

Lesson 21 - God's True Church Identified.

Today, according to the Yearbook of Churches, we have 244 Protestant denominations in the world. If you add all the others that claim to believe in Christ, and follow the Bible, you will come up with over 500 groups all calling themselves Christian.

Now that should tell us something is wrong. There was only one Christ. Then why do we have 500 groups claiming to follow Christ, yet all are different?

Let's ask some logical questions. Are all these groups right? The obvious answer is NO. The problem is, most are part right and part wrong. Let's illustrate it like this. Suppose I had a bottle of poison, clearly marked, and I offered some to you. There's no way you would drink it. But suppose I put a bit of that poison in a glass and mixed it with orange juice and offered it to you? You would probably drink it, and you might *die*.

The devil is called the "deceiver" (**Revelation 12:9**), and deception is the comingling of truth and error. The devil has this advantage over God. He can use truth and error. God can only use truth. And whenever the devil mixes truth and error, he deceives. Naked lies don't deceive people, but when Lie wears Truth's clothes, he becomes deadly!

It's interesting to ask people why they belong to the church do. One man was on a walk one day and met his neighbor coming out of church. He asked, "Are you a member here?" "Yes I am," he replied. "Tell me what your church believes?" "Oh, my church believes what I do." "Well then what do you believe?" "The same thing the church does." "What did the preacher preach on today?" "Well, he preached on the platform."

Now that's a sorry answer! And yet most people are like that. But friends, we ought to have a reason for going where we go, and believing what we believe. **First Peter 3:15** says we should always have an answer for our faith. **"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."** Let's make a proposition as we begin. Jesus *does* have a church! He said so in **Matthew 16:18**, **"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."** Christ has a church. He is the foundation of the church. **First Corinthians 3:11**, **"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."** You see, a church is not a building only; it is an assembly of people called out of darkness into His light. It is a group called out of error into truth, from disobedience to obedience, and from sin into salvation! Paul clearly wrote why we are to be a member of a church. **First Timothy 3:15**, **"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH."** The true church is to be the pillar and ground of truth. Therefore, if the church we are attending is not following all the *truth*, then God would have us seriously consider whether we are attending the right church.

God has one church, based on the Bible and *not* on tradition, on the commands of God and not men. **Ephesians 4:5** says there is only one faith. **"One Lord, one faith, one baptism."** Jesus also said this in **John 10:16**, **"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."** There is *one* fold, and *one* shepherd. Christians who follow one Bible, one law, and one

Christ ought to believe the same thing! The reason we have so many different churches is because all in degrees accept or reject the *truth*. If Christians would throw out all the tradition and false teaching and go straight to the Bible alone, we would all be in one accord. The Bible could bring us together!

Down through the ages, God's church has been characterized by people who were faithful to Him. And it's interesting to note that God's church hasn't always been the biggest church. **Deuteronomy 7:6-7**, "**For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor chose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people.**" His church was often just a few. Whenever His people strayed from the truth, He called out the few. In **Haggai 1:12** a name is applied to this group. "**Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the *remnant* of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.**" "The Remnant." Now in the New Testament, as we progress, you still see this remnant. **Romans 11:5**, "**Even so then at this present time also there is a *remnant* according to the election of grace.**"

Through the Bible, God has always had a "remnant" - a small group faithful to the pillar and ground of truth. Let's go to Matthew as we begin our study to discover the Remnant Church today. **Matthew 7:20- 23**, "**Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.**

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." God says to check the fruits--not the church's name, or the eloquence of the preacher, the size of the choir, the power of the organ, or beauty of the stained glass! God has given us some "fruit" to identify, clues to distinguish His true church. We don't have to go through 500 churches! The list will narrow down so fast in Revelation it's amazing! God said there would be a "remnant." A church like Christ's original church. In the end of time, Revelation clearly talks of the Remnant Church. Who are they? **Revelation 12:17, "AND THE DRAGON WAS WROTH 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."** The "Remnant" are commandment keepers. Now that's so simple a child can understand! Friends, with that verse alone you can do away with 99 percent of all religious churches. **Revelation 14:12** again describes the saints as commandment keepers. **"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."** So if you want to find God's true church, you need to find a church that keeps all the commandments--not just nine, all ten! **James 2:10** says if you break one commandment you break them all.

Then there's a second identifying mark. **Revelation 12:17, "And the dragon was wroth 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,"** What is the "*testimony of Jesus*" ? **Revelation 19:10** says it's the "Spirit of Prophecy." **"And I**

fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Who are the "brethren" that have this gift? **Revelation 22:9** says the Old Testament prophets! So, God's last church will believe all the Bible. They will not take away the Old Testament or New Testament, but believe "*all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God." And they will be known as a church that believes and teaches Bible prophecy. When you find a church that keeps *all the law*, and believes in *all the Bible*, and *teaches the prophecies*-you have found the Remnant Church! A sure test friends, is found in this verse, **Isaiah 8:20**, "**To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.**"

Another identifying mark of God's Remnant Church is the message they proclaim. Do you remember we read in **Matthew 24:14** the gospel must go to the whole world? "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." And we read what that gospel was in **Revelation 14:6**, "**And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.**" The three angels message. **Verse 7** talks about proclaiming the hour of judgment *is* come. The latter part of **verse 7** calls us to "worship Him who made..." calling people back to the fourth commandment. Then verse 8 is a message that Babylon is fallen, come out of it, do not follow its teachings or practices (**Revelation 18:2-4**). Then **verses 9-10** says a message will go out warning against worshipping the Beast, its image, or receiving its

mark. And so God's marks of identification for His true church line up as follows.

- A. It's built on the one faith of Jesus.
- B. It's a "remnant" exactly like the original church in all its doctrines and teachings.
- C. It keeps all of God's commandments.
- D. It has the testimony of Jesus--the Spirit of Prophecy.
- E. It believes and teaches prophecy.
- F. It believes all the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament.
- G. It carries the everlasting gospel of **Revelation 14** to all the world, which contain the following four messages.
 1. The judgment hour is come.
 2. Worship Him that made heaven and earth.
 3. Babylon is fallen, come out of her my people.
 4. Don't worship the Beast, its image, or receive its mark.

As we look at these points, there is only one church today that fits the Bible tests. Only one church today has carried this gospel to the whole world--God's Remnant Church!

We must each ask ourselves the question, "How does my church meet the Bible standard?" Serious things are at stake. God is not concerned with how famous or popular a church is. There are some people who are married to churches. If our reason for attending a particular church is: "Mom and dad went there," or "We have friends there," or "We like the preacher," then we better re-think our position! Any church that does not fit all the points is not Christ's Remnant Church! And Christ invites us to step out and follow His church of truth.

As we face this decision, it's encouraging to know that Jesus also faced this decision. He too had to change churches. Christ in the beginning of His ministry referred to the church as "My church" (**John 2:16**). It was an exquisitely beautiful church, built out of gold and marble. Nothing ever has matched its beauty. Jesus' father, grandfather, and great grandpa had been members there, for many years. But there came a time when those people rejected truth, a time when they were more interested in how they looked and impressed people than how they looked to God. The time came when form and ceremony were more important than worshiping in spirit and in truth. Yes, the time came when the tradition of men was accepted rather than a plain "thus saith the Lord." And finally Christ said in **Matthew 15:8-9**, "**This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me, But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**" In vain they worship! After three years of desperately trying to get people to accept truth, His heart-broken soul in anguish cried, **Matthew 23:37- 38**, "**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 house is left unto you desolate.**" He said, "*your house is left unto you desolate.*" Christ had to change churches! And He did. He called out a remnant--the few who were willing to believe and step out when everyone laughed and went the other way. Those faithful ones stepped out on the narrow road and began to go all the way with Jesus! And today as God calls out His remnant, there are those who say like David, **Psalms 86:11**, "**Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.**"

As we continue studying prophecy, we find God reveals His true church even clearer. In Revelation we see two women. One in **Revelation 12** and one in **Revelation 17**. These represent two churches--the bride of Christ, and the whore of Babylon. In

Revelation 12:1- 5 the woman brings forth the man child Jesus.

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne."

The woman is shown as pure and holy, clothed in symbolisms of righteousness and truth--the 12 stars represent the 12 apostles as she goes forth proclaiming the truth as it is in Christ. However, in **verse 6** the picture changes. **"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days,"** The woman or church fled into the wilderness to escape the 1260 years of persecution while Pagan and Papal Rome rule the world. **Verse 14,** **"And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent."** As time goes on, we do not see the woman in the wilderness reappear until **chapter 17:3,** **"So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a**

scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns."

Notice the startling change of the woman! In **Revelation 12** she (the church) goes into the wilderness pure and holy. But during the 1260 years to follow she becomes corrupted. Now she is a full-fledged harlot! **Revelation 17:4-6**, "**And he woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.**" Now she (the church) sits on a scarlet beast with seven heads. What do the seven heads represent? **Verse 9** says they represent the seven mountains on which she sits. "And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." What city is the city of seven mountains? Rome! Therefore **verse 18** says the woman is that great city, Rome, having turned from a Pagan empire to a Papal church empire!

What God pictures here is this simple fact. His pure church became corrupted by Pome. Through the false teachings of Babylon it became the mother church, spreading the false pagan teachings throughout the world.

Then comes another revelation. The woman is beyond restoration, she is fallen, and therefore, it is only a "remnant" of her seed that is saved. **Revelation 12:17**, "**And the dragon was wroth 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." Let's be part of that remnant!

As we continue on in **Revelation 17**, we notice another alarming fact. The woman is no longer a virgin, but has committed spiritual adultery with Babylon. From this union, she has produced daughters. **Revelation 17:4- 5, "And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."** The "mother of *Harlots*." Not only is she the mother church, but she has daughters--other churches who are called harlots for they are like her. Why? Because for 1260 years the world went down in the Dark Ages until men like Martin Luther, John Wesley, and other reformers began to protest and return to the Bible. But it's hard to reverse steps and get back on the right path after walking so long in darkness! And today most churches are still in some degree or another following Pome's doctrines and that's what makes them her daughters. The names may be changed, but the false teachings are the same. Many churches follow false teachings of Rome like baptism by sprinkling, the immortal soul, the change of the ten commandments, Sunday worship, traditions, et cetera. This is why we have so many churches in the world today.

But, praise the Lord, even though this happened, God said He would have a Remnant Church. He lowly began to restore the truth step by step through the Dark Ages. Truth is progressive (**Proverbs**

4:18). God couldn't send all the truth at once, it would have been too much, so little by little He restored truth. And we can rejoice today knowing that what God started in the reformation, He will complete.

As the Dark Ages reached their peak, God sent out a man--the "Morning Star of the Reformation," *John Wycliffe* in the 1300s. He translated the Bible into English, and with the Word came the light! He made the first steps in restoring the truth. Being the first real reformer, the Papacy did not know exactly how to deal with him. After he died peacefully in 1384, the real blood bath of martyrs began. Forty-four years later when Papal Rome discovered what he had done, they angrily dug up his bones and burned them in the city center. They then threw his ashes in the river to show their anger toward this man who brought the Bible back to the people. God had another great man ready, *John Huss*, who made the next step declaring the Bible as infallible and the *only* rule of faith and practice. He stood firm for the Word and it cost him his life. In 1415 he was arrayed before the priests while they disposed his soul from heaven, gave it to the devil and marched him to the stake to be burned to death. But he went singing with no fear! At the stake they stripped him and tied him with chains and burned him alive for his faith! Oh to God we still had that kind of faith and courage in our world today!

Then came *Martin Luther*. He built on the work of those before him and established the beautiful truth of faith, "the just shall live by faith." Then *John Calvin* came along and brought forth the teaching that "we are saved by grace." *John Wesley* brought in the teaching of the new birth and living through the power of God. Then *Roger*

Williams clearly taught Bible baptism by immersion. And so truth progressed.

But a problem arose. The people began to put their eyes on these *reformers* and not on the *truths* the reformers were bringing out. They got stuck with "denominations." For example, the "Hussites" would go no farther than John Huss taught them even in the light of the plain teachings of Luther who had more truth. So the Brethren Churches came forth. But Lutherans had the same problem. They wouldn't follow farther than Luther had light. John Calvin and John Knox after Luther had increased light, but Lutheran people wouldn't go on. So we have the Lutheran Church. From Calvin and Knox came the Presbyterian Church. So this is why we have so many denominations today. All have some light, but all still hold on to some doctrines of Rome. Paul had the same problem in the New Testament, **1 Corinthians 3:4-6, "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."** Paul said we ought to follow Christ.

But truth continued to progress through the years in spite of these sad developments. Now as we live in the end of time, God has shown complete truth. Revelation says there will be a "remnant," a church exactly like the original. Today God's Remnant Church does exist on earth. We have found it in Scripture. It is the only church that is like the original.

As truth progressed we come to the late 1700s when the 1260 year prophecy of Daniel ended. As the dominating Beast power came to its end during the French Revolution, we find several developments

taking place. First was the invention of the printing press and with it the development of Bible Societies. Within a few years, everyone was able to get a Bible for the first time. At the same time came the emphasis on education. Reading and writing was being taught. Through these two developments, there came a great religious awakening throughout the world especially in Europe and North America. Christians of all churches began reading and studying. As time progressed the common people began to ask: "If we all have the same Bible, why don't we believe the same thing?" Putting denominational barriers aside fellow Christians began to search for the *truth*. Each church had some truth to contribute, each church had to also let go of some error. But in a spirit of love and desire to follow Jesus fully, these Christians united truth with truth. From this beginning of thousands of Christians, all united under the pillar and ground of truth, came forth God's Remnant Church. The final three angels' message of warning began to be proclaimed to the world, and from these humble beginnings, the Adventist Church now surrounds the globe, in every country of the world. The movement of the early 1800s as never stopped, rather it has accelerated to the point that today the Adventist Church is the fastest growing church in the world! What happened in the early 1800s has continued in this Bible study. Sincere people, who long to follow the truth as it is in Jesus, have come together from all walks of life, and all faiths. Together we have opened the precious Bible, and that Bible has led us together. We are following one Christ, one law, and one Word. Around the world today men and women are taking hold of this message and becoming part of God's Remnant Church. Thousands of people today are hearing God's call and stepping out in faith. You are privileged to hear this truth. God has led you this far, and today He invites you to become a member of His Remnant

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

As you make this decision to join with God's commandment-keeping people, your life will be filled with joy and blessings. May God bless you as you make this decision today.