

STORACLES OF PROPHECY

A Tale of Two Women

1 Kings 3:16-28

A hush fell over the royal judgment hall, and all eyes were fixed on King Solomon. His servants wondered how the young monarch would resolve this perplexing case.

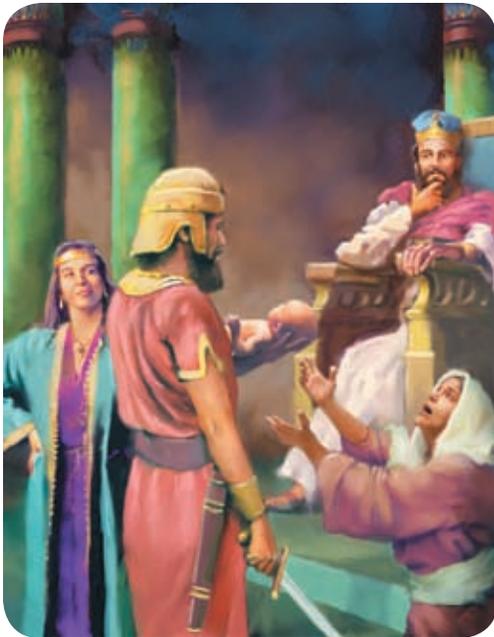
Two single mothers were sharing a room, and each gave birth to a baby boy at about the same time. During the night, one of the mothers had accidentally turned over and smothered her son. When she awoke early and saw her child was cold and still, the distraught woman took her roommate's sleeping baby to herself and laid her dead baby in its place. Later the other mother awoke, saw the dead baby, and began to wail with grief. But

after examining the infant, she quickly realized that it was not her child. Across the room, she could see her roommate tightly clutching her baby.

Now both women stood before the king, tugging for possession of the living infant. "This child is mine!" one shouted. "No, the dead baby was yours!" the other countered.

How would the king determine which was the true mother? Solomon interrupted their debate and told a guard to take a sword and divide the living infant in two. At first the soldier thought the king was jesting, but Solomon began to glare at the guard's hesitation. Slowly he drew his sharp, gleaming sword and made his way toward the woman holding the baby. Suddenly the true mother threw herself at the king's feet and pleaded, "Let her have the child, but please do not slay it!" But the other woman said, "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it." Now Solomon knew without a doubt who was the true mother.

In prophecy, a woman is a symbol of a church (Jeremiah 6:2). With so many churches in the last days, how can we distinguish the true, last-day church that has the living Son from the counterfeits? Like Solomon, we must use the sword of God's Word (Hebrews 4:12)!



Fill in the blanks after reading each Bible text.

1. How does Revelation picture God's true church?

Revelation 12:1, 2, 5 A _____ clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with _____ cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. ... And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a _____ of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

NOTE: In Bible prophecy, God's church is symbolized by a pure woman (Jeremiah 6:2). In Revelation 12, this woman is clothed with the sun, moon, and stars—the natural light of God's creation. Jesus told the church, "Ye are the light of the world." Matthew 5:14. The sun represents the light of Jesus (Psalm 84:11; Malachi 4:2). The moon under her feet represents the types and shadows of the Old Testament sacrificial system. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, so the sacrificial system was helpful because it reflected the light of the Messiah to come (Colossians 2:16, 17; Hebrews 10:1). The 12 stars above her head symbolize the leadership of the church—12 tribes in the Old Testament and 12 apostles in the New Testament. The one who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron is Jesus (Psalm 2:7-9; Revelation 19:13-16).

2. Who is the "great red dragon," and what does he try to do?

Revelation 12:9 *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the _____, and _____.*

Revelation 12:4 *The dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to _____ her child as soon as it was born.*

NOTE: The dragon is Satan, who at the time of Jesus' birth was working through the pagan Roman Empire. Satan influenced Herod, a ruler under Rome, to try to murder baby Jesus by killing all the infants in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16).

3. What happens after Satan fails to destroy Jesus?

Revelation 12:5 *And her child was _____ unto God, and to his throne.*

NOTE: After His resurrection, Jesus ascended up to heaven and to God's throne (Acts 1:9-11), where He was beyond the reach of Satan.

4. After Jesus was caught up to heaven, what did Satan do to the church?

Revelation 12:13 *When the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he _____ the woman which brought forth the man child.*

NOTE: When Satan could no longer vent his hatred on Jesus, he decided to hurt Jesus by turning his fury against the church.

5. Where did the woman go during this terrifying period of persecution? How long did it last?

Revelation 12:6 *And the woman fled into the _____, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*

NOTE: The woman (God's church) fled into the wilderness (the remote places of earth) to hide from her enemies. It is a well-known historical fact that during the Dark Ages, God's people fled to the caves and solitary places of earth, including the shores of America, to seek religious freedom and protection from papal persecution. The 1,260 days (also described in the Bible as 42 months or as three and a half years) refers to the terrible 1,260-year period of persecution during which millions died for their faith. During this time period, God's church was alive but was not identifiable as an official, visible organization. (See the supplement entitled "Years of Persecution.")

6. What are two other identifying marks of God's true church?

Revelation 12:17 *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the _____ of God, and have the _____ of Jesus Christ.*

NOTE: God's remnant church, into which He is calling all His people, will keep God's Ten Commandments (including the Sabbath). It will also have the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit, or gift, of prophecy (Revelation 19:10). God calls His end-time church "the remnant," because it is identical in doctrine and characteristics to the apostolic church. A "remnant" is the last remaining portion of a bolt of cloth. It is exactly like the first piece from the same bolt.

7. How did Jesus say that we demonstrate our love for Him?

John 14:15 *If ye love me, _____ my commandments.*

1 John 5:3 *For this is the love of God, that we keep his _____.*

NOTE: In our opening story, Solomon was able to identify the true mother by her genuine display of love. In the same way, God's true church will be recognized by its sacrificial love and its willingness to obey His commandments.

8. What three angelic messages will God's end-time church be preaching?

A. Revelation 14:7 *Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his _____ is come: and _____ him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

B. Revelation 14:8 *And there followed another angel, saying, _____ is _____, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*

C. Revelation 14:9, 10 *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the _____ and his image, and receive his _____ in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.*

NOTE: These three angelic statements represent the three urgent messages that God's church will preach before Jesus returns.

9. To whom will God's church preach these messages?

Revelation 14:6 *Having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to _____, and kindred, and tongue, and people.*

NOTE: God's end-time church will preach this great three-point message to every nation on earth.

10. What specifications has God given in His Word to help us positively identify His end-time church?

A. *It will appear and do its visible work after it emerges from the wilderness in 1798 (Revelation 12:6, 13-17).*

B. *It will teach the same truths the apostles taught, and all of its teachings will agree with the Bible (Revelation 12:17).*

C. *It will keep the Ten Commandments, including the Bible Sabbath (Revelation 12:17).*

D. *It will have the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 12:17; 19:10).*

E. *It will proclaim God's three end-time messages with a loud voice (Revelation 14:6-14).*

F. *It will be a worldwide movement (Revelation 14:6).*

G. *It will teach the everlasting gospel, which is salvation through Jesus Christ alone (Revelation 14:6).*

NOTE: Many lovely Christians are members of churches that do not meet the above seven specifications. However, no such church can be God's remnant into which He is calling all His sincere children, because His end-time church must meet all seven specifications.

11. Jesus gives you these seven prophetic identification points and then says, "Go and find My church." What does He promise regarding your search?

Luke 11:9 *Seek, and ye shall _____.*

12. How many church organizations in the world will fit these seven points?

Ephesians 4:5 *One Lord, _____, one baptism.*

NOTE: Only one church in the entire world fits all of these specifications—the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is bringing you these seminar messages. It is right now preaching the great three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12 all over the world. Millions are responding.

13. Many denominations call themselves Christian. Does that make them God’s true church?

Isaiah 4:1 *And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own _____ and wear our own _____: only let us be called by thy _____, to take away our reproach.*

NOTE: Bread is a symbol of the Word of God (John 6:35, 51, 52, 63), and apparel is a symbol of righteousness (Revelation 19:8). The seven women in this prophecy have their own bread (concept of truth) and want to keep their own clothing (righteousness). They do not want the spotless robes of Christ’s righteousness. All they want is to take the name of Jesus, probably because the Bible says, “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12.

14. Once a person discovers God’s true end-time church, is it necessary to become a member?

Acts 2:47 *And the Lord _____ to the _____ daily such as should be saved.*

NOTE: Yes, membership in God’s end-time church is imperative. Notice how clearly God answers this question about membership:

- We are all called into one body (Colossians 3:15).
- That body is the church (Colossians 1:18).
- We enter that body by baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13).

It is just as imperative to enter God’s church today as it was to enter the ark in Noah’s day. The Lord says, “Come thou and all thy house into the ark.” Genesis 7:1.

15. How many ways of escape were there in Noah’s day?

Hebrews 11:7 *By faith Noah ... prepared an _____ to the saving of his house.*

NOTE: Jesus says that the time just before His second coming will be like Noah’s day (Luke 17:26). There will be only one way of escape, just as there was only one ark in Noah’s day.

16. Since there are many faithful Christians in other churches and since God has only one true remnant, what will happen to these sincere Christians?

John 10:16 *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must _____, and they shall _____ my voice; and there shall be _____ fold, and one shepherd.*

Revelation 18:2, 4 *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen. ... _____ of her, my _____, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

NOTE: Jesus will call all of His faithful, honest followers to come out of Babylon. They will hear His voice, respond, and enter His one true, end-time church.

Your Response

Jesus is calling you today to enter the safety of His great end-time church. You are very precious to Him. Will you respond now to His call?

ANSWER: _____

Supplement

This section provides additional information for further study.

Years of Persecution

The 1,260 years of tribulation is repeatedly mentioned in the Bible, because historically it was the worst ever to face God's people (Matthew 24:21). It is referred to as 1,260 days, 42 months, and three and one-half times, or years (Revelation 12:6, 14; 13:5; Daniel 7:25). Using the Jewish calendar, which had 360 days in a year, all three add up to the same amount of time—1,260 years. One prophetic day equals one literal year (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34).

History clearly shows that the papacy was the power which persecuted for 1,260 years. The period began in A.D. 538, when papal power became supreme in Christendom according to the decree of Roman Emperor Justinian. In it, he acknowledged the bishop of Rome as the head of all churches. This letter became a part of Justinian's Code, the fundamental law of the empire. The period ended in 1798 when Napoleon's general, Alexander Berthier, took the pope captive. At least 50 million Christians died for their faith during this period of persecution.

Three Crucial Points

Three facts of utmost importance to God's people are established in Revelation 12:10-12. These facts are:

1. Jesus defeated Satan, the accuser of the brethren, at the cross.
2. All of us can overcome him through the blood of Jesus and by sharing our testimonies.
3. The devil is infuriated because he knows that his time is short. We cannot expect him to behave like a gentleman. He is our bitterest enemy.

The message is that Jesus, who has defeated Satan, offers His matchless power to us as a free gift. With Jesus' power in our lives, we cannot fail. Satan's fury need not affect us. He is a defeated foe. He was defeated in the war in heaven and cast out. He was defeated by Jesus at the cross and lost his dominion. He will be defeated legally in his case in the judgment, and he will again be defeated when he attacks God's holy city. Finally, he will suffer the defeat of being blotted from the face of the earth in the lake of fire. And, most wonderful of all, Jesus promises that he will be defeated in his bitter fight to destroy you and me. What a tremendous message of hope from Jesus!