

Identifying the Remnant

THE FINAL REMNANT IN THE BIBLE

There is much discussion today about which group, which church, which people constitute "the remnant."

Some among us declare that it refers only to those individuals who are on the rolls of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Others say the word has a broader definition.

Liberals among us declare that all denominations, everywhere, are part of the remnant. That definition is good for ecumenism; it makes it easier for us to walk in agreement with the other churches. According to this, "the remnant" is the final portion of all Christendom living on earth in the last days. Still others flippantly say the whole world is in the remnant.

However, it is only because of its usage in Revelation 12:17 that our people use the phrase.

Earlier in Scripture, the "remnant" is defined as those who remain. That is the meaning of the Greek word, *loipoi*. But Revelation 12:17 defines the word far more narrowly:

"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."-Revelation 12:17.

In this verse we are told that the **final remnant are only the last part of the seed of the woman, the true church.** But what is the true church?

According to Revelation 12, **down through the ages, the true church has been God's faithful ones, whom Satan hated and was not able to compromise.** That definition eliminates many people in all the professed Christian churches of history.

Those who remain true to God, amid great persecution, are the true seed. When everyone else compromised, **these were the ones who overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony** (Rev 12:11).

This means that the woman and her seed are overcomers! They are overcoming sin in their lives through the enabling grace of Jesus Christ, their Lord and Saviour. Well, that definition provides even greater clarity and eliminates all the false professors, regardless of what church rolls they are on.

But then there is that final remnant of the seed of the woman. In describing these individuals who live down at the very end of time, we are given an even stricter definition. **God did not want us to misunderstand who constitutes that true, final remnant. In His guiding providence, He phrased the verse as a definition, one which leaves no room for doubt or misinterpretation.**

It is a group of individuals who, in their lives and witness, are doing two things:

"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.**"-Revelation 12:17.

We hope that everyone in our denomination is included in this group; but, ultimately, that will be individually determined by our thoughts, words, and actions. Being in the remnant is more than going to church on Sabbath while enjoying cherished sin all week long.

The remnant church at the end of time consists of those individuals who, in Christ's strength, keep the commandments of God and speak of the power of Jesus Christ in their lives.

That is the Biblical definition of the final remnant. Are you and I, by our actions, daily including ourselves in the remnant? It is our choice.

It is of interest that **the earlier seed of the woman overcame the devil** (Rev 12:11); **but we are not specifically told that they kept all the commandments**, as the final remnant do. This is because the truth about obedience to all the commandments was not clearly revealed until the last days. This last-day discovery was predicted one verse before Revelation 12:

"And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail."-Revelation 11:19.

The Spirit of Prophecy repeatedly refers to this discovery of the Bible Sabbath, when God's faithful ones found that Jesus had, in 1844, gone into the Second Apartment of the heavenly Sanctuary. The present test on the Sabbath could not come until after Jesus left the first apartment (EW 42-43, 254256; 2T 693). Read Great Controversy 433.

There is a parallel verse to Revelation 12:17, which says almost the same thing. Speaking about God's faithful ones down at the end of time (two verses before the Second Advent), we are told that this final group will be keeping God's commandments.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."-Revelation 14:12.

THE REMNANT IN THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

Now that we have clarified the Bible definition of the last day remnant, let us turn to the Spirit of Prophecy.

First, nearly every Spirit of Prophecy quotation about the remnant is in reference to a group of people who are in obedience to the commandments of God. This group is faithfully living and presenting the truth, and being persecuted for doing so.

Second, a few passages refer to those nominally in the church who ought to be living in obedience to those commandments. They are in the church which should be the remnant, but which contains individuals who, in their lives, do not fit the definition. Whether or not they leave the physical "church," they will, if they do not repent, be shaken out of the remnant.

THOSE WHO ARE FAITHFULLY IN THE REMNANT

"Many who were once conscientious and loved God and His Word have become so hardened by rejecting the light of truth that they do not hesitate to wickedly misrepresent and falsely accuse **those who love the holy Sabbath** . . . In fact, this course pursued by those who hate the truth will be the very means of opening the eyes of some. Every jewel will be brought out and gathered, for the hand of the Lord is set to recover the remnant of His people and He will accomplish the work gloriously."-Early Writings, 70.

"Those who love and keep the commandments of God are most obnoxious to the synagogue of Satan, and the powers of evil will manifest their hatred toward them to the fullest extent possible. **John foresaw the conflict between the remnant church and the power of evil**, and said, '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.' "-Review, April 14, 1896; 7 Bible Commentary, 974.

"There are only two parties upon this earth— those who stand under the bloodstained banner of Jesus Christ and those who stand under the black banner of rebellion. **In the twelfth chapter of Revelation is represented the great conflict between the obedient and the disobedient.**"-MS 16,1900; 7 Bible Commentary, 974.

"In describing the remnant people of God, John says, 'Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus' (Rev. 14:12). This is the law and the gospel. The world and the churches are uniting in harmony in transgressing the law of God, in tearing away God's memorial, and in exalting a sabbath that bears the signature of the man of sin. But the Sabbath of the Lord thy God is to be a sign to show the

difference between the obedient and the disobedient. I saw some reaching out their hands to remove the banner, and to obscure its significance. .

"When the people accept and exalt a spurious sabbath, and turn souls away from obedience and loyalty to God, they will reach the point that was reached by the people in the days of Christ. . Shall anyone then choose to hide his banner, to relax his devotion? Shall the people whom God has honored and blessed and prospered, refuse to bear testimony in behalf of God's memorial at the very time when such a testimony should be borne? **Shall not the commandments of God be more highly esteemed when men pour contempt upon the law of God?**"² Selected Messages, 385.

"The **remnant church** will then be brought into great trial and distress. **Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus** will feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts. Satan numbers the world as his subjects; he has gained control even of many professing Christians. **But here is a little company** who are resisting his supremacy. If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete. As he influenced the heathen nations to destroy Israel, so in the near future he will stir up the wicked powers of earth to destroy the people of God. Men will be required to render obedience to human edicts in violation of the divine law."-Prophets and Kings, 587-588.

"**In this day, when we are bidden to call attention to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus,** we see the same enmity as was manifested in the days of Christ. **Of the remnant people of God it is written,** '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.' Rev. 12:17.

"But 'every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.' **In place of the authority of the so-called fathers of the church, God bids us accept the word of the eternal Father, the Lord of heaven and earth. Here alone is truth unmixed with error.**"-Desire of Ages, 398.

"**The spiritual restoration** of which the work carried forward in Nehemiah's day was a symbol, is outlined in the words of Isaiah: 'They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities.' **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 repairer of the breach,** The restorer of paths to dwell in.' Isaiah 61:4; 58:12.

"The prophet here describes **a people who, in a time of general departure from truth and righteousness, are seeking to restore the principles that are the foundation of the kingdom of God.** They are repairers of a breach that has been made in God's law– the wall that He has placed around His chosen

ones for their protection, and obedience to whose precepts of justice, truth, and purity is to be their perpetual safeguard.

"In words of unmistakable meaning the prophet points out the specific work of **this remnant people who build the wall**. 'If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' Isaiah 58:13, 14.

"In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. **The breach made in the law at the time the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired. God's remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation**, a constant reminder of the power of God. **In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue**. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to co-operate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in."-Prophets and Kings, 677-678.

"The trying experiences that came to God's people in the days of Esther were not peculiar to that age alone. The revelator, looking down the ages to the close of time, has declared, **'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.'** Revelation 12:17.. The same spirit that in ages past led men to persecute the true church, will in the future lead to the pursuance of a similar course toward those who maintain their loyalty to God. Even now preparations are being made for this last great conflict.

"**The decree that will finally go forth against the remnant people of God** will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews. Today the enemies of the true church see in **the little company keeping the Sabbath commandment**, a Mordecai at the gate. **The reverence of God's people for His law** is a constant rebuke to those who have cast off the fear of the Lord and are trampling on His Sabbath.

"Satan will arouse indignation against the minority who refuse to accept popular customs and traditions. Men of position and reputation will join with the lawless and the vile to take counsel against the people of God. Wealth, genius, education, will combine to cover them with contempt.

"Persecuting rulers, ministers, and church members will conspire against them. With voice and pen, by boasts, threats, and ridicule, they will seek to overthrow their faith. By false representations and angry appeals, men will stir up the

passions of the people. Not having a 'Thus saith the Scriptures' to bring against the advocates of the Bible Sabbath, they will resort to oppressive enactments to supply the lack. To secure popularity and patronage, legislators will yield to the demand for Sunday laws. But those who fear God, cannot accept an institution that violates a precept of the Decalogue. **On this battlefield will be fought the last great conflict in the controversy between truth and error.** And we are not left in doubt as to the issue. Today, as in the days of Esther and Mordecai, the Lord will vindicate His truth and His people." Prophets and Kings, 605-606.

"Let all be careful not to make an outcry against the only people who are fulfilling the description given of the **remnant people who keep the commandments of God and have faith in Jesus, who are exalting the standard of righteousness** in these last days."-Testimonies to Ministers, 57.

SOME, THROUGH NEGLIGENCE, ARE SLIPPING AWAY FROM THE REMNANT

"Today the **remnant people of God** are to glorify His name by proclaiming the last message of warning, the last invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb. **The only way in which they can fulfill God's expectations is by being representatives of the truth for this time.**"-8 Testimonies, 153.

"While you hold the banner of truth firmly, proclaiming the law of God, **let every soul remember that the faith of Jesus is connected with the commandments of God.**"-2 Selected Messages, 117.

"There are times when a distinct view is presented to me of **the condition of the remnant church, a condition of appalling indifference** to the needs of a world perishing for lack of a knowledge of the truth for this time. Then I have hours, and sometimes days, of intense anguish. Many to whom have been committed the saving truths of the third angel's message fail of realizing that the salvation of souls is dependent upon the consecration and activity of God's church. Many are using their blessings in the service of self. Oh, how my heart aches because Christ is put to shame by their unChristlike behavior! But, after the agony is past, I feel like working harder than ever to arouse them to put forth unselfish effort for the saving of their fellow men. God has made His people stewards of His grace and truth, and how does He regard their neglect to impart these blessings to their fellow men?"8 Testimonies, 24.

"The remnant people of God must be a converted people. The presentation of this message is to result in the conversion and sanctification of souls. We are to feel the power of the Spirit of God in this movement. This is a wonderful, definite message; it means everything to the receiver, and it is to be proclaimed with a loud cry. We must have a true, abiding faith that this message will go forth with increasing importance till the close of time.

"There are some professed believers who accept certain portions of the Testimonies as the message of God, while they reject those portions that condemn their favorite indulgences. Such persons are working contrary to their own welfare and the welfare of the church. It is essential that we walk in the light while we have the light. Those who claim to believe in health reform, and yet work counter to its principles in the daily life practice, are hurting their own souls and are leaving wrong impressions upon the minds of believers and unbelievers."-9 Testimonies, 154.

"All who desire to draw away from God's remnant people in order to follow their own corrupt hearts would throw themselves willingly into Satan's hands, and should have the privilege. There are others among us who are in danger. They have an exalted opinion of their own ability."-1 Testimonies, 439.

"Satan is.. constantly pressing in the spurious to lead away from the truth. The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. 'Where there is no vision, the people perish' (Prov. 29:18). **Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony.**"- Letter 12, 1890; 1 Selected Messages, 48.

"There will be a hatred kindled against the testimonies which is satanic. The workings of Satan will be to unsettle the faith of the churches in them, for this reason: **Satan cannot have so clear a track to bring in his deceptions and bind up souls in his delusions if the warnings and reproofs and counsels of the Spirit of God are heeded.**"Letter 40, 1890; 1 Selected Messages, 48.

"There is no work in our world so great, so sacred, and so glorious, no work that God honors so much, as this gospel work. **The message presented at this time is the last message of mercy for a fallen world. Those who** have the privilege of hearing this message, and who **persist in refusing to heed the warning, cast away their last hope of salvation.** There will be no second probation . . . Mysteries into which angels desire to look, which prophets and kings and righteous men desired to understand, **the remnant church will carry** in messages from God to the world."-6 Testimonies, 19.

"This is an age of signal rejection of the grace God has purposed to bestow upon His people, that in the perils of the last days they may not be overcome by the prevailing iniquity and unite with **the hostility of the world against God's remnant people.** Under the cloak of Christianity and sanctification, far-spreading and manifest ungodliness will prevail to a terrible degree and will continue until Christ comes to be glorified in all them that believe. In the very courts of the temple, scenes will be enacted that few realize. **God's people will be proved and tested,** that He may discern 'between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not.' "Manuscript 15, 1886; Evangelism, 592-593.