
Survivors of the Longest War



SOMETIMES MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE can be a matter of life or death. In a TV drama, a character may have just seconds to decide which wire to cut in order to defuse the bomb. If someone in your family had a heart attack, you'd call an ambulance. What if you asked the ambulance driver if he knew the way to the hospital, and he replied, "I think so"? His driving could mean the difference between life and death for your loved one. Is that good enough, or do you want him to be certain which way to go?

But are we certain which way to go in churches? Shouldn't we know it if God has a church on earth today? Not all roads lead to Rome; and not all roads lead to heaven either. Let's study it in God's Word.

Thoughts to Remember:

- ♦ "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hades [hell] shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus said, "Your name is Peter [the moveable stone]; upon *this* rock [Christ, the Rock of Ages] I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." The church was not built on Peter. He denied Jesus three times; hell *did* prevail against him. There is no foundation for the church except Jesus.
- ♦ Here are reasons the Bible gives for joining a church:
 - The Scriptures teach the importance of belonging to a church. "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:5).
 - Baptizing converts into the church body was part of Christ's Great Commission to the disciples. "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:18-20).
 - Heaven's godly, organized functioning requires the church to be organized also. "So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23).
- ♦ The way to find truth isn't by picking a church first, then embracing its beliefs. We find truth by studying the Bible first, then finding a church that follows its teachings. Salvation is not by church membership, however, but through a relationship with Christ.
- ♦ In Revelation 12, a woman (representing the true church) gives birth—a symbol of the emergence of Christianity. Satan attacks this new church, but God protects it.

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• Through the ages, God preserved His truth and gave courage to His people to withstand persecution. "And they overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11).

• "Then the woman 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). A day equals a year in prophetic time. In AD 538 a pagan emperor united with the church to force religious obedience; in AD 1798 Napoleon took the head of the church captive, breaking the church's power—1,260 years during which the church fled and hid.

• Revelation predicts the rise of God's last-day movement after AD 1798: "And the dragon [Satan] was wroth with the woman [the church], and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 12:17). "Remnant" means "that which remains of the original." So to find God's true remnant church in the last days in which we now live, we must look for a church that keeps all the commandments, has the faith of Jesus (salvation is by grace alone), believes Jesus is coming again, and teaches the truth about death (Christ will resurrect the dead when He comes).

• The remnant obey the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. What is the testimony of Jesus? "And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'" (Revelation 19:10). "Even as the testimony of Christ [the gift of prophecy] was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:6, 7).

• This gift cannot be denied in the remnant church unless we're willing to deny part of the Bible, but it is never to take the Bible's place. Daniel 8:14 says: "And he said unto me, 'For two thousand and three hundred days: then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.'" This prophecy went from 457 BC to 1844 AD. In 1844, a group of disciples from many denominations believed Christ would come that year. They were disappointed. In that critical time, God sent visions and prophecies to young Ellen Harmon (Ellen White after marriage) that helped the disappointed ones to continue studying to pursue more Bible knowledge and Bible truth.

• At the end of time, God will have a remnant church that is based on the Bible, loves Jesus, teaches truth about the second coming and about death, is faithful to keep the Bible seventh day Sabbath, and was guided in its early days by the gift of prophecy.

• Let's review identifying marks of the remnant church. It arises sometime after 1798; its members trust Jesus and keep all His commandments; it is guided by the gift of prophecy; and it proclaims God's final message to the world.

The "take-home" message for you . . .

• You may face difficult situations if you take a stand for Christ—the loss of a job, marriage struggles, financial challenges. God has preserved His truth for centuries, and He can preserve you too. A decision to become a Seventh-day Adventist should only be made through Bible study and prayer. Based on the prophecies of Revelation, the SDA church is not just another denomination; it is a divinely led movement in these final chapters of earth's history.

Just between you . . . and God:

• God knows why you're here, whatever the reason may be. He knows you're seeking after truth. You may sense His calling as you study. Respond in faith to His calling and depend on His faithful care over you.

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