

# THE CHURCH THEN AND NOW

When a group of people, that make up a church, become destitute of the righteousness of Christ in their lives through faith, they begin to look to other things for their security and salvation. The ancient Adventists devised all kinds of things to fill the void that only Christ could truly fill. All the things they devised were good things, BUT when these outward acts do not correspond with the righteousness on the inside, those things become meaningless. Some of the things the Jews used to fill the void were circumcision, Sabbath keeping, tithe paying, dress reform, and may be even head coverings! They failed to grasp the real purpose for all these things. As Romans 2:25-29 declares, “For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” Romans 2:25-29

The greatest outward thing of reverence and awe was the temple and the Jewish services. These became the all in all. Salvation became staying with the church. As long as one was in the church, their eternal life was sure. In fact, their sacred regard for their church/temple became crystal clear when the leadership in ancient Adventism had to make a fateful decision. When confronted with a Man claiming to be the Messiah and doing the works of the Messiah; A Man who was the living embodiment of the truth had now raised a man who had been dead for 4 days, the Ancient Adventists had to make a decision. The church organization and the truth were at odds with each other. There was a direct confrontation between the two. Which one would be saved and which one would be sacrificed?

The answer was made by the General Conference President. His name was Caiaphas. “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, **Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.** And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” John 11:47-52

**“Even if Jesus were innocent, urged the high priest, He must be put out of the way. He was troublesome, drawing the people to Himself, and lessening the authority of the rulers. He was only one; it was better that He should die than that the authority of the rulers should be weakened. If the people were to lose confidence in their rulers, the national power would be destroyed. Caiaphas urged that after this miracle the followers of Jesus would likely rise in revolt. The Romans will then come, he said, and will close our temple, and abolish our laws, destroying us as a nation. What is the life of this Galilean worth in comparison with the life of the nation? If He stands in the way of Israel's well-being, is it not doing God a service to remove Him? Better that one man perish than that the whole nation be**

**destroyed.** In declaring that one man should die for the nation, Caiaphas indicated that he had some knowledge of the prophecies, although it was very limited. But John, in his account of this scene, takes up the prophecy, and shows its broad and deep significance. He says, "And not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." How blindly did the haughty Caiaphas acknowledge the Saviour's mission!" DA, pg. 540

Well, friend, the same decision confronts us today. The denomination has sacrificed our historic teachings on:

1. The nature of Christ
2. The atonement of Christ in the sanctuary in Heaven today.
3. Victory over sin is possible and necessary for God's people.
4. Spirit of Prophecy is still authoritative in doctrine and worship.
5. The 3 Angel's messages are still in force; even the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup>!
6. The papacy is still the antichrist.
7. Spiritual Formation is trash and belongs in the dump!
8. The KJV is still the best and only translation to be used.

Will we discard the teachings that make us SDA's and focus on saving the outside shell called the denominational structure or will we repent of our foolishness and proclaim again the great truths that make us who we are? Are we so intent on saving the organization that we will throw away the truths that only give us a reason and a purpose for our existence? Is it expedient to throw away the truth in order to save the denomination? Caiaphas and Jesus present two roads and two decisions. One leads to heaven and the other to the lake of fire. The choice is ours!!