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## What is "The Church"

What is The Church? What does the Word of God say that The Church is? It is by the Word of God only, and by the study of the Word of God only, that anybody can ever know what The Church is. It is The Church of God, not the church of men. And it being The Church of God, only He can possibly know or tell what it is. And the church, being only of the thought and conception of God, when He expresses that thought in telling what The Church is, then that thought as expressed in His Word, will be as far above any conception or thought of man's, as God is above man, and as the mind of God is greater than any mind of man. Therefore, in the study of this subject, as well as any other subject of the thought and Word of God, the first thing for every person to do is to accept and follow implicitly the following instruction: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; . . . for My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55: 7-9. This being so, and "the things of God no man knowing but the Spirit of God," plainly it is only by the revelation of the Spirit of God that these things can be known by any man: by the Spirit of God taking these high and deep things of God and making them plain to us and putting them upon our minds and thus giving them to us as really our own. John 14:26; 16:19, 20; 13-15; 1 Corinthians 2: 9-12.

In this way, then, let us study the word and thought of God on what is The Church. What, then, does He say that The Church is? "The Church is His body, the fullness of Him Who filleth all in all." Ephesians 1: 22-23. The Church is the fullness of Him. Who is He, the fullness of Whom The Church is? Plainly only God, for it is "The Church of the Living God." What is the fullness of Him, whose fullness The Church is? What is the fullness of God, for The Church is the fullness of Him? First of all, it is the fullness "of all in all;" for The Church is "the fullness of Him who filleth all in all." The fullness of all in all is simply the fullness of infinity. And the fullness of Him Who filleth all in all, is only the fullness of the Infinite One — "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

Genesis 13:16 "And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, [then] shall thy seed also be numbered." This comprehends what is the fullness of The Church. Now please think on that "fullness of God" which The Church is, and then ask yourself what kind of an idea of either God or The Church can any men have who think that they can "organize The Church" or "organize a church?" or who think that a structure of the pinhead conception of finite-minded, blunder-thinking, man can be The Church of the Living God, "the fullness of Him Who filleth all in all!!"

Is it not perfectly evident that any man who ever proposed, or thought of, "organizing a church" or of "organizing The Church," by that very thing shows absolutely that he has no possible correct or true thought of what The Church is or What God is? The Church is the fulness of God: and the fulness of God manifest is The Church: so that the idea of The Church is the idea of God. A person's comprehension of The Church is his comprehension of God. In the nature of the case, whoever thinks that he can "organize

The Church," in that implies that he thinks that he can organize the fulness of God: and so that he is above God. And that is exactly where the word of God places the one who first attempted it — "the man of sin, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God." Such ones as that can organize the fullness of their god: and this very easily, for it so small. And thus every man-organized church in the world, is the manifestation of the god of that man, just like any other heathen idol. But when The Church is the fulness of The Living God, it is perfectly plain and conclusive that nobody but God Himself can possibly organize it. And when He organizes and builds His own Church in and unto the fullness of Himself — "the fullness of Him Who filleth all in all" — then it is equally plain and conclusive that the Church will be truly The Church that is the manifestation only of the true and Living God. The question of The Church and of the organization of The Church is just the same old world-old question of whether God shall be Himself in His own way and in His own place, or whether man-made idols shall be the respective gods of little cliques and coteries in men's ways and in the place of God.

Hence:

- *The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10. {Ellen White, Acts of Apostles pg. 9.1}*

Whatever church it may be, if it is not fulfilling the above description of the church then it is not the church of God but a man-made structure purporting to be an organized church of God. The Apostle and High Priest of our profession was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His House. "And Moses verily was faithful in all His House as a servant, for a testimony of those things that were to be spoken after. But Christ was faithful over His own House: whose House are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Hebrews 3: 1-6. "Ye, as lively stones are built up a spiritual House." 1 Peter 2:5. "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. "In whom, all the Building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an Holy Temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an Habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2: 19-22. "Ye are God's Building." 1 Corinthians 3:9. "I will build My Church." Matthew 16:18. The Church of God, then, is the House of God, of His own building, through Christ His own named Builder. It is built "an holy Temple, in the Lord," "for an Habitation of God, through the Spirit." Now what are the dimensions of this House of God? How extensive must be its capacity, to be such a Temple and such a Habitation of God that it shall reflect and express "all the fullness of God?" And who

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could be the Builder? What man or men could possibly build "The House of God which is The Church of the Living God," that shall contain so as to express "all the fullness of God?" Were not men long ago challenged up on this very point? Please read: "Who is able to build Him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Him?" 2 Chronicles 2:6. "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house that I have builded?" 2 Chronicles 6:18. "The Heaven is My Throne and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house that ye will build unto Me?" Isaiah 66:1.

And this challenge is carried over into the field of Christian thought and things; and is repeated to hold up all who would be "builders" of The Church or in The Church which is "The House of God" — "You builders:" "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as saith the prophet: Heaven is My Throne, and earth My footstool, what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord?" Acts 7: 48-49; 4:11. Accordingly men, who undertake to build or to "organize" The Church or a church, in that very thing show their own utter ignorance of all that is The Church in truth. And they never do build Him an house. Always they build to themselves an house where in the place of God, themselves shall sit and reign and rule utterly unlike God. No. The Church is the House of God. It is built only for the habitation of God, the place which He has made for Him who is equal with God, and therefore able and capable to compass and understand and truly express the thought of God in His "Eternal Purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

When this Eternal Purpose was purposed only in Christ Jesus, then it is utterly impossible for any other than Christ in person to be The Builder or the Organizer of The Church. And so only it is: "He shall build The Temple of the Lord; even He shall build The Temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory," Zechariah 6: 12-13. And "He" came and earned the position, and, by divine merit as well as by divine right, took the position of that Builder: "I will build My Church." But "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," "the mystery of iniquity," soon came in, and with its working supplanted Him as the builder, and became himself the builder of what is proposed as "the church," but which these builders built only for themselves and for their own glory, in which always there has sat this "man of sin" above God, and "showing himself that he is God." 2 Thessalonians 2:4. And the wicked course of that mystery of iniquity has been followed in the building of more others than there are days in the year: each one of them presented as the true Temple and the true House of God, but which in truth is only the habitation of men, who sit and rule there in place of God. But the time has come, and now is, when the Mystery of God is once more to have its place above the mystery of iniquity: and this unto its glorious finishing.

It is written: "Speaking the truth in love may grow up into Him in all things who is the Head even Christ, from whom" and "in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 4:15-66; 2:21-22. There is the Builder of The Church, the Organizer of The Church, and He is only Christ the Head.

## The Biblical teaching of "Church" – Brendan Knudson [pgs 5-14] "eklessia"

The word "Church" in Scripture comes from the word "eklessia" which etymologically breaks down into "those called out". Although this breakdown of the word is interesting, the usage in Greek at the time of the New Testament simply meant "assembly". This word could be used of secular gatherings or corporate groups as well as spiritual groups.

When looking at what inspiration says about the Church, it can be rather confusing, because "Church" can refer to several different things.

- ✓ "Church" can refer to a single congregation meeting in a specific location (eg. "the church in your house" - Philemon 2)
- ✓ "Church" can refer to all the believers of a location, even if there are several congregations (eg: "the church that was at Antioch" - Acts 13:1)
- ✓ "the churches" can refer to a collection of congregations from a wider area (eg. "the churches... throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria" - Acts 9:31)
- ✓ "Church" can refer in a more global sense to a corporate entity chosen by God ("the Church in the wilderness" referring to the entire Hebrew Church - Acts 7:38)
- ✓ "Church" can refer in a spiritual sense to the redeemed who shall be saved when Christ returns ("Church of the Firstborn which are written in Heaven" - Hebrews 12:23)

In this study, we can acknowledge that a congregational use of "Church" may be discerned by the context. The last two, however, need further discussion. It is apparent that these two uses of "Church" could be used of believers in the present. The corporate sense of "Church" could refer to an entity chosen by God, comprised of both faithful and unfaithful individuals who belong or identify with that "Church. The other use could refer to the spiritual sense of those who God knows are His.

The distinction between these two uses of "Church" is tricky. One way of seeing them is to use the term "Visible Church" to refer to an entity God has chosen and has organised to be a witness of His teachings in the world, and "Invisible Church" to refer to the faithful only whose names are written in Heaven and who only God knows are His. These labels see "Visible" and "Invisible" from one point of view on the earth. This may not be sufficient to some who would contend that the Visible Church is "invisible to the world". However, it is the identities of those whose names are written in the book of life who are truly "invisible" to the world, while the organised, corporate Church may be readily visible. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew Church was a clearly "Visible" corporate

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structure to the point that others recognised it, for example when the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon to be taught. The New Testament Church also had a "Visible" structure of organisation with both offices of Spiritual Gifts (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers) and roles of Gospel Order (Elders, Deacons).

The period of the Dark Ages poses another potential confusion to the designations of "Visible Church" and "Invisible Church" because there was a clear counterfeit at this time. Ellen White, for instance, uses the term "visible church" for the counterfeit structure of the Catholic Church. However, there was an equally "Visible Church" from Heaven's perspective of being led by God throughout the Dark Ages. This Visible Church had both order and organisation and spanned from the Celtic Christians, through the Waldenses and Albigenses and faithful Christians of the Alps to the Church of the East and the Abyssinian. This Church in the Wilderness.

Ellen White speaking of the Waldenses, after first mentioning the Celtic Christians and Churches outside of the Roman jurisdiction, says, "The very existence of this people, holding the faith of the ancient church, was a constant testimony to Rome's apostasy, and therefore excited the most bitter hatred and persecution" (1888 Great Controversy, p. 76). This demonstrates that it was these and not the other "visible church" which was descended from the Apostles. The evangelistic activities of this "Visible Church" can be further read in the chapter of Great Controversy.

With the potential of confusion over "Visible Church" to refer to an organised movement set up by God and "Invisible Church" to refer to the faithful whose names are written in Heaven, we can turn to a more Biblical classification of these two uses. Jesus used the Shepherd-Sheep illustration many times in His ministry, and it is found in other places throughout Scripture as well. The verse which is of direct relevance to these two groupings we are studying is this:

John 10:16 - "And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. So there will be one flock, one Shepherd."

Jesus makes a distinction here, in the Greek, between a "Fold" and a "Flock". The word for "Fold" is αὐλή and means "an enclosed space exposed to the open air, a sheepfold, a place where sheep are housed." It is also used of other enclosed structures such as a hall, courtyard or palace. The common theme is of an enclosed system of order and organisation. The word for "flock" is ποίμνη and refers to "a flock of sheep" and through passages such as this is spiritually applied to a group of believers.

The distinction in this passage comes from the reference to "hearing" Christ's voice. Whether within the fold or among the "other sheep", the characteristics of the "Flock" are that they "hear My voice". This is something that will only be known when the judgement is finished to determine which names are "written in Heaven". The "Fold", however, is characterised by the idea of an enclosed system. The "Fold" in Jesus' day and which He

was referring to was the Jewish Church which was largely corrupt, but still recognised by God at the time Jesus spoke it.

What becomes apparent in this investigation so far and which we must explicitly see is that the defining characteristic of the "Flock" is faithfulness to Christ which from a human perspective may be "Invisible" as only Christ knows who are His, while "Fold" would be characterised by a system of organisation that is clearly "Visible" on earth without reference to the faithfulness of all within it.

It is clear, then, that any statement about "Church" which refers exclusively to those who are faithful to God is a reference to the "Flock", while any reference to "Church" which speaks of the visible "enclosed" ideas of organised ministry and structure refer to the "Fold" of God at a given time.

### **Inhabitants of the Fold - Wheat and Tares/Sheep and Goats**

Jesus told the parable of the wheat and the tares which characterises the situation in the Fold.

"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.

And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?'

He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'

So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?'

But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" (Matthew 13:24-30)

This parable also speaks of an enclosed area - a field. Jesus' explanation of this parable states that "the field is the world" and this is true... but specifically, the field refers to the Church within the world, because Jesus was referring to the "world" in the context of his hearers, who were members of the then "Fold". Here is some additional confirmation of this identification:

- ✓ *"The field,' Christ said, 'is the world.' But we must understand this as signifying the church of Christ in the world. The parable is a description of that which pertains to the kingdom of God, His work of salvation of men; and this work is accomplished*

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*through the church. True, the Holy Spirit has gone out into all the world; everywhere it is moving upon the hearts of men; but it is in the church that we are to grow and ripen for the garner of God." (Ellen White, Christ's Object Lessons, pg. 70)*

- ✓ *"The world is a fallen world, and the church is a place represented by a field in which grow tares and wheat. They are to grow together until the harvest. It is not our place to uproot the tares, according to human wisdom, lest under the suggestions of Satan the wheat may be rooted up under the supposition that it is tares. The wisdom that is from above will come to him who is meek and lowly in heart, and that wisdom will not lead him to destroy, but to build up the people of God." (Ellen White, Review and Herald, August 8, 1893)*
- ✓ *"The church was to be as a field of wheat, but a strange hand has planted tares among the wheat, and it is this mingling of tares and wheat that causes the children of God to weep with sorrow." (Ellen White, Review and Herald, December 19, 1893)*

The "Flock" are those who hear Christ's voice and are known of Him. Therefore, this parable could never refer to the Flock as the Field, for the tares are set in contrast to the wheat, grown from the good seed. It would be the good seed within the field who are equivalent to the "sheep" of the Fold-Flock illustration. Jesus states in John 10 that "There will be one Flock" AFTER He has brought them together with the faithful in the Fold. Here we see that the harvest of the Wheat is not until the harvest. Until such time, while the Field ("Fold") is visible to human perspective, the Wheat ("Flock") is invisible and known only in Heaven's books.

The same thing can be seen in Jesus' teaching about the end of the world where the Sheep and the Goats are separated. The Sheep are those who "hear My voice" and Christ accepts them into His Kingdom, while the Goats are those who never revealed Christ's character in their lives. At this time, it is evident that many who are placed with the Goats were a part of the Fold and thought themselves Sheep, for they object saying:

Matthew 7:22-23 - "On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

We see clearly from this study that the "Fold" is made up of both Wheat and Tares/Sheep and Goats and that these differences will not be known until after the judgement has finished and the harvest begins. We should also note that the work of the harvest is not a job for humans. The "reapers" are the Angels. Any premature, pre-harvest separation or pointing out of Wheat and Tares is a presumptuous usurping of responsibilities never bestowed upon men.

### **The Church throughout the Ages - The Olive Tree Imagery.**

In the letter to the Romans, Paul contrasts the Flock and Fold of the Jewish Church by speaking of the differences between a literal and spiritual Jew.

Romans 2:28-29 - "For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God."

Paul here recognises that while there are literal circumcised Jews, not all of these literal Jews are spiritual Jews. That is not all of them "hear My voice", as Christ would say. He also points out that those who obey Christ are Jews (Sheep) in a greater sense than those who merely have the literal signs of belonging to the Jewish Fold. His closing words in these verses are a play on the name Judah, which means "praise". A real Jew is one who in reality is praised by God and is a living praise to God.

Paul does not completely rule out the value of the literal Jewish Fold. He states in Romans 3:1-2, "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God."

Paul returns to this thought later in his letter when he writes, "For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel" (Romans 9:6). Here Paul further develops the idea that not all in the Fold are part of the Flock. In this section of his discourse, Paul's thrust is similar to Christ's where he speaks of the Flock saying, "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17) which is similar to Christ's words about those who "hear My voice."

In chapter 11, Paul begins to speak of the transition that was taking place from the Fold of the Israelite Church to the Fold of the Christian Church uses the imagery of the branches of an olive tree. The unbelieving "natural" branches of the tree were being cut off and branches from a "wild olive" were being grafted in. So while in one sense, from a human perspective, there was a handover from the Jewish Church Fold to the Christian Church Fold, Paul reveals that from Heaven's perspective, the actual Tree remained the same. This Olive Tree, growing both fruitful and unfruitful branches and having branches cut off and others grafted in, stands as an image of the Church down the Ages. This Church has had the following progression throughout history:

- ✓ *Sons of God (Antediluvian Era)*
- ✓ *Hebrews (Faithful Post-Flood line through Shem)*
- ✓ *Israel (Family of Abraham through Jacob/Israel)*
- ✓ *Judah (Those who returned after the Captivity)*
- ✓ *Christian Church (Began as a sect of Judaism)*
- ✓ *Church in the Wilderness (The Faithful lineage of the Church during the Dark Ages)*
- ✓ *Seventh-day Adventist Church (Grew out of great Awakening leading up to 1844)*

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In every age, God has had a Fold in the earth. And in each of these versions of the Fold there has been wheat and tares. At different times there might, in hindsight, be different percentages of each. At times, the percentage of wheat is extremely small. Paul references in this chapter Elijah's time when Elijah felt he was alone in Israel in holding the faith of God, but God declared to him, "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." The tension through all the ages has been between Satan attempting to choke out the wheat with his tares and God using those wheat to reform the field.

God has borne with the various incarnations of the Fold for a long time, over 1000 years in the case of Israel/Judah. He has recognised His people even when they are backsliding and in apostasy. He has sent warnings, rebukes and discipline when they go astray and waits until they remember Him and cry out to Him for deliverance. It might be asked why God would continue to use an organised/enclosed Fold when it so often goes astray.

- *"The principles of God's dealing with men are ever the same. The important movements of the present have their parallel in those of the past, and the experience of the church in former ages has lessons of great value for our own time." (Ellen White, 1888 Great Controversy, pg. 343)*

This answer seeks to know the mind of God, but there are some indications as to why God chooses to work in this way. God knows that sin is a contagious darkness that would blot out true worship from the face of the earth. God has always had a Fold, an organised corporate entity, whether it was based on a system that is patriarchal, priestly or according to gospel order, to contain the truths of His Kingdom on this earth, even if they are not fully lived out by the members of the Fold. The purpose of the Fold, whether the people are faithful or not, is to shine a light into the darkness of the world.

- *"Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world, the church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin. The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reproved, warned, and counseled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard." (Ellen White, Testimonies to Ministers, pg. 49)*

This above statement cannot refer to the Flock, for the Flock are those who "hear My voice". The Flock could never have "evils existing" in it. This quote presents both the real and the ideal of the Fold. In reality the Fold has "evils existing" in it, is "enfeebled and defective" and is "needing to be reproved, warned, and counseled". However the ideal is also pointed out that it "IS TO BE the light of the world." Of course the sheep which "hear My voice", both in and out of the Fold, give greatest power to the witness of the Church and an individual sheep might shine a light in their local area, but the Fold is the repository of God's truth for the whole world. A place where God can lead people to learn more about Him.

Paul, in his discussions on this topic in Romans points out that the Fold has the following qualities:

- ✓ *Entrusted with the oracles of God, giving of the Law, etc (repository of Scripture/Inspiration)*
- ✓ *Direct lineage to previous incarnations of the Fold (Jews traced back to Patriarchs)*
- ✓ *Have relationship with God through covenant and promises.*

If you look at the things which characterise the fold in Romans, they are all things implanted INTO the Fold by God. It doesn't say, "keeping the covenants" or "keeping the law", but to them "belong the covenants" and the "giving of the law". So the identification of the Fold depends on God's initiative in choosing a people, not upon the obedience of the people. As we shall see, the transitions in the Fold only occur under certain conditions.

### **Transition between Incarnations of the Fold**

Here follows a brief history of God's Fold through the ages. We want to look for and discern "the principles of God's dealing with men" which we know to be "ever the same". Only then can we accurately discern the principles for the time we are currently living in.

The sins of the antediluvian age involved the fall of many of the "Sons of God" Church Fold of that age into apostasy with the "daughters of men". God cut off the unproductive branches of this Olive Tree in a most pronounced way by the Flood. This Flood came at the end of a walking time prophecy in the form of Methuselah. Enoch, the prophet who walked with God, gave his son a name which meant, "when He dies it shall come to pass". Methuselah was a walking time prophecy of the impending judgement. A more specific time prophecy of 120 years was also set forth in this time.

Out of this incarnation was preserved a remnant of the antediluvian age in the patriarch Noah's family with whom God entered into covenant with. Through the line of Shem, the truth about God was to be preserved, and there is reason to believe that Shem continued this personally under the name Melchizedek after the dispersion of tongues. God chose around this time to direct this line through Shem's descendant, the prophet Abram, whom He renamed Abraham upon giving him a covenant. God intended that light would shine through the descendants of this line, and Abraham was given a time prophecy of 400 years for when his descendants would be established fully in this capacity.

The repeated pattern of apostasy and revival within Israel eventually led to their being temporarily disciplined with the Babylonian captivity. This was not necessarily a true transition in the structure of the Fold, for when God brought the people out of captivity (those who chose to return) at the end of a time prophecy given by Jeremiah, He did so through leadership descended from the line of David and the Levitical priesthood. The captivity was an opportunity for pruning the Fold. At the end of this disciplinary period, the prophet Daniel was given a time period which gave the limits of the probation of the

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Israelite/Jewish Church Fold. This time period led up to AD 34 at which point a transition was made into the Christian Church.

In preparation for the transition which was coming, Jesus spent 3.5 years of this "final week" of the probationary period teaching and giving an opportunity for Israel to fulfill the points set out in Daniel 9. He also trained a core group of individuals and at the close of His time on earth, entered into a covenant with them. After the stoning of Stephen, the transition was completed from the Israelite incarnation of the Fold to the Christian Fold.

The Christian Fold continued for several generations until the Man of Sin/Little Horn which was prophesied began to come to power. At this time the true Fold was led into the Wilderness and there survived the attacks of Satan through the Papacy. However even here there was a gradual compromise and as the "time of the end" began in 1798, the truths which had been preserved by this Fold began to be passed on through the Great Awakening which was happening throughout the world and God transitioned the Fold into a small group which grew out of the time prophecy ending in 1844. Here, God again raised the gift of prophecy to confirm the transition with covenant and led this group into both doctrinal truth and gospel order.

In each of these times of transition, if we look at the common threads we can see the repeated patterns:

- 1. While there are transitions, the common thread remains throughout all time of a cohesive, coordinated Fold throughout the ages.*
- 2. The transitions always occur at the end of a time-related prophecy*
- 3. The transitions are always directly prophesied and confirmed with the prophetic gift*
- 4. The new incarnation of the Fold is always characterised by divinely ordained leadership structure and a passing on of the covenant promises*

It should also be noted that a transition does not occur every time God's people have entered into apostasy. While from a point of view of the Judgement, disobedience and unbelief cut individuals off from the FLOCK, which concerns our place in the books of Heaven, these transitions in the FOLD (where there are wheat and tares) only occur after a clearly defined period of probation has passed and the cup of iniquity was filled up by a previous incarnation of the Fold.

So a clear apostasy among God's chosen people is not a sign that a transition is happening. All of the principles which are common to the previous transitions of the Fold are necessary for such to take place again at the present time, even if there is apostasy. There were severe apostasies throughout the history of the Fold, such as in Ahab's time, and while these apostasies would cut unrepentant individuals off from the Flock, God continued to strive with His Fold.

### **Putting it all together... some case studies**

Now we have looked at these principles of the Fold and the Flock - the "Visible" and "Invisible" Church perspectives, we can now look at a few of the statements inspiration makes concerning the Church and even some of those statements which relate to more congregational uses, as mentioned at the start of this study, and discern what they relate to.

Let us start with one which has been alluded to already in this study:

Hebrews 12:22 - "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."

What is this Church/Assembly of the Firstborn? Is it referring to a Fold here on Earth? This is clearly a reference to the "Spiritual Church". This "Church of the Firstborn" includes all those who are enrolled in Heaven and will only be known when Christ returns to take the "great multitude" with Him to heaven. We can see here how a clear perception of the Biblical teaching on the Church helps our understanding. Here is another quote:

"When professing Christians are united as one,--one with Christ in God,--they are representatives of the church of the Firstborn. Unity should ever be the element of preservation in the Christian church. Men and women are united in church capacity by a most solemn covenant with God to obey his Word, and to unite in an effort to strengthen the faith of one another." (RH, January 6, 1903)

To be a "representative of the church of the Firstborn", believers are required to be "united as one" and "one with Christ in God". We have already seen that the Church of the Firstborn is not an organised Fold here on earth, but a spiritual term for all those whose names are written in Heaven. For an individual to claim to belong to this Church, whether in the current Fold or not, they are really claiming that their sins have gone before them to judgement and that their lives are hid with Christ in God. For any GROUP to claim to be part of the Church of the Firstborn, they must have, according to this quote, the principles of unity with one another and with Christ in God. Without such unity, the self-identification as the Church of the Firstborn would be no better than the Pharisee stating they are better than the Publican in prayer. In today's climate, this unity does not yet exist and waits for the Elijah message, also known as the Laodicean message, to do a thorough work of shaking in the Church.

"God has a church upon the earth who are His chosen people, who keep His commandments. He is leading, not stray offshoots, not one here and one there, but a people. The truth is a sanctifying power; but the church militant is not the church triumphant. There are tares among the wheat. 'Wilt thou then that we . . . gather them

up?' was the question of the servant; but the master answered, 'Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.' The gospel net draws not only good fish, but bad ones as well, and the Lord only knows who are His." (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 61)

The above statement is clearly speaking of the Fold, for only in the Fold are their "tares among the wheat". The Flock are known only to Heaven with their names written there. This statement also references "a people", clearly speaking of a Fold, and speaks out against "stray offshoots" which are separated from the fold. Put together with the statement before this, the unity that those who would be representatives of the Church of the Firstborn must happen within the Fold, not away from it.

- *"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. 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.' Where Christ is, even among the humble few, this is Christ's church, for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church. Where two or three are present who love and obey the commandments of God, Jesus there presides, let it be in the desolate place of the earth, in the wilderness, in the city, [or] enclosed in prison walls. The glory of God has penetrated the prison walls, flooding with glorious beams of heavenly light the darkest dungeon. His saints may suffer, but their sufferings will, like the apostles' of old, spread their faith and win souls to Christ and glorify His holy name. The bitterest opposition expressed by those who hate God's great moral standard of righteousness should not and will not shake the steadfast soul who trusts fully in God." (Ellen White, Letter 108, 1886; in Manuscript Releases, Volume 17, pg. 81)*

This quote focuses in on individuals who are humbly worshipping together in truth. It speaks not of a Church Fold which contains both wheat and tares, but speaks of the faithful, through the ages, worshipping in desolate places, in the wilderness, in cities and in prisons and dungeons or wherever they are able. This statement is clearly speaking with the Flock in view.

So we have seen, through a survey of some of the principle texts and statements pertaining to "Church", that there are several meanings of the word. We have seen that there is a Visible corporate structure God has placed upon this earth at all times, as well as a spiritual Church consisting of those written in the Book of life who "hear [Christ's] voice". Jesus referred to this distinction by the words "Fold" and "Flock".

We have seen that God has always had a Fold, and that while there may be transitions in the make up of this Fold, from the point of view of Heaven it is the one structure spanning the ages. We have also seen that while disobedience and unrepentance will cut someone off at any time from being part of the Flock, transitions in the organisation of

the Fold only occur under specific circumstances and that God's principles of dealing with humanity are the same throughout.

We have seen that God's Fold has both wheat and tares within it and that this will continue to be so until the Harvest and that the work of separating wheat from tares is the work of the Angels, not one trusted to humanity. Finally we looked at some sample statements from inspiration and were able to determine whether they referred to the Fold or the Flock as an example for further study.

### **Christian Unity**

Christian Unity is always among the Christian things that are of the greatest importance. Yet while Christian Unity is in itself of great importance, to know what it is, is of greater importance. This is because to desire, and to strive for, and to promote, as Christian Unity what is not Christian Unity at all is a most dangerous mistake and an immense loss. Much of just this has been done, and much of it is being done just now as a part of the several great "movements" in and by the churches that are now being urged. In studying Christian Unity for what it really is, it will be helpful first of all plainly to state what it is not. One of the clearest expressions of what it is not is the following prodigiously false statement of what it is:

1. *"Unity of doctrine and faith, which consists in the common accord of all the Faithful in admitting and believing all that the teaching church proposes to them as revealed or confirmed by Jesus Christ.*
2. *"Unity of government, which produces unity of communion, and which consists in the submission of all the Faithful to their respective bishops and in particular to the Roman Pontiff, supreme Head of the church."*

Yet utterly false and Romish as all of that is, take away from it only the part that pertains to "the Roman Pontiff," and it fairly expresses the view of every denomination in the world as to what is Christian Unity.

But Christian Unity is altogether another thing than is any of that; and is as far higher than all of that as Heaven is higher than the earth. Uniting of Christians upon doctrine, is not Christian Unity. Agreement of Christians in belief, is not Christian Unity. Uniting or agreeing of Christians upon a platform or statement of belief, or of doctrine, or of principles, is not Christian Unity. Uniting of Christians in an agreed assent and submission to an order of church organization or church-government, is not Christian Unity. Union of purpose or of effort of Christians or among Christians in promoting a cause, is not Christian Unity. Free and pleasant fraternal association of Christians, is not Christian Unity. Christians might have all of these things in one combination, indeed many of them do, and yet not have Christian Unity at all. Christian Unity is far more and far higher than is any association or denomination or federation or council even of all the Christians in the world for any purpose or upon any platform or in any cause or in submission to any

church-government. And it is so well worth having that it is worth more than all other things put together.

- *One man may be conversant with the Scriptures, and some particular portion of the Scripture may be especially appreciated by him; another sees another portion as very important, and thus one may present one point, and another, another point, and both may be of highest value. This is all in the order of God. But if a man makes a mistake in his interpretation of some portion of the Scripture, shall this cause diversity and disunion? God forbid. We cannot then take a position that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light. The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will, and thus root out disagreement. These resolutions may conceal the discord, but they cannot quench it and establish perfect agreement. Nothing can perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christlike forbearance. Satan can sow discord; Christ alone can harmonize the disagreeing elements. Then let every soul sit down in Christ's school and learn of Christ, who declares Himself to be meek and lowly of heart. Christ says that if we learn of Him, worries will cease and we shall find rest to our souls. {Ellen White, Manuscripts Volume 11 pg. 266.1}*

### **The Place of the Holy Spirit**

In entering upon the study of The Church of the Living God, there is an essential that should first be considered: and not only first, but first and last and all the time. That essential is, The Place of the Holy Spirit. At the beginning of the building of The Church according to the new order of the eleven apostles, all of whom had been personally chosen, and called, and taught for three years, and ordained, and commissioned, by the Lord Himself, to go and preach the Gospel in all the world, were not allowed to go anywhere not to preach at all till they were endued with power from on high in the baptism with the Holy Spirit. And they must tarry in Jerusalem and wait for that baptism. At Pentecost that Baptism came. The Holy Spirit took His place, which was the first place of all. Then they preached the Gospel and the work went on. And that work went on with always the Holy Spirit in His own place, and that the first place of all and overall and through all and in all. This is God's way with His Church and in His Church, and it must be our way. Let us trace for a little distance, this way of the Lord in and with His own Church: before man usurped the place of the Lord, and machinery the place of the Holy Spirit.

The second chapter of Acts is the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, Peter's sermon telling that this was the fulfillment of the prophecy by Joel that God would pour out His Spirit "upon all flesh," and the call to all to repent and be baptized, "and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

The third and fourth chapters tell of the healing of the lame man at the gate of the temple, of Peter's sermon to the crowd that gathered and of Peter and John being arrested and imprisoned by the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees

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of the Sanhedrin, of the trial next day by the great council where "Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost," made answer; and being let go, the two apostles went to their own company where they all together prayed "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

The fifth chapter tells of the trick of Ananias and Sapphira in the matter of their agreeing to deceive as to the sale and gift of their property. And this was "to lie to the Holy Ghost," and "to tempt the Spirit of the Lord." The consequences were immediate and dreadful. Then the apostles were all arrested by the high priest and council and were imprisoned for trial again. "But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them forth, and said Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this Life." Again they were arrested and brought before the council "and all the senate of the children of Israel," where again Peter "and the other apostles" preached the Gospel and declared. "We are witnesses of these things, and so also is the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

The sixth and seventh chapters tell of the choosing of men "full of the Holy Ghost and Wisdom" to have charge of the "business" in "the daily ministrations;" and of Stephen "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" speaking before the council with his face shining "as it had been the face of an angel," and of his "being full of the Holy Ghost" and looking up into heaven and seeing "the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

The eighth chapter tells of the preaching by Philip in Samaria, and of their receiving "the Holy Ghost;" and of "the angel of the Lord" telling Philip to go from Samaria away down to the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza, where, when he arrived a man in a chariot was just then passing and reading in the book of Isaiah what is now the fifty-third chapter, and "the Spirit said unto Philip Go near, join thyself to this chariot." Philip did so, and preached to him Jesus in that same Scripture; the man believed and was baptized and went on his way rejoicing; and the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more."

The ninth chapter tells of the apprehension and conversion of the raging Saul, by the appearing of the Lord Jesus Himself, of his being "filled with the Holy Ghost" by the laying on of the hands of Ananias who was sent to him for this purpose by the Lord Jesus "in a vision;" of "the churches walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Ghost;" and of the raising of Dorcas from the dead.

The tenth chapter tells of "an angel of God" speaking to Cornelius in a vision and telling him to send men to Joppa to call Peter to him; of a vision given to Peter to prepare for the coming of the man; of the Spirit's telling Peter that the men were seeking him and that he was to go with them; of his going and preaching in the house of Cornelius and "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word."

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The eleventh chapter tells of the rehearsal of the foregoing experience to the Pharisaic believer at Jerusalem who contended with him for what had been done; of the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles in Antioch, and of the sending of Barnabas over there "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

The twelfth chapter is the story of the deliverance of Peter from prison by the angel of the Lord; and Herod's death from being smitten by the angel of the Lord. The thirteenth and fourteenth chapters tell of "the Holy Ghost" saying to the church at Antioch, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work where-unto I have called them," and of their "being sent forth by the Holy Ghost;" of Saul, "full of the Holy Ghost" rebuking the opposing sorcerer; of the preaching of the Gospel at Antioch in Pisidia and of the disciples being "filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost."

The fifteenth chapter tells of the settlement by the Holy Spirit of the controversy as to circumcision and keeping the law for Salvation, and the sending forth of the letter saying, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us."

The sixteenth chapter tells us that Paul an apostle, and Silas a prophet "were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." and assaying to go into Bithynia "the Spirit suffered them not;" and thus traveling on, they were brought down to Troas where in a "vision to Paul in the night a man of Macedonia called them over there. And chapters seventeen and eighteen tell of their experiences there and in Greece. Chapter nineteen tells that Paul found at Ephesus "certain disciples" to whom he said, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" They replied, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." "Unto what then were ye baptized?" "Unto John's baptism." Then Paul preached Christ to them, and "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid his hands upon them the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied."

In the twentieth chapter Paul is on his way to Jerusalem, and he called the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus; and in his words to them he said, "the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me;" and "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers to feed the flock of God."

In the twenty-first chapter, when Paul came to Tyre the disciples "said unto Paul through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem;" and when he came to Caesarea, the prophet Agabus met him and "took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." He went on to Jerusalem, and beginning in the twenty-first chapter and reaching to the end of the book there is one of the most remarkable chains of the direct providence and working of God that ever occurred in the world. And the last words of Paul in the book, begin with the

great characteristic of the man and of the book, "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the Prophet," etc.

From only this mere sketch of the book of Acts it is perfectly plain that the one thing that stands out plain and clear and prominent above all other things in the whole book and throughout the whole book, is that the Holy Spirit was then the grand sovereign, reigning, and guiding power in the Church and of the Church. And next to that one great thing there stands clear and plain and prominent throughout, the splendid corresponding truth that the Christians of the time constantly recognized and gladly yielded that sovereignty and reign and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Everywhere God's Spirit is recognized as first. In all things He is considered first, and the first. If they had not done this, the record could not have been what it is; for then the experience would not have been what it was. Let Christians again so recognize and yield the sovereignty and reign and guidance of the Holy Spirit over and in themselves and over all things in and to the Church, then again will experience of individuals of the Church prove to be what it was at the first; for Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Such only is the rightful place of the Holy Spirit in individuals and in the Church; and Christ needs only that Christians yield to Him that place and recognize Him in that place, to prove Himself to be all that He ever was in the place that is supremely His. Thus in all things of The Church and to The Church and in The Church, the place of the Holy Spirit is the first place. No step can be taken and nothing can be done in the right way until the Holy Spirit is given His place. And this must be so now with us in the study of this greatest of all things —The Church of the Living God. For it is the truth that, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which in The Church God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

## **The Church Organization**

### **Anchor Points**

- *The church must be organized to carry out and enforce order, or it will scatter into fragments.--I was shown that some have been fearing they should become Babylon if they organize; but the churches in Central New York have been perfect Babylon, confusion. And now unless the churches are so organized that they can carry out and enforce order, they have nothing to hope for in the future.—[Ellen White, Review and Herald Aug. 27, 1861.]*
- *The organization of the church at Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organization of churches in every other place where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel. Those to whom was given the responsibility of the general oversight of the church were not to lord it over God's heritage, but, as wise shepherds, were to "feed the flock of God, . . . being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2, 3); and the deacons were to be "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." These men were to take their position unitedly on the side of right and to*

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*maintain it with firmness and decision. Thus they would have a uniting influence upon the entire flock. {Ellen White, Acts of Apostles pg. 91.1}*

- *God is a God of order. Everything connected with heaven is in perfect order; subjection and thorough discipline mark the movements of the angelic host. Success can only attend order and harmonious action. God requires order and system in His work now no less than in the days of Israel. All who are working for Him are to labor intelligently, not in a careless, haphazard manner. He would have his work done with faith and exactness, that He may place the seal of His approval upon it. {Ellen White, Patriarchs and Prophets pg. 376.1}*
- *As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable. {Ellen White, Christian Teachings and Experiences pg. 195.2}*
- *"The division of the General Conference into district union conferences was God's arrangement. In the work of the Lord in these last days there should be no Jerusalem centers, no kingly power. And the work in the different countries is not to be tied up by contracts to the work centering in Battle Creek, for this is not God's plan. Brethren are to counsel together; for we are just as much under the control of God in one part of the vineyard as in another. Brethren are to be one in heart and soul, even as Christ and the Father are one. Teach this, practice this, that we may be one with Christ in God, all working to build up one another. {Ellen White, Spalding and Megan pg. 311.5}*
- *August 3, 1861, I was shown that some have feared that our churches would become Babylon if they should organize; but those in central New York have been perfect Babylon, confusion. And now unless the churches are so organized that they can carry out and enforce order, they have nothing to hope for in the future; they must scatter into fragments. Previous teachings have nourished the elements of disunion. A spirit has been cherished to watch and accuse, rather than to build up. If ministers of God would unitedly take their position, and maintain it with decision, there would be a uniting influence among the flock of God. Separating bars would be broken to fragments. Hearts would flow together and unite like drops of water. Then there would be a power and strength in the ranks of Sabbathkeepers far exceeding anything we have yet witnessed. {Ellen White, Testimonies Volume 1 pg. 270.2}*

Organization is one of the great and fundamental laws of the Universe of God. The all-wise Creator has demonstrated this, on every hand, and it stands out visibly in all His creation, as a living witness of strength, and the accomplishment of a definite purpose in

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the earth. The trees of the forest, and the beasts of the field, are each one a definite and wonderful organism: a separate being made of many organs, all of which work together in harmony and system, perpetuating the life, growth, and increase, of those of its kind. The human body is a wonderful organized organism, each member of which works together as one, all having the same and supreme purpose, of perpetuating its own existence. But, Who is the Organizer of each and all of these wonderful organisms? Who organizes each tree of the forest, each beast of the field, and each human body? Is not this Organizer, in each and every case, just God and only God by His Spirit? Who ever knew or thought of the branches of a tree, organizing a tree? or the members of a beast, organizing that beast? Or the members of any human body organizing that body? There never was anything of the kind, and there never could be anything of the kind. So it is not a question of Organization, but of whose Organization. The sole question always and in every case is, Whose shall be the Organization? Who is properly and originally the Organizer, and who shall continue the organizing, and whose shall be the Organization?

Under organization, we have still to understand who is the head:

- *1Corinthians 11:3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman [is] the man; and the head of Christ [is] God.*
- *Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so [let] the wives [be] to their own husbands in every thing. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

The human body is indeed a wonderful organism: "fearfully and wonder-fully made; "and made only by God through Christ by His Spirit. Genesis1:26-27; Job 33:4. Not all the collective individual Christians and all the delegates and all the preachers and all the bishops and all the conferences and all the Councils that ever were in the world, all put together at once, could organize the human body. They would not know, and could not know, how to make the first movement, or even to think the first thought, toward it. It is all infinitely beyond all their reach or realm; and stands only within the realm and comprehension of God. And anybody ever to undertake it, would have to be equal with God, and God of God. So, in this it is not any question of Organization. The sole question is, Who is the Organizer? and whose is the Organization? The Bible speaks about how this body of Christ, his church is build up:

- *1Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*
- *Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner [stone]; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

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- *1Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, ... 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

There has never been a system of what is called "church organization" that has not demonstrated itself to be as cruel as the devil. The theory is that such "church," having the true church organization, is "the true church," which to be in is the surety of eternal salvation, and which to be separated from is the guarantee of forfeiture of eternal life. Now it is certain that in the true Christian Church, only the true Christian Spirit must be found and only this Spirit the prevailing one. Without this it is impossible that any church can be true, and much less be the true. What then is the true and genuine Christian Spirit? First of all it is only the Holy Spirit of God: for the Lord would not allow His own chosen and ordained and commissioned apostles to make a single move toward anything of The Church until they had been "baptized with the Holy Ghost." Luke 24:49; Acts 1: 4-5. And of this the inevitable "fruit" is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;" and "Liberty;" for "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty" — liberty of thought, liberty of speech, and liberty of action. Galatians 3:22; 2 Corinthians 3:17. This is the Christian Spirit. And this is the Spirit that rules and is manifested in every church that is Christian. And the manifestation of this Spirit is definitely defined as — "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." James 3:17.

Now in what is called "church organization," one man, or two men, or three men, or a few men invent and form a "plan of organization," and persuade people to accept it and to submit to it: which is in fact to submit to the rule of the men who hold the "offices," and thereby hold "the keys" to open or shut heaven. And when the "organization" is completed and in working order, then any member who is not conforming to the will and workings of the officialdom is required to do so. And if in obedience to Christ in His Spirit and in His truth, or is in his Christian liberty to think and speak and act, he does not do so, he is separated from the "organization" and ostracized from all recognition of the "church" and "the brethren" and thus is completely excluded from "the church." And if any of the brethren disregard the exclusion of the Christian brother and fellowship him and receive him into their houses, then they immediately become subject to suspicion and to being "eyed:" and if this does not prove corrective then they must also be separated. And the theory is that exclusion from that "church" means the loss of eternal life. That is, for a man's disagreement with a man or a few men who "represent the church," by these men in their "representing the church," and in that their "representing God," that man is deliberately deprived of eternal life! Now could the devil himself be more cruel than that — to put such a penalty as that upon such an "offence" as that, which in truth is no offence either to God or man? Eternal death, for disagreement with a man!

## Which one is True?

One of the liveliest questions of the day is, What is the Church? And this is the most important question that there ever could be in any day. All know that there are so many things each one of which is claimed to be not only a church but The Church, that everybody all the time is forced to the question of not only which is the true Church, but what is the true Church? Each one of them claims and asserts that it is the true Church: and yet in so many things and ways each one is conducted and managed so unlike what is Christian, and on unbiblical principles that its own members as well as other people are kept perpetually under the question, Is that the true Church? Of this confusion, we read

- *The fallen denominational churches are Babylon. Babylon has been fostering poisonous doctrines, the wine of error. This wine of error is made up of false doctrines, such as the natural immortality of the soul, the eternal torment of the wicked, the denial of the pre-existence of Christ prior to His birth in Bethlehem, and advocating and exalting the first day of the week above God's holy, sanctified day. These and kindred errors are presented to the world by the various churches. {Ellen White, Review and Herald, Sept. 12, 1893}*
- *The term Babylon, derived from Babel, and signifying confusion, is applied in Scripture to the various forms of false or apostate religion. But the message announcing the fall of Babylon must apply to some religious body that was once pure, and has become corrupt. It cannot be the Romish Church which is here meant; for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries. But how appropriate the figure as applied to the Protestant churches, all professing to derive their doctrines from the Bible, yet divided into almost innumerable sects. The unity for which Christ prayed does not exist. Instead of one Lord, one faith, one baptism, there are numberless conflicting creeds and theories. Religious faith appears so confused and discordant that the world know not what to believe as truth. God is not in all this; it is the work of man,--the work of Satan. {Ellen White, Spirit of Prophecy Volume 4 pg. 232.2}*

The true church of God must then be opposed to the above errors in doctrines. Now what is the principle of The Church of the Living God? According to this principle and idea, What is The Church? It is this: "house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" 1Timothy 3:15, "The Church is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Ephesians 1: 22-23. It is "the House of God" "built upon . . . Jesus Christ Himself . . . in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord . . .for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2: 19-22. And so "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, [it is] because [there is] no light in them." Isaiah 8:20

## Organized for Service

Young men and young women, cannot you form companies, and, as soldiers of Christ, enlist in the work, putting all your tact and skill and talent into the Master's service, that

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you may save souls from ruin? Let there be companies organized in every church to do this work. Will the young men and young women who really love Jesus organize themselves as workers, not only for those who profess to be Sabbath keepers, but for those who are not of our faith?—[Ellen White, Signs of the Times, May 29, 1893.]

Let young men and women and children go to work in the name of Jesus. Let them unite together upon some plan and order of action. Cannot you form a band of workers, and have set times to pray together and ask the Lord to give you His grace, and put forth united action? —[Ellen White, Youth's Instructor, Aug. 9, 1894.]

We shall receive the most fierce opposition from the Adventists who oppose the law of God. But, like the builders of the walls of Jerusalem, we should not be diverted and hindered from our work by reports, by messengers desiring discussion or controversy, or by intimidating threats, the publication of falsehoods, or any of the devices that Satan may instigate. Our answer should be: We are engaged in a great work, and we cannot come down. We shall sometimes be perplexed to know what course we should pursue to preserve the honor of the cause of God and to vindicate His truth. {Ellen White, Testimonies Volume 3 pg. 574.2}

To His church God has committed the work of diffusing light and bearing the message of His love. Our work is not to condemn, not to denounce, but to draw with Christ, beseeching men to be reconciled to God. We are to encourage souls, to attract them, and thus win them to the Saviour. If this is not our interest, if we withhold from God the service of heart and life, we are robbing Him of influence, of time, of money and effort. In failing to benefit our fellow men, we rob God of the glory that should flow to Him through the conversion of souls. {Ellen White, Testimonies Volume 6 pg. 427.2}

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." "Ye are," says Christ, "the light of the world." What a responsibility! There is need of fasting, humiliation, and prayer over our decaying zeal and languishing spirituality. The love of many is waxing cold. The efforts of many of our preachers are not what they should be. When some who lack the Spirit and power of God enter a new field, they commence denouncing other denominations, thinking that they can convince the people of the truth by presenting the inconsistencies of the popular churches. It may seem necessary on some occasions to speak of these things, but in general it only creates prejudice against our work and closes the ears of many who might otherwise have listened to the truth. If these teachers were connected closely with Christ, they would have divine wisdom to know how to approach the people. They would not so soon forget the darkness and error, the passion and prejudice, which kept themselves from the truth. {Ellen White, Testimonies Volume 4 pg. 535}

I saw that the people of God must put on the armor and arouse. Christ is coming, and the great work of the last message of mercy is of too much importance for us to leave it, and come down to answer such falsehoods, and misrepresentations, and slander, as the

Messenger party has fed upon, and has scattered abroad. Truth, present truth, we must dwell upon it. We are doing a great work, and cannot come down. Satan is in all this, to divert our minds from the present truth, and the coming of Christ. Said the angel, "Jesus knows it all. In a little from this their day is coming. All will be judged according to the deeds done in the body. The lying tongue will be stopped. The sinners in Zion will be afraid, and fearfulness will surprise the hypocrites." {Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts Volume 4* pg. 10.1}

If men who are engaged in presenting and defending the truth of the Bible undertake to investigate and show the fallacy and inconsistency of men who dishonestly turn the truth of God into a lie, Satan will stir up opponents enough to keep their pens constantly employed, while other branches of the work will be left to suffer. We must have more of the spirit of those men who were engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem. We are doing a great work, and we cannot come down. If Satan sees that he can keep men answering the objections of opponents, and thus keep their voices silent, and hinder them from doing the most important work for the present time, his object is accomplished {Ellen White, *Testimonies Volume 3* pg. 38}

The first-day Adventists as a class are the most difficult to reach. They generally reject the truth, as did the Jews. We should, as far as possible, go forward as though there were not such a people in existence. They are the elements of confusion, and immoralities exist among them to a fearful extent. It would be the greatest calamity to have many of their number embrace the truth. They would have to unlearn everything and learn anew, or they would cause us great trouble. There are occasions where their glaring misrepresentations will have to be met. When this is the case, it should be done promptly and briefly, and we should then pass on to our work. The plan of Christ's teaching should be ours. He was plain and simple, striking directly at the root of the matter, and the minds of all were met. {Ellen White, *Testimonies Volume 3* pg. 37}

God's plan is first to get at the heart. Speak the truth, and let Him carry forward the reformatory power and principle. Make no reference to what opponents say; but let the truth alone be advanced. The truth can cut to the quick. Plainly unfold the word in all its impressiveness.—[Ellen White, *Testimonies, Volume 6* pgs. 394-400]

Christ did not encourage criticism or caviling, nor should we. When men try to provoke a discussion of controverted points of doctrine, tell them that the meeting was not appointed for that purpose. When you do answer a question, be sure to have the hearers see and acknowledge that it is answered. Do not let a question drop, telling them to ask it again. Feel your way step by step, and know how much you have gained. In such meetings those who understand the message can ask questions which will bring out light on points of truth. But some may not have wisdom to do this. When any put questions that serve only to confuse the mind and sow the seeds of doubt, they should be advised to refrain from such questioning. We must learn when to speak and when to keep silent,

learn to sow the seeds of faith, to impart light, not darkness. {Ellen White, Testimonies Volume 6 pg. 69}

The time has come when those who are rooted and grounded in the truth may manifest their firmness and decision, may make known the fact that they are unmoved by the sophistry, maxims, or fables of the ignorant and wavering. Without foundation men will make statements with all the positiveness of truth; but it is of no use to argue with them concerning their spurious assertions. The best way to deal with error is to present the truth, and leave wild ideas to die out for want of notice. Contrasted with truth, the weakness of error is made apparent to every intelligent mind. The more the erroneous assertions of opposers, and of those who rise up among us to deceive souls, are repeated, the better the cause of error is served. The more publicity is given to the suggestions of Satan, the better pleased is his satanic majesty; for unsanctified hearts will be prepared to receive the chaff that he provides for them. We shall have to meet difficulties of this order even in the church. Men will make a world of an atom and an atom of a world. {Ellen White, Testimonies to Ministers pg. 165.1}

As a people, we must stand as did the world's Redeemer. When in controversy with Satan in regard to the body of Moses, Christ durst not bring against him a railing accusation. He had every provocation to do this, and Satan was disappointed because he could not arouse in Christ a spirit of retaliation. Satan was ready to misinterpret everything that was done by Jesus; and the Saviour would give him no occasion, not the semblance of an excuse. He would not turn from His straightforward course of truth in order to follow the wanderings, and twistings, and turnings, and prevarications of Satan. Let not those who write for our papers make unkind thrusts and allusions that will certainly do harm, and that will hedge up the way and hinder us from doing the work that we should do in order to reach all classes, the Catholics included. It is our work to speak the truth in love, and not to mix in with the truth the unsanctified elements of the natural heart, and speak things that savor of the same spirit possessed by our enemies. All sharp thrusts will come back upon us in double measure when the power is in the hands of those who can exercise it for our injury. Over and over the message has been given to me that we are not to say one word, not to publish one sentence, especially by way of personalities, unless positively essential in vindicating the truth, that will stir up our enemies against us, and arouse their passions to a white heat. Our work will soon be closed up, and soon the time of trouble, such as never was, will come upon us, of which we have but little idea. {Ellen White, Counsels to Writers pgs. 59-60}

The Lord wants His workers to represent Him, the great Missionary Worker. The manifestation of rashness always does harm. The proprieties essential for Christian life must be learned daily in the school of Christ. He who is careless and heedless in uttering words or in writing words for publication to be sent broadcast into the world, sending forth expressions that can never be taken back, is disqualifying himself to be entrusted with the sacred work that devolves upon Christ's followers at this time. Those who

practice giving harsh thrusts, are forming habits that will strengthen by repetition, and will have to be repented of. {Ellen White, Counsels to Writers pg. 61.1}

There are churches in which the spirituality has been almost killed, because the spirit of backbiting has been allowed to enter. Why do we speak words of blame and censure? To be silent is the strongest rebuke that you can give to one who is speaking harsh, discourteous words to you. Keep perfectly silent. Often silence is eloquence. My brethren, you will never enter heaven with a spirit of faultfinding. I ask you to get rid of this spirit before you leave this meeting. Do not take it back with you to your home churches. {Ellen White, General Conference Bulletin, April 6, 1903 par. 19}

If provoking words are spoken to you, do not utter a word. The best rebuke you can give the one who has uttered the provoking words is to keep silent until you can speak in a calm, pleasant voice. Try to gain control over yourself. This will help you to stand on vantage-ground. Constantly keep God and his promises before your mind. Brace yourselves to habits of self-control. {Ellen White, Review and Herald, July 6, 1905 par. 8}

Trials will come, it is true, even to those who are fully consecrated. The patience of the most patient will be severely tested. The husband or the wife may utter words that are liable to provoke a hasty reply, but let the one who is spoken to keep silent. In silence there is safety. Often silence is the severest rebuke that could be given to the one who has sinned with his lips. {Ellen White, Adventist Home 442.2}

God's ministers should not count the opportunity of engaging in discussion a great privilege. All points of our faith are not to be borne to the front and presented before the prejudiced crowds. Jesus spoke before the Pharisees and Sadducees in parables, hiding the clearness of truth under symbols and figures because they would make a wrong use of the truths He presented before them; but to His disciples He spoke plainly. We should learn from Christ's method of teaching and be careful not to cut off the ears of the people by presenting truths which, not being fully explained, they are in no way prepared to receive. {Ellen White, Testimonies Volume 3 pg. 426.1}

### ***Missionary Spirit Lost***

Why did the Lord permit Jerusalem to be destroyed by fire the first time? Why did He permit His people to be overcome by their enemies and carried into heathen lands?--It was because they had failed to be His missionaries, and had built walls of division between themselves and the people round them. The Lord scattered them, that the knowledge of His truth might be carried to the world. If they were loyal and true and submissive, God would bring them again into their own land (Ellen White, General Conference Bulletin April 7, 1903).

There has been but little of the missionary spirit among Sabbath-keeping Adventists. If ministers and people were sufficiently aroused, they would not rest thus indifferently, while God has honored them by making them the depositaries of His law, by printing it in

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their minds and writing it upon their hearts.—[Ellen White, Testimonies, Volume 3, pg. 202]

The true missionary spirit has deserted the churches that make so exalted a profession; their hearts are no longer aglow with love for souls, and a desire to lead them into the fold of Christ. We want earnest workers. Are there none to respond to the cry that goes up from every quarter, "Come over and help us"?—[Ellen White, Testimonies, Volume 4, pg. 156]

I was shown that as a people we are deficient. Our works are not in accordance with our faith. Our faith testifies that we are living under the proclamation of the most solemn and important message that was ever given to mortals. Yet in full view of this fact, our efforts, our zeal, our spirit of self-sacrifice, do not compare with the character of the work. We should awake from the dead, and Christ will give us life.—[Ellen White, Testimonies, Volume 2, pg. 114]

My heart is pained when I think how little our churches sense their solemn accountabilities to God. It is not ministers alone who are soldiers, but every man and woman who has enlisted in Christ's army; and are they willing to receive a soldier's fare, just as Christ has given them an example in His life of self-denial and sacrifice? What self-denial have our churches as a whole manifested? They may have given donations in money, but have withheld themselves.—[Ellen White, General Conference Bulletin, 1893, pg. 131]

Many of the professed followers of Christ feel no more burden for souls than do the world. The lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, the love of display, the love of ease, separate the professed Christians from God, and the missionary spirit in reality exists in but few. What can be done to open the eyes of these sinners in Zion, and make hypocrites tremble?—[Ellen White, General Conference Bulletin, 1893, pg. 132]

There is a class that are represented by Meroz. The missionary spirit has never taken hold of their souls. The calls of foreign missions have not stirred them to action. What account will those render to God, who are doing nothing in His cause,—nothing to win souls to Christ? Such will receive the denunciation, "Thou wicked and slothful servant."—[Ellen White, Historical Sketches, pg. 290]

As an illustration of the failure on your part to come up to the work of God, as was your privilege, I was referred to these words: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."—[Ellen White, Testimonies, Volume 2, pg. 247]

There was presented before me a class who are conscious that they possess generous impulses, devotional feelings, and a love of doing good; yet at the same time they are doing nothing. They possess a self-complacent feeling, flattering themselves that if they

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had an opportunity, or were circumstanced more favorably, they could and would do a great and good work; but they are waiting the opportunity. They despise the narrow mind of the poor niggard who grudges the small pittance to the needy. They see that he lives for self, that he will not be called from himself to do good to others, to bless them with the talents of influence and of means which have been committed to him to use, not to abuse, nor to permit to rust, or lie buried in the earth. Those who give themselves up to their stinginess and selfishness, are accountable for their niggardly acts, and are responsible for the talents they abuse. But more responsible are those who have generous impulses, and are naturally quick to discern spiritual things, if they remain inactive, waiting an opportunity they suppose has not come, yet contrasting their readiness to do with the willingness of the niggard, and reflecting that their condition is more favorable than that of their mean-souled neighbors. Such deceive themselves. The mere possession of qualities which are not used, only increases their responsibility; and if they keep their Master's talents unimproved, or hoarded, their condition is no better than that of their neighbors for whom their souls feel such contempt. To them it will be said, "Ye knew your Master's will, yet did it not."—[Ellen White, Testimonies, Volume 2, pgs. 250, 251]

God's people must take warning and discern the signs of the times. The signs of Christ's coming are too plain to be doubted; and in view of these things every one who professes the truth should be a living preacher. God calls upon all, both preachers and people, to awake. All heaven is astir. The scenes of earth's history are fast closing. We are amid the perils of the last days. Greater perils are before us, and yet we are not awake. This lack of activity and earnestness in the cause of God is dreadful. This death stupor is from Satan. [Ellen White, Testimonies, Volume 1, pgs. 260, 261]

Unbelief, like the pall of death, is surrounding our churches, because they do not exercise the talents God has given them, by imparting the light to those who know not the precious truth. The Lord calls for the pardoned souls, those who rejoice in the light, to make known the truth to others.—[Ellen White, General Conference Bulletin, 1893, pg. 133]

Satan is now seeking to hold God's people in a state of inactivity, to keep them from acting their part in spreading the truth, that they may at last be weighed in the balance and found wanting.—[Ellen White, Testimonies, Volume 1, pg. 260]

Men are in peril. Multitudes are perishing. But how few of the professed followers of Christ are burdened for these souls. The destiny of a world hangs in the balance; but this hardly moves even those who claim to believe the most far-reaching truth ever given to mortals. There is a lack of that love which led Christ to leave His heavenly home and take man's nature, that humanity might touch humanity, and draw humanity to divinity. There is a stupor, a paralysis, upon the people of God, which prevents them from understanding the duty of the hour.—[Ellen White, Christ's Object Lessons, pg. 303]

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Satan uses the listless, sleepy indolence of professed Christians to strengthen his forces and win souls to his side. Many who think that though they are doing no actual work for Christ, they are yet on His side, are enabling the enemy to pre-occupy ground and gain advantages. By their failure to be diligent workers for the Master, by leaving duties undone and words unspoken, they have allowed Satan to gain control of souls who might have been won for Christ.—[Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pg. 280]

When I study the Scriptures, I am alarmed for the Israel of God in these last days. They are exhorted to flee from idolatry. I fear that they are asleep, and so conformed to the world that it would be difficult to discern between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. The distance is widening between Christ and His people, and lessening between them and the world. The marks of distinction between Christ's professed people and the world have almost disappeared. Like ancient Israel, they follow after the abominations of the nations around them.—[Ellen White, *Testimonies*, Volume 1, pg. 277]

And not only in the world do we see the result of the church's neglect to work in Christ's lines. By this neglect a condition of things has been brought into the church that has eclipsed the high and holy interests of the work of God. A spirit of criticism and bitterness has come into the church, and the spiritual discernment of many has been dimmed. Because of this the cause of Christ has suffered great loss.—[Ellen White, *Testimonies*, Volume 6, pg. 297]

I am filled with sadness when I think of our condition as a people. The Lord has not closed heaven to us, but our own course of continual backsliding has separated us from God. Pride, covetousness, and love of the world have lived in the heart without fear of banishment or condemnation. Grievous and presumptuous sins have dwelt among us. And yet the general opinion is that the church is flourishing, and that peace and spiritual prosperity are in all her borders. The church has turned back from following Christ her leader, and is steadily retreating toward Egypt. Yet few are alarmed or astonished at their want of spiritual power. Doubt and even disbelief of the testimonies of the Spirit of God is leavening our churches everywhere. Satan would have it thus.—[Ellen White, *Testimonies*, Volume 5, pg. 217]

Accumulated light has shone upon God's people, but many have neglected to follow the light, and for this reason they are in a state of great spiritual weakness. It is not for lack of knowledge that God's people are now perishing. They will not be condemned because they do not know the way, the truth, and the life. The truth that has reached their understanding, the light which has shone on the soul, but which has been neglected or refused, will condemn them. Those who never had the light to reject, will not be in condemnation. What more could have been done for God's vineyard than has been done? Light, precious light, shines upon God's people; but it will not save them, unless they consent to be saved by it, fully live up to it, and transmit it to others in darkness.—[Ellen White, *Testimonies*, Volume 2, pg. 123]

### ***The Need of Heavenly Eyesalve***

The churches need to have their eyes anointed with the heavenly eyesalve, that they may see the many opportunities all about them to minister for God. Repeatedly God has called upon His people to go out into the highways and hedges, and compel men to come in, that His house may be full, yet even within the shadow of our own doors are families in which we have not shown sufficient interest to lead them to think that we cared for their souls. It is this work lying nearest us that the Lord now calls upon the church to undertake. We are not to stand, saying, "Who is my neighbor?" We are to remember that our neighbor is the one who need our sympathy and help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is every one who is the property of God. In Christ the distinctions made by the Jews as to who was their neighbor are swept away. There are no territorial lines, no artificial distinctions, no caste, no aristocracy.—[Ellen White, Testimonies, Volume 6, pg. 294]

Satan is now working with all his insinuating, deceiving power, to lead men away from the work of the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with mighty power. When the enemy sees that the Lord is blessing His people, and preparing them to discern his delusions, he will work with his masterly power to bring in fanaticism on one hand and cold formalism on the other, that he may gather in a harvest of souls. Now is the time to watch unceasingly. Watch for the first step of advance that Satan may make among us.—[Ellen White, Review and Herald, Jan. 24, 1893]

There are moral icebergs in our churches. There are plenty of formalists who can make an imposing display, but cannot shine as lights in the world.—[Ellen White, Review and Herald, March 24, 1891]

The reason why God's people are not more spiritual minded, and have no more faith, I have been shown, is because they are narrowed up with selfishness. . . . It is not the abundance of your meetings that God accepts. It is not the numerous prayers, but the right-doing, doing the right thing, and at the right time.—[Ellen White, Testimonies, Volume 2, pg. 36]

Yet some refused to be converted. They were not willing to walk in God's way, and when, in order that the work of God might be advanced, calls were made for freewill offerings, some clung selfishly to their earthly possessions. These covetous ones became separated from the company of believers.—[Ellen White, Testimonies, Volume 9, pg. 126]

It is a solemn statement that I make to the church, that not one in twenty whose names are registered upon the church books are prepared to close their earthly history, and would be as verily without God and without hope in the world as the common sinner. They are professedly serving God, but they are more earnestly serving mammon. This half-and-half work is a constant denying of Christ, rather than a confessing of Christ. So many have brought into the church their own unsubdued spirit, unrefined; their spiritual taste is perverted by their own immoral, debasing corruptions, symbolizing the world in

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spirit, in heart, in purpose, confirming themselves in lustful practices, and are full of deception through and through in their professed Christian life. Living as sinners, claiming to be Christians! Those who claim to be Christians and will confess Christ should come out from among them and touch not the unclean thing, and be separate. I lay down my pen and lift up my soul in prayer, that the Lord would breathe upon His backslidden people, who are as dry bones, that they may live. The end is near, stealing upon us so stealthily, so imperceptibly, so noiselessly, like the muffled tread of the thief in the night, to surprise the sleepers off guard and unready. May the Lord grant to bring His Holy Spirit upon hearts that are now at ease, that they may no longer sleep as do others, but watch and be sober.—[Ellen White, General Conference Bulletin, 1893, pgs. 132, 133]

**Final Thoughts**

A reminder

- *The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10. {Ellen White, Acts of Apostles pg. 9.1}*

A Warning

- *To divide the church of Christ was a sin, in the days of the apostles. When did it cease to be a sin? The answer must be, Never; that which was once a sin, is always a sin. There can be no excuse for separating from a church unless it be that it is not the church of Christ. If the Roman church was the church of Christ, the Protestants sinned in separating from her. If the Episcopalian church was the church of Christ, Methodists and all other dissenters from her, sinned in leaving her; and if the Methodist, the Presbyterian, the Baptist, or any other church that has become divided, is the church of Christ, then the numerous sects, which are off-shoots from these, were conceived in sin and born in iniquity. But if, on the other hand, these seceders have been real reformers, if their adherence to truth and righteousness, was the cause of their separation, then the churches they left needed reformation and were not, as bodies, the pure churches of Christ; and being deserted by many of the best, living members, were in a worse and more lifeless condition than before, if not wholly rejected of God for their corruptions, and unwillingness to reform. {January 24, 1865 Uriah Smith, Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald pg.65.15}*

**Blessings**