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Gary DeMar's End Times Fiction

by Thomas Ice

Preterist Gary DeMar has written a book critical of Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins' *Left Behind* series entitled *End Times Fiction*.[1] DeMar is jealous of the fact that people have responded to a fictionalized version of a dispensational prophecy scenario while rejecting his own misguided belief that these prophetic events were really fulfilled when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and Israel's Second Temple in the first century. Apparently, in an attempt to jazz up his dusty old view, DeMar creates some fiction of his own in his book and subsequent articles about Tim LaHaye. I guess you could say that DeMar's recent book is aptly titled *End Times Fiction*.

DeMar repeatedly represents the prophecy beliefs of Tim LaHaye as far-fetched and beyond the realm of possibility. For years, DeMar's writing approach has been to start his articles and books with generous heaps of ridicule upon dispensationalists like LaHaye and then use that as a springboard to introduce his truly ridiculous idea that almost all Bible prophecy was fulfilled a couple thousand years ago. It appears that DeMar is incapable of simply presenting his views in a straightforward and positive manner, without first setting the stage with one of his negative diatribes against those with whom he disagrees. Apparently LaHaye's successful presentation of the gospel within the context of a futurist view of the end times—that has resulted in thousands of people trusting Christ as their Saviour—has DeMar very upset.

Bizarre Views

I have documented—in the past—DeMar's strange belief that second coming passages such as Matthew 24—25 and Revelation 19 were fulfilled in events surrounding the Roman conquest of Jerusalem two thousand years ago. This errant view is known as preterism.[2] In a desperate attempt to defend this naturalist approach to Biblical interpretation, DeMar teaches such bizarre views as the Battle of Gog in Ezekiel 38—39 was fulfilled by the events of Esther 9.[3] DeMar believes that the new heavens and new earth of 2 Peter 3:10–13 and Revelation 21—22 arrived in—you guessed it—A.D. 70. We have been living for the last two thousand years in this time of heavenly bliss. Amazing! I could go on and on.

Lately, DeMar has been on a kick where he attempts to make fun of people like LaHaye and myself who believe in a national future for Israel. DeMar does not. He believes that Israel, as a nation, is finished in history, contrary to the teachings of the Old and New Testaments.[4] DeMar must close his eyes when he reads Paul saying, "I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! . . . God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says?" (Rom. 11:1–2). DeMar does not know what the scriptures say when it comes to Israel's future. His *a priori* preterist beliefs filter out the clear meaning of the Bible when he reads the plethora of passages that speak of Israel's future.

Dispensationalism's Future Holocaust?

On a number of occasions,[5] DeMar accuses dispensationalists in general, and Tim LaHaye in particular of somehow contributing to a future Jewish holocaust because Zechariah 13:8–9 teaches that a third of the Jews will come to faith in Jesus as their Messiah during the tribulation. DeMar's twisted logic is similar to that used by liberals in the 2000 Republican Presidential primary when George W. Bush spoke at Bob Jones University. According to liberal thinking, Bush was identified with all that BJU was thought to represent because he did not get up and renounce things that were not politically correct. In a similar way, DeMar manufactures a sin that could only make any kind of sense if one first assumes "preterist correctness."

In DeMar's article attacking LaHaye, "A Review of *The Remnant*," he says,

> What many people who read LaHaye's *The Remnant* fail to grasp is that two-thirds of the Jews living in Israel today will be slaughtered, and for every three Jews who decide to make Israel their home in the future, two will be killed during the Great Tribulation.[6]

DeMar continues his assault on LaHaye when he asks,

> Why isn't LaHaye warning Jews now living in Israel about this pre-determined holocaust by encouraging them to leave Israel until the conflagration is over? Instead, we find those who hold to LaHaye's position supporting relocation efforts of Jews to the land of Israel that will mean certain death for a majority of them because it's a "fulfillment of Bible prophecy.[7]

There are a number of things that DeMar and his followers who read him fail to grasp. Since DeMar's criticism is based upon the supposed logical outworking of our futurist views, I will work within that framework. Note the following: First, about three-fifths of the entire earth's population will be killed during the course of the seven-year tribulation, many of them believers (Rev. 6:9–11).

Second, one of the main purposes of the tribulation (the 70th week of Daniel) is to bring the nation of Israel to faith in Jesus as their Messiah. Jewish believer Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains this purpose for His people during the tribulation as follows when commenting on Ezekiel 20:34–38:

> God intends to break the power of the holy people in order to bring about a national regeneration. . . . In this passage Ezekiel draws a simile with the Exodus . . . What is important to note here is that after God gathers the Jews from around the world, He will enter into a period of judgment (tribulation) with them. The rebels among the Jewish people will be purged out by this judgment. Only then will the whole new nation, a regenerate nation, be allowed to enter the promised land under King Messiah.[8]

Even though DeMar, as a postmillennialist, believes in a future time when a mass of individual Jews will be converted,[9] he rebels against the historical means that God has chosen to bring about this end for His people—Israel.

Third, since all unbelieving Jews will be purged out and killed by the end of the tribulation—regardless of their geographical location on planet earth—it is inconsequential as to whether they are in Israel or hide away in a remote place. At the second coming all unbelievers will be killed and prevented from going into the millennium (Matt. 13:36–43, 45–50; 25:31–46). So it is just a matter of days, weeks, or months until all unbelievers (Jew or Gentile) will be removed from the earth in preparation for the start of the Messianic kingdom.

Fourth, related to the previous point, the only ones (Jew or Gentile) who will survive the tribulation will be those who have become believers in Jesus as their Messiah. Yet DeMar says, "we find those who hold to LaHaye's position supporting relocation efforts of Jews to the land of Israel that will mean certain death for a majority of them." The only ones that will be killed, whether in or out of the land of Israel, will be unbelievers. The focus of Zechariah 13:9 is on the elect remnant, which says, "And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'" Yet DeMar attempts to turn the emphasis of this passage upside-down with his focus upon the unbelieving element.

Fifth, many modern orthodox Jews—uninfluenced by Tim LaHaye—believe that Zechariah 13:8–9 is still a future event.[10] Why isn't DeMar warning them about the coming holocaust if he is so concerned for the welfare of modern Jewry? Are these Jews creating an attitude of "prophetic inevitability?"[11] A consistent application of DeMar's logic to this Jewish understanding of Zechariah would mean that the Jews, along with dispensationalists, are the facilitators of their own demise.

Sixth, DeMar asks "Why isn't LaHaye warning Jews now living in Israel about this pre-determined holocaust by encouraging them to leave Israel until the conflagration is over?"[12] (If DeMar is so concerned with a future Jewish holocaust in Israel, perhaps he could help develop an organization to raise money to assist Jews wanting to leave Israel.) LaHaye is not doing that because these events cannot take place before the rapture, which has not yet occurred. I agree with DeMar that there should be a warning. However, it will not be given to the Jews living in the land of Israel until the middle of the tribulation. In fact, Matthew 24:15–16 says of that time, "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." The parallel passage in Revelation 12:6 says, "And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days." The woman represents Israel, or even more precisely the elect Jewish remnant, which are the Jewish elect that will obey Christ's warning to head for the hills "when you see the abomination of desolation." This remnant will be divinely protected by God in the wilderness (just as LaHaye portrays in *The Remnant*) until Christ returns physically to Jerusalem and sends His angels to gather His elect (Matt. 24:31) for His approaching kingdom.[13]

CONCLUSION

Far from making LaHaye look foolish, DeMar is the one who is generating end times fiction with his zany tales. I am convinced that at least part of the motivation for DeMar's cruel criticism of LaHaye is out of jealousy. DeMar desires the limelight that God has given to LaHaye. So instead of honing an appealing case for his own preterist views, he desperately resorts to an attack in order to tear down LaHaye. Since his thoughts on Bible prophecy were not deemed important enough to have been included in the front-page story that *Time* magazine recently did on LaHaye,[14] DeMar wrote an article in which he concocts a conspiracy theory to explain why he was excluded.[15] More end times fiction! Instead of providing positive biblical argumentation for his views of the past, which really are fictional, DeMar tries to hitch his wagon to the success of LaHaye. DeMar's desperation demonstrates that when it come to biblical interpretation he has been left behind. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

[1] Gary DeMar, *End Times Fiction: A Biblical Consideration of the* Left Behind *Theology* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Pubs, 2001).
[2] See our forthcoming book due out in April 2003 by Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, eds. *Has Christ Already Come? Biblical Answers to Preterism* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2003).
[3] DeMar, *End Times Fiction*, pp. 12–15.
[4] A few passages include: Gen. 12:1-3; 15; Deut. 28:58—30:20; Isa. 14:1-3; Jer. 32:37–42; Ezek. 36:22–32; Zech. 8:7–8; Rom. 11:15, 25–27.
[5] See the following presentations of this view: Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), pp. 414–16; Gary DeMar, "A Review of *The Remnant*," on the website of American Vision, www.americanvisiion.org/page.asp?id=13; Gary DeMar, "It's Time to Fold 'Em," on the website of American Vision, www.americanvisiion.org/page.asp?id=121; DeMar brought this "argument" up in our debate at BIOLA Univ. on Feb. 25, 2002. Preterist Kenneth Gentry also went out of his way to work this "argument" into our debate in Wilmington, DE on Apr. 26, 2002.
[6] DeMar, "A Review of *The Remnant*".
[7] DeMar, "A Review of *The Remnant*".
[8] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 1982), pp. 125-26.
[9] See Gary DeMar, *The Debate Over Christian Reconstruction* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press and Atlanta: American Vision Press, 1988), pp. 244–55.
[10] A. Cohen, ed. and commentator, "The Twelve Prophets," in *Soncino Books of the Bible*, 14 vols. (London: The Soncino Press, 1948), vol. 14, p. 325.
[11] DeMar, "A Review of *The Remnant*".
[12] DeMar, "A Review of *The Remnant*".
[13] For more answers to similar arguments put forth by DeMar and others of similar thought look for Thomas Ice, *The New Anti-Semitism: Why The World Hates Israel* (publisher and date of release to be announced).
[14] *Time*, July 1, 2002.
[15] Gary DeMar, "Time's Puff Piece: The Devil is in the Details," on the website of Planet Preterist, planetpreterist.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=515.