

LETTER ONE

Understanding the Eleventh Hour

A Statement of Purpose and Personal Journey

What we believe about the future will ultimately shape how we engage the present.

Why These Letters Were Written

Christians do not all share the same understanding of prophetic events, the Kingdom of God, or the nature of the end times. Views differ concerning the Second Coming of Christ, the tribulation, the man of sin, Israel's role in prophecy, Jerusalem and the temple, Satan's "little season," and many related subjects.

Yet despite these differences, many of us share a common mission: to advance the Kingdom of God and strengthen the Ecclesia of Jesus Christ in both spiritual and practical ways. We are called not merely to observe the world around us, but to engage it—directing our resources, influence, wisdom, gifts, and effort toward the advancement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word, demonstration, power, and truth.

These letters therefore present an alternative to modern dispensational theology and futurist interpretations of Scripture. My purpose is not to attack individuals, denominations, or sincere believers. It is to encourage a thoughtful re-examination of assumptions many of us have inherited concerning prophecy, the Kingdom, and the mission of the Ecclesia in the earth.

Over time, I have come to believe that certain theological frameworks have unintentionally conditioned many believers toward withdrawal, pessimism, and expectation of escape rather than Kingdom engagement, inheritance, discipleship, and faithful occupation until He comes. Whether the reader ultimately agrees or disagrees with my conclusions, I ask only that these matters be considered carefully, honestly, prayerfully, and in the light of Scripture.

My journey into these questions has been deeply personal. Much of my spiritual formation occurred within dispensational teaching and futurist expectations. What follows is not written from a posture of superiority or certainty in all things, but as the testimony of a disciple of Jesus Christ who continues to seek truth, understanding, and faithfulness to the Word of God.

A Radical Encounter With Jesus

More than fifty years ago, while halfway through *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey, I surrendered my life fully to Jesus Christ. My conversion was radical. In a moment of wholehearted surrender, everything changed. I began seeing the world through different eyes and was overwhelmed by the love, peace, and reality of God's presence. For me, it was nothing short of miraculous.

Almost immediately, I began sharing the message of salvation with everyone around me—friends, classmates, teammates, and strangers. Within weeks, nearly half of our university baseball team had surrendered their lives to Jesus. Before long, twenty-five to thirty college students were gathering in our home every Sunday night to study Scripture and grow in Christ. Together, we worked through *A Handbook for Christian Maturity* by Bill Bright and learned the foundations of Christian life and discipleship.

Those years were filled with tremendous excitement and spiritual zeal. During the early 1970s, we witnessed hundreds of college students, friends, and family members surrender their lives to Christ. The Gospel was spreading through campuses, churches, sports teams, homes, beaches, and coffeehouses. The Jesus Movement was sweeping across the nation through ministries associated with Chuck Smith, Lonnie Frisbee, Calvary Chapel, and many others. It was an exhilarating time to be alive as a believer.

Prophecy, Expectation, and an Unanswered Question

At the same time, I became deeply immersed in biblical prophecy and the end times. Like many believers during the height of the Jesus Movement, I was captivated by dispensational teaching and futurist eschatology. I studied C. I. Scofield, J. Dwight Pentecost, Hal Lindsey, and later Tim LaHaye. I had the charts, the timelines, the prophetic systems, and a passion to tell others that Jesus was coming soon.

The establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948 was understood as the restarting of the prophetic clock. Many of us sincerely believed that our generation would witness Christ's imminent return.

A few years after my conversion, I experienced another profound transformation through an encounter with the Holy Spirit. After weeks of earnestly seeking Him, the Holy Spirit became vividly real in my life. I prayed for people and witnessed healing. I saw people delivered from demonic oppression and watched lives transformed by the power of God. Worship became deeply personal and alive. The Holy Spirit was no longer merely theological to me—He was present and active.

But as the years passed, something unexpected happened. Jesus did not return according to the prophetic timetables we had confidently proclaimed. Some teachers connected His return to a forty-year generation following 1948; others later expanded the generation to seventy years. Yet the anticipated events did not unfold as expected.

Perhaps we do not have everything figured out.

That realization planted a question in my heart: If we had misunderstood the timing, what else might we have misunderstood?

The question did not diminish my love for Jesus or my devotion to Him. He remained my Lord, Savior, and Commander in Chief. But it caused me to step back and begin re-examining assumptions I had long accepted. For a season, I largely set eschatology aside and focused on advancing the Kingdom of God and serving His people.

Jesus Builds His Ecclesia

During the early 1980s, one passage became foundational in my life:

*"Upon this rock I will build My church [Ecclesia]; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." —
Matthew 16:18*

That promise settled something deeply within me. If Jesus Himself was committed to building His Ecclesia, then my responsibility was to join Him in His work.

Not long afterward, I answered the call into pastoral ministry. Pastoring was a dream fulfilled. I loved preaching the Word of God, caring for people, and confronting spiritual darkness through prayer and ministry. Although pastoral ministry carried tremendous challenges, I genuinely loved serving God's people.

Within a few years, however, our local church became involved in an emerging movement that emphasized apostles, prophets, and strong hierarchical authority. Initially, it felt exciting and visionary. We believed we were participating in the restoration of first-century Christianity and helping transform the world through local church planting and Kingdom expansion.

Over time, the movement became increasingly authoritarian and spiritually oppressive. Submission to leadership was elevated almost to unquestioned obedience. What began as spiritual passion gradually developed into unhealthy control and heavy-handed authority.

When the Great Commission Became Personal

In the midst of that difficult season, our congregation experienced a remarkable visitation of the Holy Spirit. We had prayed earnestly for God to move among us, and His presence suddenly became overwhelmingly real. Week after week, our gatherings were filled with profound love, conviction, healing, tenderness, and power.

During one of those encounters, while lying prostrate on the floor of my office, the Lord brought the Great Commission powerfully to my heart:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." —Matthew 28:18–19

In that moment, something became unmistakably clear. Much of my time and energy had been spent building the church as an institution—even while believing we were organic. We did not consider ourselves a denomination, yet whether intentionally or not, we gradually became one. We welcomed the Holy Spirit into our gatherings, but too often treated Him as a visitor who blessed what we had built rather than the One who had come to transform us, lead us, and reshape everything according to the purposes of Christ.

Meanwhile, Jesus had commissioned His Ecclesia to make disciples of nations. Our assignment was not to build an institutional kingdom for ourselves, but to disciple nations under the authority and reign of Christ as He continued building His Ecclesia.

Jesus builds His Ecclesia. His Ecclesia makes disciples of nations.

That revelation dramatically reshaped my understanding of ministry, the Kingdom, and the mission of God's people.

Painful Correction and a Broader Perspective

Eventually, I confronted the movement's unhealthy leadership structures. After years of faithful service and submission, I was labeled rebellious, accused of having an authority problem, and removed from ministry leadership. It was painful, humiliating, and deeply wounding—not only for me, but also for my family.

Yet through that painful season, God remained faithful.

I returned to the business world and spent several years rebuilding practically and spiritually. During that time, my family and I carefully re-examined many inherited assumptions concerning church, leadership, the Ecclesia, and God's mission in the earth.

Years later, I became involved in the creation of Phoenix University of Theology, serving first as Registrar and later as Vice Provost. Through relationships with pastors, bishops, and Christian leaders from across the United States and other nations, I gained a broader perspective on the diversity, strengths, and struggles within the body of Christ.

After decades of pastoral ministry, leadership, church culture, theological study, business experience, and personal testing, I have increasingly come to believe that dispensational theology has unintentionally weakened the Ecclesia's understanding of its Kingdom identity, mission, and responsibility in the earth.

Why the Word Ecclesia Matters

One further clarification is important to the letters that follow. The Greek word *ecclesia* describes an assembly or congregation—a people called together. Yet in English translation and Christian usage, church gradually became the familiar term. By the time of influential English Bibles such as the Geneva, Bishops', and King James versions, church had become firmly established in the vocabulary of English-speaking Christianity.

The difficulty is not merely the English word itself, but the perception that developed around it. Church increasingly came to identify a building, institution, denomination, or professional religious system. The identity of God's assembled people could then be reduced to a place they attended or an organization maintained by clergy.

The New Testament vision is far more alive and active. The Ecclesia is the body of Christ, the household of God, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and an assembled people entrusted with the mission of their King. Buildings may serve the Ecclesia, but buildings are not the Ecclesia. Institutions may support the mission, but institutions must never replace the people or their calling.

The Ecclesia is not primarily a place we attend. It is the people we are becoming in Christ and the mission we share under His authority.

An Invitation to Reconsider

These letters are not written to attack or condemn my brothers and sisters in Christ. They are offered as a sincere appeal—a watchman's call to prayerfully reconsider what Scripture teaches concerning the Kingdom of God, the mission of the Ecclesia, the end times, and our responsibility in the earth.

The encounters, convictions, failures, corrections, and transforming moments I have experienced with my Lord and Savior are profoundly real to me. I offer these writings with humility, knowing that I am still learning, growing, and seeking the wisdom and truth of Christ.

My desire is not merely that believers endure the days ahead. It is that the Ecclesia flourish—recovering its identity, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, making disciples, serving faithfully, and advancing the Kingdom of God courageously until He comes.

What we believe about the future matters because it shapes what we do in the present. If our theology causes us to retreat from Christ's mission, we must be willing to examine it. If Scripture calls us to greater faithfulness, courage, discipleship, and stewardship, we must be willing to respond.

The purpose of these letters is not to win an argument. It is to help prepare a people who understand the times, know what to do, and faithfully represent their King.



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The letter does not end here. Continue the journey as we learn to think biblically, live courageously, and faithfully represent Christ's Kingdom in every sphere of life.

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