

# Proclamation!

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• INQUIRING ADVENTISTS • SABBATARIANS • CONCERNED EVANGELICALS •

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## Forgiven and **forever alive** COLLEEN TINKER

**Dying inside, I pleaded again,  
“Please, please forgive me!” But  
God had turned His back.**

**T**he grayness was suffocating me. No sunlight escaped the heavy overcast, and my apartment was as dark as my heart. Like a trapped animal I paced my living room, despair giving way to hopelessness as I pleaded, “Please forgive me, God!”

But there was no answer. I knew He could not forgive me.

I had not believed I was capable of such a

sin. I was getting divorced. As bad as I perceived my situation to have been, I knew I was not innocent. I had failed as a wife and as a woman.

I had always carried a sense of shame and unworthiness—but paradoxically, I

had also nursed a deep conviction that there were certain sins I would never commit. I knew better! Divorcée, for example, was one label I never imagined I’d wear. I knew all too well the distrust and disdain with which church members—especially other women—looked at divorced women. “Husband stealers” was the hinted-but-never-spoken-aloud judgment pronounced on them (but seldom, I knew, on widows).

Devastated at my own failure in marriage and by my shredded illusion of myself as conscientious and above reproach, I felt like I was dying. I had nothing left to offer God. Ruined as a role model, I would be unworthy to teach again. I’d shattered whatever future I’d hoped to have. I had destroyed my own life’s purpose. I had no hope.

Dying inside, I pleaded again, “Please, please forgive me!” But God had turned His back.

And then it happened: God touched me. I heard nothing; saw nothing. But deep in the place that had been dying, I suddenly felt the life of Jesus. In one life-changing moment I knew that God had forgiven me and that He wasn’t done with me. He had purpose for me, and He had given me life for His own glory.

I was overwhelmed. I wanted to sing, to dance in the light of the cloudy day. “Thank you! Thank you,” I breathed as my heart burst.

Ten years passed before the Lord Jesus brought me, step by step, into a full awareness of His gospel. During that time He allowed me to

learn things I had never dreamed about knowing as He brought me His assignments: second marriage, step-mother, business partner, managing editor for an Adventist publication, and—yes—teacher again!

God was healing my heart and teaching me that I could trust Him because His promises are sure and He is faithful. He was teaching me that He brought my heart to life with His forgiveness and resurrection power because He loved me, not because I had loved Him.

As God gave me a new life, He also led me into deeper and deeper study of His Word. I began to realize that God used the hopelessness and regrets surrounding my failed marriage to reveal that I had nothing redeemable in myself. I was unsalvageable by nature (Ephesians 2:3); no amount of trying harder would have improved my life.

Ten years after that day in my living room, in another life-changing moment, I learned that Jesus keeps the requirements of the new covenant with the Father for me. I am secure because Jesus is faithful; God isn’t “saving” me because I’m proving myself to be faithful. Rather, when God looks at me, He sees Jesus first—and His perfection and obedience are credited to me because I have His life, and mine is hidden with Him in God (Col. 3:3).

In this Easter edition of *Proclamation!* Richard Peifer explains the power of Jesus’ resurrection. Christopher Lee examines what Jesus did in order to pay in full for our sins. Dale Ratzlaff discusses the true identity of the spirit of prophecy, and Thomas Francis shares how he came to understand why Christians love Easter. In addition, we review the events of the second annual Former Adventist Fellowship weekend, and Paul and Terry Mirra share their story of finding Jesus alone.

This Easter season we pray you will know the resurrection life of Jesus and the security of being eternally alive in Him.

*“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4-5).*

†

### **Proclamation!**

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# From Adventism to Christ Alone

PAUL AND TERRY MIRRA

**TERRY:** Paul and I both grew up in Adventist homes. As we matured, our lives were spiritually uneventful. We went to church and lived our lives as practicing Seventh-day Adventists. In retrospect, although things seemed to be going along fairly well, there was always a nagging emptiness and longing for something deeper and more meaningful in our lives. Religious discussions rarely focused on Jesus Christ but rather on secondary issues such as diet and acceptable Sabbath behavior. Many Sabbath afternoon discussions centered on end-time events and how we could prepare ourselves for the inevitable persecution. There was an underlying fear and uncertainty on many levels. Would our names come up for judgment when we weren't 100% ready? Could we lose our salvation? These questions were continually casting doubt and robbing us of real joy.

As adults, we steadily moved away from traditional Adventism. We started shedding some of the beliefs that seemed dated and unbiblical. We tried a few unconventional venues, but they were still under the safe umbrella of Adventism. Internal experimenting seemed safer than looking outside our box into territory forbidden by both the denomination and our families.

**PAUL:** While we were willing to explore the possibility of a better religious experience, we still held onto the Sabbath as an anchor and safeguard against venturing into things that might jeopardize our salvation.

Anxiety was a regular companion to my religious beliefs. How was I going to protect and provide for my family during the end times? Would I be prepared to take a stand for the Sabbath? From where would the strength to endure come once the Mediator had withdrawn?

Going to church was something I did because I was supposed to. I knew that I needed to worship—but what exactly was worship? Was it the act of singing the words to a song in unison with the congregation? Or could it be the simple fact that I was physically there, in church, participating in the serv-

ice? Was it the giving of tithe? What I had to do in order to worship God remained a mystery to me.

I was never compelled to share Adventism with strangers. Only after sizing up a person and feeling fairly confident that she/he, too, was Adventist, would I reveal my religious identity.

Then there was the matter of Jesus. I knew He had died on the cross. Because of this fact I knew that I might get to heaven some day; His death extended to me this possibility. He did His part, now I needed to do mine. What was He to me, really? I never understood why non-Adventist Christians were so centered on Him.

We eventually found ourselves church-hopping. Terry would take the kids to one church for the children's program while I would attend another for the sermons. Saturdays became times of going our separate ways. This separation began taking a toll on the family. Subconsciously, we were spiritually thirsty. Our effort to seek a better religious experience while trying to hold onto the most cherished elements of our Adventist background was failing. Meanwhile, God was orchestrating a series of events that would change our lives.

**TERRY:** First, we were invited by our Christian neighbors to attend a local community church for a special series. It was on Sunday and wouldn't interfere with our regular church schedule, so we agreed. We enjoyed it so much we decided that we would continue attending through the summer. That summer we had our first real exposure to learning about the Covenants. When we learned that the Old Covenant pointed to the new, it made total sense. The whole book of Hebrews drives home the point that Jesus is superior to, and the fulfillment of, the Old Covenant—there's no need to pick and choose parts of it to keep (Heb. 8:6-8, 13). It's either one way or the other. To hang onto the Old Covenant is to say that Jesus' sacrifice wasn't complete.

Second, our teenage daughter was asking questions about Seventh-day Adventist beliefs versus other denomi-

Then there was the matter of Jesus. I knew He had died on the cross. Because of this fact I knew that I might get to heaven some day; His death extended to me this possibility. He did His part, now I needed to do mine. What was He to me, really? I never understood why non-Adventist Christians were so centered on Him.

nations' beliefs. She had questions that we felt inadequate to answer. I came to realize that much of what I "knew" and did was based on what others taught or told me; I was merely passing on tradition. I needed to answer in a way that was biblically sound and not built on the weight of a few strategically cited verses.

Third, about this same time I was handed a small denominational book that focused on Sunday laws, the mark of the beast, and persecution. It made me angry. I was tired of feeling fear and confusion whenever I reviewed my future as a Seventh-day Adventist. I wanted to know, scripturally, exactly why I was identifying with these beliefs.

These events, along with a few undeniably divine circumstances, launched us into intensive Bible study. Initially, we intended our study to strengthen our Adventist beliefs, but as we searched, it became clear that God was leading us in another direction.

As the New Testament took on new meaning, it became evident that Jesus' death had changed everything and was not merely a part of the solution. He wasn't sent down to earth to give us a head start on the Great Controversy, but He has already won and is seated at the right hand of God (Heb. 10:12). Furthermore, we are secure in Jesus because He has set His seal of ownership on us and has put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come (2 Cor. 1:22).

I was stunned! His "seal" on us had nothing to do with our allegiance to the Sabbath...it was an internal security not dependent on what I did! As truth started to become clear, 2 Cor. 3:13-18 made sense. It states that a veil remains when the Old Covenant is read, because only in Christ is it taken away. When anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away; where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. When I realized what this passage meant, I knew I was truly free.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 states that all Scripture is God-breathed...what I have learned more than anything else during this time of discovery is that God's Word is reliable and without error. Since I have started relying on the Bible alone, my confusion is gone. My new experience with the Bible has shown me that the best deceptions are the

ones closest to the truth, because it only takes a little bit of error to contaminate and distort God's Word.

**PAUL:** As I read the Bible I discovered two key elements that had eluded me in the past: grace and faith. Grace is getting something that I do not deserve. It is a gift, and it is free. This gift is eternal life, and Jesus purchased it on the cross. He is the one who offers this gift to me. So, what do I do about it? Just...take it?

I had to trust that this gift is truly free and that receiving it really is that simple: I just had to take it.

I needed faith. Hebrews 11:1 tells us faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. In the past I had hoped that I would make it to heaven. What I finally realized was that my former kind of hope was based in probabilities, like, "I hope I win the lottery." The hope that the Bible describes is one of absolute expectation of coming good.

Hope is not a matter of maybe, but a matter of when. Once I understood this concept, my life changed. Jesus' gift of salvation is real; it is a complete package, it is offered to me, and it is certain. All I had to do was accept it by placing faith in Him. Now I know that I am truly His, I am saved, and He has sealed me with the Holy Spirit.

#### What is the difference in our lives now?

**PAUL AND TERRY:** Our rest is in Jesus Christ alone, and we have the benefit of it every day of the week.

We know why Christians talk about Jesus so much: He is what the entire volume of the Bible is about—a love letter written in blood just for me and just for you.

Worship is an expression of gratitude, and it comes from the joy inside our hearts. It is not something we have to do; it's what we get to do.

We've become members of a wonderful church where the Bible alone is taught.

Our spiritually parched souls are now refreshed: "But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of living water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

Our anxiety has been replaced by anticipation. We eagerly look forward to the return of our Lord Jesus, and we want others to know what we have discovered.

Jesus is very real and personal to us now. We've learned that He and His Word are complete and reliable. He's done it all—all we have to do is to accept and submit. While we are still physically waiting for Christ to take possession of His own, we know He already holds the title deed...we are His! "It is finished" (John 19:30). That's truly Good News and a future to be excited about! †



**Paul and Terry Mirra** originally met as students at Newbury Park Adventist Academy in Newbury Park, California. Terry has a degree in nursing from Loma Linda University, and Paul, a graduate of the University of California at Santa Barbara, works as a criminalist with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. They and their daughters Megan, Amy and Autumn attend Trinity Church in Redlands, California.

# What commandments do Christians follow?

**Q: If the Ten Commandments came in with Moses and lasted only until Christ, as you say the new covenant teaches, then what do you say guides a Christian's conscience and behavior? It seems this argument is a defense for being free from rules and doing whatever you wish to do.**

A: Many letters we receive express a deep fear that by teaching that the reign of law came in with Moses and lasted until Christ,<sup>1</sup> new covenant Christians are left without any moral guide. The truth is, however, that New Covenant Christians have a much higher and better—yes, better—moral guide than the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are external. The law of Christ is internal.

First, the Christian receives the Holy Spirit when he believes, and the Spirit guides into all truth and will disclose to us things to come.<sup>2</sup> He also gives us power to witness<sup>3</sup> and bestows upon us one or more spiritual gifts for the up-building of the church in “one-another” ministry.<sup>4</sup> The Spirit also seals us and gives us the guarantee of our inheritance.<sup>5</sup> He testifies that we are children of God.<sup>6</sup> The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.<sup>7</sup> It is clear that the function of the Holy Spirit in the new covenant replaces the function of law in the old.<sup>8</sup>

Second, we have the law of Christ.<sup>9</sup> “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”<sup>10</sup> Love, we are repeatedly told, is the fulfillment of the law.<sup>11</sup>

Third, not only do we have the fruit of the Spirit but the New Testament lists the deeds of the flesh that the Christian is to avoid. Note that these are “evident” to the Spirit-filled Christian and move from externals to issues of the heart.

“Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”<sup>12</sup>

All the moral principles—in contrast to laws—are present in the New Testament. But the motive factor is what makes the difference. We do not obey to be right with God. Rather, we obey because we have been saved by grace through faith and we have a regenerated spirit living within. It is this internal witness of the Spirit that develops the various fruits of love. Christ lives out His life in ours. Thus the law of Christ is fulfilled in those who walk according to the Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

New covenant Christians do have a moral compass. They have the Holy Spirit, they have the law of Christ, and they have the instruction of the Epistles. These reach far past

outward actions to matters of the heart. Yes, the new covenant Christian has fellowship with the indwelling Christ!<sup>14</sup>

**Q: What is the difference between legalism and sanctified obedience?**

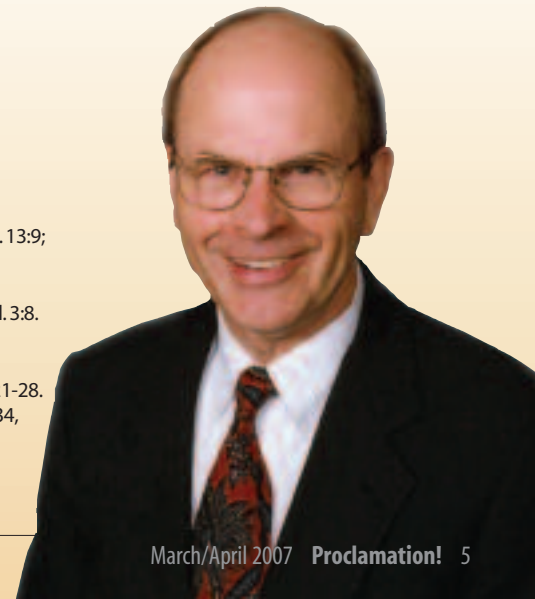
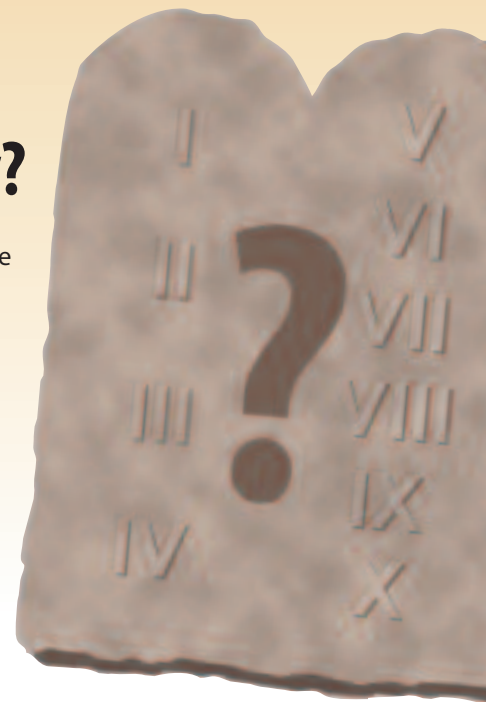
A: This is an excellent question and deserves a more complete answer than space provides in this issue. I will, however, make a few comments and hopefully in some later issue provide more of an in-depth answer. Both legalism and sanctified obedience deal with two main issues: behavior and motive.

I believe legalism is any behavior that is done to earn or to keep salvation. In contrast, the New Testament makes it clear that salvation is by God's grace through faith in the work and person of Christ.<sup>15</sup> Anything that is added to this as a requirement of salvation would be legalism. If we do any act—even that which is commanded in clear New Testament teachings—with the motive of making ourselves more acceptable to God it would be legalism.

Sanctified obedience is not obedience that makes us right with God. Rather it is the outworking of the principles of the law of love<sup>16</sup> that the Holy Spirit writes on the heart of a Christian. This would include all New Testament admonitions and all the moral principles behind Old Testament laws. However, we are not to apply the letter of Old Testament law but the moral principle behind the law.<sup>17</sup> †

## Endnotes

1. Rom. 5:13, 14; Gal. 3:17, 19, 23-25.
2. Jn. 16:13.
3. Acts 1:8; Eph. 3:16.
4. 1 Cor. 12.
5. Eph. 1:13, 30.
6. Rom. 8:16.
7. Gal. 5:22-23.
8. 2 Cor. 3:2-18.
9. 1 Cor. 9:20-21.
10. Jn. 13:34; Mk. 12:31; Jn. 15:12; Rom. 13:9; 1 Jn. 3:23; 4:21; 2 Jn. 1:5.
11. Rom. 13:8, 10; Gal. 5:14; Jam. 2:8.
12. Gal. 5:19-21. See also Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8.
13. Rom. 8:1-5.
14. John 17:20-22.
15. Eph. 2:8, 9; Tit. 3:5; Jn. 6:47; Rom. 3:21-28.
16. Mt. 22:37-40; Rom. 13:9, 10; Jn. 13:34, 35; 15:12, 17; 1 Jn. 3:11, 4:7, 10; Gal. 5:14; Jam. 2:8.
17. Rom. 7:6; Rom. 2:27, 29; 2 Cor. 3:2.





# ALIVE!

RICHARD PEIFER

**H**ere's the bottom line: We are born dead. Therefore, we need life, not behavior modification. Think about it physically. At the last funeral you attended, I guarantee you did not say, "Come on, Joe, wake up. It's time to get out of that casket and get back to work." No, you looked in the casket and sighed and wept because, regardless of what you think happens when people die, Joe was not there. His body was there, but Joe was gone.

The same reasoning applies spiritually. We are spiritually

dead because of what Adam and Eve did thousands of years ago.

When God had finished with creation and had given it all to Adam and Eve, He told them to avoid only one thing—the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. "In the day you eat from it," He warned, "you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17).<sup>1</sup>

They had to take Him at his word, to respond by faith, believing that what He said was true. God did not explain Himself to them. "You certainly will die" was not the reason

**Forgiveness does not equal salvation.  
Forgiveness equals reconciliation and justification.**

# A matter of **life and death**

for the command; it would be the result of disobeying the command.

Of course, this warning is precisely where Satan tempted them. “God is holding out. He doesn’t want you to be like Him, to know what He knows.” The snake’s assertions of maltreatment and his appeal to be something greater than they thought themselves to be carried the day against God’s simple, direct command.

They ate, and they died.

When God came looking for them that evening, they hid. What a telling question He asked! “Who told you you were naked?” Those six words defined all of sin from that day to ours, because God was not talking about their physical nakedness alone. A person can get over that bit of shame. He was also talking about the fact that they were now spiritually dead, bereft of the Holy Spirit. The tragic irony of their act of defiance was that they were incapable of dealing with this new knowledge they had just gained. They had died to the only being Who could have explained it to them, and they were left with a gaping hole and a yearning for change that haunts us still. They died to what it means to be truly human. It’s as if God came to the garden, saw them and said, “I know it’s you, Adam and Eve, but you, the real you, are not here anymore.”

## **Their own image**

One of the saddest passages in the Bible is Genesis 5:1-3:

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created. When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

Did you catch the difference? God created Adam and Eve in His image, and 130 years later, their son Seth was born in *their* own image. Why the change? Spiritual death. As God had stated, the direct result of their sin was death. They died to the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They lived physically for more than 900 years, but the Spirit was gone.

Paul summarizes it this way: “When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh...” (Col. 2:13); “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins...” (Eph. 2:1); “For the wages of sin is death...” (Rom. 6:23).

Jesus saw it in these terms, but He turned it around to present Himself as the answer. Life was His consistent message. “I am the way, and the truth and the life...; I am the bread of life; ...I came that they may have life...; I am the resurrection and the life” (John 14:6, 6:48, 10:10, 11:25). To underscore His message, He goaded the legalists without mercy.

His Sermon on the Mount was the single most condemning sermon ever preached. If you finish reading it with any other than a sense of dread because you fall so far short of the ideal, then you are not paying attention. Look closely at His words:

You must be poor in spirit; you must mourn; you must be gentle; you must hunger and thirst after righteousness; you must be merciful; you must be pure in heart; you must be a peacemaker, and you must be persecuted and insulted. If you are angry with your brother, you have committed murder. If you look at a woman lustfully, you have committed adultery. If you call someone a fool, you are in danger of the fires of hell. You need to be as perfect as your Father in heaven. If you do not forgive the person who sins against you, your heavenly Father will not forgive you.

After listening to Jesus’ conversation with the rich young ruler, the disciples asked, “Then who can be saved?” (Matt. 19:25). They finally were beginning to grasp the fact that behavior counted for nothing. Something far more serious was wrong with humanity than bad behavior. Death trumps deeds every time.

So, if the real problem with humanity is our being dead spiritually, then what is the solution? Perhaps surprisingly, this brings us back to sin.

## **Solution for sin**

What is sin? Sin, in the general sense, is independence from God. Sins, in the specific sense, are those behaviors we perform while independent from God. For example, Adam and Eve sinned (chose to go it alone) before they committed the specific sin of eating from the forbidden tree. But sins are not just the “bad” things we do in defiance of God. Sins include even

the good things we do while living independently of God. This is why Jesus said,

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you: Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matt. 7:21-23).

Put another way, no human being, after Adam, has been anything other than spiritually dead. Adam was created spiritually alive, but he killed himself by choosing to be his own god. The result? We have never been able, and never will be able, to deal with the sin problem. We inherited the cause of death, sin, just like we inherited death itself.

The only kind of human who would be able to deal with sin and death would be a second Adam. Only someone without these inherited curses could succeed where Adam failed. We must be careful here. Go back to the beginning of the article. God asked for a faith response. Adam failed because he chose to act as a god himself. This second Adam must be capable of responding as the original Adam. None of us fit this requirement.

Only Jesus Christ met the need (see Rom. 5:12-21). The most important argument for the virgin birth is that He had to be different from you and me. Being born "the human way" would have put him under the twin curses of sin and death. Being conceived of the Spirit, He was both human and divine. That He chose to live as a human is one of the great miracles of grace. He actually could have been the cause of His own effect, and, in fact, this is where Satan tempted Him—He really could have turned those stones into bread in His inherent strength and ability. But Jesus chose to live in perfect dependence on and submission to His heavenly Father. He

did not act unless the Father told Him to act (John 5:19,30). He did not even speak unless the Father told Him to speak (John 8:29, 12:49, and 14:10-11).

Jesus' entire life was a 33-year reminder that God is not

looking for behavior. God is looking for relationship, a relationship that allows Him to work through a person those things which have been prepared beforehand (Eph. 2:10).

### Sin was finished

When Jesus died, He said, "It is finished." What was finished? Sin was finished!

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21).

He both became sin and was the Redeemer from sin. (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

In order for Jesus to be the Redeemer/Reconciler, He had to provide total forgiveness.

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God... (1 Pet. 3:18).

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake (1 John 2:12).

He did this by taking away sin.

[Jesus Christ] is the one who turns aside God's wrath, taking away our sins, and not only ours but also the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2 NIV, alternate reading).<sup>2,3</sup>

...But now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26b).

Let's summarize to this point.

- Adam and Eve were created alive spiritually and physically.
- They chose independence from God and ate the forbidden fruit.
- The instantaneous result of this choice was spiritual death; the Holy Spirit left them.
- The long-term result of this choice was physical death.
- All of us were born in the image of Adam; that is, dead to the Holy Spirit and in process of dying physically.
- Jesus was born the Second Adam, alive Spiritually.
- Jesus lived a perfect life. That is, He lived in perfect submission to and dependence upon His Father. He succeeded exactly where Adam and Eve failed.
- Because He lived the perfect life, Jesus' death was the perfect substitution for the death we deserved.



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**Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was the single most condemning sermon ever preached. If you finish reading it with any other than a sense of dread because you fall so far short of the ideal then you are not paying attention.**

- Jesus took away sin by becoming sin for us.
- Therefore, Jesus provided forgiveness, once and for all, for the entire world.

To some, this might sound like I believe in universalism, the argument that everyone will be saved. If Jesus died to take away the sin of the whole world, this means the whole world is saved. Right? Wrong! The Bible clearly teaches that not everyone will be saved.

If forgiveness equals salvation, and if not everyone is saved, how do we deal with the contradiction? Some suggest that the concept of election answers this question; others suggest that salvation can be lost through disobedience.

Both points of view are based on an incorrect premise. Forgiveness does NOT equal salvation. Forgiveness equals reconciliation and justification.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (Romans 5:8-9).

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach (Col. 1:21-22).

Forgiveness/Reconciliation/Justification is the precursor to something better. Jesus is why God can be both just and the justifier (Rom. 3:26), but Jesus provided more than justice and justification. He provided salvation.

### What is salvation?

"For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10).

Salvation is life! We are not saved by the death of Jesus; we are saved by the life of Jesus! Look back at what Jesus said about it. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." This can point to only one thing—His resurrection. It is not until we come to the cross that we understand forgiveness, and it is not until we go past the cross to His empty tomb that we understand the unimaginable gift of the life He offers. "...and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). If Jesus was not raised from the dead, then the cross is meaningless.

Salvation is life! This means that the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in us. What Adam and Eve forfeited has been restored.

And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life (1 John 5:11-12).

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-6).

But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you (Rom. 8:9-11).

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ... (Rom. 8:14-17a).



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**Forgiveness is meaningless without Jesus, and so is life. When we accept Jesus, the Gift, we receive both forgiveness and life.**

Note how complete the restoration process is.

We have eternal life now.

We are seated with Jesus in heaven now.

The Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing that these mortal, sin-infused bodies of ours will be changed.

We have been adopted into God's family and are joint heirs with Jesus.

This restoration is the importance of the resurrection. Jesus defeated sin by His death on the cross. He defeated death by His resurrection. As a result, we can receive spiritual life now, and we are guaranteed that physical mortality will be swallowed up by immortality sometime in the future.

Receipt of forgiveness and life depends solely on our acceptance of the gift offered. Notice that I said gift, not gifts. These are not separate items to be appropriated over time. Forgiveness is meaningless without Jesus, and so is life. When we accept Jesus, the Gift, we receive both forgiveness and life.



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**One could say,  
“Well, I can choose  
not to believe God  
after once accept-  
ing Him. If I did  
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salvation.” My  
response is,  
“Nonsense!”**

Jesus reconciled the whole world to Himself, but the whole world does not accept His life as its own. Therefore, the whole world is not saved merely because it has been reconciled, because even the offered reconciliation is meaningless apart from Jesus. The offer of life is extended to everyone, not just to a few. The only reason anyone will suffer eternal damnation is if they refuse to accept eternal life found only in Christ Jesus. Again, forgiveness is not salvation; life, the life of Jesus represented by the indwelling Holy Spirit, is salvation, and forgiveness is received in His life.

### **Can we lose our salvation?**

Again, what is salvation? Life—the life of Jesus lived in us by the Holy Spirit. How could we lose this life? Only by dying spiritually again. Why is this not possible? There are two aspects to this question. Let’s look at the behavioral aspect first.

Has there ever been a time when our good behavior could earn a life-giving relationship with God? No, absolutely not. Read Romans 1:18-3:19. Paul carefully lays out the truth that the entire world, Jew and Gentile alike, is spiritually dead. He then states in Romans 3:20: “...Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.”

“Granted,” you say, “but now that I’m saved, God expects me to keep His Law, doesn’t He?” Even better, “Now that I’m saved, I keep the Law to show my love for Him.”

Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians to deal with this misconception.

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ...Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law (Gal. 3:1-3, 21).

Focus on the problem and solution Paul describes in Romans 7 and 8. We have received the life of God, and the Spirit causes us to desire holiness (to be set apart for His service). Naturally, we look at the definition of holiness (the Law), and all we find is sin rising up to kill us again. I think it is important that Paul discusses only the 10th commandment—coveting (Rom. 7:7-12). This commandment deals with our motives. Our flesh remains unregenerate. His ringing affirmation of victory is found in 8:1. There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. What the Law could never do, God did by sending Jesus. He both condemned sin in sinful flesh AND fulfilled the righteous requirement of the Law in us “who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4).

In other words, we must stop looking at our behavior and start looking at Jesus. Behavior has never been and never will be the basis for our standing with God, because we have never had any good behavior to offer Him.

Someone will ask the next obvious question, “Does this mean it’s alright to sin, to do just anything we please regardless of the consequences?” Not at all. In fact, the opposite is true. “For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). What is the inverse of this text? If you are under Law, then sin shall be master over you. It is the grace of God, not the Law, that teaches us to say no to ungodliness (Titus 2:12).

In short, we are accepted by God solely on the basis of Christ’s merits. This is true at our conversion and throughout the rest of our lives. Our “bad” deeds can never hinder this situation because our “good” deeds were not responsible for it in the first place. We have no deeds to offer. All we can do is accept Jesus and His deeds on our behalf.

We were guilty and deserved to die. Jesus took our verdict and death. There is nothing left for us to bear. Therefore, behavior is not the basis for our acceptance or rejection by God.

What about the other aspect of sin: our choice to live independently of God?

Because of Jesus, there is only one sin for which anyone will be judged: unbelief. “And He [the Holy Spirit], when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin..., because they do not believe in Me...” (John 16:8-9). Because there has been a change in the priesthood from Levi to Judah, there has been a change in the law (Heb. 7:12). We have been taken back to the same basis for relationship with God as Adam and Eve – will we believe Him? All behavior-based modes of comparison

and judgment have been fulfilled in Jesus. They served their purpose by demonstrating that we are incapable of behaving with the remotest form of holiness. Jesus died our death so that we could live His life.

One could say, "Well, I can choose not to believe God after once accepting Him. If I did that, I'd lose my salvation." My response is, "Nonsense!"

Who of us, after gaining an understanding of God's love, grace and mercy, after internalizing the smallest realization of who Jesus is, after choosing to accept His life by being indwelt by the Holy Spirit would then say to God, "No, I've chosen not to believe after all?" Who would say, "I choose to reject Jesus. Please take the Holy Spirit away from me. I want to return to condemnation, judgment and wrath?" Who would say, "I want to die?" No one in their right mind would say these things.

I have known many people who rejected various forms of religion and were labeled "lost" by well-meaning, but judgmental, friends and family. In every case, these people were looking for something to replace the lie they had been living. They were looking for a relationship with Jesus, and their search was rewarded with the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control promised in Galatians 5. In fact, they made the transition from darkness to light, from lost to saved, or from saved but blind to the abundant life promised by Jesus, to a full understanding of the Gospel.

I have heard of a few people, often ministers, who now claim to be atheists or agnostics after suffering some intense personal loss or disillusionment. I reject the claim that one is an atheist because this presupposes that the person is omniscient. This is not logical. I do accept the agnostic argument, though, because it indicates that the person is questioning their entire belief system. I believe that these people never really knew the truth about Jesus and now are overwhelmed by the futility of life without Him (see 1 John 2:19). I pray they will find that Jesus has been standing there the entire time with His offer of real life.

This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life (1 John 2:25).

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? ...Who is the one who condemns? ...Who will separate us from the love of Christ? ...For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created

thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:33-39).

This is our guarantee that eternal life is *eternal* life. This is our guarantee that we cannot lose salvation. This Jesus has given us His very life, has given us Himself! There is nothing that can separate us from Him. We are His forever!

Choose life. Don't let anything stand in your way. Don't worry that you are disgustingly sinful. Choose life, and you will be cleansed. Don't worry that you are, or anyone else is, a Seventh-day Adventist, a Baptist, a Methodist, or any other belief system. Choose life. God will take care of your beliefs because you will have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:14). Don't worry whether Jesus returns pre-, post- or mid-tribulation. God knows. Choose life. Don't worry if you are in bondage. Choose life, and the Truth will set you free.

For those who have accepted Jesus, take hold of that for which He took hold of you. You have eternal life. Be convinced of that fact. Do not let anyone shake your confidence in the God who saved you. Your future is absolutely guaranteed! Step out in faith: apply that guarantee to every moment, and then act on it.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen (Rom. 12:33-36).

In Christ I have been raised from the dead and will never die again! Hallelujah! †

## Endnotes

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2. For an explanation of why the NIV's alternate rendering makes sense, see the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* discussions of *hilasmos* and *hilasterion*.
3. Scripture taken from the *HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION* Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

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The background of the entire page is a dynamic, high-angle shot of numerous US dollar bills, including \$20 and \$50 denominations, falling through the air against a clear blue sky. The bills are captured in various stages of descent, creating a sense of motion and abundance.

# Paid in full.

CHRISTOPHER A. LEE

**T**he dim light of a distant street lamp filtered through my second story window. Shadows scurried across the canvas of my wall and darted in and out of the bookshelf crevices. My room was in a stuffy converted attic, and the air was hot and heavy despite the best efforts of the noisy box fan wedged in the lower half of the window. I lay on my bed under the whining fan, sleepless and covered in a thin sheet of sweat. Each minute crawled slowly by, marked only by a click as the numbers flipped forward on my new-fangled digital clock.

It is difficult to say if my sleeplessness was caused more by the oppressive heat or by the feverish state of my young mind. I was planning our escape. My mind raced through various possibilities for saving my family. There were large obstacles to be overcome. For starters we were in the middle of a town. Secondly, we were more than 700 miles from the nearest mountains.

With the simplicity of a child I fantasized that my family and I could slip out our back door undetected, make it through the back gate of our fenced-in yard, and proceed on foot out of town. With some preplanning we could have a car hidden outside of town in some deserted place. Perhaps the burnt orange top of our Pinto hatchback could be hidden with a camouflage of large tree branches. It would have to be packed with essentials like extra gasoline, food, water, blankets, and clothing. Once in the car, we would stick to the back roads and make a desperate run, crossing through three states to reach the distant Rocky Mountains. There, in the wilderness, we would ride out the time of trouble surviving on berries, roots, and glacial streams.

I had to be ready when the Sunday-keepers came to our door to arrest us for our belief in Sabbath observance. There was little doubt in my mind that I would be lost if I fell into the hands of the Sunday-keepers. I knew I did not have the necessary arsenal of memorized Scripture to allow me to

defend the Sabbath when they took away my Bible. I knew I did not have the strength to withstand hideous torture to defend the seventh day. If the Sunday-keepers took me alive, I would fail the test and be lost eternally.

Then, from somewhere in the corners of my tortured mind came the haunting, accusing voice that so often spoke to me in these moments of fear, "What difference would it make if you escaped the Sunday-keepers? You would still have to prove your perfection and live through the time of trouble without a mediator. You're lost either way."

I couldn't escape the truth of the logic. Running wasn't the answer. It was then that I began to pray for God to let me die before the time of trouble—but even this desperate hope of salvation was snatched from me by the ever accusing voice, "If you die now your name will still come up for review in the Investigative Judgment. For all you know it might be under review right now. Every wrong thing you've ever said, done, or even thought will be reviewed. Every unconfessed sin will count against you. How can you possibly hope to confess every one of the multitude of sins you've committed? Your thoughts alone will condemn you. You are lost."

With the final realization that there was no way out, that I was lost regardless of what action I took, inner night descended upon me. The darkness of my room could not compare to the utter blackness in my soul.

## Down Payment On Salvation

The angst and depression I suffered as a child and young adult were shaped in part by an end-time scenario distinctive to Seventh-day Adventism. Attendance at Revelation Seminars and reading such books as E.G. White's *The Great Controversy* had instilled a deep fear in my heart that often threatened to bubble over into complete despair. In retrospect, I now see that the most basic problem was not in the



# Completely.

dubious end-time scenario or even in the highly aberrant doctrine of the Investigative Judgment. These cultic doctrines were merely a symptom of an underlying pathology. The real problem was much more fundamental. The root of my fear could be traced to a complete lack of understanding of the finality, power, and certainty of the cross of Christ.

I've heard former Adventist pastor J. Mark Martin say that he once viewed Jesus' sacrifice as a down payment on salvation. That is a perfect analogy for my understanding of the cross as an Adventist. I believed that what Jesus did at the cross made it theoretically possible for me to be saved. Jesus had died to pay the penalty for sin, so my own death wasn't necessarily required as long as I was able to pass the test and do the rest.

Imagine for a moment that you have an extremely rich uncle who wants to do something nice for you. Your uncle decides that he would love for you to be able to live in a beautiful mansion, but he knows that you could never make the down payment on such an estate. He generously pays the enormous down payment; you only need to make the monthly payments to continue to live in the mansion.

At first you are overjoyed. After all, the down payment alone was more than you could ever earn in a lifetime. Clearly you could never afford this mansion without his help. However, your joy begins to fade when you receive the first mortgage bill. You clean out your bank account and still find that you're short on the very first month's payment. You make up your mind to work harder, and you get a second job. When the next month rolls around you find that everything you make from both jobs is still not enough to cover the mortgage. You're getting farther behind every month, so you resolve to work even harder and get a third job. Still, no matter how hard you work, you find that you simply cannot earn enough to make the monthly payments on this monstrous house.

You become consumed by the struggle to keep the house, but every month you fall further behind. You live in

fear of losing the house, and you no longer take any joy from it. It is an albatross about your neck. As the realization sets in that you will inevitably be evicted, your uncle's gift no longer seems to be such a blessing. You know intellectually that you should be grateful to your uncle, yet you feel nothing for him. In fact, you begin to wish that he had simply left you alone and let you blissfully live where you were. If there was no chance of ever making the monthly payments, why bother with the down payment? As generous as your uncle's gift may have been, in the end, the dream of a mansion is still an impossible dream.


## **Free gift—not a down payment**

That was my view of the work of Christ at the cross—but the biblical truth is that Jesus did not just make the down payment on our salvation. He purchased it in whole and gave it all to us as an absolutely free gift.

Fortunately for us, God is sovereign over all and can use even our warped understandings for His glory and His purposes. In my case, God used my experiences as an Adventist to bring me to the place where I knew, without reservation, that there was no hope of salvation if it depended in any way on anything I did. Ultimately, that is the place to which the Holy Spirit must bring each of us. As long as we are laboring under the delusion that we can, to any degree, make ourselves acceptable to a holy, just, and righteous God, then we are denying both the necessity and the all-sufficiency of Christ's work.

Every human since Adam has been born with a sinful nature. As such we are naturally ungodly and unrighteous. A holy God cannot tolerate that which is against his righteous nature. He displays his wrath against sin and those who commit it. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 1:18,

"...the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness," (NASB)



**I now understand that my position in relation to God was even worse than I had realized. It's one thing to see oneself as a basically good person trying to do one's best but not quite living up to the standard. It's quite another thing altogether to begin to understand how utterly repugnant all sin is to a holy God who is both infinite and eternal.**

Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 2:3 that every single one of us starts out under God's wrath. In fact, despite popular assertions to the contrary, we are not naturally children of God. We are, by nature, children of wrath.

"Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." (NASB)

I now understand that my position in relation to God was even worse than I had realized. It's one thing to see oneself as a basically good person trying to do one's best but not quite living up to the standard. It's quite another thing altogether to begin to understand how utterly repugnant all sin is to a holy God who is both infinite and eternal. Not only is God infinite and eternal in His being, but so are all the attributes which are essential to His being. This includes His holiness, righteousness, justice, and yes, even His wrath. As finite creatures, there is nothing that you and I could ever do nor is there any punishment that we could experience that could ever quench God's infinite eternal wrath. Until we come to this realization, we have not fully appreciated our natural position as objects of wrath.

Perhaps this discussion of God's wrath will make some uncomfortable because it seems so out of phase with the one-dimensional picture of God that is so often preached from pulpits today. And yet, without understanding God's righteous wrath against sin, one cannot comprehend the depth of our need for the cross nor the infinite grace and mercy God showered upon us in the person of Jesus. There is an infinite gulf between being children of wrath and children of God. The cross bridges that gulf. Only the eternal Son of God could accomplish our reconciliation perfectly, all sufficiently, infinitely, and eternally.

### **More than an object lesson**

The cross was much more than an object lesson in love. While the cross was most certainly a demonstration of God's great love (John 3:16), it cannot be understood apart from the concept of atonement. Atonement describes the work of Christ in reconciling sinners to God, not by example, but by substitution. Christ is our substitute in at least four very closely related ways.

First, Jesus became Adam's substitute as the new representative for the human race. All who are descended from Adam are born into his sin and death. All who are in Christ are reborn into His righteousness and life.

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive." - 1 Corinthians 15:22 (NASB)

Secondly, not only did Christ become the new Adam, thus conquering sin and death, but He did so by completely fulfilling the righteous requirements of the Law. Christ's perfect life substituted for our own imperfect life. He redeemed us from the curse of the Law and became a curse for us by going to the cross.

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE' ... But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." - Galatians 3:13, 4:4-5 (NASB)

We can see that Christ's substitutionary life, fulfillment of the law, and sin-bearing work on the cross covered our sins. This is the concept of expiation. However, expiation does not entirely explain the cross. One must still deal with the matters of God's wrath against sin and the penalty of sin. Accordingly, the atonement must encompass more than just expiation. The atonement must also include the concept of propitiation.

In order to understand what propitiation is and the necessity for it, think back to the last time you opened a newspaper and read of a horrendously evil act against a child. You were no doubt filled with outrage over the injustice, and you fervently hoped that society would bring justice to the perpetrator. You felt this righteous anger and this sense of justice because you are created in God's image and are able to reflect His communicable attributes.

The difference, however, between our human reaction toward evil and God's reaction is that we are not perfectly just or righteous, so our anger is inconsistent. Only certain especially egregious sins raise our ire—and then we turn the page of the newspaper, forget our anger, and go about our day. God is a perfectly just and righteous God. He experiences anger against all sin, great and small, not just the most heinous acts. God's anger against sin is not forgotten. It is as infinite and eternal as God Himself. God's very nature requires that justice be done. If God is truly just, then His anger against that which is unjust cannot simply be dismissed. God's wrath must be appeased or propitiated. The problem for you and me, as finite creatures, is that we are incapable of propitiating God.

This brings us to the final two ways in which Christ is our substitute. Rather than pouring out his wrath on us, God chose to bear it Himself in the person of Jesus. In addition to suffering the wrath of God, Jesus also paid the full penal-

**Through our resurrected Lord, we have the sure hope of our own resurrection from the dead. We have assurance that our salvation is secure, not by our own efforts, but by the power of God. Our imperishable inheritance is safe in Him. In Christ we have become heirs to the Kingdom, sons and daughters of the King.**

ty of sin by dying in our place. The eternal God was propitiated through the sacrifice of the eternal Son. In this way, God's perfect justice was satisfied. God, through Jesus, paid it all.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." - Romans 5:8-9 (NASB)

"By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." - 1 John 4:9-10 (NASB)

Rather than being at odds with each other, as some theologians have suggested, expiation and propitiation are actually complementary concepts that are both essential to a full and complete atonement. In understanding both concepts we are brought to an awareness of our absolute need for a substitutionary Savior. Only then can we grasp the magnitude and finality of the atonement.

### **Finished Work**

Although Christ's atonement was completed at the cross, our understanding of His work would be incomplete without knowledge of the resurrection. In His resurrection, Jesus proved He was who He said He was, the Son of God (Romans 1:4). Furthermore, in the resurrection we see that the Son's sacrifice was accepted by the Father as a complete and finished work. Christ is not abandoned to Hades nor is He pictured as continuing to work. Instead, the resurrected Christ is pictured as one who has finished the work and has sat down to wait in the place of greatest honor and glory.

"But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." - Hebrews 10:12-14 (NASB)

By His very presence in heaven, Christ assures us that we stand justified before God through Him. The resurrected

Christ has become our intercessor guaranteeing that no charge can be brought against us.

"Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." - Romans 8:33-34 (NASB)

Through our resurrected Lord, we have the sure hope of our own resurrection from the dead. We have assurance that our salvation is secure, not by our own efforts, but by the power of God. Our imperishable inheritance is safe in Him. In Christ we have become heirs to the Kingdom, sons and daughters of the King.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." - 1 Peter 1:3-5 (NASB)

As we celebrate the resurrection of Christ, I cannot help but humbly contemplate the riches that have been lavished on me in His life, death, and resurrection. I have passed out of death into life (John 5:24). I am no longer a child of wrath, but a child of God (John 1:12). I no longer live in fear. I'm no longer trying to make impossible mortgage payments on my salvation. There is nothing left to pay. My Father in heaven has a mansion waiting for me. It's been bought and paid for in full through the blood of the Lamb.

I can finally sing, along with hymnist Fanny J. Crosby, "Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; redeemed thro' His infinite mercy, His child, and forever, I am." †

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# The Christ Event and the Spirit of Prophecy

DALE RATZLAFF

In the Mar/April 2002 issue of *Proclamation!* I wrote an article on Luke 24:13–35 entitled, “Encountering the Risen Christ.” If you have not read this article, you may find encouragement in doing so. You can find it, as well as other back issues at: [http://www.formeradventist.com/proclamation\\_index.html](http://www.formeradventist.com/proclamation_index.html). I would like to build on what I wrote before and focus on one important aspect of this encounter.

**R**esurrection Sunday found two unnamed, sorrowing disciples walking the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. As they recounted the tragic events of the last few days, an unrecognized Traveler (the Risen Christ) joined them.<sup>1</sup> But the two disciples did not recognize Him.<sup>2</sup> Jesus picked up on their conversation, “And He said to them, ‘What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?’”<sup>3</sup> And they stood still, looking sad. Then they told this Traveler about Jesus of Nazareth. They said that He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed.<sup>4</sup> We now come to the focus of this study.

And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.<sup>5</sup>

This text is the first exegetical gospel sermon after the resurrection. A careful study of this verse reveals an amazing fact. In this verse the Risen Christ proclaims that all the prophets spoke concerning Him! But note carefully how Jesus communicated this truth. “And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.” Here we have the Risen Lord, Himself, who could have given those two sorrowing disciples a full revelation of who He was and is in direct face to face communication. But he chose not to do this. Rather, He directed them to the Scriptures, and He made His point by explaining the Scriptures to them. He wanted their faith in Him as the Messiah and fulfillment of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms not to be based on some supernatural encounter with God or someone’s prophetic utterance. Rather, he directed them to the Scriptures, the Word of God. By doing this Jesus not only gives us much insight as to the use and purpose of Scripture, but He also outlines a method of witness: proclaim the truth of Scripture from Scripture.

Some have missed the above truth by emphasizing the study of Scripture over the purpose of Scripture which is to lead us into relationship with the Lord of Scripture. The Jews of Christ’s day were well-versed in the Scriptures and saw the study of Scripture itself to be a discipline of great merit. To this one-sided practice, Jesus said,

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.”<sup>6</sup>

That Jesus is the central theme and truth of all Scripture cannot be overemphasized.

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.”<sup>7</sup>

But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.<sup>8</sup>

...whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.<sup>9</sup>

And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days.<sup>10</sup>

It was the proclamation of this simple new covenant gospel that Peter articulated at the home of Cornelius that resulted in the baptism of the Holy Spirit being given to the Gentiles.

“Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.” While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.<sup>11</sup>

This same truth is proclaimed in Revelation 19:10 which has often been misinterpreted.

Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

The fact that this verse has so often had a foreign interpretation placed upon it mandates that we do an in-depth study of it.

### Testimony of Jesus

We start with the “testimony” part of the “testimony of Jesus.” The Greek word used in Revelation 19:10 is related to two other words. A witness (*martus*) is one who testifies (*martureo*) to the truth. The act of testifying is called his testimony (*marturia*). In ancient days, as at the present, this was a legal term designating the testimony given for or against one on trial before a court of law. In the Christian church this term came to mean the testimony given by Christians who witness to the truth of the Christ Event and His saving power.<sup>12</sup>

The “of Jesus” part of “the testimony of Jesus” can, in Greek, be either a subjective genitive or an objective genitive depending on context. If this is a subjective genitive, then this means the testimony is from Jesus as the source. If it is an objective genitive, then this means it is the testimony about Jesus. Both could be (and are) true, but I believe the context here leans toward this being an objective genitive. Therefore, this “testimony” is about or concerning Jesus. It is one giving witness to the truth of Jesus’ virgin birth, sinless life, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. This “testimony” also includes the meaning of the Christ event: forgiveness of all sin, the imputed righteousness of God, the sealing and gifting of the Holy Spirit, the reception of eternal life, and the promised second coming.

We could summarize “the testimony of Jesus” by saying it is the proclamation of the entire truth of Christ regardless of consequences: it is “gospel truth!”

# HERE WE HAVE THE RISEN LORD, HIMSELF, WHO COULD HAVE GIVEN THOSE TWO SORROWING DISCIPLES A FULL REVELATION OF WHO HE WAS, AND IS, IN DIRECT FACE TO FACE COMMUNICATION. BUT HE CHOSE NOT TO DO THIS. RATHER, HE DIRECTED THEM TO THE SCRIPTURES...

Let's check our conclusion and see if it fits the context of how "testimony," "witness," and "martyr" are used in Revelation and the other writings of John. As we do this, also note the close association of "testimony" with "the word of God".

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John; who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.<sup>13</sup>

I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained.<sup>15</sup>

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.<sup>16</sup>

John uses these terms over seventy times in his writings. Here are a few.

He [John the Baptist] came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.<sup>17</sup>

But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.<sup>18</sup>

So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him.<sup>19</sup>

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.<sup>20</sup>

These verses confirm our conclusion that "the testimony of Jesus" describes the event of someone testifying about the truth of who Jesus is and what He has done and is doing. This term is congruent with the proclamation of the gospel.

## Spirit of Prophecy

Now let us study "the Spirit of Prophecy" as used in Revelation 19:10.

Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The context (remember we always consider the context) is about the marriage supper of the Lamb. In verse 9 an unidentified speaker tells John, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are the true words of God'" (19:9). Here we see that

Christ (the Lamb) is central. Note again the close association with the "word(s) of God."

Following verse 9 there are numerous symbols of Christ: "Faithful," "True," "eyes a flame of fire," "robe dipped in blood," the "Word of God," etc. Therefore, we conclude that the context of Revelation 19:10 is centered in Christ.

But what does the term "the spirit of prophecy" mean? "Prophecy" is what a prophet writes or says. In Scripture prophecy includes more than predictive statements and is often used for the proclamation of the truth, especially gospel truth.<sup>21</sup>

Here the unnamed person says that he also holds the "testimony of Jesus." In other words, the speaker also believes the truth about (or from) Jesus. Focusing on the last phrase, we read, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." To paraphrase, "The truth about Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Notice how this verse is variously translated or paraphrased.

- Those who bear testimony to Jesus are inspired like the prophets (*The New English Bible*).
- For the truth revealed by Jesus is the inspiration of all prophecy (*Weymouth*).
- For the testimony of Jesus is what inspires prophecy (*Goodspeed*).
- It is the truth concerning Jesus which inspires all prophecy (*Knox*).
- The purpose of all prophecy and of all I have shown you is to tell about Jesus (*Living Bible*).

These translators have captured the essence of what John is seeking to communicate. All prophecy, when rightly interpreted, in some way points to the truth concerning Jesus.

We should be very careful not to follow or rely upon prophetic utterances outside of the Scriptures. Jesus chose to reveal Himself to the two sorrowing disciples on Resurrection Sunday by showing them that the Scriptures teach of Him. Peter, as we saw above, framed the gospel in these words, "...of Him all the prophets bear witness..."<sup>22</sup>

Now we can understand the full meaning intended in Revelation 19:10.

Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Yes, the testimony of Jesus is the good news of the Christ Event, and the Christ Event is the spirit of prophecy—the theme of all the true, biblical prophets as recorded in Scripture. In our walk with God and our witness to others, let our "testimony of Jesus" be ever linked to the Christ Event and grounded in the Word of God.

To say that "the spirit of prophecy" as used in Revelation 19:10 refers to some modern-day prophet creates major problems. The New American Standard Bible rightly captions Hebrews 1:1-3 with these words: "God's Final Word in His Son." Let us look carefully at this important truth.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spo-

## TO SAY THAT REVELATION 19:10 POINTS TO THE WORK OF A MODERN PROPHET USURPS THE CENTRAL PLACE OF CHRIST IN SCRIPTURE. THOSE WHO HOLD THAT REVELATION 19:10 POINTS TO A MODERN PROPHET WHOSE WRITINGS ARE A SOURCE OF AUTHORITY CANNOT JUSTLY CLAIM TO BE PROTESTANTS.

ken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.<sup>23</sup>

First we note the fragmentary, shadowy way the prophets foretold the Christ Event. They spoke long ago in many portions and in many ways. Colossians 2:16,17 lists the holy days of Israel that pointed forward to the Christ Event. It includes festivals (yearly Sabbaths), new moons (monthly celebrations) and Sabbaths (weekly Sabbaths) as “a mere shadow.” Hebrews 10:1 says, “For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come...” As we have seen all the prophets foretold the Christ Event, but all did so in incomplete and shadowy language.

The writer of Hebrews contrasts the incomplete, shadowy nature of prophecy to God’s final Word in His Son. “In these last days has spoken to us in His Son.” The Greek aorist tense conveys the finality of this superior revelation: “God spoke.” Note the clarity of the revelation of Christ. “He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature.” Greek scholar R.C.H. Lenski rightly comments,

There is no one beyond the incarnate Son whom God might use for his speaking to us. This means that now, having spoken in the person of his Son, we have the ultimate Word and revelation of God. No more and nothing further will God ever say to men. They who look for more and for new revelation will never find it; Heb. 2:3 is God’s answer to them.<sup>24</sup>

To say that a modern prophet is needed to augment God’s final word in Christ is to undermine the content and finality of the Christ Event. It is a flat contradiction to the above Scripture. To hold the writings of a modern prophet as “a continuing and authoritative source of truth” is tantamount to heresy. To say that Revelation 19:10 points to the work of a modern prophet usurps the central place of Christ in Scripture. Those who hold that Revelation 19:10 points to a modern prophet whose writings are a source of authority cannot justly claim to be Protestants. Protestants hold to the Bible and the Bible *only* as the source of truth. We must accept the biblical definition of the spirit of prophecy for what it is: The Christ Event as foretold by all the biblical prophets and recorded in the canon of Scripture. The apostolic church recognized the finality of the revelation of the Christ Event.

The early church likewise recognized that the 27 books of the *New Testament* were historically accurate and were written either by eye witnesses or those who had first-hand knowl-

edge from eyewitnesses and were inspired by the Holy Spirit. With the revelation of God’s Final Word in Christ now written in the books of the New Testament the early Christian church rightly confirmed that the canon of Scripture is closed.

As we come to another celebration of the Christ Event—Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection—let us give thanks to God for His unspeakable gift in Christ, always proclaiming the good news of Scripture via the Scriptures. Here is the way that the Apostle Paul stated it:

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.<sup>25</sup>

This is the authentic, new covenant gospel! It the focal point of the biblical spirit of prophecy! Yes, it is the gospel by which we are saved. God has spoken His final Word in Christ. Glory to God! He is risen! My sin is gone! †

### Endnotes

1. God meets us at the point of our deepest need.
2. God’s presence in our lives often goes unrecognized.
3. God wants us to share our deepest disappointments, hopes, doubts and joys. Lk. 24:17
4. Partial belief is not enough; we must see Jesus as the Divine Son of God.
5. Lk. 24:25-27. Our disappointment, our discouragement, and our doubts may be caused by a lack of understanding Bible truth.
6. Jn. 5:39, 40.
7. Lk. 18:31.
8. Acts 3:18.
9. Acts 3:21.
10. Acts 3:24.
11. Acts 10:43, 44.
12. See *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell, Baker Books, p. 1174.
13. Rev. 1:1, 2.
14. Rev. 1:9.
15. Rev. 6:9.
16. Rev. 20:4.
17. Jn. 1:7-8.
18. Jn. 5:36.
19. Jn. 12:17.
20. Jn. 15:26, 27.
21. See 1 Cor. 14:1-3, 22-29.
22. Acts 10:43.
23. Heb. 1:1-3
24. *Commentary on the New Testament, Hebrews/James* by R. C. H. Lenski, p. 33.
25. 1 Cor. 15:1-4.

**Dale Ratzlaff** is the founder of Life Assurance Ministries and publishes books through LAM Publishing. He served as an Adventist pastor for 13 years, seven of which were at Monterey Bay Academy where he taught Bible. He and his wife Carolyn left the Adventist church in the 1980’s when he realized he could no longer teach the investigative judgment in good conscience. He has authored *Sabbath in Christ*, *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventist Truth*, and *Adventist to Christian*. They are available through his website, [www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.com](http://www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.com).





# I finally get it

THOMAS FRANCIS

**B**efore we get any further, let me make one thing perfectly clear, I love Easter! I can never get through the weekend without mixtures of deep heartbreaking sorrow, real tears, unbelievable awe, and total joy. Even excitement can be added to the list. Sometimes the Easter feeling comes upon me several times a year. It's more than a weekend or a holiday; it is truly a new way of life.

If you want to understand Easter, however, you must first determine what Jesus is to you.

I remember that when my sister and I were growing up, we never knew Easter. Until I was almost school age, I never even heard the word mentioned. Somewhere during those years I heard of Easter baskets and Easter clothes. I didn't get it! It wasn't Christmas and it wasn't summer; why would someone get all those new things just for Spring?

I asked my dad. He was my best friend, and I asked him about everything. He told me Easter was a pagan holiday. Sunday churches, he told me, made a big deal out of it because the Catholic Church declared it a holy day. It was one way to make Sunday-keeping "special," to make it look holy, so they could make excuses for not keeping the Sabbath.

I still didn't get it.

## Devout parents

Please don't misunderstand; my parents were very devout in their faith and very religious; their beliefs were deep and non-negotiable. They taught me to keep the commandments. They were more devoted to their faith than most church members I have known in any denomination. They taught me the special privilege we had of being members of God's Remnant Church. They taught my sister and me to have great pride in being members of a church blessed with the "Spirit of Prophecy." In our house, there were no "worldly" reading materials, not even a newspaper. We listened to the radio only for news. I thought Del Delker and the Kings Heralds were the top 40. I never knew there were record companies other than Chapel Records. I met H.M.S. Richards one time and thought I had met someone greater than the President. We heard Uncle Arthur's *Bedtime Stories* and *The Bible Stories* long before we could read them ourselves.

In all of the reading and in all of the music, we never read or heard anything about Easter. I held no ill-will for people who believed in that holiday, but why were so many people who called themselves Christians making such a big deal out of that day?

My parents wanted to give us something like other families had, so for a couple of years, they colored eggs and put them into a bowl with a little artificial grass. Once dad even let us help color them, but when we cracked them and ate them, they were just hard boiled eggs. When we were about eleven, mom got my sister and me each a chocolate Easter rabbit. When we bit into them, they were hollow, and the chocolate was not even good. At that point I really didn't understand.

One year we received an Easter basket with small jelly beans, colored eggs, and a couple of marshmallow bunnies. I asked the folks what these things meant. They explained that they were "Easter baskets," and other people gave them to their children for Easter. They carefully explained that we weren't really keeping the pagan part of the holiday, but it wouldn't hurt to do some of the fun things. Try as hard as I might, I couldn't understand what other people loved about Easter. Why did people go to church and have big family celebrations focused on eggs, chocolate, and bunnies? And if Easter WAS a big deal, why weren't we part of it all?

## Jesus was our example

We were taught that God loved us and wanted us to be good and keep His commandments. We were taught that He came to live a life of perfect obedience to the law as an example that we must follow. Then, we were taught, He died on a cross to show God that He was truly obedient, and when he came from the tomb, He had to go to heaven before anyone could touch Him to see if God had approved of his death.

We were taught that if Jesus could keep the commandments, it proved that we could too—but there was even more we had to do. We must also do all of the "special" things that Sister White had taught us—things which she had been shown by angels and even Jesus himself—such as keeping the Sabbath, not eating certain foods, spices, or caffeine, not playing certain sports, and not wearing jewelry.

We were taught that Jesus was in the holiest part of the heavenly sanctuary, poring over the record books of all of our sins and checking to make sure that we were keeping all the laws and asking forgiveness for every sinful deed and thought. My dear mother knew a few texts that governed her life. One she would quote often was her own version: "Every action, every word, every thought, will come into judgment. We have to be ready, because we never know when we will be judged." Believing her warning, I

could make no sense of the cross. Why did Jesus have to go through all that suffering if we still had to do all of these things to be saved? How could He die for us, and then sit in some investigative judgment, looking for even one unconfessed sin that would send us to hell?

Many times we sang the famous verse:

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,  
The emblem of suffering and shame.  
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best  
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

But we never seemed to make the connection between the “Old rugged cross” and our salvation.

### How could I be saved?

When I married my wife, I was already 35 years old. I remember her asking me what I wanted to do for Easter.

What a joke! Why would we “do” anything for Easter? Not only was Easter a non-event for me, but my lifestyle proved that I didn’t know anything about the real meaning of the subject. To my wife’s credit, she just looked at me and said nothing. How ashamed I feel now to know that for years, I spoiled this special time for her.

Years passed, and I slowly began to notice that many good Christians had a wonderful assurance about the future that I did not have. Suddenly I became deep down, mad-dog afraid. I knew from experience I could not keep all of the rules and laws I had learned. I had tried—really tried. I was going to hell in a handbasket, and the road was straight down and slick. I didn’t know HOW to be saved, but I wanted to know—I needed to know.

Just about then, God showed up. Little did I know He’d been there all along, just waiting for His time to bring me home. He brought His holy Word and me into a “hand in hand” relationship. I wrote a prayer that I have since taped into the front cover of all of my Bibles. It goes like this:

Lord Jesus, You are God, there is no other. You are the Lord of my life. You promised that Your Holy Spirit would teach us and lead us to all truth. Teach me the truth as it is. Not the way I think it is, have been taught it is, or wish it were. Lead me into Your ways, as they are. Not the way I think they are or wish them to be. Fill me with Your spirit and help me to trust You and love You more and more each day. Thank you, Amen.

I began reading the Bible through. With each reading, little pieces began to fit together, and then I began to see the complete picture. The writings of Paul, the writings of John, the Gospels—the whole book was one grand story of Jesus! And the story of Jesus, was, is, and always will be, the story of Easter.

Being saved is so simple and easy that many simply overlook it or refuse to believe its majesty.

For God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life. God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that

the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged. But he who does not believe is judged already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16-18)

It’s just that simple. Jesus died so we could be saved. If we believe in Him and what He did on that horrible black Friday nearly two thousand years ago, if we believe that He got up and walked out of His empty tomb on that first Resurrection morning—the day we celebrate as Easter—we will be saved.

Jesus never had to check with God to see if His mission was accepted. Paul tells us that we were chosen for salvation through His blood before the world began. The mission, the cross, the empty tomb, the entire plan was in place long before there was even a world to save! There was never a single doubt! There is no great cosmic controversy between Jesus and Satan; Satan never had a chance. The cross fulfilled the whole sovereign plan. The empty tomb guaranteed salvation for “all who believe.” God’s justice is satisfied!

### But there is more!

As wonderful as the cross is, as exciting as the resurrection is, it all means nothing unless we understand what the third verse of “The Old Rugged Cross” is saying:

In that old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine,  
A wondrous beauty I see,  
For ‘twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died  
To pardon and sanctify me.

Did you catch it? The wonder of Easter is not just that God loves the world, that He sent His Son, that Jesus died, or that He rose from the dead. No, the wonder of it all is that He did it all for ME! When I finally understood that verse, I finally got it. All those excited people that mystified me during my youth and childhood understood something I needed to know: Easter is something to celebrate!

An old Baptist hymn reads, in part:

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.  
Glory! Glory! This I sing – nothing but the blood of Jesus. All my praise for this I sing – nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus.

If this is the first Easter you will really celebrate, or if it is your 100th, I hope you will begin by being broken at the cross, claiming the joy of the empty tomb, and making His blood the price paid in full for your salvation. Then never, NEVER, let anyone point you to anything else besides Jesus, no matter what, ever again! Amen! *Soli Deo Gloria!* †

**Thomas Francis** lived most of his life in the Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana areas. After careers in radio broadcasting, insurance, and law enforcement, he was forced to take disability retirement because of the complications of diabetes. Raised a second generation Adventist, he is currently a member of College Road Baptist Church in Ocala, Florida, where his Sunday School class has grown from two to thirty within the past three years, handed out 143 New Testaments last year, and recently was responsible for bringing a new believer to Jesus. He has two grown children, three grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter.





## Anointed Issue

The Jan./Feb. 2007 issue of *Proclamation!* arrived yesterday... Indeed, this issue is anointed, and truth is contained in its pages. [Colleen Tinker's] article, "Walking by Faith (even when I can't see)" touched my

heart so deeply... I want to comment on Pastor Dale's article, "Lord, Increase our Faith." Wow! Did he ever hit the mark with this one... The Adventists are "dumbing down" the holy Word of God to raise the status of Ellen G. White whose writings are erroneous and full of flaws—a fact which is being recognized by members of this religion. This is their way of fighting back to retain the "cash cow" of Adventism, Ellen G. White.

Again, accolades and kudos to all the staff of *Proclamation!* For over 10 years we thought we were alone in our quest, but God sent us more help than we could ever hope for or imagine in your magazine.

## Polluting God's church

Your magazine has been coming to my husband and me for years. We opened the first several of them and found them to be works of Satan himself! How dare you try to pollute God's church in this way? My husband is now sleeping in the Lord, and I am left to deal with this satanic magazine... I don't want to burn. I'm heading for heaven where there will be no more satanic mail arriving in anybody's mailboxes. Please repent and come back home to Jesus before it is too late.

## Life Assurance Ministries, Inc

### MISSION

To proclaim the good news of the New Covenant gospel of grace in Christ and to combat the errors of legalism and false religion.

### MOTTO

Truth needs no other foundation than honest investigation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a willingness to follow truth when it is revealed.

### MESSAGE

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, that no one should boast." Ephesians 2:8,9

## Answered Questions

I received *Proclamation!* for the first time this month, and it answered so many questions for this former Adventist. God bless you for this inspired effort; I want to be able to continue to support this important ministry with a monthly donation. I am no longer lost and alone.

## Hole in my head

Don't send me any more of your ratty magazines! I need them like I need another hole in my head.

## Helping us to see clearly

Your books, web site, and *Proclamation!* magazine have been quite helpful in cementing our recent decision to leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church after a lifetime of legalism. We are grateful to you for helping us to clearly see that Jesus was calling us to freedom.

We believe strongly in what you are doing and pray that others will understand that they can be free from the yoke of bondage that has enslaved them, that they, too, can walk in the amazing freedom of the simple Gospel.

## What shadow?

I have enjoyed reading these thought-provoking articles [Nov/Dec, 2006 *Proclamation!*]. I thoroughly agree that legalism is a blight of Christianity. The concern with many of Mrs. White's articles is understandable—but I cannot figure out what "shadow" the seventh day of the week is. It appears to me that the seventh day of the week was in conjunction with creation in honor of all living things and of the Creator. I cannot see a shadow or holiday in all of Genesis 1 and 2. Will you please tell me what you mean by the shadow of the Seventh-day Sabbath?

**Editor's response:** God blessed the seventh day at creation because He was finished with His work, and He saw that all He had made was good. There was no command in Genesis for any human to "keep" the Sabbath. Furthermore, unlike the other six days, the seventh day of Creation Week was not bounded by the phrase, "and the evening and the morning were the [seventh] day." It was the only day without a stated beginning and ending. In other words, God did not stop resting after that seventh day. He did not resume creating on the first (or second or third, etc.) day. His seventh-day rest did not end.

God and Adam and Eve were in perfect unity—unseparated by sin—until the day Adam and Eve ate the fruit offered by the serpent. At that point, the perfect rest they enjoyed in God ended.

Hebrews 4:1-11 explains that God rested from His work at creation, but Israel never entered God's rest—in spite of having been given the Sabbath command in Exodus 16 in conjunction with the manna and again in Exodus 31:12-18 as the sign of their covenant with God. The Hebrews passage further explains that because Israel never entered God's rest because of unbelief, "God again set a certain day, calling it Today... 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.'" (Heb 4:7).

The writer of Hebrews continues to explain that if the Israelites had received the rest God intended for them, "God would not have spoken later about another day." In verses 9 and 10, then, he explains that the Sabbath-rest that remains for the people of God consists of entering God's rest, His finished work which was first accomplished at creation and was restored to us at the cross when Jesus cried, "It is finished" and surrendered His Spirit to the Father. Entering God's rest means accepting the sacrifice of Jesus for our sin and resting from our own work of trying to please God.

The Sabbath day, it is clear from this passage in Hebrews, was a shadow of the Sabbath rest that God offers His people. It comes to us on "another day"—today—and now, because of Jesus' shed blood and resurrection, we can experience Sabbath rest today and every day.

The Sabbath day was God's creation—not an eternal entity. As a creation of Jesus, it is not the object of our honor; we honor Him. The Sabbath, therefore, was given to Israel to help them remember their Creator and the promise of the creation rest that He would restore when the Messiah would finally come and make all things new. On this side of the cross, the Sabbath shadow has been fulfilled in Jesus Himself, and now we find our rest in Him alone. We honor the Creator, not His created day.

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## FAF Weekend 2007 CONTINUED FROM BACK

float under the “Christian” banner [such as Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and even Adventism] which actually spring from those ancient heresies rather than from the true trunk of the apostolic tree.

Dr. Gary Inrig taught a class on what to look for in locating a healthy church. He stressed that three non-negotiable beliefs must be the Trinity, a high view of Scripture’s inerrancy, and the centrality of the cross. Other doctrinal issues may be important enough for a person to want a church where those views are taught, but he said that those three non-negotiables are necessary for true Christian fellowship to occur.

Jon Rittenhouse talked about the reliability of the Bible and pointed out that we have seven manuscripts of Plato’s works, the earliest of which dates to 900 AD—1300 years later than Plato lived. Further, we have 49 manuscripts of Aristotle, the earliest of which dates 1100 AD—1400 years after Aristotle died. In contrast, the New Testament was written between 45 and 95 AD, and the earliest manuscript we have dates at 125 AD. We have manuscripts for most of the New Testament that date at 250 AD, and we have 24,970 manuscripts of the complete New Testament, the earliest dating back to 325 BC. The critics never tell us that the Bible is the most documented of all the ancient books humanity has.

Joan and Galen Yorba-Gray, Dale Ratzlaff, Mark Martin, Leslie Martin, and Greg Taylor all led breakout sessions.

Saturday evening Dale Ratzlaff preached a sermon entitled “Amazing Revelation” to an audience including people from the community. He used Acts 10 as his text, the passage recording Peter’s vision of the sheet of unclean animals and subsequently his journey to the house of Cornelius where the entire Gentile household received the Holy Spirit apart from any observance of Jewish law. There are eight main points we are to understand from this revelation beginning with Peter’s dream and ending with the baptism of Cornelius’ household: 1. The revelation was a “God-thing.” 2. The revelation takes us outside our theological box. 3. The revelation proclaims the cleansing of unclean foods. 4. The revelation declares God is no respecter of persons. 5. The message of “all the prophets” who testify of forgiveness through the Messiah (v. 43) is the “spirit of prophecy.” 6. The astonishing revelation is the Holy Spirit. 7. As soon as a person accepts the gospel and receives Jesus, he receives the Holy Spirit and is immediately a member of God’s universal church. 8. Woe to those who stand in the way of the simple gospel!

Over the course of the weekend, Martin and Sharon Carey, Greg Taylor, Paul and Terry Mirra, and Grace Carlson shared their faith stories, and Michael Hicks read Jess Dixon’s story.



**Top:** Sharon Strum led worship for the weekend assisted by her husband Scott on the guitar, Jamie Rabenstein, percussion; Sarah Schumacher, bass, and Roy Tinker, keyboard. **Bottom left:** Keith and Marianna Vincent participate in the seminar led by Jon Rittenhouse on the reliability of the Bible. **Bottom right:** Jon Rittenhouse presented one of the three Christianity EDU seminars: “The Inerrancy of the Bible.” Sound files of the meetings can be listened to at [www.FormerAdventist.com](http://www.FormerAdventist.com).

Elizabeth Inrig, pastor of women’s ministries at Trinity Church, was in charge of hospitality. She and several women of Trinity served us a wonderful breakfast and lunch, and Saturday supper was a catered meal from a local favorite Southeast Asia restaurant, Le Basil.

The weekend was rich with sharing stories, spiritual nurturing, and the palpable presence of Jesus. MP3 audio files of the main messages and of the Christianity EDU session are available online at [www.FormerAdventist.com](http://www.FormerAdventist.com), and video files will be online soon.

We hope to have you join us next year!

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## FAF Weekend 2007 a blessing for over 100 former Adventists

**T**he second annual Former Adventist Fellowship (FAF) Weekend, "The Body of Christ," was a time of wonderful blessing. Held February 16 and 17 at Trinity Evangelical Free Church in Redlands, California, it began with snacks and excited greetings as people met each other, some for the first time, and some for the first time since last year's FAF weekend. Michael and Janice Hicks and Rosalie Lynn, all from local Southern California towns, managed the registration table, while Diana Lopez from Nevada and Shirley Burton from Manitoba greeted people as they got something to eat and got acquainted with each other.

After a time of worship led by Sharon Strum, Mark Martin opened the weekend with a sermon entitled, "What Does God Have To Prove?" He emphasized that God knows all things, including us, in minute detail. He knows past, present, and future, and He never has a need to "investigate" anything, including us, to find out the truth. He knows, and we can rest in His sovereign intimacy with us, not fearing that He may discover secret sins that may surprise Him.

Saturday morning began with breakfast served from 7:30-8:30. Greg Taylor presented the main address that morning: a sermon entitled "Secrets To a Spirit-Filled Life." He used the

Beatitudes as his text, and he explained how each characteristic Jesus listed in the Beatitudes applies to a Christ-follower's life. He showed how being born from above by the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us not to be enslaved to our temptations. Now we can choose to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

The rest of the morning and afternoon were devoted to breakout sessions and to three classes comprising the Christianity EDU track. Dr. Rick Langer taught a class on the history of Christianity and explained how the apostolic church divided early on into two branches, Eastern Orthodox and Catholic. Later, the Reformation branched off the Catholic division. All true Christian churches today can trace their heritage backward to the trunk of the original apostolic church. Heresies such as Arianism, Gnosticism, and Ebionism sprouted near the trunk of the true church, and even today there are churches that appear to



Greg Taylor gave the Saturday morning address, "Secrets To A Spirit-Filled Life," in the worship center of Trinity Church.

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