

Characteristics of the Remnant

God's church

God's church is a divinely appointed ministry consisting of faithful followers of God. All through the Bible, God's church is represented by a woman. In the Old Testament, the Lord often used the name "Zion" in referring to His people (Isaiah 51:16), and He declared, "I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman" (Jeremiah 6:2). Likewise in the New Testament, as the bridegroom, Christ is married to His bride—the church. Paul the apostle explained to the believers under his care, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

The Jewish church: Israel was the chosen people portrayed as being married to God, yet often unfaithful (Jeremiah 2:11–22). In Christ's time Jesus saw His church as a barren fig tree, covered with pretentious leaves but destitute of precious fruit.

The Christian church in the New Testament: The true Israel of God was no longer a nation but rather a church composed of Jews and Gentiles who receive Christ as their Saviour. Christ founded His church upon the living Rock.

The underground church during the Dark Ages: The bishop of Rome was declared to be the head over the mainstream church; paganism gave place to the papacy that now persecuted those who loved God. During this period of persecution, conflict, and darkness, the gracious God tenderly cared for His remnant church hidden in the wilderness.

The Remnant church, the end-time church: God has called His church in this day the remnant to stand as a light of the earth, "that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). And there is no doubt that, with us or without us, the Lord will find such a church on earth when He comes. In the interest of our salvation, we certainly want to be part of this small remnant church, the church triumphant, for Christ and His church are inseparable. "Connection with Christ . . . involves connection with His church."

"The church is God's agency for the proclamation of truth, empowered by Him to do a special work; and if she is loyal to Him, obedient to all His commandments, there will dwell within her the excellency of divine grace. If she will be true to her allegiance, if she will honor the Lord God of Israel, there is no power that can stand against her."

The church of God is the pillar of truth. She advocates and practices the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

The remnant

John speaks of the end times and refers to the true people of God in Revelation 12, calling them a remnant against which Satan will make war. Down through the ages, the true church has been God's faithful ones, whom Satan hates but has not been able to force to compromise. Those who have remained true to God in all circumstances, including amid great persecution, are the true remnant. When everyone else compromises his or her principles, the faithful are the ones who overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony (Revelation 12:11). "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (verse 17).

The word remnant is derived from the old French remenant "remaining," from remanoir , "to remain." It implies a small piece or amount; or a small number left over from a larger original piece. There are three different Greek words used in the New Testament, kataleimma, loipoy, and leimma, all of which are translated "remnant." The Greek word used by John is loipos (loipoy), which denotes that which pertains "to the part of a whole which remains or continues " and thus constitutes the rest of the original.

The Lord Jesus has chosen a people to serve Him, a remnant from the time of the fall of Adam. Only Noah's family was faithful at the time of the Flood (Genesis. 6:1–8). Only a few Israelites refused to worship the golden calf in the wilderness (Exodus 32:25, 26). Only Elijah and 7,000 others did not bow down to Baal when Ahab led Israel into national apostasy (1 Kings 19:10–18). Only a few heeded God's call to return from Babylon to Jerusalem in Ezra's time (Ezra 2:1–70).

When the Bible speaks of the remnant church, it likewise refers to a small portion of God's people who remain faithful to God at the end of time. They cling to an unadulterated belief, to the faith and doctrines of the early Christian church, while the majority around them compromise their faith.

The remnant church at the end of time consists of those individuals who, in Christ's strength, keep the commandments of God and speak of the power of Jesus Christ in their life. They have not allowed pagan ideas, idols, and or the worldliness to be introduced into their beliefs. That is the biblical definition of the final remnant. God has always had and will always have a remnant.

Lineage of the remnant

The Jews believed that, since they were the descendants of Abraham, they were the children of God. Roman Catholic theology teaches a similar idea: " Ubi Petrus, ibi ecclesia " (Where Peter is, that's where the church is). But what does the Bible say? Lineal descent from a great patriarch or from an apostle of Jesus, without likeness of their character, does not make us successors of these men of God. Likeness of character is the decisive factor (Matthew 3:9; John 9:39; Romans 9:6–8; 11:22; Galatians 3:7–9).

"Descent from Abraham was proved, not by name and lineage but by likeness of character. So the apostolic succession rests not upon the transmission of ecclesiastical authority but upon spiritual relationship . A life actuated by the apostles' spirit, the belief and teaching of the truth they taught, this is the true evidence of apostolic succession. This is what constitutes men the successors of the first teachers of the gospel."

Jesus states the conditions on which the Lord has promised to recognize us as His people: "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it" (Luke 8:21). "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).

"A profession . . . is nothing in the sight of God; but true, humble, willing obedience to His requirements designates the children of His adoption."

"When we see men firm in principle, fearless in duty, zealous in the cause of God, yet humble and lowly, gentle and tender, patient toward all, ready to forgive, manifesting love for souls for whom Christ died, we do not need to inquire: Are they Christians? They give unmistakable evidence that they have been with Jesus and learned of Him."

Characteristics of God's people

God calls His chosen people upon the earth, " My people. " "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid" (Zephaniah 3:13).

In these scriptures we find the following characteristics:

1. "They shall not do iniquity."
2. "They speak no lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth."

Then, we have these promises:

1. They "shall feed and lie down." and
2. "None shall make them afraid."

God's people are those who will purify their souls by obeying the truth as it is in Jesus. God will have a separate and peculiar people . Their faith is peculiar . Their prospects are peculiar . They are a visible and identifiable church. Revelation 12:17 describes their characteristics in the context of the last days of earth's history. They are identified by three main qualities:

1. They rely on God's grace and keep the commandments of God (Revelation 12:17; 14:12).
2. They uphold the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17). This expression, the testimony of Jesus (marturia iesou), occurs four times in the book of Revelation (1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10) and is identified with the gift of prophecy (verse 10). The remnant is also characterized by having the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12), that is to say, they uphold the teachings of our Saviour Jesus Christ, based on a faith commitment.
3. Finally, the remnant has the patience of the saints (Revelation 14:12). "Patience" here means "endurance." At a time when deception and apostasy appear to prevail, the remnant people resist the constant attacks of the enemy and remain faithful and committed to the Saviour. The Greek word translated "hold" is echontoon, which means to adhere or cling to, to be closely joined to a person or thing. The book of Revelation also speaks of the reward awaiting the remnant (Revelation 2:7).

"The woman" is a symbol of the church, and the seed of the woman is the number of believers in any generation, and "the remnant of her seed" means, of course, the last generation of the church. Here is a positive prophecy that the last church will be characterized by this special feature; they will have the testimony of Jesus Christ. But what is the testimony of Jesus Christ? Revelation 19:10: "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." "Thus the remnant of her seed is the faithful church."

The commandments of God

In this important and interesting period of end-time, God calls His remnant to proclaim His law in the spirit and power of Elias. John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ's first advent—calling the attention of people to the Ten Commandments. Likewise we are to give, with no uncertain sound, the message: "Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come" (Revelation 14:7).

“God’s remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform.”

“He who loves and observes the Sabbath, and maintains the purity of the marriage institution, thereby proves himself the friend of man and the friend of God. He who by precept or example lessens the obligation of these sacred institutions is the enemy of both God and man.”

The seal of God

The Sabbath is identified with the sealing message of Revelation 7, for the Sabbath is God’s seal, His own sign (Ezekiel 20:12, 20). As the character of God, revealed in His law, is imprinted upon the heart of the remnant, they are sanctified in the truth (Isaiah 8:16; Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Corinthians 3:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; John 17:17; Psalm 119:142). When this condition is fully met, then Sabbath keeping is truly a sign of sanctification as well as a sign of distinction. It identifies us as worshippers of the true God and distinguishes us from the children of disobedience (Exodus 31:16–18; Ezekiel 9:4–6). The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty at the close of human probation.

The commandment-keeping people of God are those who will have in their foreheads the seal of the living God (Revelation 14:1, 12; 7:2–4). “In obeying the fourth commandment in spirit and truth, men will obey all the precepts of the Decalogue.”

The faith of Jesus

The remnant are also characterized by having the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12), that is to say, embracing the teachings of Jesus based on a faith commitment to Him.

“Faith in the ability of Christ to save us amply and fully and entirely is the faith of Jesus.”

Faith that works

“Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good. Thus, instead of our own, it leads us to choose His way.”

“Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ and appropriate His merits.”

“[Faith] is the act of the soul by which the whole man is given over to the guardianship and control of Jesus Christ.”

“The faith that justifies always produces first true repentance, and then good works, which are the fruit of that faith.” “Genuine, saving faith is inseparable from repentance and conversion and will manifest the fruits of the Spirit. It is a continual, conscious trust in Jesus.”

“Faith and works go hand in hand; they act harmoniously in the work of overcoming. Works without faith are dead, and faith without works is dead. Works will never save us; it is the merit of Christ that will avail in our behalf. Through faith in Him, Christ will make all our imperfect efforts acceptable to God. The faith we are required to have is not a do-nothing faith; saving faith is that which works by love and purifies the soul.”

“The remnant people of God must be a converted people. The presentation of this message is to result in the conversion and sanctification of souls. We are to feel the power of the Spirit of God in this movement. This is a wonderful, definite message; it means

everything to the receiver, and it is to be proclaimed with a loud cry. We must have a true, abiding faith that this message will go forth with increasing importance till the close of time.

“There are some professed believers who accept certain portions of the Testimonies as the message of God, while they reject those portions that condemn their favourite indulgences. Such persons are working contrary to their own welfare and the welfare of the church. . . .

“A solemn responsibility rests upon those who know the truth that all their works shall correspond with their faith, and that their lives shall be refined and sanctified, and they be prepared for the work that must rapidly be done in these closing days of the message. . . . There are many among us who are deficient in spirituality, and who, unless they are wholly converted, will certainly be lost. Can you afford to run the risk?”

They have a warning message

God is teaching, leading, and guiding His remnant, that they may teach, lead, and guide others. The remnant will also warn those who worship the beast and those who identify themselves with the image of the beast, telling them that they will face the wrath of God (Revelation 14:9–11). It is the duty of the remnant to call God’s people who are still in Babylon to come out and to be part of the remnant reaffirming their commitment to the truth (Revelation 18:4). Thus the remnant and those coming out of Babylon will constitute the fullness of God’s remnant before His coming. This remnant announce the judgment hour, proclaim salvation through Christ, and herald the approach of His second advent. It is a solemn duty.

They are overcomers

“The people of God afflict their souls before Him, pleading for purity of heart.”

Through His strength they obtain “the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name” (Revelation 15:2).

They will “have endured the anguish of the time of Jacob’s trouble; they have stood without an intercessor through the final outpouring of God’s judgments.”

The overcomers will be pillars in God’s temple and will have written in the forehead the name of God, the name of the new Jerusalem, and Jesus’ new name (Revelation 3:12). The remnant are not only pardoned and accepted, but honoured. “A fair mitre” is set upon their heads. They will be as kings and priests unto God and follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:4, 5).

Covered with the robe of Christ’s righteousness

“The spotless robe of Christ’s righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, yet faithful children of God. The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world.” “The palms signify that they have gained the victory, and the white robes that they have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ.”

“Christ, only Christ and His righteousness, will obtain for us a passport into heaven.”

The few who are part of the remnant have a sincere, earnest, affectionate longing after God. They are wholehearted in doing God’s will. They do not perform mere lip service but render actual heart service. They walk humbly with God in meekness and contrition of spirit, and the Lord recognizes them and gives them the grace of His Holy Spirit, in order

that they may do the work, according to their ability, which God gives them to do (Micah 6:6–8). They are labourers together with God. They claim no wisdom of their own but acknowledge that divine power alone can enable them (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Conclusion

The remnant do not merely make a profession but actually keep the commandments of God (Revelation 12:17; 14:12) from the heart, by the power and grace that Jesus provides. They do not join the world. They separate themselves from all worldliness (James 4:4), not seeking worldly recognition or honor (Revelation 13:15–17; chapters 14 and 15).

The remnant are faithful to God and His truth and thus to the church. “The church is the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). They take the final warning to the entire world and proclaim the message of that other angel with power.

These are believers that conquer selfishness. As a result of the death of Christ on the cross of Calvary, they no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them (2 Corinthians 5:15). The remnant are among the 144,000, which were redeemed from the earth. “In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Revelation 14:5). “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14).

The remnant go through a mighty conflict before they become the church triumphant, as described in Revelation 13, 14, 15, and 17:14. They understand that belonging to the church does not mean that they belong to Christ, but belonging to Christ means that they need to belong to the church.

“The remnant church will acknowledge God in His law and will have the prophetic gift. Obedience to the law of God, and the spirit of prophecy has always distinguished the true people of God.”

If you have these characteristics in your life, you will be part of the remnant:

Salvation is not guaranteed through membership in any church. We are saved as individuals, not as a church. It's a great privilege and responsibility, being part of this church, because we have a sacred calling. As members of God's remnant church, we must pray with firm faith for the grace of God, for even greater, genuine faith and for a consistent life.