

22 – So Many Choices



How Do You Find the Right Church?



Have you ever wondered why there are so many different churches?

The average person is confused.

Where did they all come from? How can we find the truth?



Our topic of study this time is “Why so many different churches?”

God’s word has the answers that we can trust.



(Text: Amos 3:7)

“Surely the Lord God does nothing,” the Bible says, “Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”

Amos 3:7.



Let’s go to God’s Word.

Remember that it doesn’t matter what I think.

What matters is if it’s in the Bible.

If it is, I believe it!



To start our study, let’s begin in the last book of the Bible—Revelation.

Revelation, chapter six, talks about four horsemen.



Those four horsemen represent different periods of time in the history of the Christian church.

Out of those periods of time, we see the development of the different churches we have today.

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(Text: Revelation 6:1)

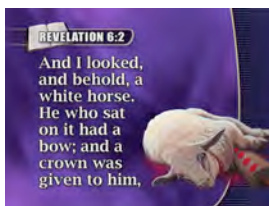
“Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals;



9

and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, ‘Come and see.’” Revelation 6:1.

The history of Christianity now is revealed here in chapter six.



10

(Text: Revelation 6:2)

“And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him,



11

and he went out conquering and to conquer.”

Revelation 6:2.



12

So, the first church is a church of conquering faith.

It is a white horse.

White represents a pure faith.



13

It would have been a thrilling time to live in that first century right after the ascension of Jesus. The disciples were filled with so much courage and so much faith, because they had walked and talked with Jesus.



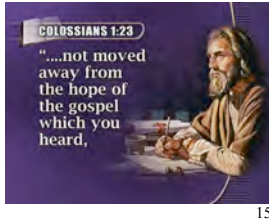
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They had seen Him resurrected. They had seen Him ascend into the heavens. They knew that He was coming back.

They believed in His promises with all their hearts.

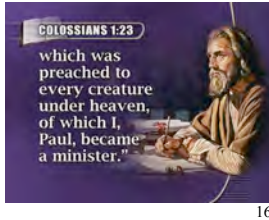
They shared the good news, the gospel, with great encouragement and with great enthusiasm, to the entire world.

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(Text: Colossians 1:21-23)

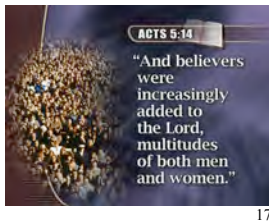
Actually, the good news of salvation was preached to every part of the then-known world. Paul prayed that the Colossian believers would be “not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard,



which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

Colossians 1:21-23.

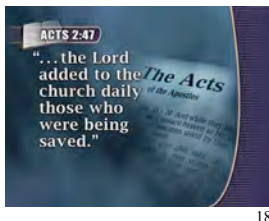
The apostolic church was a growing church!



(Text: Acts 5:14)

“And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.” Acts 5:14.

The book of Acts tells us that thousands were baptized daily.



(Text: Acts 2:47)

“...The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:47



People were baptized into Jesus.

They were baptized into His body, which was the church.

It was very important for the early disciples to be faithful to Jesus.

When the disciples were warned not to teach in Jesus’ name, the

Bible says:



(Text: Acts 5:29)

“But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men’.” Acts 5:29.

They chose to do what God said, you see, rather than to follow after man’s traditions.



They had pure faith, because they had been with Jesus.

They believed what Jesus believed.

They taught what Jesus taught.

That is the same kind of faith we need to have today – a simple, pure faith that looks forward to the second coming of Christ.

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A faith that looks forward to spreading the good news of salvation to all of our friends and neighbors – to the entire world – fulfilling the great gospel commission that Jesus gave us.

That is pure faith.

That is the faith of the believers of the church of the first century.



The first church of conquering faith was represented by a white horse.

This time period ended in A.D. 100.



What did John see when Jesus opened the second seal?



(Text: Revelation 6:4)

“Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth,



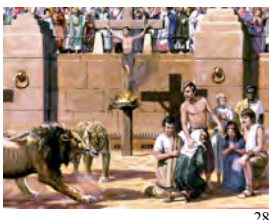
and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.”

Revelation 6:4.

So here we have represented a blood-stained faith.



We know that after A.D. 100, Christians began to be severely persecuted in the Roman Empire. They were slain, and many of them were fed to the lions in the great coliseums around the Empire.



What a terrible time for the Christian church!

But still, the church grew.

One church historian of the time said it seemed that the blood of Christians was like seed. As people died and gave their lives for Jesus, more were raised up to take their place.

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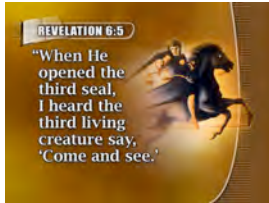


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The good news of salvation spread all across the Roman Empire and all across the known world of that time.

So the red horse represents a blood-stained faith.

The second seal is the Christian church from A.D. 100 to A.D. 323.

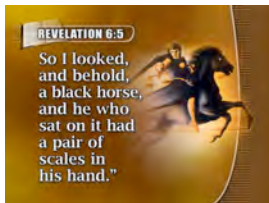


30

(Text: Revelation 6:5)

Now Jesus opened the third seal—the third period of the Christian church.

“When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come and see.’”



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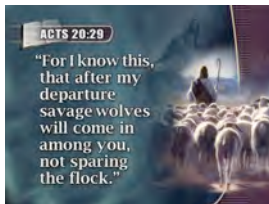
So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.”

Revelation 6:5.



32

This black horse represents a compromised faith.



33

(Text: Acts 20:29, 30)

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



34

Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Acts 20:29, 30.

This is a very sad time in the Christian church.



35

It is a time of compromised faith – when paganism is united with Christianity.

Daniel had predicted this.

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36

(Text: Daniel 8:12)

“Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices;



37

and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.”

Daniel 8:12.



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The first major truth lost during this time period was salvation by faith alone in Jesus.

Salvation through Christ was replaced by the requirements of the church.



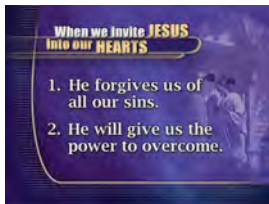
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If you will remember as we studied before, salvation, according to the Bible, is a free gift.

It is a gift, because we have all sinned, and we don't deserve it.

We deserve to die, because the wages of sin is death.

But the gift of God is eternal life.



40

To receive that free gift, all we need to do is to invite Jesus into our hearts.

Then He forgives us of all our sins.

And then He will give us the power to overcome our sinful habits.

He will give us the power to walk in His footsteps.



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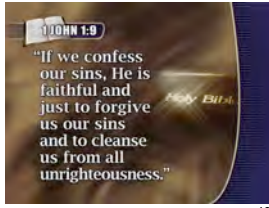
But this simple truth of salvation, this simple gospel as it is in Jesus, during this time period of the Christian church when faith was compromised, was replaced by the requirements of the church.



42

Even though Jesus offers pardon freely, Christians were told they needed to pay to have their sins forgiven.

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43

(Text: 1 John 1:9)

But the Bible says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
1 John 1:9.



44

The Christians were told they had to go to a priest.

They had to go to a man.

They couldn't go boldly to the throne of God anymore.

And people began to accept these traditions because they didn't have the Word of God to study for themselves.



45

Bibles in the common languages were actually outlawed.

Printing presses had not been invented yet, so it was difficult to find even small portions of Scriptures.

Many people accepted what the church told them, and the Christian faith became corrupt.



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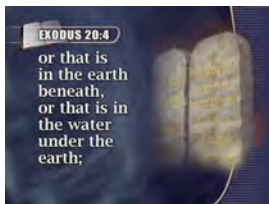
A second Bible truth that was compromised had to do with worshiping created things rather than worshiping the Creator. God says in the Ten Commandments:



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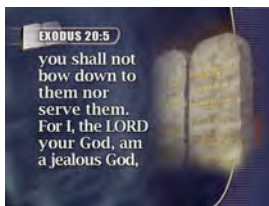
(Text: Exodus 20:4, 5)

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above,



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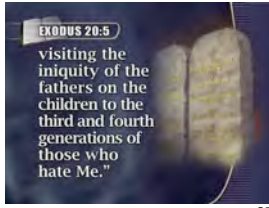
or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;



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you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,

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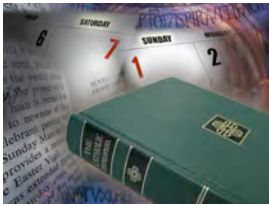
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visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me.”
Exodus 20:4, 5.



51

This was the time when images crept into the church.
The Ten Commandments made it very clear that it was wrong to worship anything but God Himself.



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A third Bible truth compromised during this time had to do with the fourth commandment and the day of worship.
Notice what the Bible says of Daniel as he saw this:



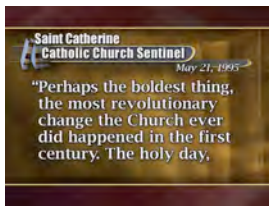
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(Text: Daniel 7:15)
“I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.”
Daniel 7:15.



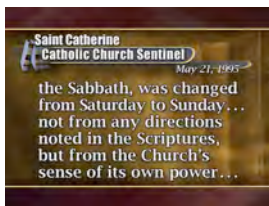
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During this time of compromised faith, love for Jesus grew cold, and many people followed after tradition rather than after God. The change from Sabbath to Sunday was brought about by the emperor of the Roman Empire, Constantine, in A.D. 321, and the church accepted this change.



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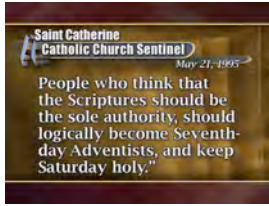
On May 21, 1995, St. Catherine’s Catholic Church Sentinel said, “Perhaps the boldest thing, the most revolutionary change the church ever did, happened in the first century. The Holy Day-



56

the Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday, not from any directions noted in the Scriptures but from the Church’s sense of its own power.

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57

People who think that the Scriptures should be the sole authority, should logically become Seventh-day Adventists and keep Saturday holy.”



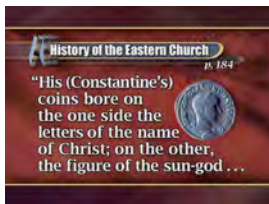
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Keeping Sunday, the first day of the week, holy is not in the Bible. Scholars around the world admit it!



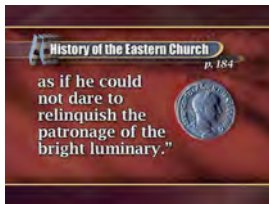
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My friends, if we want to do what the Bible says, we should be Seventh-day Adventists! During this age of compromise, the pagan’s day of the sun replaced the Bible’s Holy Sabbath.



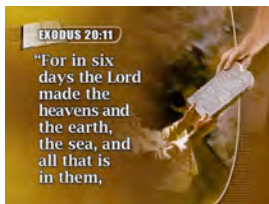
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The History of the Eastern Church, p. 184, says, “Constantine’s coins, bore on one side the letters of the name of Christ and on the other side, the figure of the sun god...,”



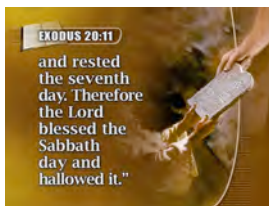
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as if he could not dare to relinquish the patronage of the bright luminary.” Isn’t that interesting? Millions have kept Sunday not knowing any better, but today we are faced with a choice between following tradition or following God’s commandments.



62

(Text: Exodus 20:11)
“For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them,



63

and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”
Exodus 20:11.
If God blessed a day, if He set one day apart, if He made one day holy, then my friends, man has no right, no power to change it!

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64

It becomes an issue of worship, an issue of obedience as to whether we are to follow man's traditions or do what God has said.



65

This then is the period of compromised faith. The compromised faith of the church is A.D. 323 through A.D. 536.



66

Now we move to the fourth period of the Christian Church, which is the pale horse.



67

(Text: Revelation 6:7, 8)

"When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, 'Come and see.'"



68

So I looked, and behold, a pale horse.

And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him.



69

And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword,



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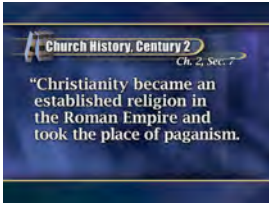
with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth." Revelation 6:7, 8.

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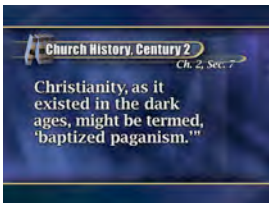
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A dead faith is represented by the fourth seal.
It was a time of union of the church and state.
The Holy Roman Empire was fully developed now, and it not only became a religious state but also a political state.
We have a union, then, of the church with politics.



72

Notice briefly this statement: "Christianity became an established religion in the Roman Empire and took the place of paganism."



73

Christianity, as it existed in the Dark Ages, might be termed 'baptized paganism'."
– Church History, Century 2, chap. 2, sec. 7.



74

Remember, at this time people did not have access to God's Word. It was actually against the law and, as we've said, the printing press wasn't invented yet.



75

Without access to God's Word, people followed after traditions. They were influenced by the pagan ceremonies that had crept into the church.



76

This was a terrible time of compromise, a terrible time of persecution of God's people.



77

This is why it is sometimes called "The Dark Ages."
Fifty million Christians were put to death because of their faith. Spiritually it was dark as traditions replaced the Word of God. Buying forgiveness for sins through penance and indulgences replaced the free salvation offered by the grace of Jesus Christ.

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Pagan theories of the afterlife, including the idea of purgatory, became accepted as fact. There is no such thing in God's Word as purgatory, yet it became a doctrine of the Church. Would God's truth be trodden down forever, we ask? No! The light of truth would again pierce through the darkness!



The flame of truth was kept alive by the Waldensians.



In the secluded mountains of northern Italy, we find their history. They early on obtained God's Word, the Bible, in their native tongue. The Waldensians would write out the Scriptures by hand and give portions of them to their children.



With these verses sewn into their garments, the children would make their way down to the great cities of Europe. They would share the Bible verses with friends they made in the market places and universities.



However, the consequences, if caught, were costly – they were burned at the stake. Though many lost their lives, the Waldensians considered it a privilege so that the work of God could be kept alive.



The seeds of Scripture they planted would come to a wonderful harvest during the Reformation. The Reformation exposed teachings of the pure faith of Jesus again to the masses of Europe.



After the Waldensians, there came a reformer, a Bible student in Prague by the name of John Huss. Huss, along with his friend Jerome, discovered that it was more important to obey God than it was to obey the church or to obey man.

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85

Because of their stand for the Word of God, and refusal to follow the traditions of the church, they were burned to death. Their ashes were cast into the river that flowed out into the Mediterranean Sea. Their ashes were like seeds, however, and the Reformation continued to grow.



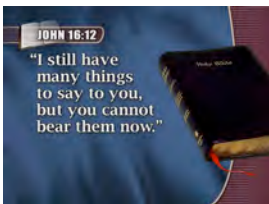
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After Huss and Jerome, a German monk named Martin Luther discovered the Bible truth of salvation by grace alone.



87

Some people ask the question, “Why is it that Huss and Jerome and Luther didn’t rediscover all the truths that had been lost in the Dark Ages?” Even the disciples of Jesus weren’t able to learn everything all at once. Change often takes time. Jesus said to His disciples:



88

(Text: John 16:12)

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”

John 16:12.



89

Recovering lost Bible truths was a process. It took hundreds of years to lose the faith of Jesus during the Dark Ages. And it would take years again to rediscover these truths.



90

When Luther died, his believers took what he said and formed the Lutheran Church. For them, the Reformation stopped at Luther’s death.



91

From Germany, we travel down to Geneva, Switzerland, and find a Bible student named John Calvin who, in his studies, discovered that Christians not only receive grace and forgiveness and should come boldly to the throne of grace, but that also, it is important for them to grow in Christ.

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92

So Calvin taught the doctrine of growth, which some call sanctification.
As we accept Jesus, He gives us the power to overcome sin.



93

When John Calvin died, his followers took what he said and formed the Presbyterian and other Calvinist churches.
So truth, you see, once lost in the Dark Ages, was steadily being rediscovered.



94

About this time there Christians in different parts of northern Europe concluded from their Bible study that instead of being sprinkled as babies,



95

baptism should follow Jesus' example.
It should be an adult individual's decision and being performed by immersion.
They were called Anabaptists.



96

Baptism by immersion-to be put all the way underneath the water as Jesus was – is a very important practice that had been lost in the Dark Ages.
It symbolizes being dead to sin and alive with God.



97

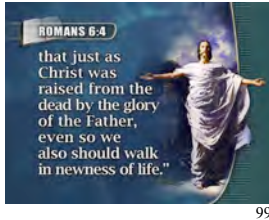
(Text: Romans 6:3, 4)
“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?”



98

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death,

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that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Romans 6:3, 4.

Of course baptism is only an outward sign. It symbolizes an inward relationship with Jesus.

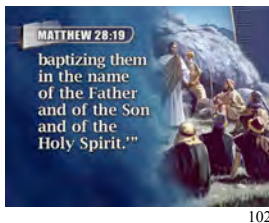


(Text: Matthew 28:18, 19)

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.



Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,



baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’.”

Matthew 28:18, 19.



Jesus gave the commission to His church to go and teach and baptize and make disciples.

The Anabaptists were following and fulfilling that commission, as we do today!



Many of these Anabaptists lost their lives, because they refused to baptize their infants and were rebaptized as adults, following the teachings of the Bible.

From this humble beginning, the Baptist churches were formed.



You see, each of these reformers were rediscovering truths which had been lost during the Dark Ages.

As they rediscovered these truths, their followers banded together into what later became major Protestant denominations such as Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Baptists.

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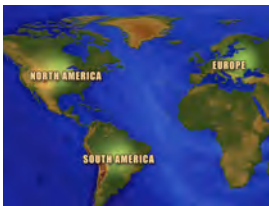
In England, a man by the name of John Wesley began to study his Bible.

He discovered the Bible teaching of sanctification – that those believers who are saved freely by the grace of Jesus may by His power live godly lives.



107

John Wesley was a great reformer, and when he died, his followers formed the Methodist church.



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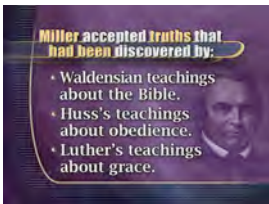
A new movement began to spread around the world as in South America, Europe, and North America, people began to study about the second coming of Jesus.



109

A man in the United States by the name of William Miller, studied Jesus' promises to return.

He also studied the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, and he understood from his studies that Jesus was coming very soon!



110

So, based on what the Waldensians taught about the Bible, what Huss taught about obedience, what Luther taught about grace,



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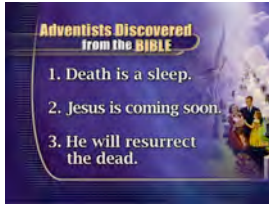
what Calvin taught about sanctification or growth, what the Anabaptists taught about baptism, and what Wesley taught about holiness, Miller added to these another very important doctrine: the nearness of the second coming of Christ.



112

After Miller's time, the Advent Movement continued. His friends also discovered that when people die, they fall asleep in Jesus, awaiting the resurrection. What a glorious morning that will be to be reunited with loved ones!

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113

The early Adventists discovered from the Bible:

1. Death is a sleep.
2. Jesus is coming soon.
3. He will resurrect the dead at the resurrection:



114

(Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:16)

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16.



115

After William Miller’s time, the believers in the second coming of Christ also discovered that the day most Christians kept holy was based on tradition, instead of God’s Word.

Because they loved Jesus, they wanted to keep all of His commandments.



116

(Text: Matthew 15:9)

Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 15:9:

“And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

How easy it is to follow tradition and forget God’s instructions!



117

But it doesn’t matter what man says.

What matters is what God says.

When it comes to worship, we must worship God on the Sabbath day that He has set apart for us.



118

It is a special day that He has given us.

As these special truths were rediscovered in the Bible, the people studying these truths eventually formed the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They keep the fourth commandment, and worship God on the seventh-day Sabbath.



119

The Sabbath is a holy day.

When we put God first on the Sabbath, then the experience will be delightful. God is not taking away from us – He is giving us a special blessing. He says He’ll cause us to ride on the high places of the earth.

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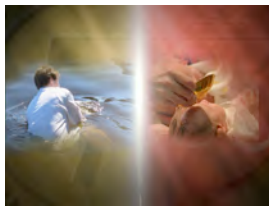
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So for every truth God has taught us in the Bible, Satan has come up with a counterfeit—a false imitation. God asks us to keep the seventh-day as the Sabbath. The counterfeit is Sunday worship.



121

God says when we die, we sleep in the grave. Satan's counterfeit is that we go to heaven or hell or purgatory at death.



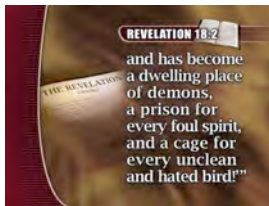
122

God says baptism is by immersion. Satan says it can be by sprinkling. God gave us His truth about health. Satan says the health laws were abolished. For every truth, there is a counterfeit.



123

(Text: Revelation 18:2)
And that creates confusion. The Book of Revelation talks about that: “And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,



124

and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!’”
Revelation 18:2.
Babylon, in prophecy, means “religious confusion.”
And notice the appeal here.



125

(Text: Revelation 18:4)
“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people,



126

lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.’”
Revelation 18:4.

22 – So Many Choices



127

God is calling for His people to come out of confusion, so that they may not be partakers of her sins.

Friends, Jesus is calling for you now.

Now is the time to stand for Jesus!

The ushers are passing out decisions cards. I want to make sure each of you receive one.

As we have studied tonight, it is plain to see that Jesus through His life and teachings revealed the truth that He intended His followers to know and follow.

We have discovered that Satan made war with the truth and Christ's church, persecuting, corrupting, and counterfeiting the truth of Jesus' teachings.

We have seen in our study of the Bible and history that Christ is leading his people back to the truth that He originally had given to His church.

He is calling a people out of the religious confusion into the truth revealed in His holy Word.

He is calling our hearts tonight! What is our answer to His call?

What will our decision be?

Why don't you just take the little card you have received in your hands, and look at it with me now.



128

This is our opportunity to respond to the call of Jesus through His Word tonight.

The first option is regarding the content of tonight's message. It reads: "It is clear to me that God has been revealing greater truth to His people through the centuries to restore the forgotten teachings of Jesus." If that has been clear as we've surveyed church history tonight, just indicate your understanding by checking this box.

The second option has to do with your response to what you have understood tonight. It reads: "I want to commit my life to following the teachings of Jesus rather than the confusing traditions of men." If you have sensed God's call to your heart, to move towards truth, to move into a clearer, more consistent system of beliefs by leaving behind spiritual confusion and convoluted traditions, just check this box as well.

The third option reads: "Because I am a disciple of Jesus, I want to take another step in my spiritual journey and become a part of God's last-day spiritual movement, the Seventh-day Adventist

22 – So Many Choices

Church.” We are saved individually, but we worship and grow together. In the book of Acts God “added to the church daily those who were being saved.” If you want to make the decision tonight to be a part of God’s last-day movement predicted in Bible prophecy, if you want to be among those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, I invite you to simply check this box as well.

Finally, if you have any prayer requests, just indicate them on the provided lines and our staff will be happy to make them a matter of prayer. Make sure your name is on the card, and the rest of the information if you haven’t filled it out before. Our ushers will collect the cards at the end of the aisles [or at the door as you leave – whichever your situation may be]. Let’s stand together as we pray.

[Suggested Prayer on next slide]



[Suggested Prayer]

Dear Father in heaven,

Thank you for revealing more and more truth to us in these last days. Thank you for the men and women who have gone before us who were willing to stand for the truths of your Word even when it was unpopular. Thank you for the greater light and freedoms we enjoy today because of their courage and faithfulness. Lord, help us to also be willing to stand for you – because we love you. Help us to be willing to stand for the truths of your word even if others don’t. Help us to be willing to hear your voice speaking to us, and be willing to follow. Tonight we’ve made some decisions. Your sheep have heard your voice, and are following you. Please bless each decision made here tonight. Bless each heart, each home, and give them the faith and courage to follow you all the way. Thank you for these meetings, and the time we’ve been able to spend together in your Word. Now as we depart from this place, we pray that you would keep us always in your presence, and brings us back again safely again to learn more of your truth. We pray these things in Jesus’ name, Amen.