

The Gift of Prophecy and God's Remnant Church



“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17, NKJV).

Remnants, Quilts, and the Master Quilter

INTRODUCTION

Revelation 12; 14:1–12

The quilt lies on the bed, a reminder of a generation of women who sewed them to keep their families warm in the winter. My grandmother patiently pieced the small triangles of fabric together one by one. They were cut from remnants of material, mostly from old clothing, which was being recycled long before that was the environmentally acceptable thing to do.

As those remnant pieces were cut, positioned properly, and then sewn together, a new item emerged—a quilt that I could snuggle under on cold winter nights. The remnants were taken from something that needed to be transformed and made into a new creation.

Throughout earth's history, God has been preparing a remnant people. Just like those small triangles so lovingly cut out by my grandmother, God has been shaping a people with characters that reflect Him. From the large group of those who

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claim to follow Him will come the remnant. These followers will keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.

He works on cutting out the things in our lives that don't belong there if we claim to be His followers. He adjusts our attitudes and our

desires as we allow Him. As the Master Quilter pieces together His remnant, a new fabric will emerge that will befit the bride of Christ.

How can we speak of being in the remnant without sounding exclusive? What really are the signs of a remnant people? What are specific biblical examples of the remnant and their telling the story of Jesus?

During this week, we will examine these questions. As we do, it will be necessary to ask how we as a church fill the role of the remnant. Do we look much like a remnant people now? Did our early church leaders seem to have more of the remnant mind-set than we have today? What changes should we be making in our personal lives to be more like the remnant in heart and actions?

As you ponder the question of the remnant and what role prophecy has both in the past and the future, ask yourself the hard questions: Is being part of the remnant important to me? If it is, how am I portraying that to the world I live in today?

“Get Out Now!”

EVIDENCE

Rev. 18:1–4

Examining the historical record of earth’s history, it becomes apparent that God always has had a remnant people who have sought to follow His leading.

Noah was the leader of just eight people who were a remnant. In the face of ridicule, he taught for 120 years that change needed to occur in people’s lives. When all was said and done, only his family accompanied him into the ark.

Abraham was called out of Ur. The majority of the world was busy living selfishly. From Abraham’s faithfulness, a remnant and a nation were born.

Moses led a remnant out of Egypt, despite a Pharaoh who was resistant and a murmuring mixed multitude who didn’t always want to be led. Out of the original group of adults who left Egypt, only three were allowed to see the Promised Land. Moses had to view it from the mountaintop. Joshua and Caleb experienced its fullness by living there for a season.

Israel faced captivity in Babylon because of its choices. Ezra and Nehemiah were called to bring back a remnant to rebuild Jerusalem and the people’s understanding of God.

After Christ’s resurrection, a remnant of Christians was persecuted. Eleven of the disciples, along with a small group of believers, followed Christ’s call to take the gospel to the world. During the next three hundred years, the church faced persecution and death, but a remnant continued to be faithful to their understanding of God’s laws and to the testimony of Jesus.

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was busy living selfishly.**

The Middle Ages saw a remnant of people who often sacrificed their lives rather than deny the truth. Men and women like John Hus, Jerome, and Joan of Arc chose the wrath of humans rather than disobey God’s call.

Today, God is seeking a remnant which will remain faithful to the end. This remnant will come from all faiths, as evidenced by Revelation 18:4.

REACT

1. What are your thoughts about being part of a remnant in the last days?
2. What do you think the warning in Revelation 18:4 means? How does it apply to us today?

“The Remnant Redeemed”

LOGOS

Revelation 12; 14:1–12

Prophetic Assurance (Rev. 12:7–9)

In Revelation 12, John records a synopsis of the great controversy. Replete with symbols and literary quotations, he offers imagery rich enough to document a war, and at the same time convey the essence of the eternal gospel. In two juxtaposed renderings, the conflict of the ages is documented in a way that is nearly self-evident in interpreting.

The record begins with war breaking out in heaven. The dragon, identified as Satan, takes the role of antagonist together with a third of the angels. They are all cast down to the earth, where the dragon seeks his vengeance on the woman, the betrothed of his opponent. The bride is sheltered in the remote regions of earth through one of the great prophetic time periods, the 1,260 days during which the dragon wields authority. The multitudes disgorged to eliminate the bride are dissipated and rendered ineffective by the wilderness where she is sheltered.

Through the blood of the Lamb, a new song is born.

From exile, John writes to those already experiencing the initial pursuit of the dragon.

Persecution and death are meted out to the growing band of believers. This prophecy communicates hope that God is still in control. His will is still being worked out, and though the devil has come down to the earth with great wrath, his time is short.

The Remnant (Rev. 12:17)

Twice angered by failure, the dragon pursues the woman’s children. Those that remain, the remnant, are marked by particular characteristics. These attributes serve to distinguish them from the impostors sent by the dragon to drown out their voices. The first of these characteristics is faithfulness in keeping the commandments of God. Where the dragon seeks to dilute and wash away knowledge of God’s law, the remnant seek to preserve those truths.

The second characteristic of the remnant is the testimony of Jesus. On the surface this could be interpreted as holding the teachings or utterances of Jesus. However, Revelation 19:10 equates the “testimony of Jesus” with the “spirit of prophecy.” Hence in John’s record, the lineage of the remnant will reach its ulti-

mate destiny in a group that both keeps the commandments and holds the Spirit of prophecy.

The remnant is the prophetic offspring of the woman, the bride of Christ. That prophetic bride is the church in its extended form. The bride is not a specific denomination. Her remnant seed have an obligation not only to preserve but to spread the essential truths they hold. In proclaiming the three angels' messages, the remnant lays claim to the Spirit of prophecy that John records.

The Redeemed (Rev. 12:11)

The characteristic traits of the remnant are only identifying marks, not the instruments of salvation. John is quite clear on this point. " 'They have conquered him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony' " (Rev. 12:11, NRSV). The parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew 22 suggests that righteousness offered through the blood of the Lamb is conditioned on our willingness to put it on, to confess it through the word of our testimony.

The Spirit of prophecy provides a foundation for confidence that today's setbacks will have at most a temporary effect. For the remnant, prophecy has long provided the reassurance that enables them to rise above the fear of death. They have confidence in the outcome, because credibility has been earned though the observed truth of the prophetic testimony.

Through the blood of the Lamb, a new song is born, sung only by those who have experienced its redeeming power. It is the culmination of the eternal gospel:

It's the song of the redeemed
Rising from the African plain
It's the song of the forgiven
Drowning out the Amazon rain
The song of Asian believers
Filled with God's holy fire
It's every tribe, every tongue, every nation
A love song born of a grateful choir.

It's all God's children singing
Glory, glory, hallelujah
He reigns.*

Read Revelation 14:12.

REACT

1. What aspects of your personal faith acknowledge the Creator God of the first angel's message?
2. In your understanding of prophetic end times, is the dragon's persecution more, or less, significant than the blood of the Lamb?

Tuesday
January 20

“A Little Flock”

TESTIMONY

Isa. 49:16; Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 15:55

“Of special value to God’s church on earth to-day . . . are the messages of counsel and admonition given through the prophets who have made plain His eternal purpose in behalf of mankind. In the teachings of the prophets, His love for the lost race, and His plan for their salvation, are clearly revealed. The story of Israel’s call, of their successes and failures, of their restoration to divine favor, of their rejection of the Master of the vineyard, and of the carrying out of the plan of the ages by a goodly remnant to whom are to be fulfilled all the covenant promises,—this has been the theme of God’s messengers to His church throughout the centuries that have passed.”¹

“In comparison with the millions of the world, God’s people will be, as they have ever been, a little flock; but if they stand for the truth as revealed in His word, God will be their refuge. They stand under the broad shield of Omnipotence. God is always a majority. When the sound of the last trump shall penetrate the prison-

“God is always a majority.”

house of the dead, and the righteous shall come forth with triumph, exclaiming, ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy

victory?’ (1 Corinthians 15:55)—standing then with God, with Christ, with the angels, and with the loyal and true of all ages, the children of God will be far in the majority.”²

“The remnant that purify their souls by obeying the truth gather strength from the trying process, exhibiting the beauty of holiness amid the surrounding apostasy. All these, He says, ‘I have graven . . . upon the palms of my hands’ (Isa. 49:16). They are held in everlasting, imperishable remembrance. We want faith now, living faith. We want to have a living testimony that shall cut to the heart of the sinner.”³

“God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments.”⁴

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 22.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 590.

3. *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 380.

4. *The Upward Look*, p. 315.

Being the Remnant

HOW-TO

Rev. 12:17; 14:12

Is it possible to be in the remnant church yet not to be remnant in heart? In the book of Revelation, God revealed the closing events of the great controversy along with its outcome. He highlighted those who will be victorious, those who are the remnant. God gives several characteristics of His last-day people. By understanding their uniqueness, we may understand not only how to be in the remnant but how to be remnant in heart.

1. *Proclaiming the message.* God's remnant church will be proclaiming the everlasting gospel to the whole world in the context of the three angels' messages, which prepare a people to meet their Savior at His second coming. To be part of the remnant, we must be part of a movement proclaiming the Second Coming.

2. *Keep the commandments.* God's last-day people teach that God's law hasn't changed or been done away with, but that it is the eternal transcript of His character and the standard by which we are judged (1 Pet. 1:15). The commandments are God's tool to show us our sin and our need of a Savior (Rom. 3:20; 7:7). The remnant not only teaches the commandments but keeps them as well. To be the remnant is to be in a loving relationship with Jesus, a love that yields obedience (John 14:15).

3. *Believe His prophets.* The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy (Rev. 12:17; 19:10). God's last-day people will possess the Spirit of prophecy like Israel of old. God has given us a map (the Bible) for our exodus (the Second Coming). He has also given us a Pilot (the Spirit of prophecy as given to Ellen White and the biblical prophets) to guide us through the perils and ever-changing circumstances of the latter days. As His remnant people, we will believe His prophets and obey His counsel so that we may prosper, even unto the end (2 Chron. 20:20).

God is calling us in these last days not only to accept His name but to reveal His character through our lives. This is the great need of the hour.

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REACT

1. What did God intend for the nation of Israel? For His last-day remnant?
2. What place should proclaiming the three angels' messages have in your life?

Thursday
January 22

The Remnant: Reflecting the Image of Christ

OPINION

John 17:3, 6–26

Our first parents were made by the hand of the Creator in His image. They were blessed to walk in the fully revealed presence of God in a perfect world. There was no need of a remnant movement. However, because of sin, humans could no longer behold the person of God and live. What was God to do but draw up a blueprint of Himself so that humankind could come to trust Him and allow His character to be reflected in them.

Why is it necessary for God's image to be reflected in us? Here are a few reasons:

1. To provide evidence of a loving God to the darkened world
2. To reveal to the world the true character of God
3. To prepare a people to dwell once again in the presence of their Creator

In the midst of the great controversy, while God's image was being denigrated through false teachings, God gave the fullness of Himself in the expressed image of Christ. Christ was not only the image of the Deity, He was the Deity clothed in flesh. Through our Redeemer's ministry, we are able to witness the lived out blueprint that the remnant is to follow. Christ preached the three angels' messages during His time on earth.

Christ preached the three angels' messages during His time on earth.

He called the multitude to the correct worship of God; He called them out of the confusion of tradition; and He reminded His followers to remain faithful, even though the majority of the world refused to believe Him.

Christ not only preached the message, He lived it because He was the Word (John 1:1–3, 14). Now that we are approaching the second coming of Christ, tremendous light has been given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have the message, but how well are we living the message, thus reflecting the loving nature of our Lord? Not only is the remnant to preach the message to the world, but the message must be revealed through their loving deeds and words. Before sin entered this world, God's image was reflected through the first couple—Adam and Eve. At the end of the great controversy, God's image will be reflected through the last couple—Jesus Christ and His bride, the church.

REACT

In what way is the Lord trying to reflect His character through you as His remnant child?

Charles Rietman, Wyoming, Michigan, U.S.A.

A Good Reflection

EXPLORATION

2 Cor. 3:18

CONCLUDE

Throughout history, God has saved a remnant people who reflected His light in a sin-darkened world. Sometimes the light has been brilliant, as in the days of the early Christian church; other times it has seemed a lonely candle, as in the days of the cave-dwelling Waldensians. We have the opportunity to be part of that historical, light-reflecting community of believers. As time winds down, the world needs vital, unique, *brilliant* people who will clearly reflect Christ in the growing darkness.

CONSIDER

- Creating something new from old remnants. Pick the medium of your choice—metal or fabric scraps, old computer parts, or even leftovers in the refrigerator.
- Constructing a mobile from bits of glass, metal, or old CDs. Hang the mobile in a sunny window or over a lighted candle and study the way it magnifies the light source. Why does a fixture made from multiple pieces of glass reflect light more strongly than one made from a single piece of glass?
- Drawing a time line of your own life. What are the high points or events that have caused you to change course? How does your time line fit in with the battle depicted in Revelation 12?
- Looking up the word *remnant* in the dictionary. In what ways does the definition describe God's remnant people? Does the dictionary term connote a positive or negative context?
- Choosing a symbol to reflect your relationship with Christ and wearing it prominently for one day. How comfortable were you wearing such an obvious mark of your connection with Christ? What marks consistently show us as Christians to the world around us?
- Coming up with contemporary substitutes for the characters and symbols in Revelation 12 and 14. What term or character would you choose instead of "remnant" to describe God's faithful?

CONNECT

John Duckworth, *Joan 'n' the Whale*, chap. 17.

Luan Miller, College Place, Washington, U.S.A.