

## WHAT'S INSCRIBED ON THE BANNER?

"Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." Right now with what's going on all around the world, we can appreciate more than ever the salutation of the apostle Paul as he greeted the various churches he raised up, and truly I pray that God's grace and peace be with each one of us this morning.

I'm fairly certain that what I'm about to share with you this morning will upset some of you, and I'm also fairly certain I will hear about it, but you know, sometimes we have to get a little agitated before we're brought to make a decision. And so, I'm willing to take a little heat if it will help the truth to become clear in our minds this morning.

I was in communication with someone recently who had questions about whether or not those who disagree with some of the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church should still call themselves Seventh-day Adventists, even though they are no longer members in good and regular standing, or perhaps have been disfellowshipped for speaking out about the corruption and error they've seen coming in for many years now, but they want to retain the name because that's the name God gave to the remnant church of **Revelation 12:17**. And so, because many of you may have had the same question floating around in your minds over the years, I thought maybe I would address that this morning.

Over the past 40 years or so, there have been several individuals and small independent churches that have been sued by the Seventh-day Adventist conference corporation because they believed it to be their duty and their God-given right to continue to call themselves Seventh-day Adventists and that they should be free to advertise it on their buildings and on their literature, regardless of whether or not they're still officially affiliated with the church. And as we know, tens of thousands of dollars have been spent in court battles over this issue, and the saddest part is that denominational tithe money has been misappropriated to enrich Catholic lawyers to defend the church's right to trademark the name so no one else can use it except those who are under their kingly power and control. And when you think this through, this is exactly how the image to the beast is formed. It was the Church of Rome, you'll remember, that became the beast of **Revelation 13** because it used the civil power to enforce its will, and it's in the same way that apostate Protestantism forms an image to the beast, or the papacy. And so, in a legal sense, the Seventh-day Adventist church has already done this, and that cannot be denied.

Most of us are probably familiar with what happened to Rafael Perez who pastored an independent church in Florida and before him Walter McGill who pastored an independent church in Tennessee and before him John Marik who pastored another

independent church in Hawaii in the late 1980s, and then a congregation in Alabama and one in Southern California who decided to settle out of court, and there have been about 40 other smaller cases the denomination was opposed to, but apparently didn't think important enough to pursue. However, as you know, pastors Perez, McGill, and Marik all lost their cases in court, and we have to wonder, was it all worth it? All three of these individuals believed that retaining the name was so important that they refused to cease and desist when they got legal papers from Seventh-day Adventist and Catholic lawyers, and I believe two of the three men spent time in jail over it and were fined thousands of dollars in damages and court costs and were on the run for a while to avoid being arrested and paying their fines. And again, I ask, in retrospect, was it worth it? And is there something in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy that would support or condemn the stand that either side took?

It's my understanding that U.S. Marshals were sent to pastor McGill's church and pastor Marik's church to remove all signage on the outside of their buildings relating to the name Seventh-day Adventist and even any promotional material within the church that violated the court's injunction, such as Hymnals and even Spirit of Prophecy books and so forth. Now, it should be obvious that this kind of publicity is not good for the denomination or for the three pastors since it tends to cause Sunday keepers and other onlookers to think of Sabbath keepers as divisive, unchristian, and a bunch of fanatics. So, my purpose this morning is not to vindicate either party, but to investigate why the denomination, and those like pastors Perez, McGill, and Marik place so much importance on the name, and whether or not it's absolutely necessary to our salvation to call ourselves Seventh-day Adventists, and does God disapprove of those who would just roll over and let the denomination have its way without a fight. After all, there must be a good reason for a person to be willing to be summoned to court, arrested, go to jail, and be fined thousands of dollars in order to retain what they believe to be their God-given duty. Either that, or they're mistaken as to what they believe inspiration teaches about this matter.

Before we move on, however, I'd like to mention one other group that was successful in their battle with the denomination over the name issue and they still are allowed to call themselves Seventh-day Adventist Kinship, International to this day. This is an LGBTQ organization, and I'll let you conjecture as to why they might have been successful while the others weren't. And so, the question is, was the denomination wrong for taking their "brethren" to court, or were the three men and their congregations wrong for raising this issue in the first place, or were perhaps both sides wrong? I'd like to explore some of these questions today, but before we do let's pray.

In the past there have been many people who were martyred for a cause, but if the cause is not just, or more importantly, not required by God, what good did it accomplish? If it's

not required, could it have been only plain stubbornness and an unwillingness to allow the other side to win that prompted the three pastors to defend themselves in court, and if that were the case, stubbornness is not a righteous motivation, is it? If that was their reason all they did was lose their case and spend a lot of the Lord's money for something that really didn't matter!

Now I'm not saying that the three pastors I mentioned were just stubborn, because I don't know what was going on in their minds, perhaps they were motivated by something else, at least I hope so, but I think our motivation regarding this issue is something we need to think about as we approach the end of the great controversy. What does God really require and what does He not require. What can glorify His name, and what can do just the opposite. I think we need to think about these things, because very soon now, we are going to have to make life and death decisions as the apostate churches of the world once again force their will upon the whole world by enlisting the help of the civil powers in honoring a day that has no higher authority than sinful man himself.

As I was studying these things, I read a statement from the Spirit of Prophecy that I think downplays any supposed mandate that we be willing to suffer abuse over the church name, or try to retain it at all cost. Let me read that particular statement to you to begin with and see what you think. This is from ***Review and Herald, February 10, 1891***, "We are not saved as a sect; no denominational name has any virtue to bring us into favor with God. We are saved individually as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, if this statement is true (and I believe it is), and we cannot find favor with God by calling ourselves Seventh-day Adventists, or by any other name for that matter, then wouldn't that mean that this is not a salvational issue? Can we at least agree on that much? And because it's not salvational, wouldn't that mean that it's futile to fight it in a court of law as though it were? And anyway, aren't we told that we should obey the laws of the land unless they conflict with the law of God? Does not calling ourselves Seventh-day Adventists conflict with God's law? Do the words "seventh day" mean we must consider it mandatory simply because it's part of the wording of the fourth commandment? Do we have a moral obligation to call ourselves by a certain name, and if we don't we're going to be barred from heaven? When we ask ourselves questions like this, the answer seems clear enough, doesn't it? But still there are those who persist, thinking they have no choice in the matter if they want to retain God's smile.

In a little while we're going to look at the statements in the Spirit of Prophecy dealing with this subject, and I have to admit that some of them give me pause to even bring up this subject, because as you read them it seems that those who say we must call ourselves Seventh-day Adventists may have a point. You know, sometimes with surface reading you can get the idea that a certain statement says one thing, but when you dig a

little deeper and follow the context, many times it's totally different than what you first thought, and I think that's the way it is with the name issue.

So, I hope to look at this subject objectively this morning without personal feelings and prejudices getting involved as far as possible. For some, I know this is an emotional subject, but we need to try to put that aside and look at this with logical and rational minds. And let me inject one other point before we move on. If calling ourselves Seventh-day Adventists is not salvational, then why discuss this issue at all? Why even bring it up? It's because, dear friends, there are those who believe, based on the Spirit of Prophecy, that it's mandatory that we call ourselves Seventh-day Adventists, and if God mandates something and we ignore it, that could be profoundly serious. And so, because this is causing some confusion, and the Lord knows we have enough of that already without adding to it, I think we should talk about it.

Turn with me please to **1 Corinthians 6:1-4**. Paul is here dealing with an issue that involved the church at Corinth as they had some problems in their own congregation with one another. Paul writes the following, "Dare any of you, having a matter against another **(that is, another church member)**, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church."

In other words, handle it within the borders of the church. Don't go outside the church to try to have your own way or to hurt your fellow church members. Paul says, "the lowest ranking person in the church ought to be able to figure this out and settle the matter, but instead, you let unbelievers settle it for you." And isn't that exactly what has happened over the name issue? The Catholic lawyers and the Judges in these past cases, and the jury if there was one, are the unjust, because they had nothing to do with the Seventh-day Adventist church, so why were they called upon to settle these cases?

Paul goes on in **verses 5-7**, "I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. **(Now listen carefully to this next sentence. Paul says)** Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?"

Didn't Jesus say, "if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloke also"? Because the Corinthians had legal disputes among themselves is proof that they had completely failed to represent Christ! Paul says it would have been better if one of the parties would have suffered themselves to be wronged rather than

take it before a civil court. It would have been better for one or the other to be deprived of their so called 'rights' than to drag the name of Christ through the mud before unbelievers.

And when you think about it, isn't that about what has happened? Are you beginning to see the problem with these court cases over the name? And really, when you think it through, both sides, according to what we just read have to bear some of the guilt for violating this principle. Who knows how God could have worked things out, nearly 50 years ago now, had both sides followed this counsel. We're told that God has a thousand ways to provide answers to things that seemingly have no solution, but rather than waiting upon God, many times we run ahead and mess things up when a little patience and a little time would make mountains of difficulty disappear. And if things can't be resolved, the counsel is for the one who is truly Christlike to suffer loss rather than forge ahead and hope judge and jury are convinced that they're right and the others wrong.

But be that as it may, there must be some good reason why so many people over the years, and even today, have and are, willing to go to court and jail in order to be able to continue to call themselves Seventh-day Adventists, so let's explore what some of those reasons might be.

First of all, what we're going to do is take a look at those statements in the Spirit of Prophecy that many people use to vindicate their cause to retain the name at any cost or consequence to themselves or to the reputation of Christ; and then we'll look at some other statements that will hopefully help balance things out. But before we do that there are a couple important principles to keep in mind when trying to understand scripture, and this is also true of the Spirit of Prophecy, and it's this, we are to draw our conclusions based upon the weight of evidence, and to allow the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy to interpret themselves. In ***Selected Messages, book 1, page 42*** it says, "The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture." In other words, we are not at liberty to put our own private interpretation on inspired statements, in fact that's what we're told in **2 Peter 1:20**. Rather we are to dig deep and find other statements that would help us determine what the truth is, and we'll see how important this is when we begin to read some of the inspired statements I'll be sharing with you this morning.

Notice this first statement from ***Spiritual Gifts, volume 4, page 54***, "I was shown in regard to the remnant people of God taking a name. Two classes were presented before me. One class embraced the great bodies of professed Christians. They were trampling upon God's law and bowing to a Papal institution. They were keeping the first day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord. The other class were but few in number, and were bowing to the great Lawgiver. They were keeping the fourth commandment. The peculiar and prominent features of their faith were the observance of the seventh day, and

waiting for the appearing of our Lord from Heaven. No name which we can take will be appropriate but that which accords with our profession, and expresses our faith, and marks us as a peculiar people. The name, Seventh-day Adventist, is a standing rebuke to the Protestant world (**not so much anymore however**). . . The name, Seventh-day Adventist, carries the true features of our faith in front, and will convict the inquiring mind. Like an arrow from the Lord's quiver, it will wound the transgressors of God's law, and will lead to repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now that's a pretty powerful statement, isn't it? At the time the name was chosen, in 1860 I believe, she says it needed to have three elements. #1, it had to be in accordance with our profession; #2, it had to express our faith; and #3, it had to mark us as a peculiar people, and the name Seventh-day Adventist fits the bill in all three aspects, doesn't it? But here's the question, what if the name does all these things, but the church itself is no longer in accordance with the profession when it was originally stated? What if it has changed its faith in some areas, and what if the church is no longer looked upon by the rest of the churches as a peculiar people because of its involvement with the ecumenical movement? Then what? Well, we'll talk about "then what" in a little while.

This next statement is equally powerful: *Battle Creek Letters, July 6, 1902, page 52*, "In the name of the Lord we are to identify ourselves as Seventh-day Adventists. If any one among us is ashamed of our colors, (**or we could say if anyone is ashamed of what the name stands for**) and wishes to stand under another banner (**and in a few minutes we'll find out what the colors of that banner are**), let him do so as a private individual, not as a representative of Seventh-day Adventist medical missionary work."

Now let me say from the outset that I have never been ashamed of the name or the colors of the name, or what's written on the banner. I have been ashamed of the leaders of the church for what they have done to the cause of truth, and I remain ashamed of them to this day, but never have I been ashamed of the name or what's written on the banner. The name has been tarnished, and that's too bad, there will be those who will have to answer for that. But the name and what it should stand for, nothing wrong with it, except how it has been treated by men in authority. And again, they'll have to answer for that. I wouldn't want to be in their shoes except they repent, but after 40 plus years I highly doubt that repentance is ever going to happen. Some have probably already gone to their graves, so we shouldn't hold our breath. It's my opinion, from what I have studied, that the church as a body has already gone too far to turn around, but you'll have to make up your own mind about that, and before we're done you'll have an opportunity to do that if you haven't already.

The next three statements I'll be reading, as well as the one I just read, contextually have to do with Dr. Kellogg and his associates who wanted to keep the medical missionary work separate from the church. They didn't think it was the best policy for the church and

the Sanitarium to be affiliated. And so, Ellen White writes about this again in ***Selected Messages, book 2, Page 384*** to Dr. David Paulson. “We are Seventh-day Adventists. Are we ashamed of our name? We answer, ‘No, no! We are not.’ It is the name the Lord has given us. It points out the truth (**notice: the name “points out the truth”**) that is to be the test of the churches.”

In other words, the test is not going to be whether or not all the other churches adopt the name. It’s whether or not the other churches accept the message the name points out, and the truth the name points out is the third angel’s message, and we’ll see that clearly as we continue reading the prophet’s explanation of what’s inscribed on the banner.

This next statement is similar to the one I just read, and it’s also found in ***Selected Messages, book 2, Page 384***. This was written to the General Conference Committee. She writes, “We are Seventh-day Adventists, and of this name we are never to be ashamed. As a people we must take a firm stand for truth and righteousness.”

So, here’s another important point. Those who call themselves Seventh-day Adventists are to “take a firm stand for truth and righteousness.” But here’s the problem, many church members who have done that over the past 50 plus years have been disfellowshipped for doing so, and others have been told to “sit down, shut up, and pay your tithe or else,” and unfortunately some have capitulated and have stopped protesting because they didn’t want to be kicked out of the synagogue, thinking their salvation was attached to their membership in a church that went by a certain name. You see, as a Seventh-day Adventist the leadership teaches that if you are disfellowshipped, it’s because you have apostatized, not them! When in reality it’s an apostate church that has disfellowshipped those who have taken “a firm stand for truth and righteousness.”

Here’s another quote from ***Manuscript 15, 1896, Selected Messages, book 2, pages 384, 385***, and this one is probably the most important. Listen carefully, “The banner of the third angel has inscribed upon it, ‘The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.’ (**Notice: the name is not inscribed on the banner, it’s part of the third angel’s message that’s inscribed there**) Our institutions have taken a name which sets forth the character of our faith, (**or the type of faith we should have**) and of this name we are never to be ashamed. . . . A company was presented before me under the name of Seventh-day Adventists, who were advising that the banner or sign (**the “sign” has to do with the Sabbath, not the name**) advising that the banner or sign which makes us a distinctive people should not be held out so strikingly; for they claimed it was not the best policy in securing success to our institutions. This distinctive banner is to be borne through the world to the close of probation.” (**What is to be borne through the world to the close of probation? The name? No! The banner, or the third angel’s message**)

“In describing the remnant people of God, John says, ‘Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus’ (Revelation 14:12). This is the law and the gospel. The world and the churches are uniting in harmony in transgressing the law of God, in tearing away God’s memorial, and in exalting a sabbath that bears the signature of the man of sin. But the Sabbath of the Lord thy God is to be a sign **(you see, the Sabbath is the sign, and it’s what the name points to)** But the Sabbath of the Lord thy God is to be a sign to show the difference between the obedient and the disobedient. I saw some reaching out their hands to remove the banner, and to obscure its significance.”

Why do you suppose well-meaning men were trying to obscure the significance of the third angel’s message? Evidentially it was so more people would feel comfortable coming to the sanitarium as paying customers if they didn’t think it was a religious institution, and not just a religious institution, but an odd one that proclaimed the importance of keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. I think many people over the years have mistakenly believed that the name was on the banner, and that that is what’s supposed “to be borne through the world to the close of probation.” But that’s not it, that’s not it at all! It’s the message that the name points out “that is to be borne through the world until probation closes.”

So that pretty much sums up all the statements of this nature in the Spirit of Prophecy. There might be a couple more, but they essentially say the same thing. The point I want to make at the risk of repeating myself, because it’s especially important, is that the banner we are to bear through the world to the close of probation is not the name, it’s something the name points to. We just read that, “The banner of the third angel has inscribed upon it, ‘The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.’” And that it’s the “name which sets forth the character of our faith.” That means that the name points to what’s on the banner, and not that the name itself is on the banner. Hopefully, that’s clear by now.

What do you think is more important: to merely be able to call yourself a Seventh-day Adventist, or to actually keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus and proclaim that to the world as long as human probation lingers? Who are the ones that will inhabit the holy city and the earth made new, those who cling to the name but don’t have corresponding works, or those who maybe didn’t call themselves Seventh-day Adventists but had corresponding works that characterized them as the ones who lived out what’s on the banner? Is it better to inscribe the name Seventh-day Adventist on your church sign, or to have the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus written upon the fleshly tables of the heart? We need to think this through! It’s not the name that’s going to give us entrance into the heavenly Canaan, it’s obedience to the



commandments of God because we have the faith of Jesus! It's because we live what's on the banner.

The name is not salvational, but what's on the banner is! That's the difference! We already read that "no denominational name has any virtue to bring us into favor with God", but will loving obedience to the commandments and the faith of Jesus bring us into favor with God? Absolutely! And so, profession alone weighs nothing in the scales in God's estimation, but loving obedience does have weight with God. Jesus didn't say, "If you love me, call yourself a Seventh-day Adventist," He said, "If you love me keep my commandments", and we will do that when we have the faith of Jesus. Long before there were those who called themselves Seventh-day Adventists there was the Ten Commandment law, wasn't there? Obedience to the law from a newly converted heart has always been the condition to an entrance into the holy city according to **Revelation 22:14**, but the name you call yourself by isn't going to give you entrance through those gates.

Let me read something you should already know, but it's good to be reminded once in a while. *Testimonies for the Church, volume 1, page 504*, "Profession alone is nothing. Names are registered upon the church-books upon earth, but not in the book of life."

Also *Review and Herald May 18, 1886*, "That which more especially distinguishes God's people from the popular religious bodies is not their profession alone (**or we could say, not just because they call themselves Seventh-day Adventists**), but their exemplary character and their principles of unselfish love." And so, character is the important thing, that's why we're told in *Selected Messages, book 3, page 391* that that's the only thing we're taking to heaven, and not that we go by a certain name or have our names on the conference rolls. In fact, if you understand corporate accountability, it is detrimental to your salvation to be connected through membership to an organization that is no longer the peculiar people they started out to be, because that means apostasy, and we'll talk more about that in a few minutes.

And so, it should be clear by now that salvation lies with keeping the commandments of God and having the faith of Jesus, rather than simply making a profession by calling ourselves Seventh-day Adventists. Because listen, I could just as well say I belong to the Jehovah's Witness church, or the Church of God, or the Church of Christ, or the Assembly of God, or the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or the Apostolic Church, and I could go on and on, but hopefully you get the point! I don't refer to myself by any of these various church names because people would then associate me with those particular denominations, wouldn't they? Then someone might say, "yes, but all those churches are teaching error", and I would agree! But this is also true of the Seventh-day Adventist church. In fact, the errors the Seventh-day Adventist church teach today are much more egregious to God than any of those other churches I just mentioned. How so?

When a church or an individual has been privileged to know about important truths that other churches and individuals have not, then they are held more accountable, and there will be consequences of a magnitude that others will not have to face. Has the Seventh-day Adventist Church had privileges that other churches have not? Undoubtedly.

Notice this inspired statement from *Manuscript Releases, volume 12, page 319*, “No people are saved because they have great light and special advantages, for these high and heavenly favors only increase their responsibility. The more and increased light God has given makes the receiver more responsible. It does not place the receiver in any safer position unless the privileges are wisely improved, prized, and used to advance God’s glory. . . . When Jerusalem was divorced from God it was because of her sins. She fell from an exalted height that Tyre and Sidon had never reached. And when an angel falls he becomes a fiend. The depth of our ruin (**Seventh-day Adventist**) is measured by the exalted light to which God has raised us in His great goodness and unspeakable mercy. Oh, what privileges are granted to us as a people! And if God spared not His people that He loved (**the Jewish Nation**), because they refused to walk in the light, how can He spare the people whom He has blessed with the light of heaven in having opened to them the most exalted truth ever entrusted to mortal man to give to the world.” And what is that most exalted truth? It’s the third angel’s message, it’s what’s on the banner. That’s the truth we must take to the world to the close of probation.

I’m also reminded of *The Great Controversy, page 587* where it says, “We may disguise poison by mingling it with wholesome food, but we do not change its nature. On the contrary, it is rendered more dangerous, as it is more likely to be taken unawares.”

Question: What’s more dangerous, a church that teaches all kinds of blatant error that is easily exposed by the Bible, or one that has mostly truth with just a little bit of poison added to it? That’s the difference between the Adventist church and other churches, and they will have to give an account for that little bit of deadly poison they have been feeding the flock for many years now.

Nowhere in history will you find, when people separated from a church, that they continued to call themselves by the name of the church they left. At least I can’t think of any. Those who left the Jewish synagogues began calling themselves Christians. Those who left Catholicism began to call themselves Protestants. When those following the Millerite movement left their various Protestant churches, they began to call themselves Adventists, and later on Seventh-day Adventists. And so, why wouldn’t this same principle still hold true today? In fact, the Bible itself teaches this principle in **Isaiah 65:15** if you’d like to turn there with me.

God is speaking here to rebellious Israel as Isaiah gives a prophecy about a name change that would take place regarding the Jewish nation and the Gentiles they looked down

upon. The Holy Spirit used Isaiah to write the following passage: **Isaiah 65:15**, “And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: **(in other words, their name would be like a curse to those God would choose instead of them)** for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name.” And so, Isaiah prophesied here that the time would come when the Jews would no longer be the children of God, and that happened when they crucified Jesus. From then on the term “Christian” would be the new name the Gentiles would be privileged to call themselves by, and Jews, if they would be saved, must also accept this new name.

Go also to **Isaiah 62:2**, This was God’s hope for Israel if they would accept Jesus as their Messiah. “And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.” This new name had something to do with Jesus and His sacrifice, and by accepting Him they would receive it. What would that new name be? Christian. And then let’s follow up with **Act 11:26**. The last part says, “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” And here we have Isaiah’s prophecy fulfilled.

And this idea of a name change is not an isolated incident in the Bible, because Jacob became Israel, and Saul became Paul, and Abram, Abraham, and so on. When there was a dramatic change in character, there was also a change in name, and why shouldn’t this same principle apply today? Ask yourself, has the character of the Seventh-day Adventist church changed dramatically since 1860 when the name was first chosen? Oh friends, the pioneers of our faith wouldn’t even recognize the church of today with their celebration worship services and their involvement with the ecumenical movement and their new theology teaching of salvation in sin and the hypnotizing of their congregations with NLP and consigning the Spirit of Prophecy to the historical trash heap and all their jewelry and unwillingness to follow the diet and health principles that were given to us for these last days. If the pioneers of our faith could be raised from the dead and enter a Seventh-day Adventist church upon the Sabbath day today, they wouldn’t even recognize it as the church that was given their God-given name so long ago.

And here’s something else to think about. In ***Selected Messages, book 1, page 57*** it says, “Regarding the testimonies, nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered.” Not “should be considered”, but “must be considered.”

God has never given the promise to any people throughout all history that His blessing could not be removed. The Jewish church is a prime example, and God says He’s going to continue to work on the same principle. Disobedience and an unwillingness to follow God’s directions will result in a curse, you can read that all through **Deuteronomy 28** where it talks about blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. This was true with the Jewish church and it’s true for the Seventh-day Adventist church. Let me read it to you.

***Last Day Events, page 59***, “The Lord Jesus will always have a chosen people to serve Him. When the Jewish people rejected Christ, the Prince of life, He took from them the kingdom of God and gave it unto the Gentiles (**Who called themselves Christians by the way**). God will continue to work on this principle with every branch of His work. When a church proves unfaithful to the word of the Lord, whatever their position may be, however high and sacred their calling, the Lord can no longer work with them. Others are then chosen to bear important responsibilities. But, if these in turn do not purify their lives from every wrong action, if they do not establish pure and holy principles in all their borders, then the Lord will grievously afflict and humble them and, unless they repent, will remove them from their place and make them a reproach.” And that’s how the name of a church can become a curse to others who are then chosen to bear important responsibilities.

So, what does all this mean? It means that the Seventh-day Adventist church cannot hold God hostage by claiming they are His chosen people when they fail to live up to the character that should characterize the remnant church of **Revelation 12:17**. Just because they call themselves by the name God gave them 160 years ago, does not mean that they are worthy to bear that name today.

Thinking of the church not being able to hold God hostage by claiming to be His chosen people, notice what it says in ***Last Day Events, page 48***, “I was confirmed in all I had stated in Minneapolis, (**this was a year after the 1888 debacle when righteousness by faith was rejected by many of the leaders**) “I was confirmed in all I had stated in Minneapolis, that a reformation must go through the churches. Reforms must be made, for spiritual weakness and blindness were upon the people who had been blessed with great light and precious opportunities and privileges. As reformers they had come out of the denominational churches, but they now act a part similar to that which the churches acted. We hoped that there would not be the necessity for another coming out.” Why would Ellen White say such a thing if it wasn’t possible for the church to be disenfranchised by God? And why would she say the following on the **same page**: “Of those who boast of their light and yet fail to walk in it Christ says, ‘But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum [Seventh-day Adventists, who have had great light], which art exalted unto heaven [in point of privilege], shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.’” And why on **page 49** did she write: “The church is in the Laodicean state. The presence of God is not in her midst.” If God’s presence is not in the church, then whose church is it?

Now, on that note I want to shift gears for just a couple minutes, because there’s another subject that is related to what we’ve already been talking about this morning. We all

know that there are several statements in the Spirit of Prophecy that state plainly that we should not call the church Babylon, don't we? But when you apply the test of considering "time and place" and the Seventh-day Adventist Church fits the definition of the term, then all the previous warnings no longer apply, because as we read, God is going to continue to work on the same principle as He has in the past with other churches.

Over and over again through the years I've heard several independent ministries say that the Seventh-day Adventist Church cannot become Babylon until they start keeping Sunday, and I believe they will eventually do that by the way, just read ***Early Writings, page 261*** carefully and you'll see that this is true. But is Sunday keeping the only way for the church to become Babylon? No, it's not! There are several definitions in the Spirit of Prophecy that define the meaning of the term Babylon, other than worshiping on Sunday, and if the Seventh-day Adventist church fits any one, or perhaps several of these definitions, then why would it not be considered Babylon?

I believe the reason some ministries refuse to call the church Babylon is because they think they'll lose support, plain and simple. And I say, where is their faith! Hasn't God promised to take care of His faithful preachers? Yes He has. Over the years I've heard various ministry leaders call the church "Apostate Israel", and say that the church is in apostasy, or a sister to fallen Babylon, or a harlot, or whatever other softball answer they can come up with, but they refuse to call it what God calls it, why is that? As we'll see in a minute, calling the church "apostate Israel" or saying the church is in apostasy, or calling the church a harlot, is the exact same thing as calling the church Babylon, they just refuse to use that dreaded 7-letter word.

So, if the church fits any one of the several definitions given by inspiration for the term Babylon, then why would it not be Babylon? And if it is, then why would we want people to think we're a part of it by calling ourselves by that name? Does that make sense? When the character of a church changes, then a difference has to be made, or confusion will exist, and unfortunately that's what we have right now, and confusion is associated with Babylon, is it not?

So, let me share several inspired statements with you that define just what Babylon is and how a church can become incorporated into it. There are seven statements and one of them is Sunday observance, but there are six more, here they are. In ***The Great Controversy, page 380*** it says Babylon is false or apostate religion. So, if you say the church is in apostasy, you're saying it's Babylon. Here's another one on ***page 382***, "churches that were once pure and have become corrupt." Here's another on the same page, "churches that cling to the doctrines and traditions of Rome." You've probably heard of spiritual formation, the stations of the cross, and the trinity doctrine, haven't you? These are all teachings and traditions of Rome that the Seventh-day Adventist church has been involved in for years. ***Patriarchs and Prophets, page 124*** Babylon is

defined as “the world loving churches of the last days.” *Selected Messages, book 2, page 68* says Babylon are “the churches that have rejected the truth”, and in *Testimonies to Ministers, page 117* it says the churches of Babylon are churches “that have fallen from their spiritual state to become a persecuting power”, and wouldn’t you call a church that uses the civil power to sue other Christians over a name, a persecuting power?

Now please understand, saying these things doesn’t make me happy or bring joy to my heart this morning. I wish I could still call myself a Seventh-day Adventist in good conscience, but I can’t, because the current denomination are not themselves worthy of the name, and yet they have legal right to it, and therefore since it’s not a salvational issue and it’s not violating the commandments of God to let it go, then I must let it go and leave the name Seventh-day Adventist for a curse, and call myself something else.

So how do I identify myself when someone asks what church I belong to? I simply say, “I’m not a member of any denomination. I’m a seventh-day Sabbath keeping Christian who’s waiting for Jesus to come back from heaven.” And you know, I’ve never had anyone react negatively to that explanation. In fact, it has been incredibly positive, because many people today are tired of denominationalism, because they see the hypocrisy of those who claim to be God’s peculiar people. Earlier in *Spiritual Gifts, volume 4, page 54* we read that the reason the name Seventh-day Adventist was given by God to the remnant is because “the peculiar and prominent features of their faith were the observance of the seventh day, and waiting for the appearing of our Lord from Heaven.” That’s why I say I’m a seventh-day Sabbath keeping Christian who’s waiting for Jesus to come back from heaven.

Now I know there are an ever increasing number who are calling themselves “Free Seventh-day Adventists”, and at least that makes somewhat of a difference, and that can be done legally, because that name was being used by a small group of black Adventists long before the denomination trademarked the name in 1980, so it’s grandfathered in, but that’s up to you, and I’m not endorsing it for reasons I’ll not mention at this point, but whatever you choose to call yourself, you should make a difference somehow, and let it be known that you are not in harmony with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, because it is not in harmony with God, and neither is it in harmony with the name when it was first given.

I’d like to finish up by reading an inspired statement that should pull this all together, and I’m sorry if you’re disturbed by it, but it’s the truth. I began this morning by reading **1 Corinthians 6:1-7**, and there we found that God is displeased when church members open up church difficulties to unbelievers and take one another to court to then have those who are unbelievers decide their cases, but now I want to allow the Spirit of Prophecy to put a magnifying glass on what Paul wrote so there will be no doubt about his counsel to the church so many years ago, and how it still remains the truth today.

This is from *Selected Messages, book 3, page 299*, “When troubles arise in the church we should not go for help to lawyers not of our faith. **(And that’s exactly what the church did)** God does not desire us to open church difficulties before those who do not fear Him **(and they did)**. He would not have us depend for help on those who do not obey His requirements **(and they did)**. Those who trust in such counselors show that they have not faith in God **(and they don’t)**. By their lack of faith the Lord is greatly dishonored **(and He is)**, and their course works great injury to themselves. **(and it has through the great multitude who have left)** In appealing to unbelievers to settle difficulties in the church they are biting and devouring one another, to be ‘consumed one of another.’

“These men cast aside the counsel God has given **(and they have)**, and do the very things He has bidden them not to do **(and they have)**. They show that they have chosen the world as their judge **(and they have)**, and in heaven their names are registered as one with unbelievers **(and they are)**. Christ is crucified afresh, and put to open shame **(and He has been)**. Let these men know that God does not hear their prayers **(and He doesn’t)**. They insult His holy name **(and they have)**, and He will leave them to the buffetings of Satan until they shall see their folly and seek the Lord by confession of their sin **(and to date they haven’t, and won’t, I’m afraid, until it’s too late)**.

“Matters connected with the church are to be kept within its own borders **(and they have not been)**. If a Christian is abused, he is to take it patiently **(but they haven’t)**; if defrauded, he is not to appeal to courts of justice **(but they have)**. Rather let him suffer loss and wrong.” **(but they didn’t)**

I don’t know if you were counting, but church leaders violated the principles in this inspired statement 18 times. On every single point they failed to heed this counsel, why? Did they not know it existed? Were they ignorant? We’re told that God winks at ignorance when there’s no way for people to know the truth, but that can’t possibly be the case here, because it was readily accessible to all those who were instrumental in taking this to the civil authorities to begin with. If they could have known, but didn’t take the time to search it out, then they are guilty.

So dear friends, we all have a choice to make this morning if it hasn’t already been made. Not only does the Spirit of Prophecy make it plain that “no denominational name has any virtue to bring us into favor with God”, but the Bible says the same thing, just in different words. **Acts 4:12**, speaking of Jesus, says, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

You know dear friends, it really disturbs me when I hear those who have separated from the denomination, and who otherwise are preaching a present truth message, when they refer to the denomination as “our church”, and to the leaders as “our leaders.” It’s clear from the things we’ve just read that it is no longer “our church” and they are no longer

“our leaders.” If you want to call the church “our church” and the leaders “our leaders” when God no longer hears their prayers, because they have insulted His holy name, etc., etc., it’s your privilege to perpetuate the confusion, but I can’t acknowledge them that way because they no longer deserve it, and they haven’t for a long time now.

Please ask yourself the following questions regarding the statement we just read a moment ago from ***Selected Messages, book 3, page 299***. Do you want to call yourself a Seventh-day Adventist when the leaders who call themselves by that same name have made it clear that “they have not faith in God”, that “they have greatly dishonored Him”, that “they have cast aside the counsel of God”, and who “show that they have chosen the world as their judge”, and “in heaven have their names registered as one with unbelievers?” Do you want to be a member of a church or call yourself by the same name as those who “have crucified Jesus afresh and put Him to open shame”, and yes, who pray, but “God does not hear their prayers,” because “they have insulted His holy name?”

Yes, these are strong words, but they’re not my words. They are the words of one who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write them for the benefit of those of us who would be alive just before Jesus comes, and friends, it looks more and more like it’s going to happen, and sooner than most of us think. If we believe that the Holy Spirit inspired Ellen White to write the words from the various statements we’ve read this morning, of which there are many more, and we reject them, who are we really rejecting? We’re rejecting the Holy Spirit, and I hope you’ll agree with me that that is an extremely dangerous thing to do.

May God give us the strength and courage to step out and be counted with those on the side of truth and righteousness and that we might uphold the banner upon which is inscribed “the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” until the close of human probation.