



THE DESTROYER IS UNLEASHED

APOLLYON

TIM LAHAYE

JERRY B. JENKINS

T H E D E S T R O Y E R I S U N L E A S H E D

APOLLYON

TIM LAHAYE
JERRY B. JENKINS



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Visit Tyndale's exciting Web site at www.tyndale.com

For the latest Left Behind news visit the Left Behind Web site at www.leftbehind.com

Copyright © 1999 by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. All rights reserved.

Cover photograph copyright © 1998 by G. Brad Lewis/Tony Stone Images. All rights reserved.

Authors' photo copyright © 1998 by Reg Francklyn. All rights reserved.

Left Behind series designed by Catherine Bergstrom

Cover photo illustration by Julie Chen

Edited by Rick Blanchette

Published in association with the literary agency of Alive Communications, Inc., 1465 Kelly Johnson Blvd., Suite 320, Colorado Springs, CO 80920.

Scripture quotations used by the two witnesses in this book are taken from the *Holy Bible*, King James Version. All other Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

LaHaye, Tim F.

Apollyon : the Destroyer is unleashed / Tim LaHaye, Jerry B. Jenkins.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-8423-2916-1 (hardcover)

I. Jenkins, Jerry B. II. Title.

PS3562.A315A56 1999

813'.54—dc21

98-32064

Printed in the United States of America

05 04 03 02 01 00 99
9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

To Norman B. Rohrer
Friend and mentor

PROLOGUE

From the Conclusion of *Soul Harvest*

RAYFORD believed the only way to exonerate Amanda was to decode her files, but he also knew the risk. He would have to face whatever they revealed. Did he want the truth, regardless? The more he prayed about that, the more convinced he became that he must not fear the truth.

What he learned would affect how he functioned for the rest of the Tribulation. If the woman who had shared his life had fooled him, whom could he trust? If he was that bad a judge of character, what good was he to the cause? Maddening doubts filled him, but he became obsessed with knowing. Either way, lover or liar, wife or witch, he had to know.

The morning before the start of the most talked-about mass meeting in the world, Rayford approached Carpathia in his office.

“Your Excellency,” he began, swallowing any vestige of pride, “I’m assuming you’ll need Mac and me to get you to Israel tomorrow.”

"Talk to me about this, Captain Steele. They are meeting against my wishes, so I had planned not to sanction it with my presence."

"But your promise of protection—"

"Ah, that resonated with you, did it not?"

"You know well where I stand."

"And you also know that I tell you where to fly, not vice versa. Do you not think that if I wanted to be in Israel tomorrow I would have told you before this?"

"So, those who wonder if you are afraid of the scholar who—"

"Afraid!"

"—showed you up on the Internet and called your bluff before an international audience—"

"You are trying to bait me, Captain Steele," Carpathia said, smiling.

"Frankly, I believe you know you will be upstaged in Israel by the two witnesses and by Dr. Ben-Judah."

"The two witnesses? If they do not stop their black magic, the drought, and the blood, they will answer to me."

"They say you can't harm them until the due time."

"I will decide the due time."

"And yet Israel was protected from the earthquake and the meteors—"

"You believe the witnesses are responsible for that?"

"I believe God is."

"Tell me, Captain Steele. Do you still believe that a man who has been known to raise the dead could actually be the Antichrist?"

Rayford hesitated, wishing Tsion was in the room. “The enemy has been known to imitate miracles,” he said. “Imagine the audience in Israel if you were to do something like that. Here are people of faith coming together for inspiration. If you are God, if you could be the Messiah, wouldn’t they be thrilled to meet you?”

Carpathia stared at Rayford, seeming to study his eyes. Rayford believed God. He had faith that regardless of his power, regardless of his intentions, Nicolae would be impotent in the face of the 144,000 witnesses who carried the seal of almighty God on their foreheads.

“If you are suggesting,” Carpathia said carefully, “that it only makes sense that the Global Community Potentate bestow upon those guests a regal welcome second to none, you may have a point.”

Rayford had said nothing of the sort, but Carpathia heard what he wanted to hear. “Thank you,” Rayford said.

“Captain Steele, schedule that flight.”

ONE

RAYFORD Steele worried about Mac McCullum's silence in the cockpit of *Global Community One* during the short flight from New Babylon to Tel Aviv. "Do we need to talk later?" Rayford said quietly. Mac put a finger to his lips and nodded.

Rayford finished communicating with New Babylon ground and air traffic control, then reached beneath his seat for the hidden reverse intercom button. It would allow him to listen in on conversations in the Condor 216's cabin between Global Community Potentate Nicolae Carpathia, Supreme Commander Leon Fortunato, and Pontifex Maximus Peter Mathews, head of Enigma Babylon One World Faith. But just before Rayford depressed the button, he felt Mac's hand on his arm. Mac shook his head.

Rayford shuddered. "They know?" he mouthed.

Mac whispered, "Don't risk it until we talk."

Rayford received the treatment he had come to expect on initial descent into Tel Aviv. The tower at David Ben Gurion cleared other planes from the area, even those that had begun landing sequences. Rayford heard anger in the voices of other pilots as they were directed into holding patterns miles from the Condor. Per protocol, no other aircraft were to be in proximity to the Condor, despite the extraordinary air traffic expected in Israel for the Meeting of the Witnesses.

"Take the landing, Mac," Rayford said. Mac gave a puzzled glance but complied. Rayford was impressed at how the Holy Land had been spared damage from the wrath of the Lamb earthquake. Other calamities had befallen the land and the people, but to Rayford, Israel was the one place that looked normal from the air since the earthquake and the subsequent judgments.

Ben Gurion Airport was alive with traffic. The big planes had to land there, while smaller craft could put down near Jerusalem. Worried about Mac's misgivings, still Rayford couldn't suppress a smile. Carpathia had been forced not only to allow this meeting of believers, but also to pledge his personal protection of them. Of course, he was the opposite of a man of his word, but having gone public with his assurances, he was stuck. He would have to protect even Rabbi Tsion Ben-Judah, spiritual head of the Tribulation Force.

Not long before, Dr. Ben-Judah had been forced to flee his homeland under cover of night, a universal bounty on his head. Now he was back as Carpathia's

avowed enemy, leader of the 144,000 witnesses and their converts. Carpathia had used the results of the most recent Trumpet Judgments to twice postpone the Israel conference, but there was no stopping it again.

Just before touchdown, when everyone aboard should have been tightly strapped in, Rayford was surprised by a knock at the cockpit door. "Leon," he said, turning. "We're about to land."

"Protocol, Captain!" Fortunato barked.

"What do you want?"

"Besides that you refer to me as Supreme Commander, His Excellency asks that you remain in the cockpit after landing for orders."

"We're not going to Jerusalem?" Rayford said. Mac stared straight ahead.

"Precisely," Fortunato said. "Much as we all know you want to be there."

Rayford had been certain Carpathia's people would try to follow him to the rest of the Tribulation Force.

Fortunato left and shut the door, and Rayford said, "I'll take it, Mac."

Mac shifted control of the craft, and Rayford immediately exaggerated the angle of descent while depressing the reverse intercom button. He heard Carpathia and Mathews asking after Fortunato, who had clearly taken a tumble. Once the plane was parked, Fortunato burst into the cockpit.

"What was that, Officer McCullum?"

"My apologies, Commander," Mac said. "It was out

of my hands. All due respect, sir, but you should not have been out of your seat during landing.”

“Listen up, gentlemen,” Fortunato said, kneeling between them. “His Excellency asks that you remain in Tel Aviv, as we are not certain when he might need to return to New Babylon. We have rented you rooms near the airport. GC personnel will transport you.”

Buck Williams sat in the bowels of Teddy Kollek Stadium in Jerusalem with his pregnant wife, Chloe. He knew she was in no way healed enough from injuries she had suffered in the great earthquake to have justified the flight from the States, but she would not be dissuaded. Now she appeared weary. Her bruises and scars were fading, but Chloe still had a severe limp, and her beauty had been turned into a strange cuteness by the unique reshaping of her cheekbone and eye socket.

“You need to help the others, Buck,” she said. “Now go on. I’ll be fine.”

“I wish you’d go back to the compound,” he said.

“I’m fine,” she insisted. “I just need to sit awhile. I’m worried about Hattie. I said I wouldn’t leave her unless she improved or became a believer, and she has done neither.” Pregnant, Hattie Durham had been left home fighting for her life against poison in her system. Dr. Floyd Charles attended her while the rest of the Tribulation

Force—including new member Ken Ritz, another pilot—had made the pilgrimage to Israel.

“Floyd will take good care of her.”

“I know. Now leave me alone awhile.”

Rayford and Mac were instructed to wait on the plane as Carpathia, Fortunato, and Mathews were received with enthusiasm on the tarmac. Fortunato stood dutifully in the background as Mathews declined to make a public statement but introduced Carpathia.

“I cannot tell you what a pleasure it is to be back in Israel,” Carpathia said with a broad smile. “I am eager to welcome the devotees of Dr. Ben-Judah and to display the openness of the Global Community to diverse opinion and belief. I am pleased to reaffirm my guarantee of safety to the rabbi and the thousands of visitors from all over the world. I will withhold further comment, assuming I will be welcome to address the honored assemblage within the next few days.”

The dignitaries were ushered to a helicopter for the hop to Jerusalem, while their respective entourages boarded an opulent motor coach.

When Rayford and Mac finished postflight checks and finally disembarked, a Global Community Jeep delivered them to their hotel. Mac signaled Rayford not to say anything in the car or either of their rooms. In the coffee shop, Rayford finally demanded to know what was going on.

Buck wished Chloe had been able to sleep on the flight from the States. Ken Ritz had procured a Gulfstream jet, so it was the most comfortable international flight Buck had ever enjoyed. But the four of them—Ken, Buck, Chloe, and Tsion—had been too excited to rest. Tsion spent half the time on his laptop, which Ken transmitted to a satellite, keeping the rabbi in touch with his world-wide flock of millions.

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 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.

Tsion had been urging the local congregations to send their leaders to the great Meeting of the Witnesses, despite warnings from the Global Community. Nicolae Carpathia had again tried to cancel the gathering at the last minute, citing thousands of deaths from contaminated water in over a third of the world. Thrilling the faithful by calling Carpathia's bluff, Tsion responded publicly on the Internet.

"Mr. Carpathia," he had written, "we will be in Jerusalem as scheduled, with or without your approval, permission, or promised protection. The glory of the Lord will be our rear guard."

Buck would need the protection almost as much as Tsion. By choosing to show up and appear in public with Ben-Judah, Buck was sacrificing his position as Carpathia's publishing chief and his exorbitant salary. Showing his face in proximity to the rabbi's would confirm Carpathia's contention that Buck had become an active enemy of the Global Community.

Rabbi Ben-Judah himself had come up with the strategy of simply trusting God. "Stand right beside me when we get off the plane," he said. "No disguises, no misdirection, no hiding. If God can protect me, he can protect you. Let us stop playing Carpathia's games."

Buck 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. He worried for his safety, of course, but more for Chloe's.

Tsion seemed supernaturally protected. But after this conference, the entire Tribulation Force, not to mention the 144,000 witnesses and their millions of converts, would become open archenemies of the Antichrist. Their lives would consist of half ministry, half survival. For all they had been through, it was as if the seven-year tribulation had just begun. They still had nearly five years until the glorious appearing of Christ to set up his thousand-year reign on earth.

What Tsion's Internet missives and Buck's underground electronic magazine had wrought in Israel was stunning. The whole of Israel crawled with tens of thou-

sands of converted Jewish witnesses from the twelve tribes all over the world.

Rather than asking Ken Ritz to find an out-of-the-way airstrip where the Tribulation Force could slip into the country unnoticed, Tsion informed his audience—and also, of course, Carpathia & Co. —of their itinerary.

Ken had landed at the tiny Jerusalem Airport north of the city, and well-wishers immediately besieged the plane. A small cadre of Global Community armed guards, apparently Carpathia's idea of protection for Tsion, would have had to open fire to get near him. The international witnesses cheered and sang and reached out to touch Tsion as the Tribulation Force made its way to a van. The Israeli driver carefully picked his way through the crowd and south down the main drag toward the Holy City and the King David Hotel.

There they had discovered that Supreme Commander Leon Fortunato had summarily bounced their reservations and several others' by supremely commandeering the top floor for Nicolae Carpathia and his people. "I assume you have made provisions for our alternative," Tsion told the desk clerk after half an hour in line.

"I apologize," the young man said, slipping Tsion an envelope. The rabbi glanced at Buck and pulled him away from the crowd, where they opened the note. Buck looked back at Ken, who nodded to assure him he had the fragile Chloe in tow.

The note was in Hebrew. "It is from Chaim," Tsion said. "He writes, 'Forgive my trusted friend Nicolae for this shameful insensitivity. I have room for you and your

colleagues and insist you stay with me. Page Jacov, and you will be taken care of.”

Jacov was Chaim Rosenzweig’s driver and valet. He loaded their stuff into a Mercedes van and soon had the Tribulation Force installed in guest rooms at Chaim’s walled and gated estate within walking distance of the Old City. Buck tried to get Chloe to stay and rest while he and Ken and Tsion went to the stadium.

“I didn’t come here to be on the sidelines,” she said. “I know you’re concerned about me, but let me decide what I’m up to.”

At Kollek Stadium, Buck had been as stunned as the others at what had been arranged. Tsion was right. It had to have been God who used the rabbi’s cyber pleas to pull together Israeli witnesses to handle the logistics of this most unlikely conference.

In spite of and in the midst of global chaos, ad hoc committees had arranged transportation, lodging, food, sound, interpretation, and programming. Buck could tell that Tsion was nearly overcome with the streamlined efficiency and no-frills program. “All you need worry about, Dr. Ben-Judah,” he had been told, “is being prepared to inspire and inform us when you are due at the microphone.”

Tsion smiled sadly. “That and praying that we all remain under the care of our heavenly Father.”

“They’re onto you, Rayford,” Mac said over pita bread and sauce.

Rayford shook his head. "I haven't been a mystery to Carpathia for months. What are you talking about?"

"You've been assigned to me."

"I'm listening."

"I don't rate direct contact with the big man anymore. But last night I was called to a meeting with Leon. The good news is they're not onto me."

"That *is* good. But they know about the device on the plane?"

"He didn't say, but he couldn't have been clearer that you're history. If the device still works—"

"It does."

"—then I'll use it and keep you posted."

"Where will I be?"

"Anywhere but here, Ray. I'm convinced the driver was listening, the car may have been bugged, the cockpit, no question about our rooms."

"They hope I'll lead them to the others, but they'll be in plain sight in Jerusalem."

"They want to *keep* you from the others, Ray. Why do you think we've been assigned to Tel Aviv?"

"And if I leave?"

"I'm to let them know immediately. It'll be the end of you, Ray."

"But I've got to see my family, the rest of the Force."

"Not here. Carpathia's pledge is to protect Tsion and the others. Not you."

"They really think I won't go to Jerusalem?"

"They hope you will. You must not."

Rayford sat back and pursed his lips. He would not