

## Chapter 23

“Well class, today we read the last chapter in our book,” Mr. Dell said as he recorded the attendance. “I don't know about you, but I've really enjoyed going through these stories with you. We've learned a lot together over the last few weeks haven't we?”

“Yeah,” Hannah asked. “I love that all through history there have been people who believed like we do.”

“Exactly,” Aaron agreed. “Who would have thought there have always been Sabbathkeepers. I knew the Jews always kept the Sabbath, but I thought that it wasn't until the 1800's that the Sabbath was kept again by non-Jews.”

“As I read this last chapter you will find a lot of verses to support the statements being made. We aren't going to take the time to look them all up, but if you wish you could jot some of them down and look them up later to verify in your own mind the truths that we are learning.” Picking up his book Mr. Dell began to read:

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### On the Hunt for God's True Church

We have reached the final chapter in our story of God's true church. In these pages we have met God's heroes who upheld His Word in Europe and the Middle East and discovered the almost forgotten stories of Christians living from Ethiopia all the way to Japan.

We were introduced to great men such as Patrick, Columba, Aiden, Vigilantius and Columbanus. We were humbled by the faithful Waldenses who were willing to sacrifice their comfort, safety and prosperity to stand for the truths found in their uncorrupted Scriptures. We rejoiced in the wide-spread success of the Church of the East and recoiled at the cruel Inquisition that hunted down so many faithful Christians and sentenced them to inhumane deaths.

But what happened to this church we have learned about? Are there descendants of the Church at Antioch, the Celtic Church, the Waldensian Church and the Church of the East? Join me in a little investigative research to find out who picked up the torch of God's long-ago heroes.

It goes without saying that any church following in the steps of Christ will be a Bible-based church. Isaiah 8:20 tells us, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” This church we are looking for will have two defining characteristics according to Revelation 12:17 – they will, “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” So let's see if we can find a church that matches this description.

Because this church has the Bible as its foundation its members will answer all doctrinal questions with a “thus saith the Lord.” They will not accept tradition or man's opinion, but rather they will allow God's Word to settle any spiritual questions. They will accept as authoritative a Bible from the pure line of manuscripts rather than accepting Rome's Bible or the many translations coming from that corrupt line.

Like the disciples, this church will worship on the seventh-day Sabbath as written by God in the Ten Commandments. Following in the footsteps of Jesus (Luke 4:16), Paul (Acts 17:1, 2), Patrick and Columba they will uphold the day that commemorates both creation (Exodus 20:11) and our re-creation (Exodus 31:13). This church is preparing now to worship with God

on His Sabbath in the Earth made new (Isaiah 66:22, 23).

The church that we are looking for will teach that there is only one mediator between God and humanity – Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). They will not confess their sins to any man because they know that only the Saviour can forgive sins (Mark 2:5).

Like Claude of Turin, this church will not use images or relics in their worship (Exodus 20:4-6). Following the example of Arnold of Brescia they will not baptize babies, but rather wait until they are mature enough to understand the commitment that baptism represents (Acts 8:36-39). They will follow Jesus' example of being immersed in the water (Mark 1:9,10) because they understand that baptism represents a death to our old way of life and a resurrection into a new life in Christ (Romans 6:4).

This true church will believe that death is only a sleep until Jesus returns from heaven (John 11:11-14; Psalm 146:4; Psalm 115:17; 1 Corinthians 15:52). They believe that hell-fire is an event not a place. This event originally was intended for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41), but all those who side with Satan against God will have to suffer the same punishment as their master (Revelation 19:20; Revelation 20:9, 10). However, even though God must destroy all sin and sinner, He still is merciful. Hell-fire will not be “eternal”, but rather Satan and the wicked will burn until they are completely destroyed and have become a pile of ashes - just like what happened when Sodom and Gomorrah burned with “eternal fire” (Malachi 4:1; Malachi 4:3; Jude 1:7; Ezekiel 28:18, 19).

The members of God's church will be health conscious. They believe, like Columba, that their bodies are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). They will not drink alcohol (Proverbs 20:1; Deuteronomy 27:6) and will keep away from all other harmful substances. They may choose, like Columba, to eat no meat but if they do eat meat they will carefully follow the Bible instructions eating only “clean” meats which have been properly slaughtered (Leviticus 11; Leviticus 7:26, 27).

The true church we are looking for will allow their pastors to marry (1 Timothy 3:2) and will uphold the sacredness of marriage (Matthew 19:4-6). They will follow biblical instruction in divorce and remarriage (Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:12) and will choose to live their lives to please their spiritual husband, Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; James 4:4).

You will remember that God's true church went into hiding for 1260 years - from AD 538 to 1798 (Revelation 12:6, 14). That means that the church we are looking for wouldn't be seen until after 1798 when the rule of the papacy would end. You are looking for a denomination that came on the scene sometime after 1798.

Another identifying mark of the true church is found in Revelation 19:10. This verse teaches us that “the testimony of Jesus” is “the spirit of prophecy”. That means that this true church will have an individual to whom God has chosen to reveal His secrets (Amos 3:7).

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Mr. Dell paused in his reading. “I would like to remind you about a chart that was passed out when we read Chapter 6. You may want to pull it out to refresh your memory,” Mr. Dell held up the chart for the class to see.

“Let's do a quick review. Who remembers what happened in 1798?”

“The pope was taken captive,” Cory answered.

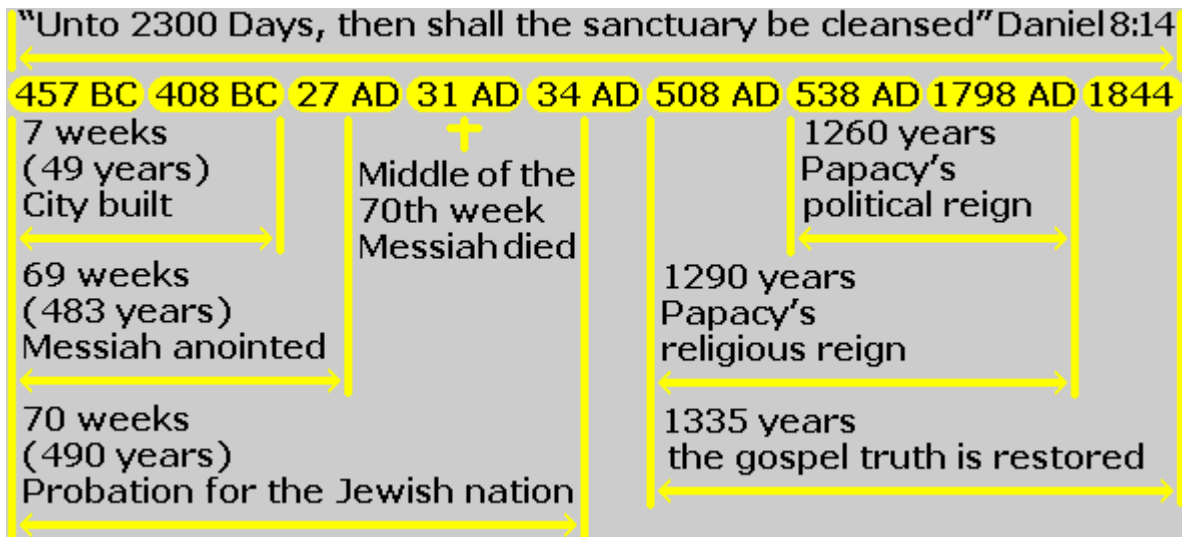
“That's right,” said Mr. Dell. “It also marked the date after which God's true church would leave

the 'wilderness' and again become a visible church. But please notice the last date on the chart – 1844. You'll notice that the 2300 day/year prophecy began in 457 BC and ended in 1844. Who remembers what event happened on that date?"

Several students raised their hands. "That's when the Adventists expected Jesus' Second Coming," Jay volunteered.

"But He didn't come and they were super disappointed," said Emily.

"That experience led some of those Adventists to really study their Bibles and in the process they relearned truths that had been lost during the Dark Ages," agreed Mr. Dell.



"1844 is an important date in identifying God's true church. You see, in 1844 there was a young, seventeen-year-old woman, Ellen Gould Harmon, who was called by God to be His prophet. She was given visions and warnings for the church which she faithfully communicated to the people."

"Here are some websites that have eyewitness accounts of several of Ellen White's visions," Mr. Dell began to write on the white board. "You will find it interesting to see how she meets the Biblical criteria for a true prophet.

<http://www.whiteestate.org/books/bhp/bhpc06.html>

<http://www.seventh-day.org/testsofproph.htm>

<http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/VisionsofEGW.html>

[http://www.ellenwhite.info/visions\\_super.htm](http://www.ellenwhite.info/visions_super.htm)

<http://www.ellengwhitetruth.com/her-ministry/vision-manifestation.aspx>

"Let me give you a few 'teasers' that confirm Ellen White's authenticity. One of my favorite stories is about a doctor/preacher who didn't believe in Ellen White's prophetic gift. After examining her while she was in vision, he turned very pale and said, 'She doesn't breathe.'

"John N. Loughborough tells a rather humorous story about a physician who also happened to be a spiritualist medium. He attributed Ellen White's vision to spiritualism and boasted that if he saw her in vision he could bring her out of it in a minute. It so happened that he was present during one of Mrs. White's visions and was invited to come up and examine her. Before he got even half way to where Mrs. White was seated, he was shaking like a leaf. He quickly examined her and found that although her pulse was strong and steady, she wasn't breathing! He left as quickly as he could in spite of some people insisting that he go back and bring Mrs. White out of the trance like he said he would.

"And then there is the story of the Salamanca Vision. It is an incredible story of a vision being erased from Ellen White's memory until God knew it was the right moment for her to give the testimony! I'm sure you will enjoy hearing some of these great stories of God's leading in the life of

Ellen White.

“But now let's continue on with our chapter...

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When we find the true successor to the Church in the Wilderness we must ask ourselves, Am I willing to make the same sacrifices that previous heroes of the cross made? Am I willing to courageously face hardships, privations, and ridicule? Am I willing to surrender my entire life to the Lord and to the building up of His kingdom? Am I willing to “stand for the right though the heavens fall”?

Be assured that these questions will trigger a battle in each hearts. You see, the real battle is for our allegiance and our mind. Each one of us will have to decide under which banner we want to stand. Jesus has a kingdom which is based on love, truth, freedom of choice, and obedience to God's law. Satan has a rival kingdom based on deception, disobedience and coercion. On whose side will we choose to stand?

To belong to God's true end-time church will require sacrifice. 2 Timothy 3:12 warns us that, “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Like the faithful heroes before them, the 144,000 are described in Revelation 7:14 as, “they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

It would be impossible to go through the hardships described by Christ in Matthew 24 and in the book of Revelation without, by faith, seeing a clear picture of the future for God's people. The early apostles, the missionaries to Scotland, Ireland and France, the faithful Waldenses, the Church of the East and many other faithful saints were able to endure hardships because they kept the reward for the overcomer always before them.

And what is that reward? Revelation 2:7 says, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” And Revelation 3:5 reminds us that overcomers “shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

In the book of Revelation we are given beautiful word pictures of heaven and the new earth. The righteous will be surrounded by only love, harmony and joy. Here is how the Apostle John described what he was shown in vision: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new (Revelation 21:1-5).

“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever (Revelation 22:1-5).

Jesus is coming soon to take His faithful people to heaven. Our prayer for each who read these pages is that we will be ready for Jesus' Second Coming. Let's prepare now to stand among the heroes who were willing to die if necessary for the truths of the Bible and defend God's reputation throughout the universe.

Quietly closing the book, Mr. Dell looked at the class. "So class, we now have the challenge of those like Lucian, Hilda, Colmen, Aba and others. Are we willing to be Heroes of the Cross and follow in their footsteps?"

As the class sat deep in thought, Mr. Dell opened a little volume and turned a few pages. "If you are perhaps thinking that the sacrifice is too great, let me read for you about the sacrifice that the Father made for us.

"I'm reading from *Early Writings* pages 125 – 127: 'I have been shown the great love and condescension of God in giving His Son to die that man might find pardon and live. I was shown Adam and Eve, who were privileged to behold the beauty and loveliness of the Garden of Eden and were permitted to eat of all the trees in the garden except one. But the serpent tempted Eve, and she tempted her husband, and they both ate of the forbidden tree. They broke God's command, and became sinners. The news spread through heaven, and every harp was hushed. The angels sorrowed, and feared lest Adam and Eve would again put forth the hand and eat of the tree of life and be immortal sinners. But God said that He would drive the transgressors from the garden, and by cherubim and a flaming sword would guard the way of the tree of life, so that man could not approach unto it and eat of its fruit, which perpetuates immortality.

"Sorrow filled heaven as it was realized that man was lost and that the world which God had created was to be filled with mortals doomed to misery, sickness, and death, and that there was no way of escape for the offender. The whole family of Adam must die. I then saw the lovely Jesus and beheld an expression of sympathy and sorrow upon His countenance. Soon I saw Him approach the exceeding bright light which enshrouded the Father. Said my accompanying angel, "He is in close converse with His Father." The anxiety of the angels seemed to be intense while Jesus was communing with His Father. Three times He was shut in by the glorious light about the Father, and the third time He came from the Father we could see His person. His countenance was calm, free from all perplexity and trouble, and shone with a loveliness which words cannot describe. He then made known to the angelic choir that a way of escape had been made for lost man; that He had been pleading with His Father, and had obtained permission to give His own life as a ransom for the race, to bear their sins, and take the sentence of death upon Himself, thus opening a way whereby they might, through the merits of His blood, find pardon for past transgressions, and by obedience be brought back to the garden from which they were driven. Then they could again have access to the glorious, immortal fruit of the tree of life to which they had now forfeited all right.

"Then joy, inexpressible joy, filled heaven, and the heavenly choir sang a song of praise and adoration. They touched their harps and sang a note higher than they had done before, because of the great mercy and condescension of God in yielding up His dearly Beloved to die for a race of rebels. Then praise and adoration was poured forth for the self-denial and sacrifice of Jesus, in consenting to leave the bosom of His Father, and choosing a life of suffering and anguish, and an ignominious death, that He might give life to others.

"Said the angel, "Think ye that the Father yielded up His dearly beloved Son without a struggle? No, no." It was even a struggle with the God of heaven, whether to let guilty man perish, or to give His darling Son to die for them. Angels were so interested for man's salvation that there could be found among them those who would yield their glory and give their life for perishing man. 'But,' said

my accompanying angel, “that would avail nothing.” The transgression was so great that an angel's life would not pay the debt. Nothing but the death and intercession of God's Son would pay the debt and save lost man from hopeless sorrow and misery.”

Carrie looked at her teacher with tear-filled eyes. “Three times Jesus had to ask the Father to let Him come and be the Sacrifice for sinners?!”

“Imagine what a struggle it must have been for God to agree to let His much loved Son come to this earth to be hated, harassed, and finally hung on the cross,” Mr. Dell said.

“That just tells me how much God loves us,” interjected Jay. “That tells me that he loves us just as much as He loves Jesus – He was willing to give up Jesus to save the me!”

“But this makes me ask myself, Do I love God as much in return?” Hannah commented as several heads nodded.

“That's the challenge, isn't it? Let's covenant to spend time each day in daily Bible study and prayer. When we know and love Jesus as we should, we will be willing to follow in His footsteps – no matter where He leads us.” With that challenge Mr. Dell led his thoughtful class in prayer.