout the revelation.

salvation. In fact, there's no actual description of the return of Christ. It's long for and looked for, and the hope is there, but we don't get a long description of it. What we get, and what is most important, is the great emphasis on the already completed victory of Jesus, the lamb that was slain.

And the revelation leaves us in no doubt that the great end time battle of God doesn't lie in the future, but in the past. And the battle has been fought and won. Jesus is the blood stained victor.

And it's made clear so many times throughout the book itself. In Revelation, it's in other parts of the New Testament, as I said before, the great end time battle lies in the past.

And this is perhaps the most important key to the mystery of this book. Let me just say something very briefly about the interpretation of Revelation 20. It's key to our view on millennialism.

[ 41 : 12 ] The literal view is Christ returns to earth, he casts the beast and the false prophet into a fiery lake and consigns the dragon to a prison for a thousand years.

And at the end of the thousand years peace, Satan is released for a brief time and chaotic period before Jesus finally concludes history. But interpreting Revelation 20 is very important because Revelation 20 is the only place that the millennium is mentioned in scripture.

One thousand years is defined as beginning with the first resurrection, if you read Revelation 20 carefully, and ending at the second death, judgment.

It should be a thousand years there, not a hundred. A thousand years in fact then equals the span of time between the two events, the resurrection of Jesus and his second coming.

So I hope that's helpful. Have I got time to just add a few concerns? Thank you. There are other issues of concerns I have about the books, the left behind books.

[ 42 : 25 ] Firstly, in the books as I've mentioned before, they teach that there is no separation of Israel and the church.

The Bible is the story of one plan of God for one people. And so I think the books here are at fault in that view.

Secondly, the return of the Jews to Palestine has no special significance from my understanding of the reading of scripture. The concept of the return of the Jews to Palestine isn't found in the New Testament.

Romans 8 to 11 speaks of the destiny of Israel but its focus is on the spiritual return of God's people to Christ. Paul says nothing about the Jews returning from all over the world to the land of Palestine.

Yes, there are Old Testament references. to the scattered Jews returning to the promised land. But these are references I believe to returns from the exile under Nebuchadnezzar.

[ 43 : 36 ] And yes, they are fulfilled in that time. I think Ezekiel has an end time view but it's an end time view in terms of longing and looking forward to when all God's people will be gathered in which includes the Gentiles.

It's not talking about a place. It's talking about a relationship with God. The New Testament teaches that God's promises to Israel are fulfilled partly in the Christian church and if you read Acts 15 and how James uses the Amos passage there and it's also fulfilled partly in the spiritual turning of Jews to Christ and all that.

The spiritual turning of the Jews to Christ does still lie in the future. I think the Bible only teaches one future coming not a rapture and then a second coming.

They're the one and the same event and there's no biblical basis for rapture as separate from the return of Christ and I think we've seen that from Matthew tonight and you can also see that with a careful reading of 1 Thessalonians 4.

We will all know about it. There will be loud trumpets and we'll all see it. Christians don't escape the tribulation as far as I understand. We are in a period of suffering now and it contradicts the teaching of Christ to say that they do.

[ 45 : 04 ] We are refined through suffering. We're already experiencing the kingdom of God. When Christ came he inaugurated the kingdom of God and we are already enjoying the blessings of being members of the kingdom of God.

We're already under the reign of Jesus Christ. Not yet in its full expression but it's wonderful to belong to him and we've already shared its blessings and await the total victory.

Satan has already been defeated. In dispensationalism nothing serious seems to happen to Satan until the second coming but that is not what the cross is all about.

Though the last day is still future we are still we are already in the last days. We are already living in the time between Christ and his second return.

So we already have the fruits of the spirit. We are already creatures in Christ now. We are the temples of the Holy Spirit. we are putting on the new self and we do have fellowship with fellow Christians with whom we await the last day and the return of Christ and the final judgment.

[ 46 : 21 ] We are in the millennium now and the signs of the time have been present from the beginning of the Christian era and present now. So we must always be ready for the Lord's return.

The second coming of Christ will be a single event as I said before and not two events separated by tribulation or by a thousand year reign for that matter. And at the time of the second coming there will be a general resurrection both of believers and unbelievers and it will be glorious.

And there will be no second choice in terms of a tribulation period where people can suddenly decide or not so suddenly decide that they want to be believers.

Why are the left behind books so popular? Well they're gripping popular fiction. That's a great read, a great story. They're not great fiction but they are a good read. They feed into the general anxiety I believe that we all have about the present and the future.

And there's not a lot of good Christian fiction around so there's not a lot of competition. And they are brilliantly marketed. Why do I think they are unhelpful? Well there's much that could be said here but some people argue that the left behind books are affecting American domestic and foreign policies.

[ 47 : 46 ] I think we've lost our next picture but it's well maybe the case that that is I think they're unhelpful too because it's an unbalanced interpretation of scripture.

There's little about following Christ in the books and there's a lot of gun toting and killing. They propose a second chance. They rely on date setting and they miss the point.

They miss the great point that Christ already has the victory. victory. It's been won. And by overlooking this key message in the book of Revelation and focusing on the potentially frightening aspects of the last judgment they sidetracked their readers from the positive gospel encouragement of the book of Revelation.

Revelation. The joy of Christ's victory is already and the ultimate fulfillment of the kingdom at Christ's return is assured.

And what a glorious time that will be won't it? Can you imagine what it's going to be like? We will see him face to face.

[ 49 : 11 ] What joy. What a hope. We don't know when he'll return but we know he's coming. We look forward to it with confidence, with hope, with joy.

Always being ready to welcome him who promises us, I am coming soon. And together, even so, come.

Come, Lord Jesus. Amen. Amen. Sorry, I can't for you.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

beliefs and people have been to you. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 50 : 24 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.