

Left Behind Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Left Behind is a story of transformation, faith, and salvation. The world is turned upside down when millions of people worldwide suddenly disappear. People everywhere grapple with their losses and the implication it has on the world. Many theories arise and people attempt to make sense of the events. One of these theories is that Christ has come back and raptured his church. A core group of followers at the New Hope Village Church believe that the end days are here as is outlined in the Book of Revelation in the Bible. As the Bible predicts, there will be seven years of trials and tribulations where the Antichrist will rise to power and wield his might. Many more will die before the seven years are finished, but for those that remain, they will witness the Glorious Appearance of Christ.

Directly affected are two people: Rayford Steele, an airline pilot, and Cameron "Buck" Williams, an internationally renowned news writer. Both are profoundly affected by the disappearances and both find different ways to deal with the aftermath of its affect. Rayford Steele is piloting a plane headed toward London when the rapture occurs. His mind immediately goes to his wife and son who are highly religious people. From the beginning, he knows the church has been raptured and he is left behind. Along with himself, his daughter Chloe is also left behind. As Rayford mends his errant ways, he also prays for Chloe's salvation in a desperate attempt to save her soul.

As a seasoned journalist, Buck Williams keeps an objective eye on the story, which has global implications. At the same time as the disappearances, there is a young man making a meteoric rise in the political realm. Nicolae Carpathia appears to be the answer to everyone's prayers. An enigmatic and powerful individual, he comes off as self-effacing and humble. However, as Buck's investigation ensues and he encounters Bruce Barnes and the rest of the Tribulation Force, he soon realizes that he is coming face-to-face with the Antichrist.

As each character comes to terms with their new reality, they find the strength in numbers and through prayer to persevere and prepare for battle. The ones that pray for a second chance - and receive it - persistently urge others to join them and be saved. Although not each character finds God and is "born-again", those that do arm themselves with their newfound faith and stand behind their cause; to spread the word and do what they need in order to bring about the downfall of the Antichrist.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Left Behind is a story of transformation, faith, and salvation. The world is turned upside down when millions of people worldwide suddenly disappear. People everywhere grapple with their losses and the implication it has on the world. Many theories arise and people attempt to make sense of the events. One of these theories is that Christ has come back and raptured his church. A core group of followers at the New Hope Village Church believe that the end days are here as is outlined in the Book of Revelation in the Bible. As the Bible predicts, there will be seven years of trials and tribulations where the Antichrist will rise to power and wield his might. Many more will die before the seven years are finished, but for those that remain, they will witness the Glorious Appearance of Christ.

Rayford Steele is an airline pilot who is currently flying a plane to London's Heathrow Airport. While flying, he is thinking about Hattie Durham, one of the plane's flight attendants. He wants to begin an affair with the younger woman and fleetingly thinks of his own wife at the same time. When he gets up to find her, he sees that she is quite shaken up. Clearly panicked, she tells him that several people are missing from all areas of the plane. He instructs her to keep the people calm and to get an account of who is present while he goes to find information on what is happening.

Meanwhile, Cameron "Buck" Williams is also on the flight to London and is furiously working on his laptop to meet a deadline. At thirty, he is the youngest senior writer for *Global Weekly*. He recalls a big story that he broke months before when he was in Israel as it was being bombed by Russia. As the bombs fell, none of them made any impact. Buck sees it as the closest thing to a miracle as he has ever seen. Russia was bombing because Israel refused to give up the ingredients in a formula that cultivates desert soil for farming.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Rayford mentions Christ's rapture of his church at the very beginning. He talks about Irene as a full-fledged religious fanatic. It is ironic that he mentions it right at the moment that it occurs. The stage is also set in the first chapter for divine intervention as Buck Williams recounts the story about Israel not taking any damage or casualties when Russia had invaded fourteen months prior. The strange occurrence is premonition of times to come with the hailstorm and how the entire Russian air offensive appears to destroy itself.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Buck wakes up to find people around him are missing. As the plane makes its way back to the States, he connects his laptop modem to the air phone to find out information on the disappearances. When the flight attendant, Hattie, sees him destroying the phone she demands he return everything the way he found it. In order to keep working, he promises to make contact with her family members. While he does this, he also taps out a message to his boss at the magazine, Steve Plank. As the plane makes its descent back to Chicago O'Hare, Buck sees the destruction that is taking place outside. Everywhere there are accidents, fires, and other plane crashes. When the plane finally lands, the airport is so backed up with all the flights coming in that all the passengers are required to walk the distance to the main terminal.

Chapter 2 Analysis

The theme of this chapter is the desperate search for those who are left behind. Everyone is trying to find out who is here and who has disappeared. Buck recalls the same sense of terror now that he felt at the time of the Russian air strike in Israel. It implies that he in some way knows that this is not an ordinary occurrence and it is possible that there is a divine explanation. Rayford, on the other hand, almost instinctively knows what has happened as Irene had spoken of it often. He knows deep down that when he gets home he will not see his wife.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

The flight crew and passengers disembark and make their way to the terminal. Buck and Hattie exchange numbers so that he can contact her when he receives news of her family. When Rayford arrives at the Pan Con Club, he calls home and gets the answering machine. As he tries to find a way home, he learns that his first officer had just committed suicide when he learned that his family was among the missing. Rayford and Hattie are able to catch a helicopter ride out to the suburbs to where they live.

Back at the terminal, Buck gets messages from his boss telling him to get to New York any way he can. Steve tells Buck about three upcoming events; the first is a Jewish Nationalist conference in Manhattan about a new world order government, the second is another conference of Orthodox Jews coming. The third is another religious conference with all leaders of the major religions to talk about a one-world religious order. This is also the first time Nicolae Carpathia's name is mentioned. Carpathia is from Romania and is expected to speak at the United Nations shortly.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Stemming from an earlier fear, Rayford knows that when he calls home, he will not get an answer. This means only one thing to him; his wife and son are gone. He also knows that because of her devout faith, Irene is a part of Christ's rapture of the church. The religion theme comes up again as Buck hears Steve's message telling him about all of the upcoming religious conferences. Clearly, religion is going to be a hot topic: first, the unexplained disappearances of so many people that many are calling Christ's rapture, and then with the big meetings yet to happen.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Buck gets word from his office that Hattie's family is alive and well. However, he still has no information on his father and brother who live out west. As he listens to people's theories on the disappearances, he begins to wonder if what happened was not a miraculous event as many are now beginning to assume. While waiting on line at the reservation desk, Buck does a search on his computer for information on Nicolae Carpathia. From an interview he conducted with Chaim Rosenzweig months before, he finds out that Nicolae is working on an impressive career path. Nicolae is seen as a successful businessman and recent peacemaker who speaks nine languages fluently. When he gets up to the counter and requests passage to New York, the representative connects him with a private pilot who might be able to help him out.

As Rayford gets close to his neighborhood, a woman offers him a ride. This woman fills him in on further disappearances. From the minute he walks in the door, he knows Irene and Raymie are gone. He goes through the house and discovers their discarded bedclothes. Completely distraught from his losses and the day's events, Rayford cries himself to sleep.

Chapter 4 Analysis

As more time elapses, there are more people saying that the disappearances are a result of the rapture. People also notice that the disappearances have apparently only affected the innocents. They pick up on the correlation between their devout faith and their disappearance, and everyone else's lack of faith and the fact that they are left behind. It is also at this time that Nicolae Carpathia's name comes up more and more. It is interesting that his popularity skyrockets at the time of the most widespread phenomenon sweeps the planet. The ever-skeptical Buck feels there is more than meets the eye with Carpathia and is determined to get to the bottom of it.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Buck recalls the reason he even took the flight to London in the first place. His friend, Dirk Burton, worked in the financial district and was a former classmate from Princeton. Dirk tells Buck about a possible conspiracy which Buck sees as a story lead. Dirk is convinced that something is brewing in the financial arena. The rumor is that everyone will make a move to one global currency. Then he tells Buck that the person behind the big move is an American. This influences Buck's decision to visit his friend for more information.

As Buck tries to get a flight to New York and a room at a local hotel, he gets to a phone and dials Hattie to let her know that her family is well. He attempts a call to his father but the lines remain tied up. A woman at the airline reservation desk flags him over and tells him that he can try for a ride just outside the airport. Although he has to wait for a long time, he eventually gets a lift to a fleabag motel. The cab driver drops him at a motel close to a small airport that he might fly out of if he can get a private flight to New York.

Chapter 5 Analysis

There is something big and suspicious brewing in London. Dirk tells Buck about the secret financial meeting and the move toward one global currency. Todd-Cothran's and Stonagal's names come up here. Dirk tells Buck that they are up to something and that these are the types that can make things happen. They are setting the stage for some tense drama.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Rayford is home alone and trying to grapple with the loss of his wife and son. He feels regret that he had not believed them when they were around. He mourns their loss and longs for a sense of closure. His daughter still has not called from school so he has no idea if she is on her way home or not. He regrets, too, that she is not one of those among the missing either, since he now believes the rapture has occurred. Rayford eventually reaches Chloe's roommate at school and she tells him that Chloe is making her way back home to Chicago. Before finally going to sleep that night, Rayford puts the news on and sees Nicolae Carpathia for the first time.

Buck is dropped off at the Midpoint Motel, just a few miles from Waukegan Airport. Ken Ritz calls Buck to arrange to fly to New York early the next morning. With that big detail out of the way, Buck once again tries to reach his father out west. This time he gets through and he learns that his sister-in-law, niece, and nephew are among the missing. As he talks to his father, Buck recalls the tension that has existed between them since he made the decision to go to school years earlier.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Rayford knows he has missed out on the rapture. He knows that the first round came and went and left him behind. He despairs when he fears that he has lost his chance altogether. He is now determined to find out what he had missed the first time around. This is the turning point for him. His life from this point forward is going to be full of changes and new challenges.

Buck's contact in London pleads with him to come. He tells Buck that there is a third person involved in the secret financial meetings. Dirk does not know what they have planned, but he knows that it is something on a huge scale. At the same time, Rayford thumbs through the paper and notices an article about a surprise move in Romania, which talks about Carpathia's move into the Romanian presidency despite the fact that the country was not holding elections since they had recently brought in a new president. Something suspicious is happening, yet no one seems to notice yet.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Ken Ritz picks Buck up from the Midpoint Motel to take him to the airport where he will then fly him to New York. As they share stories, Ken explains to Buck that although he does not know why the disappearances occurred, he does tend to believe far-fetched ideas such as UFOs. He notes, however, that those that have disappeared were all either under the age of twelve or had "unusual" personalities. Ken says that something set them apart from everyone else.

Rayford decides he wants to know as much as he can about the Rapture. He now believes that this is what happened with Irene and Ray. He picks up Irene's Bible and begins to read through it for some kind of clues. He begins at the Book of Revelation and reads that at the end times, Jesus will return and take his people back to Heaven with him. He recalls how Irene became more devout after they got married years ago. Now he is kicking himself because he did not go along with what apparently is the truth about Jesus. He regrets not truly letting Jesus into his life.

When Buck finally arrives at the office, he finds he is overcome with emotion, as everyone around him is. He is surprised to see how happy everyone is when they see that he is okay. Buck takes this opportunity to let his emotions go and is surprised how much his colleagues feel more like his family than his family does.

Chapter 7 Analysis

More and more, the idea of the rapture is catching on. Buck's private jet captain who is a self-proclaimed realist even suggests that there is something unique about all the people that are gone. He says that everyone that is gone is either a child or a person with unique personality traits; they all have something in common. It is ironic how the very thing that repels Rayford from church in the first place is the very thing that brings him back: the salvation of souls. The first time around, Rayford feels like Irene has made a project out of him, which makes him shy away. At the time, he resented her for it, though now he feels nothing but guilt and regret that he never felt grateful for the fact that she tried to save his soul. This time around, even though it is a similar mission, he takes the invitation and goes back, hoping it is not too late.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Buck and Steve talk about Carpathia and his meteoric rise to power. He is now the newly elected president of Romania, even though they just had an election there eighteen months ago. Buck tries to convince Steve that he should follow the story on Carpathia, but Steve still does not believe that there is anything newsworthy about him yet. Buck is sure that Carpathia, with Stonagal backing him, is up to something big. When Buck tries to reach Dirk, he continues to get his answering machine, which makes Buck suspect the worst.

Rayford once again relives the downfall of his marriage and blames himself for it. He freely admits that he did not value his wife as much as she deserved. While Irene was pregnant, Rayford liked being at work more than he did being at home. He felt more in control, more admired among those at the airline. Now he realizes how selfish he had been during those times. Especially now with his wife gone, he feels tremendous guilt over the feelings he had had for Hattie and is particularly grateful that he never acted upon them. Incidentally, Hattie calls while he is going over all of this in his mind. She is lonely and upset and just wants someone to talk to. Rayford is glad when she tells him that her family is fine and accounted for.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Carpathia's star is rising higher and higher - as is evident when Steve knows all about it when Buck talks about it. Steve however, does indicate that there is a small wrinkle in Carpathia's past in that he was ruthless in business with people, taking dirt naps as a result. Buck knows that Carpathia is up to something and wants in on the scoop.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Buck's colleagues are ticked that he gets to cover the story that others are already working on; the story related to the one world government. Buck is convinced that these stories are interrelated. Steve is convinced Buck should work on it despite the protestations of the other writers. Days later when Buck finally gets around to reaching Dirk again, he learns that Dirk is dead — the result of a suicide. Buck immediately knows that Dirk did not commit suicide. He suspects foul play. He arranges to go to London to visit a friend at Scotland Yard who also knows Dirk and can possibly give some information as to what happened.

Rayford makes a call to the New Hope Village Church in hopes of learning new information. From the answering machine, he learns that the former pastor has left a videotape for those that are "left behind". It is at this point that Chloe arrives home from her long trip and learns that her mother and brother are gone. He tells her that he believes they have been raptured and are in Heaven with Jesus. As a non-believer, Chloe has a hard time with this new concept. She feels it is as far-fetched as the alien invasion theory. Rayford calls the airline to see when his next flight is, and he receives a request from Hattie to work it with him. He tells the supervisor not to go out of the way to schedule her to work with him. If it happens, it happens.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Buck foreshadows future events when he pushes his belief that he thinks the stories are interrelated. With Buck's journalistic instincts being what they are, there is no way that he is wrong. Since that is the case, he builds the theory that there is a connection between the disappearances and Carpathia. This is further evidenced by his growing unease with developments with his London contact. When Dirk shows up dead, Buck is further convinced that he is right with the connections between Todd-Cothran, Stonagal, and Carpathia.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Buck arrives in London and decides how he will go about contacting Alan. When the two touch base, Alan asks Buck to come in and meet with him. When they get together at a pub, Alan explains that there is indeed a conspiracy and that Dirk's death was no suicide. He tells Buck that he was threatened with his life and that they both need to drop the issue. Buck has a hard time believing the extent of the events, but knows that he could be putting himself in grave danger. He understands that Alan is left with few choices and he indeed needs to keep quiet about Dirk. Buck agrees that it is best that he leave right away and makes a call from the pub they are at to make flight arrangements. When Alan goes outside to the car there is a large explosion. Knowing right away what has happened, Buck rushes out and drops his identification in the wreckage so that the authorities believe his is also dead. With his phony passport, Buck takes a flight to Frankfurt and onward back to the States.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Buck's belief of a conspiracy is realized as he listens to Alan's warning. He and Buck only put some pieces together, but they figure out that there are much higher-up people involved. Dirk gets too close to discovering the truth. The truth paints a picture with Todd-Cothran, Stonagal, and by association, Carpathia. This is the first indication that others now know about his not so clean past.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Rayford and Chloe go to the church together to pick up a copy of the videotape the former pastor taped before he disappeared. They meet Bruce Barnes for the first time and he tells them both his story of conversion. Bruce admits that he had been a phony but he has now changed. He tells them that he was sitting up in bed reading at the time of the disappearances. His wife and children were taken. When he asks them if they will be at the services the next day, Rayford says he will probably be there, although Chloe admits she will not be present. This is the first Sunday since the disappearances occurred.

Bruce explains about the videotape that the other pastor had left. He says that the pastor used to love to talk about the coming of Christ "to rapture his church, to take believers, dead and alive, to heaven before a period of tribulation on the earth." Bruce goes on to say that if people see the truth and act on it, then God will not withhold salvation from them. He describes the conversion as a transaction between the individual and God. He says we go from darkness to light, from lost to found; we are saved. Rayford listens intently to Bruce and believes that he has found exactly what he is looking for.

Chapter 11 Analysis

For Rayford, this meeting with Bruce is exactly what he is looking for. Bruce has the answers that explain what has happened and what people need to do in order to be saved. This feeds into the overall theme of salvation, especially as this is something very dear to these two particular characters. Rayford, in particular, is looking for salvation as well as forgiveness. As soon as his wife disappears, he is full of remorse and regret. This meeting with Bruce offers to Rayford the second chance he seeks.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Buck arrives at the Frankfurt airport and contacts his father to let him know that he is okay, in case he hears stories that he is dead. He also takes the opportunity to call his boss and leaves him a message. When he arrives at JFK, Steve tells him that none other than Carpathia wants to have a meeting with him for an interview. Thanks to Buck's friendship with Chaim Rosenzweig, he is now viewed rather favorably with the new Romanian president.

Rayford and Chloe continue to debate whether or not the Rapture occurred and if it did, if Bruce is right with everything he said. Rayford is certain of what he needs to do to be saved and he urges Chloe to consider it as well. He ends up watching the tape alone, and he uses Irene's Bible to follow along. The pastor, Vernon Billings, explains everything needed to know about the coming of the Antichrist and the final days. Rayford goes to the services the next day and stands up to tell his story. After the sermon is ended, Bruce catches up with him and asks him to join a core of followers for a new prayer group he is forming. Rayford excitedly takes him up on it.

Chapter 12 Analysis

In the videotape, the former pastor, Vernon Billings, talks about the Scripture's prediction of the coming of the Antichrist. Everything in his message foreshadows events to come immediately and in the distant future that will alter everyone's destiny. There will be a great lie, announced with the help of the media and perpetrated by a self-styled world leader. He says this person will emerge from Europe. The deceiver will promise strength and peace, but he will soon after begin his reign of terror - after everyone has already bought in to him.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Rayford makes the decision to tell Chloe about his attraction to Hattie. He tries to think of ways to convert Chloe that will not be alienating to her. He is desperate for her to change so that she can be saved. He is afraid that she will wait too long and then it will be too late for her to do anything about her salvation. During a layover in Atlanta, Rayford tells Chloe the whole story about Hattie. As expected, she is angry and hurt by it. He also tells her that he invited Hattie to dinner so that he could tell her about his conversion. He wants her to know that he cares about her salvation as well, and thinks that this is the way to prove it to her. While his intentions are true, he also wants to take the opportunity to have Chloe hear his story again.

Steve Plank meets Buck back at JFK and they hop in a cab back toward Manhattan. Buck tells Steve what happened in London and is convinced that Todd-Cothran and Stonagal are up to no good. He also thinks that Carpathia at this point is a pawn in whatever schemes they are hatching. They go to the U.N. for Carpathia's speech that afternoon. They are completely blown away by Carpathia's speech. He speaks in nine different languages and appears to be speaking extemporaneously. He brings the house down with his tremendous oratory ability.

Chapter 13 Analysis

It is ironic, and somewhat telling how Steve tells Buck that Carpathia is the farthest thing from the typical politician. Steve means it in a sense that Carpathia is the person that they have waited for and is the answer to their prayers. However, he is not as he appears to be; this is why the Bible calls him the great deceiver. Carpathia's tremendous oratory ability and the things he says in his speech are the Bible's prophecy coming to fulfillment.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Rayford and Chloe arrive home from their trip to Atlanta and discover that their house has been burgled. When the cops arrive to take the report, they admit that the items missing will most likely not be found. The neighbors recall that a repair van had parked out front and this is how the robbery occurred. Chloe, who is visibly shaken, asks her father to get another copy of the videotape from Bruce.

People at the press conference begin to recognize Buck and see that he is, in fact, alive. Nicolae gives a speech that is a simple message of love, peace, understanding, and brotherhood. As usual, he seems to completely charm the media. Reporters ask for his take on the disappearances and he gives an answer related to a scientific theory akin to people being vaporized when someone strikes a match in a room full of gasoline vapors. He downplays the Rapture theory. Steve and Buck prepare for Buck's meeting later with Carpathia for an exclusive interview. Buck believes that Carpathia will be able to clear him of the implications that he was involved in his friend's death in London.

Chapter 14 Analysis

More clues are given about Carpathia's true nature. It is said in the Bible that the Antichrist has a mastery of spoken communication second to none; he will be a great orator. It is becoming clearer that this is Carpathia. Whether one-on-one or on camera, Nicolae is very enigmatic and is able to capture the people and bring them over to his side. His message of peace and love is also indicative of the Antichrist since the Bible says that the Antichrist will be deceitful and many people will believe what he says.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Before Buck leaves for his interview with Nicolae, he checks his messages and receives one from Hattie who asks him to call her back. Steve tells Buck that he needs to be careful since he may be extradited to London for the investigation. Steve finds out that there are detectives at the Plaza waiting for Buck to show up. Buck and Steve head to Marge's apartment so that they can watch Nicolae's appearance on that evening's edition of *Nightline*. The interviewer asks Carpathia to outline his plan for disarmament. He suggests that each country with nuclear arms destroy all but ten percent.

Rayford goes out to replace the items that they will need in the house, like a new television and VCR. He is very excited and encouraged that Chloe is asking for another copy of the videotape. Hattie calls and complains to Rayford how her sister no longer has a job at the abortion clinic since all of the babies have been taken in the Rapture. He knows that she just does not get it. She calls back later on to gush about Carpathia on the TV. She goes on and on about how handsome he is. Rayford takes the opportunity to invite her for dinner that week and he begins to tell her about his transformation. He confesses his former feelings for her and that she needs to pray for her eternal salvation. When she hears this, she gets disgusted and hangs up on him.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Hattie clearly does not get what is going on and is nowhere near to realizing how perilous her situation is if she does not pray for her salvation. She is revealed as a truly shallow individual, only concerned with appearances and material things. She is morally empty. However, while Rayford is not caught up with these things, Carpathia equally deceives him when he first appears on the scene. It is interesting how it is Chloe, of all people, who proposes that Carpathia is the Antichrist, the "deceiver" as stated in the pastor's videotape. Rayford argues that he does not appear to have a personal agenda and suggests that the deceiver would be more obvious than this. His persona, however, is obvious.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Steve and Buck make their way over the Plaza and Steve agrees to impersonate Buck so that it will delay the authorities from getting to Buck before he can get to Carpathia. The ruse works and Buck breezes in. On the way, another reporter, Eric Miller, starts an altercation with Buck to get into the meeting with Carpathia, also. He is ultimately escorted out. Buck eventually gets the chance to interview Nicolae and get to the bottom of the connection with Todd-Cothran and Stonagal. Nicolae, who already knows about Buck's mess, offers to help clear his name.

Meanwhile, Rayford feels some guilt over his argument with Hattie and wishes he had allowed her to work his flight. At least that would give them the opportunity to talk. Remorseful over the loss of his son and wife, he begins grieving all over again. Desperate for Chloe to see the right way and pray for her salvation, he begins to pray for her. She overhears him in his room as he is praying and crying for her and tells him that she is doing what she can to get closer to a decision.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Carpathia's involvement with Todd-Cothran and Stonagal suggests that he was in deeper with these people than he had let on. It is a telling sign since, as the Antichrist, he will eventually make a powerful show and reveal his true nature. This is merely a sign of what is to come. Buck knows that Nicolae will become the next Secretary General of the U.N. This is another sign that he is the Antichrist, since he is charming his way more and more into positions of power. He gains people's trust before he makes any show of being the true Antichrist.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Rayford, who is now unable to sleep, turns on the news and sees a report about two men at the Wailing Wall. They are preaching and it has the Orthodox Jews in an uproar. There is also a report that says that Carpathia will be extending his stay in the States and will speak to a joint session of Congress and spend time at the White House. The president completely endorses Nicolae. In another report, the television anchor says that Buck, once feared dead, has been found alive. He is also fully cleared of all charges against him.

Bruce calls an emergency session of the core group at the church and begins to talk about the tribulation that will occur over the next seven years. He talks about how each trial is worse than the previous one and many believers will not make it to see the Glorious Coming of Christ. He also prepares the believers for the coming of the Antichrist. He indicates that World War III will probably start in six months and that they should start to stockpile food. Bruce mentions that the two preachers at the Wailing Wall are prophets. During their ministry, no one will be able to attack them or cause them harm.

Carpathia gets on the phone with both Todd-Cothran and Stonagal in order to clear Buck of the false charges. He lets Buck in on the secret that Rosezweig is going to share the formula for his desert bloom with other countries in exchange for peace. This news astounds Buck. He remembers to call Hattie and when he does, she asks him for an introduction to Carpathia. Going against his instincts, he agrees to see what he can do. When he returns to his office, he gets called in to a meeting with Stanton Bailey. He finds out that Steve is going to work for Carpathia as his press secretary. He also learns that Eric Miller's body washed up on Staten Island that morning.

Chapter 17 Analysis

The Bible predictions are unfolding in real life every day now. As Bruce mentions to the core group at the church that there will soon spring up 144,000 Jews who would believe in Christ and begin to evangelize around the world, there are two new prophets on the scene. The changes in the world are happening fast, as the end days are being ushered in. However, at this point, not everyone is convinced that Carpathia is the Antichrist since some in the church group like him and think he would make a great president. This is merely another sign that Carpathia is inching his way farther on top of the world and taking the power that people seem to be handing over to him. Bruce knows better and recommends that they keep an eye on him.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Buck is immediately uncomfortable with the idea of becoming Steve's replacement. Steve goes on to tell Buck how big he thinks Carpathia is going to become. He is sitting on the next big thing. He talks Buck into the position and promises that Buck will always have access to Carpathia for the hottest news. They turn on the news and it appears that there is an attack on Eli and Moishe at the Wailing Wall. As the attackers approach, they are killed instantly. Eli and Moishe continue to preach.

Buck leaves to meet with Hattie. Buck gets Hattie a meeting with Nicolae and they go to the Plaza for the introduction. Nicolae meets her and gives her his card. Buck sees the phone number on the card and discovers it is the office of the secretary general at the U.N. He calls Steve on it, who reluctantly admits that this change will be announced the next morning.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Even Steve Plank suggests how Carpathia stands out from the crowd. It is ironic how he tells Buck that the world is ready for Carpathia. The world may not be ready for it, however the Bible says that it is time for him. Never has Buck met anyone like him. No one has met or known of anyone even remotely like Carpathia. However, Carpathia is only doing what the Bible predicted; he is making his way into global domination and appearing to be what people want: he is the great deceiver.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Rayford and Chloe wait for Hattie to show up at the Pan Con Club at JFK. As they wait, Rayford begins to suspect that Hattie will not show. He begins to feel bad about his approach to Hattie and wonders if there is a better way to deliver his salvation message to her. He is afraid she will still be too angry and hurt over how he has pushed aside his physical feelings for her. In the meantime, he calls Bruce who tells him to look at a television to see the report on Eli and Moishe's attackers. This confirms for Rayford what the prayer group suspects: they are the prophets from the Bible.

Buck and Hattie swing by Buck's office so he can get his bag before they both go to JFK together. Hattie is meeting to Rayford to purposefully rub his nose in the fact that she met Carpathia and he gave her his card. Buck wants to meet Rayford to hear his take on the disappearances. Buck is called into Bailey's office for a brief meeting. Bailey is angry with Steve for not telling him the news that he somehow found out about Carpathia taking the secretary generalship of the U.N. Buck and Bailey agree to hold off on the story, although Steve does confirm the news for them.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Eric Miller's name comes up and Bailey infers that the story about the disappearances and how it puts Carpathia in a bad light is a mystery to him. Clearly, Eric got too close to something. It is possible that Eric suggested that Carpathia is the Antichrist. Even Buck suggests that something looks shaky about Carpathia. When he asks if anybody else thinks so they disagree.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Rayford and Chloe continue to wait for Hattie who is now late for her appointment with them. Hattie introduces Buck to Rayford and Chloe, and Buck is immediately smitten with Chloe. Hattie agrees to listen to Rayford's speech, so Buck and Chloe go for a walk around the airport. He and Chloe hit it off and end up enjoying each other's company. The four of them plan to have dinner together that night so Buck can interview Rayford then. Hattie is polite and listens to Rayford's story about his transformation, but it is clear to him that she is not buying in to it. It is still too soon for her and she still feels resentment toward him. After he finishes, she does agree to think about it. Then she asks him if he will give Buck the same speech at dinner. Rayford admits that he will, word for word.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Rayford's story is a recurring theme that falls under one of the major transformations throughout the book. This is one of the pivotal chapters for this theme. Chloe is torn between what she has known and stands on the threshold of embracing a radical way of thinking; that of joining her father and becoming born-again. Hattie also makes a transformation; she becomes increasingly distant from Rayford and moves towards a more shallow existence based only on appearances as is evidenced by her reaction to meeting Carpathia.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Rayford, Chloe, Hattie, and Buck meet up for dinner at the Carlisle Hotel as they planned. Rayford prays that he has the same strength in telling Buck the story as he did for Hattie. After a three-hour meal, Rayford breaks into the whole story. Buck is riveted by Rayford's story, though because of his journalistic nature, he does not let on. Rayford, therefore, feels as though he has completely lost Buck. He does not realize how much of an impact his speech has had on Buck. When Rayford finishes, Buck politely thanks him for dinner and excuses himself. For the first time, Buck is faced with the reality that God really exists and that the Rapture has occurred.

Chapter 21 Analysis

Chloe is closer to making her transformation when she tells Buck that she no longer gives her father a hard time. This is because she realizes more now that the stakes are higher. She knows that she is close to making the decision to make her own transition to becoming born-again, but is still clearly reluctant. She needs more than just what her father is telling her. This implies that this change is going to happen soon.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Buck tosses and turns as his thoughts remain on Rayford's story. He finds it amazing that even a smart man like Rayford, an airline pilot, also missed what seems to be so obvious to them now. Buck wonders if he might be on the cusp of being "born-again". Rayford, meanwhile, wonders if he made any sense to Buck. Not only that, he feels that he is pushing Chloe away.

The next day, Rayford and Chloe pack and get ready to head back to Chicago. What they do not realize is that Buck is joining Chloe in First Class. He is heading to Chicago hire a manager for the *Global Weekly* office there. He boards the plane and sits next to Chloe, who makes no indication that she knows he is there. She is staring intently out the window as Buck anxiously waits for her to see him. When she finally does see him, she tells him that God has answered her prayer in the form of Buck's presence beside her. It is at this moment that she makes her transformation. In her excitement, she sends for her father who comes out to her and prays with her.

Chapter 22 Analysis

This chapter is heavily focused on Buck's contemplation. It is a time of deep introspection for him. He, too, is on the brink of making a life-altering decision to embrace his beliefs. This is a big deal for him because he always looks at things objectively, as a journalist would. Chloe knows how close he is, too, when she suggests to him that it is not going to be long for either of them. She implies that she knows where they both stand.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Buck arrives in Chicago and makes an appointment to see Bruce at the New Hope Village Church. First, he tends to business by interviewing candidates to replace someone they lost during the disappearances. They watch the news on CNN where they are reporting that Carpathia is accepting his new post as Secretary General of the U.N. Buck continues to watch as Carpathia charms the media and talks of his plans for global disarmament. He gets a call from Steve Plank asking him to come back to New York for another meeting with Carpathia. Buck is the only member of the press that Carpathia will allow in the meeting. He also tells Buck that Nicolae wants to see Hattie again and asks for her to come as well.

Later that day, Buck meets with Bruce who gives him his story and explains the story of the end days and tribulation before the Glorious Appearance of Christ. Buck's whole world is turned topsy-turvy and he does not know yet what he is going to do; however, he knows that his options are limited since he cannot refute what Bruce, Rayford, and Chloe say. Bruce tells him he believes that Carpathia is the Antichrist. Buck tells Bruce about the meeting he needs to attend back in New York with Carpathia. Bruce warns Buck strongly about going to the meeting. At the very least, he feels that Bruce should be armed with the belief in Christ, though Buck is not yet ready to make this commitment. Buck knows that he just cannot pass up the opportunity for this kind of attention from the hottest individual on the global scene.

Chapter 23 Analysis

There are more foreshadowing elements here that suggest Carpathia is the Antichrist. Interestingly, it is as the Bible predicts. A reporter asks Nicolae if his plans include one world religion. He does not fully confirm it, though he does not deny it. This is something that sets him and the non-believers apart from everyone else. This is because the believers will never go along with it. He goes on to say that the idea of one world government also resonates deeply within him, though he is modest and claims he is not so qualified for this kind of venture. Meanwhile, Bruce tells Buck that the Antichrist will form a one-world religion and the so-called peacemaker will bring bloodshed through war. Buck gets nervous when he hears the seven-year plan. Knowing what he knows about the pact with Israel, he knows more and more that Carpathia is the Antichrist.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

Buck has a conversation with Steve and asks if anyone has come forward with a theory that links Carpathia with the end-times. Steve's response is to remind him about Eric Miller's untimely demise. This confirms Buck's worst fears, though Steve is not on board and does not believe it. Steve asks Buck to invite Hattie back to see Carpathia but Buck declines, saying that he is not her pimp. Steve contacts her and offers her Nicolae's companionship, which she accepts.

Buck returns to New York, feeling confused and unsure of himself. He realizes that he risks his soul if he goes into this meeting, yet he knows that he cannot miss it; it is the opportunity of a lifetime for him. When he arrives at the U.N., he picks up his press credentials with a panicky feeling. He excuses himself to go to the restroom at the last moment before the meeting. Buck takes this time to pray. He prays for his soul, he prays for forgiveness, and he prays that God helps him through what he knows will be a very difficult meeting.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Buck asks Steve how Carpathia will respond to questions about his connection to end-times theories. Steve is silent and clearly reluctant to say anything, which implies that he knows this and is trying to be silent as his boss instructs him to. He knows that something is amiss with his new boss, but for some reason he does not say.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Nicolae begins the meeting by addressing everyone individually. Also present is Hattie, who sits by his side as his personal assistant. Buck is not as taken in by Carpathia as everyone around him still appears to be. When it comes time for Carpathia to address Buck, he is strong and not sucked in by the charm. Then Carpathia makes his way to Stonagal and implies that Stonagal will now be working for him rather than the other way around. He is immediately angry about the set-up and is humiliated. Carpathia takes a gun from the armed guard in the room and puts Todd-Cothran and Stonagal in front of one another; then shoots them at point-blank range.

He then uses his mind control to tell everyone present in the room what has happened. The memory he supplies them with is that Todd-Cothran shot himself and Stonagal was in the way. The meeting members believe this so strongly that no one acts as if anything else has happened. Before he opens the room up, Carpathia goes around to every person in the room to be sure that they are all in line with his story. Although Buck resists the mind control, he does not give an answer when called upon; he is stunned speechless. However, he is very aware of what has just happened and does everything in his power just to get out of the room. He is now convinced that Carpathia is the Antichrist and that if he did not go in with God's support, he, too, would have succumbed and been in great danger.

Chapter 25 Analysis

The stage is clearly set for future action as the end times begin to take shape with Carpathia as the known Antichrist among the Christians. As it is prophesied in the Bible, Carpathia comes out as the hopeful and charming new leader and assumes power very quickly. The Bible also goes on to predict that after he comes out with his message of peace, he will use a powerful show of strength and begin the reign of terror. He does this explicitly when he shoots Todd-Cothran and Stonagal in front of everyone at the U.N. meeting and then uses mind control to tell everyone what they believed they saw.



Characters

Rayford Steele

Rayford is a commercial airline pilot in his early forties. He has had a successful career, but has not been true to his Christian faith. At the time of the Rapture, Rayford is contemplating an affair with a flight attendant, Hattie Durham. He is overcome with remorse and grief, especially when he discovers that his wife and son are gone. From the beginning, Rayford is sure the disappearances are a result of Christ's Rapture. He quickly becomes a proponent of the Christian faith and begins to devour the Scripture for answers of times to come. Through his new friendship with the pastor at New Hope Village Church, Bruce Barnes, Rayford becomes one of the first members of the core prayer group Bruce is putting together called the Tribulation Force.

Rayford overcomes issues of guilt and regret as he emerges as a born-again Christian. Not only does he feel guilt over possibly cheating on his wife, he feels regret that he was not a better husband and father to Chloe. He holds himself responsible for Chloe being left behind. He feels that had he been a better role model for her, she might have taken after him and embraced God sooner. Unfortunately, that does not happen and he experiences a period of desperation as he pleads with her to pray for her salvation. He needs to know that her soul will be saved.

Nicolae Carpathia

This Romanian, thirty-three years old, is bent on taking over the world. He stands a little over six feet tall, is broad shouldered, thick chested, trim, athletic, tanned, and blond. As the Tribulation Force guesses right, he is the Antichrist mentioned in the Bible. When he emerges onto the global scene, he charms everyone as it is predicted in the Bible. He is good-looking, charming, and appears to be working toward disarmament. He takes the world by storm. Nicolae is unexpectedly nominated to be the new Romanian president, and then the U.N. secretary general. He uses his powers of persuasion for mind control. He uses mind control and hypnosis to make people believe what he needs them to believe.

Carpathia goes from being little known to internationally famous, almost overnight. He is a self-effacing individual and makes a show of being modest. However, modest is the last thing that he is. Little by little, he is taking over the world. He proposes a one-world government, and one major religion. Instead of people being outraged by his proposals, they are embracing it. They see him as a peace-loving man who will bring people together and eliminate war and violence. In truth, that is exactly the opposite that will happen.



Chloe Steele

She is the twenty-year-old daughter of Rayford Steele. At the time of the disappearances, she is away at school in California at Stanford University. An individual like her father, she has her belief system rooted in reality and thus has a hard time grasping the faith Rayford is so desperate for her to receive. She is unable to believe that God is loving if He has sought to cause so much grief everywhere.

However, things change for Chloe when she meets Buck Williams. It is almost like love at first sight; there is an instant attraction between them. As Chloe listens to her father's conversion story as he tells it to Buck, she begins to believe that her father speaks the truth. She excuses herself when her father tells Buck his story. This is most likely because she gets more and more moved by his words. She is reluctant to let go of her old beliefs and her old life. The events of the day push her to make this change. The more things that happen, the closer she seems to making that change. This is clear especially when she receives an answer to her prayer in the form of Buck's presence on the flight back to Chicago. It is as though she now has the last piece of the puzzle and is fully ready to move forward and accept the times for what they are and for what she will have to do.

Cameron "Buck" Williams

Buck is a thirty-year-old star reporter for *Global Weekly*. He has had the great opportunities that even some of his colleagues, who are around longer, do not have. He is talented, and possesses the traits of a true journalist. He is objective and detached. He makes no decisions one way or the other without having all of the facts before him. Buck is not ruled by emotions. When the disappearances occur however, he does begin to show some emotions especially when he appears at his office for the first time. His contemporaries are more his family than his real family.

Buck has an estranged relationship with his father and brother who live out west. He gets completely wrapped up in theories of what has occurred and has the opportunity to interview Rayford Steele. When he hears Rayford's story, he is moved. This becomes a turning point for Buck. He also has the chance to meet Rayford's daughter Chloe, whom he hits it off with beautifully. Immediately smitten, he looks for any opportunity to see her and is ecstatic when he is forced to move to Chicago at the end of the story. He is forced to move because his boss, among others, does not believe that he was present at the U.N. meeting with Carpathia. Buck witnesses Carpathia's frightening mind control and is able to resist it since he has since found God.

Bruce Barnes

A young man in his early thirties, Bruce is a pastor at the New Hope Church. He is left behind because he is not a true believer at the time of the disappearances. He then has to face the aftermath alone, since his entire family is gone. In addition, most of the



Church's congregation is also missing. He begins a small core group of individuals to study the Bible and together face what they believe to be the end times. Bruce realizes right away that the Rapture has occurred. His conversion takes place immediately after. He takes any opportunity to tell his story to others: to Rayford, Chloe, Buck, and to the church congregation each week. He knows that there is no time to waste. The Rapture is a life changing experience for everyone, but this event is truly a catalyst that propels Bruce into action. Once a man of inaction, Bruce is now leading up the Tribulation Force, which is a group that will fight for a cause.

Hattie Durham

Hattie is the young blonde flight attendant working on Rayford's flight to London at the time of the disappearances. She is described as a beautiful woman. However, she is also shallow and insecure. She is someone caught up in image and celebrity, as is witnessed by her wish to meet Carpathia. In a bold move, Hattie calls Buck Williams and all but begs him to introduce them. When she meets Nicolae, she is immediately caught up in his charm. Eventually, she gives up her career in the aviation industry to take a job as Nicolae's personal assistant.

Ken Ritz

Ken is a man in mid-life with what is described as a weathered face and a shock of salt-and-pepper hair. He's a private pilot that agrees to fly Buck to New York. He used to be a commercial pilot until he was fired for being too cautious. Although he does not yet have his own theory about what happened, he does have a tendency to believe unexplainable things, like UFOs.

Steve Plank

Steve is the executive editor for *Global Weekly* until Nicolae Carpathia taps him to become his press secretary. He is a seasoned veteran in the news world. He is Buck Williams's boss at the weekly news magazine and allows Buck a certain amount of freedom because of the results that Buck gets in his news stories. He is a middle of the road man who seems fiercely loyal to Buck. However, his loyalty may only be a facade as he seems pretty quick to change teams when Carpathia offers him a job. While still at the *Weekly*, he seems to think that Buck acts paranoid, but when he goes to work for Carpathia he does just the opposite; he looks the other way and does not question things that look odd to him.

Chaim Rosenzweig

Chaim is an elderly Israeli chemical engineer who has concocted a synthetic fertilizer that causes the desert sands of Israel to bloom like a greenhouse. He was voted Newsmaker of the Year by *Global Weekly*. When Nicolae Carpathia begins his meteoric



rise to power, Chaim is rather enchanted with him and believes he will change everything for the better.

Jonathan Stonagal

He is one of the richest men in the world and long known as an American power broker. Jonathan is at the center of the one global currency discussion early on in the story. Although he is in his eighties, he owns the biggest banks and financial institutions in the United States, and also has owned or has had huge interests in the same throughout the world.

Dirk Burton

Dirk is Buck's friend from Princeton who works at the London exchange. He is also someone who believes in conspiracy theories. He was about to let Buck in on a big story when the disappearances happened. Days later, when Buck tries to unsuccessfully contact Dirk, he learns that Dirk is dead because of suicide. Buck knows immediately that foul play is involved and sets to get to the bottom of it.

Alan Tomkins

Alan is someone Buck met through Dirk Burton. Alan is Buck and Dirk's age and works at Scotland Yard. When Buck meets with him to get information on Dirk's death, Alan tells him that something big is going on and to drop the entire affair. They are being watched, and after they meet, Alan is killed when a bomb explodes in his car.



Objects/Places

O'Hare

Rayford is based in this Chicago airport, and lands here once his London flight is aborted. It is one of the few airports that remain open immediately following the disappearances.

Waukegan

This is a small, Chicago-area airport where Ken Ritz flies Buck back to New York.

London

When Buck goes to London, he meets his friend Alan in a pub. Afterward, a car bomb explodes, killing Alan and leaving many to wonder Buck's fate.

Scotland Yard

Scotland Yard is the investigative branch of intelligence in the U.K.

The Rapture

The rapture is the disappearance of millions of believers as Christ returns and brings them all back to Heaven with him. The rapture signifies the beginning of the end days in the Bible.

New Hope Village Church

Irene Steele belonged to this church. After the disappearances, Rayford and Chloe get involved with the remaining pastor, Bruce Barnes, and form the Tribulation Force.

Midpoint Motel

This is the hotel that Buck stays at the night before Ken Ritz flies him back to New York. It is a fleabag dive but it is one of the only places with vacancies near an airport.



The Tribulation Force

This prayer group is a small group of core followers based out of the New Hope Village Church. So far, it is four members strong: Bruce Barnes, Rayford Steele, Chloe Steele, and Buck Williams.

Wailing Wall

This is a sacred site in Israel for Jews everywhere. As the Bible predicts, two prophets, Eli and Moishe, appear and begin to preach. They will be there for a set amount of time at which point there will be 144,000 converts.

Glorious Appearing of Christ

The Glorious Coming of Christ will come after the seven years of trial and tribulation as predicted in the Bible. Christ raptures his followers, seven years follows, and then he will return for the remainder of his believers.

Pan Con Club

This is a private club at the airport where Pan Con employees go in between flights, as well as frequent fliers that participate in the plan, like Buck Williams.

The Bible

This is a religious book that contains the New Testament and the Book of Revelation. With the end of times fast approaching, devout followers of Christ read the Bible.

New Babylon

New Babylon is the future new world headquarters, which are in Nicolae Carpathia's plan.

Carlisle Hotel

This is the New York hotel where Rayford and Chloe stay on their trip. They have dinner here together with Buck and Hattie.



Themes

Salvation

At the root of every character's transformation is the need for salvation. The entire reason that so many people were taken to Heaven is because they had already prayed for their souls' salvation. If anyone else expects to be saved, then they need to repent all of their sins, revoke their former lives as sinners, and let God into their lives. They have to pray for their salvation. As early as the first chapter, salvation comes into play. It is through Rayford that the reader learns about Irene's deep desire for her husband to find his way and reclaim his place with Christ. He knows that she prays for his soul. After the rapture occurs, Rayford finds himself praying in much the same way for his daughter. His desire almost reaches desperation, as she seems to drag her feet before making the decision to finally let Jesus back into her life and be saved.

On the other end of the spectrum is Buck Williams, who has a very different take on salvation. Although he seems on the verge to make the leap, it is not until he is ready to go toe to toe with Carpathia that he prays for the safety of his soul. By this time, he is convinced that Carpathia is the Antichrist and knows intuitively, not just from what Bruce tells him, that he needs to seek some sort of protection against his power. Buck knows that if something happens to him, he will be left without God's grace and wisdom. If he perishes, then he does so without God's help. His prayer for salvation, although genuine, is more out of necessity and urgency. Hattie Durham is another character that feels very differently about salvation. Although she is not as smart as Rayford, she follows her gut, which is to go where the power is. She respectfully listens as Rayford tries to persuade her to repent for her salvation, but she refuses this option and sees this effort by Rayford as self-serving.

Guilt and Regret

For Rayford Steele, guilt and regret are two of the strongest feelings he experiences after the Rapture has occurred. He feels guilt over the plans he was making in his head over starting an affair with Hattie Durham, and he regrets not believing Irene and being a better Christian. Repeatedly in his mind, Rayford plays out his serious intentions to commit adultery. Even though he never acted on his desires, he is still wracked with guilt over it. Irene had never been anything other than a completely devoted wife and mother who, as Rayford discovers later, continues to pray for Ray's soul.

The first time around, Rayford feels like Irene has made a project out of him, which makes him shy away. At the time, he resents her for it, though now he feels nothing but guilt and regret that he never felt grateful for the fact that she tried to save his soul. In a way, he is placed in Irene's shoes as he pleads with Chloe for her to repent and accept Christ into her life. So, although he is ecstatic to have her with him, he feels as though he has somehow wronged her at the same time. He knows that Chloe takes after him,



which means that she is skeptical and put off by the over-zealous believers. She needs the time to mull things over before making her move. Rayford feels that this is somehow his fault since he thinks he could have been a stronger role model for her. This makes things more difficult for Rayford as he gets desperate for Chloe to join him in this new chapter of their lives.

Transformations

Almost every major character undergoes some type of transformation. Bruce, Rayford, Chloe, and Buck are all changed by faith. Hattie and Steve are changed, but in different ways. The major focus points in the book highlight the paths each individual takes as a result of the rapture. Bruce right away realizes he has missed the boat and does what he can in order to make it right the second time around. With his newfound faith, he tells people at every opportunity the story of how he was left behind and what he is doing now for the future. While Rayford also knows what has happened from the beginning, he is more scientific in his approach to finding God. Like Bruce, he knows he has missed the boat and when he repents and is "born-again", he tells everyone like Bruce does, in an effort for others to see that they need to be ready for the end times. This is the turnaround point for him. His life from this point forward is going to be full of changes and new challenges.

Chloe, taking after her father, needs time to think about the changes that are before her. She is intelligent enough to know that she has to make a decision one way or the other. At first, she is concerned and almost turned off by the new, overbearing ways of her father and Bruce. As the global events unfold however, she is pushed by circumstance to realize that the truth lies with Christ and she allows Him into her life. When she makes her transformation, Buck is with her and sees the change immediately in her. With his journalistic background, Buck is reluctant to make the leap of faith. At the end, he realizes that his only salvation lies with God. The evidence before him is too great to ignore any longer.

His colleague and former boss, Steve Plank, makes a change when he abandons his old job at *Global Weekly* for the allure and prestige of being Carpathia's press secretary. Steve is the type of person who, while a good friend to Buck, is also in pursuit of his own goals and ambitions, which are realized in his big career move. Hattie Durham is another example of this. She is the most superficial character in the story. Concerned only with appearances and boosting her own self-esteem, Hattie believes her salvation lies in a future with Carpathia. She rejects Rayford's pleas to accept Christ in her life as she finds this self-serving for him. The events of the disappearances, Rayford's rejection, and finally, her encounter with Carpathia, are enough to push her farther and farther away from God and into a life with decreasing moral value.



Style

Points of View

The story is told from the third person perspectives of Rayford Steele and Buck Williams. Both have very different backgrounds and differing views of the world. Rayford is older and has more life experience. His view on the disappearances almost automatically takes a turn toward a religious event. Rayford is someone who feels extraordinary remorse and guilt over what has happened. Therefore, his thoughts are turned more toward regret and desperation.

Buck Williams, on the other hand, comes from a very different background and point of life. He is thirty, single, and an award-winning writer for a major news magazine. The disappearances do not affect him directly as he has not lost anyone from his immediate circle. His perspective is more objective. As a career journalist, it is not in Buck's nature to get too emotional. Buck's involvement with his faith is even more remote than Rayford's. While Rayford lives with Irene and Ray who are devout Christians and are "born again", Rayford shuns his religion on purpose and is repelled by his wife's apparent fanaticism. Buck has a unique experience with unexplained phenomenon when he witnesses the utter destruction of the Russian air force as they are obliterated during their attack on Israel. Israel, meanwhile, suffers no loss of life or devastation as a result of the bombs. This is the closest Buck comes to experiencing divine intervention; however, he is still reluctant to claim any set belief system.

Setting

Left Behind is a story that takes place in the present day. It is a global story, with a plot that involves the seemingly minor people such as Irene and Raymie Steele, as well as the biggest political figures of the day such as the president of the United States and Nicolae Carpathia. At the start of the action, Rayford Steele and Buck Williams are on a flight headed to London, England. When they turn around, they land back at Chicago's O'Hare Airport in Illinois. Rayford lives in a nearby suburb of Chicago. It is at his home when he discovers that his wife and son are missing.

Buck makes his way back to his home, which is in New York City. Additionally, his office is located in midtown Manhattan. It is also in Manhattan that the conferences take place, at the United Nations building. Aside from New York and Chicago, some of the action unfolds in London when Buck visits with a friend to get information on the death of Dirk Burton. Incidentally, a car bomb explodes and it is erroneously reported that Buck is involved and dead. Meanwhile, he makes his escape to Frankfurt, Germany, then back to New York. He makes another brief journey to Chicago into the Steele's world and a visit with Bruce Barnes as well as to the Chicago office of *Global Weekly*. Buck quickly flies back to New York where he comes face to face with the Antichrist before making a permanent move to Chicago at the end of the story.



Language and Meaning

The story starts out with individuals that consider themselves ordinary people. They speak and act like ordinary people. As the events continue to unfold however, they become more morally aware and make the move to accept Christ. At the start, they sound like so many people, the voice of the times. When they realize more and more that they are coming into the end times as predicted in the Bible, they become more impatient and excited about their faith. They move from complacency to pure religious activism. As each character makes their transformation, there is more and more information provided from the Bible as well.

As the characters change and adapt to the new global situation, their ideals also change. If they all sound alike at the beginning, by the end, they either are out to convert the masses or they have purely selfish leanings and follow the power. It is not limited to class or gender. Rayford, who is sophisticated and highly intelligent, goes through the same changes and beliefs as Bruce Barnes, who is not as worldly. Their messages become the same and sound the same at the end. At the same token, Steve Plank and Hattie have the same voice at the end. Steve seems smarter than Hattie, at least on the surface, though at the end, they make similar choices and share the same opinion of Carpathia. They are intent on riding his coattails for success.

Structure

The book is told primarily from two different perspectives: Rayford Steele's and Buck Williams'. One has a highly emotional response to the events as they happen; the other keeps a more detached and objective perspective. Each point of view is seen in every chapter. It is also not highly defined as half of one chapter for each. Rather, the stories unfold almost as though in real time. One character will start the story in a chapter, and the other story pipes in, occurring almost simultaneously. Each perspective flips back and forth over the course of the book.

There are twenty-five chapters and each run approximately twenty pages each. It is a seemingly even break down between characters and perspectives. Everyone receives the same amount of face time.



Quotes

"Rayford wanted to be strong, to have answers, to be an example to his crew, to Hattie. But when he reached the lower level he knew the rest of the flight would be chaotic. He was as scared as anyone on board." Chapter 1, page 17

"The terrifying truth was that he knew all too well. Irene had been right. He, and most of his passengers had been left behind." Chapter 1, page 19

"The Rapture had taken place. Jesus Christ had returned for his people, and that boy was not one of them." Chapter 3, page 48

"I believe his goal is disarmament, which we Israelis have come to distrust. But of course he must first bring about disarmament in his own country, which not even you will see in your lifetime." Chapter 4, page 70

"He carefully peeled back the blankets and sheet to reveal her locket, which carried a picture of him. Her flannel nightgown, the one he always kidded her about and which she wore only when he was not home, evidenced her now departed form." Chapter 4, page 75

"I'm not only going to tell you that the U.N. resolution is going to be for dollars, marks, and yen within five years, but I'm also going to tell you that the real power behind the power is an American." Chapter 5, page 84

"He had no doubt that his wife and son were gone as surely as if they had died, as his own parents had years before. Irene and Ray would not be coming back, and he didn't know if he would ever see them again, because he didn't know if there were second chances on this heaven thing." Chapter 6, page 99

"He hoped against all hope that there was another chance at truth and knowledge out there somewhere. The only problem was that the ones who knew were gone." Chapter 6, page 104

"So Jesus said he was coming quickly. Had he come? And if the Bible was as old as it seemed, what did "quickly" mean." Chapter 7, page 122

"I see now, of course, that God is a sin-forgiving God, because we're human and we need that. But we are to receive his gift, abide in Christ, and allow him to live through us." Chapter 11, page 197

"Lots of people thought they could earn their way to God or to heaven by doing good things, but that's probably the biggest misconception ever." Chapter 11, page 200

"Strange as this may sound to you, this is God's final effort to get the attention of every person who has ignored or rejected him. He is allowing now a vast period of trial and tribulation to come to you who remain." Chapter 12, page 212



"We must disarm, we must empower the United Nations, we must move to one currency, and we must become a global village." Chapter 15, page 274

"I'm a young man, but I've been around the block. It feels to me as if I'm about to find out just how deep into this - well, if it's not a conspiracy, it's something organized - how deep into this thing you are." Chapter 16, page 295

"I will merely be there to provide servant leadership. Are you aware of that concept? One leads by serving, not by dictating." Chapter 16, page 297

"Bruce had told him and the rest of the core group at New Hope that there would soon spring up 144,000 Jews who would believe in Christ and begin to evangelize around the world." Chapter 17, page 302

"Whoever came forward with proclamations of peace and unity had to be suspect. There would be no peace. There would be no unity. This was the beginning of the end, and all would be chaos from now on." Chapter 19, page 344

"Rayford could tell by Hattie's look that she knew where he was going, that he had now come to agree with Irene and had bought the whole package." Chapter 20, page 376

"If this was true, all that Rayford Steele had postulated - and Buck knew instinctively that if any of it was true, all of it was true - why had it taken Buck a lifetime to come to it?" Chapter 22, page 393

"Mr. Williams, you have to do what you have to do, but I'm pleading with you. If you go into that meeting without God in your life, you will be in mortal and spiritual danger." Chapter 23, page 428

"Buck wondered what Rayford or Chloe would do if they knew Hattie had been invited to New York to be Carpathia's companion for a few days. In the end, he decided it was none of his, or their, business." Chapter 24, page 438

"While no special feeling had come with Buck's decision, he had a heightened sensitivity that something was happening here. There wasn't a doubt in his mind that the Antichrist of the Bible was in this room." Chapter 24, page 447



Topics for Discussion

Is it possible that any of these characters would have come around to accept God through any other means than the Rapture? Why or why not?

How did the masses not realize that Nicolae Carpathia is the Antichrist?

If Chloe is so close to her transformation to becoming "born-again", what do you think it is that prevents her from taking that final leap?

Rayford, Chloe, Bruce, and even Buck all find their way and bring Christ into their lives. Why is it that Hattie did not see the same thing? Why did she go the other way and join forces with Carpathia?

What are some of the reasons that kept Rayford from joining Irene in her belief? Do you think it is possible that he could have done things differently? Why or why not?

What are some of the characteristics that Rayford, Chloe, Bruce and Buck have in common aside from their actual conversion to being "born-again"?

Do you think that Hattie was somehow turned off by Rayford's pleas for her conversion or was there something else behind her reluctance to let Christ into her life? Why or why not?