

Assassins Study Guide

Assassins by Tim LaHaye

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Plot Summary

The story opens as Rayford Steele is battling rage at the stress of the current situation he's in. The time is near the mid-point of the Tribulation, and Christians are being persecuted and forced to hide. Rayford is leader of the Tribulation Force. Rayford's daughter Chloe, her husband Cameron Buck Williams, and their infant son Kenny are healthy and hiding out with Rayford at a safe house in Illinois. Also at the house are a non-believer named Hattie Durham, a doctor named Floyd Charles, and a Biblical scholar named Tsion Ben-Judah. One morning Floyd is sick, and Buck rushes him to the hospital where a nurse, Leah Rose, says there's nothing she can do except make him comfortable. Members of the Global Community peacekeeping force are looking for members of the Tribulation Force and Leah has to smuggle Buck and the dying Floyd out of the hospital. Once away, Leah is a fugitive and takes refuge in the safe house. She tells Rayford that she has a small fortune hidden at her house and they go to retrieve it. There, they are confronted by the GC officers and an army of Biblical horsemen with the heads of lions and tails of snakes. The horsemen bring death and destruction, mostly to non-believers, and take the lives of roughly half of the world's remaining people.

Chloe is helping to organize a world-wide trading community that will serve believers after the prophesy of the Mark of the Beast is fulfilled because Christians will no longer be able to buy goods and services on the open market after that time. Leah is soon looking for something to fill her days, and she becomes the person who collects and disseminates information to the other members of the Tribulation Force.

As the Christians watch, various aspects of the prophecy come to pass. They know there is to be a time when two witnesses in Israel are silenced and are amazed when Carpathia plans a "Global Gala" celebration to coincide with that day. Buck is convinced to attend, though there is to be an earthquake and he knows his life could be in danger. Leah is sent on a mission and Rayford disappears without telling anyone his plans. He is actually attending the Global Gala as well, planning to put himself in the position to be the person who assassinates Carpathia, in keeping with the prophecy. As the gala unfolds, Buck is on hand to see the witnesses killed by Carpathia, watches their corpses rot over several days and sees them in restored bodies before they ascend physically into Heaven. As Rayford sees his opportunity to make a successful shot at Carpathia, he is paralyzed and unable to take the shot. He's bumped, the gun fires and he then sees Carpathia lying on the stage, blood running from an obviously fatal head wound. Rayford isn't certain what happened but comes to believe that he might have fired the fatal shot after all. Tsion is confused, saying that he hadn't believed it would be a gunshot that ends Carpathia's life. Days pass with Carpathia lying in state as his followers mourn. Tsion warns that Carpathia will be resurrected, and he and Chloe watch for that event, certain to be televised. Before that can happen, Carpathia's right-hand-man, Leon Fortunato, looks at a tape of the shooting and identifies the assassin.



Chapters 1 through 3

Chapters 1 through 3 Summary

In chapter one, Rayford Steele is struggling with rage. He recounts his losses - his first wife and son taken in the Rapture and the death of his second wife. His daughter Chloe, grandson Kenny Bruce, and son-in-law Cameron "Buck" Williams are healthy and living in the safe house where Rayford lives with other members of the Tribulation Force, a group of Christians who work toward saving souls before Christ's final return. Also living at the safe house in Illinois is Hattie Durham, a non-believer, who tells Rayford that he doesn't give her credit for being able to carry out a plan to kill Nicolae Carpathia. Rayford prays that God will choose him to kill Carpathia. Chloe is organizing the International Commodity Co-op, which will serve as a means for Christians to buy and sell goods once the Mark of the Beast has been put in place, effectively eliminating Christians' ability to buy and sell in the open market.

David Hassid, a member of Carpathia's inner group of employees, has managed to have himself appointed to take possession of a large shipment of computers. He's created confusion in the delivery orders so that the computers are not taken to Carpathia's palace as they should be. David calls pilot Mac McCullum with news that the shipment has been misdirected, and they arrange for Mac to fly another plane there to pick up the equipment.

In chapter two, Buck, Rayford and Floyd finish up a day's work on a project in which they are digging a basement to provide better security in their coming ordeals. Tsion has offered to help repeatedly but his offer is refused, with the others saying that his daily sermons are vital to the cause of Christianity and that his efforts must continue in that direction. His sermons are posted online as is Buck's cyber magazine, "The Truth." Both have tremendous followings. Rayford's temper is noticeably short and this is soon noted by other members of the safe house. He is leader of the organization but now is questioned others seem unsure that he has their best interests at heart. As Buck and Rayford continue working on an expansion to the safe house, they discuss how to keep its existence secret from Hattie. When Floyd fails to show up at his usual time, Buck finds Floyd still in bed and very ill. He tells Buck that he has to get to the hospital right away.

David and Mac are traveling to pick up the computers when David tells Mac that there's a new cargo chief, Corporal A. Christopher, who is soon revealed to be a Christian, Annie Christopher. David and Annie are involved in an evolving relationship, though they have to keep it secret at this point because David is Annie's supervisor. Mac later tells David that he's taking Carpathia's right-hand-man, Leon Fortunato, to a meeting in Africa with a regional ruler known as a potentate. Annie learns that Mac and David have an extensive system of listening devices around Carpathia and his inner circle of employees.



In chapter three, Mac is about to be joined by a new co-pilot, a Christian named Abdulla Smith. Annie tells Mac her story, that she lost her entire family in an earthquake and that she found Tsion's Web page which led her to realize the truth about Carpathia.

Buck takes Floyd to the hospital where they're met by a believer, Leah Rose, who is the nurse who has helped them before. When Floyd tells her, as he told Buck, that he's been poisoned from having come in contact with Hattie while she was ill, Leah says she can't do anything for him except to help keep him comfortable. She knows that the Global Community's peacekeeping forces will soon be alerted to Floyd's presence at the hospital and says that they have to leave immediately. Buck helps Leah load Floyd into his Land Rover and they leave the hospital, headed back to the safe house. Leah says that Buck now has to take her in because she put herself at risk to help them. Buck drives first through Leah's neighborhood and finds it swarming with police.

Chapters 1 through 3 Analysis

It's generally accepted that Carpathia is the Antichrist predicted in the Bible and that Leon Fortunato is the False Prophet, also prophesied. While the full story is not revealed in this book, the Rapture, prophesied in Revelations as being the time when Christians are taken to Heaven, occurred at the beginning of the series. Those left behind were the non-believers who were given seven years - the Tribulation - to come to know Christ or be forever damned. Rayford's wife and son are taken but he and his daughter, Chloe, are left behind. Tsion is a Biblical scholar but is not a Christian until after the Rapture. The group known as the Tribulation Force is formed, with its membership dedicating themselves and their resources to saving souls. Armed with Tsion's knowledge of the Bible, they are able to foretell events and prepare for some hardships, including the time when Christians will refuse the Mark of the Beast and will be unable to buy things without that mark. Christians already recognize each other by a mark on their foreheads that only other Christians can see.

Rayford feels a sense of responsibility that Chloe hadn't been a Christian at the time of the Rapture and he loves his family very much, but he is burning with hatred for Nicolae and the desire to be the one to kill him. Rayford cites the amount of devastation Nicolae has wreaked on the world as the basis for his hatred, but it seems that the hardships, death and destruction Rayford's own family has suffered is really at the heart of this hatred. It could be that his motives are less than pure in that he wants the opportunity for revenge. Hattie's own motives are revealed little by little. She was pregnant with Nicolae's child and it almost caused her death. Her life was saved by the efforts of Dr. Floyd Charles, who dies because of his contact with Hattie's fetus. It's noted that all the members of the safe house have their particular roles to play and that Hattie, as the only non-believer, is more selfish than the others and spends most of her time on self-satisfying pursuits.



Chapters 4 through 6

Chapters 4 through 6 Summary

In chapter four, David tells Mac that he's got all of Carpathia's offices, planes and other areas of the palace bugged. Mac says that David is "sitting on a time bomb," a fact of which David is already aware. David also says that he has a small disc in the main computer, the one called "The Beast," that is very compact and is recording everything that's picked up on any communication device and cataloguing the information. David says the files are encrypted so that no one could figure out how to access the data, even if the tiny disc were discovered. The two men agree that their time at their jobs is limited because of the impending Mark of the Beast.

Floyd dies before they reach the safe house. Buck goes inside alone and tells the group of the death and that Leah is in the car. Hattie seems upset to learn that Floyd caught his disease from her. Leah is invited in and Rayford insists that he will dig the grave alone. He does, despite the warning that the grave has to be deeper than normal because of health issues and the fact that the grave is in the back yard of the safe house. Rayford thinks as he works on the task and admits that part of his anger is probably because he doesn't have anyone to really talk to. He is angry that he denied God prior to the Rapture and so let his wife and son be taken without him. Rayford finds a bit of peace in the thought that he might be chosen by God to participate in a "centuries-old assassination plot." As Rayford is showering after the burial, the other members of the safe house are downstairs praying for him.

Mac is battling similar emotions. He says that he should feel fulfilled in his role in the Tribulation Force, especially considering his assignment within the enemy camp. But he is dealing with constant fear of being discovered and worry that he will make a mistake that could compromise him or other believers. He knows that as soon as the Mark of the Beast is required, he and several others will have to leave and will become fugitives.

In chapter five, Rayford hates the current situation but feels powerless to change it. He goes downstairs and finds the group praying for him. He falls to his knees, sobbing out his sorrow. After the prayer, he tells Leah that they are all too drained to hear her story that night and asks if she can wait until the following day to explain her situation. She agrees to sleep in Floyd's room, but Rayford and Chloe give her a tour of the house first. She and Rayford seem to be on each other's bad sides immediately but agree to call a truce in the interest of having a peaceful night. Chloe finishes the tour and goes to Rayford's room with the news that Hattie is nowhere in the house. Rayford knows that Hattie has too much information about the Tribulation Force and the safe house and that she can't be allowed to leave because she, as a non-believer, has no reason to keep the secrets. Rayford goes one way and Buck the other in search of Hattie, but they don't find her. Rayford calls on a friend, Tyrola Delany, a man they call "T." He owns an airport, and at Rayford's request, checks computer logs and says that an unidentified female left the airport earlier in the evening. Rayford calls off the search, knowing that if



that were Hattie, they'll never catch up to her. He does alert Mac and David because he believes that Hattie will try to get close to Carpathia in order to kill him.

In chapter six, Buck reassures Chloe that her work organizing the cooperative is valuable, but he knows that she misses being in the thick of action. She and Buck have both greatly curtailed their activities since Kenny's birth. Tsion and Buck talk about Tsion's next sermon and the passage related to the two hundred million horsemen.

David is confronted by Leon, who demands to know why the computers aren't already in place. David says that it's technical and that the computers he'd ordered aren't sufficient for the task. Leon says money isn't an issue and tells David to correct the situation and get the computers installed. The conversation turns to Hattie, and Leon says that the believers are harboring "the mother of His Excellency's child," adding that she has to be found before she can abort the child. Leon leaves and David knows that he has to get the computers in place. He plans to create some bugs that will make certain the men and women running the computers can never complete their task of locating the origin of Buck's or Tsion's Internet broadcasts.

Leah tells the story of her life and says that her husband committed suicide after the Rapture took their sons. There are soon reports of a plane going down and the effects of two people floating in the water near the apparent crash site. It's reported that Hattie Durham was on board. Rayford and Chloe go to visit T to talk about Chloe's plans for the cooperative. T, owner of the airport, has the power to help. T reveals that the plane Hattie was reportedly in was flown by Samuel Hanson, who is brother to a low-level thug they know named Bo Hanson.

Chapters 4 through 6 Analysis

Everyone expects Rayford to take the lead in every situation, and his current struggles are such that he is having trouble taking that role. As Buck announces that Floyd has died, everyone turns to Rayford, but he doesn't give instructions. After a few minutes of this, Buck says he wonders what they're supposed to do now and Rayford explodes, saying that none of them are expected to withstand this much stress and loss. Rayford attributes Floyd's death to Carpathia because the poison Floyd came in contact with was initially supposed to kill Hattie. He uses this to further fuel his rage at Carpathia and to hone his desire to be the one to kill Carpathia.

The safe house is equipped with a generator that helps provide some of the basic comforts for those living there. Rayford takes a hot shower because of the generator after helping to bury Floyd. There is a great deal of technology running, all high-tech because it's necessary for the group to keep their location a secret from the Global Community peacekeepers working for Carpathia. When Leah is being given the tour of the house, Chloe doesn't mention the basement but Leah asks if there's a tunnel of some sort. Her question prompts fear on the part of Rayford and Chloe, who can't imagine how Leah would know to ask that question. She says that the members of the



Tribulation Force would have thought to plan for the day when they might have to hide and that a basement or tunnel would best serve that purpose.

Mac and David talk about the Biblical prophecies regarding Carpathia. They know that Rayford had, at one time, been a pilot for Carpathia and that he'd talked about the possibility of crashing on purpose with Carpathia on board. Both Mac and David know that the possibility isn't Biblical because Carpathia won't be assassinated until a specific time following the Rapture and that he will be resurrected. They also mention the "ten kings" that are mentioned in Revelations as being the ten who will rise up in a specific circumstance.



Chapters 7 through 9

Chapters 7 through 9 Summary

In chapter seven, Abdullah Smith arrives. It's noted that he is Middle Eastern and that few would expect him to be a Christian, but he is. Abdullah has information about conditions in some parts of the world unknown to Mac, including Botswana. He points out that the "regional potentate of the United States of Africa" is residing in Johannesburg and that there's a state-of-the-art airport there.

Leah and Rayford talk on a Thursday night. She tells him that she needs something to keep her busy. He suggests that she use her medical expertise as necessary. She agrees that she'll do that and says that she knows the Tribulation Force needs money. She asks when they can go get the money she has at her house. She says that it's hidden so well that she's certain the police haven't found it. When she tells Rayford the amount and that it's all in small denomination bills, he agrees to go with her immediately to get the money. Rayford leaves a note, which Leah questions. He says that people wake at all hours and that they all try to make sure no one needs to worry about them at any time.

Mac and Abdullah plan a flight with Leon on board and try to figure out how to make a quick stop in Kuwait in order to leave a shipment of computers that will eventually be funneled to the Tribulation Force by David. Mac announces that there's an opportunity to fuel the plane at a significant discount by stopping in Kuwait and that's why they are making the stop.

Rayford breaks into Leah's garage, but Leah panics. She tells Rayford that she sees huge horses with riders. He can't see it but knows that it's the horsemen prophesied in Revelations. Tsion has been writing about the horsemen. Rayford says that the horsemen are to kill a third of the population and that believers will be safe.

In chapter eight, Leah points out the safe, high on a shelf. It hasn't been touched and she and Rayford put the money into duffel bags. It's a great deal of money and it's very heavy. They are just about to make their way out when a member of the GC peacekeepers arrive, obviously continuing their search for Leah. Rayford asks who they are. When they identify themselves as peacekeepers, Rayford says that he and Leah are as well. He then says that they'd just found the safe and offers to split the money with the peacekeepers if they are willing to keep quiet about the discovery. To make the story more believable, Rayford says that he's "as loyal as" the peacekeepers, but that Leah Rose was obviously a rebel and that they might as well keep the money since no one from GC knows of its existence. Leah follows his lead and then Rayford kills the lights and the two of them run for the car. Before they can reach it, they encounter the horsemen. There is a great deal of smoke and flames and Leah stops in fear of running into the midst of the herd. Rayford assures her that they aren't physical and pushes her to walk through them. The peacekeepers can't see the horsemen but are suddenly



struck down, some bursting into flames. They reach the car and watch as people all over the neighborhood fall victim to the horsemen. Rayford stops the car directly in front of Leah's garage and gets the money. Rayford telephones Chloe, telling her to wake everyone to look out the window.

Mac and Abdullah are in the air listening in on Leon's conversation when the horsemen appear. Leon explains to an aide that his mission is to mislead one official in order to test loyalty to Carpathia. Abdullah sees the horses first, but Mac doesn't immediately see them. They discuss whether what Abdullah saw is real and what it could be. Then the sky in front of them is completely black with horses. Abdullah pulls back and the plane goes into a steep climb. Mac is thrown from his seat and there is crashing of people and items falling all over the plane. Abdullah manages to correct.

In chapter nine, Leon says that the plane has the overwhelming smell of smoke and demands that they land immediately. Mac knows that it's not something coming from the plane because the smoke alarms are not going off and he and Abdullah are not falling victim to the smoke as the other passengers are. Mac takes the controls and tells Abdullah to find a place to land. Mac listens as other pilots call in maydays, saying they can't see for the smoke and have passengers falling ill or dying. Mac is powerless to help. Abdullah gives Mac two options for landing and Leon chooses Khartoum, which is the former Sudan. They land there and find there's excellent medical technology. Mac can be treated for the wounds he sustained when he fell. Two members of Leon's staff die and several are ill. The plane is fumigated and Leon is soon ready to continue on his mission. Back at the palace, David is dealing with the deal of ten of his one hundred forty-member staff. Two more are being treated for smoke inhalation and Annie is missing, which throws David into a state of panic until he finds Annie has accidentally locked herself in a closet. When he finds her, they argue over whether Annie was careless in allowing it to happen or if David had failed in his responsibility to fully train her for her job.

Chapters 7 through 9 Analysis

There's an interesting conversation between Rayford and Leah as they are going to pick up her money. Leah asks about the other members of the safe house and Rayford apparently gives her an overview of how they each came to live there. When he finishes, she says it's "way too much loss in too short a time." Rayford's response is positive, saying that they all have to "look ahead." He is the one person who is having the most trouble dealing with the situation at this point, but to Leah he takes on the attitude that it's not so difficult and that they are all managing. This seems an integral part of Rayford's makeup in that he can't stand to show weakness to others.

Rayford presents an interesting question about the horsemen. It's noted that some believers can see the horsemen and Rayford wonders if the horsemen can see the believers or if they are blinded to the believers and can see only the non-believers who are their intended victims. That question is never answered. The very appearance of the

horsemen answers a question that had been posed by Tsion who wondered whether the horsemen would be visible at all, and even whether they would be figurative or literal.



Chapters 10 through 12

Chapters 10 through 12 Summary

In chapter ten, Mac arrives in Johannesburg. His injuries are painful but he's able to function. They quickly fall under attack and Mac is unable to get the plane back in the air because the aircraft is completely shut down when the attack occurs. He does manage to blow hot exhaust onto some of the attackers so that they have a few minutes to try to prepare for the next attack. Members of the crew fall victim to the gunshots. Leon yells for a gun but Mac points out that "your boss" doesn't allow possession of weapons. Despite this law, Mac has a small handgun in the cockpit but knows it isn't enough to face down the attackers. Leon is actually in the country to meet with an official named Ngumo and briefly believes Ngumo is behind the attack. However, he soon learns that Ngumo himself has been killed. Mac believes he is likely to die. In a desperate move, he calls out on the radio that there are believers on board and cites their location. The plane is soon on fire. Mac and the other survivors have no chance but to jump out and into the gunfire. Both Mac and Abdullah are hit but not fatally wounded.

Back in the States, Rayford finds that Tsion is desperately praying but doesn't know exactly why he is being urged by God to pray. He believes it might involve Hattie but leaves the matter in God's hands, pleading for mercy for anyone in need at that moment. Rayford joins him in prayer. Rayford remains aware that he's in an enviable position, living in the house with Tsion, who is teacher to the multitudes. Tsion's next sermon posted online refers to past plagues and gives information about the current plague of the horsemen. Tsion believes that God is eliminating those who have never turned to Him. He predicts that the time is quickly approaching when Christians' survival will be "a full-time occupation."

In chapter eleven, a couple arrives at the airport in response to Mac's desperate cry for help for believers. They introduce themselves as Dart and Olivia but are actually the Tuttle. Dwayne Tuttle is outspoken about his Christianity and refuses to call Leon by his title. Dwayne doesn't give away the fact that Mac and Abdullah also carry the sign of Christianity on their foreheads visible only to other Christians. Dwayne says that he and his wife, Trudy, are working for Chloe's organization of the international cooperative and says that he'd never thought he'd have the opportunity to see the false prophet in person. Mac seems surprised to hear someone refer to Leon as the false prophet. He seems to have never given the idea any thought until Dwayne's reference. Mac is soon treated for the gunshots and is told that his hand will be permanently disfigured but mostly usable. He's told that he'll be awarded a medal for having saved Leon's life. David and Annie make their relationship public and Annie is transferred to another department so that David is no longer her supervisor.

Back in the States, Buck is preparing to leave on a mission and goes to Arlington Heights to visit a father and son named Zeke and Zeke Jr., called "Z" by those who



know him. Both are Christians, run a service station that doubles as a way for Christians to pass goods and services, and Z creates false identities and travel documents. Buck makes arrangements for Z to create a new identity for him as "Greg North" for an upcoming trip.

In chapter twelve, Leon and Carpathia have a conversation that David listens in on. Leon reveals that Peter Mathews, the man who heads up the world-wide church, has indicated that he believes Carpathia to be the Antichrist. Leon, under questioning, says that he doesn't personally believe it and that he actually believes Carpathia to be Christ. Carpathia says that he wants to plan an extravagant gala and that he will invite the entire world. He says that Peter will be dealt with and that he will put a stop to two witnesses in Israel. After Leon leaves, David listens as Carpathia prays to Lucifer.

Back in the States, Chloe says that she's located Hattie's sister, Nancy, and that she's among those confirmed dead of smoke inhalation. Buck travels by commercial airline to Tel Aviv on his mission to see a friend.

Chapters 10 through 12 Analysis

There are clues throughout the book as to previous happenings though many are only mentioned briefly with little or no explanation. This makes it difficult for the reader who has not read the previous books of the series, but most readers will be able to figure out the overall events even without knowing the specific details. An example of this is seen in chapter ten when it's noted that Mac hasn't been to Johannesburg "since before the great wrath of the Lamb earthquake." While the reader who didn't read the book containing this event would not know details, a broad, general understanding is possible simply because of the name of the event.

An interesting situation occurs when Leon, Mac and Abdullah are forced to jump from the plane while being attacked. Leon calls out for God's help. It seems a frivolous reference and unlikely that Leon actually wants God's help. It seems more likely that he's simply using the words but that he's referring to God not as the Supreme Being with the real power to save him. After it's apparent that Mac, Leon and Abdullah are safe, Leon asks how they came to escape and Mac says that it's because Leon prayed, calling on God. Leon says that he's always considered himself a "religious man" and seems to accept that this is what saved them. The inconsistency here is that Christians are being actively persecuted and it's not really clear why Mac says this or why Leon agrees.

Mac realizes after the incident at the airport that he is having an issue with his faith. When he's being shot at, he screams out over the radio that there are believers aboard the aircraft, hoping that other believers will hear and come to the rescue. He then notes that he should have trusted in God to protect him and should never have put himself and other believers in that position. Also, while they were under fire and Leon wants to call for help, Mac hands Leon his cell phone. The phone is a secure piece of technology shared by a handful of believers so that their transmissions are safe from the listening of



GC. Mac realizes that Leon might easily have realized that the phone is much heavier than a typical cell phone and that he might have kept Mac's phone after the crisis passed. While Mac is willing to allow that he was under stress at the moment of these two mistakes, he also realizes that he made these mistakes because he didn't have enough faith to trust that his life was safe in God's hands.



Chapters 13 through 15

Chapters 13 through 15 Summary

In chapter thirteen, Rayford pretends to bribe a man named Bo Hanson into telling him where Bo's brother had flown Hattie. Rayford is brutal with Bo. When the interview is over Bo leaves, but he runs out of gas before he's off the airport parking lot. As Rayford is on the phone making arrangements for the next part of his plan, T takes gas to Bo. When T returns, Rayford accuses him of aiding the enemy. T points out that Rayford is supposed to be a Christian but that he hasn't exhibited any Christian traits in his dealing with Bo. Rayford realizes T is right and apologizes.

Buck arrives at the home of Chaim Rosenzweig in Tel Aviv. Jacov, who lives with Chaim and takes care of his personal needs, tells Buck that Chaim constantly reads Tsion's sermons and that he's very distressed. Chaim is also using a wheelchair, though he is healthy, and has talked a great deal about strokes. At the house, Buck visits with Chaim, sharing the fact that the members of the Tribulation Force are concerned for him and that Buck hopes to find that Chaim is finally ready to make a profession of faith. Chaim continues to hesitate on this point.

As the death count mounts to include about fifteen percent of GC employees, Carpathia says that Tsion is behind the deaths. The world situation creates a strain on the budding relationship of Annie and David.

In chapter fourteen, David's workforce - those who weren't killed by the first wave of the horsemen - are working to find the position of origin for Buck's and Tsion's online postings. David has included a bug in the system that adds a random number to random calculations meaning those doing the work never get any closer to Buck and Tsion. When there's an official GC posting related to the death of Ngumo and his family, Buck writes a counter article, providing the truthful and more believable version of events. Chaim cites Buck's version of events and says that it makes more sense than Carpathia's. He says that he is "close" to making a decision but Buck points out that Chaim has said this before. He does take Buck into a workroom and shows him the project that's been taking a great deal of his time. It's a large piece of steel and Chaim is honing the edge to an incredible finish so that the blade is so sharp it slices through wadded up material with no force put on the material. Chaim says only that he feels a need to work on this project but offers no explanation as to why

Rayford contacts David, asking for any news of Hattie. David searches the GC databases but finds nothing to indicate Hattie's location. He tells Annie of his quest and his lack of success and she suggests that he simply ask Leon.

In chapter fifteen, Rayford meets Dwayne and Trudy Tuttle and learns their story. They had three sons who were all taken in the Rapture and both have become strong



Christians. They agree to fly Rayford on a mission to find Hattie, based on information he obtained from Bo.

David goes to Leon's office and confesses to being confused about the entire situation involving Hattie's disappearance. Leon explains that Hattie is now being held in a "comfortable but secure" facility in Brussels and urges David to always come to him with questions.

Chapters 13 through 15 Analysis

Peter and Leon are talking about Tsion's Web site and Leon says that Tsion has millions of followers. Peter objects, saying that he is among those who log onto Tsion's site daily. Peter is indicating that there really isn't any reason to believe those who log on are faithful followers.

Leon is caught in a battle between Carpathia and Peter but is ultimately and completely loyal to Carpathia. At Carpathia's insistence, Leon acts like he is considering Peter's position but is actually paving the way for Peter's murder.



Chapter 16 through 18

Chapter 16 through 18 Summary

In chapter sixteen, Rayford and the Tuttles arrive at LaHavre and pick up two rental cars, Rayford and Dwayne in one and Trudy taking their belongings to the hotel in the other. David continues to try to reach Rayford with the new information that Hattie is actually being held in Brussels and that Bo's brother is dead, killed by GC forces, but Rayford's phone is turned off in his luggage. Trudy turns it on out of curiosity and answers David's call. He instructs her to tell Rayford to call off the effort to find Hattie and she heads to the address Rayford had given as where Bo said Hattie is staying. Rayford is met by a man he believes to be Bo's brother but who is really a GC peacekeeper. Just as he enters the room, Trudy rushes in, screams at him to "abort," and runs out. Rayford follows, expecting that he'll be shot but makes it safely to the street where Trudy's car is parked. Dwayne quickly catches up in his own car .

In chapter seventeen, David learns that Trudy succeeded in reaching Mac in time and that he got away safely. They make it safely to the airport and board the plane. Meanwhile, Carpathia and his staff, including Leon, are discussing plans for the gala. Carpathia says that he will personally silence the two witnesses during the event.

Rayford examines his motives and tries to decide if he's seeking to reach Hattie for the right reasons. He says that he wants to keep her from putting herself in a position to kill Carpathia at the mid-point of the Tribulation, a time that is to fall during Carpathia's gala. Rayford meets with a man who has a weapon for sale that Rayford wants to buy in the hope of being the person who gets to kill Carpathia. Dwayne and Trudy wait at a café for Rayford's return.

In chapter eighteen, Rayford goes with the weapons dealer to a remote location where he's to try out the weapon. The man presents Rayford with what seems to be a solid steel box but actually has secret springs that allow it to open, revealing a handgun inside. The box is so cleverly made that Rayford realizes he can pass it off as any number of things, including a laptop battery. The weapon does not have a safety and the bullet spreads into a "spinning disc." The seller says that a person standing very near can be injured by the air from the spinning bullet even if the bullet misses. Rayford wavers, saying that he can't justify that this is a weapon of defense at all and that he isn't certain he wants to have a weapon of this magnitude in his possession. The seller urges him to try it and Rayford does. He's knocked from his feet from the power of the shot. He misses the large rock he's aiming at and hits the trunk of a tree. The tree is so damaged that it falls. Rayford shoots it again and continues to waver, wanting to purchase the gun but fearful of taking the step.

The prophecy is that Carpathia will be killed by a sword and the weapon is called the saber. Rayford and the seller drive back into town and find that Dwayne and Trudy have been executed in their seats in the diner. Rayford doesn't enter the diner and the



weapons seller takes Rayford away from the scene. The weapons seller is not a believer but he puts himself in danger to help Rayford make it to the airport where he manages to board the Tuttles' plane and leave. Rayford is flying home when he sees the multitude of horsemen below. Tsion and Buck see it as well from their home.

Chapter 16 through 18 Analysis

There's some discussion of the two witnesses in Israel. These men are prophesied in Revelations along with the date they will cease to witness. This date happens to fall within the time set aside for this gala being put on by Carpathia. Carpathia says that there's nothing to the power of the two men and that their miracles were only tricks. Carpathia points out the turning of water into blood and says that this was probably a chemical reaction that occurred when the water reached a certain temperature. It's unclear whether Carpathia actually believes his explanations, but it seems more likely that he's actually just trying to make others believe it. As a disciple of Satan, he probably knows the truth and that the two witnesses are actually performing miracles and preaching the truth. He probably also knows the date that they will be silenced, according to the prophecy. At one point during this discussion, Leon tries to argue reason with Carpathia. He says that having Carpathia confront the two men will give credence to the rumors that they are representatives of God. Carpathia says that it "doesn't matter" and that above all else, he has to have credit for standing up to them.

Dwayne, though a short-lived character of the story, is interesting. He refuses to give in to Leon's dictate to use titles, saying outright that he is above man's laws. He is a very colorful character and seems genuine in everything he says. An example of his character is seen when he and Rayford are discussing their narrow escape from the GC peacekeepers while looking for Hattie. Dwayne says that Rayford isn't to worry about the danger. He says, "I haven't had this much fun since the pigs ate my sister." Rayford apparently gives him a look that indicates he believes Dwayne to be serious. Dwayne says that he's only kidding.



Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

In chapter nineteen, Tsion announces in one of his sermons that he won't be attending the gala. He reminds believers that the event will be the mid-point of the Tribulation, ushering in the second half which is called the Great Tribulation. Rayford says that he feels responsible for Hattie and knows that she's being held in prison without knowing that her sister Nancy has died. Rayford talks with T upon his return to Illinois and learns that Bo Hanson committed suicide. Rayford is "inconsolable" and feels a great weight. He continues to weigh the idea of being in position to kill Carpathia during the gala.

Mac is feeling somewhat lonely himself. He says that he misses Rayford. He spends time with David and Annie, but both are much younger than Mac. Mac says that his life is "interesting," but is no longer "fun." Leon continues to follow Carpathia's instructions and is now "courting" the ten regional rulers. Leon is looking for support for the plan to murder Peter. The plan is to have all the regional rulers as a single unit stab Peter to death. By having all involved, none are more or less culpable or guilty than others. Carpathia hones the plan, saying that they will use pieces of an ice sculpture as weapons so that the weapons will melt.

In chapter twenty, Buck and Chloe are at odds over Buck's decision to go to the gala. Chloe knows that Buck is a journalist at heart and that he wants to see this historic event first-hand, but also knows that it's going to be very dangerous. Buck's decision to go is caught up in Chaim Rosenzweig. Chaim is invited to attend the event and to be a guest on the podium. He tells Buck that he wants both Buck and Tsion in the crowd. Buck argues that neither of them will be able to be near the podium for fear of being recognized. Chaim says that he knows that but that he will "feel better" knowing Buck is in the crowd. Buck finally says that he won't share Chaim's request to Tsion and Chaim agrees to withdraw the request that Tsion attend if Buck will agree. Chaim also points out that the event will be historic and this will be Buck's weakness. He admits that regardless of his Christianity and the fact that he has a responsibility to Chloe and Kenny, he wants to be at the event.

Annie and David are talking about their precarious situation. David tells Annie that besides the two of them, Mac and Abdullah, he's seen only two other Christians in the GC compound. The two are women and they have been discovered by the GC authorities. Annie is dismayed that the two were found out without having a chance to know that they were not alone in their faith. David learns that there's to be no arrests of believers by the GC forces until after the gala. He shares that information with Rayford and the others, urging them to get any necessary traveling done during that time. On the Saturday prior to the gala, Mac and Abdullah head for Israel. Carpathia urges all those aboard the plane, including the ten regional authorities, to indulge themselves during the event. In Israel, there are banners proclaiming the slogan for the event, "Today is the first day of the rest of Utopia." Mac and Abdullah have some free time on



their hands and Mac wants desperately to see the two witnesses, Eli and Moishe. Abdullah agrees that it's too dangerous to be seen in the front of the crowd, but that there's no reason they shouldn't walk by there to get as close as they dare.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

Leon learns that there was a time in the past when Carpathia planted thoughts and dictated what a group of people remember about a specific event. This mind control comes to Leon's attention and he seems to hesitate, at least briefly, in his dedication to Carpathia. It seems that Leon is suddenly worried that Carpathia might have exercised this mind control on him. The thought seems to be fleeting but it's interesting that it exists at all. Another point during this section of the story is that Carpathia goes to great lengths to make sure that the general public supports his actions. For example, as he is planning Peter's murder, he makes sure that none of those who commit the murder will be able to turn on the others so that they will all stick to the same story and that it will be a publicly palatable story.

Annie's despair that there were two women who were believers in the GC compound and that the two weren't aware of other Christians nearby is an example of one of the overriding themes of the story. The Christians need support of other Christians. The fact that Annie wishes she'd had a chance to tell the others that they weren't alone is interesting. She doesn't wish that she'd had a chance to help them escape, but only that she could have offered support.



Chapters 21 through 23

Chapters 21 through 23 Summary

In chapter twenty-one, in Brussels, Rayford lets Hattie and Buck out. He and Buck argue briefly before Buck leaves the plane. Buck flies on to the gala and learns from Jacov that Chaim is in the hospital and has apparently suffered a stroke. Rayford talks with Leah by phone and Rayford tells her that he can't pick her up until Friday and says that she isn't to call on him until then. He doesn't explain why. At the site of the gala, Buck listens from the edge of the crowd and Eli and Moishe preach. Some in the crowd heed their words and become believers, but many more jeer at the two. Buck shoulders his way near the front and sits down to listen, despite warnings from the crowd that Eli and Moishe could set him on fire. It is the 1,260th day of their preaching and Buck knows it is to be their final day, according to prophecy. The two men make one final plea and then stand, completely silent and unmoving, though some in the crowd taunt them and others plead for more preaching. Though he is careful not to encounter Buck, Rayford is also at the gala. It's interesting that he is now pleading that God will not have him be the instrument of Carpathia's death.

Several people have seen a woman who looks like Hattie and it seems likely that she is in attendance at the gala, performing as one of the dancing girls. Meanwhile, Mac is considering that Rayford had once suggested that someone piloting Carpathia's plane should fly themselves - with Carpathia on board - into a mountain. Mac describes it as sacrificing one for the good of the all. He begins trying to think of a way to be the sole pilot on some future flight because he doesn't want to involve Abdullah or anyone else in his plan.

Carpathia and the other GC officials arrive and begin the lengthy addresses from the stage. During the middle of the event, while someone else is talking, Carpathia rises and says, "You will not remember that I have interrupted." He then says that there is about to be an announcement of a death and that those listening won't care. Buck and other Christians don't fall under the spell of Carpathia's voice, but minutes later when it's announced that Peter has died of a virus and that his body has been cremated to avoid the possibility of spread of contagion, the crowd barely reacts.

In chapter twenty-two, Carpathia has the audience's undivided attention as he speaks. He says that he will silence the two witnesses the following day. Rayford is among those in the audience and he continues to mill about, moving himself near the front of the crowd. Buck still doesn't know where Rayford is. Leah calls Buck, telling him that Rayford is not taking her calls and that he told her he couldn't pick her up until Friday. Leah tells Buck that she wasn't allowed to see Hattie on the day she requested to do so, and that the delay sounds suspicious to her. Buck calls Rayford who says that he didn't expect that Leah would call on Buck and asks for Buck's trust. Buck agrees though he feels that he'll eventually have to "have it out" with Rayford.



The following day, Buck and Rayford are part of a huge crowd gathered to see Carpathia's confrontation with Eli and Moishe. Carpathia walks up to the two men, though the crowd fears for his life, having seen others who were killed for venturing too close. Carpathia makes a great show of his lack of fear and then pulls out a weapon that Rayford recognizes as a "saber," the same kind of gun that he has in his possession. Buck briefly wishes that he had a weapon because he has a clear line of sight to Carpathia. Carpathia's words whip the crowd into a frenzy before he murders both Eli and Moishe, allowing their bodies to drop on the ground where they stood. The bodies are not buried but remain on the site for the next three days as people party around them, occasionally rushing by to kick one or the other of the two witnesses. Though some suggest that it would be better to bury the two men, the suggestion is ignored. Then Buck gets a phone call from Jacov that Chaim is out of the hospital and is demanding to attend the final ceremony. Buck agrees to go to Chaim's house that afternoon.

In chapter twenty-three, Buck knows that there's to be an incredible event later in the day at the site of the bodies of Eli and Moishe. He also knows that he's got to be at Chaim's later in the evening, but only if he survives the earthquake that's foretold. When Buck arrives at the site, the bodies are still lying in the same place. Both are ragged, filthy and decaying. Then the two men rise, first to a kneeling position then to their feet. Their ragged clothing becomes pristine and their bodies return to normal, then they take on heavenly glows as both rise into the air. Television cameras capture the event as they disappear. Chloe and Tsion watch from the safe house. From his hotel room, Rayford has learned from Leah that Hattie is not longer being held in Brussels and he then hears reports that someone has made off with the bodies of Eli and Moishe and some are claiming it was a miracle. The earthquake is devastating but Buck escapes injury. He goes to Chaim's house and finds Chaim insisting that he's going to attend the evening's ceremonies. Buck tries to talk him out of it but is surprised when Jacov backs up Chaim's decision and says that he'll take Chaim to the event.

Chaim arrives and is told he'll have to get out of his wheelchair. He refuses and the guard gives in, saying that Chaim obviously couldn't hope to get away anyway. Carpathia addresses the crowd, saying that it's inappropriate to have a celebration continue in the face of the death and destruction of the earthquake earlier in the day, but that they will continue the evening's ceremonies as planned. He recognizes Chaim and calls his presence a "miracle." Rayford has an opportunity to fire but Carpathia moves to embrace Chaim and Rayford won't shoot with Chaim possibly in the way. Moments later there's another chance and Rayford holds the gun but finds that his limbs are paralyzed and he can't fire. Then there's the sound of his gun firing and Carpathia falls. There's chaos as everyone tries to figure out what happened. Rayford sees destruction on the stage and believes that he must have hit Carpathia after all. Tsion tells Chloe that he hadn't expected there to be a gunshot causing Carpathia's death and he is perplexed.

Carpathia lies in state and Leon takes over much of the business. Two hours before Carpathia is to be buried, Leon calls David to his office to watch video tape of the moments before Carpathia falls. Leon asks David to explain what he sees. David wants



to deny that he sees anything but finally tells Leon what is obvious, agreeing that they now know who killed Carpathia.

There is an epilogue with only a single verse from Revelations that predicts the end of the "second woe" and the beginning of the third.

Chapters 21 through 23 Analysis

Buck is confused about the emerging relationship between Rayford and Leah. Buck knows that the two continue to rub each other the wrong way and doesn't really know why. Buck is worried about Rayford on several levels.

The fact that the two men who are prophesying in Israel become completely silent as the crowds gather for the gala is no coincidence. It's prophesied that they will stop preaching on this day and Buck knows this before he sits down to listen. He also knows that there will be some people who believe that Carpathia is responsible for silencing the two men and that those people will not listen to the prophecies related to this situation. The way the entire program comes together is nothing short of miraculous, especially for the characters who are believers who trust in the Biblical predictions.

The two witnesses, Eli and Moishe, are never fully explained in this book, though the reader does understand that the two are Biblically prophesied and that they are credited with performing miracles over the first years of the Tribulation. These are all explained away by Carpathia and by non-believers. For example, it's suggested that the two men conceal flame throwers beneath their clothing because some who attacked them burst into flames. These events, whether caused by a flame thrower or divine intervention, prompt the warnings that Buck not venture too near. He knows, however, that the two men will recognize him for the Christian he is and that he will not be harmed. Carpathia's confrontation of the two men, when it occurs, is Biblically prophesied and he also doesn't fear, knowing that the two men have ceased their preaching and are destined to die.

Buck and the other Christians hear Carpathia as he tells them that they won't remember his interruption and instructs them on how to handle the news of Peter's death. Buck recalls that he was in a meeting soon after Carpathia's rise to power when this same kind of situation occurs. Now, Buck realizes that it's God's protection that keeps him from falling under Carpathia's sway.

The misdirection as the book draws to a close is very effective. The reader has several facts available for consideration. Rayford had a weapon and has put himself in a position to kill Carpathia. Mac has come to believe that Rayford is right, that someone should sacrifice himself for the good of the whole and has decided that he will seek an opportunity to do that. Buck felt that he would have been capable of killing Carpathia when he was confronting Eli and Moishe. Hattie has a great desire to kill Carpathia and a couple of people have seen a young woman who resembles Hattie at the gala, meaning it's feasible that she's in a position to kill him. Finally - and likely the last



possibility on the minds of most readers - Chaim has honed a piece of steel to a fine edge and is on the stage in his wheelchair. He bullied the guards into letting him go without being fully searched and without getting out of his wheelchair so that he had opportunity to take the blade onto the podium. In an upcoming book, it will be revealed that Chaim is the killer and that Carpathia rises from the dead just before the hour of his burial, as was prophesied.



Characters

Rayford Steele

Leader of the Tribulation Force and a pilot, Rayford is battling rage as the story opens. He is dealing with the loss of his first wife and their son during the Rapture as well as the death of his second wife, Amanda, during an earthquake. Rayford seems to be having difficulty dealing with these losses and with the demands placed on him in his role as leader of the Tribulation Force. While he sees his weaknesses in his inability to cope, he seems powerless to do anything about them. Rayford becomes convinced that he is the person who will bring a particular piece of prophecy to fruition in the assassination of Nicolae Carpathia, head of the world government. Rayford decides to insert himself into the situation in order to be in the correct place at the correct time, though it means he leaves another member of the team on her own during a crucial and dangerous venture. As the time for the assassination draws nearer, Rayford comes to realize that he has to obey God's will rather than follow his own desire to carry out this piece of prophecy. Rayford's selfishness during this time puts him in an uncomfortable situation with the other members of the Tribulation Force, which is not resolved as the book comes to an end.

Chaim Rosenzweig

A botanist, he is a scholar who never makes a decision of faith, though he continues to tell his Christian friends that he is near that decision. He seems to relish his hold over his friends, as seen in his insisting that Buck attend the event staged by Carpathia. Chaim seems to have received some sort of divine instruction, though he continues to refuse to fully accept Christ as his savior. He purchases an electric wheelchair and makes certain that he can maneuver it, though he is healthy and fully able to walk around on his own. He talks at length about strokes long before he has one. He also spends a great deal of time honing a special length of steel to a razor-sharp edge. He tells Buck that he has the need to do this with his own hands, though he has been a scientist and tools such as steel and files have never been part of his trade. As the week of festivities planned by Carpathia draws to a close, Chaim insists that he attend the final day of the event. When Buck objects, Chaim manages to draw support from elsewhere so that he does attend. It's not revealed that Chaim is really the person who carries out the assassin until the following book, "The Mark."

Cameron Buck Williams

A journalist prior to the Rapture, Buck becomes a Christian and is the writer of an cyber magazine known as "The Truth." Buck is married to Chloe, making him Rayford's son-in-law. He has a son, an infant named Kenny. Buck is a strong Christian ,though he admits to battling between what he knows is right as a Christian and his desires as a



reporter when he is invited to be present at the ceremony prophesied as Carpathia's assassination. Buck desires to lead a man named Chaim Rosenzweig to Christ and travels a great distance in order to personally witness to the man though it leads to nothing. It's partly that Buck is anxious to witness the historical events of the assassination of Carpathia and partly Chaim's insistence that leads Buck to be present at the Global Gala where the prophecy culminates.

Chloe Steele Williams

Wife of Buck and mother of Kenny, she is Rayford's daughter. Chloe is heading up a world-wide cooperative effort to provide trading opportunities to the Christians who will eventually be prohibited from openly purchasing any goods or services. Chloe is devoted to her family though she is first and foremost devoted to her cause and her faith.

Tsion Ben-Judah

The Biblical scholar who produces an online blog daily that draws the attention of millions. Tsion is secure in his faith and puts great thought into his online sermons. These words are read by millions and prompt a great many Christian conversions.

Mac McCullum

A Christian, he is a member of the Tribulation Force but works inside Carpathia's inner circle. He is a pilot and uses that position as a means of placing bugs in the plan that allows him to listen in during his time in the cockpit.

David Hassid

A member of Carpathia's inner circle, he is a Christian and uses his position to feed information to other members of the Tribulation Force. David is in charge of purchasing and other logistical matters. When charged with tracking down the location of the safe house being used by Buck Williams and Tsion Ben-Judah, David first delays the arrival of computers and then puts a bug into the tracking system so that it's impossible for the workers to complete their task.

Leah Rose

The nurse who is in charge when Buck arrives at the hospital with Floyd Charles. Leah arranges to remove Floyd's body before Global Community peacekeepers can find him and becomes a fugitive because of it. She moves into the safe house kept by the Tribulation Force and brings a fortune in cash with her.



Tyrola Mark Delany

Known as "T," he is a believer who owns an airport and helps members of the Tribulation Force with matters of transportation. It's T who points out that Rayford had been unusually unkind to an unbeliever.

Nicolae Carpathis

The self-proclaimed supreme commander of the Global Community. Believers think Carpathia is the Anti-Christ and that his deeds and actions are fulfilling Biblical prophecies. Carpathia is assassinated at the end of the book, though it's prophesied that he will be resurrected.

Leon Fortunato

Carpathia's right-hand-man, Leon is - according to Biblical prophecy - the False Prophet. Leon apparently believes fully in Carpathia and does everything he can to further Carpathia's causes. Leon is the epitome of a "yes man," though he seems to wield a great deal of power with Carpathia.

Peter Mathews

The man who is the head of the Enigma Babylon One World Faith until his death at the hands of the ten potentates who are world leaders under Carpathia. Known as Peter the Second, his religion is perverted, but with his death, Carpathia declares that there will be no replacement.



Objects/Places

Tribulation Force

A group of Christians who works at trying to help non-believers come to Christ. The group also provides support to Christians and, using Biblical prophesies, to plan for the remainder of the Tribulation period.

The Global Community

The name given to the world-wide government headed by Nicolae Carpathia.

Illinois

The location of the safe house where Rayford, Chloe, Buck and Tsion live.

The Truth

The name of the cyber magazine produced and written by Buck Williams.

Enigma Babylon One World Faith

The religion led by Peter Mathews; it is a perverted religion that dies with Peter. Carpathia announces that it will not be replaced.

Tel Aviv

Where Buck goes to meet Chaim Rosenzweig.

Israel

Where the Global Gala takes place.

The Global Gala

An event staged by Carpathia, it's the week during which several pieces of prophecy come true.



Arlington Heights

Where Z makes fake identities for Christians who need to travel under assumed names.

Brussels

Where Hattie is held after leaving the safe house.



Themes

God's Will

The character's desire to do God's will is an apparent theme in this story, with Rayford's personal struggle the most prevalent. Rayford wants to be the one who kills Carpathia. Carpathia's death is prophesied and Rayford has no doubt that it's going to come to pass, and so he really wants to be the person to make that happen. As he works to insert himself into that scene, he questions his motives and comes to realize that it's his desire and that it might not be God's will at all. He finally puts himself in a position to fire on Carpathia and awaits God's instruction. It's only when he puts himself completely in God's will that he finds the peace that has eluded him in recent months leading up to the event. Another character looking to find God's will is, ironically, Chaim Rosenzweig. Chaim hears God's call but continues to rebel, refusing to give in and become a Christian. However, he heeds the burning desire he feels to become proficient at maneuvering in his wheelchair and to take up a file and create a sharpened blade, though he has no idea that he's listening to God's will. Tsion Ben-Judah is also seeking to remain in God's will with his daily sermons posted online to millions of readers. Tsion struggles to present his words in complete keeping with God's will, knowing that he has the power to lead others astray if he inserts his own words or his own will into the sermons.

God's Plan

The events that unfold during this book are part of God's plan and that theme is seen repeatedly throughout the story. The fact that Tsion and others who are familiar with the Bible can predict events prior to them happening is evidence that the events are following the Biblical prophesies of Revelations. Tsion begins to tell his followers that there will be two hundred million horsemen ranging over the globe and that they will have the heads of lions, the tails of snakes, and that they will kill with their smoke. Though Tsion doesn't know whether these will be physical horsemen or figurative, he has prepared his followers, including Rayford Steele, so that they are able to deal with the appearance while millions of people die.

Those who read and understand the Bible also know that on the 1,261st day of the Tribulation, the two witnesses at the Wailing Wall in Israel will be silenced. Up to that day, the two men have preached and pleaded with listeners to give in to God's call and have reached many. But on that day, in keeping with God's plan, the two men stop speaking and are killed by Carpathia, though they are resurrected just days later in front of thousands of witnesses. Another example of God's plan is seen in Chaim Rosenzweig. Chaim continues to refuse to give in to God's call but goes to great lengths to follow what will be revealed as divine direction. He becomes proficient at using a wheelchair long before he needs it and creates a sharpened blade, though he says he doesn't know why he is doing this. The use of the wheelchair is vital in arranging



Chaim's presence on the final day of the Global Gala, during which Nicolae is assassinated. The full story will not be revealed until a following book, but it turns out that Chaim is able to slip the blade onto the stage where Nicolae is waiting because of the wheelchair and that he is able to use the wheelchair to assassinate Nicolae, a fact that is part of God's plan.

The Need for Support

While Christians during this period know their time on earth is limited and that they know few will live to see Christ's return, they also know that they are each headed for a Heavenly home that is more important than anything they can possibly have on earth. Despite this assurance, the worry is so overwhelming that the Christians need the support of others and seek to buoy up other believers whenever possible. This is seen in the case of David and Annie, two of only a handful of Christians in Carpathia's employ. David tells Ann that he's learned that there were two women who were believers and that both have been arrested for their faith and taken away. Ann's immediate response is dismay that the two women were taken away before any of the other Christians could make contact with them. Her desire for this contact is only that she wanted them to know that they aren't alone. Ann herself is obviously in need of support from Christians, and she realizes these two women would also have needed this support. This theme is seen in other believers as well. When the residents of the safe house in Illinois are faced with the results of Rayford's inner struggles, they come together to pray. They are seeking divine intervention and guidance but are also seeking the comfort and support of the fellowship that comes from praying together. There are other aspects of this support evident in the fact that Christians are willing to put their lives on the line in order to provide aid and comfort to fellow Christians, despite the inherent risks.



Style

Point of View

The book is written in third person from an omniscient point of view. The perspective and point of view are the only real option available to the authors because the action takes place in various places simultaneously. To have limited the view at all would be impossible with this global cast of characters.

The omniscient perspective means that there are views into the personalities and thoughts of many of the characters. For example, Rayford is struggling with rage against the situation, and the reader gets information about those inner struggles as the story progresses. The reader is also given information about previous books in the series in order to more fully understand the characters. This is seen as Rayford tries to deal with the loss of two wives and a son. The reader who isn't familiar with the previous books wouldn't know about their deaths, but Rayford explains that his first wife of twenty-one years was taken during the Rapture, as was his son, Raymie. Rayford's second wife is also dead, and though the reader isn't given details of her death, Rayford says that he knows all three are now in heaven.

This omniscient perspective also gives the reader a look into the lives of "the enemy," Nicolae Carpathia and Leon Fortunato. The plot to kill the leader of a global government-sanctioned church is revealed through conversations between Carpathia and Leon. The man's death is later announced, though that conversation is the only information the reader has about the murder.

Setting

The book is set at the mid-point of a Biblically prophesied time. The time is fictional in that it has not yet occurred. However, Christians generally believe these events will happen at some point in the future. While Revelations is the basis for the events, the reader should keep in mind that different Biblical scholars have different interpretations of the events and not all agree on the specific occurrences. It's left to the reader to decide whether the events described in the book are Biblically correct and whether it is significant.

There are several physical settings. As a rule, these are real places in the modern world, though there are some fictional places within these settings. For example, the safe house used by the Tribulation Force is set in Illinois. Obviously, the overall setting of the state of Illinois is real but the safe house is a figment of the author's imagination. The same is true of several other settings. The use of Israel as a setting for some of the action is significant in that it is considered Biblically important. Some of the places are real but have fictional names for the book because Carpathia has created ten world regions and has renamed entire countries in order to accommodate these ten regions.



Language and Meaning

The book is written in straight-forward language with an acceptable mix of narrative and dialogue. Both narrative and dialogue are used to help clarify points that may be confusing to the reader who hasn't had the benefit of previous books and would refresh the memory of the reader who read previous books at some point in the past. For example, the book opens with an introduction of Rayford Steele. Though Rayford has been a main character in previous books, this introduction would be important for a person who doesn't have information about previous books of the series.

The overall tone of the book is hopeful, though there are points of despair and fear. Even though the characters are Christians, they have fears, including the method of their deaths. This is seen in Abdulla, who tells Mac that he doesn't want to die in the horrific manner he's seen happen to some others. The overwhelming odds facing the Christians, the hardships they deal with and the new trials they know are coming may seem hopeless to some readers. The Christian aspect of the story - the fact that Christians know they have a secure home in Heaven and that they are able to recognize other Christians on sight - dispels some of this hopelessness. Their mission to save others in a world where there are few moral expectations may also seem hopeless, but the fact that the Christians continue to fight for the souls of others is a hopeful cause.

Structure

The book is the sixth in the Left Behind series. The series includes Left Behind, Tribulation Force, Nicolae, Soul Harvest, Apollyon, and Assassins. Each of the books in the series could theoretically be a stand-alone book, though the reader who hasn't at least a rudimentary understanding of the previous books will likely be confused. For example, the authors give a sense of the role of the Tribulation Force, but there is no explanation of how they came to be joined together other than the fact that they are all Christians. The book does open with a list of main characters, including their backgrounds. It's here that the reader who isn't familiar with the characters would learn that Buck had been a journalist prior to the Tribulation and that he had briefly been part of Carpathia's staff. While the book could be read without knowledge of previous events during the series, there's little doubt that that reader would be confused on several important points. There is a prologue that includes some key points from the previous book, Apollyon, to provide at least a moderate amount of background for this book.

The book is divided into twenty-three chapters. The chapters vary in length. For example, chapter twenty-three is eighteen pages, while chapter one is only eight pages in length. Many of the chapters range from sixteen to eighteen pages. Chapters are titled by number only, which means the reader has no sense of what's to come in that chapter. This helps lend an air of mystery and suspense which is important to the tone of the story.



Quotes

"And if Carpathia was indeed the Antichrist - and most people except his followers thought he was - he wouldn't stay dead anyway."

Chap. 1, p. 5

"Among the earliest believers following the Rapture, the Tribulation Force was committed to winning people to Christ, opposing the Antichrist, and surviving until the reappearing of Christ, now just over three and a half years away."

Chap. 2, p. 13

"On the other hand, if he wasn't going bats and if he really had been chosen of God to have a part in a centuries-old assassination plot, he was someone special after all."

Chap. 4, p. 65

"Rayford gaped at a tail consisting not of hair but rather a writhing, sinewy, serpent with a head twice the size of Rayford's fist."

Chap. 8, p. 127

"He switched to a news radio feed. 'No one has an answer yet to the puzzling rash of fires, outbreaks of smoke, and noxious, sulfur-smelling emissions killing thousands all over the globe,' the newsman said."

Chap. 9, p. 142

"I'd leave you to die, but God's gonna get you in the end anyway. Read the Book. We win."

Chap. 11, p. 179

"You sit here in artificial authority not because of any following or accomplishments, but because you have mastered the art of kissing up to the boss."

Chap. 11, p. 193

"All around the plaza, on every lamppost, fence and wall, was the slogan Today Is the First Day of the Rest of Utopia."

Chap. 20, p. 354

"Mac quickened his pace despite Abdullah's pronounced limp, and the two hurried toward the Temple Mount and the two witnesses as if from a sewer to a spring."

Chap. 20, p. 256

"He knew God had been with him, protected him, helped spare him. But all Rayford felt was a resurgence of the rage that had plagued him for months."

Chap. 16, p. 282

"This event portends the second half of the Tribulation, called the Great Tribulation, which will make these horrific days seem languorous."

Chap. 19, p. 326

"The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly. Revelation 11:14."
Epilogue, p. 413



Topics for Discussion

Who is Rayford Steele? What are the struggles he's dealing with as the story opens? How does he cope? What is the effect of these struggles on the other members of his group?

Who is Cameron Williams? How is he related to Chloe? to Rayford? Who is Kenny? What is Cameron's job? How does this compare to his job prior to the Rapture? How does Cameron do this job?

Who is Chaim Rosenzweig? What is the role Chaim plays in the lives of the members of the Tribulation Force? What is the role he plays in God's plan as prophesied in Revelations and foretold by Tzion? How does he play these roles?

Who is Tzion Ben-Judah? What is his role in the Tribulation Force? How seriously does he take this role? What are his personal struggles? How does he overcome these?

What is the importance of the Biblical prophesies in the lives of the members of the Tribulation Force? List and describe at least two Biblical prophesies that come to pass over the course of the story. What are the effects of these prophesies coming true?

What is the Global Gala? Who plans it? How does it apply to the Biblical prophesies foretold by Tzion? What is Carpathia's role in this event? What are the prophesies that come true during this event? How do Buck and Rayford come to be there?

Who is Hattie Durham? Leah Rose? Floyd Charles? Bo Hanson? Dwayne Tuttle? Trudy Tuttle? T? Zeke? Z? Kenny? What role does each play in the successes of the Tribulation Force? Which are non-believers?

List at least three aliases used by members of the Tribulation force during their travels. What is the purpose of using an alias? How do they get these?