

# 23 WHY ARE THERE SO MANY RELIGIONS?



Many ask themselves this question when they see that:

- There are hundreds of religious groups and thousands of sects. Each group claims to possess the truth, and the majority base their teachings on the Bible and believe in Jesus Christ.
- Are all these God's church? Does the Lord acknowledge all churches as His elect people, or does He have a special people? If so, how can God's church be identified?
- In every religion, there are sincere people who love God, but that does not necessarily mean that the church they attend is the true church. The word of God, and especially the prophecies, gives us some clues that will help us identify God's true remnant.

## ***SYMBOLS REPRESENTING THE CHURCH***

- 1. What is the true church compared to, in both the Old and the New Testament? Isaiah 5:1, 2, 7; Matthew 21:33.**

With a \_\_\_\_\_ surrounded by a \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) The vine (John 15:1, 2, 4): Christ is the stock of that vine. He is eternal. We are the branches. If we abide in Him we will bear fruit, otherwise we will be cut off.
- b) The wall: its purpose is to establish a border between the land of the Lord and the rest. This wall protects the church as long as it does God's will. The wall symbolizes God's law. The area outside the law of God is sin (1 John 3:4).

*Any church that leaves out any of God's commandments makes a hole in the wall.*

- 2. Throughout the Bible the church is compared to a woman (2 Corinthians 11:2). According to Song of Solomon 6: 8, 9; 4:7, how many churches does the Lord acknowledge as His? \_\_\_\_\_**

- 3. What does prophecy say about the women (churches) of our times? Isaiah 4:1.**

- a) Seven women: all of them are churches (7 represents plenitude).
- b) They all take hold of one man: all churches speak of Christ.
- c) They eat their own bread: they all have their own doctrines, instead of the word of God.
- d) They wear their own apparel: self-justification (Isaiah 64:6), instead of the garment of Christ's righteousness (Matt. 22:11, 12). They are satisfied to be called by His name: Christians (Ezekiel 33:31).

## ***GOD'S CHURCH IN REVELATION 12***

- 4. What did the woman described in Revelation 12:1 look like, and what did she represent?**

- a) The woman symbolized the true church. She was clothed with the \_\_\_\_\_. The sun represents Christ, the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2).
- b) The \_\_\_\_\_ under her feet. This is a symbol of the Old Testament, the foundation of the Christian church. Just as the moon receives its light from the sun, the Old Testament received its light from Christ. The 12 stars represented the twelve apostles.

- 5. The church was promised a seed, a Savior (Genesis 3:15). Who does the child represent? Revelation 12:2, 5. \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalms 2:7-9).**

- "Pained to be delivered": there was no room available in Bethlehem, and he was born in a stable.

- 6. There was another sign, a dragon. Who does it represent? Revelation 12:3, 4, 9.**

It was \_\_\_\_\_ personified in the Roman Empire.

- It stood before the woman to devour her child; this refers to the children's slaughter ordered by Herod.

7. Where did the woman, the church, flee as a result of persecution? Verses 6, 13-16. \_\_\_\_\_

- During the Middle Ages, the believers had to flee because of the persecution of the papacy and they hid in remote, solitary places.
- The wings symbolized the speed with which the church had to flee.

8. How long was the persecuting power against the faithful last? Verses 6, 14.

\_\_\_\_\_ prophetic days.

- The same period is also given as three and a half times. One time equals one year of 360 days, which, when multiplied by 3.5 totals 1,260 days. According to the prophetic key these 1,260 days are literal years. This was the duration of papal supremacy, which lasted from 538 to 1798, when the Pope was imprisoned by the French.

9. How else were persecutions described, and how was the church helped? Verses 15, 16.

*And the serpent cast out of his mouth \_\_\_\_\_ as a flood... And the \_\_\_\_\_ helped the woman.*

- Water symbolizes multitudes of people (Revelation 17:15, which were sent to persecute the faithful.
- The earth helped the woman: during the 16th century Reformation, various European governments protected the lives of the people who were being persecuted. The discovery of America was a great help, since many left Europe and found shelter and freedom there.

10. At the end of the prophecy we see the woman again; this represents the people of God at the end of time. What characteristics will mark the true church? Revelation 12:17.

- a) It was to be a persecuted church. "The dragon.. went to make war with..."
- b) It would be a remnant, a few people (Zephaniah 3:12). c) THEY WOULD KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS.
- d) They would have the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10).

11. What other type of woman does the book of Revelation describe? Revelation 17:1-6.

*It is called \_\_\_\_\_ the great. Babylon means confusion. Babylon is classified as a harlot because it flirts with kings (politicians) instead of belonging only to Christ. She is unfaithful to Him (James 4:4); this too was Israel's sin (Isaiah 1:21, 22).*

- a) Its dominion is universal (waters, Revelation 17:15); its headquarters, Rome, is on seven hills (verse 9); the scarlet color and its wealth in gold (verse 4), the false doctrines it preaches (cup full of abominations); and its history of persecution (verse 6) reveal the identity of the church.
- b) Babylon is a religious system. If there is a mother church, there are also daughters. Who are they? The churches that in some way imitate the church of Rome. For example, they keep Sunday, preach immortality of the soul, or have no objection to participating in war.

## A PURE CHURCH

12. How can the doctrine of the church, whose head is Christ be described? Ephesians 5:23, 26, 27.

13. What should the church of God be like? 1 Timothy 3:15. \_\_\_\_\_

## CONCLUSION

14. What call does God still address to the faithful in Babylon, all those who are in the wrong religious system? Revelation 18:4. \_\_\_\_\_

- Jesus invites us to come into the fold, to be a part of the body which is His church.
- The true people of God are characterized by their obedience to His commandments. Let us be faithful to Jesus, thus showing our love to Him. Let us remain in the vineyard that is surrounded by a protecting wall, and let us remain attached to the vine which is Jesus Christ Himself so we can bear much fruit.

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*My decision: I believe the true church distinguishes itself because it keeps the commandments of God.*     Yes     No  
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