

The Church and Beyond

By Timothy Horner

This message is about “Church the Body” and not “Church the Building”. Of course there is plenty to say about “Church the Building” but that will have to be done at another time. Without going too deep into this, the Church is simply put “The Body of Christ” which is all Christians who believes in and accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Who also accepts the true Gospel being that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and was born of the Virgin Mary and died on the cross for all of our sins, rose from the dead on the third day and is alive in Heaven today as our Savior.

Hopefully, the title itself is enough to draw attention to readers. While there are many documents which describe the body of Christ, I’d like to focus in depth on all the elements which encompasses the Church to include the significant changes to this earth after the Church is removed and taken to Heaven.

In **Matthew 16:17-18** Jesus tells the apostle Peter that He will build his **church** on the rock and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In **Matthew 7:24** Jesus says that a wise man builds his house on a rock and a foolish man builds his house on sand and that a ‘wise man’ is whoever obeys His word.

I understand that the ‘Church’ has numerous interpretations such as the church(s) of the Gentiles, the Seven Churches, Church of Christ, Etc. however; for the purpose of this writing, I am specifically speaking of the ‘body of Christ’ and not a physical building; but I’ll touch on it a little later on.

Ephesians 4:4-6 says, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

Image of the Church

There was a time when a Church building represented the body of Christ and the world view of a Church was a place to go for changing their ways and learn the truth about Jesus. Unfortunately, our Churches have become a place of confusion filled with hypocrites and mixed signals depending on who is doing the preaching. There have been a number of priests, pastors, deacons, evangelists, etc. who have created some type of sin rather it be drunkenness, molestation, fornication, etc. Many different messages are being taught to the congregations as well which adds to the negative image of a Church.

Fundamental doctrines are rarely seen any more and instead churches have tried to reconstruct the Christian beliefs, standards and methods of the church to accommodate the postmodern culture.

The messages have been geared toward the greater good of building relationships therefore presenting a feel-good message was needed to attract more people or even to gain popularity in the communities.

There are still some good churches around who truly are teaching the gospel of Christ and their messages are based on the solid scriptural truth straight out of the bible and these are the churches to look for when searching for a solid family home church to attend on a regular basis.

Many people today attend church on Sunday to present the image of a Christian and who honestly feel they are good people just because they go to church, maybe they don't curse, don't drink, don't smoke, always try to think of others or help the less fortunate. These are all wonderful and they are traits of a Christian but being a good person alone won't save you. You must read the bible on a regular basis which is the word of God, you must have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ praying always and placing him before everything else that's going on in your life. You cannot have the best of both worlds by going to church on Sunday and living life as normal the rest of the week.

Nobody and I repeat Nobody on this earth is perfect and all have sinned but we must confess our sins to the Lord and try not to do them again. If you understand the purpose of the cross you will see that Jesus sacrificed His life on that cross to pay the price for our sins so that we can be free through Him.

The Body of Christ or the true Christians should be easily recognizable and stand out from everyone else because evidence of their relationship with Christ will be in every area of their lives. Being a Christian is not easy because there is evil all around us in this world presenting us with many temptations which seem to be more appealing to our flesh than trying to do what is right according to the Word. I am no different than anyone else and I certainly have my struggles but what I can tell you is that the more and more you read the bible and pray to the Lord about all areas of your life, the easier it will become. The word is daily feeding to our souls and while the bible may be difficult to understand at times, if you pray before you read and ask for guidance and understanding, it will become easier but with everything we have against us in this world, we must discipline ourselves to read more and pray more so that we as Christians can learn to defeat evil and set that example for our friends and family every day. There are many different types of bibles which may be easier for reading but be careful when choosing because some bibles were written without spiritual guidance. How do you know? Well the closer relationship you have with the Lord, the more you will be able to recognize the true word of God.

Ok, so we have covered a lot about who the Church is and we are soon to end the Church Age as the Rapture soon approaches.

1 Thessalonians, 4:16-18 - "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words".

John 14:2-3 Jesus said ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also’.

I don’t know about you but I can’t wait to see what my mansion in heaven looks like. Where there is so much to say just on the Rapture this briefly sums it up and so my advice to all is to be ready! Once this happens, life here on earth will change drastically and become nearly impossible to survive. Please don’t take this lightly and seek to establish your relationship with Jesus so you too can be Raptured.

Beyond The Church

The Rapture:

The Rapture is the next occurrence on God's calendar and is the literal, visible, and bodily return of Christ in the heavenlies. He shall return as He left (**Acts 1:9-11**). One can easily know how He departed by studying **Luke 24:39**. He had a new resurrected body of flesh and bones, a body that could be seen, touched and fed (**Luke 24:41-43**). When He returns, all believers, dead and living, will also be taken bodily to meet Him in the clouds. We shall be changed as this mortal body puts on immortality and is transformed to be like Jesus' body in a moment, within the twinkling of an eye (**1 Corinthians 15:51-54**).

This event ends the Church Age and ushers in the Tribulation period. The Rapture of the Church involves the resurrection of the Christian dead as well as all the believers living at that time **Thessalonians 4:13-18**. Regarding the Christian dead, the Bible teaches that the body is asleep in one place (the grave) and the soul is alive in another place (heaven). To be 'absent from the body' is to be present with the Lord (**2 Corinthians 5:8**).

The return of Christ for His Church is a signless and always—imminent event. All signs of the Lord's return have to do with the coming of Christ to set up His kingdom. They are only indicators of the approaching Rapture because that event precedes the establishment of the kingdom by seven years. In fact; we must be raptured in order to return with Him during the Second Coming which is after the tribulation.

The moment that the Antichrist signs the seven-year peace treaty, the **Tribulation period** will begin and a timetable will then be evident. Date-setting will now be conclusive and Christ's return will no longer be imminent. It will be exactly 84 months or 2,520 days until Christ returns (Second-Coming) to establish His kingdom. The Rapture must precede the Tribulation Hour. When one considers God's purpose for the Tribulation, it is difficult to place the Bride of Christ (Church) into such a horrendous scene. Why should Christ's Bride suffer the judgments of the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials found in Revelation 6, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16 when the Church cannot even be found beyond the third chapter of Revelation?

The Tribulation Hour is primarily a time of judgment upon a Christ-rejecting, God-rejecting world.

“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”
Romans 6:23

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (**Luke 21:36**).

1 Corinthians 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Tribulation

The Tribulation lasts seven years and is undoubtedly the worst bombardment of tragedy the earth will ever experience. God has a three-fold purpose for this period.

1. To save and allow many Jews who will enter the Millennium to experience the fulfillment of the kingdom promises to Israel made by God in the covenants. 2. To save a multitude of Gentiles who will then populate the millennial kingdom. 3. To pour out judgments on unbelieving mankind and nations. The final 42 months or three-and-one-half year period is so terrifying that it is called the Great Tribulation (**Revelation 7:14**).

There is a reason the first half is more peaceful. Because Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, is soon to return, Satan, the great counterfeiter and super deceiver called Antichrist will present himself as the messiah and be accepted! Satan will enter the body of a man and proclaim himself as God **2 Thessalonians 2:4**. This Antichrist will come into prominence and power by presenting a "peace program" to the nations. The contracts are signed and confirmed (**Daniel 9:27**). However, in the middle of the seven-year-period, the Antichrist dishonors his treaties and makes the last 42 months the bloodiest in world history.

The Great Tribulation

This is a time of incomparable judgment from God (Daniel 12:1; Joel 2:2; Matthew 24:21). A total of 21 judgments fall upon the earth. They constitute three series of seven each and are described as the seal, trumpet and vial (or bowl) judgments. This is also called the Time of Jacob's Trouble as mentioned in (Revelation 6, 8, 9, 15 and 16)

Matthew 24:21-22 - then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Mark of the Beast

During the Tribulation, the False Prophet will insist that people loyal to the Antichrist wear a mark which will be placed either in their right hand or in their forehead. This must be shown in order to buy or sell, or to make any business transaction. This mark will consist of the name of the Beast (Antichrist) or his number, 666 (Revelation 14:11).

Revelation 13:16-18 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

It is believed that the Image of the Beast, may be a type of Master Computer in order to give the Antichrist all the information necessary for him to govern the world. Its memory bank will know the number, record, and history of every living person.

As stated in **Revelation 14:11**, at the final judgment of God (Great White Throne), all those who received this mark will be tormented with fire and brimstone and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. Rather they know it or not everyone will eventually bow to Jesus.

Romans 14:11 says "every knee shall bow... and every tongue shall confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"

Immediately Following the Tribulation (Second-Coming of Christ Jesus)—This is also called the Second Advent and is when Jesus Christ comes back to earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to set up His reign for 1,000 years on top of Mount Zion. Those of us who were Raptured will be returning with him. Just imagine if you will how awesome that moment will be!

Matthew 24:29-31 - Immediately after the distress of those days "'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and all the nations of the earth will mourn.

They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other

Revelation 7:14-17 - "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. Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Armageddon

This is the closing battle of three and on-half years of skirmish in the Middle East. It begins with Russia's invasion of Israel after the peace contract of Daniel 9:27 is broken (Ezekiel 38:15). Additional participants include the kings of the west under the Antichrist (Daniel 7:24; Revelation 13:1), Kings of the East which is under China (Daniel 11:44; Revelation 16:12), and the Kings of the South, involving much of Africa (Daniel 11:11). Miracles performed through satanic power will convince the leaders of the earth, who are subservient to the Antichrist, to move all of their military might to the Middle East to do battle with Christ Jesus at His return to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4; Revelation 16:14).

They will not be disappointed: Christ will come. The Battle of Armageddon climaxes the campaign as the Lord and His armies appear from heaven. The armies of earth will march to their doom, expecting to

destroy the Christ which they have rejected (Joel 3:9-14; Psalm 2:2; Revelation 19:11-21). Christ, the living Word of God returns, riding on a white horse. His eyes are as a flame of fire and his vesture dipped in blood bears the name, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Followed by the armies of heaven, He will smite the nations and cause the Beast and the False Prophet to be cast into the Lake of Fire.

It will be the bloodiest battle in the history of the world. Militaries from the four corners of the earth will battle against the Almighty God and the hosts of heaven (Psalm 2:2; Isaiah 34:2; Zechariah 14:3; Revelation 9:16) will engage in the earth's greatest power struggle. So great will be the destruction resulting that the blood will reach the horse's bridles for 200 miles and it will require mankind seven months to bury the dead (**Revelation 14:20; Ezekiel 39:12**).

Millennium

Millennium means 1,000 years and refers to the kingdom of Christ on earth. This era, as foretold by all the prophets, will be a time of peace among people and nations. War will be just a part of history. Jerusalem, known for war, bloodshed and international tensions, will at last become the city of peace and the capital of the world. The Prince of Peace (Jesus Christ) will rule from David's throne and the promises given to Mary concerning Jesus will be fulfilled (Luke 1:32, 33; Isaiah 9:6,7)

Peace will come to Israel and to the world. But it will not come through military might or treaties. Christ will come bringing peace. When the governments of earth have finally fallen, the Messiah of Israel, the Saviour of men, will set up His kingdom (**Daniel 2:44**). Satan will be bound for 1,000 years (**Revelation 20:1-3**).

There will be people with mortal bodies and people with glorified bodies on earth during the time. Those who survived the Tribulation Hour and who have not been condemned in the judgment of the nations (**Matthew 25:31-46**) are allowed to enter the Millennium in their mortal bodies and will have prolonged lives. They, along with the millions of babies born during the time, will live for the entire 1,000 years during Christ's reign.

The Millennium will bring peace in the world of nature. All of God's creation suffers as a result of the fall-of-man and will be restored at this time (**Romans 8:20-23**). Nature will cooperate with man again (Genesis 3:17,18) productivity will return, earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, etc., will be absent. The animal world will be at peace with man and each other (**Isaiah 11:6-8**). Oppression and strikes will be unknown with food and housing for all (Isaiah 65:21-23) Total peace over all the earth in this time.

Earth's motto will be holiness unto the Lord. Those reigning with Christ during this time are the returning saints (the Church that was Raptured or His bride) **Revelation 19:14**. The resurrected Old Testament saints as per Daniel 12:2 and the raised Tribulation saints **Revelation 20:4**

After the Millennium

At the end of the 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth, Satan is loosed from the abyss and deceives the nations on the earth, who try to overthrow the throne of Jesus (Rev. 20:7-9). These are obviously lost people. Zechariah 14:16-19 tell us that during the millennium people will be required to go to Jerusalem once a year to worship the King (Jesus). For those who refuse to go, punishment will come upon them.

Why would a saved person refuse to worship Jesus? Obviously, saved people will look forward to worshipping Jesus. But these are lost people. How did they get in the millennium? The answer is simple. These are people born during the millennium.

Summary of things yet to take place very soon!

1) Rapture

2) Tribulation (3 ½ years after the Antichrist signs the peace treaty with Israel)

3) Great Tribulation (3 ½ years when the Antichrist breaks the contract)

4) Mark of the Beast (During the last 3 ½ years)

5) The Battle of Armageddon

6) Second Coming of Christ (to end the Battle and begin His reign on earth)

7) Millennium (1,000 year reign of Christ on earth)

8) Satan is loosed for a season (not sure how long this season is)

9) A new heaven and a new earth is created forever and ever (eternity with Christ)

Blessings from

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