

Bible Prophecy Reveals the True Church

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DIRECT FROM THE ONE WHO KNOWS!

This afternoon I am dealing with the question of the True Church. I don't know of any subject that is more important. As a leading Catholic debator and controversialist said some years ago, "settle the question as to which is the true church and you have practically settled every question in regard to theology." And that is very true because if you settle that, what is the true church, then you have settled practically every question as to what is truth because the true church outlined by God will be the one that holds His truth.

Now it must be very apparent that all churches can't be the true church. I understand there are about 600 different churches, well I don't know how many you would have. I know Islam is broken up into about as many sections as Christianity is. Hinduism is divided into just as many groups as Christianity. But somewhere through all the maze Christ has a church. And so that you and I would never be in any doubt about it Christ has given us a special prophecy in the Bible to settle, in just about any age of human history, what is the true church, and primarily in the last days when confusion will be rampant, because in the last days the religious world is pictured as Babylon "confusion" we are certainly living there.

However, Christ not only mentions Babylon and warns against Babylon, but He outlines very clearly, the history of His people. And I'm opening to the book of Revelation which, as you all know, is Christ's special book. Christians in the last days should love the book of Revelation. It comes to us from the Lord Jesus Christ. It's called the revelation of Jesus Christ, and all through it you find Christ speaking right through to the last chapter, and the last statement, and He says, "He that testifies these things said Surely I come quickly."

Here in Revelation 12, He outlines a wonderful prophecy. Verse 1, "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."

This is a symbol, and people wonder why it was that Jesus gave these things in symbols. It is very apparent when you stop to think of conditions that prevailed back there, and also in following centuries. The Pagan-Roman Empire was ruling and while they slaughtered thousands of the saints of God, comparatively speaking, they were a fairly tolerant group. They were quite willing to let Christians grow and practice, at least to a degree. However, if they had but known that the Christian Bible foretold the downfall of the Roman Empire, they would have waged such a persecution against it that it would have been practically impossible to survive. But God told the story of the downfall of the Pagan-Roman Empire in detail, but He put it in symbols.

Of course while He put it in symbols He hung the key right there in the door so that anybody at all that wanted to open and understand them, by the grace of Christ and the guidance of His spirit could easily do it. But He never mentioned the Pagan-Roman Empire in literal language.

Then also of course, not only in regard to the Pagan-Roman Empire, but He knew quite well that a religious power would arise and she would persecute. But He again clothed it in symbolic language so that people who weren't diligent students of the Bible could read it and not understand it and hence the persecution would be lighter.

In some ways the persecuting church preserved the Bible, at least some manuscripts anyway. If they had realized that the same book that they were preserving foretold their doom and exposed them in detail, there would have been a much more bitter persecution waged against the Bible.

And so Christ, in his wisdom, clothed these figures in symbols. And many read and in their ignorance failed to grasp their meaning because they weren't willing to obey God, and they weren't willing to walk in the way of life.

Now here we have the picture of a woman clothed in the sun, and she is standing on the moon and on her head is a crown of twelve stars. What does it mean? We are not left in any doubt about it, because I notice that even apart from the Bible, commentators are just about 100% on this question. Really you scarcely need to stop and prove this.

Dr. Albert Barnes of the Presbyterian Church "the woman, beyond all question, represents the church. " Here's the Catholic Bible note against Revelation 12:1, "the woman is the church of God." John Wesley's notes commenting on Revelation 12:1, "a woman is the emblem of the church of God."

The Bible is very emphatic on this explanation for if you turn to 2 Corinthians 11:2, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

A pure woman back there was used to symbolize the church in the first century. All through the Bible you'll find the woman as the symbol of the Church, in fact marriage is used a great deal in the Bible to symbolize the union of Christ and His people. Christ,

the bridegroom, and the church is the bride. The early church here in its purity, is symbolized as a chaste virgin that is married to Christ.

On the other hand, you have the fallen church in Revelation symbolized by the fallen corrupt woman. Revelation 17 tells us the picture in detail. Revelation 17:3, "So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns." Verse 5. "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."

John was amazed that a church claiming to be the church of Jesus had become drunken with the martyrs of Jesus, the great persecuting power.

And so you see the Bible gives you both sides of the story. A pure woman symbolizes the pure church, and a corrupt woman symbolizes a corrupt church.

I'll give you one more text. Jeremiah 6:2 "I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman."

A woman in prophecy symbolizes a church. Song of Solomon 6:10, "Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

Here you have the church as it were, in the four phases that it went through. Away back there in the Patriarchal, then in the Mosaic, then in the Christian, and then in the Millennium.

She is clothed in the sun, in the righteousness of Christ. And she is standing on the moon - that doesn't mean that she is trampling it under foot, but she is standing on the moon and is based on the moon, for the Christian church, even today is based on the Old Testament. The only Bible that Christ used was the Old Testament, and it's wonderful prophecies, and the Church was founded on the Scriptures of Christ's day which was the Old Testament.

Granted, the New Testament is a much clearer revelation, but don't get away with the idea that the church is trampling the Old Testament under foot. The Church is standing on the Old Testament. We have here the church, founded on the Scriptures. Christianity is based on the Old Testament. We have the two lights today, the sun and the moon. The Christian church in its brightness, and the Old Testament ritual which, it were, is reflected light from the glory of God and the glory of the gospel.

And the church began and was founded on those types and shadows and went forward clear as the Sun.

The moon was very important. It was a light that those prophecies of the Old Testament lit up and made certain. "We have a more sure word of prophecy unto which you do well as unto a light that shines in a dark place." We need the light of God.

Somebody was discussing the merits and the demerits of the sun and moon, and the question was asked, which one was the most important? The little girl said the moon is most important because the moon shines at night when you really need a light. The sun shines in the day but you hardly need it because it is light enough.

The moon, of course shines with a borrowed light, and so in the Old Testament it shone with a borrowed light from Christ, and Christ came as the Son of Righteousness and fulfilled those wonderful prophecies. In fact you would have a very hard job to prove Christianity was true if you didn't have the prophecies of the Old Testament. Christ came in direct fulfillment of those prophecies and we ought to always remember that.

I remember some time ago I read a debate between a rationalist and a Christian minister. The Christian minister started away with a statement like this, he said, "I'm not going to try to defend the Old Testament. I am just going to take the life of Jesus." And he spoke on that, and the rationalist just about cut him in strips.

I thought when I read it, "What a tragedy it was when that Christian minister didn't outline the prophecies of the Old Testament, outlining the work of Jesus." And there they were written hundreds of years before, and Christ came along and ticked them off one by one and fulfilled that amazing line to the letter.

Christianity is based on a very sure foundation. And there you have it, standing as it were on the moon, those wonderful prophecies of the Old Testament. They were the foundation of Christianity, and Christ used them again and again as proof, and you and I need to study those things.

Now here we have this woman standing there 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 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 to God and to His throne."

Here we have the woman, the church waiting for the birth of a man child, and eventually the child was caught up to God, and to His throne. A child who someday will rule all nations with a rod of iron. There's no question who that was. And so you have the church waiting as an expectant mother, living for one thing. It is always in her mind, and that is the birth of her child.

So friends, back there in Old Testament times you will find there was one great hope, one great longing, and that was the coming of the Messiah. Tell me, have you ever known a son to be older than His mother? You can't very well have a son older than his mother.

I meet a lot of people who believe that prior to the time of Christ there was no church. People tell me that after the birth of Jesus, He died, and then He rose again, and here in this prophecy we have the ascension, for after He was born and lived a sinless life

on this earth, He died an atoning death and He rose again and ascended back to heaven. The Bible says He was caught up to God, and to His throne.

People say that the church began with the death of Christ. If that is so then you have the son older than the mother, for the Bible says that the woman was there before the birth of Jesus on this world. We are not talking now about the pre-existence of Christ as the eternal Son of God in heaven, we are talking about Jesus when He became a man, when He was born into this earth as the Son of the Church.

The church did not begin with the death of Christ, for the Bible distinctly says that the church was away back here and the church was waiting, and all through the Old Testament times you'll find that the church of God is waiting for one thing, and that is the coming of the Messiah. It was the hope and theme of every prophecy. It was the longing of every Israelite to be in the line of the Messiah, and that perhaps to them would be born the Christ. The church you see, was in existence before Jesus was born. The mother was older than her son, which is only logical.

In case there is anybody that has any doubt about this, you just need to turn to the book of Acts and you read that about the church being in existence prior to the birth of Jesus. I want you to notice that because a lot of people make a mistake right here.

Acts 7:38, "This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spoke to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; who received the living oracles to give unto us."

Away back there when God gave the commandments at Mt. Sinai, there was a church. It was the church of Jesus, the very church of God, and born to that church was Jesus the Messiah.

But friends the church wasn't the only one waiting for the birth of Jesus, for I read here in Revelation 12:4, "And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered for to devour her child as soon as it was born."

Who else was waiting? The dragon. The same chapter tells you that the dragon was none other than the devil and the devil was waiting for the birth of the Messiah. And for 4,000 years he waited. When he was cast out of heaven by Christ, and when he heard that Christ would be born into the earth as a baby he said, "Alright, He may have beaten me in heaven, but I'll beat Him down here on this earth when He is born a human being." And for 4,000 years the devil waited and planned his attack against Jesus. And Jesus was finally born into this earth and as soon as He was born the devil tries to take His life through Herod. But Jesus was taken down to Egypt. So Herod had all the children of Bethlehem wiped out to try to get rid of Jesus, and finally Satan had him led out there to Calvary's cross, and when he had Christ crucified he thought that was the finish. But it wasn't the finish for Jesus died and rose again and ascended back to the land of glory and was beyond the power of Satan.

Notice what happens after that in verse 13, because there has never been a church history that has been written in any age that will compare with this wonderful history in this chapter.

"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child." You go back a few verses and you'll see what it means, verse 10, "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation (that's when Jesus died on the cross) and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ. For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."

You see, after Satan was cast out of heaven away back there in the very beginning, he could eventually go back to heaven. You'll read that in the book of Job, and he would go back there and he would accuse the brethren.

Talk about those Christians down there, look at them! And he loved to drag up all the mistakes. You know we are still plagued with some of these creatures. Everywhere I go I find people who come around and they sometimes get right in the church and all they like to do is put out papers and talk about the mistakes of the church. I want to tell you if there is a person here plagued with a spirit like that, get down on your knees and ask God to give you victory over it. It is a terribly easy thing to criticize, and the devil started it, and he's still got a few agents around.

Back there the devil could go back to heaven as the accuser of the brethren and criticize them. But when Jesus died on the cross, when salvation came, the Bible says the accuser of our brethren was cast down and his rebellion was limited to this world.

Verse 12, "Therefore rejoice you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he hath but a short time."

He knew he was doomed and so in a fury of desperation, as he saw that time drawing shorter, he was going to work with a fury of desperation because he hates Jesus, and because Jesus was now beyond his power.

"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman." So here the reign of persecution started. And after the cross is the time when persecution would really come to the saints of God. Prior to the birth of Jesus there was very little persecution. Practically all the persecution that has been against the church has been this side of the advent of Christ.

First of all you have pagan persecution when thousands died in the arena in Rome and those other places. But the devil could see that he couldn't wipe out the church. It grew, for the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church and instead of that persecution wiping them out, when you come down to the close of the first century there were probably three million Christians in the world.

So the devil tried a different program entirely. Instead of persecuting the church openly, this time he turns around and uses the professed Christian church to persecute, and instead of Christianity being a persecuted thing it became very popular.

Constantine the emperor, professed to be a Christian, He promised to build for any city or any town that became Christian, a beautiful big church and would pay them thousands of pounds. There were a lot of cities and towns that were a bit hard up financially, so they just said, send along your cheque, and they went down into the river Tiber, and they were baptized by the millions. They just poured into the church, unconverted, unchanged, and paganism just came in like a Niagara, for the pagans came in with their ideas and they just swamped the church. It was baptized paganism and now under the name of Christianity the blood

of the martyrs flowed by the millions and the Bible says that great reign would last for 1260 years, for in the year 538 Justinian the emperor, conferred on the pope the title, the head over all churches, the corrector of heretics. And if he couldn't correct heretics with a talk and a study, well he used to use the thumbscrew and the rack, and here in this reign well over a hundred million martyrs lost their lives.

This time prophecy is mentioned several times. Verse 6, "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God, that they should feed her a thousand two hundred and threescore days." That brings us down to the year 1798, and in that year the pope was taken prisoner and the following year he died in captivity. The great reign of the antichrist was finished.

I have been asked many times, if we want to say we are the true church, where was the church during the Dark Ages? They weren't reigning with the kings of the earth. In Revelation 17 you'll read about the church that was reigning with the kings of the earth, but it is Babylon.

Now the Bible tells you where the church was during that time, the woman fled into the wilderness. Verse 6 She was in the caves and in the rocks. And so here we are tracing the church right way down through the waiting period of the Old Testament, through the time of Jesus, through the pagan persecution, and then down through the Papal persecution, and now we are coming down toward the fast days when the Reformation began to get under way. The Reformation was a wonderful work and it began a great work but it didn't finish it.

But now I am going to bring you right down to the very end because this prophecy, like all other great prophecies, has an end and it finishes at the end of Revelation 12.

But I want you to notice where the church was and how it survived through that time. Verse 14, "And to the woman was 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." The very same time mentioned. "And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth."

The papacy poured out a flood to try to wipe out the church. It is very interesting to read the history for it says the earth helped the woman. It did it with the great mountains. They got down into those caves.

I was in the caves where the Waldensian people translated the first Bible into French, and I looked over those valleys and I wandered along the streams - streams that had run thick with blood of the Waldensian martyrs when Rome slaughtered them like sheep. But she couldn't hunt them out because of the great mountains that tower away up. And you know those Waldensian people wrote a hymn, "For the strength of the hills we bless thee, O God, our fathers' God. We are watchers of a beacon whose light must never die, We are guardians of an altar amidst the silence of the sky. The rocks yield fountains of courage, struck forth as by thy hand, For the strength of the hills we bless Thee, O God, our fathers God."

It is just about an echo of the prophecy. The earth helped the woman and preserved the truth of God until the Reformation began to get under way and the Bible became open to the people, and right after that the great clock of heaven struck the hour when in 1844 would begin the last great message that would go to this world. The Reformation began it.

Now friends, I want to come down to the end. 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 devil is still angry with the church in these last days because he knows that he is just about finished. Turn to Revelation 19:10 and that explains it, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." And not only that, but these are the very same people as mentioned there in Revelation 14 because you notice they are right there in the last days. As soon as that work finished (Revelation 14) John looked up and he saw Jesus coming and the harvest of the earth was ripe. It's the termination - the finish.

I've listened to just about every objection that has come against the truth of God, and when you get down to bedrock a lot of it is hokey. I've watched men that profess to preach this message and they've gone out and in just about every case it's the old story - they got critical and they didn't get what they wanted. So they sit back and pick up a few points here and there and they try to patch up an argument that catches a few gullible people. But the fact remains that Revelation 14 is a final prophecy and Revelation 12:17 is a final prophecy. Remember that Jesus put this in here so that you and I might know for certain just where we stand.

Here in Revelation 14 you'll find these people are preaching a great message to all the world and they are a people who keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Jesus. These people would get under way in 1844 when the hour of God's judgment came.

Now there are some characteristics that are watertight; and down in these last days when confusion is on every hand God says He has a church that has followed right down through the ages.

You have a look for the people who emphasize the commandments of God. People come along and say, "We are not under law, we are under grace." We are looking for a people who keep the commandments of God, for Jesus points them out with His nail-scarred hands.

I'm looking for a people who have the spirit of Prophecy. I've heard nearly all the complaints ever brought up about the spirit of prophecy, but my dear friends, I've yet to find a man who'll explain how it was that some of those amazing messages came to this people if they didn't come by the hand of God. How in all the earth could they picture that opening in Orion when the astronomers

didn't know about it? It was supernatural one way or another. It was either the hand of God, or the devil who revealed it. People say it must have been the devil. Well, if the devil inspired the "Desire of Ages" he is going out of business.

Down here in these last days let us look for a people who keep the commandments of God and have the spirit of prophecy. A people who are carrying the message of Revelation 14 to the world, and if this people are not the people who are fulfilling the prophecy then pray tell me who is doing it. Nobody else.

People say that there are always two sides to a question, but this is always one sided. And you can't go to a country under heaven but it is there before you. What amazed me when I went round the world was to find Adventists everywhere. We landed on a little island away over the other side, in the Carribean. It was once the headquarters of Captain Morgan - the British guns couldn't shoot him out of it so they made him first governor of Jamaica. We sailed in and I went ashore and I said, "I don't suppose there are any Adventists here". It was a Dutch place and they couldn't speak English very much, but I found a shopkeeper who could talk English and I asked him if he had ever heard of S. D. A. 's and were there any there? He said half the people were SDA and the place was moving with them. "From Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand" all across the Carribean, all across the south sea islands, and they are there. They are not only there, but wherever they go they preach the message of Revelation 14. Without a moment's hesitation they know when the hour of God's judgment came. They know exactly what is modern Babylon and why God is calling them out of it.

They know what is the beast. They know what his image is. They know what his mark is. They know what it means to keep the Sabbath, the commandments of God. They know what the faith of Jesus is. They know what the spirit of prophecy is, whether they are black or white or yellow, or whatever they are.

And I went around and I preached to these people and in some places I had to preach through three interpreters. They came to me afterwards and they said it was wonderful to have a man come from the other side of the world and do you know, he preaches the very same message!

I went into the homes of people and many of them couldn't talk English, and I had a terrible job to make myself understood, but where we could it was the same people, and I was just as much at home with them as I am right here.

God has given us a truth that is absolutely water tight. If ever I was confident of this truth its today. I've heard just about every argument that was ever brought up against it. It always reminds me of way down there in South America when Pastor Stahl pressed down in there. He had a wonderful conversion. One of our evangelists was preaching over in San Francisco, and one of our colporteurs was getting around the town while that tent mission was going on. He called into a hotel bar and he sol cl the barman a book and he began to read it and he became interested. The colporteur came along and invited him to some meetings being held in a tent, so he used to come along usually half drunk, and sit in the back seat and go off to sleep.

He came in one night and fell off to sleep and he woke up as the evangelist was making an appeal to people to come down the front and give their lives to Christ. He had begun to be a little convicted so he got up and walked down and said, "if anybody needs Christ it is me."

He gave his life to Christ, and he went to one of our hospitals and took the medical course, and they sent him away down there into South America, into the Amazon Basin, and among the Indians, and he began to preach, and do you know, that man baptized literally thousands. He put the whole Amazon Basin ablaze with the Advent message, and today we've got tens of thousands of believers all through Peru and the Amazon Basin where that man preached.

One day he pressed away into the jungle - a government group had been in there not long before and had been shot through with poisonous arrows before they had gone very far, and he began to preach through an interpreter to those red Indians. The Indians went dashing into the jungle and they said, "Come and listen to a preacher from the golden book", and the Indians came from all over the jungle and they listened in amazement.

The old chief came along and said, "Listen, I want you to stay here and teach us." Pastor Stahl said, "But I can't, however I will send a teacher in here as soon as I can." The old chief wasn't going to let him go but he eventually did. Pastor Stahl said, "I'll tell you how you can be sure that I'll send a teacher in," and he went down to the stream and he picked up a white stone and he took that stone and hit it with another and broke it in two. He said, "You keep one half and I'll keep the other. When we send one of our men in here give him the half and if it fits mine you'll know he's the man."

Well friends, we had so many calls in there we couldn't send a missionary in for years. Other people had tried to get in but the old chief said, "Have you got a stone with you?" They didn't know what he was talking about, so he sent them away. Finally we were able to send a teacher in there, and when he got in there the old chief said, "Have you got a white stone?" "Yes." The chief took it and it fitted into his stone. He said, "Fine, you are the one we are waiting for."

Today they call it the broken stone mission, and we have thousands of believers in there now. Friends, this afternoon we are dealing with a prophecy that gives us five points, like the points of a broken stone, and God says, in the last days look for a movement, a church that began in 1844. They keep the commandments of God. They have the spirit of prophecy. They preach the message of Revelation 14, and they teach the faith of Jesus. When you see these five points and you find a church that fits right in, then hold on. There may be some things you don't understand but remember this, Jesus understands it a whole lot better.

There's an awful lot in this book I don't understand, but I know enough to know that we are building on a rock that couldn't be moved. It is going to see us right through to the very end and because there are a few counterfeits around be careful you don't throw away something that is vital.

When a foreigner landed in New York some years ago he met a man on the wharf who offered to exchange his money at a very good rate, so proudly he took his money along to the bank to bank it. The banker looked it over and shook his head. He said, I am sorry friend, but nearly all your notes are counterfeit, they are useless." So what did that man do? Every dollar bill he got in the future I suppose he tore it up and threw it in the gutter. Did he? Never. All he did was to make a little more sure that he got the genuine.

Down in these last days there are an awful lot of counterfeits about. Conflicting voices are crying on every side but Jesus gives us the stamp now we can pick them out for absolute certainty. Let us thank God for this and hold on to it remembering it is the very church of Jesus and Jesus loves his church. The devil hates it and he'll do all he can both without and even within, to upset it. But friends, with all of that it will go on to triumph and He'll use a small people to accomplish a great work in these last days.

Friends, if it is the truth of God, then we not only should be tied right up with it but we should do everything we possibly can to push it along. We do it for Jesus' sake because it is His church, outlined by Him, and accomplishing His task down here in these last days.

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