

## CHURCH AGE

- 1. The Church age was a mystery unknown in the Old Testament.**
  - a. Neither the Church as a distinct entity, nor the equality of Jews and Gentiles in the Church, was previously revealed.
    - (1) God did, however, reveal that Gentiles would be saved.
      - (a) **Ge 12:3** 3 ...In you [Abram] all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
      - (b) **Is 11:10** 10 In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.
      - (c) **Is 42:6** 6 I [Yahweh] will give you [Messiah] as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations....
      - (d) **Is 60:2-3** 2 ...Darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples. But Yahweh will arise upon you [Messiah], and his glory will be seen upon you. 3 And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.
      - (e) **Zec 2:11** 11 ...Many nations shall join themselves to Yahweh in that day and shall be my people.
      - (f) **Mal 1:11** 11 For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says Yahweh of hosts.
    - b. The Church age may be called an “intercalation” or “parentheses.”
      - (1) “[T]his whole age with its program was not revealed in the Old Testament, but constitutes a new program and a new line of revelation in this present age.”<sup>1</sup>
    - c. Though man did not know the Church age was coming, God did.
      - (1) “The church was in the plan of God from eternity past. It was not something that God devised (concocted) on the day that Jesus Christ died because the Jews had rejected their Messiah. Some dispensational expositors have referred to the church as a ‘parenthetical’ part of God’s eternal plan. That does not mean the church was an after-thought by God. The church is just as much a part of God’s plan for human history as the nation of Israel. God did not reveal it in the Old Testament. It was a mystery, a New Testament revelation not previously revealed. Nevertheless it was always part of God’s plan.”<sup>2</sup>
  - 2. Jesus prepared his disciples for the Church age once clear Israel would reject him.**
    - a. **Mt 16:18** 18 And I [Jesus] tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock [Peter’s confession] I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
    - b. The Church age became necessary because of Israel’s rejection of Jesus at his first coming.
  - 3. The Church age began on Pentecost and will end at the Rapture.**
    - a. Pentecost.

<sup>1</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 137.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Constable, *Notes on Ephesians*, 7.

- (1) Ac 2
- (2) “The church is constituted a body by means of Spirit baptism (1 Cor. 12:13). The first occurrence of the baptism of the Spirit therefore must indicate the inauguration of the church. Of course Acts 2:1-4 does not state that Spirit baptism took place at Pentecost. However, 1:5 anticipates it and 11:15-16 refers back to it as having occurred at Pentecost. The church, therefore, came into existence then” (S. Toussaint, *BKC*, 2:357).
- (3) “While different traditions within evangelicalism see the import of the Spirit’s baptism in different ways, it’s clear that Acts affirms the following: The ministry of the Spirit that appears on the day of Pentecost must be called the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is something promised by the Father and affirmed by Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is therefore something new; it is a turning point in the ministry of God’s Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is foundational for the subsequent mission of the apostles and the existence of the New Testament church.”<sup>3</sup>

b. Rapture.

- (1) The Church will not be present on earth during the Tribulation.

**4. Church age believers are a distinct group of people.**

- a. During the Church age, there are three distinct groups of people: Jewish unbelievers, Gentile unbelievers, and Jewish and Gentile believers (the Church).
  - (1) Ro 11:16-18; 1 Co 10:33; Eph 2:15; 3:2-6.
- b. Old Testament believers are not members of the Church.
  - (1) John Huss was incorrect: “The holy catholic—that is, universal—church is the totality of the predestinate...or all the predestinate, present, past, and future.”<sup>4</sup>
- c. Believers of the Church age are saved in the same way believers of every age are saved—by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone.

**5. The Church age is a unique age, unlike any other dispensation.**

- a. Church age believers possess special positions, powers, and privileges that believers of other dispensations do not.
- b. “The mystery...[is] the coequal participation of the Gentiles with Israel in the full messianic salvation that is realized in the crucified and risen Christ and made effective to both through the apostolic proclamation of the gospel.”<sup>5</sup>
- c. **Is 2:2-3** 2 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of Yahweh shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be lifted up above the hills. And all the nations shall flow to it, 3 and many peoples shall come and say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem.

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<sup>3</sup> Nathan D. Holsteen, *Exploring Christian Theology: The Church, Spiritual Growth, and the End Times* (Baker Publishing Group, 2014), Kindle locations 484-89.

<sup>4</sup> John Hus (c. 1419).

<sup>5</sup> Robert L. Saucy, “The Church as the Mystery of God,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 136-37.

- d. **Is 61:5-6** 5 Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks. Foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers. 6 But you [Israel] shall be called the priests of Yahweh. They shall speak of you as the ministers of our God. You shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory you shall boast.
- 6. Worldwide evangelisation is the priority of the Church age.**
- a. **Mt 24:14** 14 ...This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed [during the Church age] throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end [the Tribulation and Messianic kingdom] will come.
  - b. **Ac 1:6-8** 6 So when they had come together, [the apostles] asked [Jesus], Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel [the Messianic kingdom]? 7 He said to them, It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
  - c. See *World Missions*.
- 7. During the Church age, Jesus sits in heaven at the right hand of the Father.**
- a. Jesus is now enthroned in heaven but not on earth.
  - b. Jesus is not yet sitting on David's throne. He will do so in the Messianic age.
  - c. See *Jesus' Session*.
- 8. Israel is partially hardened during the Church age.**
- a. **Ro 11:25** 25 I do not want you, brothers and sisters, to be uninformed of this mystery..., that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the nations ( $\varepsilon\thetavōv$ ) [the Church] has come in.
  - b. The Church age is a hiatus in God's dealings with Israel.
  - c. Israel is not wholly hardened, however.
    - (1) **Ro 11:5** 5 So too at the present time there is a remnant [of Israel], chosen by grace.
- 9. The visible church will spiritually decline at the end of the Church age.**
- a. **1 Ti 4:1** 1 The Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.
  - b. **2 Ti 3:1-5** 1 In the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.
  - c. **2 Pe 2:1-2** 1 False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.
  - d. **Re 3:15-20** 15 I [Jesus] know your works. You are neither cold nor hot. Would that you [the church in Laodicea] were either cold or hot! 16 So, because you are

lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

- e. See *Church Age Apostasy*.

**10. The Church age is the final age before the day of Yahweh.**

- a. **Mt 24:14** 14 ...This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed [during the Church age] throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end [the Tribulation and Messianic kingdom] will come.
- b. **1 Co 10:11** 11 These things...were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.
- c. **Lk 21:24** 24 Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
- d. See *Day of Yahweh*.