

WHICH CHURCH IS GOING THROUGH?

FROM >ADVINDICATE, EXCELLENT ARTICLE

July 28, 2015 Floyd Saylor

Faithful believers often say that though the church appears as though it is going to fall, it will go through to the end. We know this is true because Christ promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against His church. But what will the church look like when it appears to fall? Will it retain the same organized structure with its educational and medical institutions, its various levels of conferences and local churches? Will faithful men and women be in charge of the worldwide organization and its facilities?

Though it is good to be optimistic regarding the future of the organized church, we also need to be realistic and consider what inspiration has told us.

We have been warned by Ellen White, in Volume 5 of the Testimonies, that “few know what our churches are to experience...I know that many think far too favorably of the present time...In the mighty sifting soon to take place we shall be better able to measure the strength of Israel” (76, 80).

It is important to understand that inspiration refers to the church in two different ways. Most of the time it refers to the church militant. In fact, the message to the Laodicean church is addressed to the church militant and it is the church militant that is in danger of being spewed out of Christ’s mouth. Finally, it is the church militant that will be “the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God” (White 211). This is a result of the Seventh-day Adventist church proving unfaithful to the most important, the most solemn truths ever committed to mortals, making it all the more accountable for its infidelity. However, Mrs. White tells us that the church will be riddled with apostasy and great abominations just before the sealing angel goes through its midst. She also says that when the sifting has done its work and the wheat and tares are separated, the

church militant will become the church triumphant. This is the victorious church that will go through to the end.

A TIME OF SIFTING RESULTED IN THE FORMATION OF THE EARLY CHURCH

In the days of Jesus and the apostles, there was a mighty sifting in the corporate Jewish church. For many centuries the Jewish church had been God's chosen vehicle to advance His truth in the earth. It was the object of His supreme regard, though it wasn't infallible. When Jesus was crucified, the corporate church was rejected as God's recognized vehicle to carry on His work on the earth. We have this interesting statement by Ellen White. "When Christ cried out, 'It is finished,' the Holy Watcher that was an unseen guest at Belshazzar's feast pronounced the Jewish nation to be a nation unchurched" (5 BC, 1109).

BECOMING UNCHURCHED

We must ask ourselves a question. At what point will the corporate, militant Seventh-day Adventist Church become "unchurched"? Some people believe that will never happen. But we need to remember that our beloved church is soon going to be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. Judgment begins at the house of God and if the church militant has proven unfaithful to its high and holy calling, on her will be pronounced the sentence, "found wanting". Therefore, if God's people prove unfaithful to the truth, the church militant will reap the same consequences as the Jewish nation. We are warned in Volume 8 of the Testimonies, "Jerusalem is a representation of what the church will be if it refuses to walk in the light that God has given" (White 67).

After the sifting, there remained only a few faithful followers from the Jewish nation. Though they made up the nucleus of the newly formed Christian church, they did not inherit the facilities of the apostate church. The temple and synagogues and schools continued to be operated by those who had been rejected as Christ's chosen people. Yet the faithful few whom Christ recognized as His church on earth had something far superior than all the facilities that remained with the corporate church. They had the all-inclusive facility of the Holy Spirit that was poured

out in mighty power and giving them mighty influence and efficiency to carry out Christ's commission to preach the gospel to the whole world. Indeed, it "was preached to every creature which is under heaven" (King James Version, Colossians 1:23).

GOD'S FAITHFUL WILL ENLIGHTEN THE WORLD WITH HIS TRUTH

In similar manner, the faithful remnant that is separated from the wheat and tares will receive even a more abundant outpouring of spiritual power in the latter rain. With that facility, in a very short time they will be enabled to enlighten the whole world with the glory of God. There will be no time to build and operate schools and hospitals and other institutions that were necessary for the church militant. The work will go like fire in the stubble, without these facilities.

We need to realize that as we near the judgment, both separation and unity will be seen in the ranks of Sabbath keepers. In fact, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the wheat to mingle with the tares. When the two sides are going in the opposite directions, the bonds of unity become more and more strained. The separation between Christ's true followers and the world used to be applied to association with unbelievers, outside of the church. However, now it is becoming more and more applicable to the church itself. Sadly, there are many unbelievers in the church who profess the same faith and have their names on the church rolls. But some members are worldly and apostates in heart and therefore as dangerous for association as those outside of the church.

One final glimpse of how the church triumphant will appear is found in a special vision given to Ellen White as she foresaw the church during the time of persecution:

I saw the nominal church and nominal Adventists, like Judas, would betray us to the Catholics to obtain their influence to come against the truth. The saints then will be an obscure people, little known to the Catholics; but the churches and nominal Adventists who know of our faith and customs (for they hated us on account of the Sabbath, for they could not refute it) will betray the saints and report them to the Catholics as those who

disregard the institutions of the people; that is, that they keep the Sabbath and disregard Sunday. (Spalding-Magan Collection of Ellen G. White Statements, 1)

Today's Seventh-day Adventist Church is well known to the Catholics. Some of our medical institutions are being run in partnership with the Catholic Health System. Sadly, there is much association and linking up with the fallen churches and much borrowing of ideas and programs. However, those who make up the church triumphant will not be well known to the other churches. The above quote by Ellen White refers to nominal Adventists who, along with the fallen churches, betray the true people of God. These nominal Adventists will be former Seventh-day Adventists who give up the Sabbath when the great, final test comes. In fact, they may very well still be carrying out the functions of the church and operating church institutions and facilities. However, the power and presence of God will be lacking.

In summary, we must continue to be encouraged that Christ is in charge of His work and His people. He will purify His church as He purified the temple when He was on earth. The wheat and tares will be separated by He who makes no mistake. He will have a church that is "without spot or wrinkle...fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (Ephesians 5:27; Song of Solomon 6:10). This church will evangelize the whole world in a very short time. Those who are shaken out will be replaced by the multitudes that will come into a church that will be the pillar and ground of the truth and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. It will be a church that keeps the commandments of God and has the testimony of Jesus. Thus the way will be prepared for Christ to return to earth in power and glory and make a final end to the great controversy.