

Foundational Teachings



Left Behind

SOME WILL BE;
THE IMPORTANT
QUESTION IS WHEN?

—by Charles P. Schmitt

The multi-volume series *Left Behind*, written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, has appeared on the *New York Times* bestseller list and recently was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine. That people in the world should take such an interest in the last days and in the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is very encouraging; and for that I am grateful to the Lord. Among the Church, however, as wise stewards of the mysteries of God, certain important questions need to be asked; primarily, is LaHaye's and Jenkins' timeline of end-time events accurate? We know that some are going to be "left behind," according to Matthew 24:40–41; but the important question is *when*.

LaHaye and Jenkins have based their books on the theory that seven years before the glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ, faithful Christians will be secretly raptured—translated, caught up to heaven. This understanding has been known as the "pre-tribulation rapture." Legitimate concerns about the pre-tribulation rapture are that it rests upon questionable biblical interpretation and, historically, it found its way into the evangelical mainstream only in the mid-1800s. Millions of godly, evangelical believers for almost 1,800 years did *not* believe in a pre-tribulation rapture—among these, men of apostolic stature, such as John and Charles Wesley, Charles Spurgeon, Matthew Henry, John Knox, John Hus, William Carey, John Calvin, Isaac Newton, George Whitfield, A.B. Simpson, George Mueller (who is reported to have stated, "If you can show me a trumpet *after the last* [1 Corinthians 15:52] and a resurrection *before the first* [Revelation 20:4–5], then I can believe this new doctrine."), John Newton, Jonathan Edwards, John Wycliffe, John Bunyan, and many others. And as far as the post-apostolic, early Church Fathers go, they apparently did not believe in a pre-tribulation rapture either! They write: "Then shall the race of men come into the fire of proving trial and many be made to stumble and fall. But *those who remain established in their faith shall be saved under the very curse*" (Didache; 16:5). "Happy ye who endure the

great tribulation that is coming on..." (Hermas; Chapter II, Vision II). Irenaeus (disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John the Beloved) comments in his *Against Heresies* (5.25.3) concerning the reign of the antichrist, that "this tyranny shall last, during which the saints shall be put to flight..." And Augustine, commenting on Daniel 7:21, states, "He who reads this passage even half asleep cannot fail to see that the kingdom of antichrist shall fiercely, though for a short time, *assail the Church*."

Gerhard Pfandi, Ph.D., associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, in an excellent article, "The Rapture—Why It Cannot Occur before the Second Coming," traces some of the roots of the pre-tribulation rapture teaching:

The roots of this theory may be traced back to the time of the Counter-Reformation. The Protestant reformers in the sixteenth century identified the papacy as the antichrist of prophecy. ["I believe the pope is the masked and incarnate devil, because he is the antichrist," Luther stated. The reformers were, therefore, apparently *not* pre-tribulationists.] Several Jesuit scholars undertook the task of defending the papacy against these attacks, among these, Cardinal Bellarmine (1542–1621), head of the Jesuit College in Rome ... and the Spanish Jesuit, Francisco Ribera (1537–1591) who projected the antichrist prophecies ... to a future antichrist who would appear in the time of the end and continue in power for three and a half years.... Ribera's futurism laid the foundation for dispensationalism.... John Nelson (J.N.) Darby (1800–1882) is usually regarded as the father of dispensationalism.... Darby developed an elaborate philosophy in which he divided history into eras or dispensations, 'each of which contained a different order by which God worked out His redemptive plan.' Furthermore, Darby asserted that Christ's coming would occur in two stages. The first, an invisible 'secret rapture' of the believers, would end the great 'parenthesis' or Church age which began when the Jews rejected Christ. Following the rapture, the Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel would be literally fulfilled, leading to the great tribulation, which would end with the second coming of Christ in glory.... The doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture was disseminated around the world, primarily through Darby's Brethren Movement [and men such as Arno Gabelein, Harry Ironside, James Gray, etc.] and the Scofield Reference Bible [for untold multitudes

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became pre-tribulationists as a result of Scofield's notes, which, because attached to his reference Bible, became highly authoritative in the minds of many.] In the twentieth century the theory was taught in schools like Moody Bible Institute and Dallas Theological Seminary. Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth* and many books of a similar nature further propagated the secret rapture theory. (Adapted from *Ministry*, September 2001.)

Other scholars also cite the 1820s Irvingite charismatic visionary, Margaret MacDonald, as another of the sources of modern-day pre-tribulationism. The Irvingites most certainly influenced J.N. Darby in his thinking.

But What Did Jesus and the Apostles Teach?

Jesus' final teaching on His Second Coming, given on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, and recorded in Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21, is extremely clear. (And if anyone should know the times and seasons of His return, Jesus surely would!) In Matthew 24, there is *no* Second Coming and *no* rapture until "immediately *after* the tribulation of those days ... [for] *then* shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and *they shall gather together His elect* from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:29–31; Mark 12:24–27; Luke 21:25–28). Luke, in 21:36, gives one additional charge: "Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape [translated as "pass safely through," in the L.B., margin, and in the N.E.B., and as "come safely through," in J.B. Phillips] all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man." And so our Lord sought to prepare His disciples for His coming, and in the process told them exactly when He was coming—"after the tribulation of those days," and how not to be caught unawares,

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Personal Yearnings

—by Doty Schmitt

As the year began, I found my heart filled with gratitude and anticipation, for in this new year Charles and I have much to celebrate. The year 2003 marks our 50th year in ministry, our 40th year of marriage, and our 20th year as Immanuel’s Church! We also celebrate the past three years in which we have been blessed with five grandchildren! The Lord has done so much for us!

As I look back to over 50 years in the Kingdom of God, overwhelming gratitude fills my heart, and truly with David I can declare: “Since my youth, O God, You have taught me, and to this day I declare Your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray do not forsake me, O God, till I declare Your power to the next generation, Your might to all who are to come” (Psalm 71:17–18).

All of us who have lived for a while can look back on seasons of deep trials, awesome victories, and many days of consistently trusting God in the routines of life. And through it all we have learned to trust in Jesus and to depend upon His Word!

As this year of celebration unfolds before us I find a number of deep yearnings welling up within my soul. In the midst of all the good

of these past years, my heart cries out that the Lord would not allow us to be simply *impressive* but *glorious* in His sight! As much as He has captured our hearts and lives, we know there is so much more in Him. Perhaps this is why Moses’ cry has always pierced my heart: “Teach me Your ways” and “show me Your glory” (Exodus 33:13, 18).

Both of these cries arose from Moses’ spirit after many years of walking with His God. And so it is with us also. It seems the longer we walk with the Lord the more hungry we become just to “know Him” more deeply and more intimately. O Lord, let the glory of your presence descend upon us in all we are and do!

And then there is the challenge of Psalm 92:12–15: “The righteous will flourish like a palm tree ... planted in the house of the Lord.... They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green....” As the years progress, God’s will for us is not that we fade away, but rather that we flourish and abound in fruitfulness. In this significant year, my heart’s cry is that our lives would produce more of the fruit of holiness and righteousness, and much fruit in many lives coming to know and love Jesus Christ. To that end we pray for a deep and fresh move of God’s Holy Spirit!

Then there is a third cry moving deep within my heart, beautifully reflected in Psalm 78:3–4. The psalmist declares: “What we have heard and known ... we will not hide them from their children, we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done.”

What an indescribable joy to observe the awesome grace of God at work within the tender spirits of our five precious grandchildren—just to hear them pray, sing, and dance, both at home and in church, and to sit with them and enjoy Christian praise and biblical videos, and to share with them in great simplicity the good news of Jesus and His love! Is anything more rewarding than to teach our children, the next generation, the commands and deeds of our precious Lord Jesus Christ?

And so our prayer for each of you is that you too may *hunger* for His glorious presence, that you may *flourish* in the grace of our God, and that you will boldly *proclaim* the awesome deeds of our God to the next generation! †

Charles and Doty are pleased to announce the arrival of their fifth grandchild!

Hunter Scott Whittle

Son of Scott and Dianna

November 8, 2002

7 pounds, 6 ounces, 20 inches



“We give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

—1 Chronicles 16:34

THOUGHTS FROM ISAIAH, CHAPTERS 59 AND 60—

God’s Promises Concerning Israel and the Muslim World

—by Charles P. Schmitt

All the promises of God are “yes and amen in Christ Jesus” (2 Corinthians 1:20), and His promises are ours to believe and to plead and to claim in prayer in Jesus’ name! Recently my attention was drawn to the promises of God in Isaiah, chapters 59 and 60, concerning the various nations of the Middle East. They are amazing in their affirmative declarations.

Concerning Israel

“The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the LORD.”

Concerning All the Redeemed People of God

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you ... and His glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”

Concerning Israel and the Arab World

“Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah [modern-day Trans Jordan]. And all from Sheba [modern-day Yemen] will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD. All Kedar’s flocks [Kedar was the second-born son of Ishmael; today, the Bedouin tribes in the Arabian Desert] will be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth [the first-born son of Ishmael, Genesis 25:13] will serve you; they will be accepted as offerings on My altar and I will adorn My glorious temple.... Though in anger I struck you, in favor I will show you compassion. Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night.... The glory of Lebanon [today, that nation north of Israel] will come to you ... to adorn the place of My sanctuary; and I will glorify the place of My feet. The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all

who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.... I will make you the everlasting pride and joy of all generations.... Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.... The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.... I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly.” (Isaiah 59:20; 60:1–3, 6–16, 19, 22)

These are some of God’s “very great and precious [magnificent and awesome] promises” (2 Peter 1:4) concerning the Middle East—promises that we are to plead in intercession and claim in faith over this very troubled and explosive part of the world. The Body of Christ has been raised up in these momentous days as “watchmen on the walls,” and these are to be our bold declarations of faith! Amen! †

Joint Reconciliation Statement of Pastor John Kilpatrick and Dr. Michael L. Brown

ON DECEMBER 12, 2002, Pastor John Kilpatrick and Dr. Michael L. Brown met together privately for three hours for the purpose of reconciliation. As a result of that meeting, they issued the following joint statement:

"We are pleased to announce that a complete and total reconciliation has taken place between us. We have no outstanding issues, nor is there a hint of bitterness or unforgiveness between us. We fully bless one another, and we fully bless one another's respective churches, schools, and ministries.

"We know that many believers were deeply hurt by the breach that took place exactly two years ago, and because of that we ask the forgiveness of the Body of Christ worldwide and the forgiveness of the Body in Pensacola in particular. We desire to be examples of unity and grace, not division and strife, and as the Holy Spirit has indeed done a supernatural work and there is not a hint of ill will between us and a real sense of friendship and trust has been totally restored, we pray that the Holy Spirit will work supernaturally in the hearts of all those who have been wounded by the separation. May healing and grace be released! May restoration come! May unity replace division!"

IN CELEBRATION OF THIS RECENT RECONCILIATION WE WISH TO RELEASE THIS STUDY—

"Going Their Separate Ways": A Scriptural Re-evaluation of the Division between Paul and Barnabas

—by Charles P. Schmitt

The Message on this passage dealing with the separation between Paul and Barnabas reads: "Tempers flared, and they ended up going their separate ways" (Acts 15:39). The KJV reads: "The contention was so sharp ... they departed asunder." J.B. Phillips translates this passage: "There was a sharp clash of opinions so ... they went their separate ways." C.B. Williams reads, "The disagreement was so sharp that they separated...."

These two great apostles, Paul and Barnabas, had such sharp disagreement over taking the young defector, John Mark, with them on their second apostolic journey that the result was a severe rupture in relationship and in serving together. "They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left commended by the brothers..." (Acts 15:39–40, NIV).

The Greek word used here for "contention" ("disagreement") is *paroxysmos*, from which we get our English word paroxysm, "a sudden attack ... a sudden outburst" (Webster). The Greek word used here for "departed asunder" ("parted company") is *apochorizomai*, used in 1 Corinthians 7:10–11 ("*chorizo*") as a synonym for divorce. Whatever happened between Paul and Barnabas—however such a seemingly benign issue became such a bone of contention—one thing is certain, the outcome was a virtual "divorce" in the Body of Christ.

One of the first places that Paul revisited in Acts 16 on his second apostolic journey was the Galatian area where he and Barnabas had just previously labored together establishing the churches in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia (cf. Acts 16:1–2 with 14:21–23). I often wondered how Paul explained to these new believers in these Galatian cities that he and Barnabas, their spiritual parents, were now "divorced"; that he and Barnabas had had *such* a falling out, *such* a separation, *such* a parting of company, that they were no longer

able to serve side by side in the Kingdom of God? And, as in every divorce, I am sure it was the children who suffered the most, for in this case these were the spiritual children of Paul and Barnabas in the family of God.

For years, the traditional evangelical spin on this catastrophe has not satisfied me—"this is how God increases the ministry"; "now instead of one missionary team, there would be two"; etc. It has just become increasingly hard for me to believe that God used *sin* to increase His kingdom in the earth. That is not His way. Then one day, recently, I had an unusual insight.

According to one New Testament timeline, this division between Paul and Barnabas took place around A.D. 53. Within three years, by A.D. 56, Paul was laboring to establish the Body of Christ at Corinth, the chief city of Greece. Within another three years, in A.D. 59, he was writing his first letter back to the Corinthians, probably from Ephesus. In that first letter to the Corinthians, Paul makes a most unusual comment concerning himself and Barnabas: "Don't we have the right to food and drink? Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brother and Cephas [Peter]? Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living ... if we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?" (9:4–6, 11). Apparently, *something* had happened—a reconciliation, a coming together, a falling into one another's arms in forgiveness and acceptance—for now Paul and Barnabas were apparently known to the Corinthians as "fellow laborers" together in the Kingdom of God! And the good news didn't stop there. The seemingly unstable youth, John Mark, over whom the whole controversy began, was addressed in 2 Timothy 4:11 by Paul in these words: "Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry." An NIV note places the writing of 2 Timothy around A.D. 66–67. But Paul, in

writing to the Colossians (around A.D. 60) had apparently *already* been reconciled to Mark (See Colossians 4:10)!

Broken relationships are *never* of God. Satan's mathematics is always "subtraction" and "division." God's math is always "addition" and "multiplication"!

Perhaps that great passage in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13, actually gives us the keys to this wonderful reconciliation that took place between Paul and Barnabas and then between Paul and John Mark. J.B. Phillips, as only he can, translates 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 in this way: "This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience—it looks for a way of being constructive.... It is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.... It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails. Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen."

Godly conflict resolution, I do not believe, has ever come by an exhaustive sorting out of who was right and who was wrong, who said this and who did that. Not that some issues may not need to be discussed, but after all is said and done, it is only *when the love of God touches our wounded hearts* that broken relationships can be healed, and somehow sorting out all the issues then may even seem unnecessary. The love of God is our greatest resource; and according to Paul in Romans 5:5, this amazing and redemptive love has been "niagara-ed" (profusely poured out) into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us! We must, therefore, rise up and believe today for the miracle of God's love to prevail all across the Body of Christ—healing marriages, reconciling families, reuniting broken relationships within the Church and, then, being poured forth upon a shattered world, reconciling lost men and women to God! Amen! †

that they might "come safely through" all these things to stand before the Son of Man.

Dispensationalism, which appears to rebuild the dividing wall between Israel and the Church (that very wall that Jesus died to destroy according to Ephesians 2:11–22), dismisses these words of Jesus in Matthew 24 as pertinent only "for the Jews." But Jesus, in Matthew 28:19–20, when He commissioned His disciples to go into *all the world* and "make disciples of *all nations*," commissioned them to teach *all these nations everything* He had commanded them, and that included the truths of Matthew 24 concerning His return!

What Were the Apostles' Understandings?

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:51–52 places the rapture of the Church "at the *last trumpet*," as does John in Revelation 11:15–18: "The *seventh* angel sounded his trumpet [and this is the *last one*], and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever.... *The time has come* for judging the dead, and for rewarding Your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence Your Name, both small and great....'" Obviously, all of this takes place at the end of the tribulation period, after the blowing of the seven trumpets of judgment.

In Revelation 3:10–11 Jesus had promised: "I will keep you *from* [which preposition is better translated "*through*"] the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test those who live on the earth." (The Greek preposition used here according to the NIV footnote and the Living Bible footnote "can mean either 'keep you *from* undergoing' or 'keep you *through* the hour of trial.'" The weight of the rest of New Testament teaching leans in favor of the translation "keep you *through* the hour of trial.")

In the midst of the bowls of wrath, just before the final bowl, this word is given to John in Revelation 16:15, obviously for the saints: "Behold I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

In Revelation 20:4–6, the *first* resurrection is clearly described (and remember, there *cannot* be a resurrection seven years *before* the *first* resurrection, or the first resurrection would not be the *first*!). In this *first* resurrection are found "those who had been beheaded because of their testimony ... for they had not worshipped the beast [the antichrist] or his image..."; so the rapture and the first resurrection apparently are at the *end* of the great

tribulation, *after* the reign of the antichrist and *not before*!

From the book of Revelation, an argument for a pre-tribulation rapture has been advanced by some, insofar as the word "church" *per se* was not used by John between chapters 4 and 21; the reasoning being that the Church is not present in the earth during these chapters. The facts are that these are *highly symbolic chapters*, abounding with figures of speech for both Jesus and His Church, and that the Church *does* appear in the symbolism of these chapters as the "saints," the "kingdom of priests," the "great multitude," the "candlesticks," the "firstfruits," God's "people," the "bride," the "armies of heaven," the "new Jerusalem," etc., even as Jesus Himself appears with numerous symbolic names also—the Lamb, the Lion, the Manchild, the Word of God, the Alpha and Omega, etc. (Besides, arguments from silence do not make the best arguments. Shall we conclude that because God's name was seemingly absent from the book of Esther that He was not present in the book of Esther? Quite to the contrary; God was very much present and active!) And the notion that the "saints" of Revelation 4–21 are "the Jews," rather than the many-membered, Jewish-Gentile Body of Christ defies the revelation of God's "one new man" (Ephesians 2:15) and undercuts Paul's understanding of Israel's *re-inclusion* into that "one new man" in these last days (note carefully Romans 11:17, 23–27, where restored Israel in the last days is not raised up as an entity *separate* from the Church but rather grafted back into that olive tree which the mainly Gentile Church had been already graciously grafted into by God). Once a serious student of Scripture understands the issue of Israel's restoration to the Body of Christ in these last days, *all* the seeming arguments for both dispensationalism and the pre-tribulation rapture utterly fall apart.

Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–8 also clearly taught that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the rapture (the gathering, or mustering) of the saints to Jesus *cannot* take place *until* the great apostasy has *first* happened and the man of sin (the antichrist) is *first* revealed (verse 3). Paul also taught that the Church will get "relief" from persecution and tribulation only "*when* [and not secretly seven years before] the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels to punish those who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel..." (2 Thessalonians 1:6–8). [Also, the understanding in this passage that the one who now holds the antichrist back is the Holy Spirit in the Church, is an unfounded theory. To seek to prove a pre-tribulation rapture on such a supposition is not sound exegesis. Though we are not told exactly who the "restraining one" is (it probably is Michael the restraining archangel, as Daniel 10 teaches), it is most certainly *not* the Holy Spirit in the Church, for *if* the Holy Spirit is caught up into heaven in the Church at

the onset of the tribulation, who then will be poured out in power over all the earth *during* the tribulation?]

One of the main concerns among pre-tribulationists is a valid biblical concern—that the Church will not endure the wrath of God in the closing days of time. And indeed it will *not*, for "God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). This salvation from wrath, however, does not come through a secret pre-tribulation rapture but, according to verse 8 in this very passage, through the saints *putting on the armor of God*, that they might stand "*in the evil day*" (see Ephesians 6:3). Powerful examples are given to us in Holy Scripture of how God was thus able to keep His own *in* the hour of His outpoured wrath—for example, the children of Israel were preserved in the plagues that fell on Egypt. Many of those plagues are identical to the ones that will yet fall in the Great Tribulation—but God's ancient people were safely "kept by the power of God" (see Exodus 8:22; 9:4–7; 9:25–26; 10:22; 12:12–13).

And God's promise is as true for us today as it was for them back then: "*No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt*" (Exodus 12:13). The promises of Psalm 91 are as powerful for us today as they were for Israel in the days that God judged Egypt. "You will not fear ... the plague that destroys at midday ... it will not come near you..." (Psalm 91:5–8). Further examples of God's keeping power in the midst of great tribulation are Daniel's being kept safely *in* the lion's den and the three Hebrew sons kept safely *in* the fiery furnace. Indeed, these promises were valid for them and will be for us: "When you pass *through* the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass *through* the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk *through* the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze" (Isaiah 43:2). Amen!

But Exactly Why Should We Be Here?

The question "Why should we be here?" has a most powerful answer. First of all, only a pampered, effete western Christianity can afford to believe in an end-time that is tribulation-free. The scores of millions who suffered tribulation, even unto death, under atheistic communism did not have that luxury! And should the saints suffer at the hands of godless men in these last days, it will only be out of love for our Lord Jesus that they will endure. But the real reason for being here—the real reason for our actually *wanting* to be here—is that these last days are ordained by God to be days of unparalleled outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh and days of unprecedented apostolic harvest among the nations! And, simply stated, God has promised to take care of

us in these last days if we will but give ourselves to carry out His purposes of world-wide apostolic evangelism! (And no, He has not relegated this harvest solely to those Jews who are left behind, but rather to His total Jewish-Gentile Bride, the Body of Messiah!)

Just note the implications of these promises—“In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people... The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. *And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*” (Acts 2:17–21). What a harvest is implicit in that statement! “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that *times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord*, and that He may send the Christ, who has been appointed before you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven *until the time comes for God to restore everything*, as He promised long ago through His holy prophets” (Acts 3:19–21). What a wonderful promise for these last days! Also Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in. “*And so all Israel will be saved...*” (Romans 11:25–26). What a harvest! “Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how *the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn [early] and spring [latter] rains*. You, too, be patient and stand firm because the Lord’s coming is near” (James 5:7–8). And as a result of this glorious outpouring, John could testify concerning the harvest: “I looked and there before me was a *great multitude that no one could count*, from every nation, tribe, people and language... These are they who have *come out of the great tribulation*; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9, 14). Who would not want to participate in such a glorious happening?

Scripturally, God’s plan for the climax of the ages is clear—an unparalleled end-time outpouring of His Holy Spirit, accompanied by an unprecedented harvest of souls, accompanied by the protection of His own from His falling wrath on the ungodly, and finally Jesus’ Second Coming. And Jesus’ return includes our mustering (our gathering) together to meet the Lord (literally, to “*greet the Lord in the air*,” 1 Thessalonians 4:17) and then, as His gathered and assembled army, to return with Him to reign over all the earth (Revelation 19:14)! And in that mustering or gathering together [which is the real *purpose* of the rapture], the unprepared *will* be “left behind” for judgment, but the prepared people of God will be wedded to our Lord Jesus Christ forever, in the glorious “marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:7, 9, 17). I can think of nothing more wonderful for us to give ourselves to than this great and wide purpose of God in these last days! Amen! †

A Parable for These Last Days

This spring when you see geese heading north—flying along in V formation—you might consider what science has discovered as to why they fly that way.

- As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in V formation the whole flock adds at least 71 percent flying range, than if each bird flew on its own. *People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going more quickly and easily—because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.*
- When a goose falls out of formation it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front. *If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed the same way we are.*
- When the head goose gets tired it rotates back in the wing and another goose flies point. *It is sensible to take turns doing demanding jobs with people or with geese flying north.*
- Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. *What do we say when we honk from behind?*
- Finally, and this is important, when a goose gets sick, or is wounded by gunshots, and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with that goose and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly, or until it dies; and only then do they launch out on their own, or with another formation, to catch up with their group. *If we have the sense of a goose, we will stand by each other like that. This is what the Body of Christ is all about—especially in these last days!* †

The Church I Know

—by David Brickner, Executive Director of Jews for Jesus

Have you ever read a fascinating but fatally flawed book? That’s how I would describe *Constantine’s Sword, The Church and the Jew*—a *New York Times* best seller and winner of the National Book Award. While the author purports to tell the history of the relationship between my Jewish people and the Church, “the Church” that he portrays is a grotesque impostor.

This book shows the history of the Church as so many centuries of bloodthirsty anti-Semites and superstitious simpletons. It chronicles obscenely wealthy and corrupt institutions whose leaders took advantage of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society. The more I read, the more it dawned on me, “This is not a history of the Church. It is a continuation of one of the greatest deceptions of all time, a well-articulated lie that people continue to believe to this very day.”

No one can deny that terrible atrocities have been committed in the name of Jesus and seemingly sanctioned by “the Church.” Nor can we deny more contemporary scandals of greed and immorality—even pedophile priests whose superiors apparently protected them from the law. And politics? There is no denying that some clergymen use their pulpits as a platform, not even realizing that in their desire to be relevant they are spouting anti-Semitic rhetoric crafted by terrorist propagandists.

Yet none of this represents the Church I know. The world cannot discern between man-made religion and the true Church—but we need to remember the difference.

The real Church is not a corrupted institution; it is a community of redeemed people who love the Lord and one another. The real Church is not a bunch of bloodthirsty anti-Semites; it is the Body of Christ, Jesus’ representatives on the earth. The real Church is not a collection of superstitious simpletons, but of people who study and submit to the teaching of the Scriptures. The real Church is the people who stoop to serve others, following the example of Y’shua (Jesus), the true leader of the Church. Those who truly represent Jesus love Him—and love His kinsmen according to the flesh, the Jewish people.

This is the Church I know. This is the Church that reached out to me when I was wandering far from God—the Church that welcomed me in from the cold to be warmed by the love of Christ and the fellowship of His saints. It’s the community that showed me that friendship with God is so much more satisfying than friendship with the world. This is the body of believers who taught me to love and study God’s Word, to practice and pursue a life of prayer, to cultivate a longing to worship and praise the Lord of heaven, to give, to serve others, to spread the good news to all people.

The Church I know and love is made up of followers of Jesus from all around the world—Jews and Gentiles alike. There is nothing more important in life than following Jesus—and all who follow Him are part of His Church. †

—excerpts from *Jews for Jesus* newsletter, November 2002



As in the Days of Noah

—by Guy C. Carey

With the popularity of the *Left Behind* series there has been much discussion in the media and in Christian circles concerning the nature of the return of Christ. As a young man I was deeply impacted by similar questions that were stirred by the release of Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. As I considered the return of our Lord, I was led to Matthew 24.

Many were saying that darkness would increase on the earth. Trouble, trials, wars, and famine would proliferate as God judged the earth. They also said that the Church would be removed and many would be "left behind" to suffer the great tribulation. As I considered this in light of Matthew 24, I saw a different scenario. We were to know the signs of the times (Matthew 24:32-36). We were also to know that in the season that preceded the coming of the Son of Man, something wonderful and glorious would transpire—the Gospel would be "preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end would come" (Matthew 24:14). In this passage one thought in particular also caught my attention—Jesus' words that "as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:37). Those who were not tuned into what God was doing through Noah were caught in the great judgment of God. We are admonished by Jesus in Matthew 24:37-44, not to be like them but rather to realize what God is doing and give ourselves wholly to it (Matthew 24:45-46).

In the days of Noah, God called Noah to construct a vessel of deliverance from the coming judgment. Those who believed his report would be carried through the judgment in this vessel of deliverance, known as the ark. God said, "Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.... I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall enter the ark" Genesis 6:14, 18.

This vessel of wood was to be covered with pitch within and without. It would be constructed in the sight of all. The very construction of the vessel would be a prophetic declaration of both the coming judgment and God's way of deliverance.

The work was not understood by the masses and yet people of faith worked diligently to complete the ark. This ark would then carry them through the storm by lifting them above the waters of judgment into a dimension never before seen by men, only to return to a cleansed earth to establish a new world!

As the ark was in the days of Noah, the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ has become God's vessel of deliverance today. Human beings, *the wood of the earth*, covered within and without with the blood of Jesus are being fashioned by the power of the Holy Spirit into a glorious ark. The Church, a dwelling not made with the hands of man, is being constructed each day in the sight of the masses, yet not always understood. This daily construction proclaims that there is an impending judgment and yet there is a glorious vessel of deliverance to carry those who enter it through that judgment. In this wonderful vessel, the Church, we will rise to new dimensions of God's life in the midst of His very judgment.

Let us give our hearts fully to the establishing of the people of God, His Church, on the earth. Gather wood from the forest of humanity! Cover this wood in the atoning blood of Jesus! Then see to it that the wood is rightly fitted into God's vessel of deliverance, His Church. As we are built together we become a prophetic declaration of the impending judgment. We are also a building of God into which men may run from every tongue, tribe, and nation to be delivered from the wrath to come. Christ's Church is a safe place, a sanctuary, in these last days. We must not neglect the opportunity to be built into this awesome ark of God's deliverance, and we must also seek to be wise builders of this glorious end-time ark of God's deliverance! †



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How Can We Possibly Doubt?

—by Irvin Baxter, Jr., *Endtime magazine*

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When 1,000 religious leaders converge on the UN to adopt a plan for global governance and one week later the largest ever gathering of heads-of-state convene at the UN to approve the same document, dare we ignore the prophecy of a union of politics and religion in the endtime?

The simple truth is this—the endtime referred to throughout Scripture has now arrived. We are that generation that shall not pass until all things be fulfilled. If we are ever going to carry out the Great Commission, we must do it now! The time for talking about total commitment is over. Now is the time to act!

We are the people that Daniel prophesied about when he said, "They that know their God shall be strong and do exploits!" Ladies and gentlemen, it's exploit time! Let's go for it! †

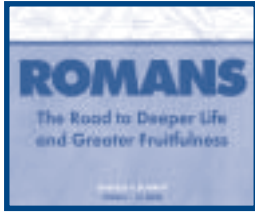


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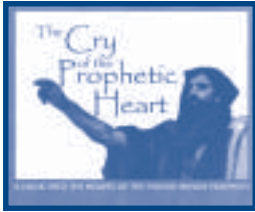
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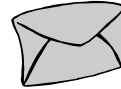
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What Kind of Church Is Immanuel's Church?

by Charles P. Schmitt, founding pastor

Immanuel's Church is an evangelical church. By this we mean that the evangel, the good news of saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is to be clearly and continually held forth in the midst of all that we say or do. The necessity of a sincere commitment to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith is likewise continually urged upon all we come in contact with, in the confidence that those who, by the grace of God, do repent and believe the Gospel, will be born anew by the Holy Spirit.

We believe that the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is, therefore, composed of all those who have thus been "born again and washed in Jesus'

blood," and that our mission as an evangelical church is to help spread the knowledge of this saving grace of our God throughout the world and to see the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ apostolically built up in every place.

Immanuel's Church is likewise a deeper-life, Spirit-filled fellowship of believers. By "deeper life" we mean that every believer in Christ, having been freely forgiven and justified by faith in Jesus' precious blood, is likewise called to be sanctified (or, made pure in heart) and empowered by God, through faith in the inner working of the Spirit of Christ.

Consequently, we believe that every believer, having been regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, is to be filled (and filled to overflowing) with that same Holy Spirit. We believe the normal Christian life is the Spirit-filled life.

Out of regard for the authority of the Holy Scripture, which is the inspired Word of God, we not only expect to see the fruit of the Holy Spirit borne in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23), but also to see the empowering gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit operative in and through our lives (1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28)—all necessary to edify the church and to reach the lost. We, therefore, believe these gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit are for the Church *today* and will not cease until Jesus returns in power and glory and

we see Him "face to face" (1 Corinthians 1:7-8; 13:8-12).

Historically, therefore, we identify ourselves squarely with the apostolic church of the first century, whose precepts and practices are faithfully recorded for us on the pages of the New Testament. We, likewise, historically identify ourselves with the cardinal sixteenth century Reformation doctrine of justification by faith through the merits of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the cardinal seventeenth and eighteenth century restoration of the doctrine of sanctification by faith through the inner work of the Spirit of Christ, and with the cardinal nineteenth and twentieth century restoration of the dynamic, empowering revival presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

We identify ourselves with the Reformation-Holiness-Pentecostal-Charismatic-Revival river of grace that flows through the history of these restoration centuries, down to this present hour. This river of grace largely accounts for the current exponential growth of the Kingdom of God in the earth as hundreds of millions are finding Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. And it is within the banks of this great river of God's renewal, restoration, and revival power that we, as a church, willingly and joyfully find ourselves moving! Amen! †

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