

# The Church

Is It **BABYLON?**

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Published by:  
**Amazing Facts, Inc.**  
P.O. Box 1058  
Roseville, CA 95678-8058  
800-538-7275

# — The Church — Is It **BABYLON?**

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**N**o one can deny the painful divisions which rack the Seventh-day Adventist church today, but few understand that much of it springs from issues rooted in the 1970s and 1980s. It was during those two decades that the church was assailed with controversy over the sanctuary, the nature of man and sin, the role of Ellen G. White, the humanity of Christ, and the possibility of character perfection before the coming of Christ.

The confrontations over those basic theological issues laid a foundation for the more vocal battle of the 1990s concerning the nature of the church. Loud and long has been the dialogue over what constitutes the church. The strongest disagreements have focused on whether the organized Seventh-day Adventist church will go through in triumph. Or has the

Adventist church become a part of Babylon? If so, should we separate from it and call others to join us?

Much of the debate revolves around the terms “visible” and “invisible.” One group contends that the visible church consists only of faithful, obedient believers and could never refer to an organization that is not wholly following God. On this basis, they feel compelled to urge people not to be associated with the organized church any longer. They also apply some of the identifying marks of Babylon to the present Adventist church structure.

These are the claims that need to be scrutinized under the microscope of God’s Word. None can ignore the fact that thousands are being influenced to join “home churches” and to look askance at those who give support to the historic conference organization. In order to ascertain whether there is a distinction between the “visible” and “invisible” church, we shall examine the testimony of Scripture and Spirit of Prophecy as well as the evidence of church history. Then we will be in a position to determine our relationship with the organized Seventh-day Adventist church of today.

## Visible and Invisible

Ellen White used the term “visible church” a number of times, but the term “invisible church” is not commonly used in her writings, if at all. Apparently, many who have studied her statements assume that where there is a “visible,” there must also be an “invisible.” However, to avoid a controversy based solely on semantics, other words can be used in place of “invisible church.” Ellen White herself drew a clear distinction between two groups within the church who would be equal in membership but far apart in their standing before God.

“We should feel an individual responsibility as members of the visible church and workers in the vineyard of the Lord. The advancement of the church is often retarded by the wrong course of its members. Uniting with the church, although an important and necessary step, does not of itself make one a Christian. If we would secure a title to heaven, our hearts must be in unison with Christ and His people.” (*Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, Sept. 1, 1888.)

Here we find a distinction between being a member of the visible church and being a

Christian. If the visible church was composed only of faithful and true believers, then being a church member and being a Christian would be exactly the same thing. But “members of the visible church and workers in the vineyard of the Lord” can take a “wrong course” which retards the advancement of the church. This means that non-Christians (professed, but not true) can be members of the visible church. Although the visible church has both Christians and non-Christians in its membership, uniting with it is still “an important and necessary step.” However, a second step is necessary in order to be a Christian and be saved—namely, a heart-unity with Christ. Both steps, becoming a member of the visible church, and having a heart unity with Christ, are necessary for salvation.

“Depending upon men has been the great weakness of the church. Men have dishonored God by failing to appreciate His sufficiency, by coveting the influence of men. Thus Israel became weak. The people wanted to be like the other nations of the world, and they asked for a king” (*The Kress Collection*, p.57).

The church is compared to Israel, which made poor decisions because it coveted the

approval of other men or nations. Clearly this statement is referring to the organized nation of Israel in a disobedient state. The “church” here cannot refer to true believers only, but to an organized body that is disobedient to God. Yet it is still “the church.”

“We profess to be the depositories of God’s law; we claim to have greater light and to aim at a higher standard than any other people upon the earth. ... As members of the visible church, and workers in the vineyard of the Lord, all professed Christians should do their utmost to preserve peace, harmony, and love in the church. ... Satan is constantly working to prevent this union and harmony, that unbelievers, by witnessing backsliding, dissension, and strife among professed Christians, may become disgusted with religion and be confirmed in their impenitence” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 619, 620).

Here the visible church is said to contain “professed Christians,” which is not the same as true believers or genuine Christians. Those who profess obedience to God are members of the visible church, but some of them are backsliding and fighting with each other.

When God led Israel out of Egypt, He gave precise directions regarding each person's work. "This is an important lesson to the church. ... The management of that great church in their journeyings in the wilderness symbolizes the management of the church till the close of earth's history" (*That I May Know Him*, p. 323).

The organized church of Israel is to teach lessons of obedience to the organized remnant church until the close of time. The church of Israel and the church of Adventism are parallel to each other, and we can learn what the church is today by looking back at the church of the Old Testament.

"Notwithstanding our varying types of character, we are brought into church capacity through the profession of our faith. Christ is the head of the church; and if those whose names are on the church record do not belong to Jesus, the invisible Head, they are like the fruitless branch of the vine, and are taken away. If one is really a fruitful branch, he will make it manifest by bearing fruit, giving evidence of his absolute allegiance to Christ. He will have a spiritual connection with God" (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Feb. 23, 1897).

Note that Christ is the head of the church, which we enter by our profession of faith, and that we can be fruitless branches while on the church record. This church with many unfaithful Christians in it is not a false church, and we are not to leave it to find the true church, because Christ is still its Head. However, we are reminded that being a church member is not enough. We must maintain the spiritual connection with God that is essential to salvation, and we are to take this step within the church of professed believers.

“There are two kinds of connections between the branches and the vine stock. One is visible, but superficial. The other is invisible and vital. So there is an apparent union, a membership with the church, and a profession of religion which, though in itself good, is too often unaccompanied by saving faith in Jesus or living obedience to the commandments of God” (*Signs of the Times*, July 27, 1888).

This visible, superficial, apparent, professed membership in the church is “in itself good.” In other words, no one should be denied the privilege of joining the church, even if their motives and sincerity may not be fully

apparent. But the important point is that church membership is not the same as saving faith, and the church is not solely a group of faithful believers. The visible church includes within it more than obedient Christians.

From the preceding statements, we can see that there are two distinct categories described in the Spirit of Prophecy. One is the visible church, and the other is faithful souls. Since both of these categories can be called “the church,” it is only by a careful study of context that we can determine which church is being referred to in a given statement.

The visible church, which is specified in *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 16, has a special purpose. Though it cannot save individuals, its function is to be the center of God’s government on earth. It is to reveal God’s character and His laws to a rebellious world. It is to be a center of outreach to those who are deceived by Satan. It includes both saved and unsaved individuals, because it includes all who make a profession of faith in Christ. It is to be a teacher of salvation and a guide to salvation.

The “faithful soul” church is described in *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 11. It is made up of

individuals whose hearts have responded to God in genuine faith and obedience and who are in a saving relationship with Christ. Some of these are in the visible church while others, who are fully surrendered to God but have limited light, are outside the visible church. It is membership in this spiritual body that assures us a place in heaven.

To say that the visible church is always equivalent to the “faithful soul” church is to seriously distort the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy and to misunderstand the distinct purpose of these two groups. One cannot select a preferred definition of the church and then try to force all other usages of the word to conform to this preferred definition. We can wrest the Spirit of Prophecy to our own destruction just as surely as we can wrest the Scriptures.

### **Two Visible Churches**

**A**s we look back through history, we can see two visible churches in action—one established by God to demonstrate His character and laws and one established by Satan to counterwork God’s plans. Immediately after the Flood, Satan set his church into motion

through the city and tower of Babel. God soon saw fit to call Abraham out of the society where Satan's principles were being followed. Abraham became the father of God's visible church, and it is important to note that although Jacob's 12 sons were not all faithful believers, they were all part of, and fathers of, God's true visible church on earth.

Some might ask why God directed Abraham to move into Canaan, whose inhabitants were followers of Satan's church also. Why should the faithful church move from one center of false worship into another just as wicked? The answer appears as God revealed His ultimate purpose to drive out the pagan tribes and to establish His own center of worship in the land of Canaan. God gave specific orders for His church to have no close relationship or intermarriage with the heathen nations—a principle that He continued to apply to His church right down to the present.

When God called Israel out of Egypt, He put into operation a plan designed to completely replace Satan's church in Canaan with His own visible church. Again it is important to note that God's true church included

a mixed multitude of faithful and unfaithful souls, a situation which did not improve dramatically even after they entered Canaan. After a time, God's true visible church took a major step in disobedience by asking for a king so it could be more like Satan's church. God continued to work through Israel's kings as much as possible, but His plans were severely hampered by increasing apostasy in His visible church. Satan's church, on the other hand, developed first in Assyria and then in Babylon. Things got so bad in God's church that He had to allow Assyria to destroy 10 of the 12 tribes He had laboriously brought out of Egypt.

It has been suggested that when Israel broke God's covenant they were not the true church. If that had been the case, God would have been without a true, visible church for most of the history of Israel. We marvel at the extreme mercy and long suffering of God in dealing with His backsliding people. It seems to us that God should have cut them off when their apostasy was so deep and pervasive. In order to understand how long and patiently He bore with them, read the command of God to His prophet Hosea.

“And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord” (Hosea 1:2). The church of Israel was in full apostasy, and God’s response was direct. He commanded the prophet to give names to his children that would bear witness to the whole nation concerning their spiritual condition. After the birth of his third child, Hosea was told by God: “Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God” (Hosea 1:9).

This does sound like God was through with Israel as His visible church, and that He was ready to move on to some other plan for accomplishing His purposes. But in the very next verse God said, “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God” (Hosea 1:10).

We must always remember the difference between God’s chastisements and God’s

rejection, and be able to tell the difference between the two. Because Israel had broken God's covenant, God had to abandon His people to their own choices—temporarily. But as long as Israel continued to be God's church, He would work to secure their repentance and obedience so that He could once again call them His sons.

“O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him” (Hosea 14:1, 4). Although Israel was in full apostasy, God had not yet rejected them as His church, and all His efforts were directed toward healing and restoration. We must never mistake God's discipline for His rejection. Sometimes God disciplines by allowing His church to pursue its rebellious course until it suffers the results of disobedience. But until the moment of final rejection, God's visible church on earth remains the object of His supreme regard, and He watches over it unceasingly and longingly.

Even when the two remaining tribes were taken into captivity by Babylon because of their rebellion, they remained His visible church on

earth, and God brought them back to Canaan one more time to fulfill the purpose for which He had originally brought them out of Egypt.

By the time Christ appeared, Rome had become Satan's primary agent as he tried to defeat God's plan once and for all. It is of interest to note that Christ was taken to the organized church of His day for His dedication and first Passover. Some suggest that the Jews were no longer God's church because of their apostasy. How strange, then, that Jesus would spend most of His ministry trying to gain their repentance. The stories of the unfaithful servants in the vineyard and the fig tree that received one more year of cultivating show that Christ was still working for the repentance of His church. Jesus sent the healed lepers to the priests to reach their hearts, and He even paid the temple tax to the church authorities.

But the time did come when God's visible church crossed a line. After that time, the corporate church could no longer be brought to repentance, and the only solution for faithful souls was to leave the rejected church. Even though the Jews never became Babylon or Rome, they suffered final and absolute rejection

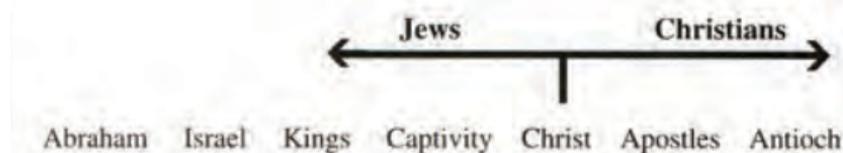
and will play no part as a nation in God's plan to defeat Satan. From this, we should learn that becoming part of Babylon is not the only way for God's church to lose its position as His chosen people. Continued rebellion can lead to final rejection, no matter how high the calling or how many blessings have been bestowed.

Out of one rejected visible church, God formed a new visible church as the apostles carried the gospel to the world. But even in this new visible Christian church, we find the same problems appearing as in the Jewish church. Sometimes it is claimed that a church that is not teaching and living the truth is not God's church at all. But let us look more closely at the church in Corinth to see whether or not this is so.

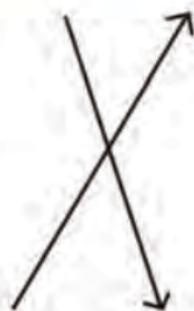
“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:2). Everything that follows in this letter is directed to the church of God, composed of all those who are sanctified [set apart], called, and who call on Jesus' name.

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as

# TIME



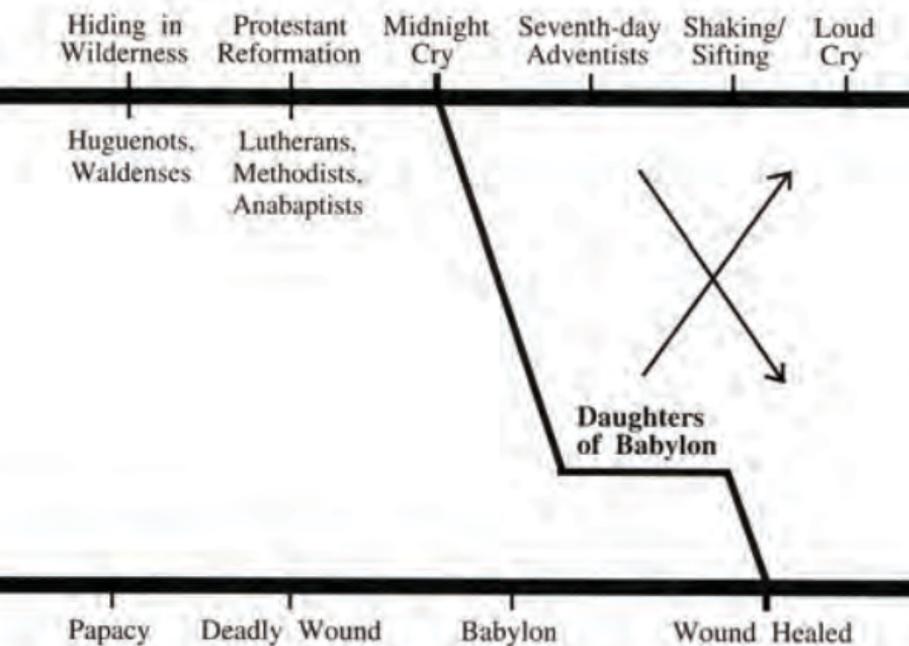
## God's Visible Church



## Satan's Visible Church

A horizontal timeline with a thick black bar above it. The timeline has tick marks for 'Babel', 'Canaan', 'Assyria', 'Babylon', 'Rome', and 'Alexandria'.

# LINE



unto babes in Christ. ... For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1 Corinthians 3:1, 3). “For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you” (1 Corinthians 11:18, 19). In God’s visible church were carnal professed Christians, as well as divisions and heresies. Although not all of its members were Christians, the Bible says the Corinthian church was part of the visible church of God.

The next step in the history of the Christian church is very important, because many people say that the church of the apostles turned into the Papacy—in other words, that the true church turned into Babylon. To find out whether or not this is true, perhaps we need to see exactly where the Papacy originated.

“And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority” (Revelation 13:2). The Papacy received its power, its place of government, and

its authority from Satan, who was working at that time through the Roman Empire. From its very beginning, the Papacy was part of Satan's visible church, in a direct line from Babylon through Rome. The Papacy was never God's true church at all. Let us review what happened during the first centuries of the Christian era.

In Alexandria, Egypt, a school of philosophy and theology had existed from before the time of Christ. In fact, the school at Alexandria had more than a little to do with the corruption of the Jewish church through the education of its most promising young men. When Christianity came on the scene, the Alexandrian school began to study these new teachings, incorporating them into its philosophical models. The Alexandrian Christian school combined mysticism, pagan philosophy, and a careless handling and interpretation of the Scriptures into an apostate form of Christianity almost from the very start.

Alexandria had great influence on the Western branch of the Christian church, especially in Rome, Italy. These two Christian centers were the first to combine Christian teachings with pagan ideas and to discredit

the Bible Sabbath. Thus the Papacy was the direct descendant of Babylon through Rome and Alexandria.

In the meantime, an entirely different Christian school was developing in Antioch, Syria. Here the teachers and students were much more faithful to the authority of Scripture, refusing to mystify and spiritualize away clear teachings of Scripture. They copied and interpreted Scripture very faithfully and did their best to pass on the teachings of Christ and the apostles accurately. This brand of Christianity spread within the Eastern branch of the church, which remained much more faithful to the truth than did the Western branch. However, this more faithful Eastern church should not be confused with the later Orthodox churches in the East, which were closely patterned in theology and ritual after the Papacy in the West.

Thus, the true church did not turn into Babylon, but remained vital and growing for centuries, while the false church continued directly in the line of Babylon. Now it is true that individuals and whole congregations changed sides occasionally during this formative

period—both from God's church to Satan's church and, more rarely, from Satan's church to God's church. But this must not obscure the fact that the two churches remained distinct and separate from each other. (See time line on pp. 16, 17.)

Unfortunately, the Eastern church was not to be left in prosperity. The Mohammedan invasions took their toll on the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, and Eastern Christianity was gradually swallowed up by these invasions. The great centers of the Eastern church were eliminated and could no longer stand in defense of the truth against Western perversions of true Christianity. The only part of the Roman Empire to stand intact was in Rome itself. The church in Rome became the professed defender of Christianity and, ultimately, the only form of Christianity recognized during the Dark Ages.

As the Roman church forced the true visible church to flee into the wilderness for survival, hundreds of years passed by, with God's true visible church receiving very little recognition from the civilized Christian world. Reports filtered out of England and Ethiopia confirming

the activities of many faithful Christians. Only later did the Waldenses in Italy and the Huguenots in France receive notoriety as they suffered intense persecution by Satan's church.

Then the Reformation broke upon the Christian scene, and Lutheranism and Presbyterianism carried the torch of God's true visible church. Next, the Anabaptists and Methodists came into the picture. Satan's church, meanwhile, received a deadly wound in 1798, from which some thought it would never recover. During these centuries, there were again individuals and congregations that crossed from one side to the other; but as before, the two churches remained distinct. (See time line on pp. 16, 17.) Babylon did not turn into the true church.

Finally we come to the climactic time period of William Miller and the giving of the midnight cry. God was challenging all the Christian bodies that carried the torch of truth to move ahead into the advancing light, including the Sabbath and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. If they would not move with the light, they would be left in darkness and would actually become part of the spiritual

system of Babylon. For the first time in history, whole denominations switched from the true church to the false church.

Those who were obedient to the gathering call formed the Seventh-day Adventist movement to function as the final remnant, God's visible church, which would ultimately be formed into the 144,000 and give the loud cry to Babylon. Those who refused to heed the gathering call became the daughters of Babylon, soon to be fully absorbed into Babylon.

God's plan for the visible church is that it will pass through a time of shaking and purging, so that unfaithful professors will be shaken out while the faithful believers go to the world with the final loud cry. Individuals and congregations will again switch sides at this time, but it is not God's plan to raise up a new visible church to replace the corporate Seventh-day Adventist church.

The most important thing to note from this brief review of history is that God's visible church and Satan's visible church have remained distinct from the very beginning. Also, God's visible church has always included faithful believers as well as unfaithful professors.

## Adventism and Babylon

In light of this understanding of God's visible church, what conclusions can we draw regarding the present and future of the Seventh-day Adventist church? Let us look carefully at God's counsel through the Spirit of Prophecy.

When the school at Battle Creek began to depart from God's plan, especially regarding the amusements being provided, Ellen White quoted the text, "How is the faithful city become an harlot!" (*Special Testimonies on Education*, p. 181). In another context, her divine Instructor said to Ellen: "How is the faithful city become an harlot! My Father's house is made a house of merchandise, a place whence the divine presence and glory have departed! For this cause there is weakness, and strength is lacking" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 250).

Serious charges, indeed! The Seventh-day Adventist church is a harlot and God's presence has left it? Surely this was a final judgment against the organized church.

But look again. Her very next words are: "Unless the church, which is now being leavened with her own backsliding, shall repent

and be converted, she will eat of the fruit of her own doing, until she shall abhor herself. When she resists the evil and chooses the good, when she seeks God with all humility and reaches her high calling in Christ, standing on the platform of eternal truth and by faith laying hold upon the attainments prepared for her, she will be healed. She will appear in her God-given simplicity and purity, separate from earthly entanglements, showing that the truth has made her free indeed. Then her members will indeed be the chosen of God, His representatives.”

What God was saying to the Seventh-day Adventist church is exactly what He was saying to Israel through Hosea. Rather than a statement of rejection, this was an appeal for repentance and obedience, and it carried a promise of healing. God appealed to His visible church to repent before it might cross a final line.

Ellen White wrote to George Butler, the General Conference president, in 1886: “We are in danger of becoming a sister to fallen Babylon, of allowing our churches to become corrupted, and filled with every foul spirit, a cage for every unclean and hateful bird.” I tell

you the truth, Elder Butler, that unless there is a cleansing of the soul temple on the part of many who claim to believe and to preach the truth, God's judgments, long deferred, will come" (*Letter 51*, 1886).

"If most earnest vigilance is not manifested at the great heart of the work to protect the interests of the cause, the church will become as corrupt as the churches of other denominations" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 513). "The world must not be introduced into the church, and married to the church, forming a bond of unity. Through this means the church will become indeed corrupt, and as stated in Revelation, 'a cage of every unclean and hateful bird'" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 265).

These are very, very solemn warnings to God's visible church. We cannot pretend that they do not exist and that if we do not read them they will somehow not apply to us. We dare not make the mistake of the Jews, who believed that because God had called them to be His chosen people it was impossible for them to fail. We live under the principle of conditional prophecy just as surely as God's Old Testament

church did. This means that both the beautiful promises of God to this church and His warnings to us are conditional upon our response to Him. Our obedience or disobedience will determine what the future holds for us individually or as a church.

Ellen White makes it clear that a church can be converted into Babylon, but the process is not an easy or simple one. Disobedience—even over a long period of time, or in a number of different areas—does not turn the true church into Babylon. God's love for His chosen people is too deep and strong to allow Him to cast them off for even repeated failures. God's love for Israel over many disappointing centuries should instruct us about His attitude toward His remnant church today. Israel crossed the line of divine patience only after it rejected, openly and defiantly, the ultimate gift of God's love by sentencing His Son to death. As we understand from Daniel's prophecy, God's final separation from the Jewish nation did not take place for another three and a half years after the crucifixion. What long suffering and mercy!

We are told what steps our church will have to take to cross the line that Israel crossed. If

our church were to adopt, openly and officially, the errors of Sunday sacredness, the immortality of the soul, and eternal torment, then we too would become a part of fallen Babylon. (See *Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 68 and *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 61, 62.) However, we must remember that small deviations from truth lead to larger errors. Our compromises over the last 50 years need to be addressed and reversed, or we could be in real danger of adopting the major errors of Babylon.

Now that we have examined the warnings God has delivered to His church, we must also look at what the Spirit of Prophecy has to say to those who claim that the organized, visible church has already crossed the line and that the faithful ones should separate themselves from it.

“No advice or sanction is given in the Word of God to those who believe the third angel’s message to lead them to suppose that they can draw apart. This you may settle with yourselves forever. It is the devising of unsanctified minds that would encourage a state of disunion. ... There must be no separating in this great testing time” (*Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 21). Please notice how long we are to

avoid drawing apart. Forever!! Should this not caution those who are saying that things are so much worse today that her 1893 counsels no longer apply?

“I know that the Lord loves His church. It is not to be disorganized or broken up into independent atoms. There is not the least consistency in this; there is not the least evidence that such a thing will be” (*The Remnant Church*, p. 53). “We have never had a message that the Lord would disorganize the church” (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, vol. 3, p. 86).

“The Redeemer of the world does not sanction experience and exercise in religious matters independent of His organized and acknowledged church, where He has a church.

“Many have the idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His acknowledged followers in the world. But this is condemned by Jesus in His teachings and in the examples, the facts, which He has given for our instruction” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 432, 433).

“You will take passages in the *Testimonies* that speak of the close of probation, of the

shaking among God's people, and you will talk of a coming out from this people of a purer, holier people that will arise. Now all this pleases the enemy. ... Should many accept the views you advance, and talk and act upon them, we should see one of the greatest fanatical excitements that has ever been witnessed among Seventh-day Adventists. This is what Satan wants" (*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 179).

"The Lord has not given you a message to call the Seventh-day Adventists Babylon, and to call the people of God to come out of her. All the reasons you may present cannot have weight with me on this subject, because the Lord has given me decided light that is opposed to such a message" (*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 63).

"I tell you, my brethren, the Lord has an organized body through whom He will work. ... When anyone is drawing apart from the organized body of God's commandment-keeping people, when he begins to weigh the church in his human scales and begins to pronounce judgment against them, then you may know that God is not leading him. He is on the wrong track" (*Selected Messages*, vol. 3, pp. 17, 18).

“But we have never had a message that the Lord would disorganize the church. We have never had the prophecy concerning Babylon applied to the Seventh-day Adventist church, or been informed that the ‘loud cry’ consisted in calling God’s people to come out of her; for this is not God’s plan concerning Israel. ... Now can we expect that a message would be true that would designate as Babylon the people for whom God has done so much? Hell would triumph should such a message be received, and the world would be strengthened in iniquity. All the reproaches that Satan has cast upon the character of God, would appear as truth, and the conclusion would be made that God has no chosen or organized church in the world. Oh, what a triumph would this be to Satan and his confederacy of evil!” (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Oct. 3, 1893).

These statements are much too clear to be misunderstood. Although the visible church is in crisis, the solution is not in applying the message for Babylon to it. If we decide that the church is Babylon or has passed the line of its probationary time, then our only message is “Come out of her.” If we decide that

the church is Laodicea, then our only message is “Repent.” Our message will be determined by our view of the church.

Although God’s visible church is not functioning as He designed that it should, and although there is much disobedience individually and corporately—in God’s church, this is the time to look back to Moses and rebellious Israel. “In the example of Moses pleading for the children of Israel, is represented the position that we should take in regard to the people of God, however erring, or weak, or defective they may be” (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Oct. 3, 1893.).

In pleading for God’s people, we will be following in the hallowed line of Jeremiah, Daniel, Jesus, and Ellen White. May God help us to have the shepherd’s heart, seeking to heal and restore while the door of probation for the church is still open.



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