

Jerusalem to RDU and Beyond 2022

Some of you may have seen this pic: (Pic of me, David B, Carl Scott, Pat E). I have so many thoughts when I see it:

- First, I'm not sure I could ever rock that goatee and not sure where my friends were at the time. It's like for 3 years I had mustard on my lip that no one told me about.
- Second, 20 years just doesn't seem like that long ago! I told Veronica--I mean, in another 20 years--the same amount of time--I'll be 68. I'll either be retired or everybody will be desperately wanting me to retire! (Old JD Pic)
- Third, so many from that picture have gone on to be with Jesus.
- Pictures like this remind me of Heb 12:2, which says, "Therefore since we are surrounded by so a great cloud of witnesses-- so many who have gone before us--let us run with patience and faith and endurance the race that is set before us, looking to the same Jesus they looked to, to do through us what he did through them."

You've heard me tell stories of how 20 years ago a group of about 300 brave saints of God joined me in asking God what he wanted to do with this church. Gideon had his 300 and we had ours. They committed to put the mission first, trust God for the impossible, and then sacrificed their comfort, time, material possessions--and for a few, even their careers--in getting us here. People like Bonnie Shrum and Chris Gaynor and Curtis Crutchfield and Rick Langston and Paul and Barbara Derby and many others. This morning, could I ask: Is anybody from that original 300 here right now? And could you stand?

As we come to this point--our 20 year mark--I thought it would be helpful to look backwards for a moment--to think about how we got here--how all this came to us--and what we're supposed to do now with it.

Our story doesn't start, you see, in 2002 or even 1962. It starts in:

37 A.D. Standing atop a hillside outside of Jerusalem, Jesus gives the Great Commission to 11 scared men and a few of their friends, charging them to take the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the ends of the earth. They'd never heard of Durham, NC, but he promised that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him and that his Spirit would go with them. Then, he ascended into heaven, leaving them all there staring at each other, saying "Now, what?"

- In 42 A.D. Mark goes to Egypt
- In 49 A.D. the Apostle Paul heads to Asia Minor and then in 51 A.D. into Europe¹
- In 52 A.D. Thomas take the gospel to India

¹ Turkey, Greece

- By 54 A.D. Paul is on his 3rd missionary journey, reporting great success wherever he goes, saying that Gentiles are embracing the gospel much more enthusiastically than the Jews.

By the end of the first century, the Apostles have established 3 major church planting centers: Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome.² From these centers, churches are being planted all over the Roman empire.

At the end of the 2nd century, the church father Irenaeus describes the global church as geographically broad, though still numerically small. These churches know how to multiply, however, and by the end of the 3rd century nearly half of the Roman Empire confesses Christ.

- In March of 432 a guy named Patrick responds to a dream and takes the gospel to Ireland—which people now commemorate every year by getting smashed and pinching those who don't wear green.
- In 596 a church planter named Augustine (not St. Augustine, a different one) ventures down to what we now call England, then just an island filled with Barbarians. He settles in Canterbury, where he plants a church. God moves powerfully, and in the first two years he baptizes more than 10,000 converts there.
- In 650 a monk named Caedmon completes the first English translation of the Bible. Sadly, the religious elites keep it captive, believing that it's too dangerous to put into the hands of common people.
- The next 500 or so years were a little sketchy in terms of Christian history (which is why we call them "the Dark Ages"), but one of the good things that comes out of the Dark Ages is a conviction by many--men like Jon Hus and John Wycliffe--that the most effective way to spread the gospel is just to put the Bible in the hands of common people. "The power is in the Word," they say. "Let the Word do the work."
- By 1200 A.D., the Bible is available in 22 different languages.
- In 1526 William Tyndale publishes the New Testament into everyday English and, with the help of his wealthy merchant friend Humphrey Monmouth, ships it to people all over the English speaking world. Considering this to be an affront to their authority, the state church of England persuades the King of England to imprison Tyndale. He is tried for heresy, and on Oct. 6, 1536, William Tyndale is burned at the stake. Tyndale's last words, as the flames engulf his body, are, "*Lord God, please open the king of England's eyes.*"
- Less than 100 years later, in 1611, that prayer is answered when the King of England sponsors the largest Bible project ever commenced: the publication of the King James Version.
- The Bible's availability in English leads not only to a gospel revival in the English speaking world, but a wave of missions throughout the rest of the world. The 15th to 18th centuries come to be known as the golden era of missions. These are the days of William Carey, and the Moravians, and Adoniram Judson. For the first time, Christians penetrate Central Africa, Inland China, and remote countries in Southeast Asia with the gospel. Many are imprisoned; most are killed.
- In 1587, the first two people are baptized on the continent of North America--right here in North Carolina. Two Native American are baptized on Roanoke Island in what is now known as the "lost colony."³
- 1609: A man named John Smyth plants a new kind of church in England, founded on the belief that that the Bible alone is the Christian's authority, that salvation is by faith alone through grace alone and that baptism and church membership should come only after conversion to Christ. You can't be "born" as a Christian, he says, you have to be "born again" as one. This is the first official "Baptist" Church.
- By 1635, that church has planted 50 others like it in the regions around London. Because of the rapid growth of the Baptist movement, the Church of England responds with brutal persecution. One of those new Baptist pastors, Roger Williams, flees for America and establishes the First Baptist Church in America in Providence, Rhode Island in 1638.

² Ibid. chp 1.

³ <http://statelibrary.dcr.state.nc.us/NC/HISTORY/HISTORY.HTM>

- In 1727: That church plants the first Baptist church in North Carolina: the Shiloh Baptist Church in Chowan County.⁴
- 1740: Great Awakening evangelists⁵ come to North Carolina, with great response—crowds of up to 35K come to hear them preach and people all over North Carolina are baptized. These evangelists go back to Massachusetts, reporting the great success they’ve had in NC, and there God stirs in the heart of a man named Shubal Stearns to move his family to central NC to plant a church. He has 14 kids, so in 1751 they plant the Sandy Creek Baptist Church in Liberty, NC (just south of what is today Greensboro, NC) with 16 members (that’s one benefit of having a large family! You’re an automatic church plant wherever you go). In just 2 years that church grows to over 600 in attendance and plants 42 other churches across North Carolina.
- In 1845, they plant a church in Durham, NC, which launches at the Piney Grove School in West Durham. Over the next 40 years that church moves locations twice and changes their name twice, from “Rose of Sharon Baptist” to in 1877 “the Durham Baptist Church” to finally, in 1878, “The First Baptist Church of Durham.”
- 1899, Durham’s population swells to 16,000 and the First Baptist Church senses God’s call to plant new churches around the rapidly expanding Triangle. They see a real need in North Durham, so in 1907 they plant “the North Durham Church” on Hardee St.
- In 1921, that church changes its name to Grace Baptist Church.
- 1959, Grace Baptist looks to plant a church even farther north to reach new people moving there.
- 1960: Sam James, a young, 28 year old pastor from Greensboro, NC feels called by God to take the gospel to the unreached nation of Vietnam. In preparation to go, however, his newborn develops a heart condition, and he and his wife Rachel have to spend a frustrating year at Duke Medical Center. But during that year, he attends the Grace Baptist Church in Durham, and Dr. James learns of their burden to plant a church in Northern Durham. He volunteers to lead the effort, and in 1961 they open a mission up on Duke Street called “The Grace Baptist Mission.”
- The small mission grows rapidly and within a year, **100 people are attending, and they officially** relaunch themselves as the Homestead Heights Baptist Church. On launch Sunday, March 4, 1962, Sam James preaches his only sermon at this church. His sermon is from Isa 54:2–3, William Carey’s famous missionary text, where God tells Israel to “expand the borders of its tents to make room for the nations.” Dr. James prophesies to the Homestead Heights Baptist Church that God will use them to bring the gospel to the nations—and challenges them not to exist just for themselves, but would expand the borders of their tents so that people of ALL nations would find salvation there. That afternoon, he and his wife Rachel leave for Vietnam--in 1962, one of the most unreached and dangerous places in the world where they spend the next 40 years.
- 1994: God speaks to a college kid at Campbell University as he is studying for a pre-law exam, telling him that he is done with law (to finish the exam, yes, but after that, no more law) and that the focus of his life is to be on getting the gospel to people overseas. In 1997 he leaves for Indonesia for what he assumes is a lifelong assignment. That kid was me.⁶
- 1999: I return home from Indonesia to complete my Ph.D. in Islamic and Christian theology. While stateside, I attend the Homestead Heights Baptist Church, believing I’m headed back to SE Asia.
- Dec, 2001: Homestead Heights Baptist Church extends a call to me to be their pastor. At first, Veronica and I think God is playing a joke on us. I’ve never even had a full-time job, and we’re supposed to be overseas.

⁴ With great sadness, I’ve left the Moravians out of this story. They settled in Bethabara (now Winston-Salem) in 1753. They walked there from Pennsylvania, having arrived there from Germany.

⁵ George Whitefield

⁶ 1998: God sends Dr. Keith Eitel, missions professor at Southeastern Seminary, to serve as interim pastor at the Homestead Heights Baptist Church in Durham. Dr. Eitel rekindles in Homestead Heights a passion for the nations.

But God makes clear that he has called us here, and that my role in missions for the time being is to lead a church that sends.

- March, 2002, we change the name of Homestead Heights Baptist to the Summit Church. “Why...” you ask? “There are no mountains in Durham.” True, but the name sounded cool, and our property did happen to be located at the highest point in Durham County which is why it was called “Homestead *Heights*.”
- April, 2002: Summit baptizes its first two African-American believers.
- Aug, 2002: College students “discover” our church and start to make up a sizable portion of our attendance each weekend. At this point, we know that we will never have a lot of money, but we will have a lot of young, eager believers trying to figure out what to do with their lives. Nov, 2002, after service an usher approaches me with an offering bucket that contains a “BEC biscuit” from MacDonald’s, from a college student...
- Nov 7, 2003: We receive a check from a man in Arizona who had visited our church only once but was so moved by the amount of college students he saw that weekend that he pledged to give us \$200,000.
- So the next week, Nov 14, 2003, I stand up at Summit and tell the college students to put all the BEC biscuits they want into the offering; a man from Arizona has paid their offerings forward for them for many years to come. Through stories like this and many others, God teaches us that if we put his mission first, he’ll take care of all of our needs)
- Nov 19, 2004, Nicolas Cage debuts in the first National Treasure movie, which forever changes of trajectory of cinematography
- Dec, 2004: God burdens the Summit Church for the city of Durham. We realize that God has put us here not just to reach it for Jesus, but to bless it, better it, and make it a better place to live. I meet with the mayor, asking him what the biggest needs of the city are: he tells me they are the homeless; orphan; prisoner rehabilitation; the crisis of single moms, and the growing number of high school dropouts. Out of this grows the HOPUD strategy, which stands for the homeless, the orphan, the prisoner, the unwed mother and the high school dropout. We say that we want our city to say, “We may not believe what those crazy people at Summit believe; but thank God we’re here, because if not we’d have to raise our taxes.”
- 2005: We’ve outgrown our property on Holt School Road, so we sell it and move to Riverside High School. We sense that God has called us to reach not only N Durham but all of the Triangle. At first, we look to purchase a 100-acre piece of property on Cole Mill Road onto which we can build our “6 Flags Over Jesus” facility that people from all over the Triangle can drive to. But God shuts that door decisively, and God reveals to us that instead of developing one large property, we should seek to establish smaller locations throughout the Triangle, where believers can stay in their communities and invite their neighbors. We move our host campus to Brier Creek, leaving behind a thriving, multi-ethnic community of believers in North Durham as our first multisite location, led now by the inimitable Gus Pacheko.
- Jan, 2006, we begin the search for land to build a new permanent facility for our North Durham campus--since we’d sold the initial Homestead Heights location.
- In May, 2007: God leads us to adopt the goal of planting 1000 churches out of our church within our generation. No one is sure where the number 1000 came from (we’ve asked)--we think I spontaneously threw it out in a sermon--but it starts to feel like a God=thing so we embrace it.
- Feb, 2009: We launch Summit in Espanol to reach the growing Hispanic population in Durham. This will be followed by Summit Mandarin and Summit Arabic, as well as campuses in the local Women’s Prisons and Men’s prisons⁷
- September, 2015: Summit Church leads the state of NC in both yearly baptisms and missions giving
- Aug, 2016, Summit celebrates the planting of its first granddaughter church, as Summit Denver plants The Heights in the suburbs of Denver. Each year, more granddaughter churches are added to our family. Currently, 14 of our 78 domestic plants are granddaughter churches.

⁷ 2010; 2016

- Also in August 2016, we launch the Summit Institute, which is committed to training up men and women for full-time ministry.
- Nov 2017, we are recognized as the top sending church in the nation by both the IMB and NAMB
- Dec, 2018, we celebrate the sending out of our 1000th member on church planting teams and our 250th church planted.
- Nov 2021, the largest-attendance and fastest growing churches in both Greensboro and Winston-Salem are Summit plants, Mercy Hill and Two Cities. Both count representatives to the U.S. Congress among their membership. Each weekend, more than twice as many people attend Summit plants in North America as come to the Summit Church. For every one member we've sent out, 20 new people are worshipping in the Kingdom.
- In December 2021, the Summit's offering is \$10 million in a single month. That's by far the largest month of giving **in the history of TSC. \$10M!!** This is 20x more than our annual budget in 2001--in a single month. We believe it symbolizes God's commitment to us for the next 20 years.
- Jan 30, 2022, the Summit Church, now a church of more than 12,000 weekly attenders in 12 campuses, celebrates its 20th anniversary, marveling at all that God has done in two decades. In 20 years they have seen over 92,000 first time guests walk through their doors, seen 8,172 people baptized, and planted 492 churches around the world. Each weekend more than 26,000 people worship in churches planted by the Summit. And our church planters are now telling us stories that we find hard to believe, like:
 - Nathan Rostampour who will be baptizing 30 new believers in Iran this year and planting 14 new churches. This is the beginning of a church planting movement there.
 - Or Samantha, a Summit member who leads a team in the slums and red-light district in one of the biggest cities in South Asia. She reports that in 2021, 186 people have professed faith through her ministry. A tiny new church was planted there in the red light district (think of that!!!! This weekend as we gather and celebrate the planting of 492 churches, one of those is made up women who previously have been victims of the sex trade in South Asia)
- Jan 30, 2022, Summit now has 300 members (as many as were in the whole congregation when we began) serving in 65 different cities around the world outside the US. The IMB tells us that we have 6X more missionaries than their 2nd closest partner. We average sending out 25 new long-term missionaries every year.
 - 107 men and women have been trained for full-time ministry through the Summit Institute, with 60 more entering the program next year.
 - Several hundred are involved serving in our fostering and adoption ministries, serving local refugees and serving in our local prison ministries.
- And so, on Jan 30, 2022, I ask the church to re-commit to its original vision, trusting that the God who has brought them thus far will lead them the rest of the way. The Summit Church responds *enthusiastically* and we become a part of this huge movement through history. Right? (That's today, btw)⁸
- ***That's pretty amazing, isn't it? But dream with me for a second...*** (standing O)
- **June 2022**, we finally get the **N Durham campus** completed, and for the first time in 20 years, Summit members in N Durham have a permanent home.
- Mar, 2024, the Summit Church realizes that its 1000 church goal is too small. The movement in Iran alone has grown to 140 congregations, with 1000 new Iranian believers baptized in 3 years.
- January 2025, Summit surpasses its goal of being 25% multiethnic by 2025. 40% of its staff and pastors are now people of color
- July, 2026: A couple on the cusp of divorce begins attending the Chapel Hill Campus. Through the faithful love of their small group and our G4 ministry, in 2041, they celebrate their 30th anniversary. Their son, who watches this redemption story unfold firsthand, grows up to plant a church in Columbia, SC in 2038.

⁸ April 17, 2022, we host our first ever Easter service at Walnut Creek Amphitheater and 20,000 people gather to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus in the heart of the Triangle.

- **Aug, 2028**, the church planting movement Nathan Rostampour has led in Iran spreads into Turkey, Afghanistan, and the United Arab Emirates. More than 800 Muslim-background believers are baptized every year.
- July, 2029, a woman saved in our prison campus in 2022 becomes the 1000th international church planter sent out by the Summit
- Nov 2030, the Summit is recognized by the state of NC for its work in rehabilitating prisoners, using its holistic model of healing and reintegration to inspire other churches across NC to do the same
- March, 2031: Summit has so many families involved in foster care that for the first time in the Triangle's history, there are more foster families waiting for placement than foster children.
- **Aug, 2031, The Summit Institute now trains more than 500 men and women for ministry each year.**
- September, 2035: The Triangle's population has swelled to 3.5 million people. We launch our 25th campus in the Triangle, having completed our goal of having a campus 15 min driving time from everyone in the Triangle. Since 2002, the Summit Church has baptized nearly 17,000 people in the Triangle, and each weekend, more than 1.2 million worship in churches that Summit has planted around the world. These churches baptize a combined 100,000 each year.
- Nov, 2036, Nicolas Cage releases his 444th movie, *National Treasure 13*, and I am invited to the world premier.
- April, 2037: A former Summit College student, who had gone to live in Serbia in 2024, reports seeing 264 churches planted there in a single year, and the launch of a seminary to train young men and women there for ministry.
- Jan, 2038: the child of a family who was saved at the Garner campus grows up to translate the Bible into the language of the final unreached people group in North Africa
- Oct, 2041, a girl adopted by a Summit family through their foster ministry, who grew up in Summit kids and students, is appointed to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. (Come on, let me dream)
- Nov, 2041: Summit College commemorates its 5000th student sent out on a church planting team. 47 of the churches we have planted in vibrant college ministries. Together, these churches baptize more than 3000 students each year and together send out 1000 on church planting teams around the world.
- Jan, 2042, we gather for our 40th anniversary (or for some of us, it's our children or grandchildren)--marveling at what God has done with a small mustard seed of faith planted many years ago. That seed has now grown into a mighty tree whose branches cover the earth. We stand overwhelmed by the faithfulness of God, and we can only put our hands on our mouths and say, "Look at what the Lord has done." Our children recommit themselves to God and say, "As you have been with my fathers, may you be with me," and "Lord, let it also be it unto me according to your word."

Of course, I don't know exactly what God will do in the next 20 years. I'm just dreaming based on the past 20 years. What we do know is that God promises to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or imagine. I've seen what he's done in the last 20 years, so now I can imagine that--which means what I dream for the future has to be greater than what I've seen.

Which brings us back to *today*. **Martin Luther said that on God's calendar, only two days matter: *that day*, and *this day*.**

- **THAT day: where we know history is headed:** a vast multitude of people from every tribe, tongue, nation and people under heaven rejoicing together in the salvation of Jesus.
- And **THIS day: what we're doing now in anticipation of that day—which is what he said to those scared 11 guys on that hillside outside of Jerusalem:** *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Summit, when I look at **the picture I began with**, I think not of our past; I think about our future. I think about what those believers would tell us if heaven were opened up, just for five minutes. What would they want us to do with what we have received? I guarantee they wouldn't want us to play it safe, burying our talent in the ground. They would be the first to tell us: Freely you have received. Now freely give—give of yourself, give the first and best of your time, talents and treasures, to see this gospel carried to the ends of the earth.

In truth, I don't know what the future holds; I can't even guarantee I'll wake up tomorrow. What I do know is that we still serve a Savior who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places; a Savior whose finished cross and empty tomb guarantees that he will be successful in uniting the nations to fear his name, who has yielded us his authority and imparted to us his Spirit to guarantee its completion. And now we know that even in suffering and setback he promises to make us always walk in triumph; that what the enemy means for evil he overrules for good. **This is not our history, you see, it's HIS story.** He's the author and finisher of our faith. What stirs in our hearts today is the power he released into the world 2000 years ago in an empty tomb, and as sure as he walked out of that grave, we're going to finish our mission. What he started, he'll complete. Even the gates of hell cannot stop us.

And so on THIS day, I pledge to walk forward in anticipation of **that day**, expecting great things of him and attempting great things for him. **This is where me and my house are going**, and I'd really love for you to go with me.

Summit, is that where you want to go?

When I was installed as pastor, my childhood pastor, Dr. E.C. Sheehan, who led my mom and dad to Christ, Chris Gaynor's grandfather--led the service. He's since gone on to be with Jesus, but during that service he leaned over to me and said, "Son--he's here. He's here." Jesus was here with us. We didn't have any secrets of success in those early years--we didn't have a lot of money; I didn't have a lot of experience. What we did have was the presence of God and the awareness to go with him. That's why the first part of our mission statement says, "*Following the Holy Spirit...*" It's never been about our plans for this church. His are always better. Where he is is where we want to go. *If you're not in it, I don't want it; but if you say it, I'll believe it.* Where he is is where I want to be. IS that where you want to go also.

Could I ask you right now to bow your heads, and just personally recommit yourself? Say, "God, what do you want to do? And what do you want ME to do?" In just a moment, I want us to stand and recommit, but first, I want you to do it. (For some; ministry in the Triangle; missions and church planting; for some, just sharing Christ with a neighbor. Listen to the Holy Spirit.)

(30 secs)

And while we are thinking about this, can I ask you to commit to take this journey of fasting and prayer for these next 14 days? You heard this earlier, but we are taking 20 days to ask God, "What do you want for our future?" Join us. Even if you missed the first 6, join us for these last 14. On our website or our app, you can sign up for daily prayer prompts and fasting ideas. Join us, and come to our big all-campus prayer meeting on Feb 11.

Right now, I want you to stand and form up in small groups and just thank God for what we've seen. And then pray, "Lord, have thine own way..." And pray with your voices--loud! Let's turn this place into a tabernacle of prayer.

PRAYER

Introduce Sam James (Sunday)--I mentioned that in 1962 a young preacher was delayed by a heart condition in one of his kids, and during that delay planted church. This is that man.

The thing I see happening with missionaries is they stop taking risks. And when they stop taking risks, God stops pouring out miraculous power. God is as ready to pour out his power as he ever was, but you have to be willing to take a risk to see it.