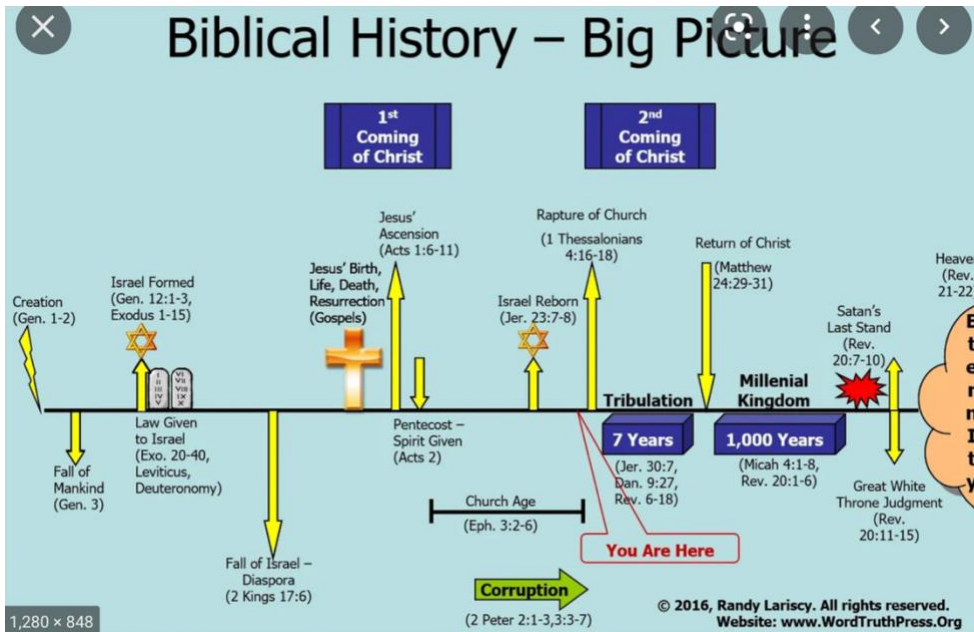


Last Sunday we took a look at the chart below to give us an overall idea of God’s plan for mankind and the world. We did not deal with creation or the fall of man, but we took up with how and when Israel was formed as a nation, and we also looked at the question of why Israel was chosen by God to be “His people.” This morning we’re going to take a closer look at what we call the Rapture, as well as the evidence that supports that the Church will be removed from the earth before this event. In addition, we’ll examine what we should be doing while we wait. Let’s make a quick review of last week.



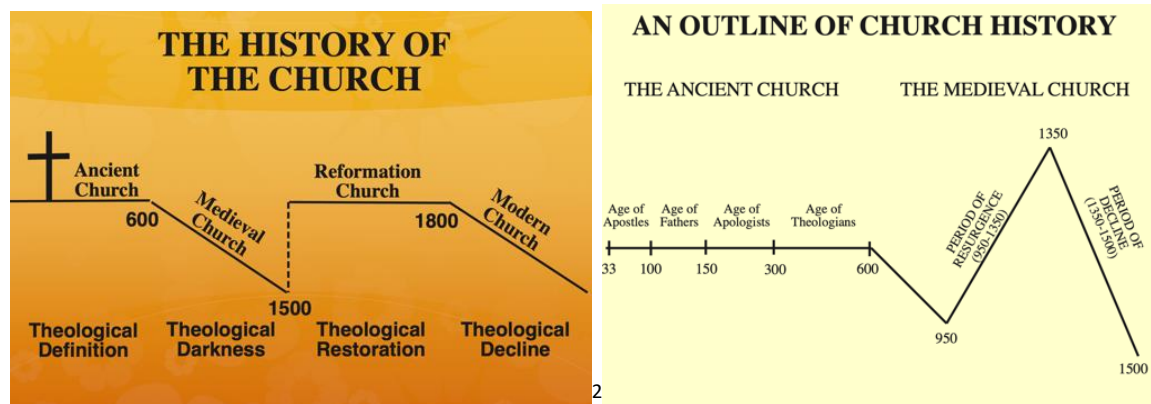
In Genesis chapter 12 God made certain unilateral promises to the Jews.

*Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> **I will make you a great nation;** I will **bless you and make your name great;** And **you shall be a blessing.** <sup>3</sup> I will **bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you;** And in you **all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**” (Genesis 12:1-3, NKJV). Answering the question of “why” God would choose these people, Moses tells us it was not because of Israel’s greatness, but it was just grace (Deuteronomy 7:7-8a). God chose Israel out of pure grace. It was unmerited favor that God chose to bestow on Israel.*

After learning this, we then jumped straight over to the Day of Pentecost. We learned that the Church came into being when the Holy Spirit was received on the day of Pentecost 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead. With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Church was born and would continue on for approximately 2,000 years without any significant prophecy being fulfilled relevant to the end times. Let’s look at a few visuals to help us understand the overall 2,000-year period of the Church. I am not talking

about an institution of the Church, rather I am talking about THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL (as some call it): being all those people who have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus during the 2,000-year period since Jesus ascended to heaven. The Church has always been and always will be the people. It is not a place. It is not an ecclesiastical hierarchy. It is not Jerusalem. It is not in Rome. The Church is the worldwide body of believers.

The time of the Ancient Church included the time of the Apostles, the Age of the Fathers, the Age of the Apologists, and the Age of Theologians. After the Apostles, including Peter and Paul, others arose who carried the faith. We see in the outline below the time periods that Dr House<sup>1</sup> calls the Age of the Apologists and the Age of the Theologians.



Some of the most significant people from each category would include:

- 1st Century - Apostles - Peter and Paul
- 2nd Century - Fathers - Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch
- 2nd Century - Apologists - Justin Martyr & Irenaeus
- 2nd Century - Theologians - Tertullian (a lawyer)
- 3rd Century - Theologians - Origen, Athenagoras
- 4th Century - Theologians - Athanasias, Augustine

When I took Church History 1, I studied the period from the time of Jesus up to the time of the Reformation. The first schism (breakup) of the Church happened about half way through the time period in 1,053 AD. That is when the Eastern Church (Orthodox) and the Roman Church (Roman Catholic Church) split up. They both essentially excommunicated the other. The Orthodox Church could no longer tolerate the rising power grab by the Bishop of Rome (the Pope). Rome wanted to control all of the Church, which had never been done historically. Likewise, the Orthodox Church disagreed with the Roman use of statues. They saw it as too close to idolatry. There was also a difference between the two on the date of Resurrection Sunday (Easter). Interestingly enough, according to some of the teaching I received in Baptist seminary,

<sup>1</sup> Dr Wayne House, a biblical scholar and author, is a regular congregant of UGBC of Whitehall at this time

<sup>2</sup> Graph provided by Dr H Wayne House

there were always remnants of people who practiced the Christian faith much like we do today, living simple Christian lives, practicing a believer's baptism, etc.

In the earliest days of the Church there were individual congregations led by a pastor or a group of pastors in each place. There was a church in Philippi, a church in Ephesus, a church in Jerusalem, a church in Rome, a church in Antioch, a church in all of those places that we studied in the Book of Acts. There was no instance of one of the churches being the head church over the others.<sup>3</sup> The Church in Rome, desiring centralized power and domination over the others, used the passage in Matthew chapter 16 to argue supremacy over the others. Let's take a close look at the passage.

### Revelation of the Church

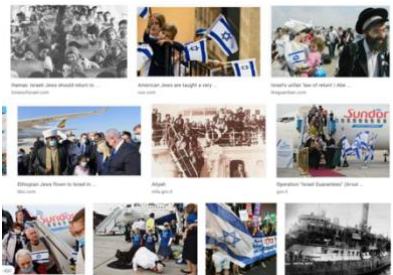
<sup>18</sup> And I also say to you that <sup>n</sup>you are Peter, and <sup>o</sup>on this rock I will build My  
 δε<sub>2</sub> κάγω<sub>1</sub> ← λέγω<sub>4</sub> → σοι<sub>3</sub> ὅτι<sub>5</sub> σύ<sub>6</sub> εἶ<sub>7</sub> Πέτρος<sub>8</sub> καί<sub>9</sub> ἐπὶ<sub>10</sub> ταύτη<sub>11</sub> τῇ<sub>12</sub> πέτρα<sub>13</sub> → → οἰκοδομήσω<sub>14</sub> μου<sub>15</sub>  
 de kagō legō soi hoti sy ei Petros kai epi tautē tē petra oikodomēsō mou

church, and <sup>p</sup>the gates of Hades shall not <sup>7</sup>prevail against it. <sup>19 q</sup>And I will give you  
 τῆν<sub>16</sub> ἐκκλησίαν<sub>17</sub> καί<sub>18</sub> → πύλαι<sub>19</sub> → ᾧ<sub>20</sub> δου<sub>21</sub> ▶<sup>22</sup> οὐ<sub>21</sub> καταχύσουσιν<sub>22</sub> ← αὐτῆς<sub>23</sub> καί<sub>24</sub> → → δώσω<sub>25</sub> σοι<sub>26</sub>  
 tēn ekklesiān kai pylai hadou ou katischysousin autēs kai dōsō soi

the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth <sup>8</sup>will be bound  
 τὰς<sub>4</sub> κλεῖς<sub>5</sub> ▶<sup>7</sup> τῆς<sub>6</sub> βασιλείας<sub>7</sub> → τῶν<sub>8</sub> οὐρανῶν<sub>9</sub> καί<sub>10</sub> ὃ<sub>11</sub> ἐάν<sub>12</sub> → δήσης<sub>13</sub> ἐπὶ<sub>14</sub> τῆς<sub>15</sub> γῆς<sub>16</sub> → ἔσται<sub>17</sub> δεδεμένον<sub>18</sub>  
 tas kleis tēs basileias tōn ouranōn kai ho ean dēsēs epi tēs gēs estai dedemenon

in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”  
 ἐν<sub>19</sub> τοῖς<sub>20</sub> οὐρανοῖς<sub>21</sub> καί<sub>22</sub> ὃ<sub>23</sub> ἐάν<sub>24</sub> → λύσης<sub>25</sub> ἐπὶ<sub>26</sub> τῆς<sub>27</sub> γῆς<sub>28</sub> → ἔσται<sub>29</sub> λελυμένον<sub>30</sub> ἐν<sub>31</sub> τοῖς<sub>32</sub> οὐρανοῖς<sub>33</sub>  
 en tois ouranois kai ho ean lysēs epi tēs gēs estai lelymenon en tois ouranois

You will notice that this graphic taken from the original Greek text shows the distinction between Peter (Petros) and “This rock” (Petra) upon which God will build His church. The “rock” upon which the Church is built is the **Confession of Faith pronounced by Peter** in the verses preceding this verse (not Peter himself). That confession is when he says, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:16). So “the Church” is those who have joined Peter in that confession; those who have believed in Jesus as Messiah. The main take away here is that the Church will be built and **Jesus says that NOTHING shall prevail against it**. This lets us know that the Church will survive on planet earth until it is taken out at the time of the Rapture. That is when the Church Age will end. Let's now look at where we are as the Church.



As was explained last Sunday, the next significant event in the timeline of history happened on May 14, 1948 with the birth of the State of Israel. This has happened during the “Church Age.” This event has fulfilled many prophecies concerning Israel, and, in a way, **it is the entrance gate to the beginning of the End of Times**. Nothing moving forward in prophecy could begin to happen without the Jews having a physical restoration in the land of Israel. We read the amazing passage from the Book of Isaiah, “It shall

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/origin-Catholic-church.html>

*come to pass in that day That the <sup>4</sup>Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea. <sup>12</sup> He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:11-12, NKJV).* This has happened and continues to happen in our lifetime RIGHT NOW.

The Rapture is now imminent. So, what does “imminent” mean? When the birth of a child is past due, it is imminent. I gave an analogy of when my father and I used to have to cross our cattle over a railroad track out on Stickerbush ranch. The ranch was divided by a railroad track. It took about 15-20 minutes to safely move the herd over to the other side. Dad would get down on his belly and put his ear on the railroad track to make sure there was no train that was “imminent.” If we could hear the train vibrations in the track, we would not cross with the cattle, and we’d see a train in the next 20 minutes or so. It is that same way now with the Rapture. The regathering of the Jews to Israel coupled with the incessant drive by elitists towards a one-world government, combined with so many other events (wars and rumors of wars) have created a rumbling in the tracks. We may not see the train itself, but if you listen closely, you can hear the rumbling. His coming is imminent.

As I explained last Sunday, the Rapture is an event that I want to cover a little more in depth this morning. Go back above and look at the first graphic in this study. You will see the Rapture of the Church with a reference to the scripture passage found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. If you did not read this with us last Sunday you should take out your Bible to read about the event of which we speak. Let’s examine several reasons why I support the “pre-trib” viewpoint that this event called the rapture will happen **before** the Great Tribulation (7-year period of judgment on unbelievers).

### **Support of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture**

#### **1) No Wrath for the Church.**

The Tribulation is a time of judgment for the unbelieving Jew and Gentile. God has never brought His righteous people under judgment. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). The church of Philadelphia was promised to be kept from “the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world” (Revelation 3:10). The promise is not preservation, rather it is deliverance from the hour and time of trial. The Church is not appointed to wrath (i.e. The Tribulation). We know this from Romans 5:8-9 and 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9.

<sup>8</sup> *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we shall be saved from wrath through Him.** (Romans 5:8-9, NKJV).*

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<sup>4</sup> Google: Jews returning to Israel

<sup>9</sup> For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, <sup>10</sup> and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, NKJV).

## 2) No Mention of the Church.

The Book of Revelation mentions the Church 19 times in the first three chapters. After that, none of the other chapters of the Book of Revelation mention the Church. It is silent as to the Church. I am sure that God would have provided insight and instructions for the Church if the Church were to be present during the Tribulation. There are none. Hence, we can deduce that we will not be here.

## 3) Distinction between Israel and the Church.

“Pretribulationism” is the only theory which clearly maintains the distinction between Israel and the Church and God’s separate plans for each. The 70 “sevens” of [Daniel 9:24](#) are decreed upon Daniel’s people (the Jews) and Daniel’s holy city (Jerusalem). This prophecy makes it plain that the 70<sup>th</sup> week (the Tribulation) is a time of purging and restoration for Israel and Jerusalem, not for the church.”<sup>5</sup>

## 4) Pre-Trib is the only view that holds that that the rapture is imminent.

From John 21:22-23 we find that the early church saw Christ’s return as imminent. That is why Paul was writing the passage we read earlier to the church in Thessaloniki. The imminence of Christ’s return is not congruent with all of the other viewpoints on the timing of the Rapture.

## 5) The “restrainer” (the Holy Spirit) will be removed before the Antichrist is revealed.

### WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The “restrainer” in 2 Thes. 2:6, which refers to the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit at work through the body of Christ during the current Church Age, supports a pre-trib rapture.

“And you know what *restrains* (neuter) him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now *restrains* (masculine) will do so until he is taken out of the way.” — 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7

Since “the lawless one” (Antichrist) cannot be revealed until the restrainer (Holy Spirit) is taken away (2 Thess. 2:7,8), the tribulation cannot begin until the church is removed.

“Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.” — Revelation 3:10

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, John explains that the Church will be “kept from the hour of testing.” That is super comforting. The reason it will be so incredibly horrible is because the Holy Spirit will be removed. During the entire period of the Church Age, the Holy Spirit has worked on planet earth to “restrain” evil. There is so much goodness in the world because the Holy Spirit is present in the hearts of so many godly men and women. This leads to my last point. Some try to tell us that

we can be on the lookout for the Antichrist. The “restrainer” mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 will be taken away BEFORE the “lawless one” can be revealed. If the Holy Spirit/restrainer is removed, that means that all believers who have the Holy Spirit abiding with them must also be removed. We’ll be gone before the Antichrist is revealed. This also supports the idea of a Rapture before the Tribulation.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/pretribulationism.html>

The Pre-Trib view is in line with God's character in delivering the righteous from judgment. Examples of that grace include Noah and his household that were saved from judgment, Lot who was delivered from Sodom, and Rahab who God sought out to save from the destruction of Jericho (2 Peter 2:6-9). I can't think of a single instance in the Bible where the righteous are judged with the wrath of God. I don't know about you, but I take great comfort from these words. Christ's return is imminent, and you and I will be saved from the judgment that is coming. So how should we prepare?

- 1) Live in the light of His first coming (Luke 19:11-27).
- 2) Be discerning. Don't be deceived (Mark 13).
- 3) Accept the uncertainties of life. They're okay. Just watch and be alert (Mark 13).
- 4) Don't lose hope (Titus 2:11-13).
- 5) Encourage one another (Philippians 4:18).
- 6) Live as if today were the day. Live every day for eternity. Do the significant (2 Corinthians 6:2).
- 7) Keep on doing the work Jesus left for you to do (Mark 13:7-10).

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He gave the Church her instructions: *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* (Acts 1:8, NKJV). The author Luke then tells us that the disciples were just staring up into heaven, and two angels appeared to them and said, *"Why are you standing there gazing into heaven? Jesus is coming back—so get busy!"* (vv. 9-11).

Church, let's get busy doing what He would have us do.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at [uniongrove362@gmail.com](mailto:uniongrove362@gmail.com) or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.