

Lesson 27 – The True Church

INTRODUCTION: Does God have a movement to counter the spirit of Babylon? If, as we have seen, Babylon constitutes the great end-time confederacy of religious powers aligned against the government of God, then who will represent the case of God? The sad fact is, that the great majority of people will be deceived by the power and splendor of the woman that who rides the beast.

The woman decked with gold, precious stone and pearls (Revelation 17:4) represents, as we have seen, Rome. This attire that she wears corresponds to that of the ancient high priest, which means that she usurps the High Priestly role of Christ, placing herself in His position.

The doctrines of Rome have permeated through the cultures of the world and the religious systems have willingly accepted her leadership. The High Priestly ministry of Jesus is of vital significance to the world and while Babylon comes to fruition, God also heralds the final warning and invitation to call us back into a covenant relationship with Him.

Throughout the ages, God has had a people through whom He chose to disseminate His truth. It was God's plan that all people - every nation, tribe and tongue should become partakers of His grace. In His divine plan of restoration, He chose fallen human beings to become co-workers together with Him to achieve this end. God has always had faithful followers who would stand for truth and justice even in the face of great opposition. Before the flood, Enoch walked with God, and faithful Noah became the father of the post-flood human race, when he and his family were the only remnant to be saved from the destruction of the then-time apostate world.

After the flood, the patriarch Abraham was given the promise that through his seed all peoples would be blessed. (Genesis 12:2) The Messianic promise was to be realized through Isaac and Jacob whose name was changed to Israel after he wrestled with God for divine forgiveness and blessing. (Genesis 32:28) "Israel" became the name of the descendants of Jacob - the chosen people in terms of the covenant between God and Abraham their forefather. (Genesis 15:18; Psalm 105:9,10)

THE ISRAEL OF GOD (OLD COVENANT ISRAEL): There is much confusion today as to who constitutes the Israel of God. Many denominations seek the fulfillment of the promises of God to ancient Israel in modern Israel. They expect the restoration of Israel, and the modern Israel in Palestine is seen to be integral in this process.

It must be remembered that "Israel" is not the natural name of Jacob, but was given to him by God in recognition of a spiritual victory when he prevailed with God and secured pardon for his past sins. Jacob wrestled with the Angel and refused to let Him go unless he obtained the surety of the heavenly blessing which

would grant him the pardon of his sins. Jacob prevailed and received the blessing. His heart was renewed and he could face his brother Esau knowing that God was with him. The name change signified a change in character from the “supplanter or deceiver” to “God contends”.

An understanding of the relationship between physical Israel and the covenant people of God is vital if we are to discern who God’s light-bearers are in this modern age.

Following the Exodus from Egypt, God formally entered into a covenant with the nation of Israel. (Exodus 19:1-8) Israel was to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6) and they were to spread light to all people on the face of the earth. (Isaiah 60:1-3)

- 1) What were the conditions of the old covenant promises?

Exodus 19:5 “Now therefore, ___ ye will ___ My voice indeed and keep My covenant, ___ ye shall be a special treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.”

NOTE: The promises were subject to “if”. The physical throne of Israel was always conditional to obedience.

- 2) What were the conditions based on during the reign of Solomon and David?

1 Kings 2:4 “...that the Lord may continue His word which He spake concerning me, saying, ‘ ___ thy children take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with ___ their heart and with all their soul,’ He said, ‘there shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel.’”

NOTE: The conditions did not change during the golden age of Israel. Only whole hearted obedience to the God of Heaven was the criteria.

- 3) What are some of the blessings that attend an obedient life?

Deuteronomy 28:2 “And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, ___ thou shalt _____ unto the voice of the Lord thy God.”

NOTE: Deuteronomy 28:1-14 contains a list of the most wonderful blessings ever pronounced to any nation or people. Again the promises were conditional to obedience. Israel did, however, not heed this admonition and became more corrupt than the nations around them. (2 Kings 17:6-23) Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were spared for a while, and the other tribes were carried away captive by the king of Assyria and disappear from history. Some believe that they constitute the nations of Britain and their descendants including the USA. Without loyalty to God, the promises could not be fulfilled, and a century and a half later,

even Judah was plucked up from the Promised Land and scattered in the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

Nevertheless, some had remained faithful to God even in the face of this calamity as is shown by the stories of Daniel and his friends who were willing to rather face death than to disobey God. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God had granted a specific time for repentance and reflection, and He had promised that they would return to their land after 70 years of exile (Jeremiah 31:10-14; Isaiah 43:1-13). After this time, they were to rebuild the temple. The time prophecies of Daniel predicted the advent of the Messiah; and they had the opportunity to be witnesses to the nations (Micah 4:1-4; 5:2-6; Zechariah 8:20-23). Again all these promises were conditional to obedience (Zechariah 6:15). Sadly, the nation rejected the Messiah, and forfeited its covenant role and the covenant promises.

- 4) What happened to Israel as a result of rejecting Jesus?

Mathew 23:37-39 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your _____ is left unto you _____. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

THE ISRAEL OF GOD (NEW COVENANT ISRAEL): When the Jewish nation rejected the Messiah, the gospel was to go to the Gentiles and all who would believe in the name of Jesus would become the spiritual descendants of Abraham. (Galatians 3:16; Romans 4:16; Romans 9:3,8)

- 5) Who is the Israel of God today?

Galatians 3:29 “And if ye be _____, ____ ye are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the _____.”

NOTE: The apostle Paul speaks of Christians as the “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16) and the “circumcision” (Phil. 3:3) The kingdom of God and the covenant promises associated with it were to be taken from the Jews and passed on to spiritual Israel - those who would permit Christ to transform them, to change their character, as was the case with Jacob of old.

- 6) Did Jesus ever teach this concept to the Jewish nation during his life on earth?

Matthew 21:43-44 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God shall be _____ from you and _____ to a _____ bearing forth the fruits of it. And whoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

NOTE: Jesus did not choose 12 disciples coincidentally. Just as the twelve patriarchs were the founders of ancient Israel, so these twelve men

are the foundation stones of new Israel to which the Lord promised the kingdom (Matt 19:18; Luke 22:30).

The subsequent choice of seventy others is modeled after the choice of seventy elders by Moses in ancient Israel (Num 11:16). The real Israel of God is a remnant chosen by grace (Rom 11:5). There is a marvelous continuity between the old and the new Israel of God. In Romans 11:17-24, Paul speaks of the olive tree which represents Israel. The branches (Jews) were broken off because of unbelief and the wild olive shoots (Gentiles) were grafted in to share in the nourishment of the tree. The natural branches could be grafted back into the tree if they accepted the conditions. God is no respecter of nations or individuals. All who turn to Him will be accepted (Acts 10:34,35).

7) Is there any difference between Jew and Greek (Gentile) with God?

Romans 10:12 “For there is ___ between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”

Galatians 3:26 “For ye are ___ the children of God by ___ in Christ Jesus.”

NOTE: The new Israel is the inheritor of God’s covenant promises. Those who have accepted Christ have become the chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. (Compare 1 Peter 2:9,10 with Exodus 19:5,6) They were chosen to reveal God’s marvelous light to the world. (1 Peter 2:9; Matthew 28:19,20; Ephesians 3:10) The human race is in desperate need of redemption. God yearns to forgive and cleanse. (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:4) Henceforth, it was the role of the church to carry the gospel to the world.

SPIRITUAL DECLENSION AND REFORMATION: It is a sad fact of history that, like Israel of old, spiritual Israel also experienced a moral decline and turned towards the worship of other gods. The principles of heathen sun worship found their way into the church, and under the guidance of the Roman church were elevated to such a position that they would counterfeit the very gospel of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the period of spiritual decline, there were people who clung tenaciously to the word of God, but these were relentlessly persecuted for their faith. Among these were the Waldenses who, after having withdrawn to the Alps, because of persecution, fully separated from the Roman church. The work of Vigilantius Leo, who vigorously opposed the many false doctrines and practices that had been adopted by the Roman church, served as a light to many believers. The Waldenses constituted a remnant that kept the light of God’s word alive in a period of terrible spiritual declension. For their faith, they were ruthlessly massacred by Catholic leaders in a series of campaigns led against them, particularly those by D’Oppede in 1544, the Marquis of Pianesse in 1655, and Gabriel of Savoy in 1686. The light of truth which the Waldenses and Albigenses spread laid the foundations for the reformation. In England, John Wycliffe was the herald of reform, and Huss and Jerome, invigorated by his writings, carried the flag of reform in Bohemia. Huss

was burned at the stake on July 6, 1415 and Jerome on May 30, 1416, but the reformation forged ahead in spite of persecution. One by one, the great reformers uncovered precious truths that had been hidden under the rubble of false doctrine and superstition. Justification by faith and the once-for-all atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His all-sufficient mediatorial priesthood were the cornerstones of the reformers' faith.

Many unbiblical teachings, such as veneration of saints and relics, the mass, purgatory, celibacy, the numerous sacraments and faith in tradition rather than the word of God were discarded. The Protestant Reformers were virtually unanimous in identifying the papal system as the "man of sin", and he was equated with the "little horn" of Daniel chapter 7.

Martin Luther was one of the most prominent reformers used by God to call the world out of darkness. He obtained much light, but the full work of restoration was not entrusted to him alone. Others followed and each had some aspect of truth that together could have created a highway for the gospel. Instead, the followers of Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, and other great reformers often ventured no further along the path of gospel light than had their leaders. They would crystallize their beliefs into a creed to the extent of shutting out additional light that did not fit into this creed.

Instead of forging a way for collective truth, the reformation resulted in a host of denominations, each with aspects of the truth, but excluding total truth. Satan had once again achieved a victory. Caught in the cage of creeds, Protestantism itself degenerated into formalism and theoretical theology, which extinguished the reformatory flame, opening the way to universal apostasy.

The present wave of cooperation between the churches is based not on issues of the gospel, but on social issues, thus there is nothing separating the "reformed churches" from Rome. The aim of the reformation, the unveiling of the gospel, had once again been curtailed.

THE FINAL REFORMATION (THE LATTER RAIN): God will not end the work on earth with less power than that with which He started it. Under the symbols of the former and latter rain, God had promised showers of blessing that would bring the harvest to ripening. As God's power was manifested at Pentecost when the fledgling church was empowered to take the gospel to the world, so God's power will be manifested when the church completes its witness. The symbols of the early and the latter rain (Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23,28-32; Acts 2:16-21) represent not only the outpouring of the Spirit on the church, but also on the individuals that constitute the church. Each individual must also have a former and latter rain experience. The former rain represents the rebirth whilst the latter rain is to bring the character in line with the character of Christ. They also refer to justification and sanctification or "us in Christ" and "Christ in us". (John 14:20) At the end of time, God will have a people that will represent Him and His truth before an apostate world. As in the days of the disciples, the truth will be triumphant - the latter rain will do its work to bring God's harvest to fruition.

TIME OF THE END: The time of the end is not to be confused with the end of time. The phrase “time of the end” is used five times in Daniel, chapters 8-12 and refers to a time before the second coming of Christ. There would also be a definite appointed time when that time should arise. (Daniel 11:35)

In Daniel 7:25, the prophet refers to the 1260-year period of papal dominance, and in Daniel 12:6,7, the same period (time, times and half a time) is mentioned with regard to the time of the end. With the completion of the 1260-year period of papal dominion in 1798, commences the time of the end. The great truths concerning the ministry of Christ had been trampled on during the period of papal dominance, (Daniel 8:11) but these truths were to be restored.

The prophet Daniel himself did not understand the vision of the cleansing of the sanctuary (Daniel 8) at the end of the 2300-day period, nor did he fully comprehend the events that would unfold during the time of the end. The reason for this is that the prophecy was sealed unto the time of the end. (Daniel 8:17,26; 12:9)

8) What clues did Daniel give in regards to the time of the end?

Daniel 12:4 “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book even to the time of the end; ____ shall run to and fro, and _____ shall be _____.”

NOTE: In the Hebrew, the definite article is given with the word “knowledge”, which indicates that knowledge of the book of Daniel itself will be increased at the time of the end. It is noteworthy that only the wise and none of the wicked will be lead to an understanding of these prophecies. The wise would also lead many to righteousness. (Daniel 12:3) Wisdom, in a biblical sense, comes from a relationship with God that is built on trust and obedience, and cannot be compared with worldly wisdom.

9) According to the Bible where can true wisdom be found?

Psalm 119:98-99 “Thou, through Thy _____, hast made me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation.”

NOTE: Wisdom is associated with the law of God and the word of God. Understanding comes from obedience to God’s law (Psalm 119:100,104) and to the testimony, the Word of God revealed through the prophets of all ages (Psalm 119:125, 130, 144). If truth was to be restored, then knowledge and understanding of the Biblical concept of truth is essential.

10) How does the Bible define truth?

John 14:6 “...I am the way, the _____, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by ____.”

John 17:17 “Sanctify them through Thy truth. Thy _____ is truth.”

Psalm 119:151 “Thou art near, O Lord, and all Thy _____ are truth.”

NOTE: Truth restored contains all these elements. It is Christ centered, it is word-based, and it involves obedience to the law of God. As Jesus Himself pointed out in (John 14:15). At the time of the end, there would thus be a movement to restore all things and to unveil the sealed prophecies of the book of Daniel. History confirms that a great resurgence of interest in the Scriptures, accompanied by missionary zeal commenced around the year 1798. In 1795, the London Missionary Society was organized, followed a year later by the New York Missionary Society, the first in America.

The great Bible societies of the world were also formed in the period between 1798 and 1844, which is the close of the 2300-year prophecy. Associated with this resurgence of interest, numerous health and temperance societies were formed, and by 1807 William Metcalf had even founded the vegetarian and teetotaler “Society of Bible Christians of Philadelphia”. It is noteworthy that this time period is also associated with the great technological advances of our age. The first steam engine was patented in 1769, and this opened the way for steamboats (1807-1810) and the railroads (1825). The gospel was to be spread to “all the world” and God saw to it that the means to achieve this end would also be available. In the world of music, the great Biblical themes were a prominent source of inspiration with Handel’s “Messiah” focusing attention on the King of kings and Haydn composing the “Creation” in 1844.

THE UNSEALING OF DANIEL’S PROPHECY: It is during this period of renewed interest in the Scriptures that a young Baptist farmer by the name of William Miller (1782- 1849) published a series of articles in the Baptist weekly - “Vermont Telegraph” on the prophecies of Daniel. He used a simple set of rules to unravel the great themes of prophecy, namely-

- a) The New Testament is the expositor of the Old
- b) Scripture must be its own expositor
- c) The symbolism of type and antitype
- d) Every word must be taken into consideration
- e) Prophecy compliments prophecy

His study of Daniel chapter 8 led him to believe that the cleansing of the sanctuary, which was to take place at the end of the 2300-year period, referred to the cleansing of the earth from sin. He concluded that Christ would return at the close of this prophetic time, and using the day-year principle, calculated that this event would take place in 1843. It is then that the “spiritual sanctuary”, the church, would be cleansed. Miller rejected the popular interpretations of the day and reintroduced the

old Protestant Christ-centered interpretation, which saw the followers of Jesus at the heart of the end-time prophecies. He stressed the pre-millennial return of Christ and, based on the time prophecy of Daniel 8, eventually set a definite date for this event, namely October 22, 1844. As a consequence, he, together with some 100,000 others were expelled from their churches. The believers in the imminent advent of Christ came from all denominations and included at least 200 ministers from prominent Protestant churches.

Drawing from the parable of the ten virgins, (Matthew 25:1- 13) the message became known as the “midnight cry”, the return of the bridegroom. There was a return to primitive godliness, as the various groups of advent believers awaited the return of the Lord. History tells us that Jesus did not return to this earth in 1844. Those that eagerly awaited His return were greatly disappointed, an event which became known as the “great disappointment”. Many were disillusioned and left the movement. Those that clung to their experience were ridiculed and became objects of scorn.

Once before in the history of the church had there been such a disappointment. The followers of Christ had with great expectation awaited His coronation as the Messiah in Jerusalem. They had hailed Him as their king and thrown palm branches before His feet. (John 12:13) But instead of a coronation, they had to witness a crucifixion. Their disappointment was real, and many lost their faith. Even the disciples were filled with fear and hid themselves “for fear of the Jews”. (John 20:19) On the road to Emmaus, two followers of Jesus were contemplating these sad events (Luke 24:13-53).

11) Was this final reformation prophesied in times past in the Bible?

Isaiah 58:12 “And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The _____ of the _____, The _____ of paths to dwell in.”

NOTE: As in the case of the disappointment in Christ’s time, the disappointment of 1844 led to ardent study of the Scriptures and assimilation of truths uncovered by the reformation. Those associated with the advent movement that remained after 1844 considered themselves as “the remnant church” or simply “the remnant”. The prophecies of Daniel were re-examined and a number of believers discovered that the books of Hebrews and Revelation are full of references to a sanctuary in heaven. The great doctrine of the sanctuary, its type and antitype was rediscovered and the role of Jesus as our High Priest and sacrificial lamb were understood in its setting. The Typology of the Jewish feasts and their meaning and fulfillment were also uncovered.

Together with this tremendous breakthrough in understanding came the realization of what the day of atonement stood for in type, and what its relevance was in terms of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary or the commencement of the judgment in heaven. The standard of judgment, the law, and its significance

was also understood in its relationship to the plan of salvation. The ancient wall of truth that had served as a bulwark against evil, was being rebuilt as Isaiah had prophesied. The Law and the Sabbath were rediscovered and the relationship between law and grace was placed in a right setting. The commandments of God and faith in Jesus Christ became pillars on which the faith of the remnant rested.

12) Does the book of Revelation mention a final movement that would be keeping the commandments of God?

Revelation 12:17 “And the dragon was _____ with the _____, and went to make war with the _____ of her seed, which keep the _____ of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

NOTE: Out of the ashes of the Millerite movement grew the Seventh-day Adventist Church. By 1848, a doctrinal platform existed incorporating the great truths uncovered by the reformation. The basic principles of prophetic interpretation as held by the emerging church were the cumulative prophetic views of the church of the centuries. They adopted, coordinated and continued reforms that had been lost in the sands of time. Doctrinal landmarks of the movement were grounded on the Scriptural teaching regarding:

- 1) The second coming of Christ
- 2) The binding claims of the seventh-day Sabbath
- 3) The third angel’s message in relation to the first and second angel’s messages
- 4) The ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary
- 5) The non-immortality of the soul

AT THE RIGHT TIME: The judgment hour message which was proclaimed by the Millerite movement was not the final message of warning, but commencement of the “restoration of all things”. In Revelation 14, John describes the judgment hour message, as given by an angel who gave it with a loud voice.

13) What does the judgment hour message of Revelation 14 consist of?

Revelation 14:7 “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his _____ is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”

NOTE: This message is, however, followed by two further messages, namely the proclamation of the fall of Babylon, and the warning against allegiance to the beast and his image.

14) Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church comply with all the conditions of the remnant?

NOTE: Only the Seventh-day Adventist church complies with all the attributes of God's remnant as given in the Scriptures. Satan may counterfeit one or the other of the attributes, but he cannot counterfeit them all. The Adventist church:

- 1) Arises at the right time
- 2) Preaches the three angels' messages
- 3) Has a worldwide distribution
- 4) Keeps the commandments of God. (Rev 12:17; 14:12; 22:14)
- 5) Has the faith of Jesus. (Rev 14:12) They have a Christ-centered religion and believe that through trust in God, the believer will obtain grace to overcome as Christ overcame. (1 John 5:4; Rev 12:11; 1 John 23:3,7)
- 6) Has the testimony of Jesus (Rev 12:17) which is the spirit of prophecy. (Rev 19:10) (Covered in Lesson 27)

15) What is Jesus calling people to do?

John 10:16 “And other sheep I have, which are not of this ___ : them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.”

NOTE: Jesus wants us as Christians to be united. But the unity He wants is based on the Word of God. There are thousands of different denominations today, very few of which keep all the Commandments of God. They deny the Sabbath truth. Also, God's Church must have the Spirit of Prophecy. There is only one worldwide church that fits these specifications. The Seventh-day Adventist Church. It does not mean that this church is better, or that this church is the only way to heaven, but it does mean that if you want to be victorious in these last days you will be led to this body of believers. These studies that you are doing are part of God's leading. Isn't it wonderful to know that God cares so much about you that He has opened the door of providence for you to take these Bible Studies?

IS IT YOUR DESIRE...

I recognize that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's Remnant Church. I choose to be a member of this church that will bring the Gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and people. Yes or No

