



## The Church

### The Beginning of the Church

The Church began on the Day of Pentecost. John 14:16-20 gives a picture of the Church Age relationships with the Holy Spirit and with the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is absent during the Church Age and the Holy Spirit produces His character in spiritually mature believers.

*“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” (John 14:16-20, NASB)*

Acts 1:5, Acts 11:15, and John 14:20 say the Baptism of the Holy Spirit happened on the Day of Pentecost which was the beginning of the Church Age. In the Church Age, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at the point of salvation for all believers. It is the Holy Spirit placing every believer into union with Jesus Christ at the point of salvation. All Church Age believers form the Body of Christ. We are placed “in Christ.” At salvation, the Holy Spirit identifies the individual with the Body of Christ. The term “baptism” means to identify.

*“for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (Acts 1:5, NASB)*

*“And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning.” (Acts 11:15, NASB)*

*“In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” (John 14:20, NASB)*

1 Corinthians 12:13 says that the Body of Christ is the Church universal. The Church started in only one local spot in Jerusalem. After only 30 years, the Church had covered the known world.

*“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:13, NASB)*

The Jewish Age believers were indwelt by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. They then preached the Gospel to the “devout” Jews, (not saved) present for the Passover feast. Acts 2:3-5; 2 Cor. 5:17.

*“And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.” (Acts 2:3-5, NASB)*

*“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NASB)*

At that point just as today when someone is born again, they are filled with the Holy Spirit and are then in fellowship with the Lord. Those Jewish Age believers also received at least one spiritual gift. For example in Acts 2:4, the gift of tongues.



*“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.” (Acts 2:4, NASB)*

*“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4, NASB)*

At the time of their belief in Jesus Christ before the Day of Pentecost, they already had been regenerated and sealed by the Holy Spirit. Now, they are the Church and have received the same seven things from the Holy Spirit that every born-again believer receives in the Church Age. See category on the [Holy Spirit, Seven Salvation Ministries](#).

In Acts 19:1-7, Jewish Age believers were placed into the Body of Christ through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

*“It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said to him, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” And they said, “Into John’s baptism.” Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. There were in all about twelve men.” (Acts 19:1-7, NASB)*

## **The Mystery**

The doctrine of the Mystery is mentioned in Ephesians 3:3-6. In Ephesians 3:3 is the revelation of the mystery. In Ephesians 3:4 is the knowledge of the mystery. In Ephesians 3:5 is the definition of the mystery. In Ephesians 3:6 is the content of the mystery.

*“that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,” (Ephesians 3:3-6, NASB)*

Up until the time of our Lord’s ministry on earth, the Church was a complete mystery. The “Church” did not exist in the Old Testament, nor was it revealed in the Old Testament. In Ephesians 3:1-10, “mystery” is μυστήριον (mustērion) in the Greek and means to be known to those on the inside and not to those on the outside. The mystery is the New Testament and has reference to Church Age truth. The Church Age was prophesied in the New Testament by Jesus Christ in Matthew 16:18 and John 14:20.

*“that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;” (Ephesians 3:3-5, NASB)*

*“To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been*



*hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 3:8-10, NASB)*

*““I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” (Matthew 16:18, NASB)*

*““In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” (John 14:20, NASB)*

This doctrine refers to the Old Testament and Gospels where the “Church” could be mentioned but isn’t. This passage approaches the Church Age (death, burial, resurrection, ascension) and then stops. If the passage has any more to say, it skips the Church Age and goes into the Tribulation, Millennium, etc.

The Church Age (mystery) was not mentioned in the Old Testament or in the Gospels other than in Matthew 16:18 and John 13-17 in our Lord’s Upper Room Discourse. Eph. 3:5. In Matt. 16:18, the Church is still future.

*“which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;” (Ephesians 3:5, NASB)*

*““I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” (Matthew 16:18, NASB)*

The Holy Spirit takes the believer at the point of salvation and enters them into Union with Christ. This only happens in the Church Age. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit actually began on the Day of Pentecost, although it is not mentioned until Acts 11:15 as “us at the beginning” referring to the apostles on the Day of Pentecost and in Acts 11:16 which quotes Acts 1:5.

*““And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning.” (Acts 11:15, NASB)*

*““And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 11:16, NASB)*

*“for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (Acts 1:5, NASB)*

The crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ took place during the Age of Israel or the Jewish Age. The Church Age began on the Day of Pentecost. The Church Age is called the “stewardship of God’s grace” in Ephesians 3:2-3. This is because a maximum amount of grace is available to Church Age believers. For example, the Jews had failed in their responsibility, but the Jews were the first believers and were made part of the “Church.”

*“if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.” (Ephesians 3:2-3, NASB)*

## **The Invisible Church**

The Greek word for “Church” is ἐκκλησία (ekklesia) and means that which is called out. Up until the time of our Lord’s ministry on earth, the Church was a complete mystery.

The Church universal (and invisible in the true biblical sense) is made up of both Jew and Gentile who accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. From the moment of regeneration, they cease to be Jew or Gentile and become members of the Church. Gal. 3:26-28; Col. 3:11.



*"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26-28, NASB)*

*"a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all." (Colossians 3:11, NASB)*

In 1 Corinthians 12:12, the Church is called the Body of Christ with many members. Rom. 12:4-5.

*"For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ." (1 Corinthians 12:12, NASB)*

*"For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." (Romans 12:4-5, NASB)*

At the point of salvation, the Holy Spirit baptizes all believers into the Body of Christ. 1 Cor. 12:13. In Colossians 1:18, Christ is designated as the head of the body, the Church.

*"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13, NASB)*

*"He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything." (Colossians 1:18, NASB)*

The Church is the Lord's redeemed called from the old creation (in Adam) into Christ. 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:17.

*"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22, NASB)*

*"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." (2 Corinthians 5:17, NASB)*

The Church is likened to a growing, but not yet completed structure. Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 3:9.

*"in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:21-22, NASB)*

*"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building." (1 Corinthians 3:9, NASB)*

Through the production of the filling Holy Spirit, Christ's character is formed in the Church Age believer. The Spirit's fruit is produced in the believer. The believer is conformed to His image. Gal. 4:19; Gal. 5:22-23; Rom. 8:28-29.

*"My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—" (Galatians 4:19, NASB)*

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23, NASB)*

*"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;" (Romans 8:28-29, NASB)*

When the last believer has been added to the Church, the Lord will remove His Church from the earth at the Rapture. John 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; Eph. 5:27.



*“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:3, NASB)*

*“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, NASB)*

*“that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.” (Ephesians 5:27, NASB)*

The Lord Himself builds His church. Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47.

*“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” (Matthew 16:18, NASB)*

*“praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:47, NASB)*

The Church when in heaven will be called the “Bride of Christ.” Rev. 19:6-8.

*“Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” (Revelation 19:6-8, NASB)*

Other words used for the Church are; Position in Christ, In Christ, Body of Christ, Church Universal, Church Invisible, and Bride of Christ.

### **Construction of The Church**

Although God saw fit not to make known this mystery prior to the Church Age, He had planned the Church and the believing members of it before the foundation of the world. Eph. 1:4.

*“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love” (Ephesians 1:4, NASB)*

The structure of the Church could not begin until after the Lord Jesus Christ had died, risen and ascended to the third heaven and was seated at the right hand of God the Father. The Church is called the “Body of Christ” in Ephesians 1:22-23. Christ is the head of the body or the Church. Col. 1:18.

*“And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22-23, NASB)*

*“He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.” (Colossians 1:18, NASB)*

The construction of the Church is given in Ephesians 2:19-22. The founder of the Church is Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:20b) who is the Chief Cornerstone. Jesus Christ has always been the only source of salvation for





the Church Age and all previous dispensations. Jesus Christ brings Jew and Gentile together in Christ in the Church Age.

*“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22, NASB)*

The historical foundation of the Church is the Church Age spiritual gifts of apostleship and prophecy, which were possessed by the early church leaders and historical founders of the Church. Eph. 2:20; Matt. 16:18.

*“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,” (Ephesians 2:20, NASB)*

*““I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” (Matthew 16:18, NASB)*

The meaning of the name “Peter” (his new name) was “the little rock” or “a little chip off of a big rock.” Peter understood that he was exactly like any other believer - a small living stone which, when fitted together, made up the Church or Body of Christ. Peter understood that he was not “the rock” on which the Lord’s Church would be built, but that Christ was the foundation of the Church. 1 Peter 2:4-9.

*“And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: “BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.” This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, “THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone,” and, “A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;” (1 Peter 2:4-9, NASB)*

Jesus Christ is the Rock. A rock is hard, solid, safe and sturdy foundation on which to put up a building of any size. You would not erect a building on a pebble. All believers in this dispensation are considered “living stones” who are “acceptable to Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 10:4; Psalms 18:31.

*“and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:4, NASB)*

*“For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God,” (Psalms 18:31, NASB)*

In Matthew 16:18-19, the phrase “I will build My church” is a future event. The phrase “keys of the kingdom of heaven” means the prerogative of witnessing that would bring new believers to the Body of Christ or the Church.

*““I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in*



*heaven.”“ (Matthew 16:18-19, NASB)*

The growth of the “building” in Ephesians 2:21 refers to each new believer being added to the Body of Christ by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor. 12:12.

*“in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,” (Ephesians 2:21, NASB)*

*“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.” (1 Corinthians 12:12, NASB)*

The Holy Spirit holds this Church together. Within each individual believer there should be built an edification complex in their soul.

### **Jewish Age Believers Become Members of The Church**

The Jewish Age believers were made Church Age believers at Ephesus. This is just one illustration of the transition. In Acts 19:1, “some disciples” were Jewish Age believers.

*“It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples.” (Acts 19:1, NASB)*

In Acts 19:2, Paul is determining whether they are Old Testament or New Testament believers.

*“He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said to him, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”“ (Acts 19:2, NASB)*

In Acts 19:3, “Into what” means on what basis. “Into John’s baptism” confirms the fact that they were Jewish Age believers.

*“And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” And they said, “Into John’s baptism.”“ (Acts 19:3, NASB)*

In Acts 19:4, “repentance” means a complete change of mental attitude concerning Jesus Christ. You do not repent of your sins. The object of the verb “to repent” is Jesus Christ. It is a synonym of belief. The word “repent” does not include any reference to “sorrow for sin.” Repent is simply the mental attitude you have toward Jesus Christ when you believe in His work for your sins on the Cross. When you believe, you repent. When you repent, you believe.

*“Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.”“ (Acts 19:4, NASB)*

In Acts 19:5, “were baptized” is in the aorist tense and means a point of time. “In the name” means into the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is referring to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which entered them into union with Christ.

*“When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 19:5, NASB)*

These Old Testament Jewish believers could not have Positional Truth without the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ had not died in the Old Testament (historically) therefore, there was no Baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. John 7:37-39.

*“Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’“ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:37-39, NASB)*



In Acts 19:6, “laid his hands upon them” means to show that Paul was identified with them. The phrase “speaking with tongues” meant to show they were identified with Pentecost.

*“And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.” (Acts 19:6, NASB)*

Within one generation, the Age of Israel believers became Church Age believers in union with Christ. Christianity has already spread throughout the inhabited world.

### **The Team Concept of the Church**

The Lord Jesus Christ is absent from the earth, seated at the right hand of the Father. Every believer represents Him. 2 Cor. 5:20.

*“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20, NASB)*

Every believer is part of the Body of Christ, in union with Christ. 1 Cor. 12:13.

*“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:13, NASB)*

Because we in union with Christ the Holy Spirit has sovereignly bestowed upon us at least one spiritual gift. 1 Cor. 12:11.

*“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.” (1 Corinthians 12:11, NASB)*

The different parts of the body are analogous to spiritual gifts. 1 Cor. 12:12.

*“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.” (1 Corinthians 12:12, NASB)*

Spiritual gifts determine the believer’s position on the team or the Body of Christ. All spiritual gifts depend upon the filling of the Holy Spirit for operation and resulting divine production. The filling of the Holy Spirit is more important than any spiritual gift. 1 Cor. 12.

In the Christian way of life, all authority and responsibility is based upon spiritual birth and the sovereign bestowal of spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit. For maximum divine production from your spiritual gift, you need the filling of the Holy Spirit plus Bible doctrine in the right lobe of your soul.

Every Church Age believer has at least one spiritual gift. It is to the advantage of the Body of Christ to have all spiritual gifts operational. One of the great factors of a local church is the consistent function of believers in fellowship functioning in service through the area of their spiritual gift.

What you do in the Christian life in way of service depends upon your spiritual gift, plus knowing the techniques and growing up spiritually resulting in the development of the edification complex in the soul. We all have the same position in Christ, but while living on earth, we have different spiritual gifts. Some gifts carry more authority than others. Distinction of gifts does not in any way make you inferior or superior. Each gift determines the believer’s responsibilities in the plan of God.

### **The Relation of the Church to Government**

In the New Testament, the Church is instructed to pray for governmental authorities, since they are appointed by God. 1 Tim 2:1-4. The Church is further instructed to be in subjection to such powers in 1 Peter 2:13-16, Titus 3:1, and Romans 13:1-7 because these governments are God’s representatives to





carry out God's will.

*"First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:1-4, NASB)*

*"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God." (1 Peter 2:13-16, NASB)*

*"Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed," (Titus 3:1, NASB)*

During the Tribulation, the governments will be controlled by Satan because the restraining ministry of God the Holy Spirit will have been removed. The Church must be delivered before this time for it could not be subject to such a government. Rev. 13:4.

*"they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"" (Revelation 13:4, NASB)*

There is silence concerning the Tribulation in the Epistles. Much instruction is given concerning trials and tribulations, but none of the nature mentioned in Revelation 6-19.

Regarding the sealing of the 144,000 Jews in Revelation 7 and Revelation 14, as long as the Church is on earth, none are saved to a special Jewish relationship. All who are saved are placed in a positional relationship with Christ. Col. 1:26-29; Col. 3:11; Eph. 2:14-22; Eph. 3:1-7.

*"that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me." (Colossians 1:26-29, NASB)*

*"a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all." (Colossians 3:11, NASB)*

During the Tribulation, the Church must be absent because God seals 144,000 Jews, 12 from each tribe, reflecting the fact that these seven years are Jewish in flavor rather than neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free. The only Church mentioned in Revelation 6 through Revelation 19 is the false, harlot church. The true Church, if present on earth, would not be ignored.

*"The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:17-20, NASB)*



## **The Church Age Ends at the Rapture, Seven Years Before the Second Advent.**

In 1 Thessalonians 4:17, “caught up together” is the Greek word ἀρπάζω (harpazō) and means to be caught up or to be carried away. The Latin translation used the word *rapturo* from which we get the English word “rapture.”

*“Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17, NASB)*

There are two major interpretations of Scripture regarding the Rapture of the Church. One is called Pre-tribulationism where the Rapture occurs before the seven years of the Tribulation. The other interpretation is Post-tribulationism where the Rapture occurs after the Tribulation.

Pre-tribulationism rests essentially on one major premise, the literal method of interpretation of the Scriptures. As an adjunct to this, the pre-tribulationists believe in a dispensational interpretation of the Word of God. They find that the Word makes many distinctions between Israel and the Church. Also, the Church is a mystery not revealed in the Old Testament. Only the Pre-tribulation position guards the biblical teaching of the imminence of the Rapture meaning that Jesus Christ can return for the Church at any time.

Post-tribulationism erroneously takes the Pre-tribulation position and is quite new, having started with the Darbyites, known as Plymouth Brethren. However, the early Church believed in the imminent return of Christ. 1 Thess. 4:13-18. Paul looked for the imminent blessed hope in Titus 2:13. Many of the Church fathers believed in an imminent return in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th centuries AD.

*“looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,” (Titus 2:13, NASB)*

A distinction must be made between the Rapture and Second Advent in the area of signs. Since the Church is given the hope of an imminent return of Christ, there can be no signs given to her as to when this event will take place.

### **Conditions That Will Exist Prior to the Rapture**

There are many signs concerning the Second Advent, but no signs concerning the Rapture of the Church. However, certain conditions will exist at the end of the Church Age.

There will be denial of God. 2 Tim. 3:2-5.

*“For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.” (2 Timothy 3:2-5, NASB)*

There will be denial of Christ. 1 John 2:18; 1 John 4:3.

*“Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.” (1 John 2:18, NASB)*

*“and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.” (1 John 4:3, NASB)*

There will be denial of Christ’s return. 2 Peter 3:3-4.

*“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their*



*own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4, NASB)*

There will be denial of the faith. 1 Tim. 4:1-2.

*"But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron," (1 Timothy 4:1-2, NASB)*

There will be denial of sound doctrine and Christian liberty. 2 Tim. 4:3-4.

*"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths." (2 Timothy 4:3-4, NASB)*

There will be denial of the separated life, of authority, and of morals. 2 Tim. 3:1-13; Jude 1:18.

*"that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." (Jude 1:18, NASB)*