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Apocalyptic Radio Show

Eli Ewing

This dialogue between Jim Jones and Tim LaHaye discusses their backgrounds, chapter 21 verse 3 of the book of Revelations from the Bible, and their beliefs on the end of the world.

Selection from 21:3 of Revelations:

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they should be his people, and God himself should be with them, and be their God.”

Me: Welcome folks, to KUPS 90.1FM “The Sound.” Today we have with us the Peoples Temple leader, the infamous Jim Jones, and Tim LaHaye, author of the *Left Behind* series.

Jim: Thanks for having us, Eli. This is a great opportunity for me to get my word out about the apocalyptic life we’re living in.

Tim: I second that. It’s a privilege to be here and talk about this.

Me: As a preface to this interview, I mentioned to both of you that we would be discussing the apocalyptic text found in chapter 21 of Revelations. Let’s begin with each of you explaining a bit about yourself and the circumstances that brought you to lead your own movements. Tim?

Tim: I had a fairly religious upbringing, I ended up graduating from Liberty University as well as receiving a doctorate in literature from Western Theological Seminary (Tom Bivins, *Religion of Fear: The Politics of Horror in Conservative Evangelicalism*, (New York: Oxford, 2008)). I worked with Christian schools for a time, then worked on Reagan’s campaign, and finally turned to writing novels; as you mentioned, my best-known set of works is the *Left Behind* series. I’m

well known within the National Catholic Reporter circles, and I'm married to a great woman, Beverly LaHaye, with whom I helped to found Concerned Women for America.

Jim: I was born in a small town of Indiana to a poor family. I preached briefly, then got involved with the Communist party in my early twenties. After I gained followers by preaching the social gospel, I referred them to the Marxist principle: "For each according to his ability and to each according to his need" (Wessinger 113). I became aware that I was the manifestation of the Christ and realized that I could heal people. Then, I became aware that a "cataclysmic period of race war, genocide, and ultimately nuclear war was coming" (Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven's Gate* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 1998)) and opened up a place that would be like a refuge, a utopia if you will, called Jonestown, and the rest is history.

Me: Thanks Tim, Jim. The verse I've chosen to start with for this interview Revelations chapter 21, verse three: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they should be his people, and God himself should be with them, and be their God." Jim, thoughts?

Jim: I'd especially like to emphasize the section "God himself should be with them," because there are a lot of people who don't believe I'm Christ reincarnated. It's understandable, I guess, because there have been some people from different sects and religions who have claimed to be the Christ reincarnated, but they were not. I am. I was immaculately conceived (Wessinger, 1998) and I came to liberate all the people living in poor conditions, especially people of color and women, but really anyone who was a slave to the capitalist society that we live in. God told me that I was to come to earth and save all these people who were being exploited.

Tim: Well, I believe differently, Jim. In my books, God never directly speaks to the people. My books deal mostly with the Rapture, and what follows, or what is commonly known as Armageddon. What do you think of the “great voice out of heaven?” Shouldn’t God be speaking from the sky and not using a prophet?

Jim: But you can’t deny “he will dwell with them” implies that he walks among them.

Tim: I suppose that’s true.

Me: What do you both think “and he will dwell with them, and they should be his people” then?

Jim: Well, Eli, I believe that fully encapsulates God’s word and his will that I should lead the Peoples Temple, and we should all live in this Promised Land named after he who brings God’s word. That’s me, and the “promised land” is Jonestown.

Tim: Again, I disagree because God dwelling with people does not necessarily mean in person. He can be with them in spirit He *God*, not Christ.

Me: One verse later, 21:4, it is written that “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Tim, how do you feel about this passage?

Tim: I’m mixed about this passage. There shall be no more death, sure, and the former things will be passed away, yet at the same time, there will be sorrow, as shown in the *Left Behind* series. My characters Rayford and Chloe Steele are overcome with sorrow and pain when Irene and Raymie are raptured, Raymond and Chloe didn’t have time to say good-bye to them, they just left. The former things are passed away, I believe, is another way of saying the old people we had in our lives have left us and moved on to a better place. They aren’t necessarily dead, they’re just in a better place with God. Things from previous parts of our lives are no longer with us.

Jim: As for the phrase “former things are passed away,” I believe that the term revolutionary suicide comes into play here –

Me: Can you define what the term means for our listeners?

Jim: Revolutionary suicide can be defined as essentially “not letting the other side win.” It’s taking life into one’s own hands and not dying by regular suicide, which is seen as discrediting oneself, one’s movement, and is shameful. This is respectable, dying by your own hands for a cause which you and several others believe in, and leaving a legacy of pride. I once defined it as “protesting the conditions of an inhumane world” (Jim Jones, *The Jonestown Death Tape (FBI No.Q042)*, November 18, 1978).

Me: Thanks, Jim. You were saying revolutionary suicide comes into play here . . .

Jim: So it does. The former things are passed away, and when the idea of suicide, how that’s shameful and something from which you can’t redeem yourself, picks up speed, you have to look at your life and realize that you need to change the situation. You need to take control of your own life and let what might have been stay in the past. You have to take decisions into your own hands so you don’t die a death that everyone will look at as dishonorable.

Me: Would you say that the apocalyptic idea in your preferred version is pre- or post-millennialist? For our listeners, pre-millennialism is the pessimistic view of how the world ends. It includes the world descending into chaos, heresy, and immorality. Post-millennialism is the optimistic view of how everything ends, which generally includes the idea of a Golden Age and the creation of a better world through human agency.

Tim: The *Left Behind* series is pre-millennialist, because in an instant, half the people you know are gone, they’ve just disappeared, and the world begins to start burning (figuratively) and the

Antichrist takes over. Pre-millennialism includes the Rapture, which sets the scene for the series, so it is definition pre-millennialist.

Jim: That's close to the opposite of the ideology of Peoples Temple. Peoples Temple believes that there will be a time of trial and destruction, but then there will be the Golden Age where a utopia will come together, created by humans, led by us.

Me: That's it for our time, thanks Tim, Jim, for joining me here today on KUPS 90.1FM "The Sound."