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## **The Remnant Theology**

By Pastor Reimar A. C. Schultze

Throughout Bible history, there runs a golden thread - it is the remnant of God's people, the lifeline for the church. "except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah"—Isaiah 1:9.

How important is a remnant? It is indispensable for the survival of the church! God will punish the church when she is in sin, as he did Israel again and again for her transgressions, causing foreign armies to devastate her. But because of the uncompromising remnant of God's people, Israel has never experienced the total devastation of Sodom and Gomorrah. Israel still is with us today - because of the remnant people. My friend, what will preserve your church or nation is not the multitude of half-hearted worshipers, but the very small remnant in the midst of her, a remnant that serves Jesus only and not also.

Let us now look at the history of the remnant. As soon as Adam and Eve were shut out of paradise, you have the beginning of two strands of believers. There are those who, spiritually speaking, came out of Cain; and there are those who came out of Abel. Both believed in God. Both worshiped God, both sacrificed to God. But Cain's sacrifice was rejected, while Abel's was accepted. This is the first picture of the church in her post-garden existence and until the end of time, she will consist of those like Cain and of those like Abel. You, every one of you in the church, is spiritually speaking either in Cain's or Abel's lineage.

If you are a Cain, although you believe, worship and sacrifice, you contribute nothing of saving virtue to the church. You are in the church but you give no light to her. You may even prophesy, doing miracles and wonderful works, but those will not be acceptable to God (Mt. 7:21-23). Cain wanted to worship the way he wanted it, not the way God wanted it. Cain wanted to be #1, to be above his brother. Cain had jealousy and the characteristics of the self-life. Cain was a murderer of all that God was in. Jesus said of the Pharisees that they were like their fathers, who always killed the prophets (Mt. 23:31). They too, like Cain were murderers of all that God was in.

If you are an Abel, you want God's will and Jesus will reign within you. His spiritual lifeblood will flow through your veins. You abide in him. He abides in you. You have unbroken fellowship with Jesus (1 Jn. 1:7). It is because of these Abels that a church can survive, even though there may be only 5 or 6 of them in a church of 200 or 1000 Cains. "except the Lord had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom "(totally annihilated).

Now, this reality of the church-within-the-church was also displayed in the patriarchal era. Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob was of the spiritual lineage of Abel, Esau of that of Cain. Esau, like Cain, hated his brother (Ge. 27:41). Both Jacob and Esau believed in God, but God loved Jacob and rejected Esau (Ro. 9:13). Jacob had the remnant spirit. Esau had the Cain spirit. Here Jacob represents the church within the church, the remnant church.

The history of Israel affirms this. Remember the multitude of Jews never removed the high places of idol worship as God commanded (De. 12:2-3). They didn't want to go all the way to Jerusalem to worship God at the temple. Even the Samaritan woman knew where the Jews were supposed to worship (Jn. 4:20). But they had a religion of convenience. This grieves the heart of God. All those of Cain have a religion of convenience. The Cains hold on to their choices, the Abels let God make their choices.

The prophet Micah said, "and the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people" (Mc. 5:7). Here again, is the church within the church. In 2 Kings 19:3 God points to the day of Pentecost. "and the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant". Are you part of that remnant? Are you in the inner circle where all have direct contact with the Lord Jesus? Another picture of the church-within-the-church is in the book of Daniel. There should have been thousands of Jews going into the fiery furnace, but it was only Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Only the remnant people will go into the fire!

Jesus taught the reality of the church within the church in his parables. Take the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:24-30). Jesus said you will find them mixed together, their root systems intertwined, even looking alike for a while. Don't try to separate them before the time of harvest. You see, spiritually speaking, as goats can become sheep, so sheep can become goats; as tares can become wheat, wheat can become tares; they can change. Some people, like Jesus' disciples, want to separate the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats. But Jesus said, "let both grow together until harvest". See also the Parable of the Sheep and

Goats (Mat. 25). Only the Great Shepherd is adequately equipped and authorized to separate the real from the pretenders. Judgment belongs in the hands of God.

So God never let the remnant of Israel live in a separate place or be disconnected from the rest of the body of the church. All the prophets ministered to the whole church, to the tares with the wheat. Do not mistake the two admonitions in the Bible to come out from among her to mean separation from the church (2 Co. 6:17 and Re. 18:4). They mean separation from the world, not from the church with its tares and goats. Of course, the remnant people need to gather together often for intercession and mutual encouragement.

Jesus also repeated this teaching after He ascended to heaven. In His message to the church of Sardis (Re. 3:1-5) He said that she was dead. Many of you are in dead churches. You are as a few stalks of wheat surrounded by plenty of tares, as sheep among many goats. So it was at Sardis. Jesus said to this people, “thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; they shall walk in white: for they are worthy.” It is these few that kept hope in the Sardis church for revival.

The Apostle Paul combines the Old and New Testaments, quoting Isaiah, “though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved” (Ro. 9:27). This tells us there are multitudes in Christendom but only the company of the totally committed shall be saved. Don’t think you’re saved because you’re in the church; because you believe, worship and sacrifice. Remember Jesus’ words: many are called, but few are chosen (Mt. 22:14).

Another way to think of the two groups is by distinguishing between believers and believing disciples. In the parable of the Great Supper Jesus calls all His believers into discipleship, to forsake all to come to the supper. But they all had a religion of convenience: it was not convenient to one because he just bought a field, to another because he acquired some oxen, to a newly-wed couple because they wanted to go on their honeymoon. Oh yes, they were all believers, they planned to be there eventually, but not now, they would come when it would fit their schedule or when it would fit into their lifestyle. Do you know that Jesus cancelled their seat at the supper? (Lk. 14:16-24). Beware, do not be a Cain who espouses a religion of convenience. It will cause you to lose your seat at the great Marriage Feast of the Lamb.

The hope of the church is not in numbers: 600,000 believers left Egypt, but although they crossed the Red Sea, they did not cross the Jordan. Only Joshua and

Caleb did: they had the spirit of Abel, a remnant mentality. The power is with the remnant. God does not want us to take pride in the number who come to our church. David counted the troops to brag about how many he had, but God punished him severely (2 Sm. 24:12,13).

Friend, God is looking for a people who will look to him and not to man. It is this people who will bring His salvation, even if it be a very small remnant, to the church and the world.

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