

Lesson 23

The Bible says there is but one body, or church, into which Jesus calls His end-time people—the bride of Christ. To some, this is unnerving, as there are thousands of churches today that call themselves Christian. Virtually every one of them claims to be God’s church, yet they each differ widely in biblical interpretation, faith, and practice. It’s quite impossible for an honest seeker of truth to investigate the claims of each one. However, we can be thankful that Jesus has solved this dilemma for us by describing His church in such detail that you can easily identify it! That description, vivid and powerful, is found in Revelation 12 and 14, and it will thrill you with amazing truths that will help you in the end times.

***Note:** Please read Revelation 12:1–17 before beginning your journey of discovery into these transforming truths.*

1. By what prophetic symbol does Jesus represent His true church?

“I have likened the daughter of Zion to a lovely and delicate woman” (Jeremiah 6:2). “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Revelation 19:7, 8).

Answer: We learned in Study Guide 22 that Jesus symbolizes His true church (daughter of Zion) as a pure woman and the false, apostate churches as a harlot. (See also 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22, 23; and Isaiah 51:16).





2. In Revelation 12:1, Jesus symbolizes His church as a woman “clothed with the sun,” with “the moon under her feet,” and wearing “a crown [KJV] of twelve stars.” What do these symbols mean?

Answer: The sun represents Jesus, His gospel, and His righteousness. “The Lord God is a sun” (Psalm 84:11). (See also Malachi 4:2.) Without Jesus there is no salvation (Acts 4:12). More than anything else, Jesus wants His church to overflow with His presence and glory. “The moon under her feet” represents the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. As

the moon reflects the light of the sun, so the sacrificial system was helpful spiritually only as it reflected light from the Messiah to come (Hebrews 10:1). The “crown of twelve stars” represents the work of the 12 disciples, which crowned the early years of the New Testament church.

3. Next, the prophecy states that the woman is in labor, about to deliver a baby who would one day rule all nations with a rod of iron. She then delivered the “male



Child,” and later He was taken up to God’s throne in heaven (Revelation 12:1, 2, 5). Who was this baby?

Answer: The baby was Jesus. He will one day rule all nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 19:13–15; Psalm 2:7–9; John 1:1–3, 14). Jesus, who was crucified for our sins, was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9–11). His resurrection power in our lives is one of Jesus’ essential gifts to His people (Philippians 3:10).



4. Revelation 12:3, 4 introduces “a great, fiery red dragon” who hated the “male Child” and tried to kill him at birth. (You might remember this dragon from Study Guide 20.)

Who was the dragon?

Answer: The dragon represents Satan, who was cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:7–9) and who was working through the pagan Roman Empire at the time of Jesus’ birth. The ruler who tried to kill Jesus at birth was Herod, a king under pagan Rome. He killed all the male babies of Bethlehem, hoping that one of them would be Jesus (Matthew 2:16).

5. What is the meaning of the “seven heads” and “ten horns” of the



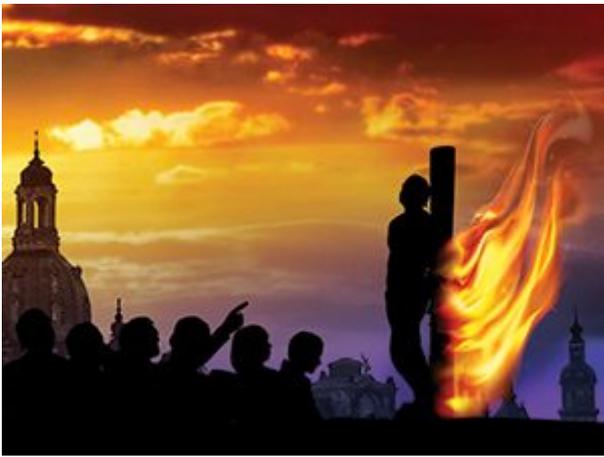
dragon, and of “a third of the stars of heaven” being cast to the earth?

Answer: The “seven heads” represent the seven hills or mountains upon which Rome was built (Revelation 17:9, 10). We have now encountered a beast with seven heads and 10 horns three times in our Study Guides (Revelation 12:3; 13:1; 17:3). The “ten horns” represent the governments, or nations, that support the major powers in their oppression of God’s people and church. During pagan Rome’s tenure (Revelation 12:3, 4), they represented the 10 barbarian tribes that supported the papacy in eventually bringing down the Roman Empire (Daniel 7:23, 24). These tribes later became modern Europe. In the last days, they represent all the nations of the world united in the end-time coalition (Revelation 16:14; 17:12, 13, 16) that will support “Babylon the great” in her warfare against God’s people. “A third of the stars of heaven” are the angels who supported Lucifer in his insurrection in heaven and who were cast out with him (Revelation 12:9; Luke 10:18; Isaiah 14:12).

A Review and Summary

Thus far, the prophecy has covered the following Bible facts:

1. God’s true church appears, symbolized as a pure woman.
2. Jesus is born into the church.
3. Satan, working through King Herod of pagan Rome, tries to kill Jesus.
4. Satan’s plan is unsuccessful.
5. Jesus’ ascension is pictured.



Many millions were burned at the stake because of Satan's persecution.

6. What did Satan do after he failed in his plan to destroy Jesus?

“He persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child” (Revelation 12:13).

Answer: Since he was no longer able to attack Jesus personally, he aimed his fury and persecution at God's church and His

people.

Six Identifying Points

In Revelation chapters 12 and 14, Jesus gives us six descriptive points to use in identifying His end-time church. Watch for them as you study the remainder of this Study Guide.

7. In Revelation 12:6, 14, what did the woman (church) do to protect herself, and what is the “wilderness”?

Answer: Verses 6 and 14 say, “The woman fled into the wilderness,” where she was protected for “a time and times and half a time” (or 1,260 literal years) from the wrath of Satan—who was working through papal Rome. The “two wings” represent the protection and support God gave the church during her time in the “wilderness” (Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy



32:11). The time spent in the wilderness is the same 1,260-year period of papal prominence and persecution (ad 538 to 1798) that is repeatedly mentioned in Bible prophecy. Remember, one



Many of God's people fled to the United States to escape terrible persecution.

prophetic day equals one literal year (Ezekiel 4:6).

The term “wilderness” refers to the solitary places of earth (mountains, caves, forests, etc.) where God’s people could hide and escape total annihilation (Hebrews 11:37, 38). And hide they did—the Waldenses, Albigenses, Huguenots, and many others. God’s people (His church) would have been obliterated if they had not fled and hid in the

wilderness during this devastating persecution by the papacy. (In one 40-year period, “from the beginning of the order of the Jesuits, in the year 1540, to 1580, nine hundred thousand were destroyed. One hundred fifty thousand perished in the Inquisition in 30 years.”¹ At least 50 million people died for their faith during this 1,260-year time period. God’s church did not exist as an official organization during these years. From ad 538 to 1798, it was alive but not identifiable as an organization. When it came out of hiding after the 1,260 years, it still had the same doctrine and characteristics as the apostolic church, which entered the “wilderness” in ad 538.

We have now discovered our first two identification points for Jesus’ end-time church:

1. It would not exist officially as an organization between AD 538 and 1798.
2. It would arise and do its end-time work after 1798.

There are many loving, genuine Christians in churches that were officially in existence before 1798. But none of these churches can be God’s end-time church into which Jesus is calling all His people, because Jesus’ end-time church had to arise after 1798. This means that most of the popular Protestant churches cannot be God’s end-time church because they existed officially before 1798.

8. In Revelation 12:17, God calls His end-time church the remnant [KJV]. What does the word “remnant” mean?



A remnant of cloth is the last remaining portion of a bolt. It matches the first piece from the same bolt.

Answer: It means the last remaining portion. In reference to Jesus' church, it means His church of the very last days, which is one based on all of Scripture, as was the apostolic church.

9. In Revelation 12:17, what additional two-point description did Jesus give of His end-time remnant church?



Answer: It would keep all the Ten Commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment (John 14:15; Revelation 22:14). It also would have the “testimony of Jesus,” which the Bible tells us is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10). (See Study Guide 24 for a full explanation of the gift of prophecy.)

We now have Jesus' next two points of identification for His end-time remnant church:

3. It will keep God's commandments, including His seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth

commandment.

4. It will have the gift of prophecy.

Remember that while hosts of sincere Christians are found in churches that do not keep the Sabbath or have the gift of prophecy, these churches cannot be God's remnant end-time church into which Jesus is calling last-day Christians because God's end-time church will keep all of God's commandments and have the gift of prophecy.

10. What final two points of identification for God's remnant church does the book of Revelation provide?

Answer: The final two points of the six are:

5. It will be a worldwide missionary church (Revelation 14:6).

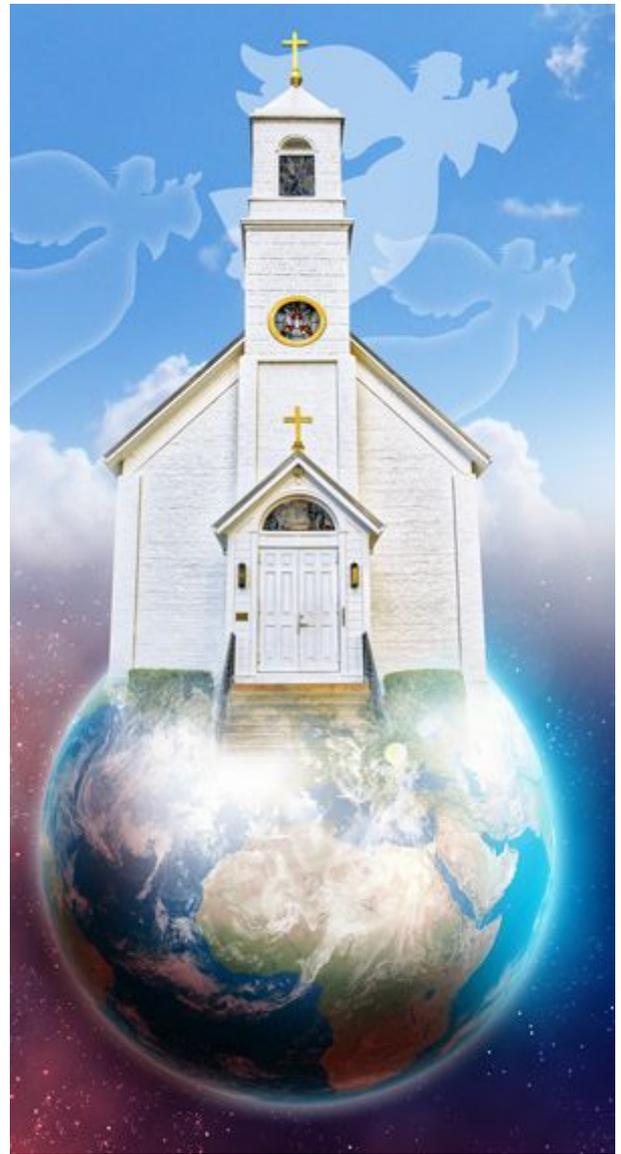
6. It will be preaching the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6–14, which are briefly summarized below.

A. God's judgment is in session. Worship Him! God's end-time church must be preaching that the judgment began in 1844 (see Study Guides 18 and 19). It also calls upon people to "worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:7). How do we worship God as Creator? God wrote the answer in the fourth commandment. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ... For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8, 11). So, the first angel's message commands all to worship God as Creator by keeping holy His seventh-day Sabbath, which He gave as a memorial of Creation.

B. Come out of the fallen churches of Babylon.

C. Don't worship the beast or receive his mark, which is observing Sunday as a holy day in replacement of the true Sabbath. Beware of all counterfeits.

Let's now review the six points that Jesus gives us for identifying His end-time remnant church:



1. It would not exist as an official organization between AD 538 and 1798.
2. It would rise up and do its work after 1798.
3. It would keep the Ten Commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath.
4. It would have the gift of prophecy.
5. It would be a worldwide missionary church.
6. It would be teaching and preaching Jesus' three-point message of Revelation 14:6–14.



11. Now that we have established Jesus' six identification points for His end-time remnant church, what does Jesus tell us to do, and with what results?

Answer: “Seek, and you will find” (Matthew 7:7). Jesus hands you these six specifications and says, “Go find My church.” He promises that those who seek for heavenly things will find them.

12. How many churches fit these six specifications?



Answer: Jesus gave such distinctive specifications that they fit only one church.

Jesus did not give vague generalities such as “There will be many good people in My church” and “There will also be some hypocrites.” How many churches would those two points fit? All of them. Those two points also fit the corner grocery store and downtown civic clubs! They would fit everything, and thus mean nothing. Instead, Jesus gave such pointed, specific, highly descriptive points that they fit one church and only one church—the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Let’s double-check the specifications.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church:

1. Did not exist as an official organization between ad 538 and 1798.
2. Arose after 1798. It began to form in the early 1840s.
3. Keeps the Ten Commandments, including the fourth—God’s seventh-day Sabbath.
4. Has the gift of prophecy.
5. Is a worldwide missionary church, working in nearly all countries today.
6. Teaches and preaches Jesus’ three-point message of Revelation 14:6–14.

Jesus asks you to take these six specifications and check for yourself. It is easy. You cannot miss.

Note: *Please remember that there are many loving Christians in churches that these points do not fit, but no such church can be God’s end-time remnant into which He is calling all His people today.*

13. After one of Jesus’ children heeds His loving warning call and comes out of Babylon (Revelation 18:2, 4), what does Jesus ask him or

her to do next?

“You were called in one body” (Colossians 3:15).

“He [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18).

Answer: The Bible says that God’s people are called into one body, the church. Jesus asks those who leave Babylon to join the remnant church—of which He is the head. Jesus said, “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold” (John 10:16). He also calls them “My people” in both the Old Testament (Isaiah 58:1) and the New Testament (Revelation 18:4). Of His sheep outside His fold (church), He says, “Them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. ... My sheep hear my voice ... and they follow Me” (John 10:16, 27).



14. How does one enter that body, or church?

“By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Answer: We enter Jesus’ end-time remnant church by baptism. (See Study Guide 9 for details on baptism.)

15. Does the Bible provide other evidence that Jesus has only one remnant church into which He is calling all of His people?



Answer: Yes—it does. Let's review it:

A. The Bible says there is only one true body, or church (Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 1:18).

B. The Bible says our day is like Noah's day (Luke 17:26, 27). How many ways of escape were there in Noah's day? Only one—the ark. Once again, today, God has provided a boat, the church, that will take His people safely through earth's final events. Don't miss this boat!

16. What is the good news regarding God's remnant church?

Answer:

A. Its central theme is "the everlasting gospel"—that is, righteousness by faith in Jesus only (Revelation 14:6).

B. It is built on Jesus, the Rock (1 Corinthians 3:11; 10:4), and "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

C. Jesus died for His church (Ephesians 5:25).

D. Jesus describes His remnant church so plainly that it's easy to identify. He also describes the fallen churches and calls His people out of them. Satan will trap only those who keep their eyes and hearts shut to His loving call.

E. Its doctrines are all true (1 Timothy 3:15).

17. What is the good news regarding God's remnant people?

Answer: They will:

- A.** Be saved in His heavenly kingdom (Revelation 15:2).
- B.** Overcome the devil by the “power” and “blood” of Jesus (Revelation 12:10, 11).
- C.** Be patient (Revelation 14:12).
- D.** Have Jesus’ faith (Revelation 14:12).
- E.** Find glorious freedom (John 8:31, 32).



18. Earth’s hour is very late. Jesus’ second coming immediately follows the giving of the three angels’ messages (Revelation 14:6–14). What is Jesus’ urgent plea now to His people?

“Come into the ark, you and all your household” (Genesis 7:1).

Answer: In Noah’s day, only eight people (including Noah) heeded God’s invitation. Jesus is waiting at the door of His end-time ark, the remnant church, for you.

Note: *This is our eighth Study Guide in the thrilling series on the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6–14. The final Study Guide of this series will discuss the gift of prophecy.*

19. Are you willing to heed Jesus’ call to come into the safety of His end-time remnant church?

Answer:

Thought Questions

1. China, with approximately one-fourth of the world’s population, has barely been touched with the gospel. Wouldn’t it take a long time to reach everyone there?

“With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27). The Bible says the Lord “will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth” (Romans 9:28). That same Lord who empowered Jonah to lead an entire city to repentance in less than 40 days (Jonah chapter 3) will finish His work very quickly in these last days. He says His work will move with such breathtaking speed that it will be almost impossible for God’s church to adequately handle the overwhelming influx of souls (Amos 9:13). God promised it. It will happen—and soon!

2. Is there really a serious danger that many professed Christian people will be caught off guard and lost when Jesus returns?

Yes. Jesus made that point crystal clear. He warned of several things that will trap and destroy Christians: (1) surfeiting (KJV), (2) drunkenness, (3) the cares of this life, and (4) sleeping (Luke 21:34; Mark 13:34–36).

A. Surfeiting is overdoing in anything—eating, working, reading, recreation, etc. It upsets balance and destroys clear thinking. It also precludes spending time with Jesus.

B. Drunkenness refers to things that bring on a stupor and give us a distaste for heavenly

things. Examples include pornography, illicit sex, evil companions, neglect of Bible study and prayer, and avoiding church services. Such things cause people to live in a dream world and thus miss out.

C. Cares of this life destroy Christians who become so busy doing perfectly good things that time for Jesus, prayer, study of the Word, witnessing, and attendance of church services are crowded out. In so doing, we take our eyes off the real goal and drown in peripheral matters.

D. Sleeping refers to being spiritually asleep. It might be the biggest problem today. When a person is asleep, he does not know he is asleep. Taking our relationship with Jesus for granted, having a form of godliness with no power, and refusing to become actively involved in Jesus' work—all these things and others make sleepwalkers of those who, unless awakened, will sleep past the moment of truth.

3. I joined God's remnant church and have never been so happy. But I have never been harassed so much by the devil, either. Why is this?

Because the devil is angry with God's remnant people and spends his time trying to hurt and discourage them (Revelation 12:17). Jesus did not promise that His people would not suffer trials, woes, onslaughts from the devil, tough times, and even serious injury from Satan. He promised that such things would, indeed, come to His people (2 Timothy 3:12). He did, however, gloriously promise: (1) to give His people victory (1 Corinthians 15:57), (2) to be with His people always, in everything they face (Matthew 28:20), (3) to give them peace (John 16:33; Psalm 119:165), and (4) to never forsake them (Hebrews 13:5). Finally, Jesus promised to hold onto His children so tightly that no one can take them out of His hands (John 10:28, 29). Amen!

4. What does the word "church" mean?

The word "church" is translated from the Greek word "ekklesia," which means "called-out ones." How fitting! Jesus' people are called out of the world and Babylon into His precious fold of safety. People become part of Jesus' remnant end-time church by being baptized when Jesus calls them. Jesus says, "My sheep hear My voice ... and they follow Me" (John 10:27).

Quiz Questions

1. How does Jesus symbolize His true church in prophecy? (1)

- By a tall steeple.
- As a beast.
- By a bright angel.
- As a pure woman.
- By a mysterious cloud.

2. What was the "wilderness" into which the church fled? (1)

- Solitary places such as caves, forests, etc.
- The Sahara desert.
- Iraq.
- The Gobi desert.

3. The following items are part of the three angels' messages: (3)

- Babylon is fallen. Come out of her!
- Hell burns forever and ever.
- God's judgment is in session. Revere, praise, and worship Him as the Creator by keeping His holy Sabbath--which is His sign, or mark.
- The plagues have ended.
- Everybody is going to be saved.
- Do not worship the beast or receive his mark.

4. Jesus provides six identification points to guide us to His remnant church. This church will (6)

- Have many fine Christians.
- Keep the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath.
- Have some hypocrites.
- Enjoy singing great Christian songs.
- Pray much.
- Not exist as an official organization between A.D. 538 and 1798.
- Have the gift of prophecy.
- Speak in tongues.
- Be a worldwide missionary church.
- Have many fine church buildings.
- Arise and do its work after 1798.
- Preach and teach the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-14.

5. How long was the church to be in the wilderness? (1)

- Five years.
- 1,000 years.
- 680 years.
- 1,260 years.
- 33 years.

6. In Revelation chapter 12, the symbol of a baby born to a woman represents (1)

- The apostolic church.
- Jesus.
- The gospel going to the Gentiles.

7. Does Jesus call His people out of the world and Babylon and into His remnant church? (1)

- Yes.
 No.

8. How does one join the remnant church? (1)

- By shaking the preacher's hand.
 By signing a membership card.
 By baptism.
 By giving a large donation.

9. There are many fine Christians in all churches, and even some who are not members of any church. (1)

- Yes.
 No.

10. Which of the following things cause Christians to be caught off guard and lost? (4)

- Surfeiting.
 Cares of this life.
 Getting too excited about your religion.
 Spiritual drunkenness.
 Being spiritually asleep.
 Faithful witnessing.
 Reading the newspaper.

11. God will cut short His work on earth by taking the gospel quickly to every creature. (1)

- Yes.
 No.

12. Which of the following does God promise His children? (4)

- Peace.
 They will have no troubles.
 Victory.
 They will never get sick.
 No one can take them out of His and Jesus' hands.
 He'll never forsake them.
 They will be rich.

13. What does the word "church" literally mean? (1)

- A properly designated place of worship.
 A congregation of the faithful.
 "Called-out ones."
 A cathedral.

14. I want to become part of God's end-time remnant church.

_____ Yes.
_____ No.