

I'VE BEEN SET UP

MOVING AWAY FROM LEGALISM

ProclamationMagazine.com

Proclamation!

FORMER ADVENTISTS
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS
SABBATARIANS
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

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VOLUME 16, ISSUE 3

**ELLEN G. WHITE
CONSULTS WITH HER
DEAD HUSBAND**

**JONAH: MISSIONARY
OR GOD'S SIGN AND
SERVANT**

FIGHT WITH ME

**ADVENTIST COMMUNION:
FROM THE BIBLE OR TRADITION**

WAS **SABBATH** CREATED?

A LOOK AT ADVENTISM'S USE OF MARK 2:27



COLLEEN TINKER

WOE TO YOU TEACHERS OF THE LAW

I remember the day vividly. It was early in 1998, and it was the seventh day—the day we were just beginning to call “Saturday”. We already knew that we were leaving the Adventist organization. We had been studying the New Testament and had been changed by the reality of the new covenant in Jesus’ blood. Nothing looked the same anymore, and we were hungrily devouring Scripture.

That Saturday we and our friend Rosalie sat together in our house and watched, for the first time, The Visual Bible’s dramatization of *Matthew*. The script was the entire book of Matthew in the New International Version, and I heard those words as I had never heard them before.

... YOU MAKE THEM TWICE AS MUCH A CHILD OF HELL AS YOU ARE.

I have never gotten over the impact of hearing Jesus’ “Woe to you” judgments on the Pharisees recorded in Matthew 23 as I heard them that day. Never again could I think of Jesus as finally being pushed to the edge of anger and delivering verbal blows. Instead, I heard those words being ripped from the heart of a Man who loved those Pharisees, who grieved over their unbelief, who was angry at the darkness that marked their spiritual leadership. And then I heard verse 15:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.”

At that moment I realized those words described Adventist missions. Of course many Adventist missionaries are sincere and well-intentioned. They often have no idea that the doctrines they teach are not biblical—but the fact is, Adventist doctrines teach what Paul called “a different gospel; which is really not another” (Gal. 1:6b-7a). No matter how well-meaning, a different gospel—a false gospel—condemns people to destruction.

When I heard those words of Jesus, I felt truth pierce my heart.

Adventism teaches that Sabbath is an eternal sacred reality—a day which even God honors, a day to which humanity is subject. Yet only God is eternal. An eternal, holy day would require loyalty from creatures that rivals the creatures’ loyalty to God.

Adventism teaches that Ellen White was God’s prophetic messenger sent specifically to the Seventh-day Adventists for the purpose of providing prophetic insight and biblical counsel for all last day believers. Yet Ellen White twisted the words

and meanings of Scripture so faithful Adventists would not be able to read the Bible using normal rules of context, grammar, and vocabulary to ascertain its meaning. Ellen White not only misused or ignored Scripture herself, but she also left her followers an example of morphing Scripture to fit their beliefs.

In this issue Dale Ratzlaff shows that the sabbatarian argument that Sabbath is a creation ordinance is not an accurate interpretation of Scripture’s words. William Hohmann, a former Worldwide Church of God member, has shared a companion piece explaining the faulty sabbatarian interpretation of 1 John 3:4.

We introduce Robin Brace, a former pastor in the Armstrong Worldwide Church of God who resides in the U.K. Robin shares an inside look at the warping effects of cultic legalism on the minds and souls of people indoctrinated into Millerite adventist movements. James Valentine shares his research into Ellen White’s little-known dream in which she consulted her dead husband James and considered his advice to her to be sent from God.

Martin Carey shows that, contrary to the way Adventists teach the story of Jonah, he was not a missionary. Instead, he was God’s sign and His servant. Kelsie Petersen tells her story of trusting Jesus, and we also introduce the launch of the dedicated website for the Spanish *¡Proclamación!* Spanish translator Joanie Yorba-Gray shares a devotional in addition to our usual columns by Rick Barker, Chris Lee, and Carolyn Macomber.

We pray that if you have not been born again, you will hear the gospel as you read. We pray that you will repent, as the Ninevites did, and know the grace of God “so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). †

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WATCH OUT FOR THE JUNE BUGS



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What's wrong with legalism?

Let me tell you a story. We first noticed the big green June bugs when we were picking the ears from the first planting of our organic corn. We had seen corn silk worms many times before, but June bugs were different. We could almost ignore the irritating corn silk worms; if we found them in an ear of corn, we could simply cut off the infected tip. June bugs, however, could not be ignored.

As I was picking the first fruits of our corn, suddenly a swarm of huge iridescent buzzing beetles invaded the space around my head. I had never experienced an invasion like this before. Soon I discovered that these hungry green bugs like to hunt in packs—some ears of corn had about a dozen of those hard-shelled beetles crowded together on the tip, corporately decimating the husks and the tender kernels underneath. Quickly, I picked the rest of the corn and took it in to freeze. But that was not the end of the story.

Soon we noticed beetles eating our blackberries—and then the peaches, the tomatoes, and the melons. We decided it was time to declare war on the June bugs—and by the way, June bugs pay no attention to the “June” part of their name. They are still here as I write on September 29. We discovered that a coffee can filled with water and molasses attracts them, and they drown in the sweet mix. Actually, we caught dozens of them by hand and threw them into our “traps”.

Catching them, though, is not a pleasant experience. They have strong claws that grab onto one's fingers with an intensity and strength that makes one certain they're about to bite—even though they do not.

Their social nature drew others to the feast. In fact, we had to check our garden and trees several times a day to keep those buzzy green giants from destroying the harvest that we had worked so hard to nurture.

Legalism is like those pesky green June bugs. It sucks out the strength of whatever it invades. When we seek to do good, it is there telling us that we did not do well enough. When we miss the mark, legalism buzzes in our heads making us think we might just as well give up. When we fall into sin—big or small—legalism tries to claw the good news out of our being, telling us the gospel does not work. Like the social June bugs, legalism in one area of our lives invites legalism into other

areas, and before we know it, we are being consumed with shame, anxiety, and compulsions.

There is only one cure for legalism: the sweet savor of the gospel—the righteousness of Christ imputed to those who believe. Just as we grabbed the pesky green June bugs off our ripe harvest and threw them into the sweet molasses trap, in the

same way as soon as we experience legalism eating out our Christian joy and liberty, we are to grab it before it can dig its claws into our soul, and throw it into the ocean of God's grace. The gospel is the good news of what Christ has done for us in His death, burial, and resurrection. Understanding and believing this good news at the very core of our being will drown the condemning voices of legalism. While we are saved by a one-time experience with the living Lord, we will ever have to stand guard over the sweet fruits of the Spirit. While we are to always tell others of the good news of the gospel, let us never forget the importance of telling ourselves the gospel story over and over again. †

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest. And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song, 'twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.

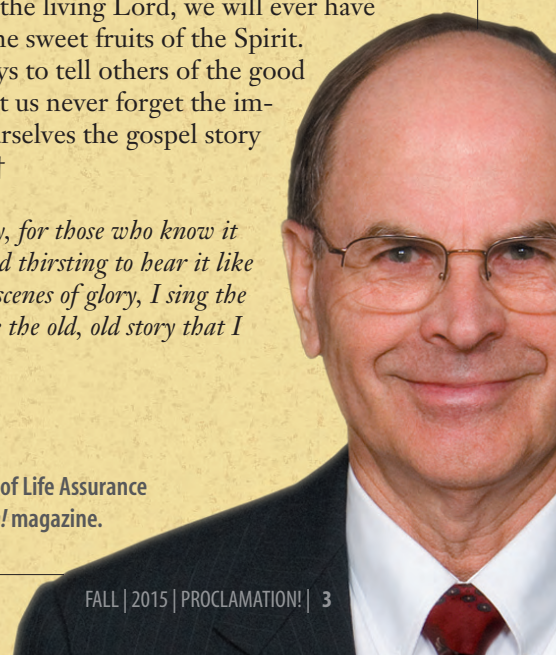
Dale Ratzlaff is the founder of Life Assurance Ministries and *Proclamation!* magazine.

LEGALISM IS LIKE THOSE PESKY GREEN JUNE BUGS. IT SUCKS OUT THE STRENGTH OF WHATEVER IT INVADES.

Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff have authored six books: *Sabbath in Christ*—a volume that explains new covenant Sabbath rest, *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism*—explores the false Adventist doctrine of a pre-advent judgment that decides eternal destinies, *Truth*

About Adventist "Truth"—a little book that's perfect to give to Christians that need to understand Adventism, *Truth Led Me Out*—in which Dale Ratzlaff tells his own story of following Jesus, no matter the cost, *My Cup Overflows*—Carolyn's autobiography, and *Gospel Transformation*—which teaches what the Gospel is and accomplishes.

Each of these books is available at Ratzlaff.com or by phoning (928) 554-1001.



KELSIE PETERSEN

I realized last night that I've been set up—utterly and completely set up. I lay in bed, thinking about the whirlwind of the last ten weeks, and as usual, my thoughts tumbled over themselves, bringing my mind through the bumps and twists of all the years that have gone before.

June 30th I received the diagnosis from a seemingly simple biopsy that had been performed a week earlier: I had a high grade (fast-growing) sarcoma in the flesh of my hip. I suddenly found myself scheduled for a CT scan, an MRI, and an appointment with an oncologist and surgeon two hours from where we live. I was told my surgery would result in a two-month convalescence with severe limitations on my activities. Since we have a toddler, a preschooler and a kindergartner, my next weeks were a blur of arranging for food and care for them and for my husband while my head churned with the implications of my diagnosis. At the same time, we tried to cram as much “summer” into a few short weeks as we could.

On July 31 I had surgery, and as I've healed and regained my ability to do my daily activities and to take care of our children, I've had to learn to trust God in new ways.

I've had low days over the past three months. I don't feel as if I've actually doubted God's goodness and faithfulness, but I have often had to preach to myself, to remind myself, to explain (again) to myself the purpose of this unexpected interruption: it is for His glory.

This is not the first period of time in my life when I have faced potentially faith-shattering circumstances, and it certainly won't be the last. (It is, however, only the second time that I clearly remember being tested and tried but not feeling swept away by doubt. I

I'VE BEEN

am thankful to know that I can face hard times with the full assurance that Jesus is faithful in His goodness and His love for me!) Nevertheless, every time these extra-hard times come along, I find myself recounting the events and decisions in my life that brought me where I am. I tear up when I look back along my years (there's not that many of them, mind you), and I see so clearly how God has led, guided, cleared paths, and possibly given me a little nudge into places and situations I might not have chosen for myself. I see how the tapestry of my life has been woven together, flaws and imperfections, mistakes and tragedies included, to create a beautiful picture of a perfect God who saved dreadfully imperfect me.

Trajectory change

Every time I take this walk down memory lane, I think back to the time and place where my trajectory changed. At one time I

would have told you that, rather than a trajectory change, what happened was the beginning of God's clear leading and work in my life, but I've come to see that He was working all along—even before I was born; “Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (Ps. 139:16).

Circumstances came together to put me in that moment where my trajectory changed. It occurred in September, 1991. Because our small, local Adventist church school had closed, I had spent the two previous years in a non-denominational Christian school. This arrangement was certainly not ideal in my parents' eyes, but it was the best option they felt they had.

There I had made a wonderful friend. I saw in Renae something that I couldn't name—I couldn't put my finger on it. Oh, there were obvious differences between us; we went to different churches which taught quite different things about the Ten Commandments—particularly the fourth, about the state of the dead, and even about the prophet, Ellen G. White. But none of those differences explained the “something” I sensed in Renae. She was not missing something that I had; on the contrary, she

SET UP

had something that I was missing. It was puzzling. As a 12-year-old, however, although I wondered what she had, I didn't spend a lot of time thinking about it. I just accepted the fact that she was a lovely, sweet person who was deeply different from anyone I had known before. We were close friends, and I remember vividly the excitement of being allowed to go school-supply shopping with her just weeks before school started. I felt so mature as we wandered the “downtown” of our small Canadian prairie town, just the two of us (she was a couple years older than I)—oh, what independence!

That September, Renae invited me to a multi-denominational youth rally. It was a typical youth event with games, food, and music—and of course, the speaker. I don't remember exactly what he said during his talk, but I remember as it came to an end, he began, as was usual, to speak about “giving your heart to Jesus.”

I had heard it before. Adventist campmeetings, summer camps, weeks of prayer—they always ended with similar pleas. Moreover, those pleas always ended the same way: “with every eye closed and every head bowed”—and the entire congregation would rise to their feet in response to the plea. I was honestly weary of it. “How many times do I have to do this?” I wondered. Just that previous summer, in fact, out of pure protest, knowing that I had stood every other time I had ever heard that



plea, I remained seated at the campmeeting appeal in the Junior building—what a rebel I was!

But that night at the non-Adventist youth rally, we were seated on the gym floor with “every head bowed, every eye closed.” The speaker asked us to raise our hands if we wanted Jesus to come into our heart and be Lord of our lives. “Yeah, yeah, yeah...here we go again,” I thought, but I knew people would be peeking, and since I was in the midst of a group of “cool” strangers, I caved to the appeal and floppily put up my hand.

The speaker, though, didn’t stop there; he took it a step farther and asked those who put up their hands to now stand! I got to my feet expecting to hear the usual shuffle of an entire gymnasium full of kids standing, but—silence.

I was mortified.

SHE WAS NOT MISSING SOMETHING THAT I HAD; ON THE CONTRARY, SHE HAD SOMETHING THAT I WAS MISSING.

I peeked open one eye to see that, out of a gymnasium full of kids, only I and perhaps ten others were standing. I don’t know how to explain what happened next in my head, other than to refer back to the (also old) electronic game of Tetris. Imagine opening a game, and all of a sudden the pieces fall from the top and fit perfectly together to fill the whole screen. That’s what happened.

In what seemed to be an instant, I understood! I understood that Jesus was sacrificed once for my sins, and that the call to “make Jesus Lord of my life,” or to “give my heart to Jesus” was in actuality a call to be born again—one time. I would not say that I could have articulated it so at the time, but I do know that I understood, and my understanding was not a result of my own analysis. God opened my eyes. When I left that night, I knew and understood that something real had taken place, not just a mental ascent to something that I (in my head) believed was “true”, such as that I needed Jesus to help me be good or to help me obey. Rather, something real and deep happened—a spiritual transformation, a transformation of my spirit, of my soul. I was deeply changed—deeply different.

Set up for freedom

It’s hard to believe that it’s been almost 24 years since that night I stood at that youth rally and experienced God changing my heart

Kelsie Petersen lives near St. Paul, Alberta, Canada, with her husband Aaron and their three boys, Matthew (5), Tyler (4) and Colby (2). Kelsie was born and raised in an Adventist home and received her elementary education degree from Canadian University College (formerly Canadian Union College, now Burman University). She is a life-long lover of music and spends her few spare moments at the piano with favorite praise songs and hymns. Kelsie and Aaron have attended St. Paul Alliance Church since leaving Adventism in 2004 and are thrilled to have found a church that preaches the simple gospel of Jesus week after week.

and giving me Himself. I’ve grown deeper in my understanding of what happened in those moments, what it meant and what it means to my todays and my tomorrows—to my forever. Along the way, especially early, I can say that I didn’t always choose to live those “to-days” in light of what had taken place, but the more I understood, the harder it became to choose to ignore that act of God in me.

Even though I had been born again, I wandered in circles for 13 more years before finally coming to the point of leaving Adventism. As an earliteen, a youth, a summer camp worker, an Adventist university student, and eventually as a teacher in an Adventist school, I tried to “be the change”. I tried to take the truth I had seen and experienced in my heart since that night, the truth I was reading about as I actually sat down and read my Bible (rather than following a lesson or a study or reading a devotional “thought”

here and there) and stuff that biblical truth into the “truth” my head had been taught from the cradle up. I tried to inject more grace, more love, more “tolerance” into my Adventist environment, but the biblical truth I was reading never really meshed with the Adventist “truth”.

It was a long 13 years. Through another series of circumstances (another story for another time), I was brought face to face with the fact that on that long-ago night when I understood that Jesus was the sacrifice for my sins, God changed my trajectory. Adventism had me on a trajectory going one direction, but God’s word and His Spirit were guiding me on another. It took me 13 years to realize that I couldn’t harmonize the two—and then I saw that on that night 13 years before, God had “set me up”.

I’d been set up to feel the weight and enormous depth of my sin even though I told myself it wasn’t “that bad,” compared to so many others.

I’d been set up to know and understand the fullness of Jesus’ complete sacrifice on the cross for me.

I’d been set up to be purchased—fully and completely.

I’d been set up to live life in the Spirit, not under a list of do’s and do-not’s.

I’d been set up to know my eternity is safe and secure.

I’d been set up to be free.

As I write this, I’ve just received the “all clear” from my surgeon. With this current trial thankfully receding toward the rear-view mirror (although I don’t know the future, that’s for sure), I know I’ve been set up again: set up to trust more, to love more, and to walk in even more freedom and release than before. I don’t know what my tomorrows will bring, but I know, now more than ever, that “It is finished!”

I know, absolutely, the purpose of my life—of my joys, my sorrows, my burdens, and my loves; it is to glorify the One who bought me. Even me. †

Adventism's Fundamental Belief #16: The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Savior. In this experience of communion Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. Preparation for the Supper includes self-examination, repentance, and confession. The Master ordained the service of foot washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love. The communion service is open to all believing Christians.

Comments about the belief statement

This Fundamental Belief on the Lord's Supper appears simple and straightforward. Let's examine it closely, however, to determine how Scriptural the beliefs actually are.

First, Scripture never describes the elements of communion as "emblems" or "symbols". This interpretation is a very common understanding, one that is certainly not unique to Adventism. In the strictest sense, however, this designation is a tradition rather than *sola Scriptura*. Scripture only tells us that we are sharing in the body and blood of Christ (e.g. 1 Cor. 10:16-17); it never details specifically "how" that sharing takes place. Different churches have defined that "sharing" differently, resulting in traditions that are taught as dogma.

Second, the opening statement in the Fundamental Belief also describes participation in communion as an act of expressing our faith in Christ. Again, the doctrine goes beyond what is stated in Scripture. Communion is not described in the Bible as an expression of faith.

Next, the Fundamental Belief states that Christ is present in communion "to meet and strengthen His people." I ask, though, whether this statement is based solely on Scripture or whether Adventists are relying on some of the same traditions that they criticize others for adopting.

The next statement, that taking communion proclaims the Lord's death, is the first solidly biblical teaching in the belief statement. It is drawn from the passage. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

The belief statement further addresses the scriptural command for self-examination in regards to communion: "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the

ADVENTISM'S FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #16: THE LORD'S SUPPER

ADVENTIST COMMUNION: FROM THE BIBLE OR TRADITION



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bread and drink of the cup" (1 Cor. 11:28).

The belief statement further introduces foot washing into the Lord's Supper. In the context of John 13, Jesus' example of foot washing was one of humbling oneself to serve, not of requiring "renewed cleansing". Also, while foot washing itself is not "wrong", I cannot agree with Adventists' conclusion that foot washing is established as a necessary precursor to communion because neither the example nor instruction on the practice are provided in any other passages of the Bible. However, my single largest objection to the manner in which Adventists have applied the passages of foot washing is that it allows a single, symbolic act to replace the continual attitude of serving one another.

Who may take communion is another subject on which churches differ. Some churches only allow baptized believers to participate in communion. Others have a minimum age, or prerequisite classes (such as confirmation). A

few churches limit communion to their own members, and others allow all believers to participate. The gospels and 1 Corinthians 10 show that Jesus inaugurated the Lord's Supper with His disciples, and Paul instructed the Corinthian Christians how to celebrate communion, but these provide no specific instructions on who is allowed to participate.

Scripture links communion with atonement and the New Covenant both directly (Mt. 26:28) and indirectly (Heb. 9:11-15), but these important truths are missing from the Fundamental Belief. This absence raises the question: can a church that teaches an incomplete atonement and chooses the old covenant over the new legitimately serve biblical communion? In conclusion, Adventist teaching on the Lord's Supper isn't particularly unique nor heterodox. While churches and denominations may define traditions where Scripture is silent or unspecific, it is healthy, nevertheless, for believers to understand what teachings are based on traditions and which are drawn solely and directly from Scripture. †

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WAS SABBATH

A LOOK AT ADVENTISM'S USE OF

DALE RATZLAFF

And He was saying to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.”

From time to time I have had discussions with a sabbatarian scholar who takes me to task for doing an “inductive” study of the Sabbath. The right way to study the Sabbath, he says, is to start with Mark 2:27 and, using this text to “prove” the Sabbath is a creation ordinance, proceed by using “systematic theology” to fit all other biblical evidence into this paradigm.

Because Mark 2:27 has been the strongest key text for sabbatarians, I want to do an in-depth study of this verse. First, we will identify the two things drawn from this passage which sabbatarians use to conclude that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance. The first is the Greek word “made” (ἐγένετο). This word within the context of the verse, the argument goes—refers to the “making” of the Sabbath—a reference which should lead one back to Genesis 2 where God blessed and sanctified the seventh day. The second argument comes from the fact that in Greek, the word “man” has the definite article with it and really

says, “The Sabbath was made for ‘the man’” (τὸν ἄνθρωπον). This usage may be translated as “mankind”. These two constituent parts of Mark 2:27—the word “made” and the definite article “the” before “man” in the Greek text—form the sabbatarians’ strongest argument for making Sabbath a “creation ordinance” and for using Mark 2:27 as their central passage for “proving” that Sabbath is a continuing mandate for Christians.

Answering the sabbatarians

Let us now consider four points. First, we will study the different meanings or possible translations of the Greek word “ἐγένετο” (“made”) from its lexical or basic word definitions. Second, we will consider how Mark uses the word ἐγένετο throughout his gospel to determine its meaning in other contexts. Third, we will consider the meaning of Mark 2:27 from its immediate context within the gospel of Mark and from the wider context including the other two synoptic gospels. Fourth, we will consider the preponderance of evidence regarding the Sabbath as gathered from the rest of the New Testament, especially the epistles which were written to young gentile churches. Lastly, we will summarize our findings.

CREATED?

MARK 2:27

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Our goal in this study is to determine whether the Sabbath is a creation ordinance that should be observed by all mankind, or whether the Sabbath is a ritual law first given at the time of Moses as a special sign between God and Israel and intended only for Israel. Space does not allow for a complete study as the material bearing upon this subject is monumental, but more extensive resources are available.¹

The lexical or dictionary meaning of ἐγένετο²

“γίνομαι (root word for ἐγένετο) is capable of many translations in various contexts, of which these are typical:

1. **be born or produced** Mt 21:19; J 8:58; Ro 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:37; with emphasis on the fragility of human life Gal 4:4. Arise, **come about, occur, come** Mt 8:26; Mk 4:37; Lk 4:42; 23:19, 44; J 6:17; Ac 6:1; 11:19; 27:27; 1 Ti 6:4; Rv 8:5, 7.
2. **be made or created, be done** Mt 6:10; 11:20f; Lk 14:22; J 1:3; Ac 19:26; 1 Cor 9:15; Hb 11:3; **be established** Mk 2:27.
3. **happen, take place** Mt 1:22; 18:31; Lk 1:38; 8:34; J 10:22; Ac 7:40; 28:9. Expressions like γέγονε ἐμοί τι something

has come to me = I have or have received something Mt 18:12; Mk 4:11; Lk 14:12; 1 Cor. 4:5. μὴ γένοιτο by no means, far from it, God forbid lit. ‘may it not be’ Lk 20:16; Ro 3:4, 6, 31; Gal 2:17. καὶ ἐγένετο and ἐγένετο δέ, with or without καὶ following, is usually felt to be superfluous and is left untranslated; older versions rendered it, it came to pass Mt 7:28; 9:10; Lk 2:1, 6, 46; 8:1, 22.

4. **become** Mt 5:45; 24:32; Mk 1:17; 6:14; Lk 6:16; J 1:12, 14; 1 Cor 13:11; Gal 3:13; Col 1:23; Hb 5:5. Come, go Mk 1:11; Lk 1:44; Ac 13:32; 20:16; 21:35; Gal 3:14.
5. **be largely** = εἰμί: Mt 10:16; Mk 4:19; Lk 6:36; 17:26, 28; J 15:8; Ac 22:17; Gal 4:4; 1 Th 2:8; Hb 11:6. With dat. of a person belong Ro 7:3f. Appear Mk 1:4; J 1:6. [genesis] [pg 39]

First preliminary conclusion

The lexicographical usage of ἐγένετο, as noted in No. 2 above, is “be established”. While it is true that most translations use “made” in Mark 2:27, the word does not lead to the idea of “created”, nor is it pointing to the seventh day in Genesis 2. Consider the following:

In Mark 2:27, the Greek verb *made* is “ἐγένετο” which has the lexical form of *ginomai*. Most typically, ἐγένετο in 2:27 is translated as if in the passive voice construction such that the word is rendered “made”. But there is a problem here. “The dependent very ἐγένετο (*egeneto*),” Streifling explains, “has usually been taken as if in the passive voice sentence construction rendering it ‘made’. However, since the construction is not passive, the verb takes the active function ‘become’, similar to John 1:14, ‘the Lord became (ἐγένετο) flesh and made his dwelling among us.’”³ As a result, Mark 2:27 is more literally translated as, “The Sabbath became for man, not man for the Sabbath.”⁴

Therefore, we can say at this point that an equally valid translation of Mark 2:27 would be that the Sabbath “was established” or “became” for man. True, “was made” makes easier reading, and that is why most translations render it this way. This rendering, however, does not indicate when it became, was established, or was made.

ἐγένετο as used in Mark

Following is a list of all the usages of ἐγένετο in the Gospel of Mark. Note the multitude of ways ἐγένετο is used and how they all express the ideas of “established”, “became” or “made” but not “created”.

And a voice **came** (ἐγένετο) out of the heavens: “Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased” (Mk. 1:11).

And it **came about** (ἐγένετο) that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain (Mk. 2:23).

And it **came about** (ἐγένετο) that as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up (Mk. 4:4).

And as soon as He **was** (ἐγένετο) alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables (Mk. 4:10).

For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor **has anything been** (ἐγένετο) secret, but that it would come to light (Mk. 4:22).

And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it **became** (ἐγένετο) perfectly calm (Mk. 4:39).

And those who had seen it described to them how it **had happened** (ἐγένετο) to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine (Mk. 5:16).

And King Herod heard of it, for His name **had become** (ἐγένετο) well known; and people were saying, “John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him” (Mk. 6:14).

and His garments **became** (ἐγένετο) radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them (Mk. 9:3).

Then a cloud **formed** (ἐγένετο), overshadowing them, and a voice **came** (ἐγένετο) out of the cloud, “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!” (Mk. 9:7, ἐγένετο is used twice in this sentence).

After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy **became** (ἐγένετο) so much like a corpse that most of them said, “He is dead!” (Mk. 9:26).

When evening **came** (ἐγένετο), they would go out of the city (Mk. 11:19).

...This **came about** (ἐγένετο) from the LORD, and it is marvelous in our eyes? (Mk. 12:11).

When the sixth hour came, darkness **fell** (ἐγένετο) over the whole land until the ninth hour (Mk. 15:33).

Second preliminary conclusion

The verses above are all the places Mark uses the word “ἐγένετο”. None of these contexts would allow for rendering (ἐγένετο) as “made”, but several of them could be rendered “became” or “established”. All we can really conclude at this time is that “made” in the sense of “created” is not necessarily the meaning in Mark 2:27. Thus, Mark 2:27 is not a central passage to support the idea that the Sabbath was a creation ordinance that crowned creation week.

The context and parallel accounts in the Synoptics

The incident recorded in Mark 2 is a very important Sabbath encounter, one recorded by all the synoptic gospels. Matthew adds some additional details not found in Mark and also has some contextual material that must be studied in connection with it. We will first examine the reference from Mark and then consider the additional material found in Matthew. Luke adds no additional insights except in Luke’s account the Pharisees direct their question to the disciples and perhaps even to Jesus, “Why do you (plural) do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”⁵ In Mark and Matthew Jesus is asked, “Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”

The Mark account comes immediately after Jesus’ discussion about putting new wine into old wineskins. Most interpret this section to refer to the contrast between Judaism and Christianity or the old and new covenants. In essence, Jesus was saying by this illustration that the fullness of the new covenant gospel could not be put into the rigid forms of Judaism. The gospel of Christ must be placed in a new “wineskin”, the church.

And it came about that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to Him, “See here, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” And He said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he was in need and became hungry, he and his companions: How he entered into the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he gave it also to those who were with him?” And He was saying to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Consequently, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mk. 2:23–28).

Matthew’s account of this Sabbath occurrence follows immediately after Christ made this proclamation:

Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light (Mt. 11:28–30).

In the Matthew account we also find that Christ's defense of His disciples' activities has two additional arguments not listed in Mark.

Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent? But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, "I desire compassion, and not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the innocent (Mt. 12:5-7).

First, let us look carefully at what the disciples were doing and why the Pharisees considered them to be breaking the Sabbath. It is very easy for us to denounce the Pharisees for their narrow interpretation of Sabbath law. Yet to rightly understand

consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he gave it also to those were with him? (Mk. 2:25,26).

In 1 Samuel 21:1-6 we are told that David was fleeing from King Saul, who was seeking to kill him. He came to the priest, and in answer to the priest's question as to why David was alone he answered,

The king has commissioned me with a matter, and has said to me, "Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you with which I have commissioned you and I have directed the young men to a certain place."

This was actually a lie. Nevertheless the priest believed it and gave David "consecrated bread" which he later shared with his

... THE FULLNESS OF THE NEW COVENANT GOSPEL COULD NOT BE PUT INTO THE RIGID FORMS OF JUDAISM.

this incident and what Jesus was teaching we must see it from their perspective. In this case the Pharisees understood the Sabbath law to require "complete rest" (Ex. 31:15) and refraining from all work (Ex. 20:10). The Pharisees recognized that these laws applied even to plowing and harvest time (Ex. 34:21). They were familiar with the instruction which said that on the Sabbath they were "to remain every man in his place" (Ex. 16:29). Further, they knew the Scripture which taught that food was to be gathered and prepared on the day before the Sabbath so no gathering or cooking would interfere with the Sabbath day rest (Ex. 16:23-26).

Looking through the eyes of the Pharisees we can see why they considered Christ's disciples to be breaking the Sabbath on at least three counts. (1) They were "harvesting and threshing" the grain in their hands, which was work and therefore a violation of the Sabbath. (2) They were not completely resting, but "rest" was required on the Sabbath. (3) They had failed to "remember the Sabbath" in that they apparently had not prepared their food the day before.

Whether or not the disciples actually broke the letter of the biblical Sabbath law is not the most important point. Rather, it is the way Jesus responded to the accusations as He took authority over Sabbath law and defended His disciples by giving four powerful arguments to show that His disciples did not come under condemnation for their questionable Sabbath activities. Consider each of the arguments Christ put forward to show why His disciples were free from condemnation. It is vitally important that we observe that every one of Christ's illustrations dealt with ritual, and not moral laws.

Argument one is:

Have you never read what David did when he was in need and became hungry, he and his companions: how he entered into the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the

men. It is important to note that David was not reprimanded by God for the violation of this ritual law regarding eating the sacred bread, as he was when he violated a moral law by taking another man's wife.⁶

There are two possible conclusions which may be drawn from this illustration, both of which are valid. First, human need takes precedence over ritual law. Second, David was exempted from this ritual law because of who he was: the anointed of God, the coming King of Israel. It was all right for his men to eat this bread because they were associated with the coming King of Israel, who was above the letter of ritual law by virtue of his kingly office. In other words, God's anointing is a higher authority than the demands of ritual law.

Correspondingly, Jesus was arguing that His disciples were innocent, not so much because they were hungry and desperately in need of food, but because they were involved with Him in His work, which took precedence over ritual, Sabbath law. Jesus was the anointed of God, the coming King of Israel; therefore, they were free from condemnation by virtue of their association with Christ. This situation offers a preview of the coming redemption of the new covenant gospel: believers are complete in Him.⁷

The second argument Christ placed before the Pharisees to justify His disciples' questionable Sabbath activity is this:

Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent? (Mt. 12:5).

The priests were instructed in the law to do certain things on the Sabbath which would fall into the category of work and would normally be considered Sabbath breaking. These activities were probably the making and deploying of fresh showbread (Lev. 24:5-9) and the sacrificing of certain Sabbath offerings (Num. 28:9,10). However, because these activities were commanded in the old covenant law, the priests were innocent. Most pastors can

relate to this argument. The day of worship is often, if not always, the hardest and most tiring day of their week.

Now notice how Christ applies this argument to the situation at hand. “But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here” (Mt. 12:6). Jesus used this phrase several other times in this chapter, and it becomes evident what He means.

The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here (Mt. 12:41).

The Queen of the South shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it; because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here (Mt. 12:42).

That “something greater” is Jesus Himself, the Messiah, and the kingdom He brings. It was God’s presence which made the tabernacle service important enough to allow the priests to violate the letter of ritual Sabbath law and yet be innocent. The presence of Jesus tabernacling (Jn. 1:14) in the temple of His body (Mt. 26:61) took precedence over ritual Sabbath law. Therefore, just as the priests could violate the letter of Sabbath law to fulfill the more important services of the temple, so the disciples of Jesus could violate the letter of ritual Sabbath law because they were engaged in the more important service of One who is greater than the temple and the Sabbath.

The third argument of Jesus is:

But if you had known what this means, “I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,” you would not have condemned the innocent (Mt. 12:7).

hand the disciples, who appear to have broken the letter of the old covenant Sabbath law, were loyally following their Lord!

The fourth argument of Jesus is:

The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Consequently, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath (Mk. 2:27,28).

Here Jesus is saying that the Sabbath was made for the benefit of man and not man for the benefit of the Sabbath. Because of this, Jesus, as the Son of Man, controls the Sabbath and is not to be controlled by it.⁸ The term, the Son of Man, which Jesus used in reference to Himself, comes from Daniel 7:13, where it is used in connection with the dawning of the eschatological (end time) reign of God. Thus, in defense of Jesus’ disciples’ questionable Sabbath activities, Jesus announces His own authority as the Son of Man who is bringing the eschatological reign of God.

The thrust of Jesus’ argument is not in defining appropriate Sabbath behavior or in a correct interpretation of old covenant Sabbath law; rather it is in showing how old covenant law, including Sabbath law, points to Him. In this respect it seems obvious that the Sabbath is a ritual law. Even Jewish scholars recognize the Sabbath as a ritual and not moral law.⁹ Thus, like the other ritual laws, the importance of the shadow falls away in the presence of the Messiah, the reality to which the ritual laws pointed (Col. 2:16-17).

In this incident Jesus is taking authority over Sabbath law. His presence allows greater freedom regarding Sabbath observance just as the priests were not bound by all the Sabbath laws in their temple services where God was present. And Jesus is



...JESUS IS SHOWING THAT A VIOLATION OF RITUAL LAW WHICH WAS DESIGNED TO POINT TO HIM NOW HAS LITTLE SIGNIFICANCE.

This is a quotation from Hosea 6:6. It reads:

For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Notice again that both “sacrifice” and “burnt offerings” are ritual laws. This text cuts to the very heart and meaning of covenant law. It shows that God is more concerned with the attitude of the heart than He is with ritual, even rituals which pointed forward to Christ’s death on the cross. In this argument, Jesus proves the disciples are innocent because of their heartfelt loyalty and close association with Him, even though they may have broken the letter of Sabbath law.

Here again is the irony of the old covenant Sabbath laws as observed by the Pharisees. On one hand the Pharisees, who were keeping the very letter of the Sabbath laws, had no compassion or loyalty to the God of the covenant. On the other

greater than the temple. His office as the anointed coming King of Israel gave Him and those associated with Him freedom to infringe upon ritual Sabbath law. As the Son of Man, who has the mission of bringing in the eschatological reign of God, He is above the control of ritual Sabbath law.

We can safely conclude even more than this. When we consider that in both Mark and Luke this incident immediately follows the discussion about putting new wine in new wineskins, we get overtones of coming changes. Remembering also that in Matthew this incident (Mt. 12:1,2) is connected to the three verses of the preceding chapter (Mt. 11:28-30) by the use of the phrase “at this time” (Mt. 12:1), leads us to conclude that the Sabbath itself may be associated with the eschatological rest of God.

At the same time, there is evidence for the fact that the Sabbath itself is associated with the theme of restoration and the

messianic age. Within such a framework the fact that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath becomes the more significant, for the very concept of Sabbath begins to undergo transformation. That Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath is not only a messianic claim of grand proportions, but it raises the possibility of a future change or reinterpretation of the Sabbath, in precisely the same way that His professed superiority over the Temple raises certain possibilities about ritual law. No details of that nature are spelled out here, but the verse arouses expectations.¹⁰

Third preliminary conclusion

The way this incident contextually unfolds in Mark with its parallel accounts in the other synoptics indicates that the Sabbath is a ritual law and Jesus as Lord over Sabbath is not to be controlled by it. It shows that Jesus is the reality prefigured in old covenant rituals. More than that, Jesus is showing that a violation of ritual law which was designed to point to Him now has little significance. The shadow loses much of its value in the presence of the Reality to which the shadow pointed.

The Preponderance of evidence

If the seventh-day Sabbath is a creation ordinance and was/is required for all mankind to observe, there should be sufficient evidence outside of Mark 2:27 to support this claim. It should be present in the Old Testament accounts prior to Moses, and it should also be present in the epistles written to young gentile churches after the cross.

What do we actually find? Following are summaries of biblical evidence. (See *Sabbath in Christ* for supporting references for these points.)

- God's moral principles were embedded in the conscience of the patriarchs so they knew right from wrong, but there is no record that anyone knew about or kept the Sabbath or any day of worship before the time of Moses. This conclusion is confirmed by scholars of Scripture, Jewish scholars, and scholars of antiquity.
- The Old Testament prophets confront the gentile nations for worshiping idols, blaspheming the name of God, ruthless killing, injustice, immorality, and pride, but never for breaking the Sabbath.
- The gentile nations were under the laws given to Noah but not under the Torah.
- Acts 15 clearly states that circumcision was not required for gentile Christians. Therefore, Sabbath was not required, because Sabbath was only for those who had been circumcised.
- Paul states forthrightly, "For when gentiles who do not have the Law..." (Rom. 2:14).
- Paul states the law was added (was not there before) 430 years after Abraham...until the seed should come (Gal. 3:19).
- Paul states that law was our tutor until Christ; now we are no longer under a tutor or the law (Gal. 3:24).
- Paul states, "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we

serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter (Rom 7:6).

- There is no command to keep the Sabbath in the New Testament.
- All the Sabbath meetings in the book of Acts are in Jewish settings.
- Jesus violated several ritual laws, including the Sabbath (See Jn. 5:16-18).
- Jesus met with His disciples after the resurrection for a period of 40 days, but never on a Sabbath. Every recorded meeting when a day is mentioned was on the first day of the week.
- There is no instruction on how to keep the Sabbath in letters to young gentile Christian churches. At that time there was disagreement even in Judaism on how to keep the Sabbath. One would expect that if the Sabbath was required of gentile Christians, the first thing converts would have asked is, "How do I keep the Sabbath?" However, there is only silence.
- Sabbath-breaking is never mentioned in any lists of New Testament sins, and there are a number of lengthy lists.
- In the new covenant the one-time entrance sign is baptism, and the Lord's Supper—not the Sabbath—is the repeatable sign Christians are to "remember".
- Even the Jews acknowledge that the Sabbath is a ritual law.
- When Jesus was confronted with his questionable Sabbath activities, He defended them every time by referring to Sabbath as a ritual, not a moral law.
- Circumcision was considered more important than Sabbath.
- When the epistles mention the Sabbath, the references are either in a negative or unimportant context.
- The *Didache* (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) was written very early. It contains a long list of items Christians should do and a long list of items Christians should not do. The Sabbath is not mentioned in either list. However, it does say that Christians should gather together every "Lord's day", a term used in the early church for Sunday.

Fourth preliminary conclusion

The wider context of Sabbath teaching—or the lack of it—in the New Testament and especially in the letters written to young gentile Christian churches does not support the conclusion that the Sabbath is a requirement for all mankind. Rather, in the new covenant Sabbath observance is not required or even expected.

Final conclusion

- The lexical or dictionary meaning of ἐγένετο may be translated as "made", but the underlying concept is be "established", "became", or "came to be", and there is no necessary link to Genesis 2. There is no evidence in Mark 2:27 of when the Sabbath was established.
- In the gospel of Mark, ἐγένετο, is translated in many ways, but in no other context in Mark is it rendered as "made".

- Considering the context of Mark 2:27 and its parallel passages in the synoptics, there is much evidence supporting the conclusion that the Sabbath is a ritual law, not a moral law, and as such it points to Christ.
- The preponderance of evidence supports the conclusion that the Sabbath is not a creation ordinance and was never given to the gentiles either before the time of Moses or after the cross. There is no evidence that the Sabbath was required or even expected in young gentile Christian churches.
- Knowing the importance of a dedicated time for worship and Christian teachings, the early church, starting with Paul's teaching, met on the first day of the week.
- All the pieces come together if we only change our paradigm of truth from Ellen White and Adventist theology to the Apostle Paul who was personally chosen by the risen Christ and personally given the gospel by a direct revelation from Christ.¹¹

It seems to me that those who teach that Mark 2:27 proves that the Sabbath was made at creation for all mankind to observe, and then insert this conclusion into the rest of Scripture are building a “systematic theology” on sand. †

Endnotes

¹ For a more in-depth study of this subject see Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ*, LAM Publications, LLC.

² See “Bible Works” Bible software for ἐγέμετο.

³ Verle Streifling, *Bible Answers to Sabbath Questions*, p. 30.

⁴ James P. Guzek, *Why Catholics Worship on Sundays: Answering Seventh-day Adventism*, p. 31.

⁵ Lk. 6:2.

⁶ 2 Sam. 11,12.

⁷ “And in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority” (Col. 2:10).

⁸ D. A. Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels”, in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, p. 65.

⁹ “Although the Sabbath's importance is suggested by its being the only ritual law in the Ten Commandments, there is little specific Sabbath legislation in the Bible”. Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *Biblical Literacy*, p. 429.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹¹ It is beyond the scope of this article to document this; see *Sabbath in Christ*, chapter, “The Rest that Remains”.



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COMMANDMENT BREAK

WILLIAM HOHMANN

There is a behavior people develop in relation to the Bible that can lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation if one is careless. It is the habit of embracing certain beliefs as “carved in stone”, making them what I call “anchor beliefs” that are set up in the mind as being impervious to being proven wrong.

These beliefs are, in turn, used to evaluate other beliefs and concepts, also to the exclusion of any proper biblical hermeneutic. The end result is a theology where one lie is built upon another—an entire theological structure that is nothing more than a house of cards. Dislodge one card—one falsehood—and the whole structure crumbles.

Great care, therefore, is taken to insulate this contrived theology.

Among sabbatarians, I John 3:4 as found in the King James Version is an anchor Scripture:

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

By contrast, however, the New American Standard Bible, a “word-for-word” translation of the original Greek, draws from much older manuscripts than did the KJV. It says,

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

Any and all evidence countering the KJV translation is dismissed as being the feeble assault of the enemies of Christ.

The flawed KJV translation states that sin is the transgression of the law, a rendering always interpreted as meaning the Ten Commandments, or old covenant law. For Sabbatarians, therefore, everything and anything related to defining sin is interpreted in relation to this anchor Scripture. The results are often incongruous and contradictory.

If sin is the transgression of the law (they read “Ten Commandments”), then the ten commandment law existed even before the creation of the world—or at the least, before the creation of Adam and Eve. The devil sinned at some time previously, the reasoning goes, and because 1 John 3:4 states explicitly that “sin is the transgression of the law,” the devil's sin could not have happened had there been no law to transgress.

A person whose critical thinking skills have not been compromised by the adherence to this particular anchor belief sees the flaws in the rationale nearly immediately. If the Ten Commandments existed from the beginning of the earth, and perhaps even earlier, then one has the sin of adultery extant before there were people alive to commit adultery. If it were not for the explicit declaration by Jesus that the angels do not marry, no doubt many would have concluded otherwise in order to further bolster and uphold this particular anchor belief.

They also conclude, due to the influence of this anchor belief, that the Sabbath would have had to exist prior to the six

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days of creation, and the seventh day of Genesis 2:1-3, therefore, is the first seventh-day Sabbath on the earth as designated by the eternal law.

Again, to a person with his or her critical thinking intact, the notion is absurd. One cannot have the Sabbath pre-existing the creation and the establishment of the Sabbath event. A sanctified day cannot exist before there was a seventh day to sanctify.

Other absurdities follow to further insulate the anchor belief. In this case, this “law” is given the status of being “moral” law. It matters not that any such declaration is missing in the Scriptures. What matters is protecting the anchor belief from any and all evidence to the contrary through the construct of numerous barriers—all of which are contrived in the mind where it is perceived as impossible to knock them down. There are many cards in this house of cards, with many fences, walls, moats, and barricades surrounding it—an impenetrable fortress of the imagination.

Arguing from a position of Scripture and logic will avail nothing. Should one knock down one of these defenses of the imagination, the imagination will simply replace it with other barriers while mentally reconstructing the one which the argument from Scripture managed to dent.

How does one defeat this stronghold of the imagination?

One cannot. There is no effective tool, no effective weapon that can be wielded against such defenses. The defender only needs to declare his opponent’s scriptural weapons of assault to be useless and ineffective. Indeed, they are ineffective against a shut mind that seeks only to preserve its core anchor beliefs which are securely locked into the imagination of the mind and heart.

We see examples of this persistent unbelief in the people—especially the religious leaders—of Jesus’ time. Their anchor belief was also the law—the whole Torah, not just the Ten Commandments.

Jesus went about doing things that were in conflict with their anchor beliefs and doctrines. To them, the law was an end in itself, just as the Ten Commandments are to some today. Unlike today’s adherents to the Ten Commandments, however, the average Jew then actually knew what the law said. For example, it was a transgression of the law to do “any” work on the Sabbath. Consequently, over the course of several hundred years, the Jews learned there were legitimate circumstances of justifiable Sabbath work, such as performing a circumcision on the eighth day after the birth of a male baby, or the physically demanding works performed by priests on the Sabbath. The Jews also went overboard in the other direction, defining “work” in such a way that even some simple, everyday actions might be prohibited on the Sabbath. Does someone want to move a chair closer to the window on the Sabbath? They must make sure

they don’t drag a leg across the floor, because that dragging would be equivalent to creating a furrow in order to plant seeds.

The Jews had specific exemptions for working on the Sabbath if the work could not be put off for another day. For example, the priests’ rites and circumcisions, as mentioned above, could be performed. A sheep that fell into a ditch or pit on the Sabbath could also be saved or, if saving the animal wasn’t possible, ending its suffering was permitted.

Jesus and His disciples, however, went far beyond these Sabbath limits, and the Jews saw their behavior as blatant Sabbath-breaking. Today’s Sabbatarians, however, take a different approach. Since they want to keep Jesus in the picture, they say Jesus didn’t really break the Sabbath. Instead, they say He broke the rabbinic Sabbath restrictions and entirely miss the significance of Jesus’ deliberate, specific Sabbath breaking (see John 5:18) that revealed who He was and filled the Sabbath with meaning.

Again, trying to point out the flawed Sabbatarian claim here does no good. The evidence doesn’t matter. What matters is protecting the anchor belief; “sin is the transgression of the law.”

Therefore, despite everything John has written regarding what Jesus did and said about the Sabbath, those words of Scripture are rationalized away in order to maintain the anchor belief:

“Jesus didn’t really break the Sabbath. If He had, He would have sinned, and Jesus didn’t sin. Sin is the transgression of the law.

“Sin is the transgression of the law.

“Sin is the transgression of the law.”

Jesus said the truth sets one free. The opposite is also true: lies enslave.

When people get tired of living in slavery, they will seek freedom. The Father will draw them to Jesus and to truth.

Until then, “Sin is the transgression of the law.”

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MOVING AWAY FROM LEGALISM

ROBIN BRACE

Editor's note: We are using this article with permission from ReachOut Trust which first published it in their e-newsletter. Author Robin Brace grew up in the old-style Worldwide Church of God and uses the term “adventist” in the generic sense meaning any and all of the sects and cults that have roots in William Miller’s apocalyptic movement of the 19th century.

How does one transition from a legalistic sect to normal Christianity? When one learns the gospel and leaves an adventist sect such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, Christadelphians, or the old-style Worldwide Church of God, he or she often feels adrift, unable to understand or even to evaluate how to find a Christian church to attend. Moreover, the “former’s” cultic worldview creates an invisible barrier to mutual understanding between the new believer and the Christians around him.

In order to understand how disorienting the Christian world seems at first to these spiritual refugees, it is essential first to understand the legalism of these groups. The legalistic adventist sects such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, Christadelphians, and the old-style Worldwide Church of God, may vary in actual doctrine, but they have many areas in common. First, they all share a common root: they are products of the adventist worldview developed by William Miller in 19th-century United States. This Millerite Adventism derived from a base in Jewish apocalypticism and in the fanaticism of such men as Thomas Muntzer and Joachim of Fiore.

The excesses of such men would likely not have been able to “take off” in the Old World dominated by the theological legacies of the Reformation and of men such as Tyndale, Luther, and Calvin who sought, sometimes with several hours of prayer each

day, to make the Bible accessible and to bring out the full biblical teaching of such points as justification, atonement, and salvation. At the same time, however, the struggle to establish Protestant doctrines in a Europe which had been dominated by Catholicism often resulted in rigid controls and in persecution of people who had differing views.

New Frontiers, New Freedoms

One cannot stress enough the desire of the early Americans to be free of religious control after having suffered often in the Old World because of its excesses. This hunger for freedom led to a powerful sense of independence and a resulting desire to rediscover Christian community and experience. Much good came from this pursuit of a more personal Christianity, but it also led to an atmosphere in which idiosyncratic beliefs were often tolerated in ways they would not have been in the Old World.

By the 1840s, overlapping historically with the early development of the Mormon religion, William Miller sought to refocus Christianity away from Christ’s atoning work on the cross and instead preached an envisaged, imminent second coming supported by his interpretations of Bible prophecy (especially that found in Daniel and Revelation). He was drawing on strands of sensational teaching which were in no way new. Similar arguments had been attempted before in the Old World but had not prospered because of the wide accessibility of more deeply grounded biblical theology. The New World, however, was determined to be “open” religiously; this American, individualistic freedom assisted the new, exciting adventist worldview and provided an environment in which it could flourish.

All the “adventist” cults and sects—which are American phenomena—can be traced to the legacy of Miller. It matters not whether we speak of Joseph Smith, Ellen White, Hiram Edson,



Joseph Bates, Charles Taze Russell (who became the first leader of the Watchtower Society—later, Jehovah’s Witnesses—in 1896), or Herbert W. Armstrong—who founded what became the Worldwide Church of God in 1933—these theological mavericks who posed as Christians all reflected America’s individualistic freedom and bore the marks of William Miller’s “gospel,” replacing the finished work of Jesus on the cross with the alarm: “Jesus is coming; get ready!”

Miller’s new approach had proven to be so popular that by 1844, F.S. Mead calculated in his *A Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, p 20, “... there were between 50,000 and 100,000 adventists in North America.”

Miller’s doomsday legacy continues to evolve; David Koresh, of Waco, Texas fame, was also an adventist, originally of the Seventh-day Adventist sect, later leaving to pursue his own highly idiosyncratic theological path.

Today, Miller is quite famous for his date-setting for Christ’s return based upon his understanding of the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation. Inevitably, however, his dates failed, and many gave up adventism; others went into mental asylums, and some committed suicide. They had given up everything, even leaving their crops unharvested, because they believed Jesus would come and take them away.

Others, however, were not deterred by Miller’s failed prophecies. These adventists refused to accept the fact that they had believed a lie and had discounted the clear teaching of Jesus: “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mk. 13:32). This group never gave up Miller’s approach of refocusing adventists away from the cross and toward the second coming. As time passed, their methods included prophecy, legalism in various forms, and, inevitably, all the pet theories of each of the founders of the sects that emerged from those persistent Millerite faithful.

Miller, like the founders of almost every adventist cult who would follow him, had little deep knowledge of the word of God and had not been a long-term practicing Christian. He had never studied Greek or Hebrew, and it is known that he only used the Bible and Cruden’s Concordance in his work. He was unaccountable and marched to his own theological drum.

In fact, all the subsequent sect-founding adventists followed a similar “me-only” approach, believing that God was revealing new truth—only to them! They even rejected the new understandings of other adventists. In short, their Milleresque methods became notable for their sublime senses of self-sufficiency!

These men and women had never been masters of even one of the biblical languages in which the inspired texts were originally written. Neither were they prepared to check their conclusions against the more time-honored conclusions of men such as Luther, Calvin, Augustine, and others. Consequently, it has been easy for adventists to hold their ground, since they have never felt the need to defend their teachings against the more thoroughly biblically-grounded teachings of the Christian world. In adventism itself, typically, the people are held in subjection to various charismatic leaders and do not dare pose questions. Further, most such sects have painted a picture (also very much part of adventism) that they alone have all truth and that those who hold other biblical views are the tools of Satan!

Justification

Mainstream Christianity upholds justification by faith alone, while no adventist cult or sect can wholly endorse this core doctrine. After all, if one is finally justified—made right with God—because of holding to the sufficiency of the gospel, then why the need for adventism—any brand of it—with its morass of additional teachings? On the bottom line, the issue really is this simple.

THE ADVENTIST CULTS AND SECTS **DO NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND**, MUCH LESS APPRECIATE, THE EXCHANGE THAT OCCURRED UPON **THE CROSS**.

Of course, some adventist groups do carefully attempt to uphold the bona fide Christian position in their publications. However, as every former adventist knows, this public facade is not reality for those within the group. In fact, many adventist “gospels” say yes, Christ died for us, but it is not enough just to believe this fact; one also has to—and at this point, each adventist sect introduces its own legalism.

Before we discuss what the Bible says about the pivotal matter of justification, however, let me explain a quick way of identifying adventism’s essential flaws.

The Apostle Paul wrote Galatians and Romans (especially Galatians) to counteract the influence of Judaizers. Judaizers taught that accepting Christ’s sacrifice was insufficient to save, that there was a requirement to hold on to facets of old covenant law and practice. In hotly rejecting their claims, however, Paul produces some of his strongest language, even saying,

“As we have said before, so now I say again; if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:9).

No serious student of the Bible is in any doubt as to what Paul means. The judaizing teachers did accept Christ, but they believed that there also existed a requirement to observe old covenant law. Their teaching called into question the means of justification.

Paul reacts strongly in his ever-vigorous defense of the true gospel. Sects and cults may allow themselves the luxury of quoting odd verses from the New Testament in order to back up their points (proof-texting), but serious Bible students insist on looking at entire books (such as Galatians) in context—being careful not to impose their own views. Just what is Paul saying in this book? The answer is clear in the English translations, and it’s even more clear in the Greek. Paul condemns those who teach a “gospel” that adds any requirement to belief in Christ’s finished work.

While the background to Galatians is incipient legalism from a Jewish stance, the background to Paul’s epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians is early Gnosticism, one of the first heresies which entered the Church. The gnostics believed that man could not directly approach God, but that God had to be approached through intermediaries. The designated intermediaries were angels, and they, too, had to be worshiped. In fact, some of these gnostic ideas were starting to affect some Christians, hence Paul’s comment:

“Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, taking his stand on visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind” (Col. 2:18).

While the Galatian heresy added legal requirements to faith in Christ for justification, the gnostic heresies added spiritual beings and experiences to the formula. These early heretical influences always attacked the pure gospel teaching of justification, but Paul was vigilant to challenge all ideas that suggested Christ alone was insufficient to save.

The Gospel: Legalism v. Grace

What, then, is the biblical teaching on justification? Can Christians be clear about it?

The answer is Yes. Scripture makes justification abundantly clear because it is the core of the gospel! If we are to escape from the influences of legalism, it is vital that we grasp the gospel fundamentals.

The New Testament defines the substance of the gospel on several occasions. See 1 Corinthians 15:1-14; 1 Corinthians 2:1-2; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 16:30-31, and Romans 4:24-25. We may also consider Paul’s defense before Agrippa in Acts 26:1-23. All these texts, and others too, define the message of the gospel which Paul preached, a message centered on the cross and what Christ achieved there. This is the message of the gospel; Jesus died on the cross for our sin; He was buried, and on the third day He rose from death. Therefore, repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—the Kingdom is at hand! Those accepting and trusting Christ’s sacrifice are brought into Christ’s Kingdom at that moment (Col. 1:13) and sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). This is not the place for a full rebuttal of the common adventist belief that “The Kingdom is at hand” refers to the second coming, but it patently does not.

Under the new covenant, man is made right—justified—with God by accepting Christ—there are no other grounds! The adventist cults and sects do not fully understand, much less appreciate, the exchange that occurred upon the cross. The Lord Jesus “became sin for us”—became what the Father hates (2 Cor. 5:21)—and the Father had to turn His back on Him temporarily, for God cannot live with sin. Christ had to be fully man in order to be an appropriate sacrifice for human sin, and He had to be fully God in order to offer an infinite, sinless sacrifice that atoned for our sin for all eternity. The requirement that Jesus be fully God and fully man rules out any form of Arianism such as that of Jehovah’s Witnesses which states that Christ is merely the highest creation of God, or of the Seventh-day Adventists which insists that Jesus gave up at least one of His attributes of deity, omnipresence.

The second part of the exchange is that the righteousness of God becomes imputed to repentant sinners who accept Christ. Because Christ took upon Himself the sins of all who would believe in Him, repentant people take upon themselves the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). The oft-occurring statement in Romans, “the righteousness of God”, refers to our justification—our being credited with the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus Himself—through this completed work of Christ’s atonement upon the Cross.

In both cases of imputation—of Jesus becoming sin for us and of our becoming the righteousness of God in Him—the exchange is forensic or judicial, a legal declaration as in a court of law. Christ did not internally infuse sin or become sinful in His last few moments upon the cross. Neither is it possible for repentant man to truly “infuse” the very holiness of God. Never-

theless, God imputed human sin to the sinless Lord Jesus, and He imputes repentant man with His own righteousness when we believe in Jesus and His substitutionary sacrifice. It is all a matter of the grace of God.

Of course, the Christian, having received the Holy Spirit, should then be expected to exhibit signs of having received God's grace in his/her life. When we believe, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14) and pass at that moment out of death into life (Jn. 5:24). The Holy Spirit brings Christians eternal life now, while we are still in our mortal bodies, and He is the guarantee of our glorious futures which are to come (Eph. 1:14).

Read what Paul says of Israel in Romans 10:1-13. Also, carefully read all of Galatians. Christians are granted a freedom in Christ which was not available to those under the law. The law was a child-trainer to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:23-29). As born-again believers, however, we are now people "of the Spirit" and not of the letter (2 Cor. 3) since we have, through the Spirit, the mind of Christ within us (1 Cor. 2:16).

It will thus be appreciated that a correct understanding of justification—of how we are "made right" or reconciled to God—is intrinsic to the gospel. In fact, justification is what the gospel message is all about! It tells us that everything that happened under the old covenant only prefigured or looked forward to Christ. Sacrifices could never truly cancel out sins; only the supreme sacrifice of Christ could do that. Further, even impeccable law-keeping could not qualify us as righteous, and this fact is an important part of Paul's message (as an ex-Pharisee).

When any Adventist sect founder develops his or her version of the gospel, that new theology always involves legalism, or additions to the simple gospel of the Lord Jesus. Once any self-proclaimed prophet or teacher requires followers to adhere to his or her teachings, the true gospel is lost! Paul has already illustrated that the true gospel doesn't need support from extra philosophies (Ephesians and Colossians), nor with any partial adherence to the old covenant (Galatians and Romans). Believers in Christ are not to attempt to put "new wine into old bottles" (Mt. 9:17; Lk. 5:37) because the old covenant is, for Christians, now obsolete (Heb. 8:13).

Free to break the law?

Now for the inevitable question: does this gospel freedom mean that Christians are free to break all of the Ten Commandments?

The question, though, is the wrong question. The real question is, if the law is obsolete for Christians, where do we look for moral standards? For Christians to live in contradiction to Scripture's moral standards would be showing ourselves to be children of Satan—not of Christ. We now follow "the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2), being led by the Spirit and bearing one another's burdens. We don't reject the law, but we look upon it in a very different way now, knowing that Christ took its penalty upon Himself at the Cross. There is now no condemnation (Rom. 8:1-2), for we are not under the law but under grace.

Because Jesus fulfilled the law, we look to Him and His entire word for truth, morality, and righteousness. The principles of the law are alive in Him, the Author and Fulfiller of the law, and His Spirit writes them on our hearts as we read Scripture and learn the truth of the new covenant.

So, as Paul is at pains to explain in Romans, a new way of achieving the righteousness of God, without the dictates of the law, is revealed in Christ. This fact gives the Jews, with their knowledge of law, no advantage; righteousness is received through faith in Christ.

Do all the established Protestant churches, then, have it right?

Concerning their perception of the gospel, yes—most established Protestant churches articulate the gospel accurately in their foundational doctrines. Nevertheless, many have taken on some dreadful influences. The rationalistic, God-denying, liberal theology of the last century, for instance, has taken a terrible toll and has been a destroyer of churches. One of the worst such offenders is Don Cupitt who denies the clear words of Scripture and reduces God to a mere concept. His Christ enables us to live more fulfilled lives, but doesn't actually exist. Paul Tillich is another theologian who, earlier in this century, greatly perverted the Scriptures.

In spite of the spirit of the age, however, good conservative evangelical theology has fought back, producing a plethora of biblically sound writers and theologians, especially in the UK. Names such as John Stott, Alister McGrath, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones spring to mind.

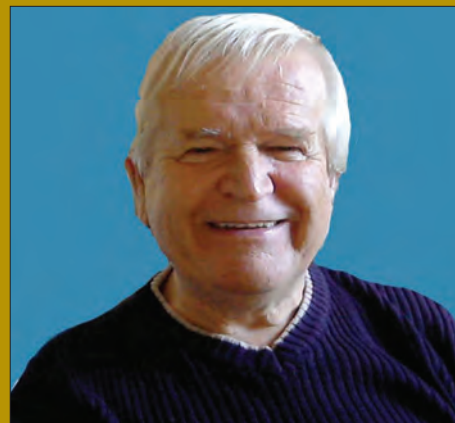
In the final analysis, people who leave the adventist sects and cults because they have responded to the true gospel need to know there is only one focus that can keep them grounded and growing: they must be committed to the Lord Jesus and to His word, allowing the Holy Spirit to teach them truth from a biblical perspective. Only the word of God is "seed that is not perishable but imperishable" and is "living and enduring" (1 Peter 1:23). Only the gospel of the Lord Jesus—not the gospel of an organization or charismatic leader—"is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16).

Concurrently, Christians who meet former adventists from any of the Millerite sects or cults need to understand that those "formers" have deeply ingrained worldviews built on unbiblical legalisms. The Christians who meet the formers need to believe the stories they will hear, and they need to be willing to study Scripture together, "so that by it [they] may grow in respect to salvation, if [they] have tasted the kindness of the Lord" (1 Pet. 2:3). †

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<http://www.ukapologetics.net/moveaway.htm>

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ELLEN WHITE

JAMES VALENTINE
WITH COLLEEN TINKER

Q: What do Ellen G. White and King Saul have in common?

A: They both consulted the dead...but we are getting ahead of our story.

CONSULTS WITH HER DEAD HUSBAND

Saul, the first king of Israel, was nearing the end of his life. He had not honored God in his monarchy, and as the years passed, he became consumed with jealousy of David, the young man he had taken into the palace as his armor-bearer, the man who eventually became a mighty warrior for Saul and Israel. In fact, Saul's rage was so intense he began looking for ways to kill David.

Our story begins as Saul's reign nears its end. Samuel, the prophet and judge who transitioned Israel from a theocracy to a monarchy, had died. During his life, Samuel had been the man of God who had anointed both Saul and then David as kings over Israel. He had been the one to whom Saul had looked for guidance on the occasions when he turned to God, and he had been the man God used to establish David as the successor to the throne when Saul would finally die. David was hiding from Saul, but he was still fighting against Israel's enemies, knowing that God would give him the throne in His time.

The infamous Philistines were once again mustering their armies to fight Israel. Saul gathered the Israelite armies together and camped in Gilboa, prepared to fight. When he saw the Philistine army arrayed against him, however, he was terrified. The ensuing story—perhaps the best-known story about Saul—is recorded in 1 Samuel 28:3-19.

His heart trembling with fear, Saul asked God for advice, but God did not answer him, “either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets” (v. 6). Desperate, Saul looked for an alternate source of information—and donning a disguise, he went to the witch at Endor.

Saul's disguise was necessary, he believed, because he had previously “removed from the land those who were mediums and spiritists” (v. 3). God's law forbade consulting mediums or necromancers (Lev. 19:31) and stated that God would cut off from Israel anyone who did consult them (Lev. 20:6). Moreover, God declared that mediums and necromancers should be stoned to death (Lev. 20:27). In fact, Deuteronomy 18:9-12a says,

“When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who

inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD.”

Saul knew that consulting a medium was an abomination before God and had previously purged Israel of spiritists. Saul, however, was desperate. He had apostatized and had turned away from God, and now, faced with the terror of the Philistines before him, he revealed the darkness of his own heart. He went to a witch.

So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments and went, he and two men with him. And they came to the woman by night. And he said, “Divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you.” The woman said to him, “Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the necromancers from the land. Why then are you laying a trap for my life to bring about my death?” But Saul swore to her by the LORD, “As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.” Then the woman said, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” He said, “Bring up Samuel for me.” When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the woman said to Saul, “Why have you deceived me? You are Saul.” The king said to her, “Do not be afraid. What do you see?” And the woman said to Saul, “I see a god coming up out of the earth.” He said to her, “What is his appearance?” And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped in a robe.” And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid homage (1 Sam. 28:8-14).

The witch, who was used to conjuring spirits, was terrified when she saw Samuel and instantly understood the truth: the disguised man before her was Saul. She knew she had been deceived.

The Bible continues,

Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul answered, “I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do.” And Samuel said, “Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy? The LORD has done to you as he spoke by me, for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day. Moreover, the LORD will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons shall be

with me. The LORD will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines” (1 Sam. 28:15-19).

Those details came to pass exactly. Saul ushered in the end of his own life by doing the very thing for which he knew God would cut him off from His people: he consulted a witch. He went into this ultimate act of disobedience and apostasy with his eyes wide open—and he knew that Samuel spoke the truth. He had trampled God’s law, and he sought information from a spirit. He knew he had turned his back on God.

God is sovereign; even evil must do only what He permits, and God can “trump” evil with His will.

What about Ellen?

Ellen White knew the biblical prohibitions against spiritism, necromancy, and witchcraft. She knew the Bible forbids consulting the dead. In the chapter “Ancient and Modern Spiritualism” of her *Patriarchs and Prophets*, condensed version, Ellen discussed the story of Saul and the witch of Endor. She wrote,

Modern spiritualism and ancient witchcraft—both holding communion with the dead as their vital principle—are based on that first lie by which Satan deceived Eve in Eden: “‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it...you will be like God.’” Genesis 3:4,5. Based on falsehood, both are from the father of lies.

God said: “The dead know nothing...Nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 9:5,6.¹

Moreover, in chapter 67 of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, the full edition, she wrote:

The belief in communion with the dead is still held, even in professedly Christian lands. Under the name of Spiritualism, the practice of communicating with beings claiming to be the spirits of the departed, has become wide-spread. It is calculated to take hold of the sympathies of those who have laid their loved ones in the grave. Spiritual beings sometimes appear to persons in the form of their deceased friends, and relate incidents connected with their lives, and perform acts which they performed while living. In this way they lead men to believe that their dead friends are angels, hovering over them, and communicating with them. Those who thus assume to be the spirits of the departed, are regarded with a certain idolatry, and with many their word has greater weight than the word of God.² She continues:

Modern spiritualism, and the forms of ancient witchcraft and idol worship,—all having communion with the dead as their vital principle,—are founded upon that first lie by which Satan beguiled Eve in Eden: “Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof,...ye shall be as gods (Gen. 3:4,5). Alike based upon falsehood and perpetuating the same, they are alike from the father of lies.

The Hebrews were expressly forbidden to engage, in any manner, in pretended communion with the dead. God closed this door effectually when he said: “The dead know not anything.... Neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun” (Eccl. 9:5,6). “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” [Ps. 146:4]. And as the Lord declared to Israel: “The soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whor-

ing after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people” (Lev. 20:6).

The “familiar spirits” were not the spirits of the dead, but evil angels, the messengers of Satan. Ancient idolatry, which, as we have seen, comprises both worship of the dead and pretended communion with them, is declared by the Bible to have been demon-worship.³

Clearly, Ellen wrote against consulting the dead or thinking an appearance of a dead person was legitimate. She was very clear that one cannot listen to, take advice from, or seek counsel from the dead. In fact, she concludes her chapter “Ancient and Modern Sorcery” with this warning:

The word of the Lord to ancient Israel is addressed also to his people in this age: “Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them;” “for all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord.” (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:12).⁴

Importantly, these things Ellen wrote have remained in every reprinting of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. These clear warnings appeared first in 1890 when she published the book; they were in the 1913 version, and they are in the 2005 edition as well.

Ellen consults with James

In 1990, Arthur White, Ellen’s grandson, published a compilation of “gems of thought that have been gleaned from her letters, manuscripts, books, and periodical articles, many of which were written after she was 65—the 23 years from 1892–1915.”⁵ (Interestingly, the book *The Retirement Years* is “temporarily out of stock via the Adventist Book Center web site. Some local stores may have stock. Please call your local store.”⁶ This book has, in fact, been out of stock online and in most stores for at least seven months.)

In this book is a portion of a letter Ellen wrote to her son Willie five weeks after her husband James had died. She wrote:

A few days since, I was pleading with the Lord for light in regard to my duty. In the night I dreamed I was in the carriage, driving, sitting at the right hand. Father was in the carriage, seated at my left hand. He was very pale, but calm and composed. “Why Father,” I exclaimed, “I am so happy to have you by my side once more! I have felt that half of me was gone. Father, I saw you die; I saw you buried. Has the Lord pitied me and let you come back to me again, and we work together as we used to?”

He looked very sad. He said, “The Lord knows what is best for you and for me. My work was very dear to me. We have made a mistake. We have responded to urgent invitations of our brethren to attend important meetings. We had not the heart to refuse. These meetings have worn us both more than we were aware. Our good brethren were gratified, but they did not realize that in these meetings we took upon us greater burdens than at our age we could safely carry. They will never know the result of this long-continued strain upon us. God would have had them bear the burdens we have carried for years. Our nervous energies have been continuously taxed, and then our brethren misjudging our motives and not realizing our burdens have wakened the action of the heart. I have made mistakes, the greatest of which was in allowing my sympathies for the people of God to lead me to take work upon me which others should have borne.

“Now, Ellen, calls will be made as they have been, desiring you to attend important meetings, as has been the case in the past. But lay this matter before God and make no response to the most earnest invitations. Your life hangs as it were upon a thread. You must have quiet rest, freedom from all excitement and from all disagreeable areas. We might have done a great deal for years with our pens, on subjects the people need that we have had light upon and can present before them, which others do not have. Thus you can work when your strength returns, as it will, and you can do far more with your pen than with your voice.”

He looked at me appealingly and said, “You will not neglect these cautions, will you, Ellen? Our people will never know under what infirmities we have labored to serve them because our lives were interwoven with the progress of the work, but God knows it all. I regret that I have felt so deeply and labored unreasonably in emergencies, regardless of the laws of life and health. The Lord did not require us to carry so heavy burdens and many of our brethren so few. We ought to have gone to the Pacific Coast before, and devoted our time and energies to writing. Will you do this now? Will you, as your strength returns, take your pen and write out these things we have so long anticipated, and make haste slowly? There is important matter which the people need. Make this your first business. You will have to speak some to the people, but shun the responsibilities which have borne us down.”

“Well,” said I, “James, you are always to stay with me now and we will work together.” Said he, “I stayed in Battle Creek too long. I ought to have gone to California more than one year ago. But I wanted to help the work and institutions at Battle Creek. I have made a mistake. Your heart is tender. You will be inclined to make the same mistakes I have made. Your life can be of use to the cause of God. Oh, those precious subjects the Lord would have had me bring before the people, precious jewels of light!”

I awoke. But this dream seemed so real. Now you can see and understand why I feel no duty to go to Battle Creek for the purpose of shouldering the responsibilities in General Conference. I have no duty to stand in General Conference. The Lord forbids me. That is enough. —Letter 17, 1881.⁷

This letter reveals that, even though she knew she was seeing James in a dream, Ellen took his words to be God’s answer to her prayer for direction. “The Lord forbids me,” she concluded as she announced her decision to refuse to go to Battle Creek to take on General Conference duties.

Adventist apologists have attempted to normalize this account, citing her frequent statements condemning any sort of consultation with the dead as evidence that she really didn’t think she was getting advice from James, that this was merely another of her prophetic dreams from God.

In fact, Ellen did claim to receive many visions and dreams from God supposedly revealing His will to her. Moreover, in 1875 she claimed that “a young man of noble appearance” had repeatedly come to instruct her over a period of 26 years.⁸

She frequently claimed that an angel of God stood by her, guiding her. In fact, in 1904 she wrote, “‘Angels of God are in this room.’ The glory of the Lord was revealed. Light seemed to shine all through the house, and an angel’s hand was laid upon my head. From that time to this I have been able to understand the Word of God.”⁹

In fact, Ellen was used to seeing men and angels in her dreams, visions, and even in real life as explained in the previous quotation. She was used to receiving direction, information, and even illumination about the Bible from these beings. For her to dream of talking with James and taking his advice would have been a familiar experience.

She was used to receiving spirit guides to give her direction; James’s counsel to her confirmed her next decisions, and it was by no means unusual for her to claim that God was responsible for the counsel. She responded to James as to her familiar spirit guides.

No matter how one attempts to explain away this incident, the fact remains: Ellen consulted with her deceased husband James when she dreamed of riding with him. James was unusually detailed, considering he was a dream character, and he gave her direct and specific instructions. Ellen took his advice—and then she attributed that advice to God.

No matter how one might rationalize Ellen’s dependence upon angels and men who accompanied her in her dreams, this particular story is clear. In spite of her frequent warnings against consulting with the dead, in spite of her repeated declarations that appearances of dead people were manifestations of evil spirits, Ellen White consulted with and obeyed her dead husband when he appeared to her in this dream. She contradicted her own counsels, and she contradicted the Scriptures which she quoted.

And when they say to you, “Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,” should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? (Is. 8:19). †

Endnotes

¹ EGW, “Ancient and Modern Spiritualism”, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, condensed version, pp. 345-346.

² EGW, “Ancient and Modern Sorcery”, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 1890, 1913, 2005, p. 684.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 685.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 689.

⁵ Advertising copy from the website of the Adventist Book Center, <http://www.adventistbookcenter.com/the-retirement-years.html>

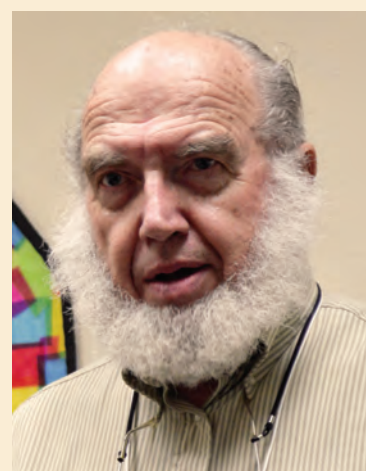
⁶ <http://www.adventistbookcenter.com/the-retirement-years.html>

⁷ EGW, *The Retirement Years*, 1990, pp. 161-163. See also *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 10, P. 38-40.

⁸ *Signs of the Times*, Nov. 11, 1874, quoted in *Counsels on Health*, p. 465. Quoted from Sydney Cleveland, *Whitewashed*, p. 129.

⁹ EGW, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 207; quoted in Cleveland, *Whitewashed*, p. 131.

James Valentine is the president and founder of Christian Apologetics Research and Information Services (C.A.R.I.S.) based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Never an Adventist, Jim’s early career in industrial chemistry was cut short when he realized God was calling him to apologetics work. He has become an expert in the pseudo-Christian cults. He has been collecting Ellen White’s books and writings for over three decades and is well-acquainted with her works—sometimes even correcting our citations with correct page numbers and editions.



OLD TESTAMENT MISSIONARY OR

God's sign and servant?

MARTIN CAREY

Editor's note: This commentary on the story of Jonah originally appeared at BibleStudiesForAdventists.com as commentary in response to the Sabbath School lesson for the week July 14–24, 2015. The website exists to offer biblical commentary on the Sabbath School lessons week by week.

OVERVIEW OF THE QUARTERLEY'S LESSON

This lesson presents Jonah as the only Old Testament prophet sent as a missionary to a gentile nation. He is also, according to the lesson's author, a "forerunner of the disciples in the New Testament." Jonah's Jewish pride and prejudice against the unclean gentiles leads him to resist God's call as a missionary, prompting his flight to Tarshish by ship. God sends a powerful storm to thwart Jonah's escape, and the gentile sailors at last are forced to dump him into the sea. After Jonah is swallowed by the great fish, he desperately prays for deliverance, promising to fulfill his vows to God if he is delivered. God answers his prayer by commanding the fish to release him.

God gives Jonah a second chance to obey him, the lesson says, and this time, Jonah delivers the message exactly as it was given by God. However, the author states, "God's message is generally threat and promise, judgment and gospel." The lesson reasons that Jonah's message must have contained not only judgment, but also promises of hope and salvation, as evidenced by the Ninevites repenting and being saved.

Jonah is angered by their repentance, the lesson tells us, because of his contempt for the Ninevites, and as Ellen White states, because they will consider him a false prophet. His attitude was selfish and narrow, more concerned with his comforts and reputation than the people of the city. The lesson summarizes the message of the book: "God instructed Jonah to recognize human brotherhood based on the fatherhood of God. The prophet should accept his common humanity with these 'foreigners' although they were wayward."

UNDERSTANDING JONAH

For many people, "Jonah and the Whale" is more a myth than a real historical person. We can understand his book better by

searching other Scripture references to him. Jonah grew up in Gath-hepher, a town in northern Israel just west of the Sea of Galilee, near Jesus' boyhood home of Nazareth. The lesson names his hometown but does not acknowledge the trauma that Jonah likely faced there, shaping the behavior and attitudes we find in his book. Life was not peaceful in Jonah's time, since Galilee was subjected to murderous attacks from their powerful enemy to the north, Assyria. Jonah was a child of war and likely had many painful memories and emotions dealing with Israel's enemy. Jonah saw his defenseless little town repeatedly overrun by Assyria's armies, making life difficult and uncertain. In 2 Kings 14:25 we find that under God's command, Jonah prophesied that Israel's borders would be restored, a promise which came to pass by the divinely empowered armies and leadership of King Jeroboam II.

When God called Jonah to prophesy at the enemy's capital city Nineveh, Jonah reacted emotionally and tried to flee "away from the presence of the Lord." This attempt was foolish, for Jonah probably had read David's Psalm 139:

"Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!" (Ps. 139:7-8).

Jonah knew Scripture and was called "God's servant," yet he tried to run from God. Perhaps he thought that if he were disobedient, God would change his mind and assign the job to someone else. Reassignment, however, wasn't God's plan. When the storm broke on the ship Jonah had boarded, he was rudely awakened down in the cargo by fearful sailors urging him to pray to his god. In fact, the courage and kindness of these sailors ("salts") is admirable in contrast to Jonah's sullen rebellion. Taking matters into their own hands, the sailors cast lots, and God directed the lot to fall on Jonah. Nevertheless, the crew still tried everything they could to save the ship to avoid throwing Jonah overboard. Finally, when the ship was about to sink, they tossed Jonah into the raging sea.

What happens to Jonah next is sadly missed in the Sabbath School lesson. We find clues of the missed reality in Jonah's prayer in Jonah 2. The lesson compares this prayer with psalms of thanksgiving, including a cry for help and a promise to keep his vows if rescued. However, Jonah's prayer is not actually a "cry for help." Rather, he spoke this prayer after being swallowed by the fish, and inside the fish's belly, he thanked God for a rescue that had already occurred:

“Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying, ‘I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice...’ Then I said, ‘I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.’ The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head, Yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple... Salvation belongs to the Lord!” (Jon. 2:1-9).

Jonah’s prayer tells us the chronology of his near-death and rescue. After Jonah was thrown overboard, the waves began to cover him, seaweed wrapped around him, and he began to sink. As he was drowning, he cried out to God, and God rescued him. Rescue came in the form of a giant mouth “appointed” to swallow him, keeping him from drowning. Even though he had been “eaten,” he realized that, while in the belly of the sea monster, he was safely in God’s care. He had “called out to the Lord,” and his prayer was already answered. He was now ready to obey.

Sometime later, God’s word came again to Jonah, commanding him again to call out against the great and wicked city, Nineveh. This time he went and entered into the city, calling out his message in the streets. Jonah’s unexpected appearance must have been a disturbing sight for the locals; a strange foreign man in simple clothes delivering a message of doom. The message was clear and brief: “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

We don’t know what else Jonah might have said to the locals when questioned. That Jonah’s rescue by the great fish became known to them is suggested by Jesus’ words:

“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Mt. 12:40).

“For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation” (Lk. 11:30).

According to Jesus, Jonah’s experience in the belly of the great fish was a sign to the people of Nineveh and gave power to his message. However, the Scripture does not say that Jonah’s message also included a message of hope and salvation, as the lesson states. Nowhere in Scripture is Jonah’s message or mission made equivalent to Christians proclaiming the message of salvation through faith in Jesus. However, Jesus does contrast the unbelieving Jews of His time with the men of Nineveh who, when warned by Jonah, repented. Jesus is telling us that we have much greater reason to repent and believe, because “something greater than Jonah is here” (Matt. 12:41).

The lesson is eager to extract a lesson about Christian missions from Jonah and asserts what the author believes was God’s primary lesson for Jonah:

“God instructed Jonah to recognize human brotherhood based on the fatherhood of God. The prophet should accept his common humanity with these ‘foreigners,’ although they were wayward.”

However, this statement misunderstands Jonah’s Old Testament thinking. First of all, the fatherhood of God is rarely stated in the Old Testament (i.e. Is. 63:16; 64:8), and could not be fully taught until Jesus came and completed His work. Thus, devout Jews were not able to pray to God as their “Father,” for this title would have

been considered irreverent. Jonah did know that he and his people were set apart from the nations and were related to God through the seed of Abraham. The other nations, he knew, did not have Abraham as their physical father, nor did they have the same advantages when relating to God. Paul later explained:

“Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

Gentiles were not sons of Abraham and were not part of the commonwealth of Israel. The “mystery” of the gospel that included the nations was not revealed to gentiles until Christ and the apostles came to proclaim the message of the cross. Paul tells the Ephesians:

“When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph. 4:4-6).

The Ninevites were given a message of judgment and fear of destruction. They “believed God” (Jon. 3:5), and repented. God then showed them mercy by not destroying their city. The book of Jonah is not about missions or even about how to reach different cultures. It is a book about how a servant of God named Jonah sinned repeatedly, yet received mercy—over and over.

Jonah resented God’s mercy to Nineveh because it was undeserved. Yes, we can surmise with Ellen White that he was jealous of his prophetic reputation, but Scripture simply states that he was angry that God did not destroy the wicked city. Jonah had good reasons to hate his enemies and resent any mercy shown to them. It is too easy to look down on stubborn, self-righteous Jonah and miss the lessons here. Jonah’s story is precious because he is so much like we who are never far from being drowned in well-deserved calamities. God teaches all of us unforgiving servants with hard hearts how to repent and show mercy to others, including our enemies. Living the gospel means living in continual repentance and mercy. It is the broken, forgiven messenger who will show mercy to others.

“Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little” (Lk. 7:47). †

Martin Carey grew up as a “nomadic” Adventist in many places. He works as a school psychologist in San Bernardino, California. Married to Sharon, he has two sons, Matthew, 14, and Nick, 27. Astronomy, research, and too many pets keep him in joyful disarray. You may contact him at martincarey@sbcglobal.net.



SPANISH WEBSITE NOW ONLINE:

Revista **Proclamación**.com

Last month Life Assurance Ministries experienced a landmark event: a website was launched dedicated to the Spanish ¡*Proclamación!*, which Joanie Yorba-Gray has been translating since 2006. Joanie has taken on the task of uploading the files of the translated *Proclamation!* magazines onto a dedicated website:

<http://espanol.lifeassuranceministries.org>

This resource has been sorely needed in Mexico and in Central and South America where, along with the Caribbean nations, the largest concentration of Adventists in the world reside.

In fact, according to a news story published by Adventist News Network on October 16, 2014, church leaders have implemented a reorganization of the Adventist management in Central America, reflecting the growth in membership there. This decision was finalized at the annual Fall Council held at Adventist world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, last October, and the reorganization was implemented in January, 2015.



This new organization affects the Adventist organization in the countries of Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua. These three countries, which are small geographically, nevertheless have a combined Adventist membership of 295,000. Now, the organization's South Central American Union Conference will become two union "missions": the Panama Union Mission and the South Central American Union Mission. ("Missions" rely on management support from their parent "division", while "conferences" are financially independent.)

Once the changes are implemented, the church's Inter-American Division will be comprised of 23 unions, the most in of any of the denomination's 13 world divisions. Inter-America is also the largest division by membership, with more than 3.7 million Adventists.¹

The Inter-American Division "includes the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America and the five most northern countries in South America."²

The Inter-American Division is not only growing in membership but also in its ability to equip its pastors. In 2011, the Association of Theological Schools "granted the Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary full accreditation status."³ This status means that the Adventist organization now offers graduate degrees to its Adventist pastors: "a Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology, a Master of Arts in Religion, and a Doctor of Ministry".⁴ Inter-American pastors no longer have to travel to Andrews University in the US state of Michigan to earn graduate work in theology.

This Adventist growth in Central and South American reflects the strategic planning of the world organization of Seventh-day Adventists. This July at the quinquennial meeting of the General Conference session of Seventh-day Adventists held in San Antonio, Texas, church leaders urged "each of the world church's 18.5 million members to find a way to get personally involved in the Adventist Church's new five-year 'Reach the World' strategic plan after the General Conference (GC) session ends in San Antonio."⁵

This plan includes long-term initiatives which penetrate deeply into cities through free health clinics and community service, ultimately bringing those reached into Adventist churches. Andrew McChesney, news editor for the Adventist Review and Adventist News Network, wrote the following from the General Conference session held this July:

Among the newer initiatives expected to continue for the next five years are "Mission to the Cities," which seeks to share Jesus in the world's biggest cities, and "Comprehensive Health Ministry," which aims to meet the physical and spiritual needs of communities through free clinics, health expos, and community health centers in local church buildings.⁶

Adventists worldwide are also being urged to participate in personal study plans designed to immerse them into Ellen White's books. McChesney further wrote,

Initiatives such as "Believe His Prophets"—an online Bible study plan that will expand on the previous quinquennium's Bible study plan, "Revived by His Word," to include seven books by church co-founder Ellen G. White—seek to nurture church members' relationship with God by encouraging them to spend more time reading the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, as White's writings are known.⁷

Adventism is growing around the world. Moreover, its profile is even higher now with Adventist Ben Carson's bid for the Republican nomination for president. The Adventist worldview is being subtly introduced to thousands of unsuspecting people around the world through their evangelistic and health outreaches, but God's truth is still stronger than deception.

The Spanish-speaking world is especially responsive to Adventism which offers education, healthy lifestyle, medical care, and even employment. It stands in apparent contrast to entrenched Catholicism while ironically still offering a “salvation” that includes one’s good works and best efforts. *¡Proclamación!* is much-needed in the Inter-American and South American Divisions, and we ask that you pray for this new outreach. Please pray that God will protect and bless Joanie as she both translates and uploads the magazines online, and pray that God will help those who need to find this site to discover the true gospel and find the help they need to “unpack” Adventism. †

Endnotes

¹ <http://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2014-10-16/adventist-leaders-approve-new-administrative-unit-in-central-america/>

² <http://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2011-08-02/bible-study-is-second-phase-of-inter-american-divisions-revival-initiative/>

³ <http://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2011-09-06/inter-american-seminary-achieves-full-accreditation-status/>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ <http://news.adventist.org/all-news/news/go/2015-07-07/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-adventist-churchs-new-strategic-plan/6/>

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE THE STORY?

JOANIE YORBA-GRAY

Editor’s note: We want you to meet Joanie Yorba-Gray. While she has written for *Proclamation!* before, we especially want you to benefit from her insight and wisdom as she now begins to post as well as to translate *¡Proclamación!*. Joanie, a certified Spanish translator and a licensed clinical social worker, has lived 27 years since she was diagnosed with HIV, and she continues to serve as a board member for He Intends Victory, an international ministry which provides support and education for victims of AIDS. Joanie and her husband Galen attend an evangelical Anglican church in San Diego where Galen is a professor of Spanish at Point Loma University.



Galen and Joanie Yorba-Gray

I want to think about some of the prepositions in the Bible. Remember what those are? A preposition is a word that shows direction, location, or time; these three prepositions indicate time: “before, during, and after”. We are used to reading Bible stories and learning about them in fixed moments in time. We remember the birth of Christ, Daniel in the lion’s den, the flood, and many other fascinating and awe-inspiring stories. But unless we read the Bible from cover to cover, we may fail to realize that God has had an overarching purpose for humanity from the very moment of creation. God is not living in time; He is outside of time, not ruled by time, not limited by time. He is in the beginning and the end.

I want to help us stretch our brains to see a bigger picture, to see that the Before, During, and After can have a tremendous impact. Suddenly a Bible story can be transformed when we look at the events prior to, during, or after it. In many cases, the before, during, and after of a story can transform it from a wonderful lesson to something transcendental that gives us a moment of revelation, an “aha” moment, something to think about, and a wider insight into the heart of God.

Here is an example. In Matthew 8:1-4 we read:

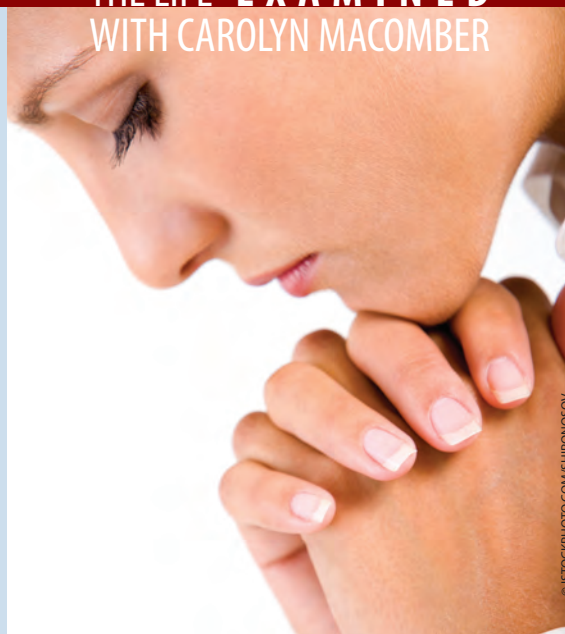
When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, “See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

In this story, Jesus heals someone who is suffering from a disease that made him an outcast. The man was stigmatized, rejected, and shamed because he had a skin condition that caused him to be unclean and cast out of society. Those with leprosy had to live away from loved ones in isolation, and they could never have a normal life. Those who touched lepers were also declared unclean and had to be quarantined until they went to the priests at the temple and were declared clean. So even being near a leper was risky. Jesus went to that man and had compassion and wanted to heal him.

The “before” in this story is amazing. Before Jesus healed the man, he reached out his hand and touched him. Before. It would have been an amazing healing story if Jesus had healed the man, then given him a hug or clasped hands and sent him on his way. Yet there is more to the story. Jesus touched the man before he healed him. What is unsaid in the story is that in the eyes of the law, Jesus made himself “unclean” for the purposes of showing his grace and mercy to the leper. This man had suffered plenty of rejection, stigma and shame, but Jesus did not make him feel untouchable or shamed by reeling back and healing the man from a distance. Jesus went into the man’s space, as we would say today, and became “ritually unclean” in that moment, but He didn’t care.

Moreover, Jesus was the Messiah. In that “before” moment, He took that man’s uncleanness onto Himself, and He cleansed him.

Jesus took away shame, discrimination and stigma. He was not afraid of the leper’s disease, and before He made Him clean, He reached out to him—and He touched him. †



FIGHT WITH ME

I AM TO TRUST GOD'S HEART AND
LOVE FOR ME IN THE MIDST OF
PAIN AND SUFFERING, AND I CAN
DO THAT BY LISTENING TO HIS
WORD AND COMMUNICATING
WITH HIM IN PRAYER.

Recently I received an email containing a music video by Steven Curtis Chapman called "Warrior". It depicted scenes of believers contending in prayer, and I was deeply moved.

Why have I been so moved by this music? I think the answer is that prayer is a mystery to me. It is a mystery why God answers prayers the way He does. Sometimes He does not remove the pain, suffering, or circumstances a person is going through. And when one's circumstances do not improve, it is easy to question the heart of God. I have.

In the song called "Warrior", Steven writes, "Our weapons are trust, our weapons are hope." In the midst of pain and suffering, trust in God is attacked. Our hope is tried, and we wonder about the heart of a loving God.

In Scripture we are told that God is faithful and we can trust Him. The Bible says, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord for ever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal" (Is. 26:3-4). We can find peace in our trials and suffering by trusting the motives and the heart of God. He loves you and He loves me (Jn. 3:16). David, who suffered much before becoming king, wrote, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; ... The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me; your love, O Lord, endures for ever – do not abandon the works of your hands" (Ps. 138:7-8). I am to trust God's heart and love for me in the midst of pain and suffering, and I can do that by listening to His word and communicating with Him in prayer.

The Lord promises in Isaiah, "He will swallow up death for ever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken. In that day they will say, 'Surely this is our God; we trusted in Him, and He saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in Him; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation'" (Is. 25:8-9).

"Trust" in Isaiah 25:8-9 comes from the Hebrew word *qatwa*. In essence it means to bind together by twisting. Another way to look at trusting God in the above verses is to visualize being braided into Christ. A braided rope is not easily torn apart. To trust in God is to be braided into His love and life.

Have you allowed the Lord to braid every aspect of your life to Himself? Are you so entwined in the Lord that prayer is your first

response in fighting the battles of your life? Do you trust the Lord? Will you trust His heart when life seems out of control? Steven Curtis' song says, "Our weapons are trust, our weapons are hope, in the One". The Lord desires to be braided into your life so tightly that peace will reign in the midst of chaos. What can you do to continue to trust Him in the hard times?

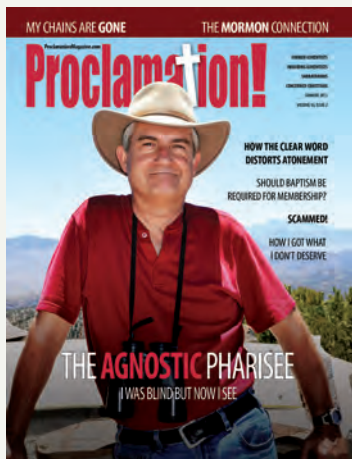
As I think about the song "Warrior" and about fighting my battles with prayer, I am convicted by Romans 12:12: "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." I desire to make the time and give the energy needed to fight on my knees. I know I have seen victories when I have done so. Peace returns as I submit my heart to the heart of the One whose love endures forever.

Will you fight with me? The battle rages fiercely. Families and relationships are damaged, and the "destroyer" destroys. The accuser accuses, the serpent deceives, the liar lies, and the lion roars, but he knows his time is short. He has been defeated at the cross (Col. 2:14) so I do not need to live in defeat. Please, fight with me. Our nation's leaders need it. All people need it. Fight with me. †

The Former Adventist Fellowship Fall Conference in Michigan organized by Carolyn Macomber has been cancelled for this year. Our church host, The Chapel, will be near the end of a large building project at that time. You are invited to attend our Winter Conference in Southern California this coming February. See the details on page 31 in this issue.

Carolyn Macomber was a doctoral student at Andrews University when she discovered inconsistencies between Adventism and the Bible. She withdrew her membership from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2009. She is a marriage and family counselor and is the contact person for former Adventists at The Chapel Evangelical Free Church in St. Joseph, Michigan.





Mormon connection makes sense

I have been receiving *Proclamation!* for many years. As an evangelical Christian, it has educated me rather well in this cult and makes it so easy to educate others when they ask about Adventism.

Your last edition spoke about the similarities between some of Ellen White's writing and Joseph Smith's, prophet of the Mormon church. This was certainly a surprise.

However, knowing as much as I do about LDS (Mormons), it was an easy connection for me to make. It certainly does make sense once a person stops and thinks about it.

Blessings to you all and thank you for your faithfulness.
PASCO, WA

LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES

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

Thank you for truth

I wanted to write and thank you for the magazine. I have truly enjoyed it. I don't know much about the Seventh-day Adventists as I have never been a part of their church nor have I visited or even known anyone who did. With the rise of conditional immortality from books such as Edward Fudge's book, however, many are now examining the Seventh-day Adventists to see if they are a reliable group to worship with. I am thankful for the truth that you give to us in this magazine.

May the Lord bless you!
LEXINGTON, SC

Devoid of the Spirit of God

It's easy to judge the Seventh-day Adventist church as being deplorably ignorant, deceived, and without Christ (wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked). But any cult, forum, or magazine that presupposes that Adventist failures are secrets and lives on the husks of those failures demonstrate that they, too, are devoid of the Spirit of God.

RICHARDSON, TX

Now I can explain the covenants

The article by Bryan Clark ["We are ministers of a new covenant", Spring, 2015] makes me understand the old and new covenants as they should be understood. He is certainly adequate in explaining 2 Corinthians 3—well, OK, the Holy Spirit has made him adequate. I just want to thank him for writing it. I can explain this subject now to my brothers and sisters in my former church. Thank you again.

JAKARTA, INDONESIA

Sunday Law nearer than you think

As I read your magazine, I'm confused about how you can let Bible truths go. Take the Sabbath issue, for example. "Remember the Sabbath day." God blessed the Sabbath and made it holy. You go to church on Sunday; there's no Bible text to support that. I read where one of your writers said that Sunday was worshipped long before

Catholics changed the day to Sunday. Those people were called pagans. ...If you don't like Ellen White, then start another church, but don't throw God's Sabbath away. I can get the message of Adventism from the Bible only.

You don't believe the the Sunday Law is coming. Watch the news. It's nearer than you think.

VIA EMAIL

Editor's note: In order to understand the Sabbath, one must understand God's covenants. He made unconditional covenants, and He made a conditional covenant with Israel. For more clarity about the old and new covenants, read Bryan Clark's article "We Are Ministers Of A New Covenant" in

standing that I would be lost if I so much as questioned "The Truth".

By the late 1970s I came to the conclusion that if Adventism was "The Truth", then heaven was going to be a very empty place because there was no one who ever had or could or would be able to reach the perfection required to live on their own so-called righteousness after "probation" closed and the Holy Spirit was said to be withdrawn. At that time it was clear to me with "complete assurance" that there was no salvation possible for anyone.

About that time my husband, who was on the staff at Pacific Union College, was taking a class from Dr. Desmond Ford. My husband recorded each lecture and

THE STUDY OF THE NEW COVENANT CHANGED MY WHOLE UNDERSTANDING OF SALVATION. MY LIFE IS NOW ALL ABOUT PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING AND JOY!

the Spring, 2015, issue of *Proclamation!* Also read Dale Ratzlaff's article, "Was Sabbath Created?" in this issue.

Thank you for Proclamation!

Thank you so much for producing *Proclamation!*. It has been of great value to many of us who are former Adventists.

I want to thank you especially for bringing out Phyllis Watson's material on the Mormon connection with Ellen White. Phyllis and I were close friends...It was from a heart of love that she was motivated to present facts to those who were suffering from fear and confusion about Adventism's non-biblical teachings which were based on Ellen White's [EGW] writings.

After 40 years as a fourth-generation Adventist who had studied Adventist doctrines and EGW's writings in depth, it was my under-

brought each home for me to hear. For the first time I actually heard and was able to understand the good news!...

About 10 years ago I was studying the book of Hebrews and came across some explanations of the new covenant. That study of the new covenant changed my whole understanding of salvation. My life is now all about praise and thanksgiving and joy!

Even though I have recently lost my dear husband after 60 years, I can still live securely in the knowledge that all is well, and we are in Christ having passed from death to life—we are the righteousness of God in Him. While we wait for His soon coming, He is currently gathering one by one to live forever, adopted into the family of God.

Once again, sincere thanks for the work you are doing.
NAPA, CA

Glee in criticism

Please remove our names. You are nothing more than an organization that takes great glee in being critical of an organization that has been established by Bible prophecy. COLLEGE PLACE, WA

My eyes began to open

I have been meaning to write to you for a very long time to tell you how very much we appreciate your ministry and to thank you for all the wonderful and helpful articles in *Proclamation!*.

As a third generation Adventist who attended their schools from third grade through college, I believed it all! After I met my husband, I told him I would never marry anyone who was not an Adventist, so he became one. But after three years he said he could no longer go on in that church.

At that time I began reading the New Testament to show him he was wrong, but that time my eyes began to open, and I saw things I'd never seen before! My husband invited me to attend the new members' class at the Baptist church he had chosen. Somehow I went, curious about what they believed.

The teachings were presented from a spiritual point of view. I heard the true gospel and responded to it after a few weeks—praise God!!

This story could go on and on, but I will just say how difficult it was to trust completely in our Savior's finished work on the cross, but at those times I was reminded and given verses of assurance.

Down through the years since 1971, we didn't realize how very

wrong Adventist doctrine was until we read articles in *Proclamation!* which not only informed us but also presented the truth of the word in a glorious way!

For all this, we again thank you. We pray for you and your ministry every day and even more as soon as we receive our next issues, that it will be used to open more hearts to receive Jesus Christ and to learn the real truth in God's word!

You are such a blessing!
ELK GROVE, CA

mankind of? Through the history of the Bible, God generally speaks to mankind through prophets, visions, and the Holy Spirit to relay a message (Heb 1:1-3). Will leaving the Adventist church to gain "freedom" by grace grant me a better spot in heaven? Every truth I've read on your site is already observed by the Adventist church. Leaving Adventism would only take away from but not add too my relationship with God. The only things that seems to be in question

works of confusion. I pray we both are grown closer to the truth to be in harmony with God through the Holy Spirit.

VIA EMAIL

Editor's response: For a closer look at Adventism's fundamental beliefs, see the columns by Rick Barker in *Proclamation!* magazine over the past four years (and continuing in future issues) in which he examines each belief individually. The back issues are all available here: lifeassuranceministries.org/proclamationback.html. As to your question about freedom by grace yielding a better spot in heaven—Jesus' words to Nicodemus address our presence in heaven: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit....He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (Jn. 3:5-6, 18).

We do not enter heaven based on our sincerity or on our best efforts to keep the law. Sabbath-keeping is not a requirement for salvation. Rather, repenting of our sin and placing our full faith and trust in Jesus results in our being born again and sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). We cannot be saved by "accepting" the Sabbath; neither can we be lost for not keeping the Sabbath. Our works have nothing at all to do with our salvation. Our salvation is on the basis of Jesus' finished work on the cross, His resurrection, and His ascension. When we trust Him for our forgiveness and our life, we are transferred out of the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13). "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev. 7:10).

...WE DIDN'T REALIZE HOW VERY WRONG ADVENTIST DOCTRINE WAS UNTIL WE READ ARTICLES IN PROCLAMATION! WHICH NOT ONLY INFORMED US BUT ALSO PRESENTED THE TRUTH OF THE WORD IN A GLORIOUS WAY.

Generalizations, nitpicking, and confusion

The fact that you are putting so much emphasis on Adventism causes me to question your intentions. After reading a lot of content on your website, I have failed to find anything specific that you point out as being in error in the Adventists' fundamental beliefs. I see a lot of generalizations, nitpicking, and running around in circles.

After leaving the Adventist church, then what? What new-found mission have you been inspired to bring about? What message have you come to warn

is Ellen White, and some preconceived notion that Adventists don't believe in salvation by grace.

Furthermore, I have found nothing from what Ellen White has prophesied to be opposed to the Bible; the problem appears to be centered on the view that her writings are legalistic; however, even through we are free from the penalty of the law by grace, we are not free from its observance (Matt. 5:17-20).

In conclusion, I find no statement of purpose or new light from your former Adventism movement....Lengthy explanations of simple truths are typically the

SPANISH TRANSLATION NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

Life Assurance Ministries, Inc. is partnering with Dale Ratzlaff to provide a Spanish translation of his new book *Gospel Transformation* as a free online download. A donor has already offered to match up to half the cost of translating the book. We are praying for partners who will help make this book available to the multitudes of Spanish-speaking Adventists who need to understand the gospel in order to have the

courage and motivation to step out with faith in the finished work of Christ.

This ministry also continues to depend on the regular donations of *Proclamation!* readers who have discovered freedom and security in our Lord Jesus and want to help others find it.

Use the attached envelope included in the center of this magazine and mark your gifts either "ministry" or "Spanish". Thank you.

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:

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P.O. Box 7776
Redlands, CA 92375

OR EMAIL EDITOR:

proclamation@gmail.com



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SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2016

- 9:00 Welcome
- 9:15 Peter #1, Dale Ratzlaff
- 10:30 Daniel #1, Gary Inrig
- 11:45 Breakout Sessions (Dale, Martin, Jim, Ron)
- 1:45 Daniel #2, Gary Inrig
- 3:30 Letters to the Editor, Colleen Tinker
- 6:30 Public Session, Ron Rhodes, Paul Carden

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2016

- 9:00 "Story of Faith," Ron Rhodes
- 10:30 Daniel #3, Gary Inrig
- 11:45 Breakout Sessions (Dale, Martin, Jim, Ron)
- 1:45 Peter #2, Dale Ratzlaff
- 3:15 "Breakout Sessions (Dale, Martin, Jim, Ron)
- 4:30 Ron Rhodes (Topic TBA)
- 6:30 Daniel #4, Gary Inrig (Communion)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2016

- 10:30 Worship Service: Cornerstone Fellowship BC
- 12:30 Fellowship Lunch



RON RHODES
REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES
FRISCO, TEXAS



DALE R. ATZLAFF
FOUNDER, LIFE ASSURANCE
CAMP VERDE, ARIZONA



GARY INRIG
BIBLE TEACHER, AUTHOR, PASTOR
REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA



RICHARD AND COLLEEN TINKER
LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES
REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA



MARTIN CAREY
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST
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SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, CA



JIM VALENTINE
DIRECTOR, C.A.R.I.S.-
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

THE LIFE A F T E R WITH CHRIS LEE

It's Saturday morning in the historic Haymarket district. Brick warehouses, some from the 1880s, loom over brick streets and railroad tracks. Shoppers leisurely stroll through the farmer's market, coffee in hand, steam rising to dissipate in the summer morning air. I see him from across the street. Weathered and worn, he sits on a bench against an equally seasoned brick backdrop. His white beard is long, contrasting with his patched army jacket and cap. The lines on his face tell wordless tales more wrenching than the cardboard sign he is holding. His very presence, here amidst all the affluent gentrification, tells its own story. It's the kind of shot every street photographer dreams of, art mixed with social commentary.

I raise my camera to my eye. Darkness. Frustrated, I flip the power switch on and attempt to recompose. Still darkness. I've left the lens cap on. Now rushing, I slip the cap into my pocket and try once again to acquire the shot. Better, but still dim. My exposure is wrong, requiring me to make some quick adjustments to the camera's dials. Finally, proper exposure, but the shot is gone. He's moved. The moment has passed.

Every photographer has had a moment like this. The frustration involved in trying to see through my dark viewfinder brings to mind a particular Bible passage:

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known (1 Cor. 13:12).

It's frustrating not being able to see everything clearly. In Adventism, we knew it all. We had an inspired prophetess who had com-

mented authoritatively on nearly every part of Scripture. We didn't have to guess or speculate on anything because it had all been explained for us. It was comforting and satisfying, to the point of creating a certain smugness when in the company of others



Chris Lee lives in Lincoln, Nebraska with his wife, Carmen, and daughters, Ashlyn and Alyssa. They attend the Lincoln Berean Church. Chris is a self-described "theology junkie" whose mission is to proclaim the unfathomable grace of Christ in a clear, understandable, and Biblical way. Chris is the editor of the *Proclamation!* Blog at ProclamationMagazine.com. You may contact Chris by email at ambulator@gmail.com.



who didn't have divine commentary on which to rely.

The life after Adventism isn't quite so simplistic. It turns out there are a lot of secondary issues about which God hasn't deigned to give us all the details. While many things in the Bible are clear, there are some that are less so. Let's take eschatology for example. The Bible doesn't give us all the details on end-time events, so naturally there's a lot of speculation. It can be bewildering and frustrating to sort through the strengths and weaknesses of each end-time theory.

I've seen former Adventists respond in a range of ways, with a few gravitating to one of two polar extremes. In one extreme they throw their hands up in despair and declare evangelical Christianity to be too confusing. These folks usually have a hard time fully integrating into a

church family. In the other extreme they plant their flag in a particular camp and defend it with the same vigor as they once defended Adventism. These folks can be divisive, sometimes suggesting that Christians with differing views aren't taking the Bible seriously.

These over-reactions aren't relegated only to eschatology but cover a number of other secondary issues; such as Arminianism versus Calvinism. But here's something to ponder: even the great Apostle Paul didn't know it all. Even he, a writer of Scripture, saw through a glass darkly and only knew a part of the story. We're not supposed to know it all, not yet. Grappling with these interesting subjects is a normal and healthy part of the Christian experience. Perhaps we all need to just take a deep breath and take these words, sometimes attributed to Augustine, to heart:

"In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."

Now go start living the life after! †