

Bible Study – The History Of The Church Since 1844

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First of all, in the late 1700's and early 1800's we had (and I have one of their brochures) The Testimony of Joseph Smith. He was the originator of the Mormon church. We will find here in those early years that, initially, the first encounter he had with a spirit being was a very dark circumstance. He described it as darkness. God is a God of light, not darkness. He had another revelation come along with another spirit being and he described it as the being's feet were suspended above the ground. So here was another spirit being which he interpreted as being from God; and that interpretation impressed him. This was the angel or the fallen angel—the demon—that actually gave him the golden plates from which he translated to the people who were there with him. This formed the basis of the book of Mormon and things of that nature. My point here is that we are dealing with an epic that was influenced greatly by demons. We need to acknowledge the truth of that.

Going on a little further from his experience, you get into Ellen G. White and the same thing happened to her. I have literally boxes of their literature, and some of them will describe her as a young girl—fifteen years old. If you recall those very large heavy bibles they used to have. Well she could hold one of those, as a weak young girl, at arms' length for fifteen minutes without faltering a bit. She also always described this spirit that was the same spirit that returned to her all the time—it was the same one; a familiar spirit. She always described it by spelling it out and she would spell it out, D-A-R-K. interesting—very similar experience to Joseph Smith's. I mention those things as background just to give you a feeling of what was going on in this country in the early part of the 1800's.

Then we have William Miller coming along and he started a movement that grew to 100,000 people. At that time, he was predicting that Jesus was going to return on October 22, 1844. That was 175 years ago, just a few more days from us now. What is the date today? the 18th? Is that right? It was on the 22nd that that was supposed to happen. It was called the Great Disappointment, so you can imagine what happened. We should have learned our lesson and the church in general should have learned the lesson when we made similar assertions about 1975 and then '82 and so forth.

You can imagine what happened back then because many of the people sold their farms. Most of that movement—he was right on the border of eastern New York state above Albany and right adjacent to Vermont. How they gathered 100,000 people is amazing to me. No internet, no kind of things we now have electronically and yet the conditions were so grave in this country at that time, as they are so often, that people were desperate for Jesus to return. They waited on that hillside after giving up, selling their jewelry, their farms and they waited and they waited and nothing happened. I tell you, that's why they call it the Great Disappointment. It was just like in our own history. I was one of the ones who had to write answers back to disillusioned people after we had

made predictions, similar in nature to that kind of thing. People were upset, and I tell you, some of them threw the baby out with the bath water and many were terribly hurt and disillusioned. In like fashion, there were many cases when some of our people sold their farms and then later on prices had gone up and they didn't have the money again to repurchase those things. All kinds of hardships resulted from that. There are a lot of parallels here.

Out of that, it took several decades for people to recover from that Great Disappointment. But, after a while, largely starting around the states of Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, those areas, people wanted to group together again because many of them were of like mind. That whole thing started again. It was by Robert Coulter, who is no relation to Fred, and it's called the story of the church of God Seventh Day. It is a free booklet that really, I think most of us should own because our legacy comes from them as we'll see in a little bit. As a matter of fact, I have one sheet here that was written at their 100th anniversary by John Keats who was one of their elders and I have twenty-one points that were enforced—true points of doctrine—that had already been established. This report was 1963 but many of these things had already been ironed out and established by the brethren 100 years earlier. If any of you are interested in looking at some of the points, I have them up here. There was beginning to be a history of true doctrine that was being established by sincere people. At that time most of them were not Sabbath keepers. There was a fellow by the name of Bates who was a very important name in history at that time. He was from Maine and he would come down and he introduced the Sabbath to not only numbers of these brethren, but also to Ellen White and ultimately her husband as well. He encouraged them to become Sabbath keepers.

The point of bringing all of this up is that some of our people think and many who don't know much about us, they will ask the question. Maybe some of you have had a similar experience of people, if you say I keep the Sabbath, oh are you a Seventh Day Adventist? Have any of you had that experience? I see a number of you have. The point of it is, there was a great falling out of these brethren as the Whites began to establish themselves and Ellen began to have visions. She had over 200 visions from this spirit being who would reveal things and many of the doctrines. I tell you they are really off the wall—I mean really, really bad—they are not truthful. Some of the people—this group of people, in general, resisted that because they began to study their Bibles and found that her visions were not in accordance with what scripture says—to their credit. So, they rejected her and her visions and they began to pull away from her, whereas Ellen and her husband James kept their organization. It became a very large group and even in southern California, they had their big hospital and college down in Loma Linda in southern California. She has holdings up in the wine region up in northern California, above 'Frisco so they went their way. But the point I'm trying to make here is that the Church of God that has followed true doctrine has never been part of the Seventh Day Adventist church. I think that is important to understand and keep in mind. We have never been a part of the Seventh Day Adventist people. We are an entirely different group in spirit. Even a recent sermonette was speaking about

differences in spirit and that's what I'm talking about here. There's a different spirit here. Those things are very interesting.

Interestingly also, the Church of God in the 1940's had a division themselves. They had a major split also and the reasons for that split was that headquarters—their headquarters there—was trying to be overcontrolling in matters of policy and doctrine. The rest of their pastors wished to be more autonomous and more independent and they had a big division rising up. They had a major split at that time, spearheaded by A.N. Dagger. There are two Daggars—A.F. is the father and A.N. is the son. A.N. was a very influential and prominent person because he heavily influenced the leadership which became the future Radio Church of God and which ultimately became the Worldwide Church of God.

Along that line, I also have two charts that have to do with prophecy. One was from The Plain Truth back in 1939. The one that Worldwide and that the Church has used for decades and decades was one that was printed in 1952. I have that one also. This earlier one was given to me by a longtime member and I have a copy of that here also, that was copyrighted back in 1939. My question was, where did this chart come from? This is the chart that equates all of the European, major nations if you recall as well as the ancient nations and tries to make a chart of them and correlate them into an end time setting. The problem is that there are many mistakes in the chart. I have personally written a number of papers showing what some of the differences are in the chart. This has influenced our ministry in our legacy, all these years. I wondered, where did this come from? In answer to that, I called the headquarters of Church of God, Seventh Day and they had no record of these charts, no knowledge of it whatsoever, so I called the author of this book—Robert Coulter—and we talked for over an hour. I outlined the problem and he had never seen the chart himself, which I ultimately sent to him. He was mentioning that this chart was originally started by, not A.F. the father, but the son—A.N. Dugger—who presented this to the leadership of the Church of God Seventh Day and they rejected it. That is one of the reasons why A.N. Dugger left and formed his own group. There's a long history associated with this but I finally found out where the origin of this came from. It was not, as our 1952 copyright shows, established at that time. Interestingly, when the leadership of Worldwide wrote and put out the booklet on Jesus is the God of the Old Testament, it caused me to wonder about these various copyrights. I also have the booklet on our holy days and the copyright on this booklet is 1957. My point is, it seems that many of the decisions after that booklet about Jesus being the God of the Old Testament was put out, many of those decisions were wrong. They were not biblical and there's one scripture that I think explains this. That's over in Isaiah—notice the phrasing over in Isaiah 30. Notice what it says in verse 1. Very pointedly and eloquently. He is reprimanding the children of Israel and says:

Isaiah 30:1 *...that take counsel, but not of me;* (KJV)

And goes further on and it says:

1 continued) ... but not of my spirit ... (KJV)

That to me is a very important scripture because it shows that we can seek God, but I think Jeremiah (if I remember) it's Jeremiah 11, who also said the house of Israel was going according to their own dictates. It says that in different words. They were making decisions, but not of God's Spirit but of their own minds. That is what was going on at this time here. If you begin to reject God's truth, as the end of 2 Thessalonians 2 mentions, God just says, alright, if you don't love the truth then He gives people up to believe the lie. It's just like the end of Proverbs 1 dealing with young people. God says look, I have this wisdom to give to you but if you reject it, you are just going to have to learn by hard experience and even when you cry out to me, I'm not going to listen. I tell you, rejecting truth is a very serious matter because it results then in people beginning to form doctrines which they think are truth but they're not of God's Spirit and they are their own imaginations. That is why we need to study carefully and see what the Bible says, not what comes out of our minds. We have this kind of thing but every time I read our holy day booklet—how could we get so far away? Believe me when I say it's such a blessing to understand truth and we have to begin to restore some of this understanding. It isn't us that is doing it, it's God and His mercy who is opening up our minds to understand these things and has given us the understanding of so many things. It's just beautiful and I just cannot emphasize this enough.

Much more can be said but I hope that I'm giving you the general feeling of some of the problems that the church has had over the years. Some of the people, if I understand Revelation 3 correctly, the end is true even about Sardis, it even mentions in that description that there are few rows that God acknowledges as being righteous people and there are some people from even that era that are going to be first fruits. I can't emphasize enough the importance of being a first fruit and becoming worthy of being a first fruit. It says in Hebrews that it is a special blessing—it's different. It mentions over in Revelation 20 that we are going to be kings and priests—it's hard for us to understand because we are so physically oriented. To understand that we are coming into an area of God's throne where there are millions of attending spirit beings. Tremendous amounts of people—we can't begin to imagine the grandeur and the majesty and to be associated with that is going to be such a different experience for all of us. As Paul said, really, we see through such a glass darkly, so that we can hardly understand what we are going to be doing—all of us. Being a first fruit and becoming worthy of becoming a first fruit, that's what I have been concerned about because I see all of my imperfections. Things that I have not overcome yet. I want to be there, I really do. I really with all my heart wish to be there and just give up all of my aspirations—whatever God says, just like David said, he would be happy if he was just a gate keeper. We're told that we're going to be servants of God and kings and priests and some function there that we can hardly identify with as human beings now. Our lives are going to be different brethren. We are going to be in a completely different dimension, a completely different dimension. These are things that excite me, I hope they excite you too.

As I said I have charts and all of these things, if any of you wish to see anything further.

We can go on—I'm trying to quickly go over many things, because one of the things I wanted to cover was one of the big problems that we've had, as I mentioned, during the 1940's. There was this split in the Church of God Seventh Day which resulted in their separation and it was about church government. I would like to give you a sort of resume, starting from the book of Deuteronomy and show you the models and the examples that the Bible gives us and that I think are relevant to what we're talking about. I want you to look at a scripture that when I saw it first, it really blew my mind away too. How many times have you heard in past years that this is the work of God? So many times, churches will claim, we're doing the work of God. Do you know there's a definition of what the work of God is, in the scripture? Turn with me over to John 6. I was really surprised to read this because it presents an entirely different viewpoint. Notice what Jesus Himself explained.

John 6:28 *Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*

29) *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, [notice this] that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. (KJV)*

What a definition that is. This is the work of God. God has given us the ability to believe in all that His Son has done for us and does for us continually, through His Spirit. Now that brings up a whole number of scriptures. Principally, one of them is Ephesians 2:10 that mentions, we are the workmanship of God. Do you recall that? Check that out in Ephesians 2:10. We are His workmanship to do good works and that brings us back to Isaiah 64 that mentions that God is our great master Potter and He is fashioning us like we are the clay, as that scripture says, but He is fashioning us, through His Spirit to become like He is. He is making us like Him, like I explained where we had been begotten by His Spirit in our minds and by that same spirit and power—oh my—what a God we serve Who can do such things.

One thing I forgot to mention about the spirit going up to heaven—think about that too. The spirit goes to heaven and you need to keep in mind that there are four resurrections. There's a resurrection of the first fruits—that's before the millennium. We have two resurrections, one of Israel that's mentioned in Ezekiel 37 and also one of the Gentiles that Matthew 25 explains and the time setting of that, is when Jesus returns with His angels. Those are opportunities for salvation for unconverted people at that time. My point in mentioning this is, the fourth resurrection is one to condemnation and destruction, which is the lake of fire, of people who just refuse to obey God and accept Him in any way. But what a God He is to have all these spirits—spirits are records of our intelligence of our mind and He has like a great giant computer or whatever He has, to keep a record of these things of everybody who has ever lived. Can you imagine that? Then at the appropriate time, give various opportunities of salvation to different groups of people. That's a kind of God Who is beyond our comprehension—of such power, that such a thing could be done but that is exactly what is happening.

Going on a little bit further, I want to mention those things but if you go back to Deuteronomy 30—you all know this scripture very well. Starting in verse 17, which says,

I present life or death to you. You have to make a choice. We are given free moral agency. God gives us a liberty of freedom to make choices so that's why it's so important to learn to make right choices. Deuteronomy 30 gives that kind of information and you go on, still in Deuteronomy, go back to chapter 17. In chapter 17, starting with verse 14, because God even foresaw that Israel would reject Him because there are so many other scriptures that describe God as the supreme King over everything. God is the Creator, it's His creation, He is the King over everything. God foresaw that Israel would reject Him, which they did in Samuel 8 and it even mentions where God says they have not rejected you Samuel, but they have rejected Me as being King. Even after a thorough description was made as to how the king would put them to work for his purposes and they would be indentured to him and subject to him in all things and life would not be the same at all. The chapter goes on and these were specific instructions that God gave to the king that they would choose. If you know the section, you know it mentions don't take a whole group of wives, don't take all of the money for yourself, don't go after chariots because chariots represented weapons of war and horses and so forth—don't do those things, but then it tells the king to sit down and write the words of this law. All the time so that his heart does not become above his brethren. Notice that phrase in that section. Even there, there's a caution there and an insight there that even a king—God is no respecter of persons—even kings and everybody who is in positions of some measure of authority, they are subject to the same laws of God and the same judgment standards that God has. God's standards of judgment as Matthew 25 mentions is how we deal and interact with each other. How we interact in love with each other. As you do it to this other person, Jesus said in Matthew 25, so you're doing it to Me. It's how we interact with people that is the standard of God's judgment of us—one of the standards. As has been brought out, there are other things to consider as well. That is a foundation standard. That's a remarkable scripture to me where He's cautioning the king. Just because you are in authority that does not give you the right to lord over all the other brethren—you should not do that. There's even a restriction mentioned in that scripture.

Going on a little further, go to Leviticus 25. This is a wonderful scripture because it's given on the Day of Atonement and has been described in Mr. Railston's sermon on Atonement. One of the subject matters is reconciliation. It is giving opportunity for people who have made mistakes or had serious things fall on them to start all over again. Also, in there, it mentions that this gives liberty. This is the year of jubilee, it's a year of liberty. Jesus came to preach liberty. Going on with that thought, in Leviticus 25 it also mentions, if you'll notice in verse 14, it's mentioned several times that you shall not oppress each other. Even in that statement there, in connection with the subject of liberty, there is also instruction that you should not lord it over other people. I think that comes a little bit later. It's also phrased that you should not lord it over people. If my notation is right it is in verse 43 and 46 where that is mentioned—don't lord over other people. God has given, just like back in Deuteronomy, the right of freedom of choice and we are all individuals. I will expand that a little further in a moment, as to what the apostles said about that. That is a remarkable section and that whole section dealing with the Day of Atonement, I tell you there is a lot to consider about this matter of

freedom and liberty and not lording over and being released from any kind of spiritual bondage, even in our understanding of some of the details of the Day of Atonement.

Going on a little further, of course one of the key scriptures in the New Testament is in Matthew 20. Here we have, directly after the foot washing and Jesus obviously understood their attitudes here. They were bickering about who was going to be greatest in the Kingdom of God. You know the scriptures very well, let's read that because the churches have read this but we really have not understood it or put this into practice in the way that we should have. You all know this scripture because it's been repeated so many times, but look at this carefully. They were trying to get positions and even Jesus said those positions are not Mine to give. Those things come from the Father; those are his decisions. You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and exercise authority over them, but he gave a specific command—that's the amazing thing. A specific strong command; it shall not be done among you. I tell you, that has gone unheeded for so many years. Maybe stabs at that have been made at different times but most of the time, as I even mentioned in the early church history of the Church of God Seventh Day—matters of abuse of authority came up and divided them. Here He's telling us, don't lord it over others, which is completely in harmony with all of the scriptures that I just read to you, that are saying the same thing—all of them. Through Deuteronomy, in Leviticus—they are all consistent. Everything comes together. He's speaking that we have a freedom and a liberty.

This matter of liberty is very important, but I want to see if I've completed this. There's a scripture over in the last verse of 2 Corinthians 1. The apostles understood this. There's a statement over there about giving the joy—you should read that because it's a statement that is showing we're not here in the ministry to lord over people. It's to support them in their joy and to build them up and give encouragement. The same thing is mentioned over in 1 Peter 5, it is one famous example too. Here's Peter and he says, I'm a fellow elder—he was one of the apostles who saw Christ. That is the definition that the Bible gives of an apostle, those who had the experience of seeing Him in His resurrected form. Peter didn't try to push himself up into a high position. He mentioned himself as a fellow elder and he tells the other fellow elders to shepherd God's people. Because the ministry is to be like a shepherd, shepherding very, very gently and lovingly the sheep under their jurisdiction and not to lord it over them. It's a completely different point of view.

In line with that, I would like to go back to one scripture—two scriptures actually—about liberty. One is in Galatians 5. Let's go over to Galatians 5 for a moment, in verse 13, notice how this is phrased. Read that for yourself, you can read it a lot faster than I can read it. We have liberty but he cautions them not to use liberty according to the flesh but to love each other. In other words, don't use the liberty that you have to just succumb to all of your carnal inclinations towards disobedience towards God. What he's saying is that we have liberty within the laws of God. That's what he is saying, in different terms. We have liberty, really as Christian people, but within the laws of God; not according to our own lusts and desires. Peter says the same thing over in chapter 2:16. If you'll check that—two very important scriptures. I think Peter mentions that we shouldn't use

our liberty for matters of vice, of going against God and God's laws. We have liberty which is a sense of freedom, but all within God's laws.

The ministry is really there just to help the brethren to have unity of mind and for works of service. The whole problem was started over in the early years by 1 Corinthians 12:28, as I recall that. That was coupled with Ephesians 4:11 and over in 1 Corinthians 12:28, it mentions first we have apostles, then second evangelists, if you recall the order there, then it gets to the third one we have—so there's a numerical order that was interpreted as being rank. They coupled that leadership at that time, especially in the early '60's, with Ephesians 4 because it mentions there the various offices. Paul uses the term office for all of these things over in Romans 12. In Ephesians 4 it mentions apostles and prophets and apostles don't even exist at the moment, neither does the prophet, in the Old Testament sense of the word. That's why they started with evangelists because they had evangelists at that time. So, they put evangelist at the top and then we had under that, pastors. But that whole system breaks down because in the context of those verses is also mentioned, other lines of service which have nothing to do with people doing things of some authority or anything of that nature. What was not understood is the "firstly, secondly, thirdly" words are all adverbs. Where it mentions back in 1 Corinthians 12:28, those are adverbs which were even translated that way in the Philips translation; that he understood that as well as some of the others did. In other words, the first, second and third are just manners of itemization. It's like you have a grocery list and you're just running down the list, first, second, third, fourth and so forth. It was misunderstood and made into a system of ranks. We had evangelists over pastors, pastors over elders, elders even had a differentiation between a preaching elder and a regular elder who did a lot of the grunt work. It was a false, wrong system that goes completely contrary with what I just outlined in the rest of the Bible. It continually shows direction by God not to lord over each other, not to rule over each other. As the section in 1 Corinthians 12 through 14 mentions the example there is one of the human body that all of the parts of the human body are necessary.

Paul said I have authority but my authority is not to break down or discourage but to build up. That's what all of us should be doing. The ministry is here to help the people in love and tenderness and to give encouragement. But spiritually speaking, we are all under the laws of God and we are all under the judgment of God—every single one of us. It makes no difference whatsoever. Like I keep saying, we are all in the same boat here. When I came to understand the problem—I wondered how shall this be best expressed and explained. Because I really didn't know how to explain it until I began going through the Old Testament examples which showed the consistency of what Jesus was saying. He was just repeating the same principles that are given in Deuteronomy, Leviticus and all of those Old Testament scriptures. Don't lord over each other because, as Jesus said I think in Matthew 23, you are all brethren. I am the Teacher and Jesus was the Teacher, but everything He taught us and is teaching us is from the Father and has already been expressed. Everything we have is from the Father. He is the One who is fashioning us as He is and He has given us a freedom as His children. Just like with our own children, if we have responsible children, we give them freedom because we have confidence in the kind of decisions they are going to

make. God wants us to come to the place where we are making righteous decisions that are pleasing to Him, as well as being beneficial to ourselves. So, there is a consistency all through here. I hope that just this brief exposition of some of the things that have happened in our histories has been beneficial. Certainly, there are many, many other things, but these are some of the main things that have concerned me and have caused the church a lot of hardship and a lot of grief over the years. Thank God that we can have the kind of government now that God originally ordained and that we can enjoy growing in love and service toward each other Brethren.

Let's stop and be thankful with those things in mind. I'll conclude with that thought.

As I still have a little bit of time left, I did want to point you to a number of other things. This is for your benefit though. There is a book called In the Beginning by Alister McGrath. He is one of the Deans of the History of Theology in Oxford over in England. Oxford is where Tindale was doing his studies and he was killed because he was finding out many mistakes in the King James Version. Originally it was Jerome whose Vulgate bible was created and it lasted for a thousand years. But they inserted in the Vulgate many terms to substantiate the governing system of the Catholic Church. So, what happened was, they put in terms like bishops, bishoprics, ruling over you, obedience to authority and ministry and words that were not in the bible. Even Adam Clarke, if you have the old Adam Clarke's Commentary which many of us do, go into Chapter 13 of Hebrews and you will find that he himself back in the 1800's is correcting some of those mistranslations.

Well, this book goes over the history of how all that happened. There was a Catholic bishop who had control over the translators and he made sure that these wrong words from the Vulgate were inserted in the King James Version. King James himself was very appreciative of this because he believed in the divine authority of Kings and so consequently, he felt that such words could bolster his authority. He needed to read Deuteronomy 17.

The other document you can all get on the internet is called The Great Ecclesiastical Conspiracy. It is compiled by 3 authors who are Greek scholars and they go through the history and all of the terms that I just mentioned, especially in Chapter 2. This is available free, I copied this myself from our computer and so you can do the same thing. Very interesting reading, as it goes through all of the Greek exposition of these things as well, and in layman's language. So, it is easy to understand, but it is a source though that will show you, that even here we have things to correct and to bring a correct understanding because Satan has inserted these things to be put in. I should add, in the 1960's what the ministry at that time and practically everybody else was using was the King James Version as their source of authority. Many of the newer versions hadn't even appeared yet. So, the King James was their authority. They were picking on all these terms here which were really very, very misleading and contributed then to a whole false system of over lording and legitimizing it which it wasn't but they thought then it was legitimate to have this kind of an over lording. But it wasn't and God has released us from all that and I tell you we should be very, very thankful because we can truly begin to grow. We can have love for each other because there are no divisions

between us. We are all here under God's judgment and as Jesus said He came to serve and we need to learn to serve not only God, but each other also.

Well, believe it or not I still have 10 minutes left, but I feel comfortable in bringing this to a close at the moment.

So I hope that this was of some value to all of you but if there are any questions I want to mention here that in whatever way, if there are any questions in the future, don't hesitate to email me because my wife reads all of the emails and if we can be of any help to you, please don't hesitate to email us and I will do my best to give you as good an answer as I know. So, we are here to help you in any way we can. So please don't hesitate to do that and we look forward to getting to know all of you even greater in the months and years ahead. I hope I can find other ways to be of greater service to you.