

19 – Set Free by the Truth



Where Can We Find it Today?



The story is told of a young man in ancient Greece who wanted to find truth. He approached an old man who was considered the wisest man in the city.

The young man asked the old man, “Wise Sir, tell me please, ‘How can I find truth? Can you lead me to it?’”

The wise old man got up and began walking.

The young man followed. They walked through the streets of the city to the sea shore.

The old man kept walking into the water.

When they were out about waist deep, the old man told the young man to put his hands upon his head.

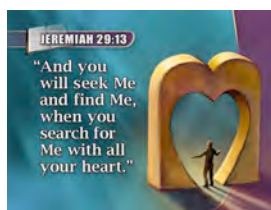
The old man dunked the young man under the water.

Three times the young man came up gasping for air. Three times the wise old man pushed his head down again. By the third time, the young man was screaming, “All I wanted was to find truth!”

The wise man responded, “When you desire truth as much as you wanted this breath of air, you shall find it.”

It’s not that it’s hard to find truth. It’s that often our hearts are not really that anxious to know it, especially if it calls for change in our lives.

God is not holding back truth from us. Jeremiah the prophet says,



(Text: Jeremiah 29:13)

“And you shall seek me and find me when you search for me with all of your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

But some people are searching in all of the wrong places.



It’s been said that each of us is born with a “God-shaped vacuum” inside us.

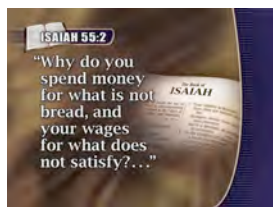
Subconsciously, we seem to be seeking something we cannot describe—but something we know we want and need!

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5

So in restless boredom, we seek to fill the void in our lives with fame, fortune, drugs, alcohol, possessions and leisure-time activities, only to discover when the prize is won that there is no lasting satisfaction. And sooner or later the haunting question of an ancient prophet will echo from the past:

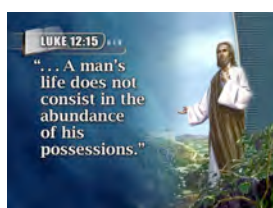


7

(Text: Isaiah 55:2)

“Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?” Isaiah 55:2.

Jesus understood the temporary satisfaction of possessing “things.”



8

(Text: Luke 12:15)

He said, “A man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” Luke 12:15.

Materialism doesn’t satisfy. People today sense the need for a power outside of themselves. This is nothing new.



9

Ever since man chose to go his own way in the Garden of Eden, he has had this strange emptiness that only God can fill.



14

Evidently God allows us to sense an inner hunger and restlessness, so we will reach out and let God satisfy our longings.



15

Today, we see a great interest in various forms of religion.

With the tremendous emphasis today on uniting religions and the push to break down denominational walls, there is much more study and thought concerning various forms of religions and the church.



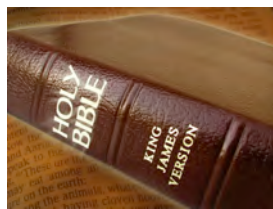
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New churches are rapidly springing up around the world.

Each claims to be God’s special people with a message of truth for everyone on earth.

Yet consideration of those claims would make it obvious that not all claims can be true.

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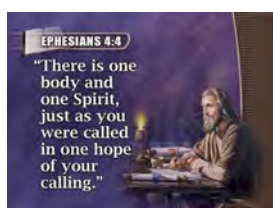
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They each claim the Bible as the foundation for their beliefs, but their teachings are very different.



18

How can sincere people sort out all the claims of these religions and know for certain what is truth. Does God really have a special group within Christendom that He recognizes as His church today? Evidently, for Paul wrote:



19

(Text: Ephesians 4:4)
“There is one body and one Spirit-just as you were called to one hope of your calling.



20

one Lord, one faith, one baptism;



21

one God and Father of all.”
Ephesians 4:4-6



22

(Text: 1 Timothy 3:15)
Paul wrote to his young friend, Timothy, and said, “I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God,



23

which is the church of the living God , the pillar and ground of the truth.” I Timothy 3:15.
Paul clearly states that God’s church today is the pillar and the ground of the truth, but how do we discover which church has the truth.

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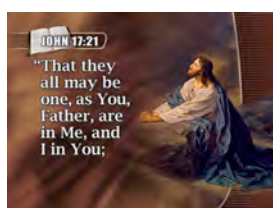
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There are so many denominations, so much controversy, so much confusion in the religious community.



25

Friends, according to Scripture, Jesus never intended there to be any confusion, and certainly not all these denominations. Just before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed:



26

(Text: John 17:21)

“That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You;

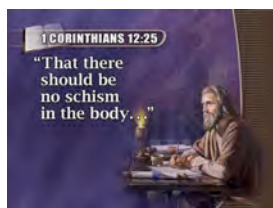


27

that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

John 17:21.

Jesus wanted the world to be able to recognize His followers by their unity and love. He did not want any divisions in His church.



28

(Text: 1 Corinthians 12:25)

In fact, Paul wrote that “there should be no schism (division) in the body.” 1 Corinthians 12:25.

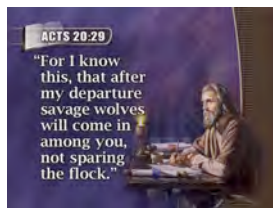
But Paul said that apostasy would come, and with it, division!



29

(Text: Acts 20:28-30)

We read: “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock . . . to shepherd the church of God....



30

For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

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31

Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things,



32

to draw away the disciples after themselves."
Acts 20:28-30.



As we turn the pages of church history, we discover this is exactly what happened.

False teachers arose, and some accepted their errors and left the church.

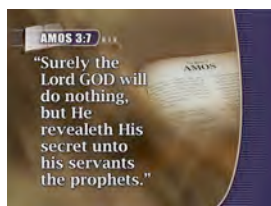
Others became confused. Disciples were drawn away, and there was a gradual falling away from the teaching of Jesus.

But through it all, God has had a church which remained faithful.



We do not have to study the teachings of all the denominations for long hours, if we know the characteristics of God's true church as given in the Bible.

God does not leave man to guess which one it is, for God has given us the facts in His Word:.



35

(Text: Amos 3:7)

"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth His secret unto his servants the prophets."

Amos 3:7.



The book of Revelation gives special insight into the last days.

Here the apostasy and religious confusion to exist in the last days of Earth's history is foretold.

Chapter 12 gives a panoramic view of church history from Christ's time to the end of the world:

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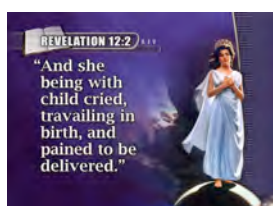
(Text: Revelation 12:1, 2)

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun,



38

and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of 12 stars:



39

And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”

Revelation 12:1, 2.



40

This is quite a symbol – a woman in white, clothed with the sun, standing on the moon with a crown of 12 stars on her head! In Bible prophecy, a pure woman represents God’s people—His church.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote:



41

(Text: Jeremiah 6:2)

“I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman.”

Jeremiah 6:2

And who is “Zion”? Through Isaiah, God said,



42

(Text: Isaiah 51:16)

“...Say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’”

Isaiah 51:16.

As we link these two texts, we see that God used a virtuous woman to represent His true church.

The apostle Paul uses the same terminology to describe the Corinthian church.

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43

(Text: 2 Corinthians 11:2)

“For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 11:2.

However, John was also shown another woman, whom he described in Revelation 17:



44

(Text: Revelation 17:3-5)

“And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy....”



45

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls,



46

having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.



47

And on her forehead a name was written:



48

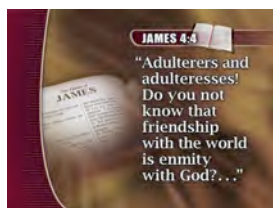
MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”
Revelation 17:3-5.



This symbolic language describes an impure woman—the false church. The fallen church has been unfaithful to Christ and has compromised Bible truth.

James used similar words to describe those who forsake God’s teachings and join the world:

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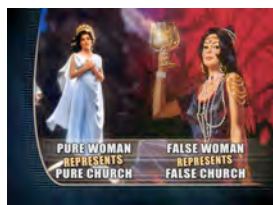


50

(Text: James 4:4)

“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God.”

James 4:4.



51

A fallen woman, then, represents a false church, and a pure woman represents a pure church.

Let's look again at the prophecy of the pure woman.



52

(Text: Revelation 12:2, 4)

“She being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered...”



53

And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered,



54

for to devour her child as soon as it was born.”

Revelation 12:2, 4.

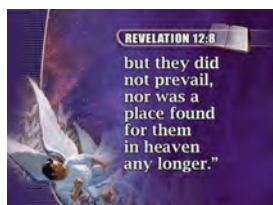
Who is this dragon that stood before the woman to devour her child as soon as he was born?



55

(Text: Revelation 12:7-9)

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,



56

but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

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57

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world;



58

he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”
Revelation 12:7-9.



59

(Text: Revelation 12:5)
Revelation also describes the child: “She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.



60

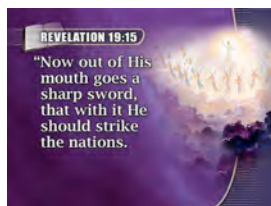
And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.”
Revelation 12: 5



61

Only one child in the history of the world was to “rule all nations with a rod of iron” and be “caught up to God and His throne,” and that was Jesus.

Speaking of the second coming of Christ,



62

(Text: Revelation 19:15)
John said, “Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations.



63

And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron...”
Revelation 19:15.
Paul tells how Jesus was “caught up to God’s throne,”

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64

(Text: Ephesians 1:20)
when God "...raised him from the dead, and set him at His own right hand in the heavenly places."
Ephesians 1:20.



65

Yes, Jesus was the "male child" that the dragon attempted to destroy.
Working through pagan Rome, Satan tried to take Jesus' life as soon as He was born.
Herod, the Roman governor, decreed that all male children two years and under should be killed, but an angel warned Mary and Joseph to escape with Jesus into Egypt.



66

The devil tempted Jesus throughout His ministry, hoping to block God's plan to save our fallen world.
Christ's body hung on the cross, Satan thought he had won the battle.
But an empty tomb was Satan's certain defeat.



67

Christ arose and ascended to His father's throne.
The prophecy was on schedule, just as predicted!
Failing in his attempt to destroy God's Son, Satan turned his wrath on the woman, or the Christian church.



68

Satan could no longer touch Jesus. He was in Heaven of course.
So he viciously attacked Jesus' followers.
All but one of Christ's disciples died a martyr's death.



69

The apostle Paul was beheaded outside the walls of Rome.
Christians were tortured and thrown into dungeons, many sealing their testimony with their blood.

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70

As long as the disciples were alive, the church stood firmly for the truth.

But after the death of the disciples, with the passing of time, some Christians compromised their faith and false teachings came into the church.



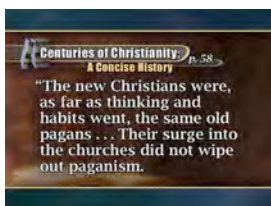
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In the fourth century, Emperor Constantine tried to hold the Roman Empire together by uniting pagans and Christians into one great system of religion.

As a result, Christianity became very popular.

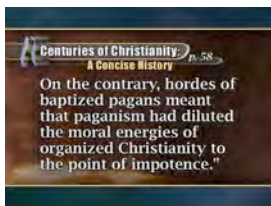
Pagans were baptized into the church and brought many of their beliefs and practices with them.

As the church embraced these errors, it lost sight of its purpose.



72

One historian wrote, “The new Christians were, as far as thinking and habits went, the same old pagans....Their surge into the churches did not wipe out paganism.



73

On the contrary, hordes of baptized pagans meant that paganism had diluted the moral energies of organized Christianity to the point of impotence.”

–Centuries of Christianity: A Concise History, p. 58.



74

However, during this time many Christians remained faithful to God’s truths and protested the changes that had crept into the church.

They refused to compromise their position, and many were persecuted for their stand.

Soon the Roman emperors issued edicts making it a crime punishable by death to reject the false practices of the state church.



75

(Text: Revelation 12:13)

Foreseeing it all, John wrote,

“The dragon...persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.”

Revelation 12:13.

And what happened to the woman?

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(Text: Revelation 12:6)

She "...fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God,

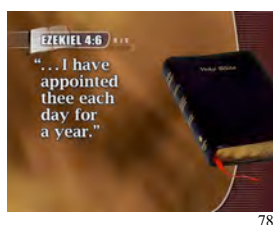


that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days."

Revelation 12:6.

Notice that God reveals the time that His people were to be persecuted: 1,260 days.

We have already discovered that each day in Bible prophecy stands for a year of literal time.



(Text: Ezekiel 4:6)

Ezekiel wrote, "...I have appointed thee each day for a year." Ezekiel 4:6, KJV.

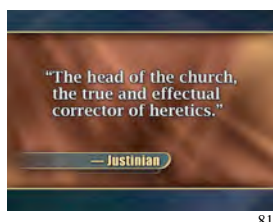


So the oppression of God's faithful people, as predicted in Revelation, was to continue for 1,260 years.



History accurately confirms this Bible prophecy.

Roman Emperor Justinian ordered the Roman general Belisarius to wipe out the last two Arian powers that opposed the church in Rome.



The last of these powers was eliminated in A.D. 538, and Justinian declared the bishop of Rome to be "the head of the church, the true and effectual corrector of heretics."

The reign of intolerance for so-called "heretics" began.

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82

And faithful Christians who continued to cherish the truths revealed in God's Word found that the only way to preserve their faith was to flee, just as Revelation predicted. The woman fled into the wilderness.



83

The Waldenses, Albigenses, and other faithful Christians fled to the Alps in northern Italy and southern France, and the Huguenots scattered throughout France. They settled in secluded valleys, remote caves, and high mountains.

They were hunted down as common criminals, and many were slain.

Their crime? They would not give up the teachings of Jesus.



84

Millions of Christians died rather than compromise their faith. Some historians estimate the death toll to be as high as 50 million. And many of those who died were martyred by other professed Christians who believed they were doing the will of God!



85

God's truth finally triumphed.

The Bible was translated into the language of the people and now through the invention of the printing press was scattered throughout the world.

No longer was God's truth to be hidden. It was now to be revealed!



86

Courageous reformers boldly proclaimed God's Word. Some, like Huss and Jerome, were burned at the stake.



87

Others, like Luther, Wycliffe, and Tyndale, were hunted and persecuted.

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88

However, with the discovery of America, new freedom and a new refuge were provided for the persecuted Christians of Europe.



89

On the shores of a newborn nation was laid the foundation of civil and religious liberty.



90

The era of compromise and persecution predicted in Revelation 12 finally came to an end in 1798. It ended when Napoleon sent General Berthier to take the pope captive—exactly 1,260 years after the period of persecution began in 538.



91

At this time we should expect to see a pure faith again in the open. The Church no longer must be hidden in the wilderness. Notice how the prophet described the church that appears after 1798:



92

(Text: Revelation 12:17)

“The dragon was wroth [angry] with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed,



93

which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Revelation 12:17.



94

A remnant is the last portion of cloth left over from a larger piece. Just so, the “remnant” of God’s church is the last part of that pure faith – His church that exists at the very end of time just before Jesus returns to earth.

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95

So translating this verse literally, we would say, "The devil was angry...and went to make war with the last-day church."
Satan is furious that God's people still follow God's truths in these last days!

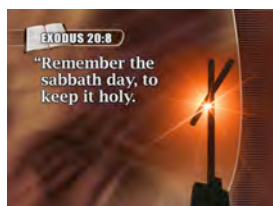


96

John describes two characteristics by which we can recognize this last-day church:
"The dragon was wroth [angry] with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17.
This remnant are those who keep all the commandments of God.

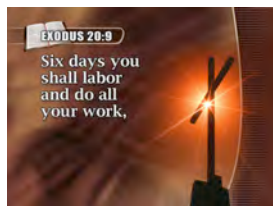


But doesn't every church teach that Christians should obey God's commands?
Not exactly! But many religious bodies today teach their members, in one way or another, to disobey some of God's instructions.
For example, some congregations are taught to bow before images. Others ignore the sacredness of God's name.



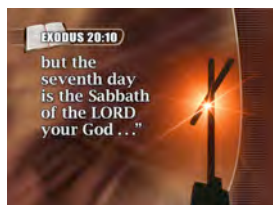
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(Text: Exodus 20:8-10)
And most of the religious world has lost sight of the memorial of creation described in the fourth commandment:
"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.



99

Six days you shall labor and do all your work,



100

but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God."
Exodus 20:8-10.

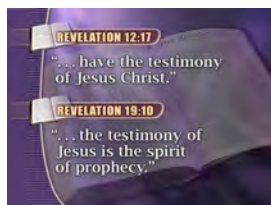
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101

(Text: Revelation 12:17)

Not only was God’s remnant, or last-day church, to keep the commandments of God, but the prophecy also says that it will “have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Revelation 12:17)



102

(Text: Revelation 19:10)

Revelation 19:10 Says, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”



103

God’s last-day church will have the gifts of the spirit, including the spirit of prophecy.

We will study this special gift in more detail at a later time.

God gives several other characteristics to help us in our search for His last-day church.



104

The command to preach the everlasting gospel in all the world is symbolized in Revelation 14 by three angels flying in the heavens. The first part of this threefold message emphasizes two great truths to be shared with every person:



105

(Text: Revelation 14:6, 7)

“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven,



106

having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth-



107

to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people-

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108

saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come;

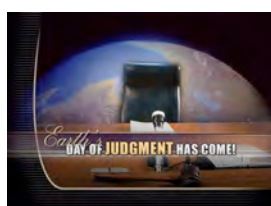


109

and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water. ’”

Revelation 14:6, 7.

God’s end-time movement will be engaged in taking His message to the entire world!



110

It includes a warning to those living in Earth’s last hours to remember that the day of judgment has come.

And it is also a reminder of the great memorial of God’s creative power, the seventh-day Sabbath.

The second part of this three-fold message is found in verse 8:



111

(Text: Revelation 14:8)

“And another angel followed, saying, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city,



112

because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. ’”

Revelation 14:8.

God’s end-time message faithfully identifies sin and apostasy. It points out the confused mixture of human traditions and teachings in the religious world.

The last, and most solemn, appeal is given in the third portion of this prophecy:



113

(Text: Revelation 14:9, 10)

“Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice,

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114

‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand,



115

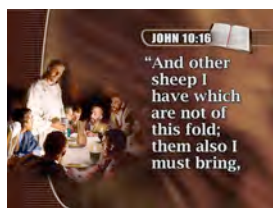
he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God’...”
Revelation 14:9, 10.



116

The world is to be warned against worshipping the beast and his image or receiving his mark.

Why this serious warning? Why such a politically incorrect message saying error is wrong and dangerous?



117

(Text: John 10:16)

Jesus said, “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring,



118

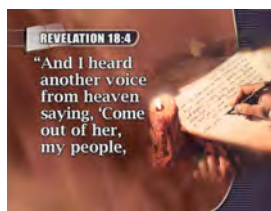
and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”
John 10:16.



119

God has faithful followers in all churches, but there will come a time when there will be one true fold, or one true church. Jesus said His sheep will be called out of these other folds that have not carefully followed the teachings of God’s Word.

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120

(Text: Revelation 18:4)

John the Revelator predicted that time:

“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people,



121

lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.”

Revelation 18:4.

God’s faithful followers will be called out of the religious error and confusion that exists at the end of time.

You will want to notice how the Bible describes the people who are called out of the religious confusion that will exist just before Jesus returns.



122

(Text: Revelation 14:12, 14)

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus...”



123

“And I looked, and behold a white cloud , and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man,



124

having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.”

Revelation 14:12, 14.

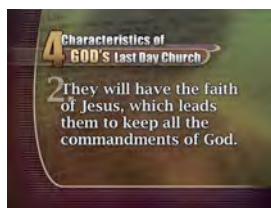


125

Let’s just briefly review some of the distinguishing characteristics of God’s last-day church as given in the Bible:

God’s remnant church was to appear after the period of terrible persecution which ended in 1798.

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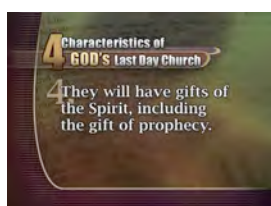
126

They will have the faith of Jesus, which leads them to keep all the commandments of God.



127

They will proclaim the special warning messages of Revelation to all the world to prepare a people for Jesus' return.



128

They will have the gifts of the Spirit, including the gift of prophecy.



All churches may look alike at first glance, but as you study God's description of the genuine in His Holy Word, it is quite easy to eliminate the ones that do not have these Biblical characteristics.



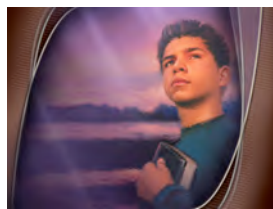
Perhaps you have been searching, trying to sift through the confusion in the religious world today, looking for God's last-day church.

I believe that there is only one true church. It's a Bible believing, Christ centered, Sabbath keeping, worldwide Advent movement. It teaches what Jesus taught. That's why I'm a Seventh-day Adventist.



I'm a Seventh-day Adventist today simply because as a disciple of Jesus I want to follow Him. He believed death was a sleep – I want to believe the same. He taught that He would return – I want to look forward to that day. He kept the Sabbath holy, and expected His follower to as well – I want to keep His special day sacredly each week. I know each of us are growing in our understanding of truth – but I just want to follow Jesus as closely as I possibly can!

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How about you, my friend? As we have studied these messages from night to night have you learned new truth? Have you heard the Spirit speaking to your heart, to follow Jesus more closely as well? His voice always calls us up higher, to a more abundant life. When He teaches us truth, we are blessed if we follow it. Jesus said:



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(Text: John 13:17)
“If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”
John 13:17.



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Tonight I believe that God is inviting you to make one of the most important decisions of your life.

Once again the ushers are going to place a small decision card in your hand. We're going to think about our decision together tonight.

Do you believe you have heard God's word preached during this series?

Do you believe the Holy Spirit has been impressing your heart from night to night?

When we hear God's word, when we listen to God's truth, the Holy Spirit impresses us to make a decision.

Now is the time for a decision.

When truth comes to us, when the Holy Spirit speaks to our heart, we cannot remain the same.

Imagine if you were to take two balls, one made of wax, and the other of clay, and leave them outside in the middle of the summer.

Would they change when the sun came up? Oh yes. One would melt, and the other would become hardened.

So it is with the Spirit of truth. When the light of truth shines in, our hearts cannot possibly remain as they were before. They either are softer – or harder. It is our decision which change takes place. The choices we make determine the direction we're headed.

So tonight I just want to ask you to examine your hearts in the light of God's word. Are you willing to open your heart to His truth? Are you willing to make the decision to follow that which you know to be His will from His word?

That's all He's asking for – a willing heart.

Let's look at this card together tonight.

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First I want to know if this message has been clear tonight. The first option reads like this: “It is clear to me that a remnant is an authentic continuation of the original, and that in the last days the pure faith of Jesus is to be once again taught.” If that is clear to you, just check this first box.

The second is how your heart has responded to this understanding. “I want to follow Jesus completely and be a part of His last-day remnant who are described as keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” If this is your heart’s desire, if you want to make sure you’re a part of the faithful remnant disciples of Jesus, indicate this by checking the second box.

The third is an important decision for each of us. “I would like to be part of a world-wide movement that fits this prophetic description, the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” If God’s word is true, if there is a remnant teaching as Jesus taught, don’t you want to be a part of it? If it is your desire to join a church that follows as closely as possible the teachings of Jesus, just check this little box. Finally, you may have additional questions you’d like to have answered, or desire more information on this topic specifically. If so, please indicate this on the card before you make sure your name is written clearly. Thanking for giving your cards to the ushers as you leave tonight [INSTRUCTIONS MAY VARY] These are important topics, and important decisions. Tonight we want to have a special prayer for the decisions that have been made. We want to ask the God of truth to guide and keep us walking in the light of His truth.

[Suggested prayer on next slide.]



[Suggested Prayer]

*“Dear Father in Heaven,
Tonight we’ve once again discussed important topics in your word. We’ve seen that you described a last day woman in prophecy – a last day church – that would be identifiable as a part*

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of the original. Lord, we want to be a part of this remnant people. We want to be recognizable to the world as your disciples – as teaching what you taught and living as you lived. We want to be a part of those who are keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus when you come again. Lord tonight we've made decisions. Many here have heard your voice and want to follow you all the way. Bless their decisions. Bless their families. Bless them as they walk in the light of truth, that their hearts might always remain soft and pliable and willing to follow where the Spirit leads them through the teachings of the Word. Lord, let none of us here have hearts that are hardened by the presentation of truth. Let none of us here choose to have hearts of clay – but let us each choose to have hearts that can be melted by the light shining from God's Word. Give us a clear understanding of your will, and hearts made willing to follow it. This is our prayer, and our desire, and our decision tonight. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen."
