

Christ in Prophecy

Apologetics 8: “Barger’s Personal Testimony: A Miraculous Deliverance”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: One of the most convincing evidences that the Bible is the Word of God is the transforming impact it has had on millions of people over the centuries. One of those persons whose life was radically changed was Eric Barger. His confrontation with God’s Word and His Son totally transformed Eric’s life. At the time it happened Eric was a drug-addicted rock n’ roll musician, today he is the spokesman for Take a Stand Ministries! Stay tuned for his fascinating and inspirational testimony.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. Last week on this program we talked about the supernatural power of the Bible as the Word of God to transform lives. This week we want to provide you with a dramatic first hand testimony of that transforming power. We have invited Eric Barger, Founder and Director of Take a Stand Ministries! to share his personal testimony with you. Welcome back Eric.

Eric Barger: Thank you Dave, I am sure glad to be here this week. You know I have given my testimony all over the U.S. and Canada and I hope it will be an encouragement to you. Something that I have learned along the way is that so many people were born and raised going to church, they had some Christian experience maybe their parents were Christians or they were baptized as little children or they did Christian things, well that was my life. My grandparents raised me and sent me faithfully every Sunday to a church in downtown Parkersburg, West Virginia where I grew up. And I heard about all the great stories from the Bible, all about the Old Testament characters and of course the New Testament in particular about the Lord Jesus. And I did all the Christian stuff; I was in Vacation Bible School, the Kids Choirs, and I was baptized when I was 2 years of age against my will. But all that stuff did not equate to my name being written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, even though I would have claimed

to have been a Christian and I did all those Christian things I wished somebody would explain to me in a way that I could have understood that I needed to be born-again, to make a personal confession of faith and to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. And that just being a good person or just doing religious things couldn't and wouldn't save me; I wished somebody would have explained that because my life would have been radically different if that would have been the case.

Now I mentioned my grandparents raised me and I am so grateful and thankful that they gave me the upbringing they did. They sent me to that local church there in West Virginia, it was a Methodist church but it could really have been any kind of church. My grandfather was an honorable man, my grandmother a great mother to me, and my mom was more like a sister because my mom had a condition in both hips it was rheumatoid arthritis, I never saw my mother walk up one step. She got that when she was in High School and she and my dad married and they were together a year or so and I came along during that time and they divorced and I lived in my grandparent's house. In fact from the time when I was born until I was 17 I lived in my grandparent's house. My grandmother became like a mother to both me and to my mother. My grandfather was a father to both of us and he was an honorable man, good people and I am grateful. Although I will say this, this is no disrespect to them, we didn't have a Christian altar in our house, we didn't have a Bible time, we didn't have prayer time together. But we lived in what I call a kind of a Christian home. And how I wish if I was to be able to start again with my children that I would raise them according to the Word of God and raise them with Christianity as being the center of our lives, but that really wasn't the case for me though I would have certainly claimed to have been a Christian there is no doubt about that. So just the most important thing in my testimony that I want to get across to you, and the very most important thing for many of you is that just because you do Christian stuff, just because you were raised by good people in a Christian surrounding that doesn't mean that you are born-again.

One time many years ago in the early days of our ministry a lady walked down the middle aisle of a church in Sterling, Colorado and I had just given an invitation there were people around the altar being prayed for, and in a kind of loud voice almost yelling at me from about the third row back she began to say, "I'm so sick and tired of you preachers talking about being born-again. Why I don't need to be born-again, I'm a good person. My mother did it right the first time and besides that I'm an American." You know like God's got a special door marked U.S.A. here. And there are people all over our culture and I believe some watching right now who have that kind of thinking.

Well early in my life they tested me and they found out that I had musical talent, they knew I wasn't going to be mechanical that was obvious and if you don't believe that just ask my wife. So I wasn't mechanical and I wasn't really going to crunch numbers but I had musical talent. And why God gives one person one thing and another person another I can't say for sure, He is a God of diversity, I do know this He has gifts that He has given to each and every person and He wants you to explore and ask Him, and to pray and to seek Him and to find out what those gifts are that He has for you. He's got different gifts that He wants to give you, no doubt about it.

You know in those early days I grew up without being around my dad, one of the best parts of my testimony is the fact that my dad and I have developed a terrific relationship here later in life. You think about how many people don't know who their dad is, or who their mom is even. But my dad and I do have this terrific relationship and he and I are the last 2 in our family, my grandparents and my mother are gone, but my dad and I are it, we are the last ones in my family. And in those early days he didn't have much say in what I did. But they found out that I had this musical talent and they bought me an instrument and I began to play in the school band, and most of you all know what the school bands sound like, they are not exactly what you want to be around very much. And then I began to beg my grandmother to buy me a guitar. My grandfather and my mother didn't see it, but she did and she went down and bought me a guitar, and they got me some guitar lessons. And I wanted to learn to play the songs that were on the radio when I was a little boy, and you know it was a total different world back then, there were only 3 channels on television they were all in black and white there wasn't any cable or satellite TV. It was a different world and the most rebellious song on the radio was, "It's My Party and I Will Cry if I Want To." There weren't any songs about sex, or drugs, or suicide, or rebellions or nihilism or fatalism, those weren't the themes of the music that we see that is so prevalent today all around us. And so it looked so innocent growing up and learning to play those songs, and play those instruments and so it looked so innocent at the time. And really it was in comparison to the world that we live in today.

And so the guitar teacher that I began to take from he got a crush on my mother and he got himself invited to dinner one night, so at dinner though I certainly don't remember this my grandmother told me this several years before she passed away. Evidently this guitar teacher asked where else I was taking lessons, and they said, "Nowhere else, you are the only one he is taking lessons from, and why do you ask?" And he said, "Because every week this boy comes in and he is teaching me the new chords he has learned and the songs that he was learned that week. Only thing is we aren't teaching him any chords, he is only learning scales in the book

that we are teaching him from.” So I was learning those chords by sitting up in my room playing records that I had bought with my allowance. And I know that there is probably somebody watching that we need to put a picture of a record up on the screen and you are going to see some graphics come up as I am giving my testimony that kind of relate to is. You know a lot of people have never seen a record, well I had these little 45rpm records and I was playing those records and I was by ear learning the sounds of the chords and then the songs that were on those records, the hit songs of those days in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s and again it was so, so innocent.

You know how would you explain records and a turn table? It is a total different world today then the world that we lived in back then. Well I began to beg my grandmother to go buy me a set of drums, and I wanted to learn to play drums and I was accomplishing doing this and I think about all those hours and days and weeks and months and years that we spent playing in my grandmothers front room there in the house where I grew up. And so she got me a set of drums and I was teaching a friend of mine how to play a little guitar, we found a better drummer so I switched to guitar and my friend switched to bass and we had a little trio and we started to learn songs together. A local disc jockey heard about us and he invited us to come down to the radio station that went off the air at dusk and he set up 1 microphone in the middle of the recording studio room in that radio station and he recorded 1 of our songs and then started playing it on the air and announcing our names. Now listen if you are in the sixth or seventh grade and the disc jockey is playing your song on the radio and announcing your name you are cool at school, at least with some people. And then this same disc jockey asked us if we would come and play at this very innocent dance that he was holding every Saturday night, very innocent very innocuous by today’s standards. So we told him that we didn’t have enough songs to play for 3 hours so we played everything that we knew 3 times. And at the end of that dance in February or so of 1963 just before I was 12 years of age that disc jockey handed each one of us in that band a crisp \$10 bill, that would equate to \$100, \$110, \$120 today. That was more money than my other friends were making raking leaves, or shoveling snow in the middle of the winter, and I made it in 3 hours playing in the band, doing what I wanted to do. I couldn’t believe somebody is paying me to do this.

So as time moved along then we got some more members to the band, we learned some more songs and we began to play at other places, we couldn’t get around none of us had cars and my grandparents never owned a car, and so it wasn’t they couldn’t have they just decided they didn’t want one in their lives. Can you image that day? But that was the day I grew up in. And so

a local fireman and some of his buddies were like our chaperons and they would take us from place to place as we would play. We would come back to my grandmother's house on Friday night and Saturday nights after we would play and we would crash there. The only thing is my grandmother didn't make me get up and go to church on Sunday mornings. How I wished that my grandmother would have made me get up and go to church as part of the deal if I was going to be out playing with the band on Saturday that I would also have to go to church on Sunday.

For just maybe I would have heard the message of Jesus Christ, just maybe it would have dawned on me, I would have realized that I needed to be born-again, that I needed to make a confession of faith and come to Christ and my life would have been radically different and you wouldn't be hearing this testimony today. You see by the time I was 16 years of age I was the only kid in my High School who was taking drugs. To my knowledge nobody else in my High School, now this was a school of 3,000 students the only public school in the county, the only public High School in the county. It had a football stadium that sat 5,000 a 27 acre campus for a High School, it was a huge school. Yet I couldn't find drugs there. Can you imagine today it would be an absolutely phenomenal thing for a Christian school of 300 not to have at least 1 student who was secretly experimenting with drugs. But I couldn't find drugs back then. Remember I didn't know what a gang was at that point in my life, I'd never heard of this kind of stuff. Where I learned about all this is through the lifestyle of the music industry.

Part 2

Eric Barger: I was playing in a bar band every night 6 nights a week for 7 months in a row when I was a junior in High School and I was going down to Athens Ohio 40 miles away to do that, every night back and forth, and that is where I got turned on to drugs. You know it wasn't very long before it all started because when I was 17 I moved to Seattle that meant rock stardom for a lot of people. By the time I was 21 I was playing all over the West coast in bars and night clubs, and small concerts and I had expanded the drugs I was using from just trying to experiment with marijuana to speed, and LSD and all kinds of psychedelics. Now by the time I was 25 I was a full blown cocaine addict, and yet I had what my peers called good.

The people around me that I knew they wanted what I wanted, you see I meet my wife while I was playing in a bar band helping to build a recording studio. I'd already given up on the idea that touring around the country was going to get me discovered. If my songs or my talent was

going to be used it would be because I got involved in a recording studio. So I built one studio and then helped remodel another studio and then finally was the studio manager at a studio that is still there today, a state of the art place. And so those were the days when I was out looking for talent and I would find musicians or song writers and I would bring them into the studio, we would record them and do a like a limited short-term contract if we could take their product and sell it, then we would get part of it. And during that time I met the woman I am married to and I had a live in girlfriend at the time but that didn't matter because remember if you are a rock musician in the 1960's if it feels good do it, that was what we dreamt up being that I came from the original hippy generation. You know the way I felt like was you know it is my thing, I will do my own thing no matter what, it was all about what I wanted, what my flesh wanted. That is the way we lived and that is still the way many people who are looked up to by Christian kids today in the music business and the entertainment world that is still the way many of them think and live too. That is the attitude that is being spread today all through our culture.

So I meet my wife we had a couple of dates and we realized we were made for each other because I was involved in the New Age Movement, I was throwing the yarrow sticks at the I Ching, I was reading my astrology chart which was a scroll that you unroll down to the floor. We were both drug addicts, she was into witchcraft, we both loved rock music, and that was the glue if you can call it that, that held us together. In fact we meet each other and 3 weeks later we flew down to Lake Tahoe and got married, and then the trouble really began, because we had no bases in our lives to hold ourselves together. And you know nobody told me you had to give up all your girlfriends once you, once you got married, but I wasn't going to do that because I am going to do whatever I want to do. You know there are several pictures of me, one is me playing on stage at the Paramount Theater in Seattle and there is a smile on my face and it looks like I have everything together, it looks like I'm really happy, but really inside I am trying to find something that will do away with the pain I've got. And that is what a lot of people do they run to the drugs and the alcohol, I was running to those things and the world of the occult looking for some sort of reason, looking for some sort of bases for my life.

Well we tried marriage counselors that really didn't work, so we went on our lives both of us as drug addicts, both of us experimenting in mysticism, both of us just aimless with what we were going to do with ourselves and with our 2 beautiful daughters that had come along. How I wish that my daughters had never smelt pot smoke in our house, or never seen lines of cocaine on the coffee table, or never heard their parents yelling and screaming the most filthy profanities at one another. I wish my kids would have never heard that, but they did and all I can do is go to

them and say, "Please forgive me." And I have done that and we have had long talks about it. My older daughter who is not a Christian I went to her in my sister-in-law's kitchen one Christmas time a few years ago and put my arms around her and said, "Kenna you don't have to say a word, I just want to tell you how much I wish I had been a better father. I wish I would have done more. I'd been the right guy when you were growing up, but I wasn't." And I think that is the position of strength to recognize that was what you used to be but today you are a different person. You see this is the same person, the same body that took all those drugs, and did all that stuff, but Jesus transformed me, but not quite yet in the story.

You see we were in the middle of a big fight one night and my wife, I didn't know she could throw the Yellow Pages that far but they are about that thick you know in the Seattle area where we lived at the time and she threw them and hit me in the back of the and was swearing the blue streak at me. And I don't remember saying this but she expressly remembers that I picked up those Yellow Pages and I shook them at her in our hallway where we were standing and I said, "If we are ever going to get our marriage straightened out it's got to be a Christian counselor." And I shook those Yellow Pages. Now what could make me say that I don't know. All I know is that now that I've read the Bible and I see what God's Word says, I found a story in the Old Testament where God talked through a donkey, so I guess He could have talked through me back in those days as well.

But you know the next morning she locked me out of the bedroom and I slept on the couch, so the next morning, and morning for us in those days was about noon or so. So the next morning I woke up and did what anybody would do that didn't know what to do, I opened the Yellow Pages up to religious counselors and I closed my eyes and I put my finger down and I called where my finger had landed, it landed on name Ted Bradshaw. And I called up and Ted answered the phone he said, "Good morning, God bless you." And you have to understand that back in those days I talked funny because every sentence ended in the word man, "Know what I mean man. Wow, man. Far out man." You are looking at someone who actually used the word groovy and was dead serious when he did it. And so he says, "Good morning God bless you." And I must have thought wow far out God's on the phone; you know that is how spaced out we were in those days. And so I said, "You know like man, we need a marriage counselor man, like can you help us out man?" The first question Ted asked was, "Are you a Christian?" Of course I said, "Well sure man." Because I'd been baptized when I was a little boy, because my grandparents were Christians, and I went to a Christian church, and hey I live in America. I went through my little check-list, not a Buddhist, not a Hindu, not a Muslim, yeah I'm a Christian.

That's the way a lot of people are. The next question "Is your wife a Christian." And I said, "Well yeah," because she also had been baptized in a church against her will when she was a little girl. By the way we've both been baptized since we got saved, but just to clarify that for anybody who is wondering out there. You know so he said, "Come on it." And we went in that afternoon, he told me sometime later 2 or 3 years later that after that first visit with us he knew the only hope we had was to come to Jesus Christ. Because he knew if the stuff we were telling him was accurate how much more there probably was behind the scenes that we weren't telling him yet, because we had lots of problems with each other we were blaming each other for all kinds of stuff. But really it was our lack of understanding how to live godly lives underneath what God wants for marriage.

Well my wife kept going to the counselor and she wanted help, she I believe the mothering instinct you know the maternal instinct with her she wanted help for her and for our family and for our daughters. But you know I didn't really need to go anymore because actually she is the one with the problem, not me. You know I wanted her to get help, but I don't need any help of course. So I made up every excuse I could not to go back to the counselor anymore even though she kept going. She did what he told her to do, she went and bought a Bible, he encouraged her to get into the Scriptures, and she started reading it. Folks she came to Jesus Christ by reading the Word of God. She recognized that if Nicodemus needed to be born again that she needed to be born again as well. Now she didn't run out and make a profession of faith to anybody about it, but she came to Christ reading the Bible.

And you know I came home one night and there is the Bible laying there on the coffee table and I was thinking, "Well that is okay as long as she doesn't get weird with it." Well she got weird with it of course because she started reading it and believing it. And then she kind of goaded me into going to a counseling session one day. And I am sitting there just trying to hope we can get out of there quickly because I want nothing to do with the stuff he is talking about because I was face to face with a real live evangelical Bible believing born-again Christian as a counselor. Who was telling me I needed to take responsibility as a father and a husband. Who was talking to me about stuff in my life that I didn't want to talk about because I wanted to do my own thing. And every time he would see us he would give an invitation, would either of us like to receive Christ and be free of our sins or something like that. And you know that day he said that to us and I am sitting there just wanting to get out of the place and Melanie breaks down and begins to cry. And I am there when that counselor prays the sinner's prayer with Melanie and leads her through the prayer of repentance to Jesus Christ, and she was set free of her sins. I believe she already

came to Christ by reading the Scripture and coming to faith, but she was now confessing before man that Jesus Christ was Lord.

Soon as I could get her out of that office I got her out to the car and I lit up a joint and I blew smoke in her face and I swore to her all the way home. And I went home and packed a suitcase I went to lived in the recording studio for 3 weeks because I wasn't going to put up with some Jesus freak. And then one night when I was missing my kids and missing my wife and missing a home cooked meal, and all my clothes were dirty and I was tired of sleeping on the floor in the studio I called her up, "Can I come home honey?" She said, "Yes Eric please come home we've been praying for you." Because she had been in church, she had been in Bible Study already.

I came home that night I walked in the kitchen and the apostle Paul's sister is cooking dinner. And you know when she figured out that preaching at me wasn't going to change me, and she started loving me unconditionally it changed everything. And then for 2 years I put her through complete hell, I mocked everything she did, didn't want anything to do with it. I got deeper and deeper into drugs, \$1000, \$1200, even \$1500 a week on my cocaine addiction, yet I was producing people who went on to win Grammy Awards. It was only a matter of time for me to have my dream fulfilled, to make it in the music business.

But I was so empty and so vacant inside, and then on a rainy, cold Friday night in February of 1981 she found my car sitting outside one of my girlfriend's houses that facilitated me coming back and finding a note on the windshield that she had written, and I just decided it is over, it is a charade, why keep going? So that evening, that night all night long before the sun came up I took enough cocaine to kill a person and I overdosed. Somehow I made it to the hotel in North Seattle not too far away; I don't know how I got there, but I laid in that hotel room and I shook and tremored for two and a half days.

Sunday night I came back to our house, I begin to blame my wife for all my problems again and for whatever reason sat down in the middle of the floor and I just kind of passed out. She says I laid there for a ½ hour while she is praying for me in the middle of the night, 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. She's bought a book that day earlier on a Sunday at the Christian bookstore, she bought a book called, "Racing Toward Judgment," by David Wilkerson and she's underlined things in the pages, she is trying to keep her mind off me. And I decided I am going to leave my wife and divorce her and walk away from my family. And so when I come to on the floor that night I kind of slithered up onto the couch and that book is laying there between us, and I pick the book up and I didn't look at the Table of Contents or who the author was and I didn't know

who that was. I just opened the book to page 60 and looked down and there were 3 words in the middle of the page that she had underlined they were, "God hates divorce," He hates divorce, He loves the divorced, He loves people, but He hates divorce. And I look down on that page and saw that and realized. She said at that point I just fell off the couch onto the floor and she said I was crying so hard that she felt the neighbors might hear, she came down and put her arms around me and began to comfort me.

And you know at some point I begin to say, "Melanie forgive me," you know I was already sorry when I had been caught, but this time I really meant it. She said it went on and on and on and then finally I began to say, "God forgive me." And I believe what happened the first time I said that was my name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and I know that doesn't equate to praying the Americanized sinner's prayer that I have been so fortunate to pray with so many of 1,000's of people through our ministry and through the time we have had. But I believe that I was crying out to the God who I knew about from that Sunday School in West Virginia, and the God who I had watched transform and revolutionize my wife's life as He delivered her from drinking and smoking and drugs, and the lifestyle we used to live. And I was praying out to the God who I had seen in that marriage counselor Ted.

The next morning I went to Ted's office and he knew the miracle had happened, he was in tears as we were arriving at his office, he knew what he had prayed for, for so long had finally happened. And that morning sitting in his office as he prayed for me, all I can say is I know I know I had a supernatural experience with God. I realized a few minutes later that I wasn't shaking anymore, after being overdosed on cocaine. You know I never went through any kind of withdraws, never went through any kind of drug treatment centers, but God delivered. I don't know why He doesn't do that to everybody, but He did it with me, and He can do it for you. If you have never received Jesus as Lord and Savior I encourage you to do that today.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and Eric thank you for that inspiring testimony, I nearly fell out of the seat when you talked about the fact that if God could speak to a donkey he could speak to you. And I want to tell you something your wife must be a saint. The only reason I think your marriage still exists is because of the power of Jesus Christ working through her life.

Eric Barger: Yeah she stood for me and she prayed for me when I was really unlovable and I just thank God that she did spiritual warfare for me. And I encourage people if you have an unsaved loved one or spouse hang in there keep praying for them don't give up.

Dr. Reagan: Speaking of praying, how about telling our viewers how to come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Eric Barger: Maybe you've prayed the simple prayer before, maybe you haven't but if you know you need to get things right with God it is a simple thing to do and it's not about us, it's all about Jesus. Just pray; Father in Jesus name I confess I'm a sinner, I know I need you and I confess Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, come into my heart, forgive me of my sins and live through me in Jesus name, Amen. It's that simple; it's that simple, coming to Christ making Him Lord and Savior. I encourage you to do it.

Dr. Reagan: Thank you Eric and I want to thank you once again for being with us over these past few weeks. May the Lord bless your ministry and continue to magnify your voice. Well folks that is our program for this week until next week the Lord willing this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries' saying "Look up be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program