

GRADE 10

ENGLISH – Quarter 1

THE LIGHT OF TRUTH

During the time when the Church of Rome was prominent the people were searching for something different. They were taught to look at how sinful they were and their works weren't enough. They pictured God as cruel and stern. The burden they bore was a heavy one and they longed for peace.

God had been building up a people that would keep His commandments and bring light to the dark world.

The history of this unique people began after Christ's time. Jesus' followers, called Christians, were persecuted by many emperors. One of which was Nero. He was persecuting the Christians because they would not say that the emperor was God on earth. Another persecutor was Diocletian who was the Emperor of Rome from 284-305 AD. Because of this persecution many of the Christians fled into the valley of Piedmont. This is where they became known as "the people of the valleys" or Waldenses.

In 272 AD Constantine began his rule as emperor. He claimed to have converted to Christianity and he "conquered in Christ's name" yet he clung to his pagan ways. This caused a meshing between paganism and Christianity. The sun received more of Constantine's devotion than Jesus Christ Himself did. This is why Jesus has rays of sun portrayed around His head in many paintings. Another result of this meshing was that many of the pagan practices were intertwined into Christianity.

By the 6th century the Papacy was well established. The bishop of Rome was declared to be the head of the entire Church. Europe was entering the dark ages.

Revelation 13:2 "... and the dragon gave him his power and his seat, and great authority".

There were many reasons for the need to separate from the Roman church. But main cause of separation was the Sabbath (Saturday was not Sunday). The Waldenses were a solid Biblical based people that kept all of God's Ten Commandments no happiness including the seventh day Sabbath. They refused to give up the Bible, confess to priests, bow down to the wafer (and believe it to be the body of Christ), or acknowledge the Roman pontiff as the victor of Christ. They believed God and only God should be worshipped.

This group of God fearing humble people kept their religious beliefs founded upon God's word. Their doctrines struck out like the majestic mountains around them in contrast to the doctrine of Rome. Hundreds of years before the Protestant reformation they had kept the Apostolic faith, pure and unadulterated. One of the striking differences was that they would not base their beliefs on earthly authority or men's traditions. They found their light from God's word.

The Waldenses originally were called by a few different names but the most common being Waldenses which originates from the Italian word for valleys. They have also been called "Vaudois" from the French word meaning "inhabitants of the valleys". To the Waldenses the mountains were an emblem of the righteousness of God so this name fit them well.

The children of the Waldenses from an early age were shown God in nature. They would memorize several chapters of the Bible so that if the manuscripts were ever lost they would have large portions of God's word safely hidden in their hearts and minds.

They were going through tough times and the children were taught to endure hardships knowing that someday they may suffer a martyr's death.

As the children grew up they were instructed in their mountain schools and later they were sent to institutions in France or Italy. They experienced all the worldly ways, ideas, and temptations but they were founded solidly on Jesus Christ, the rock.

Being the biblical based people that they were, the Waldenses would put together all the parts of the Bible they had (some by memory some manuscripts) and they would write out the Scriptures verse by verse, chapter by chapter, piece by piece. The amount of work it took to make these Bibles was tedious but Divine hands were overshadowing the work of these humble people. Interestingly enough the Waldenses were among the first people to have a translation of the Bible. Satan had urged priests to bury the Bible manuscripts, but God used "the inhabitants of the valley" to preserve His Word.

The Waldenses knew the scripture inside out but they didn't want to just keep it to themselves...they wanted to share what they knew! They would go out as missionaries two by two just like Jesus' disciples. One was typical more experienced and one was younger. In this manner the older could mentor the younger. They would often meet with their partner and pray together asking for guidance from the Lord. When training to be a missionary each individual would choose a profession so that they could disguise while being missionaries. They would typically choose merchant, peddler, or Minstrel. The Waldenses had silks, jewels, and other articles that were hard to find, and therefore they were welcomed as merchants, peddlers, or minstrels where they would have been rejected as missionaries otherwise. This missionary spirit of the Waldenses in spreading the

Gospel message and the Bible truths brought great success which caused the papacy to worry.

When the papacy noticed this rapidly growing people they became a little worried. But by the 12th century the bishop of Rome wasn't just worried, he became terrified by the overgrowth of the Waldenses and the papacy's fire was kindled. They led many crusades to destroy the Waldenses. In 1488 Pope Innocent the VIII decreed that all the Waldenses should be put to death. The only way out was to submit to Rome. Even though it may have seemed that the flame was dimmed because of this persecution, it was evident the blood of the Waldensian martyrs watered the seeds of the Gospel.

A date that will be recorded in infamy is 1685. King Louis XIV of France was nearing his death and wanted to redeem all the bad things he had done in his life and so he asked no other than the Roman priests what he should do to make up for his shortcomings. The priests, seeing the opportunity, told him to get rid of all the Waldenses. From then on, he made every effort to get completely rid of the Waldenses. When the Waldenses heard about the order from the king, they prayed to God to give them grace to suffer and die for Him. They were tortured and killed. But when they died, it wasn't in fear but in peace and faith claiming God's promises.

Even though the Waldenses were accused falsely, gashed by spears, and burned by fire, the Waldenses stood unflinchingly. History reveals the Waldenses faced death with peace and courage. They were not afraid of death because they were founded in the rock. If we look at the book of Revelation 2:10 it says "... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life".

Finally after several hundred years, persecution ceased and the Waldenses were given back some limited rights. And in 1848 they were given their civil rights back.

The effect of the Waldenses was evident. In fact, Protestantism was a spiritual expansion from the Church in the Wilderness. Protestantism was a return to the Bible and an intensive study of the prophecies took place. Because of the influence of the Waldenses many Bible societies sprang up and missionary associations were made.

During the time when the papacy was dominant, the light of truth could it be put out. This truth came into many darkened minds. God had preserved His truth secure in the mountains. God held it with His strength and nobody could have removed it except God Himself. Just like the ark that Noah built, God preserved His word and kept it safely in His arms.

The missionary spirit of Jesus led the Waldenses to pass out parts of Scripture that they had carefully hand written. They felt blessed that God wanted to use them to preserve the truths of the Bible, but remember, they didn't just want to keep it to themselves...they wanted to share it! As Seventh-Day Adventists we feel privileged to know the truths of the Bible, but we can't just keep it to ourselves my friends. We need to share the gospel with those that don't know about Jesus or His Biblical teachings!

In every age God has had witnesses for Him. The Waldenses had been His truth bearers for many ages. But unfortunately in their excitement of joining the Protestantism movement they compromised many of their beliefs including the total dependence upon the Word of God and gave way to some of the traditions of men. But, about this time a new worldwide movement was forming. One in which the world was experiencing a great awakening to the second coming of Christ and a call to keep all ten of God's

commandments (especially the 4th). When the Waldenses were starting to compromise their beliefs, God was raising up another people, a people that keep the commandments of God and have faith in Jesus. “The centuries of faithfulness seen in the history of the Church in the Wilderness were succeeded by the period of the Remnant Church who would ‘keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus’” (Revelation 14:2) – *Truth Triumphant*.

Times will be hard but Revelation 2:10 says, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. [But] be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”