

Christ in Prophecy

Interview 58: Al Gist on the Need for Hope

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: The year of 2020 proved to be a horrible one for most Americans as a result of the pandemic, the collapse of the stock market, the lockdowns at home, the rioting and looting, the bankruptcy of many business, and massive unemployment. As we enter this new year there is an overwhelming need for hope. Stay tuned for an interview with a man who can tell you where you can find that hope, and what it consists of.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. My colleague, Nathan Jones, and I have a very special guest with us today who I know is going to be a wonderful blessing to all of you. His name is Al Gist. Al is the founder and evangelist for Maranatha Evangelistic Ministries which is located in southwest Louisiana, near DeRidder. Welcome to Lamb & Lion Ministries, Brother.

Al Gist: Thank you, Brother Dave, it is good to be here. I appreciate the invitation to come and share a few things of what's been going on.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, sir, always.

Nathan Jones: Al, so good to have you here, sir.

Al Gist: Thank you, Nathan.

Nathan Jones: Oh, wow, well, the world is a mess; 2020 was a horrible, horrible year, people have been looking for hope. And when we talk about a horrible year, brother, I kind of think of you, because you have endured two, not one, but two hurricanes, you've lost most of your speaking engagements as an evangelist, and then you've also survived COVID. Can you please share some of your experiences, so people know how your 2020 was.

Al Gist: Well, I guess it started like it did with everyone, with COVID coming in the early part of the year, and the closures, and people losing their jobs, and having to quarantine, etcetera. And immediately I started getting calls from pastors canceling all of my speaking engagements. And so, I had some time on my hands, so I had to continue on, you know, with other things. But, then with COVID we had many other issues that came into play there. But later in the year I did actually catch the virus myself, and I was very sick for several weeks. But before that happened Hurricane Laura came through, right directly over where we live.

Nathan Jones: You live in southern Louisiana, right?

Al Gist: Yes, southwest Louisiana.

Dr. Reagan: It came right over Lake Charles, right?

AI Gist: Yes. We live about 30 miles north of Lake Charles. It came right over us. Fortunately, our house only suffered minor damages. But, the place, our home around us just was totally destroyed.

Dr. Reagan: Well, didn't you get hit also by a tornado during that time?

AI Gist: Yeah, we believe there was a spin off tornado from the hurricane that came right to our area where we live. And you could see the path that it took through the trees, it was like a giant saw that just sawed all the trees off. And just as it got into my front yard where it would hit my house I noticed that the trees around my house only had the top ten feet that were cut off.

Dr. Reagan: So, it lifted.

AI Gist: So, it lifted just as it got to my house.

Nathan Jones: Praise the Lord.

AI Gist: And I give the Lord all the praise for that. It literally, with the power of the tornado, had it hit my home it would have just been splinters, it would have been nothing left. On the west side where it went over the trees on that side were undamaged, so I know that it had actually lifted right as it got to my home. So, we thank God for that.

Nathan Jones: But there was a second hurricane. I know one, but two, and that hasn't happened in how many years?

AI Gist: I don't know. It's never happened in my lifetime that I can remember. But Hurricane Laura was the most destructive, that was the first one. Later on, they had so many storms, remember they started using the Greek alphabet to name them.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

AI Gist: Well, this was Hurricane Delta the second one that came about one month later, and took the exact same path, and kind of--

Dr. Reagan: You got a lot of rain out of that, didn't you?

AI Gist: --cleaned up on the things that Laura missed, it came along and destroyed it. So, we had so many trees down with Laura somebody asked about Hurricane Delta and I said, "Well, we had many just a few trees that fell." But when you have three or four trees that fall, and you've already had a hundred trees that fell, so it really doesn't make much difference.

Nathan Jones: Yeah, you live in the woods.

AI Gist: So, Delta was not as bad as Laura, the first one.

Dr. Reagan: The bottom line is it was a bad year, a horrendous year for everybody, and for you in particular, oh, man.

AI Gist: It was terrible.

Dr. Reagan: So, my question is this: We have just been inundated with e-mails, and phone calls, and questions about: Are we in the Tribulation?

AI Gist: We are in a tribulation, but we are not in the Tribulation.

Dr. Reagan: Why aren't we in the Tribulation? People want to know that.

AI Gist: Well, there are a lot of things that are going to happen at the beginning of the Tribulation. In fact, the singular event that actually initiates the Tribulation is the peace covenant that the Antichrist will make with Israel, and that certainly has not happened. And there are many other things. The rise of Antichrist I believe will happen prior to the Tribulation or he couldn't make that treaty, and we haven't seen that. So, there's a lot of things that the Bible tells us must happen before the Tribulation. But quickly let me say, there's not anything in the Bible that says this must happen before the Rapture of the church. The Lord could come at any time.

Dr. Reagan: And I think one thing we need to emphasize is it people think things are bad now it is nothing compared to what it is going to be like in the Tribulation.

AI Gist: Right. The Lord said in Matthew 24 that these signs, these destructive signs actually would be like labor pains. And labor pains, Brother Dave, as you know they get more intense, they become more frequent. So, I think we're just seeing the beginning of that. What's coming is going to be far worse.

Dr. Reagan: And we've got to as we're speaking in this particular program we've got about 300,000 Americans who have died from the pandemic. In the Tribulation one-half of the population of the world is going to die during the first 3 ½ years. Nobody will have to call anybody to ask if we are in the Tribulation.

AI Gist: Yeah, you are exactly right. It's going to be awful beyond our imagination.

Nathan Jones: Four billion people when you think about it. That's amazing. Well, a lot of people have hope for the future in that we might have a great spiritual revival. One thing about tribulations, little "t" is that they bring about spiritual renewal. Do you see prophetically that we are going to have a great spiritual revival before the Lord returns?

AI Gist: You know I may have a little bit different view on that, but I see that the Church kind of comes full circle from the first century church. Now, think about the first century, the Church was vibrant, it was growing, there were miracles being performed, but they were in the midst of a terrible time of persecution, the government was corrupt, etcetera, etcetera. And it seems to me like we are getting back to that same time as we move towards the end of the Church Age; we find that governments are becoming more corrupt, and more deceitful, and persecution against Christianity is certainly on the increase. But, in local areas where people have remained true to God's Word, and continue to seek His face and serve Him, I'm hearing stories of local places like that where revival is true.

Dr. Reagan: But there's not many of those.

AI Gist: There are not many, you're right.

Dr. Reagan: I mean the number one question, AI, that we receive today is: I live in so-in-so do you know of a Bible believing church anywhere near me?

AI Gist: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: Because they can't find them.

AI Gist: I get the same question, Brother Dave. There's a lot of churches, and I use that term very loosely out there that are not really Bible believing churches.

Dr. Reagan: No. They are teaching pop psychology and denying the fundamentals of the faith.

AI Gist: Social Gospel, watered down Gospel, you know name it and claim it.

Dr. Reagan: Endorsing abortion, endorsing homosexual marriage, and every abomination you can think of. Because the church it seems to me today, at large, is so much more interested in pleasing man, then pleasing God.

AI Gist: Exactly. And why is that? Well, the Bible tells us that it is the love of money that is the root of all evil. And behind these churches is the love of money, just like it is with politics, and entertainment, and everything else, it is all about how people love money and seek after material gain, rather than focusing on the fundamentals of the faith when you hear it in the scriptures.

Nathan Jones: So, we do have hope then for personal revival, or small revival.

AI Gist: Yes.

Nathan Jones: Just probably not churchwide revival because we are in the church of Laodicea?

AI Gist: I don't think that society as a whole will see a great overwhelming revival across it.

Dr. Reagan: We don't have any prophecies to that effect.

AI Gist: No, we don't.

Dr. Reagan: It says things are going to get worse.

AI Gist: It says there is going to be a time of great apostasy as we get towards the end, and that is what you were just referring to, the churches are falling away from the truth of God's Word.

Nathan Jones: When you read about the Tribulation, and you see the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, you've got the two witnesses, you've got the Gospel Angel. All the materials that we will be leaving behind. People looking at the Rapture. And you read about all the tribes, tongues, nations, people from all over the world will turn to Jesus Christ. So, it sounds like prophetically there is a great revival of people who are left behind, they come to Jesus. They are not reviving, so to say, but they are giving their lives to Jesus.

AI Gist: I think there is a going to be a large harvest of souls during the Tribulation. I think maybe, sadly, Bible prophecy people we talk about the horrors of the Tribulation, and we forget to talk about the harvest of the Tribulation. There will be many people that come to Christ during the Tribulation. In fact, I think that many people who are aware of what took place with the Rapture of the Church, many of them will then give their hearts to Christ.

Dr. Reagan: Well, AI, I know you and your wife very, very well, and I know that through all this horrendous thing, in fact I called you one day and said, "Your life is beginning to sound like the life of Job in the Bible."

Nathan Jones: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: And I know you all well, and I know that through all this you have been able to maintain a very vibrant hope, and I want to know how you were able to do that. And what we are going to do is we are going to pause for a moment for a break and an announcement, and when we come back from that announcement I want you to tell us how you have been able to maintain hope through all this. You know in Romans chapter 15, in verse 13 it says, “Our God is a God of hope.”

AI Gist: Yes. Yes.

Dr. Reagan: And I want you to talk about that when we come back.

AI Gist: I would be glad to.

Dr. Reagan: And so, we are going to take a break right now, and then after the announcement we will come back.

AI Gist: Thanks.

Part 2

Nathan Jones: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and our interview with AI Gist about how to find hope in this dark world. Well, AI, people are looking for hope, and this was a big election year and many people seemed to be looking for hope in politics. Can they find any hope in that?

AI Gist: People look for hope in all sorts of things, including politics. But politics change like the wind. And you know if you are going to put your hope in something it certainly needs to be something that is steadfast, something that is stable; of course, the answer to that is Jesus Christ, He is our hope. But yes, people have put their hope in politics, and this election if it has ever been evident, we’ve certainly seen it in this particular election. People are so adamant. And I’m not discounting the importance of what is taking place in politics in our country, but that is not where our hope is as born again believers, our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ. And He’s far above all the political humbug that is going on.

Nathan Jones: Amen.

AI Gist: And all the things that are taking places. And so, politics is important, I’m not saying that it’s not, but people need to put their faith in Christ. The politics are going to be what they are going to be, but our relationship and what the Lord has planned for us and our future is unchangeable. We have that to stand on.

Dr. Reagan: Okay, that brings us to a major issues, AI, and that is, you know I read a verse right before the break and it says our God is a God of hope, and you said put your hope in Jesus. But what do you say to the non-believer who says, now you tell me to put my hope in God, put my hope in Jesus, and yet, God allows this pandemic. He allows this horrible hurricane. He allows this tornado. He allows COVID to put you in the bed for two weeks. How can you put your hope in a God who allows all that to come into your life?

AI Gist: Well, God never makes the promise to us that He’s not going to allow bad things, hardships, tribulations to come. Things are going to happen in life, in our individual lives that take us down, so to speak. Certainly, across a nation like ours, we’ve seen a lot of things

happen this year that have been very difficult to deal with. God never promises to remove all of that. What He does promise is that He will never leave us nor forsake us. And that with His strength and His encouragement, and His provision for us we can handle anything, we can go through things. And Brother Dave, I have personally experienced that this year. I mean we've gone through COVID, we've gone through hurricanes, two hurricanes that just reeked great destruction and devastation around us, and all around our city and our area, and then on top of all of that I got the COVID virus. And you know, it would have been real easy to get depressed I'll tell you that. What we got was tired. We got tired.

Dr. Reagan: Sure. Sure.

AI Gist: Because we were doing clean up work, and I felt bad and all of that. But we never lost that hope that we had in Christ. And my wife, bless her heart, she is so full of the Lord, she just continually says, "We are going to get through it. God is with us. We will get through it." And that's the key. God's not going to remove all the hard stuff; He will help you to go through it. I think of the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. God didn't save them from the fire, He saved them through the fire. And that's His promise. And we can have hope in that.

Nathan Jones: Well, I find the Bible a place of hope because God says that He is the source of hope. Look at Romans 15:13 for instance, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." And that's just one of many verses, right.

AI Gist: Yes. Yes. In fact, I started looking through the psalms and looking at the encouragement that I could find in the book of Psalms. And one that really jumped off the page sort of for me was Psalm 31:24, and it says, "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord." And if we put our hope in Him, then He will encourage us and carry us through.

Dr. Reagan: Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." He was in a dank, dark prison at that time, and they didn't have colored TVs and air conditioning and all the stuff prisons have today. And yet he sang, "Rejoice! Rejoice in the Lord always." He said, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Nathan Jones: Wow.

AI Gist: Amen.

Dr. Reagan: The unbeliever finds that hard to believe.

AI Gist: They do and you're absolutely right. Jeremiah said this in Jeremiah 17:7, he said, "Blessed, blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." The man who has his hope in the Lord, that's the man who is blessed. I know the world can't see it, it's almost like they have some kind of spiritual blinders that no matter what you say they can't seem to come to grips with the idea that God could be such a tremendous help to you in a time of tribulation. All we can do is be that witness that that's the way God is, and that's the way He works. It is His character to take care of His people and to provide for us.

Dr. Reagan: If you don't have that kind of hope you look for it in other places, And you don't find it in other places. And the result has been during this pandemic a great increase in suicide.

AI Gist: Yeah. And when you don't find it that just adds to your depression. You feel like there is no such thing as hope.

Dr. Reagan: Do you have another point there, Nathan?

Nathan Jones: Well, I like Nahum 1:7, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him." I think of the medieval time periods where there used to be a castle and the serfdom would live outside the castle, and when the invading armies would come the serfdom would run to the castle and hide behind the walls and be protected by the lord. And that is kind of the vision Nahum is giving here, is that when the troubles of life come barraging and coming down on you, you get behind the Lord's protective walls; He's your stronghold.

AI Gist: He is our shield and defender for sure. The enemy, and we have a very real enemy guys. We have an enemy, and I'm not talking about foreign countries or anything like that or terrorism, I'm talking about the enemy who is Satan. And he wants to destroy everything that is of God. He wants to destroy the churches. He wants to destroy us as individual Christians. But the promise that we have from the Lord is that He is our shield, and He is our protector. He will provide for us. You know I don't even know if I should say this. But you would think with all that has happened to us we would suffer financially very badly. I want you guys to know, and I want our viewers to know that we have done very well financially through all of this.

Nathan Jones: Praise the Lord.

AI Gist: And I'm going to tell you how because many of God's people came to our aid. Now you see if you don't have the Lord working in the hearts of His people to come to you then you wouldn't have that. But I had that. And we had that.

Nathan Jones: And didn't you even have the Mississippi Baptist Association send crews in to work on your property?

AI Gist: Yeah, just like on day two, or three after the hurricane, the Mississippi Baptist Association, one of the associations came over with ten men with chainsaws and they started cleaning the place up. And then our son-in-law's church sent people over also. And so, we had a lot of Christians that came to our aid to clean our place. We had people, believers who came to our financial aid and helped to support us and get us through this. All of that, you know, comes from the goodness of the hearts of these people. But ultimately it comes from God Himself. It is God leading them to do those things that provides for us.

Dr. Reagan: Yes. He motivates them.

AI Gist: He does, yeah.

Dr. Reagan: You know during my wife's nine years of dementia where she was just spiraling down into a darkness I would feed her every evening and read a scripture to her. Everyday I read the same scripture to her. Now I read other scriptures as well, but I always ended with this one: Romans 8:18, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is yet to be revealed to us."

AI Gist: Amen.

Dr. Reagan: In fact, I put that scripture on her marker, her head marker at the tomb. And I believe that with all my heart. That is talking about hope in the future. Now, what is that talking about when it says, "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared?" Have we got any indication of what that glory is that is going to be revealed to us?

AI Gist: Brother Dave, my whole ministry, and essentially your ministry, and Nathan's ministry is to look at the prophetic Word of God that gives us that Blessed Hope of what's coming. I mean God is here, today, He's here now. He gets us through the things of this life. But what He has in store for us in the future so far supersedes anything that this mortal life has today that it is incomparable.

Dr. Reagan: Tell us about it.

AI Gist: Well, I believe, and I know you do, that the Lord Jesus is coming soon for His people. And I see signs that tell us that we are approaching that, or it could literally happen at any moment. And so, we have that tremendous promise; Titus 2 tells us about the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. That's the first. Things for us as believers will totally change after that because from then on, number one, we are living in that new glorified body. Praise the Lord.

Nathan Jones: Amen.

AI Gist: My back won't hurt anymore.

Dr. Reagan: You are talking about the Rapture of the Church.

AI Gist: At the Rapture of the Church, and the resurrection that will take place at that time. And the changing of our body into that new glorified body. So, we have that to look forward to. But the most important thing that we have to look forward to is from then on, and forever we will be in the very literal presence of Jesus Christ our Savior.

Dr. Reagan: Hallelujah!

AI Gist: That changes the whole picture. That changes everything. And of course, we have the glories of Heaven to enjoy, we can't even imagine it. The Bible tells us that the eyes have not seen, nor ears heard, or the heart. We can't imagine what God has prepared for us.

Dr. Reagan: And even before that we are going to reign with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Millennium.

AI Gist: Yes, and then we have a thousand year reign where the Lord is going to allow us to participate in His government and actually rule over this.

Dr. Reagan: We will see this earth flooded with peace, righteousness, and justice.

AI Gist: It will be a time unlike anything else in all of history, and we will be major participants, reigning with the Lord in it. It is just so much.

Dr. Reagan: And the tragedy is that in most of the churches in this nation today there is silence in the pulpit concerning Bible prophecy, and people don't know what the promises are, and they have very little hope as a result of that.

AI Gist: And here's where we, literally you look at it this is the bottom line, this is the essence of what our hope is built upon, is that eternal future that we have with the Lord. In this life, in this mortal life bad stuff happens, it just happens to everybody, Christians and non-Christians.

Dr. Reagan: We live in a fallen world.

Nathan Jones: Yes.

AI Gist: But in that coming life, in the presence of the Lord things like that will be gone, it will be no more. And I'm talking about the eternal future that we have with the Lord. There will be no more crying, and no more tears, and no more death, and heartache, and pain that we suffer in this life. What a tremendous thing to look forward to, and to have hope in. It keeps you going. It really keeps you going to know that this is not the end. Paul said if this is all that we had, we would of all men be most miserable, this would be terrible if this is all we had to look forward to.

Nathan Jones: I love that prophetic perspective because when you see Bible prophecy you get the big 30,000 foot view the way that God sees it. And you realize that the sufferings that we endure now are like this. And then when you think that we only live maybe up to 100 years or so, but we are going to live thousands, and ten thousands, and millions.

Dr. Reagan: There you go.

Nathan Jones: This part gets smaller and smaller and it fades away.

AI Gist: Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: Well, I used to get very, very upset about the political world. Matter of fact my wife said, I could have my own reality program by just putting the camera on me watching the evening news and shouting. I don't do that anymore. I remind myself of Psalm 2 which says, "That while all the politicians are conspiring against God and His anointed One, God sits in the heavens and laughs." Not because He doesn't care, but because He has it all under control. He has the wisdom and the power to orchestrate all the evil of Satan, and mankind to the triumph of Jesus Christ, and that gives me hope.

AI Gist: Amen.

Closing

Nathan Jones: Well, Brother AI you have blessed me, you've given me hope. Let folks know how they can get in touch with you so you can share that hope with them as well.

AI Gist: Well, Nathan, probably the easiest way is simply for folks to go to our website and you can do that by going to maranathaevangelisticministries.com, and there at our website we have all of our contact information and you can reach us in various ways.

Dr. Reagan: Well, folks, that is our program for this week. I pray, the Lord willing, that you will be back with us again next week. Until then this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program