



When Change is Expressly Forbidden

"You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. (Deuteronomy 4:20)

"Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it. (Deuteronomy 12:32)

Do not add to His words

Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar. (Proverbs 30:6)

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. (1 Corinthians 4:6)

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18-19)

There are those who try to tell us that the warning at the end of the Book of Revelation applies exclusively to revisions attempted to *only* that book of the Bible and not the rest, but as with all things biblical, our understanding of any principle of the Lord comes from the *whole* of Scripture and not by lifting out and highlighting just a single reference. Moses, Solomon and Paul, at various points of history, provide the foundation for what is *finalized* in the last verses of the Bible on behalf of the whole of Scripture, that God's *entire* Word is closed canon and provides no option for human editing, be it in any form of redaction or embellishment. And yet something has taken place *within* the walls of the Church since the turn of the new millennium for which I can find no previous historic parallel: openly changing God's Word *in spite of* the express mandate otherwise.

Some of the most popular leaders within Christianity have altered God's Word in ways that *no* Christian cult, *no* rival religion, nor *any* enemy of the cross I know of has dared to do. If such distortions of God's Word had been engaged in by the usual suspects working against the true Church, I would characterize it as some kind of desperate attempt to fabricate their lie to give it an outward appearance of authority. But how does one explain this coming about at the hands and from the mouths of those whom most of the present-day Church's membership recognize as their own?

Most of us get why the Mormons had to write an additional book, or the Jehovah's Witnesses create their own translation, or Islam provides the *Quran* and Hindus the *Bhagavad Gita*; cults and false religions ultimately substitute something else in place of Scripture in order to say something that is ultimately contrary to the closed, authoritative Word of God. But when those recognized as members of mainstream Christianity corrupt and misrepresent the very Word of God itself? It disturbs me so deeply I am struggling to find the words to fully express how profoundly I am shaken, so this is much longer than the usual commentary. But I am equally convinced these prominent individuals, accepted inside the mainstream Church, are doing it for the same reason, to inject something into Christianity which God's Word in its uncorrupted presentation does not actually justify.

A Cut-and-Paste Hermeneutic

The first time this was brought to my attention was several years ago in Rick Warren's teaching concerning what he sees as a distraction to Christians by biblical prophecy specifically, and the End Times in general. In *The Purpose Driven Life*, Warren did something which I had never even heard of anyone doing before, but is outrageous just by the fact that he so boldly tries to get this past us as if no one would notice:

Today there's a growing interest in the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. When will it happen? Just before Jesus ascended to heaven the disciples asked him the same question, and his response was quite revealing.

He said, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

"When Change is Expressly Forbidden", Page 2 of 19

When the disciples wanted to talk about prophecy, Jesus quickly switched the conversation to evangelism. He wanted them to concentrate on their mission to the world. He said in essence, "The details of my return are none of your business. What is your business is the mission I have given you. Focus on that!" (*The Purpose Driven Life*, pages 285-286)

Warren uses the question asked of Jesus by the Apostles in Matthew 24:3 and employs his word processor to cut-and-paste it together with the answer He gave to a *completely different* question posed in Acts 1:6-7! The net result of this "cut-and-paste" hermeneutic is to nullify Christ's instructions for Believers to pay close attention to the prophetic signs of the Last Days. Warren switches things around to misrepresent Scripture in the most egregious manner possible, representing the exact *opposite* of what Christ teaches about His return.

At the beginning of the Olivet Discourse, the Apostles ask Jesus to tell them what will be the sign of His second coming:

As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. (Matthew 24:3-4)

Notice that Jesus not only *answers* their question, but goes into such length and detail that it takes Matthew two whole chapters to record it all. (Mt. 24-25) In this End Times discourse, Jesus warns *at least* four times that anyone **NOT** looking for these things is a high-risk candidate for being deceived. (Mt. 24:4, 11, 24-25, 42-51)

But this is not to be confused with a second and completely *different* question posed by the Apostles just prior to His Ascension into heaven in Acts 1:

So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; (Acts 1:6-7)

This is a very "Hebraic" question posed by His Jewish Apostles, who are not asking, "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" as they asked in Matthew 24:3, but inquiring if this is the time when He would establish the Millennial

"When Change is Expressly Forbidden", Page 3 of 19

Kingdom as they knew the Messiah must do in order to fulfill *all* the prophecies about the Messiah in the whole of God's Word which specifically pertain "*to Israel*". This is not like the previous question about Christ's second coming, but a completely new and different question about when He would fulfill the messianic prophecies concerning Israel and His Millennial Kingdom. Jesus does not say here that their *question* is incorrect, but that it is not the subject of their focus for their present work assignment in this current age. They must first carry out the work of the Suffering Servant who came to die for sin for that work to qualify entrance into the Millennial Kingdom to be ushered in at His second coming.

Rick Warren takes the question posed in Matthew 24:3 about Christ's return, cuts it out, and presumptuously *pastes* it to Jesus' reply, belonging to an entirely *different* question in Acts 1:7, and presents us with something which Jesus *never actually said*. In fact, this translocation of two bits of Scripture into something of Warren's own creation actually *contradicts* what Jesus taught about His return:

When the disciples wanted to talk about prophecy, Jesus quickly switched the conversation to evangelism. He wanted them to concentrate on their mission in the world. He said in essence, "The details of my return are none of your business. What is your business is the mission I have given you. Focus on that!" (*The Purpose Driven Life*, page 285)

Taken to Warren's logical conclusion, I suppose the right thing to do would be to publish Bibles without any of the prophetic passages, which are apparently none of our business. Do you have any idea how much of the Bible Warren is telling us to ignore? Shall we publish Bibles *without* the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21? Jesus told us not just to simply be *aware* of these things, but cautioned against our being *deceived* by not paying attention to them! Who are you going to listen to, Warren or Christ?

I submit that this is one of the many definitive proofs that what Rick Warren has to offer is patently false, because like any other false religion or cult, he has to introduce something to replace God's Word in order to justify his false teachings. A prominent Utah-based group attempts with *The Book of Mormon* to replace the authority of God's

Word in the same manner as Warren with his *Purpose Driven* books in all their variations.

Ever since this was first brought to my attention, I have held this to be the most egregious abuse of Scripture I have ever witnessed or even heard of. I am not aware of anyone else who simply spliced together different snippets of Scripture to not only fabricate a biblical justification for their own teaching, but in so doing to actually nullify a direct instruction from Christ Himself. Usually a false teacher simply lifts part of a Scripture out in isolation from the rest of the text in an attempt to trick us into believing God's Word says something it in fact does not. As stated before, however, not even a Mormon or Jehovah's Witness or Muslim has dared employing Warren's "cut-and-paste hermeneutic" which can be so easily exposed for its dishonesty, because at least *they* would be embarrassed to have their academic integrity exposed and ridiculed. But I recently discovered yet another prominent figure doing this exact, same thing and, in reality, far worse.

When It Becomes a Double Switch-A-Roo

Tim LaHaye, most noted for *The Left Behind* fictional series on the Rapture and the End Times, is an editor and contributor for *The Popular Handbook on the Rapture*. In chapter 10, "The Wrath to Come is Not for Believers", he replicates Warren's cut-and-paste technique in almost the same way by likewise quoting the first part of one question but pasting in the answer from an entirely *different*, second question.

In 1 Thessalonians 4 the question posed to Paul by that church was what happens to those who die in Christ before the Rapture takes place:

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14)

Later in 2 Thessalonians 3, an entirely *different* issue at a much *later* date is addressed by Paul in an entirely different letter when outside agitators were coming into the church and preaching that the day of the Lord had already come:

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from
"When Change is Expressly Forbidden", Page 5 of 19

us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)

But LaHaye states on page 133 of the book:

"During the first century, believers living in the city of Thessalonica were concerned that they may have missed the rapture and were about to enter the Tribulation."

And then follows up with Paul's answer to their real question of what happens to Believers who pass away in the Lord:

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

— 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

This was Paul's answer to their question in the preceding two verses about those who have "fallen asleep in Jesus". LaHaye not only pastes an answer from a different question in place of the original, but notice how he even takes it a step further than Warren by performing a **double** switch-a-roo by altering the question itself!

In 2 Thessalonians they did not express to Paul a fear that they "were about to enter the **Tribulation**"—a very specific term LaHaye capitalizes to unmistakably mean that final seven year period leading into the Millennial Reign of Christ—their question was about the arrival of "the day of the Lord". Even if we buy into the assumption that these two things represent the same, exact thing, Scripture never uses them interchangeably. There is Scripture devoted to "the day of the Lord" and Scripture assigned to the "Tribulation", so let's at least demonstrate the academic honesty to use the term the actual passage of Scripture is using. (More on why LaHaye is purposely doing this in a moment—it's not an accident.) But LaHaye does not stop at duplicating Warren's cut-and-paste behavior and takes it to a whole new level.

"When Change is Expressly Forbidden", Page 6 of 19

Promoting a Single Eschatology

I often qualify my belief in the “inerrant Word of God” with the caveat, “in the original languages”. Translators can make mistakes, the discovery of additional ancient documents can refine our understanding of words in those original languages, so our trust is not solely limited to the English renderings but in the infallibility of the *original* manuscripts in the *original* languages. After all, just compare the English of the 1611 King James Version to the English of the 1995 New American Standard Bible. The underlying manuscripts in the original Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic did not change, but four centuries of English history, culture and geo-political influences have certainly and dramatically altered the English language. (Try explaining in today’s English what, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me” from the KJV means.) But we have the assurance that regardless of any language into which the Holy Scriptures are translated, and no matter how much change a given culture undergoes, the original manuscripts written in their originally given languages are an absolute that transcends man’s transitory nature and the way his vocabulary tends to reinvent itself over time.

But what happens when someone alters **NOT** the English translation, but the *original*? Rick Warren effected a cut-and-paste of the *English*—how would you feel about someone reaching in to cut-and-paste the original *Greek* words? A renowned, self-proclaimed Evangelical leader playing games with the *English* translation is egregious in itself beyond words, so I am not sure how to articulate the actions of an equally famous and important Christian figure reaching down to manipulate Scripture by cut-and-pasting one Greek word over *another* in the original, inerrant text so he can get his own message across.

The general editors for *The Popular Handbook on the Rapture* are listed as Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice and Ed Hindson. Fourteen well-known, mostly multi-degreed and prominent scholars and leaders of present-day Christianity contributed the contents of the book’s twenty-one chapters. While the title might lead one to believe the reader is going to be provided an academic treatment of all the particulars characterizing each of the various main eschatologies and their differing viewpoints on the Rapture, the truth is that this is not a “handbook” in the sense of documenting everything pertaining to the Rapture, but an extremely one-sided presentation of *just* the Pre-Tribulational view alone. Given that LaHaye and Ice co-founded the “Pre-Trib Research Center”, a group of academics who annually meet to exclusively promote Pre-Tribulationism, and the fact that the

“When Change is Expressly Forbidden”, Page 7 of 19

contributors to this book are all members of or closely aligned with that organization, it should not surprise anyone that this book, in spite of its title, is really only devoted to espousing *one* eschatology. Granted, this may be an example of poor scholarship, but it is certainly neither a sin nor what is at the heart of the matter in question.

Just in case someone does not actually know this, one of the bedrock platforms of Pre-Tribulationism is that the Rapture of the Church will take place at some point *before* the final seven year period of history known as the “Tribulation” begins. It is their fervent belief that the Church will not enter into nor experience any part of what takes place in Revelation 6-18 covering God’s judgments expressed as seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls.

Various classic arguments have been raised in support of this from within the circles of Pre-Tribulationism, the first being the assumption that this final seven year Tribulational period, and something prolifically spoken of throughout Scripture called “the day of the Lord”, are the exact same thing. This actually is an important, key issue which must be scripturally discerned because “the day of the Lord” is *not* a literal twenty-four hour period, but describing a period when the full wrath of God’s final judgment is poured out on the earth in a prelude to Final Judgment. Since Scripture repeatedly and specifically states that Believers will never suffer God’s wrath, which is repeatedly associated with “the day of the Lord” in Scripture, most everyone agrees that the greater theological purpose of the Rapture is to remove the Church in fulfillment of God’s promise we will not experience His wrath. Even Pre-Tribulationism so stipulates this doctrinal qualification for the Rapture.

It’s this specific point, however, that because non-Pre-Tribulationists disagree as to what constitutes “the day of the Lord”, for why we have major differences of opinion as to when the Rapture will actually take place. For Pre-Tribulationists, “the day of the Lord” and the seven year Tribulation are the *exact, same* thing, so this is one of the foundational reasons why they believe the Rapture must take place at some point *prior* to the opening of the first seal in Revelation 6. (This sheds some light on the previous discussion of the importance of noting when Tim LaHaye deftly substitutes “Tribulation” when the text explicitly states “the day of the Lord”. He assumes they’re one and the same thing and wants us to accept that as well.)

There are also a couple of additional supporting reasons proposed by most Pre-Tribulationists, such as the Church being mentioned so prominently in the first three chapters of Revelation and the word for “church” seeming to disappear with John’s being taken into heaven in Revelation 4:1, the presence of twenty-four elders in heaven in Revelation 5, twelve of whom they believe to represent the Church already in heaven with Christ, and the way that in the Last Days God returns to working through Israel to fulfill all the as-yet-unfulfilled prophecies and promises exclusively pertaining to them.

There are an untold number of books, websites and papers devoted to decades of debate over these points in particular and many related ancillary issues. Personally, for most of my Christian life I have managed to live with these issues and tried to not allow what I characterized as “differences of opinion” to be a source of division. No one will ever convince me, even now, that what one believes about the Rapture gets them sent to heaven or hell; it is simply not foundational to one’s salvation. And I will state what I will expressly elaborate upon again later on, that the primary issue here is **NOT** the timing of the Rapture, but the *right handling* of the Word of God!

The Sequence Becomes the Issue

But regardless of the weight of each of these particular aspects of End Times prophecy, what is perhaps the most potent point of scriptural tension when Pre-Tribulationism comes under attack by its opponents is what Paul has to say in 2 Thessalonians:

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

— 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

Apparently some false teachers visited Thessalonica in Paul’s day who asserted “*that the day of the Lord has come*”, and because of Paul’s previous teaching, the Thessalonians knew there was a specific sequence preceding that event. Taken on its face as the text here provides, Paul warned against the deception that “*the day of the Lord has come*” outside of the proper sequence “*unless the apostasy comes first*”, after which “*the man of lawlessness [the Antichrist] is revealed*”, and only *afterward* could the day of the Lord

“When Change is Expressly Forbidden”, Page 9 of 19

be experienced. Why is this such a huge scriptural point highlighted by the opponents to Pre-Tribulationism?

Go back to what we discussed as to their belief that “the day of the Lord” and “the Tribulation” are the *same thing* and that the Church, in their view, *has* to be extracted *before* this all takes place. The problem is that a great spiritual falling away—“apostasy”, and the visible arrival and working of the Antichrist, are things spoken of *inside* that part of the Book of Revelation when Pre-Tribulationists say the Church will *already be removed*. Taken at face value, Paul’s sequence of events directly conflicts with the assertions of Pre-Tribulationism which states we will not be here to witness the arrival of the Antichrist or to experience the full effects of the apostasy preceding him. They are presented with the problem of how to justify their own sequence of events because they agree that the Antichrist will not be revealed until *within* the seven year Tribulation, but which they assert will be missed in its entirety by the Church, and the apparent contradiction of Paul’s teaching that the Church will still be here to witness the arrival of the Antichrist just prior to the onset of “the day of the Lord” from which all agree the Church will be exempted.

The “problem” for Pre-Tribulationism is in the original Greek text, the word “*apostasia*” which the NASB here translates as “apostasy”. Even more pointed, the original text states it as “*ho apostasia*”, which is why it is rendered as “*the* apostasy”. It is not just a *general* apostasy that could refer to people who fall away spiritually at any and every period of history, but “*the apostasy*” to specify a particular and unique time of spiritual falling away like no other which Scripture teaches will characterize the Last Days.

So to justify the Pre-Tribulationists’ proposed sequence of events, they must reconcile why Paul teaches something plainly contradicting it. How do they do that? Well, in Tim LaHaye’s and company’s case, he first effects his double switch-a-roo with the English translation as previously discussed, but then takes it further to cut-and-paste the ***original text!*** But as a prelude to what he is about to do with the Greek, LaHaye performs a another switch-a-roo with the English which only Rick Warren could appreciate.

A Switch-A-Roo within a Switch-A-Roo

In *The Popular Handbook on the Rapture*, Tim LaHaye personally authors chapter 13, “‘Departing’ Rather than ‘Falling Away’ in 2 Thessalonians 2:3”. The title nicely

“When Change is Expressly Forbidden”, Page 10 of 19

summarizes what is going to be presented, and the following quote come from that chapter.

Consider how the difference in the translation of a *single Greek word* can affect a person's conclusion about the timing of the rapture.

The Pretrib Rapture

Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the **departing** comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition
(2 Thessalonians 2:3)

The Mid- or Posttrib Rapture

Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the **falling away** comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition
(2 Thessalonians 2:3)

The quotation of 2 Thessalonians 2:3 on the right-hand side is *exactly* as it appears in the *New King James Version*. What a difference the translation of a single word makes? Yes, that may be true, but let's understand from the outset that it is *Tim LaHaye* who superimposes "departing" in the left column over the NKJV's translators' provision of "falling away" for the underlying Greek word "*apostasia*". In this chapter of the book devoted to this one and only issue, which is one of the longest chapters in the whole book, LaHaye tries to make the case that "*ho apostasia*" is not actually referring to "the falling away" from the faith spiritually, but is instead referring to the literal "departing" of those remaining faithful—the *Rapture* of the Church! His very detailed and circuitous arguments are designed to get us to believe that this word means something decidedly *opposite* of its plain, basic meaning, and he begins by superimposing *his own* translation over that provided by the NKJV.

In fact, we cannot find an English Bible translation beginning with the KJV published more than 400 years ago up to this present day, when so many are available as never before, which translates "*apostasia*" in this verse as "departing". More than four centuries of English translations, lexicons and Bible dictionaries offer a range of definitions which all seem to conform to some variation of the unfaithful "falling away" spiritually, but the faithful "departing" in the Rapture is nowhere to be found in *any* of them. In the twenty-three English translations in my Bible software package I found five

"When Change is Expressly Forbidden", Page 11 of 19

which translated "*apostasia*" as "the apostasy", six as "the falling away", (the Amplified uses both), ten which offer "the rebellion" and one each choosing "the turning away from God' and "until people rise up against God". LaHaye even admits there are no Bible translations from the 1611 KJV onward which employ "departing" in this verse, but that does not inhibit him from doing so himself. Yes, a single word *can* make a difference, Mr. LaHaye, especially when *you* are the making the substitution!

Just in case, I checked with the seemingly myriad of Bible dictionaries, concordances and lexicons within my software (and the old fashioned printed books still gracing my bookshelves) which provide English definitions of each respective Greek word. I thought that perhaps there were Greek-to-English resources which might agree with LaHaye's assertion. The range of what I found never even came close to describing the Rapture of the faithful, but provided a *breadth* of renderings all conforming to a description of the unfaithful falling away from the faith: "rebellion", "abandonment", "breach of faith", "apostasy", "revolt", "desertion" and "defection". Just as *none* of the English Bibles in use for the past 400 years provide a hint of justifying LaHaye's one word difference, *neither* do *any* of the supporting Greek-to-English resources.

LaHaye even provides the caveat that normally the Greek word "*apostasia*" refers to a spiritual falling away, but then offers that this is the one exception.

We who believe the rapture will take place before the Tribulation readily admit there are at least three Bible passages that predict there will be a global apostasy on the earth when Jesus raptures the church.
But this is not one of them! (Page 158) [His emphasis.]

Of course, even in the English language, the context of "the departing" *could* mean exactly the same thing as "the falling away" if they are construed to be both referring to a *spiritual* "departing", but that is not LaHaye's position in the least. He insists that instead of referring to a *spiritual* "falling away", it actually refers to the Rapture—"to mean 'departing' (as in the physical departing) rather than 'falling away' or 'rebellion'". (Page 159) Whereas he agrees that "*apostasia*" refers to a spiritual falling away of the unfaithful everywhere *else* it appears in Scripture, in this one instance alone he proposes it suddenly means "the Rapture of the faithful". Instead of the *unfaithful* "departing" from the faith, it is assigned an entirely opposite meaning of the *faithful*

"When Change is Expressly Forbidden", Page 12 of 19

“departing” this planet! Just like Warren, LaHaye turns Scripture inside out, claiming a meaning that is the *exact opposite* of what it plainly teaches!

Historical Proof-Texting

If we cannot find an English Bible affirming LaHaye’s substitution, nor any Greek lexicon or dictionary agreeing with that rendering, then how could he possibly justify this assertion? According to him, it can only be explained if we go back to English translations created *before* the 1611 Kings James Version.

Yes, there were seven major English versions pre-dating the KJV: the *Wycliffe Bible* (1384), *Tyndale Bible* (1526), *Coverdale Bible* (1535), *Cranmer Bible* (1539), *Breeches Bible* (1576), *Beza Bible* (1583) and *Geneva Bible* (1608). These oldest of the English translations rendered “*ho apostasia*” as “the departing”.

Of course, this begs the question, when these pre-KJV translations used “departing”, did they do so because they knew the true meaning of “*apostasia*” was the faithful Church “departing” from the earth in the Rapture as LaHaye represents? Or were they simply using it in the then-present day English vernacular to mean the unfaithful *spiritually* “departing” from the faith? In other words, even if someone chose “departing”, did they do so in order to describe the Rapture, or were they still actually describing “falling away” spiritually?

Just as Rick Warren so brazenly and publicly proclaimed a cut-and-paste misrepresentation which he seems to have thought no one would check on, so it might appear LaHaye has likewise done in desperately reaching back to pre-KJV English translations. This is a variant of bad exegesis I call “historical proof-texting” where one searches for an obscure exception from antiquity and then insists it must be substituted in place of everything else published since. But the fact is that not all of the ancient sources LaHaye quotes actually support his argument!

First of all, the *Wycliffe Bible* which he quotes does not say “the departing” but “the dissension”! In fact, it adds a note to help explain what “the dissension” means by adding the qualifier, “departing away”! I guess “departing” is technically in the mix, but certainly cannot possibly allude to the Rapture of the faithful—it agrees with all the modern translations.

“When Change is Expressly Forbidden”, Page 13 of 19

Likewise the *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* in relation to LaHaye's naming of the *Tyndale Bible* explains that although the term may literally be translated "departure", they concede it "may refer to a departure of doctrine". Not exactly a ringing endorsement for LaHaye's assertion, is it?

The *Geneva Bible* literally translates it as, "except there come a departing first", which it then goes on to state, "Note 1: A wonderful departing of the most parte from the faith" and "Note 2: He sheweth them that the day of the Lord shal not come, til the departing from the faith come first". (Pardon the original English spelling, but this is the exact quote.) This is the *third* resource LaHaye himself cites which not only does *not* support his assertion, but actually *contradicts* it!

But that was the *Geneva Bible* as published in 1560. When it was edited, revised and published in its 1599 form, still 12 years *before* the KJV (which LaHaye and company blame as the source for the mistranslation of "*apostasia*" by every English Bible going forward), the *Geneva Bible* translators **DROPPED** "departing" and published the updated version with "falling away"!

Let no man deceive you by any means: 3 for [that day shall not come],
except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be
revealed, the son of perdition; (2 Th. 2:3) - 1599 Geneva Study Bible

I am no Bible savant or gifted researcher with powers beyond the ordinary. I did not go to obscure, alternative resources unavailable to the average seeker or spend months earnestly scratching and clawing to discover these facts. I uncovered all of this in the course of a very *basic, cursory* search of the references which Tim LaHaye himself cites! Did he bother to determine what these translators meant when they selected "departing", or was he so fixated on assigning his *own* meaning to the verse that he never bothered to check? Can someone be so arrogant and prideful that they cite sources *knowing* they not only do *not* support their assertion but actually contradict it? Or are they so deceived themselves that they never bother doing the most fundamental research required of a first-year college student and assume no one else will either? (Both are equally disturbing.)

Not Just the English, But the Greek

If you've stuck with me this long, I cannot sufficiently express my appreciation, but this does not end here—in fact, it gets worse, because only a small part of LaHaye's chapter tries to justify this double switch-a-roo with the English definition; the majority of space is devoted to the even more egregious action of replacing "*apostasia*" with a substitute Greek word. He not only does a cut-and-paste with the *English*, but extends it to the original *Greek* text itself.

Of course, I have avoided the whole issue, which would involve an equally lengthy discussion to this already long dissertation, that the Greek word from which "rapture" is derived is actually "*harpazo*", which literally means a violent snatching away. In the Septuagint it is used to describe ripping a wing from a bird or a leg from an animal at the dinner table or by a hunter, a fairly vivid picture of what it means to be "violently snatched away". "Rapture" has been commonly used because Jerome, in the *Latin Vulgate*, translated the Greek "*harpazo*" into the Latin "*rapturo*" which we then Anglicized into "rapture". But the underlying Greek word is actually "*harpazo*" when speaking of the Rapture, nothing even remotely resembling "*apostasia*". Most of LaHaye's argument after misrepresenting the *English*, however, involves misrepresenting the *Greek*.

In a very detailed explanation on pages 160-169, LaHaye is in agreement with the other scholars he cites that "*apostasia*" must be replaced in this instance with its root, "*aphistemi*", a word that is indeed sometimes used in Scripture to describe a physical departing, such as in Acts 12:10.

*When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel **departed** from him. (Acts 12:10)*

Yes, the Greek word "*aphistemi*" is often literally translated to mean someone "departing"—physically leaving a place, but we aren't allowed to just switch Greek words in the original text to suit us! We don't decide on our own to replace "*apostasia*" with "*aphistemi*" any more than we would arbitrarily switch them the other way around. LaHaye and the very same Bible scholars who are so closely aligned with him, as a core aspect of their teaching, often walk us through even the most subtle variations of a Greek word's usage, placing an importance on even a modest change in case,

"When Change is Expressly Forbidden", Page 15 of 19

possession, or the most sensitive context. And yet in *this* one-and-only case we are to accept replacing the whole, original Greek word with an entirely *different* Greek word? If they caught anyone else doing this with any other verse in Scripture, they would be the first and loudest to denounce it themselves!

One of the real ironies here is that by doing just a basic, cursory search on the word “*aphistemi*” itself. By doing so we discover that even this alternative is not always interpreted as being something drastically different from “*apostasia*”:

*“After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and **drew away** some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. (Acts 5:37)*

Sometimes this word chosen by LaHaye to replace “*apostasia*”—a spiritual falling away, is actually used to also describe the exact, same spiritual “falling away” in other Scriptures as in...

*Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that **falls away** from the living God. (Hebrews 3:12)*

*But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will **fall away** from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, (1 Timothy 4:1)*

Do you really think that the underlying Greek word “*aphistemi*” used in both of these verses is referring to anything *other* than a spiritual “departing”? Even the substitute Greek word LaHaye and company want to use as a cut-and-paste substitute is found in the original text to be often used to mean the *exact, same thing* they are attempting not just to simply replace, but to reverse what it plainly says!

This occurs twice in the Septuagint when Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. They actually chose “*aphistemi*” to describe a spiritual “departing”:

*“For they will **turn your sons away** from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you. (Deuteronomy 7:4)*

*“So you shall stone him to death because he has sought **to seduce you from** the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (Deuteronomy 13:10)*

“When Change is Expressly Forbidden”, Page 16 of 19

Just as the English resources LaHaye cites not only *do not* support his assertion, but actually and directly *refute* them, so works against him this attempt to cut-and-paste the Greek. We are not only supposed to accept his word that the English resources he cites don't say what they really say but something else entirely, so we are also expected to blindly accept his personal superimposition over the original Greek which *again* turns out to actually work against him. His switch-a-roo of the English backfires, his second switch-a-roo to pre-KJV Bibles backfires, and his third switch-a-roo of the Greek backfires. Does the phrase, "Three strikes and you're out" mean anything here?

Different Individuals but a Common Goal

As I stated at the outset, when someone inside or outside of the Church provide something additional to supplant the closed canon of God's Word such as the *Book of Mormon*, the *Quran*, their own special version of the Bible, or to cut-and-paste their way to a new conclusion, it is always to justify something that cannot be accomplished with the plain text as provided. In the cases of both Warren and LaHaye (and company), it is important to note that their common target is God's prophetic Word. In Warren's case it is to entice us to ignore prophecy and all things related to the End Times all together; in LaHaye's case it is to promote an eschatology which has provided the basis for the sale of tens of millions of books fictionalizing the End Times which cannot be supported by the plain and simple reading of Scripture.

Christ and the Apostles repeatedly warn that in the Last Days the Church will itself become the target of deception where the End Times are concerned. These warnings about false Christs, false prophets and false teaching have surprisingly little reference to cults such as Mormonism and outright false religions such as Islam; the common denominator to them all are repeated descriptions of attacks that will come from *within* the Church itself.

I readily admit there is a significant difference between Rick Warren and Tim LaHaye. In the course of reading some of Warren's *Purpose Driven* books, I was disturbed by not only never finding a clear, biblical presentation of the basic Gospel message of salvation, but alternative presentations which did not merely dilute the message, but more often redefined it into something else altogether. It is not surprising Warren wants us to ignore God's prophetic Word when, from the outset, he is obscuring even the most fundamental scriptural presentation of the basic Gospel of salvation.

"When Change is Expressly Forbidden", Page 17 of 19

In Tim LaHaye's writings, however, we repeatedly find the sound presentation of the Gospel of salvation. I don't doubt anyone who testifies that they came to know Christ through one of his books, because when it comes to presenting the scriptural message of salvation in Christ, his preaching is flawless. The presentation of the Gospel is present in spite of a flawed choice of eschatology. This is probably why I was even more disturbed by what LaHaye has done than similar actions by Warren. But the hard truth we must face here is that just because someone's *soteriology* is right (the fancy seminary term for the doctrine of salvation), it does not automatically confer legitimacy to their *eschatology* (End Times theology).

No matter how many books someone sells or how large the attraction to their ministry, their teachings cannot be justified by undermining the ultimate foundation of God's Word upon which the true Body of Christ rests. This is not merely a case of not being able to rightly handle God's Word, but extending way beyond in an attempt to manipulate and change Scripture in order to present something that cannot be justified by the plain, given text. The fact that this common behavior is easily proved in the two men who have, in the past 15 or so years, sold more of their books to Christians than almost everyone else in Christendom combined should bring upon us great sorrow and spiritual remorse.

Because these activities took place in the course of their teachings related to the Rapture and/or eschatology, I have been forced to discuss these topics, but as stated previously, this is **NOT** the fundamental, core issue of what is wrong. Perhaps the Rapture will take place exactly when Pre-Tribulationism anticipates, but I refuse to believe that *any* position can be justified by attempting to alter the biblical text to make it appear so. Even more importantly, the ends never, **ever** justify the means as a matter of biblical principle. We cannot slice and dice God's Word as we see fit regardless of our intentions and no matter how well we might present the basic Gospel message in the process. We are called to a much *higher* standard.

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness

"When Change is Expressly Forbidden", Page 18 of 19

surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-20)

In Him,

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“When Change is Expressly Forbidden”, Page 19 of 19