



# *discover belonging*

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*Uncover the people who remain loyal to God and His will  
and how we can belong*

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**Published** by HopeChannel

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**Edited** by John Gate & Sue Robinson

**Art direction** by Jared Madden & Shelley Poole

**Layout** by Elena Janakijovska

**Typeset** in Univers

**Printed** in Australia by Signs Publishing Company®

Unless otherwise stated all Bible texts are from the **New King James Version**

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In the movie *Cast Away*, Tom Hanks plays a character stranded on a deserted island. Before long he gets so desperate for company that he takes a Wilson basketball which is part of the debris left over from the plane wreck, paints a face on the ball, names it Wilson, and starts talking to it. Wilson becomes his constant companion. There's an especially powerful scene where, in a storm, the ball drifts away from him, and he screams, reaching out desperately for it and crying, *Wilson! Wilson!*

The point is, of all the privations he suffered, loneliness was the worst. And that's because, as human beings, we were made for community. We were made to interact with other people.

All this leads into one of the most important aspects of Christian faith, of what it means to be a Christian, and this deals with the idea of community - community that is based on and centred around a relationship with God.

## BOOKENDS

This concept - that of community and our need for community - becomes, as we will see, especially important in the context of the following text:



***And the dragon was wrath 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*

First, in this text, notice the great controversy theme. Then, notice the context - Revelation 12:7-9. It's the start of the war in heaven.

These verses reveal the reality of the cosmic conflict which began in heaven and has come to the earth - a conflict that we are all a part of, a conflict in which we all get pretty battered up and bruised, too, don't we?

Satan here is called the *dragon ... that serpent of old* - depicted as *wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed*.

Revelation 12:17 KJV

In this verse, then, the following elements exist - Satan, the woman, and her seed, specifically the remnant of her seed. Though expressed in the context of the last days of the great controversy on earth, these images go back to the beginning of that conflict here, even to Eden itself.

Deceived by *that serpent of old*, Eve fell into sin and Adam followed her. The Lord then said to the serpent, Satan:



***So the LORD God said to the serpent ... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.***

*Genesis 3:15*

The same elements are found here, in the beginning of the epic struggle on earth - Satan - the serpent, the woman, and her seed - that are found also in Revelation 12:17, near the end of the conflict. These verses form bookends to the great controversy, at least as it is being played out here on earth, and in our own lives and our own epic journeys.

## REVELATION 12

Thus, from Eden down to the end of time, the great controversy has raged. In Revelation 12, *the woman* - the church, is depicted as being persecuted by Satan, which happened through the long centuries of persecution, as we studied in earlier booklets.

Revelation 12:17, however, focuses on the *remnant of her seed*. A remnant is a part of the original that is left over, that is remaining. Her refers to the woman, God's people, the church. So God's people at the end of the epic story, will face conflict with the dragon, Satan himself.

Who, then, is this remnant?

A crucial factor can be found in the context of the chapter itself.

Revelation 12 is a quick summary of key events in the great controversy, though not necessarily in chronological order.

First, was the war in heaven, a war that resulted in Satan and his angels being cast down to earth. See Revelation 12:7-9.

Then, the woman gives birth to a child, obviously Christ (Revelation 12:5), who was born on the earth, where the dragon - Satan, already cast out of heaven, was ready to *devour the child as soon as he was born*.

Revelation 12:4. See also Matthew 2.

Next, the dragon attacks the woman:



***Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.***

*Revelation 12:13*

As a result of this attack, the woman - God's church - is twice depicted as fleeing into the wilderness:



***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 See also Verse 14.*

Then, following the time the woman fled into the wilderness, the remnant is introduced:



***And the dragon was wrath 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*

Thus, Revelation 12 unfolds like this:

1. Satan's rebellion in heaven and his being cast down to earth.
2. His failed attempt to destroy Christ.
3. Satan next attacks Christ's church.
4. The 1260 days (years) persecution of the church.
5. Satan, then, makes war on the remnant of the woman's seed, those who *keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.* Revelation 12:17

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REMNANT

We can start to look more carefully at this remnant.

The first characteristic is that it comes after the period that the woman fled into the wilderness, the *one thousand two hundred and sixty days* or the *time and times and half a time*, which we saw in an earlier study, was the period of papal persecution that ended in the year 1798.

Thus, the first characteristic of this remnant is that it arises after 1798.

The next characteristic is that they *keep the commandments of God*. This is simply stating that they keep the Ten Commandments, the law of God - all of them. Remember this?



***For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not murder. Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.***

*James 2:10-11*

So the remnant will be a commandment keeping group, which includes the seventh-day Sabbath.

They also take the Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14 to the world - the messages in which last day events are clearly depicted. In contrast to those who get the mark of the beast, God's people - in essence, the remnant of the woman's seed - are described like this:





***Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.***

*Revelation 14:12*

Further, by linking this verse with Revelation 12:17, we can see that another characteristic of the remnant is that they have the faith of Jesus. Whatever else that means, these are a Christ-centred group of Christians whose faith rests in Christ and in His salvation. They live by faith - the faith of Jesus - trusting in the Bible and in the Lord of the Bible, as did Jesus.

## THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS

There's another characteristic of the remnant, as depicted in Revelation 12:17:



***And the dragon was wrath 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 *testimony of Jesus Christ*? What is that? Revelation later gives the interpretation:



***And I fell at his (the angel's) feet to worship him. But he said to me, ... do not do that! ... Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.***

*Revelation 19:10*

What is the spirit of prophecy other than a manifestation of the prophetic gift - the gift of prophecy - which is taught in the New Testament?



***But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy.***

*1 Corinthians 12:7-10*

To another prophecy - that is, the prophetic gift is seen operating in the remnant.

And again:



***And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.***

*Ephesians 4:11-12*

A prophet?



***For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.***

*Luke 7:28*

This is heavy. Of the prophets - Moses, David, and Isaiah, to name just a few - none were greater than John?

For our immediate purposes, what's a crucial difference between these other prophets and John?

John the Baptist has no writings in the Bible, as do all these others. And yet he is still considered not only a prophet, but the greatest one?

The point is simple. One doesn't have to be a Bible writer to have the prophetic gift. As those other New Testament texts have shown, the gift of prophecy will be manifest in the church. According to Revelation 12:17 and Revelation 19:10, it is one of the marks of the *remnant of her seed*.

For these reasons, and many others, millions around the world believe that this gift has been seen in the life and writings of Ellen G. White (1827-1915), the world's most translated woman author. Her writings, which cover a span of about 70 years, have influenced and still exert influence all over the globe. Her writings are filled with counsel, admonitions, and direction that have helped in the establishment of churches, hospitals, and schools in almost every continent. Her work is a truly remarkable achievement, especially for a woman who never went past the third grade. Her writings speak for themselves, and for the Spirit that inspired them.

Also, in all these studies, what has been the only authoritative source of all the teaching? Of course, the Bible - and the Bible alone. Every teaching has been based on the Word of God, nothing else. Whatever the various purposes of the spirit of prophecy and the prophetic gift, the gift remains subservient to the teachings of the Bible. Ellen White's last public statement to the church was, *I commend to you this book* - and she held up the Bible.

These booklets - by keeping the Bible as the sole authority for the teachings presented - help make that position clear.

## THE REMNANT OF HER SEED

From these points, we take the position that the one community best fitting this depiction - that of *the remnant of her seed* - is the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Firstly, the Seventh-day Adventist church arose in the mid 1800's, that is, after the prophetic period depicted in Revelation 12.

Secondly, the Seventh-day Adventist church upholds the keeping of the *commandments of God*, including the fourth. The name *Seventh-day Adventist* testifies to the importance it puts on that commandment.

Thirdly, the Seventh-day Adventist church is Christ centred, with the focus on the *faith of Jesus*, meaning that it teaches that salvation comes only by faith, faith in the righteousness of Christ.

And, finally, though many people outside the Adventist church read and have been blessed by the ministry of Ellen G. White, her life work and ministry emanated from within the context of the Seventh-day Adventist church itself. Hence, it can rightly claim the spirit of prophecy as one of its identifying marks.

But these claims don't mean that only Seventh-day Adventists are saved. That has never been a position or teaching of the official Seventh-day Adventist church. It means only that now, as has been all through salvation history, God has a group of people - often deemed a remnant - who have been blessed with truth that the world at that time needed to hear. In our time, right before the Second Coming of Jesus, this truth is the Three Angels' Message of Revelation 14, which the Seventh-day Adventist church alone - with a presence in more countries than any other Protestant

denomination - is preaching *to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.*

Revelation 14:6

Like the early Christian church it has a mission - to take the gospel to the world. *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.* Matthew 24:14  
 Revelation 14: 6-12 gives the setting of the preaching of the gospel in the last days.

## A COMMUNITY

Of course, even if one were to accept the idea of a remnant church, and that the Seventh-day Adventist church fits that description, many have a dislike, and understandably so, for organised religion.

What, though, would they prefer? Disorganised religion? The western world today is characterised by individuality. This individuality is seen in many ways, but notably in a fear of commitment. But avoiding commitment, like the quest for freedom, is elusive. That issue is at the heart of the epic struggle. Remember, it started with Lucifer - *I will be like the Most High.* He wanted to be free from God's restraint - but to be so, he was committed to his own agenda. It's the same issue today. In God's world where true freedom reigns, there is deep commitment to God, to what He says and what He does.

The fact remains that the concept of a church - a community of believers bound together by a mutual sense of love for each other and by a common goal and mission - is profoundly biblical. One could even argue that organised religion is just another term for the biblical concept of

community, the fellowship of the *called out* ones - the Greek meaning of the word church - a concept that is central to biblical faith.

The church was called out by God to represent Him, to be a community that serves - serves Him by obediently following Him and serving others. This is what the Seventh-day Adventist church strives to be - imperfectly, as with all churches - and to do. A global network of schools, hospitals and humanitarian agencies is the result.

In the great controversy, we all take big hits. Who among us can make it alone? Who of us has in and of himself or herself all that he or she needs? We all come with strong points, we all come with weak points, and we all come with gifts in some areas and deficiencies in others.

And God knows that. And He knows that we often need each other. Our lives are often full of turmoil. Problems arise, needs arise, crises happen that we in and of ourselves can't always handle. And sometimes we just don't know where to turn to, or where to get help.

But if you are part of a community, a caring community of fellow-believers, you can find help. And not only that, if you are part of a community of believers - a church - you can be in a position to help others. The church isn't just a place you go to get. On the contrary, the church is a place where you go to give. And so often, as anyone who has ever experienced the results of selfless giving knows - the more you give of yourself the more you get back in return.

That's what the New Testament concept of a church is all about. The apostle Paul uses the analogy of the body for the church, the idea being that the different parts of the body cannot function properly without the

others parts. That is, we not only need others, others need us. That's what the Christian church, ideally, is to be about:



***But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, on these we bestow greater honour; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honour to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.***

*1 Corinthians 12: 20-25*

Who, among us, amid the terrors and trials of the great controversy, doesn't at times need to be cared for in one way or another? Even more importantly, who among us doesn't need, in one way or another, to care for others?

The church - the community - is God's venue for both. And He calls us, as part of our own stories, to be part of it - for our own good, and for the good of those whom we can bless.

God loves the church. See Ephesians 5:25. He can love them in a way that others won't let Him love them. They have said *Yes* to Jesus. One of the recurring images used for His church is His *bride*. How romantic is that? Ever since the open face to face relationship between God and His first

church - Adam and Eve - was broken by the rebellion, God has been looking forward to the time when He is back with His bride face to face again.

When Jesus comes again, when the closing struggle of the present age is over, notice what comes next:



***Then he said to me, Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! And he said to me, These are the true sayings of God.***

*Revelation 19:9*

Friends, it's almost supper time! He has prepared a place for us - His bride (John 14:1-3), the wedding breakfast is ready. You are invited.



***And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.***

*Revelation 22:17*

This is your personal invitation. What a reception it will be when we, with the saved of all ages, meet Jesus face to face in His kingdom.

*I have accepted Jesus as my personal Saviour. By His grace I will be there. It's been my privilege to open God's word with you. Chances are we will not meet on this earth. But I look forward to catching up with you some day, at the supper. It may just be that what we have studied together has helped you to make sense of this life, and to choose Jesus.*

Really, in comparison, there's nothing else in life worth living for!

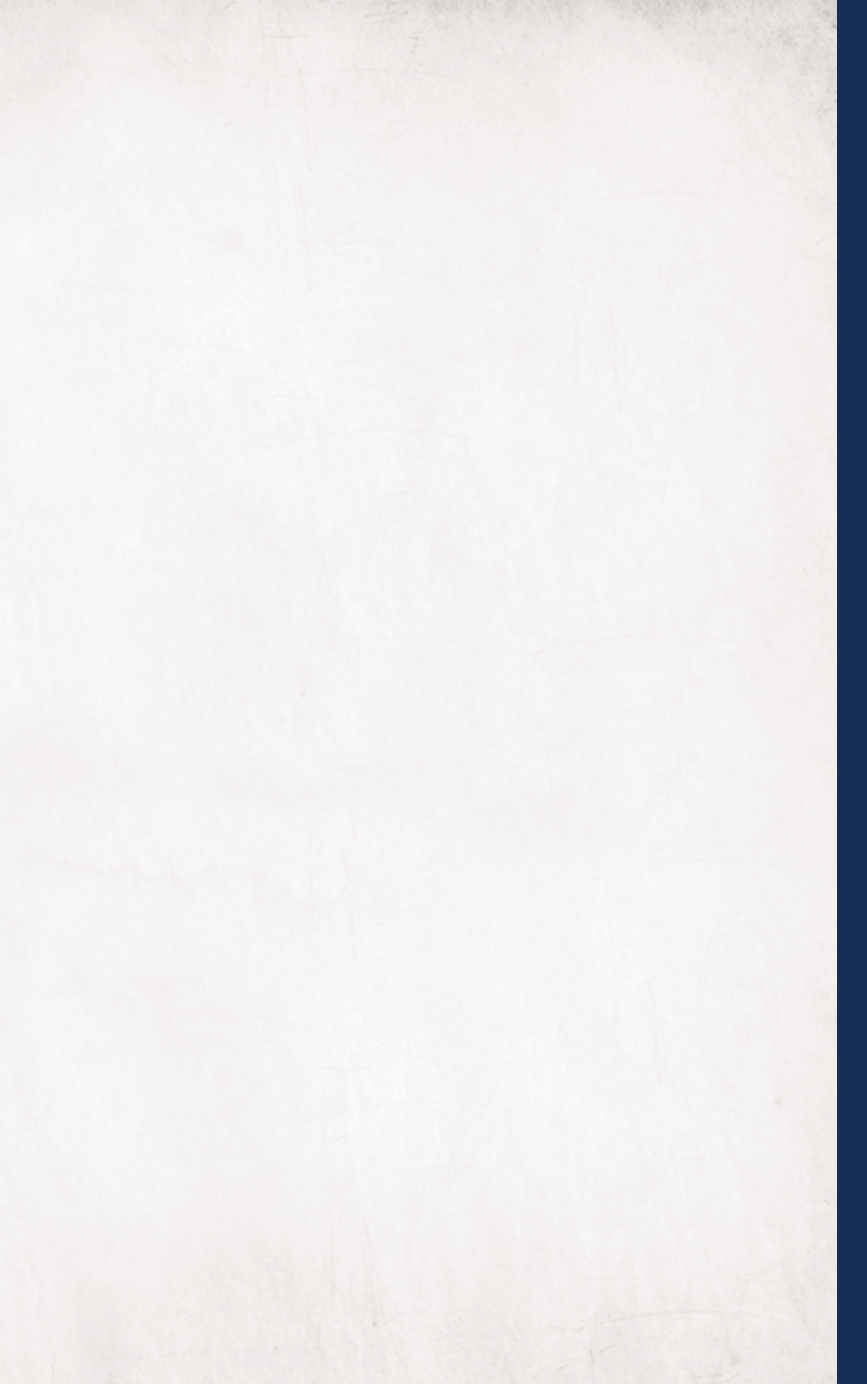
*God bless you.*

Clifford Goldstein









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