

Christ in Prophecy
“Interview 16: Ryrie on the Bible and Dispensationalism”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: The Bible was written over 2,000 years ago. Is it still relevant to modern day society? Stay tuned for a discussion with one of the foremost biblical authorities in Christendom today, Dr. Charles Ryrie, the renowned author of the *Ryrie Study Bible*.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Well greetings in the name of Jesus our blessed hope and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. I am delighted to have in the studio with me today a living legend among Christian leaders, Dr. Charles Ryrie, the author of the *Ryrie Study Bible*. Dr. Ryrie holds two earned doctorates and one honorary one. He has written numerous books that have sold over a million and a half copies worldwide. He is the former president of the Philadelphia College of the Bible, which today I believe is known as Philadelphia Biblical University. And he served for many years as a professor of systematic theology at Dallas Theological Seminary. Dr. Ryrie thank you very much for being with us today.

Dr. Ryrie: Thank you for having me, and thank you for saying I'm a living legend.

Dr. Reagan: Okay. I appreciate that sense of humor. I tell you, I want to jump right into the discussion because our time is so limited. And I want to begin by asking you the question that I used to introduce this program and that is, can a book that was written 2,000 years ago still be relevant today?

Dr. Ryrie: Of course! Why not?

Dr. Reagan: Well.

Dr. Ryrie: It speaks to the problems today, and it speaks to solutions to those problems more importantly so of course it's relevant.

Dr. Reagan: Well, you know the thing that's interesting about that is that there's very few books that I think you could say that of, if any.

Dr. Ryrie: I think that's true, though we do study ancient books for various reasons, but the Bible's got answers.

Dr. Reagan: Fundamentally I guess the point is that man hasn't changed one bit.

Dr. Ryrie: That's the reason it's so relevant, because we are still needing that relevance.

Dr. Reagan: God knows us better than anybody else. He created us and He knows that we haven't changed any at all and what He says in that Word seems to me just as relevant as ever.

Dr. Ryrie: Yeah, it certainly is.

Dr. Reagan: Well, saying that leads me to a point that I ran across recently in some research I did. The Barna Association which does a lot of polling of Christians recently polled the American Christian body about their knowledge of the Bible, and Barna concluded the Christian body in America is immersed in a crisis of Biblical illiteracy. He goes on to say the most widely known Bible verse among adults and teens according to this poll is this one: "God helps those who help themselves."

Dr. Ryrie: Oh dear me.

Dr. Reagan: Which is not even in the Bible. And which in fact is contradictory to what the Bible teaches. Gary Berge who's a professor of New Testament at Wheaton College gives a test to the entering students every year. And these are kids coming from evangelical churches and they, one third could not identify Matthew as an apostle. And he goes on talking about their Biblical ignorance which makes you wonder if evangelical churches are doing anything except having weenie roasts for teenagers. Now, the reason I've mentioned all this is because you gave a speech recently that's all over the internet. I think it was in March of 2007 at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth in which you expressed serious concern over the lack of knowledge of the Bible today. Could you elaborate that for us?

Dr. Ryrie: Well, I think what these polls say is true. Now, I don't teach regularly anymore. I'm retired from full time teaching, but the opportunities I do have to teach young people, I find that they are less and less aware of what's in the Bible. And even those that come from good churches I think are not educated in the Scriptures. So some of the fault lies in our churches, in our programs, in our preaching. And if you dare to talk about theology then you're way above them.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, their eyeballs roll back in their head.

Dr. Ryrie: Or else they close and sleep.

Dr. Reagan: Well, it is a sad situation and particularly since the Bible prophesies that in the end times there's gonna be a time of deception and it's so easy to deceive people when they don't know the Word. They don't know how to test anything.

Dr. Ryrie: Well, they have no discernment. They have nothing to compare. They can't compare what's wrong with what's right because they don't know what's right, because they don't know the Bible.

Dr. Reagan: I actually went to a mainline protestant denomination to speak on a Sunday night and I asked people to open their Bibles. There was not one person there with a Bible. I asked them to get the pew Bibles. They didn't have any. I asked them to go through the church and get the Bibles out of the educational section and I led three songs. They came back and said we can't find any Bibles in this church.

Dr. Ryrie: Not even in lost and found?

Dr. Reagan: No, not any. [Dave chuckles] Well, let me ask you this.

Dr. Ryrie: I can go one better than that. Okay, go. I went to a seminary once, not one that we'll name or speak of. And I said open your Bibles, the students did not have Bibles.

Dr. Reagan: This was at a seminary?

Dr. Ryrie: At a seminary.

Dr. Reagan: Well, it's a sad state of affairs. And you know, I would dare say that many seminaries today, if not more than 50% of them, in America would teach that this book, the Bible, is man's search for God, and therefore full of myth, legend, and superstition, instead of it being God's revelation to man. What would you say in response to that?

Dr. Ryrie: Well, if it's man's search for God, then why is it better than some other book you might use to search for God. Unless it is divine origin you might as well search for God in Plato or Socrates or some of the modern authors who write. And going back to relevance, I think it's very important to remember that we're not supposed to make the Bible relevant to us. We're supposed to make ourselves relevant to it because that's truth, that's the standard. And God in all the scriptures is trying to help man, not vice versa.

Dr. Reagan: You know I spent 20 years in higher education before I went into the ministry and I was a professor. I know all the academic games, and it seems to me that so often today that in seminaries that do not believe this is really the Word of God. Their approach to this is like their approach to Shakespeare. The approach is, let's take it, let's pull it apart, let's tear it apart, let's analysis it, dissect it. Instead of the approach of, this is God's Word, let's read and obey.

Dr. Ryrie: Yeah, there's no question about that.

Dr. Reagan: It's an entirely academic approach.

Dr. Ryrie: Yeah, there's no interpersonal reaction and action. And you're right, it's very academic, and then the Bible ends up being nothing but myths.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Ryrie: And stories. Not historical, not factual.

Dr. Reagan: Well, if you were talking to a person who did not believe this was the Word of God, what would you point to, to try to convince them it really is God's Word, it came from God?

Dr. Ryrie: Well, you will appreciate this because of the emphasis of your ministry. I would point them to fulfilled prophecy and I would compare it to the possibility of fulfilled prophecy being fulfilled by chance.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Ryrie: And I'm no expert in probability but I did major in mathematics in college.

Dr. Reagan: Is that right?

Dr. Ryrie: Yes, strangely enough. And, I've done some of that comparison. How could the 10 prophecies be fulfilled by chance? Then if you talk about 50 prophecies, of course the chance

gets much less. If you talk about just, let's say, 100 prophecies about the First Coming of Christ, the probability of that happening by chance is always 1 out of something. Probability is expressed in a fraction. But the one out of something is so minor, so minute, so little that the mathematical would say it's zero.

Dr. Reagan: Right.

Dr. Ryrie: Now, the person who wants to grab on the one, as a possibility for it happening by chance will say the 1 out of whatever it is, a billion, 2 or 3 billion, is the one I'm holding to. Well, good luck, that's all I can say. Good luck, because these prophecies could not be fulfilled by chance.

Dr. Reagan: And furthermore you don't find any fulfilled prophecies in books like the Hindu Vedas or in the Book of Mormon or even in the Koran. No fulfilled prophecies and here they are, one after another after another.

Dr. Ryrie: And you can test them. Yes, it's amazing.

Dr. Reagan: Well let me ask you something else, this gets kind of controversial with some people. I mean, they get really, really emotional about it. You are a person who has dealt with Biblical manuscripts for years and years and you know, have produced your own study Bible and so, I think you would be one that people would like to hear respond to this question. And that is, there are some good folks out there, I mean really good Christian folks, who take the position that if you use anything other than the King James Version, you're going straight to Hell. I get letters from them all the time. Now, what is your attitude about the King James only folk, who are really sincere, but what do you think about that?

Dr. Ryrie: Well, that's too restrictive and the language is too 17th Century. And you need to, even for your own sake, you need to update some of the language in the King James.

Dr. Reagan: Well, they have, they revised it many, many, times haven't they?

Dr. Ryrie: Yes. And the last major revision of the King James was in 1769. That sort of startles them if they want to have the original King James, just like it came from the translations in 1611. There have been four major revisions, the last one being in 1769.

Dr. Reagan: So you're basically saying that there are some modern translations that are good for use. Like the New American Standard, or something of that nature.

Dr. Ryrie: They're better for use because they're more accurate and New American is one of them, certainly.

Dr. Reagan: You know, when I was growing up in the church back in the 40's about the only translation we had was the King James. And I really didn't enjoy reading the Bible because to me it was like reading Shakespeare. I had great difficulty with it. And then when I was a freshman in college my Mother and Dad sent me one year for Christmas a copy of the J.B. Phillips paraphrase of the New Testament. Dr. Ryrie I picked that up and started reading it and it was like something exploded inside of me. I read all day. I read all night. I read all the next day. I couldn't put it down, and suddenly I became interested in studying the Bible like I never had before. And yet, I find quite often people just thoroughly condemn paraphrases and say there's no use to them whatsoever.

Dr. Ryrie: Well, I think paraphrases have a use, especially with young people or young Christians. It helps them to see what the Bible is saying and gets them interested just like they did in your case. But if you stay only with a paraphrase then you're missing out on something.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, you're in trouble.

Dr. Ryrie: Well, you've got to grow and grow toward a more accurate, literal, plain, reliable translation.

Dr. Reagan: Especially for very serious study.

Dr. Ryrie: Yes, you don't prepare for Sunday school class with a paraphrase. You might use it, but let's hope your preparation will be something else as well.

Dr. Reagan: I agree, well I appreciate you mentioning that to us. You know, Dr. Ryrie, in 1909, the very first study Bible was produced. And as I understand it, that's the very first one in history, one where they had notes at the bottom of the page. And that was by a Dallas pastor, C.I. Scofield. I was gonna ask you if you knew him but then I did some research on his background and yours and I think you were about 1 or 2 years old when he died right?

Dr. Ryrie: Dave, I wasn't born when he died.

Dr. Reagan: Okay, well I thought you were about 2 years old when he died.

Dr. Ryrie: I don't think so.

Dr. Reagan: Okay, so you didn't know Abraham. Okay.

Dr. Ryrie: No, and I wasn't in the flood. I wasn't on the ark.

Dr. Reagan: Okay, well, anyway. I've always been intrigued by the fact that that was the very first one produced by a pastor right here in Dallas, Texas and published of all things by the Oxford University Press. I don't know how he arranged that. Do you know?

Dr. Ryrie: I really don't know that.

Dr. Reagan: But, he was severely criticized by many Christian leaders because they said that a study Bible is adding to the Word of God and therefore was a sinful thing to do. And he got a lot of condemnation. Today we just accept study Bibles as a useful, Biblical study tool. What I want to do is in a few minutes I want to discuss that change of attitude and the attitude of adding to the Bible with you but first...

Dr. Ryrie:... Let me interject something here. When people say notes at the bottom of the page are an addition to the inerrant texts if they are inerrant without error. That's just nonsense. You can't buy a Bible today that doesn't have some man-made note on it. Because chapter titles are man-made, and verse divisions are man-made.

Dr. Reagan: And those chapter titles can be very misleading in the Old Testament when it says this chapter is about the church when the whole chapter's about Israel.

Dr. Ryrie: Those heading are often very wrong.

Dr. Reagan: Right, right. Okay, I appreciate you making that point. Folks, we'll be back with Dr. Ryrie in just a moment. But first we want to tell you about a wonderful book by Tim LaHaye that will help you to better understand the whole Bible including Bible prophecy.

Advertisement

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Well welcome back to Christ in Prophecy. My special guest is Dr. Charles Ryrie, author of the very popular *Ryrie Study Bible*. It is available in the King James Version, the New American Standard Version, and the New International Version. It's also available in several languages. How many languages so far has it been published in?

Dr. Ryrie: It's been published in Spanish and Portuguese and there are a couple in process.

Dr. Reagan: Well, what are those?

Dr. Ryrie: Albanian, can you believe that? I understand that's at the printer.

Dr. Reagan: Well, is that something. And what else?

Dr. Ryrie: You know, a relatively small language group. And it's in process in Chinese.

Dr. Reagan: Well, that's, I guess, spoken by more people than anybody else in the world.

Dr. Ryrie: Oh absolutely, I'm just...

Dr. Reagan: Isn't that wonderful?

Dr. Ryrie: It's almost unbelievable that somebody would translate that.

Dr. Reagan: Well I understand that you just got back from Brazil for the introduction of your Portuguese version.

Dr. Ryrie: That's correct.

Dr. Reagan: That's great, so I guess you'll be going to China for that one.

Dr. Ryrie: I may be too old for that kind of trip to tell you the truth.

Dr. Reagan: I tell you what, that's a long hard trip.

Dr. Ryrie: But the prospects are his schedule is to have it out by the end of the year.

Dr. Reagan: Oh that's wonderful, praise God. We'll put that on a prayer list.

Dr. Ryrie: Amen.

Dr. Reagan: I had the opportunity to go to China not long ago and teach at a seminary there and those people are just so hungry for the Word. It's just unbelievable. Now, I've got a surprise for you. And that is that my wife recently wore out her Bible. I mean she just wore it out. And she came to me and she said, "Dave, I need a new Bible would you go get me one." I said, "Yeah what kind do you want?" She looked at me like I was nuts. And she said, "Well the only kind I'll use. That's the *Ryrie Study Bible*."

Dr. Ryrie: You have the most wonderful wife in the world.

Dr. Reagan: Here, this is her *Ryrie Study Bible*, I mean it is worn to a frazzle.

Dr. Ryrie: I love to see that kind of Bible.

Dr. Reagan: So what I did is I went out and bought her a brand new one. Look there, *Ryrie Study Bible*.

Dr. Ryrie: That's great.

Dr. Reagan: And it is in the New American Standard Version and I would just appreciate it so much if you would inscribe this to her. Because I tell you what, it would thrill her to death and it would get me a whole lot of brownie points, and I need them! Her name is Ann, A-N-N.

Dr. Ryrie: A-N-N.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, A-N-N, just Ann. And that would be a real great blessing, and while you're doing that let me say that I wore out my copy of your Study Bible a long time ago. But you know what I replaced it with? I replaced it with the electronic version. And so I'm not sure that all of our viewers are aware of the fact that just about any electronic Bible study software that you can get will have as an add-on your notes for an additional price. I think that would be true of just about any of them and so I use it that way all the time when I'm doing serious Bible study. I've just got the text on one side and I've got your study notes on the other. And also, you told me something about this new study Bible that really astounded me because when my wife looked in it she said, "Hey, here's a map, here's a chart, here's a diagram. I've never seen that before. Are you sure you got me a Ryrie Study Bible." Didn't you tell me you added 2,000 notes from the original addition?

Dr. Ryrie: Yeah, in '93 and '94 I expanded it and there are more notes and more in text helps like maps and charts. So I understand it's about 20% more material.

Dr. Reagan: Well, I highly recommend it.

Dr. Ryrie: I wrote a little bit. That's what took me so long.

Dr. Reagan: Oh okay, thanks. That will thrill her to death.

Dr. Ryrie: I want to give you a bonus.

Dr. Reagan: Okay that's great. Now, to get back to the *Scotfield Study Bible*. One thing that sort of intrigued me about that, Dr. Ryrie, is that the *Scotfield Study Bible* is still in print. In fact, I think it has a revision committee that revises it every so often. And it is written from what is called a

dispensational view point. You also have a dispensational view point so why was it you felt led to put out another study Bible when that one was already there?

Dr. Ryrie: Well, actually a publisher approached me.

Dr. Reagan: Okay.

Dr. Ryrie: Not the present publisher but somebody else.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Ryrie: And asked if I had a project to suggest to them. I said, well, evangelicals have not had a new, from the ground up study Bible. Scofield was being revised when we began to talk about mine and I thought maybe we needed a new one. And my approach is different from the Scofield. Not my theology but my approach because the Scofield, the notes are more synthesis, putting things together. And my notes are more explanatory, interpretive, some historical. They're shorter throughout the whole Bible. So I don't think while our theology is the same, our approach is different. And hopefully that justifies another. Well, nowadays, there's study Bibles for any body that wants to put one out.

Dr. Reagan: How long did it take you from the time you started on that project 'til the time it was published?

Dr. Ryrie: The original took my part about seven years.

Dr. Reagan: Seven years, wow.

Dr. Ryrie: But I was teaching some too. And the actual production took about 10, because they had to put things together. Now, I think that time can be reduced because of computers and so on.

Dr. Reagan: You know, when I asked....

Dr. Ryrie: I did it on a typewriter.

Dr. Reagan: On a typewriter? Yeah. Wow.

Dr. Ryrie: I did it in B.C., before computers. [Dave laughs]

Dr. Reagan: Well you know, when I asked you that question, "How long did it take you?", it reminded me of one time when I bought a beautiful painting, a southwestern painting. And then I had the opportunity to meet the artist. And I asked the artist, I said "How long did it take you to do this painting?" And he looked at it and he said, "65 years." And that's really it. I mean, you can talk about a 7 year period of time, but it's really a product of a lifetime of study.

Dr. Ryrie: A lifetime of teaching and study, yeah that's true. I almost said it that way.

Dr. Reagan: Now, for those people out there right now who are kind of scratching their head over a word I mentioned, I want you to explain that word. I mentioned that Scofield wrote his study Bible from a dispensational viewpoint and you did the same thing. What in the world is a dispensational viewpoint, what does it mean?

Dr. Ryrie: It just recognizes a very simple truth. And that is God has dispensed, dispensational, dispensed the way the rules by which He's governed the world differently at different times. Just like when our kids are growing up we dispense the rule about bedtime at different times as they grow throughout their childhood.

Dr. Reagan: And you don't have the same rules for a two year old that you do for a 17 year old.

Dr. Ryrie: No, you don't tell a two year old they can stay up until midnight. Some of them do, but. And you don't tell a 17 year old that they have to go to bed at 9 o' clock. That's what this dispensation is all about. God has dispensed the way a package of guidelines and rules that He wants to run the world at different times.

Dr. Reagan: So give us an example of two different dispensations.

Dr. Ryrie: Well, I think the clearest example is the set of rules that we call the Law, the Mosaic Law. There are 613 commandments. They govern almost every area of a Jewish person's life, not only how he worshipped but the things he gave, what he ate. Just everything was governed that way. For example, you and I are probably violating the Mosaic Law. I'm not sure about you but I know about me, because I'm wearing a shirt of mixed material.

Dr. Reagan: Oh yes.

Dr. Ryrie: And that was a violation, you didn't do that. You had to wear clothing that was not.....

Dr. Reagan: All wool, all cotton, whatever.

Dr. Ryrie: Not mixed at all. And I don't know what you had for breakfast, but if you had bacon you are a double sinner. [Dave chuckles]

Dr. Reagan: Reminds me of the prayer of Moody. Lord if You can bless what you have cursed bless it.

Dr. Ryrie: If You can bless what you've cursed under the law then bless it. Okay, so those are requirements. And they were for a purpose. I'm not sure I understand all the purpose but God gave them that way. Now today, God has given us all meats to enjoy with thanksgiving. That's a wonderful verse.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Ryrie: Because I happen to like bacon. [Dave chuckles] And I can eat it and feel that I am not disobeying God. Yes.

Dr. Reagan: So we're in a different dispensation.

Dr. Ryrie: He's dispensing food laws in a different way at different times.

Dr. Reagan: Actually, to some degree I guess all Christians are dispensationalists in the sense that they would at least recognize two dispensations, the old and the new. Dispensationalists tend to recognize some seven different dispensations, correct?

Dr. Ryrie: That's the usual. But I think if you recognize now today the new church grace and the one previous to that, Moses' law, and if you, as we are, pre-millennialist then you recognize the future one, the millennium, so you've got three. Going backwards, the millennium and today and the previous law and the law began at a certain point in time, so there's a pre-law time. So you've got four without trouble, you don't have to try.

Dr. Reagan: Well it seems to me that another distinguishing characteristic of dispensationalism is that dispensationalists are the only ones that I know of who clearly differentiate between the Church and Israel.

Dr. Ryrie: Absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: Explain that.

Dr. Ryrie: Not only clearly but consistently. Some people might clearly discern the difference between Israel and the Church but they wouldn't be consistent about it. They would say Israel and the Church are different in the millennium but not today, or not in days past. The Church in the Old Testament was Israel, and in the New Testament the Church is the new Israel. They're not differentiating consistently, but if they're pre-millennialists they probably differentiate the Church and Israel in the millennium.

Dr. Reagan: Well what do you say to those who argue that the Church has replaced Israel and therefore Israel has no future left with God?

Dr. Ryrie: Well, I say, be consistent. If you're gonna have a replacement, you've gotta have the whole package.

Dr. Reagan: Okay.

Dr. Ryrie: You can't just say the Church is going to have Israel's blessings, good things, and not take the cursings.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah we don't want the curses.

Dr. Ryrie: No we don't want the curses, not at all.

Dr. Reagan: Well it seems to me like this is one of the greatest errors that's made in the interpretation of the Bible today is the idea that the Church has replaced Israel. And as I mentioned earlier you go to some versions of the Bible and you find that here's a whole chapter in the Old Testament about Israel. And they say, no it's a chapter about the Church and they argue that God washed his hands of the Jewish people in the First Century, has no purpose left for them whatsoever and I wonder what they do with Romans 9-11.

Dr. Ryrie: Well there are other passages that distinguish Israel and the Church since the day of Pentecost, at which time the Church was supposed to have begun to replace Israel. The first mention of Church in the book of Acts is in chapter 5. And also in chapter 5, Gamaliel said, "you men of Israel", same chapter. And of course that's in 30's, you get to the 50s, and Paul wrote, "give no offense either to the Jews, Gentiles are the Church of God", and there's Jews distinguished from the Church.

Dr. Reagan: Do you know of any place in the Bible where Israel is used to refer to the Church?

Dr. Ryrie: No, there's one passage that people use but that's only an optional interpretation of the passage.

Dr. Reagan: Well, Dr. Ryrie, ever since I let the word out that I was going to be interviewing you on this television program I have been deluged with questions about one thing in particular, Bible prophecy. So if you'll agree to be back with us next week, we're gonna focus on questions concerning Bible prophecy.

Dr. Ryrie: I would be delighted and honored.

Dr. Reagan: Okay.

Dr. Ryrie: And thank you for having me this week.

Dr. Reagan: Alright, well great. Well, folks, I want to invite you to tune in again next week when I will be asking Dr. Ryrie questions specifically related to Bible prophecy. Until then, 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