

DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN THE HEBREW ROOTS MOVEMENT

ProclamationMagazine.com

# Proclamation!

FORMER ADVENTISTS  
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS  
SABBATARIANS  
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

SPRING 2016  
VOLUME 17, ISSUE 1

change  
wording

don't use  
the word:  
"source"

use words:  
"prophetic  
authority"

create  
ambiguity

internally  
affirm  
writings

publicly  
downplay  
dependence

## ADVENTISTS REVISE WORDING ON PROPHET'S AUTHORITY

INVESTIGATING THE CHANGES TO FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #18

**NO ONE WHO ACCUSES GOD OF TRICKING, LYING, OR OTHERWISE  
DECEIVING PEOPLE IS HIS MESSENGER IN ANY SENSE.**

# Proclamation!

LIFE ASSURANCE  
MINISTRIES

- Back issues of *Proclamation!* and the blog site  
**ProclamationMagazine.com**
- Books and other materials by Dale Ratzlaff  
**LifeAssuranceMinistries.com**
- Day by day commentary on the Sabbath School lessons  
**BibleStudiesForAdventists.com**
- Testimonies, Bibles studies, and the forum  
**FormerAdventist.com**
- Large body of resources for studying Adventism  
**TruthorFables.com**



# PROOF THAT WE MUST **KEEP THE LAW?**

**Isn't Matthew 5:17-19 proof that we have to continue keeping the law?**

**M**atthew 5:17-19 has been a proof text for many groups. It has also been a text that, when fully understood, was influential in helping our original Sabbath study and later the Worldwide Church of God make a 180 degree turn in theology. Over the years this text has been addressed several times in *Proclamation!* Furthermore, in my book *Sabbath in Christ*, a whole chapter is dedicated to this reference. Usually, we at Life Assurance Ministries have interpreted this text in reference to its use in Adventism. However, since this issue of *Proclamation!* references the teachings of the Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM), I thought it would be appropriate to look once again at this text. I have included verse 20 in this short study as it points us to the correct understanding. Here is how it reads in the New American Standard Bible.

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness sur-

passes that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:17-20).

## The typical Hebrew Roots Movement understanding

To fulfill the law does not mean to abolish or make void, it means to correctly interpret the law.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Christians need to keep the laws and judgments of Torah, including the Sabbaths, new moon celebrations, and annual feast days.<sup>2</sup>

## Evaluation

The HRM is correct in interpreting “law” as Torah. However, they along with the Adventists also find themselves in a dilemma. Note clearly that the text in Matthew states, “...not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law (Torah) until all is accomplished.” The Torah has a multitude of laws<sup>3</sup> regarding sacrifices,<sup>4</sup>

cleansing and circumcision. It includes laws such as, “You shall not breed together two kinds of your cattle; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor wear a garment upon you of two kinds of material mixed together.”<sup>5</sup>

The text in Matthew refers to “the least of these commandments”, referring to the commands contained in the Torah.

Therefore, we are left with only two choices. (1) We must either keep all the laws of Torah, or (2) accept the fact that “all is accomplished”. Jesus Himself gives us the answer:

Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, “I am thirsty.”...Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit (Jn. 19:28, 30).

For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:20).

Therefore, as Paul clearly stated, we need the very righteousness of God that is “in Christ”. This righteousness is received only by faith.<sup>6</sup>

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Botkin, *Gates of Eden*, March-April 2014, p. 27, Gates of Eden, PO Box 2257, East Peoria, IL 61611.

<sup>2</sup> My summary after reading several issues of *Gates of Eden*.

<sup>3</sup> Some count 613 laws in the Torah.

<sup>4</sup> Thirty are listed in Leviticus.

<sup>5</sup> Lev. 19:19.

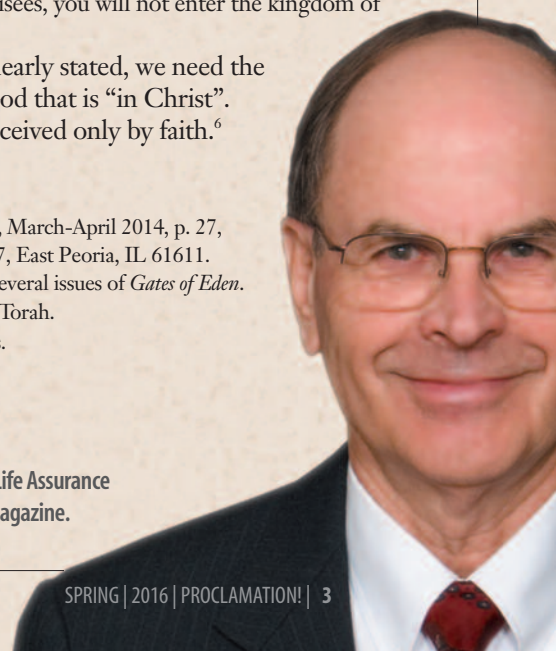
<sup>6</sup> Rom. 3:21.

WE MUST EITHER KEEP ALL THE LAWS OF TORAH, OR ACCEPT THE FACT THAT “ALL IS ACCOMPLISHED”

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](http://Ratzlaff.com) or by phoning (928) 554-1001.



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





want to share my own testimony of the faithfulness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. I am the older son of Richard and Colleen Tinker. I grew up as a Seventh-day Adventist, and I was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist church at the age of 10.

When I was in junior high, my parents attended a seminar about the new covenant given by Dale Ratzlaff. They were impacted by what they heard, and in the following weeks, they read two of his books, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* and *Sabbath in Crisis* (which has since been renamed *Sabbath in Christ*). As they read, they talked constantly about what they were reading and learning. My brother Nathanael and I listened as these discussions took place—frequently at the dinner table—and the two of us also became convinced that the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist church are in error when measured by the Scriptures. We understood that contrary to the Adventists' teachings, the old covenant Sabbath command as stated in the Ten Commandments is not binding on believers in Jesus Christ and is not the final test of our salvation. We were convinced that the investigative judgment as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist church is a false doctrine, that Ellen White herself was a false teacher and false prophet, and that we didn't need to be afraid of her.

Together we as a family left the Seventh-day Adventist church when I was in the 9th grade. It was a scary but morally inescapable choice. God's design is that believers meet and share life together (as they did in the early church), and His command to us regarding unbelievers is, "Therefore come out from their midst and be separate" (2 Cor. 6:17a). We had to leave the false doctrine and false gospel of Adventism in order to be obedient to God's Word.

There is a covenant promise attached to that command to separate from unbelievers. Let me share the passage from 2 Corinthians 6:16-18:

I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty.

Then Paul, having quoted God's promises which He had long before given to His people, writes to the believers in Corinth, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

My parents left the Adventist church fearing God and choosing to believe His promises, trusting Him with their livelihood, their friendships, their future, and their two sons.

### Faithful Father

One of God's promises in that passage is to be a father to us, and He proved himself faithful to that promise in the coming months and years.

The Lord became a Father to me and has continued to be a Father to me from the time when I received the gospel and be-

# DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN

ROY TINKER

lieved in the Lord Jesus Christ until now. He has faithfully provided for all my needs, both material and spiritual, and I'd like to share a couple of ways He showed Himself faithful.

In leaving Adventism, I knew I was leaving a church built on false doctrine, but I didn't yet know the Lord personally. I didn't know what my life would look like as I left my Adventist community, but the Lord faithfully gave me a new one. He brought me to a youth group through a friend at school, and through the youth pastor's leadership, I learned and feasted on the glorious gospel truth of justification by faith in Christ, and I learned who I am in Christ—an adopted son of God. I learned I am now without condemnation or guilt before God, and I have peace with Him through the atonement the Lord Jesus provided on my behalf.

The Lord also brought some great Christian brothers and friends into my life. During my college years, through mutual accountability and encouragement in the Lord, we saw spiritual growth, increasing holiness in our lives, and victories over sins.

After college I became a Bible study leader with the young adult ministry at my church, and through that Bible study I met the wonderful Christian woman who would become my wife. We were married in 2010, and we are raising three beautiful small children now.

In all these things, God showed his covenant faithfulness and grace to me by providing for all my needs—even needs I had not anticipated.

## Antidote to legalism

In the years following our family's exit from Adventism, I often struggled with nagging legalistic doubts and fears about sins and shortcomings in my life. I had been raised, in part, not only with the Law of Moses but also—perhaps especially—the law of Ellen White, which is 10 times more impossible to keep. I would lapse into worry about even extremely small issues, as if God were carefully watching and measuring with terrible exactitude my every thought, deed, and word. (Even those words may remind you of the anxiety of being under legalism.) My overactive conscience often drove me crazy, and it still tries to sometimes.

My experience, though, is that God's Word and the truth of the Gospel given in it sets me free from bondage to fear. Notice Galatians 2:19-21:

For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

This law, I would add, is not just the law of Moses; it's any system by which we measure our right standing with God or our behavior. Christ died to free us from these systems.

In John 17 where Jesus prays to the Father, He says in verse 17, "Sanctify them by the truth; your Word is truth." It is His will to sanctify me through the truth, not from listening to a condemning conscience or obeying its demands. I know that God has justified me already through faith in Jesus, and I have peace with Him, no condemnation, and adoption as his child (from Rom. chapters 3, 5, and 8). Trusting in these powerful truths from God's Word not only sets me free from fear, but is transformative. As John Piper writes, "The faith that justifies also sanctifies" (from *Future Grace*).

Growth in holiness is the result of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives as our faith in God's promises increases, it is not the result of submitting to an external standard of behavior. We who have lived under legalism need God's Word to renew our minds and the blood of Jesus to cleanse us from an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22)—that is, a conscience that is not informed by the truth. God calls us to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," and such assurance comes through faith in the truth of the gospel.

God rewards those who act in faith, as my family did when we trusted him to take care of us, even as we left all that was familiar. The life of faith looks like Abraham's life did—leaving our old life behind as we follow God by faith into the land he will show us.

---

Roy's testimony given at the 2016 Former Adventist Fellowship Conference is online here: [www.youtube.com/formeradventist](http://www.youtube.com/formeradventist). Select the playlist "2016 Former Adventist Fellowship Conference" and then find Roy's testimony video.



change  
wording

create  
ambiguity

# ADVENTISTS REVISE WORDING ON THE PROPHET'S AUTHORITY

INVESTIGATING THE CHANGES TO FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #18: THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

## Fundamental Belief #18

The Scriptures testify that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and we believe it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.

## Comments about the belief statement

This belief statement about the role of Ellen G. White was changed during the General Conference session in July, 2015. Since 1980 the belief statement had been worded this way:

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White—the Lord's messenger. Her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.

First we need to examine what has changed in this belief statement.

In the previous version, Ellen White's writings were described as "a continuing and authoritative source of truth"; in the current version her writings are said to "speak with prophetic authority".

According to the Seventh-day Adventist North America Division News Release on the subject of the changes in this statement of belief (July 12, 2015), "There were no changes in the revisions adopted last week that (add to or change the meaning of the prior statements)." Interestingly, this particular news release is no longer accessible online, although it is referenced in an article in *Adventist Today*.<sup>1</sup>

This same *Adventist Today* article, referencing the now-unavailable news release from July 12, explains the changes this way:

Some felt that the prior version gave Adventist Church co-founder Ellen G. White authority comparable to that of the Bible. Changes were made to remove this potential ambiguity. White herself emphasizes that her authority is subject to the Scriptures. The new wording of this statement does not in any way diminish the church's understanding of the authority of the Bible or the prophetic role of White.<sup>2</sup>

Please bear with me as I walk through the logic and implications of these recent changes.

Does Scripture speak with prophetic authority? Certainly.

Is a prophet of God a source of truth? Absolutely, because if what a prophet says isn't true, then Scripture condemns him or her as a false prophet (Deut. 18:20-22; Eze. 13:9; Jer. 23:30-32).

Since prophecy and Scripture both originate with God, the truth and authority of both are based on the Source. Interestingly, Peter states that "no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will" (2 Pet. 1:21). At the end of this tiny epistle, Peter further clarifies where one finds authoritative prophecy, and he describes the Old and the New Testaments this way: "You should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles" (2 Pet. 3:2). In other words, believers are to remember the Old Testament prophets' words; the New Testament words from the Lord were spoken by the apostles.

This clarification is why Paul tells us to test "prophetic utterances" carefully; anything we "hold fast" must contain the message and authority of God's revealed word (1 Thess. 5:20-21), and the "prophet" must be 100% accurate. (Deut. 18:20-22; Jer. 23:30-32).

Because there really is no difference between "prophetic authority" and "an authoritative source of truth," the Adventist church can fairly say they have made no changes or additions to the mean-

ing of Fundamental Belief 18. Ellen White's "prophetic authority" remains the same as it has always been.

### Statement of confidence in EGWs writings

At the same July, 2015, General Conference session where the Fundamental Belief #18 was "softened" in its wording, delegates received a "Statement of Confidence in the Writings of Ellen G. White" in their agendas. On July 7, this statement was adopted as an official affirmation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's confidence in Ellen White,<sup>3</sup> apparently as an attempt to offset concerns that omitting "source of truth" would be seen to weaken White's authority. The statement says:

As delegates to the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, we express our deep gratitude to God for the continuing presence of the various spiritual gifts among His people (1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 4:11-14), and particularly for the prophetic guidance we have received through the life and ministry of Ellen G. White (1827-1915).

On the centennial of her death, we rejoice that her writings have been made available around the globe in many languages and in a variety of printed and electronic formats.

We reaffirm our conviction that her writings are divinely inspired, truly Christ-centered, and Bible-based. Rather than replacing the Bible, they uplift the normative character of Scripture and correct inaccurate interpretations of it derived from tradition, human reason, personal experience, and modern culture.

We commit ourselves to study the writings of Ellen G. White prayerfully and with hearts willing to follow the counsels and instructions we find there. Whether individually, in the family, in small groups, in the classroom, or in the church, a combined study of the Bible and her writings provide a transforming and faith-uplifting experience.

We encourage the continued development of both worldwide and local strategies to foster the circulation of her writings inside and outside the church. The study of these writings is a powerful means to strengthen and prepare His people for the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

### What do the words mean?

In spite of its edits, the amended belief statement still reveals the truth about Adventism's dependence upon EGW as God's voice to them—a dependence reflected in the "Statement of Confidence". Let's look at what their carefully-chosen phrases mean.

**"One of the gifts of the Spirit is prophecy."** This statement is true.

**"[Prophecy] is an identifying mark of the remnant church."** There are multiple fallacies within this one short statement. One is the fallacy noted in the discussion of Fundamental Belief 17 in the last issue of *Proclamation!*: if the gift of prophecy has been given to the church, why does the Adventist church only recognize one person in all of church history as having received the true gift?

The second fallacy, addressed in the Winter, 2014, issue of *Proclamation!*, is the statement that the Adventist church is the remnant church. The lone scriptural reference for this remnant church is Revelation 12:17: "So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest (remnant) of her children,

who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus." The "rest", or remnant, of the passage is not a denomination, as Adventism teaches. Instead, this verse describes how Satan, when He can no longer attack Jesus or the woman who gave Him birth, turns his attack on the other children of the woman, the brothers and sisters of Christ. The concept of "remnant church" is not found in this passage nor in the rest of Scripture. In fact, throughout both Old and New Testaments, the remnant are always the few who trust in God even in the midst of horrific opposition.

**"[Ellen White's writings] make clear that the Bible is the standard."** Consider the irony of this statement. The confirmation for Adventists' believing that the Bible is the standard for testing, as stated in this Fundamental Belief, is Ellen White's statement. In other words, Ellen White is their final authority for both accepting and interpreting God's Word. This wording shows that Adventists actually have two sources of doctrine, the Bible and Ellen White.

The careful reader might also notice that this statement doesn't address dealing with a false prophet. Instead, it opens the door for the common (and non-Biblical practice) of dealing with each teaching individually, without drawing any conclusion about the legitimacy of the prophet and his overall message. So, even if one concludes that a statement of EGW's doesn't align with Scripture, this Fundamental Belief only asks that you evaluate the teaching, not the teacher. This "permission" does not go far enough. If the teaching is false, the prophet is a false prophet, and all of the "fruit" from the rotten tree is unfit for consumption.

I would agree with the Belief Statement that Ellen G. White exhibited the characteristics of a prophet. However, this fact demands that we must test her to determine whether she is a true or a false prophet. The biblical standards for being a true prophet of God are quite high. There is no such thing as a "sometimes true" prophet of God. I would like to challenge every Adventist to get off the fence and decide, as Ellen White herself phrased it, whether her visions were "of God or the devil".<sup>5</sup> If she is a true prophet of God, obey her writings as you would every other word from God. If she fails the tests of a true prophet, flee from her and the church claiming her teachings as fast as you can. †

<sup>1</sup><http://atoday.org/what-was-changed-in-the-fundamental-beliefs-document.html>

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup><http://remnant-online.com/smf/index.php?topic=16808.0>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.adventist.org/fileadmin/gcsession.adventist.org/files/galleries/2015-gcs-agenda-website.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>Ellen G. White, Letter 8, To Brother John Andrews, 1860, p. 16-17. *Manuscript Releases vol. 1*, p. 307.1.

**Rick Barker** is a native of Southwestern Ohio and facilitates a weekly Bible study for former and transitioning Adventists in the Dayton, Ohio, area. Rick graduated from Andrews University in 1987 and received a Masters degree from the University of Dayton. Rick and his wife Sheryl formally left the Adventist church in 2004. Prior to this they had been active in the Miamisburg and Wilmington, Ohio, Adventist churches.







**A**s Peter prophesied in 2 Peter 2:1, there are many “destructive heresies” invading the Christian church. Some are secretly deceptive, and some are boldly confrontive. In this article I will give an introduction to one of these heresies—the Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM). I will list the main assumptions and teachings upon which this movement is based and do an overview evaluation of these teachings.

### **The Hebrew Roots Movement is growing**

Rico Cortes, a former minor league baseball player and scout for the Chicago White Sox, was raised in a Christian community in Puerto Rico. In the 1990s, however, he began “searching his roots” and found out he was a descendant of medieval Spanish Jews. His reaction was anything but predictable.

“When I kept reading the Bible, [Jesus] kept Shabbat, he ate kosher, he kept the faith,” says Cortes. He found himself thinking,

“Wait a minute—what’s going on? How come we don’t do what he did? It’s hypocritical.”<sup>1</sup>

Cortes, 47, decided that the best way to understand the Torah is to “really live it.... It’s the only way.” So he became a self-described “Torah-observant believer in Yeshua,” or member of the Hebrew Roots Movement.

They don’t identify as Christian because they see contemporary Christians as heavily influenced by pagan culture. Now Cortes studies Torah six to seven hours a day and teaches full time. He is also the founder of the popular Wisdom in Torah ministry, which is mainly online.

He says he has followers from more than 130 countries, and he is invited to speak to Hebrew Roots communities all over the world. In the next few months he will travel to Colombia, South Africa, Canada, Costa Rica and multiple cities in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. He recently led a prayer session of 500 followers in China, held in a school gym.<sup>2</sup>





DALE RATZLAFF

# ING UP THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ROOTS MOVEMENT

© DEPOSITPHOTOS.COM/LUCIDWATERS

I believe there is real spiritual danger in the HRM. I have read materials from several different leaders in the HRM, the notes in the Aramaic English New Testament (AENT), and have had conversations by emails and phone with two of these leaders. Without an understanding of the new covenant gospel, biblical hermeneutics, and at least some understanding of the discipline and rules of textual criticism,<sup>3</sup> it would be quite easy for one to get swept into this movement. Because it is so easy to be deceived by this movement, I want to share with *Proclamation!* my reasons for rejecting the HRM.

Because the HRM has no centralized organization, it is hard to evaluate it as a movement. In fact, through my reading and conversations with those in the HRM, I have learned unequivocally that it is a movement of individuals and groups without central leadership.<sup>4</sup> Thus, because of the independence of individual congregations, it is hard to establish a universal set of doctrines or beliefs. Nevertheless, I perceive, based on my reading and conversations, that the following are the foundational

assumptions and teachings of the HRM regardless of individual variations in detail from group to group. In fact, I encourage you to read the footnotes in addition to the text of this article because some contain important information in addition to source citations.

## Hebrew Roots Movement teachings and assumptions

1. The underlying assumption for the HRM is that the New Testament (yes, all the books) were originally written in Aramaic. In fact, the HRM teaches that early in the history of the church, the Greek Christians, influenced by Greek paganism, translated the original Aramaic manuscripts into Greek. Therefore, one cannot trust modern Bibles, as they are based on the Greek text and do not reflect the pure teachings of the authors. Instead, the HRM says, readers should go to the early versions of the New Testament which are in Aramaic.<sup>5</sup> The HRM recommends the Aramaic English New

# GREEK WAS IN WIDESPREAD USE IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE BEFORE 4 BC AND WAS WIDESPREAD IN USE IN PALESTINE AT THAT TIME.

Testament (AENT) which is a *diglot* (Aramaic and English side by side). At the end of the AENT there are about 300 pages of highly biased (in my opinion) notes supporting the HRM. In fact, the whole HRM rests on this one assumption—that the New Testament was originally written in Aramaic. Again, the arguments for this assumption are quite compelling for those who do not understand textual criticism, hermeneutics, and the biblical covenants.

2. We are saved by faith in Christ, but true believers will honor and follow the Torah.<sup>6</sup> The focus of the movement's authority, study, and teaching is the Torah, not the New Testament.<sup>7</sup> This belief is the second most important teaching of the HRM.

3. There is no “new” covenant in Hebrews 8, 9, or anywhere else in the Bible. Instead, they say there is a “renewed” covenant in which the laws of Torah are written on the heart.<sup>8</sup>

4. It is important to use the sacred (Hebrew/Aramaic) names of God (Yahweh or Elohim), Christ (Y'shua, Yahushuah), The Holy Spirit (Ruach he Kodesh).<sup>9</sup> Some teach that the Holy Spirit is a feminine member of the Heavenly Family.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, one must use the Aramaic names for NT authors such as Paul (Sha'ul) and John (Yochanan).<sup>11</sup>

5. One must keep all the Sabbaths and feasts of Torah.<sup>12</sup>

6. Sunday-keeping is the mark of the beast.<sup>13</sup> This belief is true at least for the many former “Completed Adventists” who have joined this movement.

7. The HRM pits Jesus against Paul. The words of Jesus regarding law are more important than the teachings of Paul.<sup>14</sup>

8. Matthew 5:17-19 is a key text in the HRM: “Y'shua at no time ‘loosened’ either the Torah or the Prophets!”<sup>15</sup>

9. The holidays of Christmas and Easter are pagan and should be rejected. Rather, Christians should keep all the celebrations of Torah.<sup>16</sup>

10. Some HRM leaders follow the teachings of the late Roger Morneau, a Seventh-day Adventist who was involved in “an elite

group of Luciferian/demon worshippers in Montreal in the 1940s”<sup>17</sup> (please read this footnote).

11. Men should wear beards.<sup>18</sup>

12. Some in the HRM stress abstaining from coffee and tobacco and link the use of these addictive things to demon possession.<sup>19</sup>

## Was the New Testament written in Aramaic?

First we will look at four of the main claims of the HRM to support their position that Aramaic, not Greek, was the original language of the New Testament. Then we will show why we believe this argument is unsupportable.

### The HRM claims:

1. There is some evidence from early church fathers that Matthew<sup>20</sup> and Hebrews<sup>21</sup> may have first been written in Aramaic. However, very recent evidence, which will be listed later, supports the understanding that Matthew wrote his gospel in Greek and also wrote it in Hebrew.

2. Some argue that the wording in some of the Greek manuscripts (MSS) appears to reflect Aramaic wording behind it.

3. The HRM claims that Jesus and the disciples spoke Aramaic as their native language and would have written in it.

4. One of the church fathers stated that he had seen (or heard) evidence that the Hebrew text of Matthew did not quote the Old Testament references from the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, but from the ancient Hebrew.<sup>22</sup>

I have encountered no evidence that any other New Testament books were first written in Aramaic. Moreover, all the earliest MSS are in Greek. In fact, the earliest full Greek MSS of the New Testament are from the fourth century with hundreds of earlier fragments, whereas the earliest MSS of the Aramaic New Testament are from the fifth century.

## New Testament was written in Greek

There is good evidence to support that not only the apostles but Jesus Himself were fluent in Greek. Consider the following: In *Biblical Archaeological Review*, Pieter W. Van Der Horst states “that no less than 1,600 Jewish epitaphs—funerary inscriptions—are extant from ancient Palestine dating from 300 B.C. to 500 A.D.

Van Der Horst goes on (emphases his):

One of the most surprising facts about these funerary inscriptions is that most of them are IN GREEK—approximately 70 percent; about 12 percent are in Latin; and only 18 percent are in Hebrew or Aramaic.

These figures are even more instructive if we break them down between Palestine and the Diaspora. Naturally in Palestine we would expect more Hebrew and Aramaic and less Greek. This is true, but not to any great extent. Even in Palestine approximately TWO-THIRDS of these inscriptions are in Greek.

Apparently for a great part of the Jewish population, the daily language was Greek, even in Palestine. This is impressive testimony to the impact of Hellenistic culture on Jews in their mother country, to say nothing of the Diaspora.



In Jerusalem itself about 40 PERCENT of the Jewish inscriptions from the first century period (before 70 C.E.) ARE IN GREEK.

Greek was in widespread use in the Roman Empire before 4 BC and was widespread in use in Palestine at that time.<sup>23</sup>

What about Jesus and the apostles? Did they, too, commonly speak Greek as a second language? The answer is almost certainly yes.

### Evidence that Jesus could speak Greek

All four Gospels depict Jesus conversing with Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect of Judea, at the time of his trial (Mk. 15:2-5; Mt. 27:11-14; Lk. 23:3; Jn. 18:33-38). Even if we allow for obvious literary embellishment of these accounts, there can be little doubt that Jesus and Pilate did engage in some kind of conversation...In what language did Jesus and Pilate converse? There is no mention of an interpreter. Since there is little likelihood that Pilate, a Roman, would have been able to speak either Aramaic or Hebrew, the obvious answer is that JESUS SPOKE GREEK at his trial before Pilate.<sup>24</sup>

Jesus' father was a businessman, with recent scholarship indicating he may have been a stone mason:

Given that Israel's buildings were constructed of stones and rocks, Jesus likely worked as a stonemason rather than a carpenter. He probably spent hours helping his father shape and cut stones.<sup>25</sup>

In any event, the language of business in that area and time was mostly Greek. It is not hard to believe that Jesus was introduced to the Greek language in His youth. Furthermore, Nazareth was a town in Galilee, much closer to gentile regions than was Judea.

In his ministry Jesus often used the word, "hypocrite," in describing the Pharisees and Sadducees as in Matthew 23. This comes from the Greek word *hypokrites*, (ὑποκριταί). This is a compound word with the Greek preposition *hypo* for "under" and *krites*, meaning "judgment." This form is wholly lacking in Semitic languages. The word *hypokrites* basically means, "one who answers" (i.e., one who always has an answer, or excuse), but came to mean over time not only "expounder" or "interpreter," but "orator," "actor," "stage actor," or one who spoke from behind a dramatic mask on stage. From this it came to mean "pretender," "dissembler." **But this Greek word, so familiar in the denunciations of Christ, has no counterpart in Hebrew or Aramaic.**<sup>26</sup>

In Mark 7:24-30 we have the record of a Gentile woman of the Syrophoenician race who kept asking Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter. They communicated in several sentences with no indication of an interpreter, thus lending supportive evidence that Jesus spoke Greek.

In John 12:20-23 we have this record:

Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

From this we can infer that Philip knew Greek and probably communicated in Greek at least some of the time in Jesus' disciple

group. We can also infer that Jesus spoke with these Greeks who were seeking Him.

Another incident that implies Jesus spoke Greek we find in Matthew 8:8-13.

But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. 'I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very moment.

The majority of the Old Testament quotes used by Jesus in the Gospels are loosely quoted from the Greek Septuagint, not the old Hebrew.

Of the places where the New Testament quotes the Old, the great majority is from the Septuagint version. Protestant authors Archer and Chirichigno list 340 places where the New Testament cites the Septuagint but only 33 places where it cites from the Masoretic Text rather than the Septuagint...

But, since you ask, here is an example where the Greek gospels present Jesus as quoting the Septuagint: In Mark 7:6-7, Jesus quotes the LXX of Isaiah 29:13 when he says, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'"<sup>27</sup>

There is evidence that when Jesus was quoting Old Testament passages, he often quoted from the Greek translation, the Septuagint.<sup>28</sup>

Considering the evidence listed above, it seems very likely, if not a certainty, that Jesus spoke both Aramaic and Greek.

### The Apostles were given the gift of tongues

The account of the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is very insightful and has direct application to the issue of whether or not the disciples were capable of writing their gospels in Greek.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, **"Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?"** Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs— **we hear them in our own**

tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God. (Acts 2:4-11, my emphasis).

If the Holy Spirit could help these apostles, some of whom were unlearned fisherman, speak clearly the mighty deeds of God in the languages of peoples listed above, is it too much to conclude that they could also write fluently the mighty deeds of God in the same languages?

### Accuracy of modern literal Bibles

There are thousands more New Testament Greek manuscripts than there are for any other ancient writing. Moreover, the internal consistency of the New Testament documents is about 99.5% textually pure. In addition, there are 19,000 New Testament manuscripts in languages besides Greek: Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic. In fact, the total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000.<sup>29</sup>

There is a recent discovery of a very early fragment from Mark's gospel in Greek. One scholar says this about the fragment:

...But, if this Mark fragment is confirmed as from the first century, what a thrill it will be to have a manuscript that is dated within the lifetime of many of the eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection!<sup>30</sup>

In addition, a recently-found fragment of the book of Matthew has elicited this comment from A. W. Argyle, "We may have direct access to the original utterances of our Lord and not only to a translation of them." Others' comments follow:

The *London Times* reported that the evidence on an early form of writing paper was a potentially "important breakthrough in biblical scholarship, on a level with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947".<sup>31</sup>

But earlier this year, Thiede visited Oxford and inspected the papyrus. He concluded, "The Magdalen fragment now appears to belong to a style of handwriting that was current in the 1st Century A.D., and that slowly petered out around the mid-1st Century. Even a hesitant approach to questions of dating would therefore seem to justify a date in the 1st Century, about 100 years earlier than previously thought."

The lines on the fragments are from Matthew 26 and include the oldest written reference to Mary Magdalene and the betrayal of Christ by Judas. **This fragment, written soon after the death of Christ, in the first century, is written in the Greek language, putting in the trash compacter once and for all the notion that the apostles did not speak or write Greek!**<sup>32</sup> (My emphasis).

The Magdalene fragment from the Gospel of Matthew has been identified as coming from a document dated to the middle of the first century A.D.—during the very lives of the apostles! This fragment is written in GREEK, and **could even be a fragment from an original monograph written by the apostle Matthew himself!** This amazing new discovery is powerful evidence, obviously, that the writer, evidently the apostle Matthew, was very familiar with the Greek language and was capable of writing intelligently in it.<sup>33</sup>

Given the evidence available, we can draw the following conclusions about the language of the New Testament manuscripts:

1. The Greek language was widely used in Palestine during the life of Christ and the apostles. It was the language of business and commerce.

2. The Apostles were given the gift of tongues and could accurately speak in other languages, including Greek. There is good reason to believe this same gift equipped them to write accurately the mighty deeds of God in their gospel accounts using the Greek language.

3. Jesus and the apostles likely spoke both Aramaic and Greek.

4. In the New Testament the majority of quotations from the Old Testament are from the Septuagint Greek translation, not from the Hebrew Masoretic text.

5. All the earliest extant fragments of the New Testament are in Greek, including the recent fragment of Mark and the one from Matthew which could actually have been written by the Apostle Matthew.

### Should Christians focus on the Torah?

Now we turn to the second most important assumption supporting the HRM: focusing on the Torah. As noted in the opening story, Rico Cortes spends six to seven hours a day studying the Torah. While all Scripture is God-breathed and "is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16), studying in context with a correct hermeneutic is mandatory in order to rightly divide the word of truth. Is Cortes's focus on the Torah the correct focus for the Christian? Our study of an important text in John will help us answer this question.

John 5:45-47 states that we will be judged by Moses. Doesn't this mean that we ought to honor and keep all the laws, judgments and statutes of the Torah as the Hebrew Roots Movement teaches? They say "Yes". I say "No!"

John 5:45-47 reads as follows:

Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words? (Jn. 5:45-47).

This verse carries more insight than it might first appear. It is obvious that Jesus is holding up Moses, not as Savior, but as Judge. Therefore, the opening question is valid. Are we, along with the Jews of Christ's day, going to be judged by the writings of Moses, the Torah? If so, then we need to embrace these as our authority as the HRM recommends.

In John 5, Moses is pictured as a present accuser for those who did not believe his writings. To what part of the writings of Moses did Jesus refer when He said, "The one who accuses you is Moses," and "he wrote of Me"? What part of the Torah would accuse the strict law-keeping Jews to whom Jesus was speaking?

Deuteronomy 18:15-19 indicts the unbelieving Jews:

The LORD your God will raise up for you [Israel] a prophet like me [Moses] from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him....I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and *I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him* (my emphasis).

The New Testament writings show that Jesus understood that He was this "Prophet".<sup>34</sup> Several times in the gospels, the



people inquired if Jesus was “The Prophet”<sup>35</sup> or proclaimed Him to be “The Prophet” of whom Moses spoke.<sup>36</sup> Peter, in his sermon to the people after the healing of the crippled man at the gate of the temple, applied this passage from Deuteronomy to Christ:

But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled....Moses said, The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him *you shall give heed in everything He says to you. And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people* (Act. 3:18, 22-23, my emphasis).

In quoting this passage, author Luke drew from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures, and this quotation is evidence that Luke wrote in Greek, not Aramaic. Moreover, notice that in context it is not laws, curses, or commands that Moses delivered in the Torah that accuse the listeners of Jesus. Rather, Moses’ condemning words were that the Prophet would come speak to them, and it would be what this Prophet would say that would be required of them. In other words, if they did not heed every word of the promised Prophet, they would be destroyed.

Comparing John 5:45-47 with Deuteronomy 18:15-19 leads us to a greater understanding of what is required of the Christian. It also provides some insight into why the Hebrew Roots Movement has the wrong focus. If we have interpreted the verses correctly then there ought to be plenty of evidence from the gospels regarding the sayings of Christ. The following passages<sup>37</sup> show beyond a shadow of doubt that it is the sayings of Christ to which Christians will be held accountable and not the laws, judgments, and statutes of the Torah.

Read again the salient part of the Deuteronomy passage below and then note the many parallels in the sayings of Jesus that follow.

I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.

#### **“I will put My words in his mouth.”**

Jesus therefore said, when you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me” (Jn. 8:28).

For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak (Jn. 12:49).

And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me (Jn. 12:50).

Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works (Jn. 14:10).

The word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me (Jn. 14:24).

## **THE MAJORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT QUOTES USED BY JESUS IN THE GOSPELS ARE LOOSELY QUOTED FROM THE GREEK SEPTUAGINT, NOT THE OLD HEBREW.**

#### **“Whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.”**

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels (Mk. 8:38; Lk. 9:26).

But the one who has heard, and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house upon the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great (Lk 6:49).

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day (Jn. 12:48).

He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me (Jn. 14:23-24).

He who does not love Me does not keep My words (Jn. 14:24).

#### **Reward for those who listen and keep Christ’s words**

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away (Mt. 24:35; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33).

Everyone who comes to Me, and hears My words, and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when a flood rose, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built (Lk 6:47).

Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death (Jn. 8:51).

Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life” (Jn. 6:68).

Remember the word that I said to you, “A slave is not greater than his master.” If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also (Jn. 15:20).

# WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS BY LISTENING TO AND FOLLOWING THE WORDS AND SAYINGS OF JESUS.

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life (Jn. 5:24).

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:5).

It is beyond the scope of this little study to cover all the sayings and words of Jesus. Nevertheless, John lists 26 occurrences where Jesus says, "Truly, Truly I say unto you". The above references show clearly that it is the words and sayings of Jesus to which we are to be accountable.

You are My friends, if you do what I command you....This I command you, that you love one another (Jn. 15:14-17).

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (Joh 13:34).

And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning;<sup>38</sup> the old commandment is the word which you have heard.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him<sup>40</sup> and in you,<sup>41</sup> because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him (1 Jn. 2:3-10).

Reviewing once again the key passage from Deuteronomy 18 will lead us to the summary of our findings.

I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.

The commandments in the writings of John can best be defined as a summary of the words and sayings of Jesus. We keep His commandments by listening to and following the words and sayings of Jesus. They do not point us back to the Torah; rather, they reveal the Lord Jesus as the One who fulfilled the Torah. Furthermore, in Paul's writings these same words and sayings are called the "law of Christ".

To those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law (1 Cor. 9:21).

Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).

The gospel of John was written so that his readers would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, they would have life in His name.<sup>42</sup>

John uses the word "law" (νόμος) 13 times in his gospel. Yet never once in this gospel are Christians directed to keep or focus on old covenant law or the Torah. John uses the words, "your law" (in reference to the Jews) three times; "Their law" once, but never "our law". Rather, throughout John's gospel it is belief and trust in the sayings, words, teachings and person of Jesus that determine salvation, eternal life, fellowship with God, being judged righteous, and all the many blessings associated with being a Christian.

In his gospel, John uses "commandment" six times and "commandments" four times, but never once do these commandments refer to the Ten Commandments or any other laws in the Torah. Rather, these words always refer either to the commandments that the Father gave specifically and only to Jesus or the commandment to love.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter tried to place Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah, representatives from the Law and Prophets, yet the Father would have none of it:

And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" And when the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were much afraid. And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, except Jesus Himself alone (Mt. 17:2-8).

## Conclusion

If we believe that God watched over His written revelation given to the apostles, one must reject the fundamental assumption of the HRM. Instead of our modern Bibles being untrustworthy and corrupted by Greek paganism, they are about 99.5 percent accurate in every detail compared to the oldest Greek manuscripts.

The writers of the New Testament are united in teaching that Christ and His gospel of grace are to be the focus of the believer. With Jesus came a major shift in salvation history.

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it (Lk. 16:16).

Christians are not judged by the laws, statutes, and judgments of Torah but by the complete atonement provided on the cross by the Perfect Sacrifice and Substitute.

The Torah was a shadow pointing toward Jesus; now the Reality has come, and we live eternally only in Him. He has fulfilled the law. †



## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Lorena O'Neil, March 13, 2014, <http://www.ozy.com/fast-forward/the-rise-of-the-hebrew-roots-movement/30086> "The Rise of the Hebrew Roots Movement".
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> Textual, or lower, criticism relates to the process of determining the original wording of the Greek text by comparing the thousands of MSS or Bible fragments, versions of the Bible which were translated from Greek into other languages very early in the history of the church, and from quotations of the church fathers who quoted portions of Scripture. By using these documents and following well established rules, linguistic scholars are able to determine with about 99.5% accuracy the original wording used by the Bible writer.
- <sup>4</sup> Ron Buhler a Two-House Messianic Israelite, scribe of the Kingdom of Heaven, Biblical student, pilgrim, and stranger, Toronto; and Daniel Botkin of Gates of Eden, PO Box 2257, East Peoria, IL. 61611.
- <sup>5</sup> My summary after conversations, email discussions, and reading HRM materials.
- <sup>6</sup> "The Bible tells us that one important mark of true New Covenant believers is the keeping of God's Torah!" Daniel Botkin, as printed in Ron Buhler's *Open Response to the Church Board Action Banning the Teachings of the Torah of Yahuah*, June 2000, p. 60. (Botkin's emphasis).
- <sup>7</sup> "Once a Christian has been awakened to his spiritual identity as a full-fledged member of the house of Israel, it will be easier for him to relate to his Israelite heritage—Israel's Torah, Israel's Sabbath, Israel's History. Because the Christian is joined to Israel's Messiah, he is also joined to Israel, Israel's Torah, Israel's Sabbath, and Israel's history also becomes his Torah, his Sabbath, his history." Daniel Botkin, *Gates of Eden*, May-June 2002, p. 18.
- <sup>8</sup> *Gates of Eden*, p. 68, 1995. As far as I was able to ascertain, the AENT never uses "new covenant" but always, "renewed covenant". "The Bible tells us that one important mark of true New Covenant believers is the keeping of Torah!" Botkin, *Gates of Eden*, printed in Buhler, *Ibid.*, p.68.
- <sup>9</sup> I note a number of different spellings for the "sacred names" in the HRM material.
- <sup>10</sup> "Ruach he Kodesh is identified as a feminine member of the Family of Heaven, and we can now understand that Her work involves the implementation of the Statutes and Judgments of Torah." Ron Buhler, E-mail Yeshivah/ School of the Prophets, Part II, June 2000.
- <sup>11</sup> My observation from reading the HRM materials.
- <sup>12</sup> Botkin, *ibid.*, p. 52.
- <sup>13</sup> "The 7th day Shabbat is the mark of the Creator's authority, and Sunday is the mark of Lucifer's authority: those who worship and refrain from work on the 7th day Shabbat come under the Creator's authority, and those who worship OR refrain from work on Sunday come under Lucifer's authority and become subjects in his kingdom." Ron Buhler, in email conversation, January 6, 2015.
- <sup>14</sup> "The devil has convinced Christians that Paul taught against keeping Old Testament commandments... This anti-Torah theology is absorbed into Christians' minds and spiritually sickens them... If it is real Christianity, should it not be based more on the teachings of Christ than on the occasional letters that were written by one of Christ's Apostles?" Botkin, *Gates of Eden*, Mar.-Apr. 2011, p. 16,17.
- <sup>15</sup> Aramaic English New Testament (AENT), notes, p. 12. See also Botkin, *Gates of Eden*, July-Aug, 2001, p. 7-11.
- <sup>16</sup> See Botkin, "Syncretism—A Blending of Paganism & Truth", *Gates of Eden*, July-Aug, 2005.
- <sup>17</sup> Buhler, email conversation, Jan. 6, 2015. "In harmony with the 2 Kings 6:17 precedent in the history of Israel, the Toronto Torah study group and I will be offering special intercessory prayer on your behalf beginning this Shabbat, Dec. 27, 2014. We will uphold before our Heavenly Father Yahuah His Son's blood that was shed on Calvary for the salvation of your soul, and then we will ask that, through the mighty power of the Holy Spirit and at a time and place of His choosing, He will open your eyes so you can see the double cohort of demonic angels that are accompanying you. We will condition our request on it being in harmony with His will, on granting of it bringing honor and glory to His holy Name, and on your possessing sufficient sincerity to merit this intervention. In case you should be blessed to experience something extremely unpleasant that you would like to discontinue experiencing, call me at the number below and the Toronto Torah study group and I will speak with our Heavenly Father about the situation." (My response: "You sound like those witch doctors who are going to put a curse on you. Christ has defeated Satan"). Buhler's response: To the contrary, you have brought the curse on your own head through rejection of many precepts of Torah (see Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28), and we are endeavoring to assist you so that this curse can be lifted."

- <sup>18</sup> Based upon "You shall not round off the side-growth of your heads, nor harm the edges of your beard" (Lev. 19:27).
- <sup>19</sup> "Tobacco is a (1) vicious (2) addictive (3) drug which when smoked constitutes an (4) idol that directs (5) worship form the smoker to Lucifer, causes the smoker to become (6) possessed by Lucifer's demons, and to end up in the (7) same lake of Fire and Brimstone that Lucifer and his demons end up in." "One Stick" Yeshive (Ezekiel 37:15)/*School of the Prophets*, Part VI, Chang Hamatozos/*Feast of Unleavened Bread*, 2011 Special Issue, p. 2.
- <sup>20</sup> "Matthew composed his work in Hebrew dialect, and each translated as best they could". Papias, quoted by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39, AENT, p. xi.
- <sup>21</sup> "In the work called *Hypotyposes*, to sum up the matter briefly, he [Clement of Alexandria] has given us abridged accounts of all the canonical Scriptures... The Epistle to the Hebrews he asserts was written by Paul, to the Hebrews, in the Hebrew tongue, but that is it was carefully translated by Luke, and published among the Greeks." Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.25, AENT p. xi.
- <sup>22</sup> Jerome, *On Famous Men*, 3;5 as quoted in AENT, p. xii., sixth century AD.
- <sup>23</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Biblical Archaeological Review*.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- <sup>25</sup> Ray Vander Laan, as quoted in "What evidence is there that Jesus was a carpenter?" <http://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/4896/what-evidence-is-there-that-jesus-was-a-carpenter>.
- <sup>26</sup> Corey Keating as quoted in [http://www.ntgreek.org/answers/nt\\_written\\_in\\_greek.htm](http://www.ntgreek.org/answers/nt_written_in_greek.htm)
- <sup>27</sup> Jason Evert, <http://www.catholic.com/quickquestions/in-which-passages-does-jesus-quote-the-septuagint-and-where-does-the-new-testament-al>, quoting G. Archer and G. C. Chirichigno, Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete Survey, p. 25-32.
- <sup>28</sup> "The Language Spoken by Jesus", Aaron Tresham, <https://www.tms.edu/m/tmsj20e.pdf>.
- <sup>29</sup> <https://carm.org/manuscript-evidence>.
- <sup>30</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, "First Century Manuscript", <http://www.dts.edu/read/wallace-new-testament-manscript-first-century>.
- <sup>31</sup> William Tuohy, *Los Angeles Times*, Dec.25, 1994, "Gospel Fragments in Britain May Be Contemporary Account of Life of Jesus Christ", p. A42.
- <sup>32</sup> Corey Keating, [http://www.ntgreek.org/answers/nt\\_written\\_in\\_greek.htm](http://www.ntgreek.org/answers/nt_written_in_greek.htm)
- <sup>33</sup> William Tuohy, *Los Angeles Times*, Dec.25, 1994, "Gospel Fragments in Britain May Be Contemporary Account of Life of Jesus Christ", p. A42,3.
- <sup>34</sup> And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his own household" (Mt. 13:57).
- <sup>35</sup> Mt. 21:11; Lk. 7:16.
- <sup>36</sup> Jn. 6:14.
- <sup>37</sup> These are only samples; many more passages could be cited.
- <sup>38</sup> When they heard and responded to the gospel of Christ.
- <sup>39</sup> Note that the "old commandment" is the word (of Christ) that they heard (when they responded to the gospel).
- <sup>40</sup> In context I believe this refers to the new commandment of love that was "in Christ" and demonstrated in His life and sacrifice for sin.
- <sup>41</sup> In context I believe this refers to the love that is to be reflected in the lives of Christians who claim to be "in Christ."
- <sup>42</sup> Jn. 20:31.

**Dale Ratzlaff** is the founder of Life Assurance Ministries, Inc., and owns LAM Publications, LLC. He served as an Adventist pastor for 13 years, seven at Monterey Bay Academy where he taught Bible. He and his wife Carolyn left the Adventist church in 1981 when he realized he could no longer teach the investigative judgment in clear conscience. He has authored several books on Adventism that are available through his website, LifeAssuranceMinistries.com. The Ratzlaffs reside in Camp Verde, Arizona.



# WATER FOR THE WEARY

DALE RATZLAFF



## Introduction

The book of Philippians is full of the spiritual nutrients which bring joy and peace into our lives. In fact, it has been one of the chief sources of my spiritual food. After years of studying the life and letters of Paul, I have found I have several things in common with him: I, too, am the chief of sinners; I, too, grew up in rank legalism trying my best to keep the law. I, too, discovered the gospel late in life, and it was a life-transforming experience. In fact, sometimes I fear that those who grew up in Christian churches just take the gospel for granted and don't understand the magnitude of the good news embedded in it.





For those of us who grew up in legalism, however, the gospel is like a pitcher full of cold water to tired and thirsty hay haulers on a hot day. Years ago, Bill Ruzicka and I were on our way home to Napa, California, after loading hay in Lovelock, Nevada. It was our first trip together. That fateful day we had already been up nearly 24 hours. We had loaded hay in Lovelock and were going back over Donner Pass. Bill was driving—his first time behind the wheel of the hay hauler, and as we approached the pass, we decided to pull over and check on some things. Not used to the top-heavy load, Bill steered the truck up a slanted incline by the edge of the road—and a third of the hay fell off the trailer.

We were tired, out of water, and had no loader. The only way we could reload all those bales was by hand. Using hay hooks we stacked the bales much higher at the front of the trailer, lowering the load gradually as we worked to the back of the trailer.

We were terribly dehydrated and far from any water source. We drove for many miles before we found a coffee shop, ran in, sat down, and cried out for water. The waitress brought two glasses full; we gulped them down and asked for more. Seeing our desperation, she brought a pitcher full, and we immediately drained it.

That experience helps me understand Jesus' words, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall

be satisfied" (Mt. 5:6). When we realize we are exhausted from trying to be good enough and are ready to give up, when we realize we are dying of spiritual dehydration and our spiritual energy gauge points to empty, then we realize how good, how refreshing, how nourishing the gospel is. It will bring real, lasting peace, joy, and true rest. The gospel is good news for everyone!

### **Rejoicing safeguards our faith**

Many of us know the surpassing joy of trusting Jesus and His payment for our sin and the surprising reality of being born again. Once we are made alive in Christ, though, how can we stay engaged with the gospel and not fall into apathy or discouragement? Paul's letter to the Philippians offers us insight. Most likely written during Paul's house arrest in Rome, this letter is, nevertheless, known as the epistle of joy. In chapter 3:1-11 he helps us understand how the Lord Jesus has rescued us from ourselves, given us hope, and provided for our eternity with Him:

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true circumcision, who worship in



**DALE RATZLAFF LEARNED OF HIS NEED OF WATER WHILE HAULING HAY WITH THIS FREIGHTLINER.**

the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:1-11).

In verse one, Paul comes back to a central theme in this letter: joy and rejoicing: “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.”

The first word, “finally,” marks a transition in this letter. In the last part of chapter two Paul has been telling the Philippians how he hopes to send Timothy, his son in the gospel, to them, and he reminds them how God has had mercy on Epaphroditus and tells them to keep rejoicing in the Lord—even when facing suffering and opposition. Suffering with joy, in fact, was something they had understood from the founding of their church. The story is recorded in Acts 16:22-33:

The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many

blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; [here we see how suffering and joy can be combined] and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!” And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” [Here it is, the simple gospel.] They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.

The Philippian church understood Paul's admonition: “Rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.” Rejoicing is a safeguard to us as well. When suffering and opposition come to us, and they will, we are to rejoice in the Lord, singing hymns to God, knowing that God is right now working all things together for our good and His glory.

Having reminded the Philippians to keep rejoicing in the Lord, Paul, with graphic words, gives three descriptions of and warnings against the Judaizers who would steal their joy if given opportunity:

Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision (Phil. 3:2).

## Who are these Judaizers?

We find a summary of their teachings in Acts 15: “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, ‘It is necessary [and that is the key word] to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses’” (Act 15:5). Notice that they said, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.” In other words, faith in Christ was not sufficient.

“Sure,” they would say, “faith in Christ is important, but one must teach these Gentiles coming into the Christian church that they must be circumcised, and they must keep the Law of Moses.”

The term “Gentiles” refers to anyone who was not a Jew. Jews understood circumcision, the sign which God had given to Abraham, to be the covenant sign that entitled one to be under the Law as one of God's covenant people. For example, Jewish boys had to be circumcised at eight days old to become part of the covenant community, and believing Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to become part of the Israelite community. Thus, as Gentiles became Christians, the Judaizers believed the



converts had to be circumcised and had to place themselves under that law in order to be truly part of God's people. The key parts of the law of Moses that the Judaizers were enforcing included: worshiping on Sabbath, new moons, the annual feasts of Israel, and eating only kosher food. The sign that one was observing all these laws was circumcision—the entrance sign into the covenant community that God gave to Abraham and repeated in the Law of Moses.

### **Beware of the dogs**

Now we'll examine Paul's three warnings against the Judaizers. What does Paul mean calling them dogs?

When Carolyn and I go on our daily walk, we go by a home that has three huge dogs that bark at us: one Great Dane, one Mastiff, and one St. Bernard. Their deep-throated barks warn us, "Beware of the dogs". However, well-loved family guard dogs are not what Paul has in mind. In his day, while there were little dogs that were family pets that ate the crumbs that fell from the children's table, most dogs were wild scavengers that would roam the streets looking for a free lunch wherever they could find it.

That kind of scavenging is exactly what the Judaizers did. They would wait until Paul and his companions had done the work to form a Christian church, then they would sneak in behind them with a false gospel and win over the converts' allegiance.

Today the same thing is taking place; it's just packaged differently. Today, beware when two nicely dressed young men in

moon celebrations and annual feasts commanded in the Old Testament.

Others teach that unless one speaks in tongues, he or she has not received the Holy Spirit and is not a first class Christian. Still others believe one must interpret the Scripture through the writings of their prophet in order to avoid being deceived by his or her own Bible study.

Some modern Judaizers are promoting the idea that unless one uses the Hebrew or Aramaic names for God such as YHWH and Yhashawa, one is either not pleasing God or is worshiping a pagan God. Yes, beware of evil workers.

### **Beware of false circumcision**

Beware of the false circumcision, or people who put on a front of holiness or spirituality to cover persistent sin. Two extreme examples come to my mind.

First, when I was pastoring in Santa Cruz, California, there was a lady who claimed to be fully sanctified. True, when we are "in Christ" we are declared to be perfectly holy, but imputed holiness was not what she had in mind. She said she was living above sin. After one Sunday night service we were talking, and then she looked at her watch and said, "Oh, I need to run; it is almost time for..." and she mentioned a TV program that I believed one who was "fully sanctified" would not watch.

The second example was at a large Adventist gathering also in Santa Cruz, California. Carolyn and I were introduced to a twenty-something woman who claimed to be sinless. I told her

## **...BEWARE OF THOSE PROSELYTIZERS WHO PREY ON THOSE WHO ARE NOT WELL-GROUNDED IN BIBLICAL TRUTH.**

white shirts knock on your door. Beware when people come to your door handing out the latest edition of *Watchtower* and telling you that Christ is not God, that the Holy Spirit is not a person, and that Christ died on a "torture stake" and not a cross. Beware when your mail contains a highly-colored graphic advertising a prophecy seminar that will explain the mark of the beast and the United States in prophecy.

All of these movements are out to capture and convince undiscerning people, threatening they will not be saved unless one joins their religion. Yes, beware of those proselytizers who prey on those who are not well-grounded in biblical truth.

### **Beware of evil workers**

Beware of evil workers who would like to put you into bondage. Today there are modern Judaizers who teach that Christians must keep Saturday as the Sabbath as well as the new

that Paul never claimed sinlessness and asked her if she had bypassed Paul in righteousness, and she said "Yes". Later, I found out that she was living with a man who was not her husband.

The message of Paul comes through clearly today:

- Beware of those who proselytize believing Christians with a counterfeit gospel.
- Beware of false teachers who seek to put one under bondage.
- Beware of those who put on a front of holiness by promoting their own righteousness.

### **True believers defined**

Paul has just given us three characteristics of the Judaizers, now he will give us three features that describe true believers:

For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3).

First, we—those who have trusted Christ and have been born again—are the true circumcision. We are those who receive the promise of righteousness given to Abraham, not because of any outward sign, but because we have the faith of Abraham (Rom. 4:13-16).

Second, we, the “true circumcision”, worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus. As Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” In other words, true spiritual worship is not demonstrated by following a rigid list of prescribed duties, but true worship springs from a grateful heart for what Christ has done for us at the cross and every day since. My favorite worship song is “In Christ Alone.” Coming from a legalistic background and then experiencing the grace of God, my heart melts when I realize that the center of my faith is Christ alone—now and forevermore—and I no longer have to trust my legalistic performance for right standing with God.

Third, we put no confidence in the flesh. Paul expands on this fleshly confidence in the next three verses:

Although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless (Phil. 3:4-6).

## Personal heritage

For the Jews who prided themselves on being God’s chosen people in Abraham, personal heritage was very important. Pre-conversion Paul was no exception.

- “Circumcised the eighth day”, exactly as the law required. In other words, he was not a proselyte, someone who accepted the Jewish faith and was circumcised late in life. He was a Jew by birth.
- “Of the nation of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin.” He could trace his ancestry to one of the two existent tribes. There was no questioning his connection to Abraham. In fact, he was named after Saul, the first King of Israel, who was also of the tribe of Benjamin.
- “A Hebrew of Hebrews.” Both Paul’s father and mother were true Jews, and he could trace their ancestry—probably better than ancestry.com would have been able to trace it!

## Personal performance

Now Paul moves to his personal performance as a Jew:

- “As to the law, a Pharisee.” In fact, in Acts 23 we learn that Paul was not only a Pharisee, but he was the son of a Pharisee. The Pharisees were strict law keepers; they knew the 613 laws of Torah and were the most diligent in keeping them.
- “As to zeal, a persecutor of the church.” Paul compares his zeal to that of the Judaizers who had enough zeal to follow him and to try to steal his converts. Paul, however, says in effect, “You think you have zeal? I had more; I was a persecutor of the church and tried to destroy it.”

• Paul saved the most important point in his personal performance list to the last. “As to the righteousness that is in the law, found blameless.” Wow. Who could match that? Paul has now shown that by their own standards of personal heritage and personal performance, he has trumped them!

What Paul does now is amazing. Using his own record of personal heritage and personal performance, he completely pulls the rug out from under the Judaizers. He shows that all their bragging about obedience is worthless:

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ (Phil. 3:7).

Before Paul met Christ, he must have said to himself, “My personal heritage and personal performance were a real plus before God. God knows I am a real Jew. He knows my self-discipline, God knows I was an A student in the school of Gamaliel and graduated summa cum laude, God knows my personal obedience to the law.” Yet, when Paul met Christ, a major re-alignment took place. Paul states that these positive achievements he has now counted as loss for the sake of Christ. “Have counted” is in the perfect tense. Paul indicates he considered his heritage and performance carefully, and then he counted them once and for all nothing but loss.

## All things

Next, Paul expands his conclusion in verse 8:

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ (Phil. 3:8).

Paul now says “all things”—not just his personal heritage and personal performance, but in comparison to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord, he now counts all things as rubbish. In verse 7, Paul uses the perfect tense for “have counted” or “considered”, conveying the idea that he had made a once and for all decision. Now, in verse 8, he uses the present tense. “I still count this matter carefully,” he says in effect. “I still consider my decision to be once and for all, and unlike many politicians, I have not gone back on my evaluation. All my goodness—even my meticulous law keeping—when compared to the perfect righteousness of God, is nothing but rubbish.”

There has been much discussion about the meaning of the Greek word often translated “rubbish”. Some think it refers to a pile of manure; others say it can mean rotten hay, or compost—an interpretation I can endorse. We have a large lawn, and we planted clover in our orchard. I thought the clippings of the two plantings would make good compost, so I put together several old pallets to make a compost box and started putting those clippings into it. My sense of smell is somewhat diminished, yet I knew that something was cooking down inside that box.

Carolyn, who has a very keen sense of smell, kept telling me, “Dale, you are going to have to do something about your compost pile. It stinks.” I did nothing, however, and it kept growing as I kept adding new material—and yes, it kept cooking. One day when I was in the back yard, the neighbor came over and said, “I don’t know what you have going on over



there, but we have company, and the smell from your pile is unbearable.”

Yes, it was a stinking mess, and a stinking mess is just what Paul meant. All his glorious heritage and all his personal performance, when compared to the righteousness of Christ, was like what was cooking in my compost pile. It stank.

Notice also Paul’s wording in verse 8, “in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” The way this phrase is written in Greek implies a personal knowledge, not just an intellectual conclusion. “Knowing” denotes personal experience—fellowship, communion, relationship, and trust.

Do you really know Christ Jesus as your Lord? Is this experience and relationship with Christ of sufficient value that it surpasses all things?

## Righteousness from God

And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Phil. 3:9).

When Carolyn and I were discovering the gospel as we were transitioning out of Adventism, this verse carried enormous insight for us. We were taught that righteousness was our “perfect obedience to the law”, and we did our best to be righteous. Yet here Paul clearly states he does not want to be found having his own righteousness derived from the law. Earlier he said that ac-

3. Where is saving righteousness found? Saving righteousness is found only “in Christ”.

4. How do we get saving righteousness? It comes from God on the basis of faith.

5. When do we get this saving, judicial righteousness of God that is “in Christ” by faith? When we hear the simple yet profound gospel—that Christ died for our sins, was buried and was raised to life the third day for our justification and was seen by a number of credible witnesses after His resurrection—the Holy Spirit is present to give saving faith. Even right now. Yes, you can rejoice with Paul in the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. If you respond, recognizing that all your good works are only a stinking compost pile when compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus as your Lord, and if you cry out to God, “Save me, I know I am a sinner, I now trust only in the righteousness that is in Christ,” He will save you.

Paul clarifies the “when” of salvation in Ephesians 1:13.

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Understanding saving righteousness was a major insight as Carolyn and I were transitioning out of Adventism. There is nothing we can boast about, because saving righteousness is always in Christ.

Understanding what it means to be in Christ reveals so many magnificent and precious promises. This discovery makes it

# JESUS SHATTERED PAUL’S MISCONCEPTIONS, AND PAUL REPENTED AND SUBMITTED TO HIS LORD.

cording to the righteousness that is in the law, he was found blameless. Now, however, he considers that personal righteousness to be nothing more than a rotting compost pile giving foul odors which disturb the neighbors.

What, then, is saving righteousness? Paul tells us in just a few words; it is “that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.” This is such an enormously important verse on the topic of saving righteousness that I want us to consider it carefully. Let’s look at the what, the why, the where, the how, and the when of this righteousness.

1. What is saving righteousness? It is judicial righteousness. The word for righteousness is the root Greek word used for justification. We are counted righteous by a judicial declaration of God, not by our personal performance.

2. Why is saving righteousness judicial righteousness? Saving righteousness is the very “righteousness of God”, a much higher righteousness than the righteousness of a person keeping the law. We can’t achieve saving righteousness by obedience. We have to be given righteousness from outside ourselves.

possible to understand what Paul means when he speaks about the “surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”

## Surpassing Value

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10-11).

In these verses, Paul is restating what God did for him when He appeared to him and blinded him with His glory, causing Paul to surrender to the One whom he had been persecuting. The story is recorded in Acts 9. Paul didn’t just decide to “follow Jesus”. The risen Lord appeared to Him and overwhelmed him with who He is. Jesus shattered Paul’s misconceptions, and Paul repented and submitted to His Lord. Not only did the Lord Jesus bring Paul to spiritual life, but He said, “I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.” (Act 9:16).

In 2 Timothy 2:11, Paul reiterated his commitment:

It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim 2:11-13).

Paul made the decision once and for all, and he never looked back. He was going to trust Christ's righteousness and be found in Him. In good times, in bad times, in life, and in death—he knew “the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”

## My experience

Perhaps one reason this passage in Philippians is so meaningful to me is that, like Paul, I, too, was a legalistic “Pharisee”.

Early in our marriage Carolyn and I were living in Cornville, Arizona. I had been working night and day for much of one week, helping one of Carolyn's cousins move, when I became terribly sick with a high fever. After going to the doctor daily for about a week, he decided I had diphtheria and sent me to a hospital in Phoenix.

When we arrived, they informed us that they did not have a contagious diseases ward; consequently, they quarantined me in a motel, and the doctors came there to see me. I was so congested that whenever I dropped off to sleep, my choking would awaken me. After two sleepless days and nights, I knew my condition was not only not improving, but I knew I was at death's door. I was terrified to die.

Like Paul, however, I had a legalistic righteousness. I had a good personal heritage and good personal performance in Adventism. My grandfather had been a missionary and a pastor. My grandmother was a paid evangelistic Bible worker, and my grandmother's brother was a vice-president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. My uncle was an Adventist pastor, and both my father and my mother had taught school in the Adventist school system. In fact, when I was just a baby, my parents were self-supporting missionaries and raised up a little church in the jungles of Panama.

As far as personal performance according to the laws of Adventism was concerned, I ranked high. I had never been to a movie theater; I had never been to a circus or carnival; I had never been to a pool hall, and I had never been to a bowling alley. I never had smoked—well, except once or twice as a kid in North Carolina when I smoked on a home-made corn-cob pipe using pencil-sharpener shavings for tobacco! I never had a beer, a glass of wine, or any alcohol. I never had sex outside of marriage. I was a vegetarian and had only eaten meat two or three times in my whole life. I very seldom had a coke or other caffeinated drink. I did not drink coffee, tea, or use pepper. I had gotten A grades in Bible class and had studied my Sabbath School lesson usually 7 times each week. I had participated in door to door church activities and was a deacon in the church.

Why do I mention all these things? I certainly am not bragging; in fact, seeing my almost-perfect Adventist observances listed and remembering how pious they made me feel is almost embarrassing. Rather, I tell you these things to reinforce the message of Paul to the Philippians. Within my Adventist world, I was righteous.

Yet when I was facing death, I was terrified. I knew I was not ready to meet God. Even though I could give God a list of my heritage and personal performance, they brought me no assurance before Him.

Even though I had a high fever, I could think. I began repeating Bible verses I had leaned through the years in the King James Version, and then I said 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Suddenly, for the first time in my life, I understood what that verse said. I had memorized it in Bible class years before, but the truth never hit home in my soul until that day when I was terrified, facing death.

For the first time I realized that all I had to do was confess my sins. I simply had to admit that I was a sinner, and then God would do the forgiving, God would do the cleansing. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, God would forgive my sin. Suddenly, peace came into my soul that I had never known before. Suddenly I was no longer afraid to die. Now I could commune with God as I had never done before. I told God that I wanted to live to support my beloved Carolyn and two little boys. I told Him that I would do whatever He wanted me to do as long as He made His will clear to me.

Then I said, “I will even go back to college and study theology if you want me to be a pastor.” Being a pastor was the farthest thing from my personal desires, but now I knew I wanted to do God's will above all.

Almost immediately the fever and the congestion began to improve, and within two or three days, I was well. God did open doors I could not have pried apart, and I did go to the Adventist Pacific Union College and then to the seminary at Andrews University and studied theology. What I had no way of knowing in advance was this: in the course of delving into my Adventist theology classes, I began to see inconsistencies between Adventism and Scripture. I spent hours studying and asking questions of my professors, but no one could give me satisfactory answers.

As God revealed to the zealous but unbelieving Saul the truth of who Jesus is and the mystery of the new covenant, transforming him into Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, so He revealed to me the errors of what I believed to be truth and showed me how the finished work of Jesus shatters the deception of Adventism.

Today I cannot take the gospel for granted. God the Son became a man and died for my sin. He was buried in a tomb, and he rose to life three days later. Because of Jesus, God has credited me with the personal righteousness of Jesus Christ—it is not righteousness of my own, and it is not related to the law. This righteousness comes from God on the basis of faith in Christ, and because of it, I know Him. My future is secure.

The gospel is good news for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and the promise is for you: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Mt. 5:6).

Like those two dehydrated hay haulers gulped down that pitcherful of cool water, drink deeply of the gospel God offers you. You will be satisfied. †



I was studying Revelation 19 in order to teach it to a group of 5th and 6th graders. As part of my study I decided to watch Gary Inrig's presentation of the same chapter on YouTube. What struck me from his teaching was the meaning behind the word Hallelujah. The word basically means, "Boast in the Lord!" Pastor Gary mentioned that it is a command or imperative sentence such as, "Sit over there." I had always thought Hallelujah was just a word to use in praise—not a command.

Now my study of Revelation 19 took on a whole new meaning. I wondered what followed the four Hallelujah's in that chapter? What were the people boasting about? Let's take a look at what followed the first Hallelujah, "Salvation and glory and power belong to our God" (Rev. 19:1). The verses boast not only in the fact that God has judged and destroyed the great prostitute who represented evil, but also in God's power to judge evil. Wow! Are you boasting in God and His power over sin? Are you boasting in God even amidst the effects of sin? I had to ask myself, "Do I boast in the Lord when hard circumstances come my way as a result of evil?"

The second Hallelujah in Revelation 19 says, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever." (Rev. 19:3) Wow, again! Evil is utterly and completely destroyed forever. It's over. Indeed, that is something to boast about. Only God can destroy evil. Death is a result of sin, and sin is evil in the sight of a Holy God. "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:54b-55). Maybe we should say again, Hallelujah!

Then, in Revelation 19:4, there is the third Hallelujah: "Amen, Hallelujah!" Amen means, "Let it be so." "Amen, Hallelujah", then, would have the connotation, "Let it be so; boast in the Lord!" Yes! Let it be that we boast in the Lord. When was the last time you told someone of God's goodness and power in your life?

The last Hallelujah in Revelation 19 follows a sound like the roar of many waters and peals of thunder. They cry out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns" (Rev. 19:6). The Lord will at last physically reign forever with justice over the whole earth. There will no longer be dictators or kings, but only

HAVE ANY OF YOU LONGED FOR JUSTICE? THE CROSS IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF THE LORD'S JUSTICE AND MERCY. WHEN WE LOOK AT THE CROSS WE NEED TO CALL OUT, "HALLELUJAH"!



© DEPOSITPHOTOS.COM/GORELOV

one King above all kings who will rule. The political climate will be focused on one world government and one ruling King. How do you think it will be to live under the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ? Can you imagine a world ruled with perfect justice and mercy?

Have any of you longed for justice? The cross is a perfect example of the Lord's justice and mercy. When we look at the cross we need to call out, "Hallelujah"!

King David is known for exuberant love for God. He danced before the ark of the covenant as it was brought to Jerusalem. The Psalms talk about David's whole being exclaiming, "Who is like you, O Lord? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them." (Ps. 35:10).

I confess I used to feel jealous of those who would boast in the Lord. They would tell stories of God's work in their life. I would wonder where and if God was working in mine. He didn't seem to respond in ways I wanted Him to. For some reason I had gone brain dead regarding the great gift of salvation and the forgiveness of my sin. I saw only my current circumstances.

Now when life gets difficult I purposely look for what I call God's thumb print, and I can more often see His blessings and mercies in the midst of hard things. I am never alone.

Can you boast in the Lord today? Will you find someone each week to tell of His goodness to you? How will you look for His thumb print amidst difficult circumstances? Shall we all shout like those in Revelation, Hallelujah!? Amen, Hallelujah! †

**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.



# SOCAL FAF CONFERENCE THE BEST YET

The tenth anniversary (eleventh annual) Southern California Former Adventist Fellowship conference, Good News Prophecy, featured world-class teaching, great fellowship, and warm, sunny weather. Attendees from as far away as Ohio, Manitoba, and Alberta and as close as Riverside, California, convened at Cornerstone Fellowship Bible Church in Riverside for a weekend of learning, encouragement, and support. Cornerstone pastor-teacher Milton Vincent and the elders and staff were generous with their help and with their support in hosting this conference as an official Cornerstone event for their congregation.

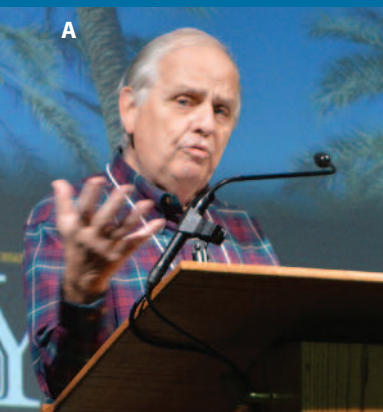
On Friday morning hospitality coordinators Amy and Audrey Herwig had coffee, eggs, fruit, and breads ready for the attendees who began arriving at 8:00, enjoying food and fellowship around tables decorated by Cheryl Granger. At 9:00 AM Richard and Colleen Tinker opened the weekend with reminiscences and pictures from the first conference held in 2006. Milton Vincent welcomed everyone to Cornerstone and started the day with prayer.

Dale Ratzlaff taught twice from Peter's epistles; first "Born Again to a Living Hope" from 1 Peter, and "Everything Pertains to Life and Godliness" from 2 Peter.

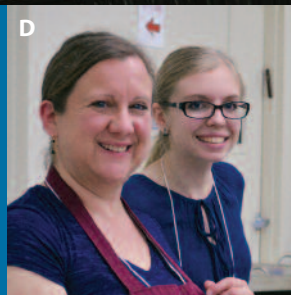
Gary Inrig, the main conference presenter, taught four times from the book of Daniel which Adventism uses to anchor their core heretical doctrine of the investigative judgment. First he gave an overview of the book of Daniel revealing God's sovereignty over the future and His faithfulness. His other talks were entitled, "Daniel and his time: thriving in a hard place", "Daniel and his meaning: curious interpretations", and "Daniel and his Lord: the coming King".

In his "Curious Interpretations" talk, Gary showed from the text that Daniel was not a life-long vegetarian and explained that the story in Daniel 1 does not teach the superiority of a vegetarian diet but rather the miraculous intervention of God when His children refused to defile themselves with the king's paganism. Moreover, he showed in detail how the text explains the identity of the little horn that arises from the goat representing Greece, and he outlined the historic movements of the

Greek generals that took control over the civilized world after the death of Alexander the Great. He told the story of Antiochus Epiphanes and his defilement of the temple in Jerusalem. The consequence of his explanation of the historical movements was to see



A. Gary Inrig taught four sessions on the book of Daniel; B. The worship team, led by Jonathan Winn, included Shearin Matute, Amy Selby, Jeremiah Petsas, Ib Hansen, and Roy Tinker; C. Martin Carey led a breakout session on "openness theology"; D. Hospitality coordinators Amy and Audrey Herwig; E. Shearin Matute sang two original songs as part of her faith story.



PHOTOS BY SHARON CAREY





that the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 is not only unsupported by anything in the text but is a deliberate refusal to acknowledge that history has fulfilled the words of Daniel 8 explicitly.

Well-known apologist and author Ron Rhodes was the featured speaker for the Friday evening public meeting where he gave a talk entitled “Cultic Solutions to the Problem of Evil”. Kelsie Petersen from Alberta, Canada, gave her faith story at the Friday evening meeting, and Paul Carden, executive director for The Centers For Apologetics Research, gave a short talk entitled “Colossian Caution”. The meeting ended with a Q & A session moderated by Richard Tinker and a panel including Paul Carden, Gary Inrig, Dale Ratzlaff, Ron Rhodes, and Colleen Tinker.

Ron Rhodes also spoke twice on Saturday, sharing his own faith story and a talk entitled, “Why We Can Trust the New Testament”, and Colleen Tinker spoke about “Letters to the Editor: what they reveal about the Adventist worldview”. People alternated through three breakout sessions during the two days of the conference: Dale Ratzlaff fielding questions and teaching about the Hebrew Roots movement; Martin Carey explaining how the great controversy contributes to the Adventist belief in the openness of God, and Jim Valentine discussing the effects of perfectionism on three Adventist leaders as revealed in their writings.

On Saturday after lunch Sharon Matute also gave her testimony of coming to faith in Christ after Gary Inrig’s last sermon at the 2015 FAF Conference. The framework of her story was her singing two original songs she composed, telling of coming from darkness into the light of the Lamb who was slain and is alive, and of discovering that the Sabbath was a shadow of the living Lord.

# GOOD NEWS PROPHECY STUDIES FROM DANIEL AND PETER

Roy Tinker gave his faith story on Saturday evening before Gary’s last talk from Daniel which led into our taking the Lord’s Supper together. The evening ended with a time of sharing praise and thanks to God.

Jonathan Winn again led worship for the conference assisted by Roy Tinker. They were joined by vocalists Shearin Matute and Amy Selby, Ib Hansen on the bass, and Jeremiah Petsas, percussion.

On Sunday, conference attendees joined Cornerstone Church where Milton Vincent preached from Genesis 12, and the weekend ended with lunch and great conversations at the Redlands home of Les and Fran Spoelstra.

Various comments from attendees emphasize how wonderful the weekend was:

“It was a peaceful conference; there was no sense of conflict or discomfort. It was a wonderful time.”

“The teaching was first-class.”

“I loved the worship! It was God-honoring and beautiful.”

“I’ve never heard Daniel 8 explained so well. There’s no way to justify the Adventist investigative judgment doctrine!”

“There was opportunity to visit with others who were there.”

“Dale’s breakout on the Hebrew Roots movement was very helpful.”

Make plans now to attend this annual conference next February, 2017! †



**A.** Dale Ratzlaff gave two talks from Peter’s epistles and led a breakout session on the Hebrew Roots movement; **B.** Friday’s Q & A panel consisted of Dale Ratzlaff, Colleen Tinker, Gary Inrig, Paul Carden, and Ron Rhodes with Richard Tinker moderating; **C.** Friday night speakers Ron Rhodes and Paul Carden, friends since working together with Walter Martin; **D.** Kelsie Petersen from Alberta gave her faith story; **E.** Christian apologist Jim Valentine led a breakout session on the effects of perfectionism on three Adventist authors; **F.** Pastor Milton Vincent welcomed the FAF conference to Cornerstone Fellowship Bible Church.

PHOTOS BY SHARON CAREY

# NEW CHURCH BRINGS GOSPEL TO LOMA LINDA

COLLEEN TINKER

**O**n March 26, 2016, Redeemer Fellowship was launched in Loma Linda. For over ten years my husband Richard had been nurturing a hope that one day a Bible-teaching church could be established in this town which has had no Bible churches within its city limits. The hope remained an unrealized dream for many years, but the idea never went away.

In March, 2012, Richard organized a core team that met weekly and began to pray for God to open a door for the simple gospel to go to Loma Linda. Richard led the group in an ongoing study through 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus and began to discuss possible ways to launch this gospel dream. As the months progressed, the team decided that starting a weekly Bible study on a Thursday evening would be a good way to start an outreach to Loma Linda. Thursday was chosen to make it easier for students from the university to attend.

In June, 2013, the team asked Gary Inrig, who had recently stepped down from his senior pastorate at Trinity Church in Redlands, if he would teach the Bible study, and he said yes. Our group secured a contract for a year of Thursdays at the community room in the Loma Linda civic center, and Loma Linda Word Search was born.

Just before the first meeting of Word Search, however, the civic center rescinded its contract saying they would not be able to honor ongoing, regular scheduling of the room. Consequently, Loma Linda Word Search only met in Loma Linda for its inaugural meeting on September 12, 2013.

God provided in a way for a new meeting place that none could have anticipated. Les and Fran Spoelstra, the owners of

Selah Christian Bookstore in Redlands, had some space which they offered to us for hosting Bible studies. Since that second meeting of Word Search, Suite V behind Selah Christian Store has been the home of Word Search, of Women of the Word taught by Elizabeth Inrig, of Men of the Word taught by Gary, and of Former Adventist Fellowship. Over the past two-and-a-half years, Gary has taught through Colossians, Galatians, and Revelation to a group comprised of Christians from a variety of churches and backgrounds who love God's word.

## The dream never waned

Meanwhile, our core team continued to meet. The dream of launching a church never waned; in fact, the desire had intensified. Several obstacles loomed ahead, but the biggest one was a venue. Finding a venue in Loma Linda seemed impossible, and our team began to look for locations in the surrounding communities. After all, Loma Linda Word Search was meeting in Redlands; perhaps a church could serve Loma Linda from a neighboring city as well.

One evening we were driving home from a core team meeting, talking about how to find a proper venue to house a new church. Richard said to me, "We need to remember our original purpose. We need to pray that God will bring us a place in Loma Linda."

I knew Richard was right. As pointless as it looked to me, I began to pray again that God would bring us a place in Loma Linda if having a church there was His will.

In June, 2015, the core team asked Gary if he would consider sharing our dream by being our teaching pastor on Sundays. A







# REDEEMER FELLOWSHIP

couple of weeks later he met with Richard and me and said, "What your core team needs right now is to study what the Bible says about what a church is and how it operates." We asked if he would teach us, and he agreed.

In August we began meeting twice a month for Bible studies about "church". We worked through lessons on the marks of the church; we studied church membership, leadership, elders, deacons, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and discussed practical issues such as children's ministry, small groups, and more.

Then, around the first of the year 2016, Gary and our core team agreed to launch the church on Easter Sunday. He suggested the name Redeemer Fellowship because the name would represent the core values the church would hold: Christ is at the center of all that is done, and it is in Him and around His table that the body would gather for fellowship.

We reviewed our options for a meeting place, and Richard mentioned that a new hotel had just opened for business in Loma Linda: the Holiday Inn Express. Three of us from the core team visited the venue one afternoon and learned that the hotel had a conference room. The hotel management agreed to rent the room for successive Sundays for a church service.

## First service on Easter

On Easter Sunday Redeemer Fellowship met for the first time. Ninety people filled the hotel conference room, rejoicing together as they worshiped the risen Lord and celebrated the Lord's Supper together.

On the second Sunday Gary began his first sermon series, Firm Foundations, in which he is preaching through the core

tenets of Redeemer Fellowship's doctrinal statement. Services also include communion, worship songs, and prayer. Children are accommodated with special sermon note pages and coloring sheets. A time for donuts and coffee after the service provides a relaxed atmosphere to meet new friends.

As the core team meets weekly to evaluate each Sunday service and to plan for the next steps, we continue to marvel at the mysterious ways God works. The Holiday Inn Express did not exist when we began praying for a venue where a new

**"WE NEED TO REMEMBER OUR  
ORIGINAL PURPOSE. WE NEED TO  
PRAY THAT GOD WILL BRING US  
A PLACE IN LOMA LINDA."**

church could meet in Loma Linda where rental space for a church is difficult to find. Yet at exactly the right time, this new hotel was built.

You can read more about Redeemer Fellowship at the website [RedeemerLomaLinda.org](http://RedeemerLomaLinda.org), including links to sermons and the weekly Sunday live streaming event. †





### Thank you for clarity

Wow, *Proclamation!* The last issue was power packed. I started at the back cover and wrote an email to Mr. Lee. As I am reading the other articles, I realize how you all have worked to make this information very clear.

Thank you, Colleen and the artist [Richard] who developed the worldview columns on page 15. It got me to understand the words that are similar but different, and I need to SEE it like this. Excellent magazine for those who really want to understand. I must say, though, it irritates those I know who are Adventist. Thank you for being so willing to work for the truth of the Word.

KISSIMMEE, FL

### My questions were answered

The first time I attended an Adventist worship service, I was already attracted to them. They are very nice, friendly people. I read two books by Ellen G. White, and I was about to join them when I came across Dale Ratzlaff and your magazine.

My questions about the investigative judgement, 1844, and more were all answered by your publications.

May God continue to use you to lead them to the real Savior, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ!

VIA EMAIL

### Offensive tripe

Somehow my grandfather ended up on your mailing list. Since he is dead and has been for years I have no idea how this tran-

spired, but I'm still receiving your magazine. I would appreciate it if you would remove him from your mailing list as I am tired of receiving your tripe of a magazine, which I promptly throw it in the trash where it belongs every time it shows up. I find it highly offensive and would be very thankful if I never had to lay eyes upon it again.

With disdain and great antipathy,  
MINDEN, NV

### Great controversy absurd

I just finished reading your reprint of the great controversy worldview article in the latest edition of *Proclamation!* It is so well written, as is everything in each magazine. I know I read it the first time around, and yet again I was impressed by the methodical uncovering of deception. Each time I am faced with this type of article it becomes more clear how pervasive Adventist false doctrine is, and it

Jesus is just a promoted being. No wonder the salvation message is so messed up!

I am currently participating in a Bible study on the armor of God, and this week's lecture noted that Satan is not God's peer or counterpart; only God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, and miracle-working. Moreover, we're talking about the triune God, not God and His promoted-to-deity Son and a Holy Spirit who doesn't make the cut as my guarantee or seal of God for salvation because He got aced out by the Sabbath! I'm not trying to be sarcastic, but this is an example of how absurd great controversy theology really is when compared to the truth of the gospel. Galatians 1:6-9 spells out in no uncertain terms what kind of gospel this is, or better yet, what it isn't. It is not the Good News; it is not the gospel at all!

Without an accurate understanding of who God is and how

god who must prove himself to his creatures and to Satan in order to be vindicated and keep his crown. Christ has already won the victory, and we are seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph 2:6), so no vote of vindication needed!

Thank you and your staff for delivering well-thought-out articles for our edification. Each writer always encourages personal study and investigation, which I appreciate. May God continue to bless His work through your team.

CRESCENT MILLS, CA

### What would Jesus do?

Jesus spent his life in this world sharing the Truth that would set men free; not looking to tear down others. I think we would do well to follow His example, don't you?

VIA EMAIL

### Eight years out

I thank our Lord Jesus I have been out of the Adventist church for almost eight years now, thanks to your *Proclamation!* magazines and books published, which I keep reading, learning more each time, even when it's regarding something I've read before. Most educational.

I pray for Life Assurance Ministries and all of you and thank you for spreading the good news of the true Bible gospel. May you all receive abundant blessings of health, guidance, and protection.

AGUADILLA, PUERTO RICO

### Painful to lose fiancé

Thank you for the great magazine you sent me. There were so many insightful truths, and I was so blessed by reading all the information.

Please continue to pray for my former fiancé; he did not take kindly to what I had to say to him, especially the articles I gave him which I had downloaded from your website. He basically told me that we had no future together if I did not change my thinking about the Adventists and did not accept their teachings. This I completely refused to do, so as you can imagine, it has been very painful and difficult to bear, but my Lord Jesus is my

AS A FORMER ADVENTIST, I KNOW THE LAW IS ALWAYS PUT ON A PEDESTAL [IN ADVENTISM], BUT TODAY I WAS REMINDED HOW THE DEVIL IS ALSO ELEVATED IN IMPORTANCE WHILE JESUS IS JUST A PROMOTED BEING.

must still be dealt with on a personal level. It isn't that I believe these lies, but it's how I still find myself at times needing to stop, look at a passage of Scripture, and say, "Wait a minute, let me get this straight!" It blows my mind how I could have been so very blind, deceived, and enslaved for so long (I have only myself to blame). Seriously, praise God for his mercy!

Something that really gave me pause about this great controversy false doctrine is the elevation of Satan and the law. As a former Adventist, I know the law is always put on a pedestal, but today I was reminded how the devil is also elevated in importance while

my sin problem is to be dealt with by Jesus, and how I'm to live as a result of my salvation, well, as Paul said in Ephesians 2:12, I'm without God and without hope in the world. I praise God everyday that He took me out of the darkness and brought me into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9), that I have peace with God through the blood of Christ (Col. 1:20), and that He works in me and gives me the desire and power to do the things that please Him (Eph. 2:13).

I pray for all who are in darkness, that they will submit to the truth of the gospel and be saved, be made right with the true God, a sovereign God—not a manmade



life and my everything. I will not give Him up.

My former fiancé is convinced that you and all the former Adventists are anti-Adventists; that is how he and many other practicing Adventists refer to you.

Thank you again for your wonderful work and support.

Jesus bless you always in His love, mercy, grace, and favor.

VIA EMAIL

## Divisiveness is evil

It is a sad day when Christians cannot agree to disagree. Just because we differ or do not believe as others believe does not make one a better person than the other. It is extremely clear that no church has the ticket to heaven. Of all the denominations out there, it is very curious that the Adventists and former Adventists are the most adamant about their so called “revelations”.

It seems that any group of people that feels obligated to promote their positions to cause division are questionably of God’s direction or on His mission. God is love. What better use of our time and energy could there be than to indulge, pursue, and pray for the love that 1 Corinthians 13 defines? We need to promote the love of God and not any doctrine or dogma that is divisive. Divisiveness is evil. We are one body in Christ, and we should

be obsessed about the love of God that binds rather than about belittling anyone that differs from our own experience or understanding. By attempting to get others to believe as we do by coercion or intimidation, we give the message that we are right and the other person/people are wrong. Have we now become judges of others? God is the only Judge who knows the real intent and motive of the heart.

Jesus and His finished work. To add anything to the gospel of Jesus’ life, death, burial, and resurrection is to create “another gospel” (Gal. 1:6-10), and no other “gospel” brings spiritual life.

Fourth, the love to which we are called in the New Testament is the love Jesus commanded: “Love one another, even as I have loved you, that you may also love one another” (Jn. 13:34). Jesus’ love was

group has set up a small set of rules to identify their organization and members, the bylaws or canons of their constitution. These form the basis of the belief which this church promulgates: the 28 Fundamental Beliefs.

The credo does not change. With the passing of time the canons change, however. After all, this is a voluntary organization, and one does not have to take unto oneself the depth of understanding which all these points cover. Most certainly an individual can, but not easily, study his way around any one of these beliefs. If one does study around one, the question is: does one want to opt in or leave?

For most, membership in the Adventist organization is a serious, simple, and direct way to gather together with a common goal: to be ready for the hereafter. In the assembly of others of like mind, there is solace to be found, avoiding or minimizing confusion about minor points that do not contribute to an in-depth relationship with God and his Son...and the Holy Spirit.

What are you at *Proclamation!* doing that will contribute to a vertical relationship with our maker? Look and search deeply within your souls and hearts to see what you are working, thinking, or doing to avoid or to escape responsibility as you attempt to put together a meaningful, concise, undiluted answer. Why is your publication focused on undermining or creating unrest only for our church in particular?

Perhaps a thorough study of Daniel and Revelation would be a good activity for you. It may help you avoid straying far from the gospel.

MELBOURNE, FL

**Editor’s note:** Thank you for your advice that we thoroughly study Daniel and Revelation. Please go to our YouTube channel ([youtube.com/formeradventist](https://www.youtube.com/formeradventist)) and click on “Playlists” and choose “2016 Former Adventist Fellowship Conference” for studies on Daniel, and choose “Loma Linda Word Search” for studies on Revelation.

## PERHAPS A THOROUGH STUDY OF DANIEL AND REVELATION WOULD BE A GOOD ACTIVITY FOR YOU. IT MAY HELP YOU AVOID STRAYING FAR FROM THE GOSPEL.

We should be praying for one another and embracing each other’s differences with love. “Let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone that loves is born of God and knows God” (1 Jn. 4:7).

VIA EMAIL

**Editor’s note:** First, we are not criticizing individuals; as the writer above said, only God can judge another’s heart. We are attempting to show that the system of Adventist theology is counter to the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

Second, Jesus said that He came not to bring peace but a sword that would divide mothers and fathers from their own children (Mt. 10:34-39). He further said if people persecuted Him, they would persecute His followers, too (Jn. 15:20). “Unity” at the cost of exposing false teaching and submerging the biblical gospel is not true unity. Unity is “in the Spirit” and “of the faith” (Eph. 4:4, 13), not setting aside convictions to avoid revealing false doctrines.

Third, not all groups professing to be churches teach that Jesus is the only way to the Father. It is true that no denomination provides “the ticket to heaven”, but the Bible reveals only one way we can be saved: to believe in the Lord

sacrificial, a willingness to die for the salvation of another. Jesus did not preach “tolerance” that insists on ignoring truth for the sake of getting along. He exposed unbelief and called people to repentance.

God’s love is characterized by grace, mercy, truth, and judgment. He asks His followers to teach the truth about Him and His cross so those who are in error may be brought to repentance and life, credited with Jesus’ personal righteousness, and presented faultless to the Father. Because Jesus took God’s judgment on the cross, those who place their faith in Him will not come into judgment (Jn. 5:24).

## Undermining our church

I see you print just anything that comes along. Try this on your presses. It is not my intention to be crass or to castigate, so here is the query. The Adventists I know believe in a Designer, Creator, Redeemer, and Savior. This higher power has provided some unswerving rules to attend to if a human wants his blessings—the Ten Commandments, the constitution or credo. A small segment of society, 24,000,000 persons, has banded together to embrace the biblical teachings and dogma they represent as a religion. This particular

## 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

**Overly Calvinistic tone**

Thank you for sending your magazine. I have learned much about Adventism, and I appreciate your articles that define their beliefs and contrast them with the Bible, the only source and final authority on truth.

I have become increasingly concerned, however, with the unabashed Calvinism in the various articles I have been reading. There are multitudes of Bible-believing and born-again Christians who uphold the Arminian view on free will. I am not including Adventists, obviously.

I shouldn't wonder at your positions, given the religious system you came from. I can see where swinging to the polar opposite position on grace and sovereignty may have made sense to you. But there are true Christians who would definitely disagree with you on the fundamentals of the will.

I'm just sorry that I can't recommend your magazine to others due to its overly Calvinistic tone. I guess this is a "great controversy" between us. I do enjoy learning about Adventism and how different it is from biblical Christianity. Your materials would be great to pass along if they took a more neutral position on matters that divide evangelicals.

MILLERBURG, OH

**Editor's response:** Thank you for expressing your concerns about this issue. Interestingly, we receive criticism from both ends of the spectrum; some say we are too Calvinistic, and some say we are too Arminian. In fact, we at *Proclamation!* do not identify ourselves as

either Calvinists or Arminians. Our commitment is to teach what the Bible states and to resist the natural tendency to make a formula that eliminates the tension of apparent contradiction in Scripture.

For example, Scripture states that we are born dead, by nature objects of wrath (Eph. 2:1-3). It further states that not even one person is righteous; none understands or seeks God; all are naturally useless; none does good, and all are full of cursing and bitterness with no fear of God (Rom. 3:10-

born with a spark of "life" or "light" that can decide to seek God.

At the same time, Scripture is clear that we make decisions that have eternal consequences, and we are commanded to believe. Hebrews 4:7-11 quotes David saying, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts," and then says, "Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience."

Paul tells us that "the living God" is "the Savior of all men, es-

17:8 about those who are written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world.

What are we to do with these apparently conflicting passages? Jesus stated our one proper response: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (Jn. 6:29).

There is a tension in Scripture that God does not explain to our satisfaction. He is sovereign with absolute foreknowledge. Our inability to understand how He can be utterly sovereign over every detail of creation and human life only confirms that we are creatures. Moreover, God knows how to draw us out of our natural darkness and death and make the gospel known. His foreknowledge does not negate His command that we believe, nor does it remove His command that believers are to preach the gospel and make disciples.

If we remove the tension between God's sovereignty and our human will, we lose the cross. God sent His Son to bear and to die for sins He did not commit so rebellious creatures could be reconciled to Him. Furthermore, Jesus cried to the Father to save Him from death, and although He was a Son, he had to learn obedience through what He suffered (Heb. 5:7-8). He had never had a disagreement with His Father before, but He obeyed Him even when His humanity screamed for relief.

Because Adventism makes libertarian free will the center of its plan of salvation, the discovery that God is utterly sovereign completely changes one's view of reality. It is necessary for those who have been Adventist to understand that God and His glory, not they as His creatures, are the ultimate "value" in the universe. We are here for God's glory; He is not there for ours.

We do not hold to any "ism" to explain how God saves us; we hold the tension of Scripture gratefully knowing that God is utterly unlike us and is beyond our comprehension, yet He loves us and gave Himself in the person of His Son so we can be reconciled with Him when we place our trust and faith in the finished work of His Son.

## IF WE REMOVE THE TENSION BETWEEN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND OUR HUMAN WILL, WE LOSE THE CROSS.

18). In fact, we must be rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred out of it into the kingdom of the beloved Son (Col. 1:13). We were all condemned and dead in Adam; only in receiving "the abundance of grace" and "the gift of righteousness" are we brought to life (Rom. 5:17-18).

Moreover, Jesus was clear that our wills are not able to seek and find Him without outside intervention. He said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (Jn. 6:44), and "No one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father" (Jn. 6:65).

These are propositional statements we must accept as facts if we believe the Bible is the inerrant word of God. Scripture does not allow us room to argue that we are

pecially of believers" (1 Tim. 4:10). Peter says that the Lord "is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

Because we are finite, we have a tendency to understand God from our perspective instead of allowing God to reveal Himself as He is—whether or not we can explain it. For example, Romans 8:29-30 clearly states that God foreknew His own, and He predestined, called, justified, and glorified (already past tense) them. Ephesians 1:3-12 addresses those who are "in Christ", and Paul says God "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." He predestined us to adoption for the glory of His grace, and in Him we have redemption and forgiveness. This passage echoes John's statements in Revelation 13:8 and

## SUMMER HELP NEEDED

Thank you for your gifts during 2015. We were once again able to close the year with all bills paid! We praise God for you.

The work here at Life Assurance Ministries continues to expand. More and more people are asking to receive *Proclamation!* magazine mailed to them, and the number of viewers on our YouTube channel keeps growing.

As we approach the summer months, please don't forget to continue your support even when you are away on vacation. You may request your bank to automatically mail a check each month, or you may ask us to charge your credit card each month for your specified amount.

If you live in the Texas hill country between Austin and San Antonio, please come and see us at the Discovering Grace conference in New Braunfels next October.

Thanks again for your consistent giving.



**Family fracturing**

Thanks much for your website and ministry!

I am currently in a difficult situation with my wife who has recently chosen to become re-baptized into the Adventist church here in Illinois. We were both non-denominational when we were married, and faith was a key part of our bond; now it is causing only fighting between us as my wife is seeking to have our two daughters, nine and 13, become Adventist. She has them going to an Adventist school against my wishes and now is having my oldest daughter study Adventist beliefs with another girl.

Our marriage is on the rocks, and I feel that many in the local Adventist church feel that their

faith is more important than our marriage. I have pretty much given up on my wife changing her views and am trying to pray for her, but I still feel that having my children pressured into this church is very troubling...I do like the serious consideration of faith in this school, but I am troubled that Adventist principles are being taught as the undisputed truth. I feel that I need to be proactive about giving another opinion without trying to divide my wife and the children. It is a pretty difficult situation...prayers would be appreciated!

VIA EMAIL

**Blind and dumb**

This last issue about the great controversy—you amaze me.

You've got to be as blind as a bat and dumb as a fence post to not know it is a reality. Your religion is very little more than a religion of criticism—what Jesus would refer to as "White Washed Sepulchers".

It is sad that because of your unfortunate experience in Adventism you feel that you have to drag others into your abyss. I would just hope and pray that before it is too late you and your followers will truly have your eyes opened to truth.

MONTROSE, COLORADO

**Can a believer fall away?**

Thank you again for sending me the excellent publication, *Proclamation!* The article by Pastor Ratzlaff on "Can A Believer Fall Away?" (Winter, 2015), was to the

point and cleared up many questions for me. I know the age-old question has been, "Can a believer fall away?" The doctrine of once saved, always saved conflicts with the question of whether one can fall into complete apostasy. I understand that "saving faith is a real thing that changes the life." Amen and praise the Lord. I have never heard the parable of the sower used to teach this principle before.

AN INMATE IN A STATE PRISON

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:

**Editor, *Proclamation!* Magazine**  
P.O. Box 7776  
Redlands, CA 92375

OR EMAIL EDITOR:

**proclamation@gmail.com**

# DISCOVERING GRACE THE TREASURE OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH

ONE WEEK CONFERENCE OF TEACHING AND TESTIMONIES CELEBRATING THE DISCOVERY OF GRACE



**Dr. Dave Anderson**  
Grace School of Theology



**Dale Ratzlaff**  
Life Assurance Ministries



**Adam's Road in concert**



**Michael and Lynn Wilder**  
Ex-Mormon Christians United for Jesus



**Dr. Charlie Bing**  
GraceLife Ministries

**OCTOBER 16–23, 2016 • NEW BRAUNFELS BIBLE CHURCH • 652 LOOP 337, NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS**

## THE LIFE A F T E R WITH CHRIS LEE

**J**aw and hands clenched, knuckles white, I fought the sporadic gusts of wind that threatened to wrest the wheel from my control. With each renewed gale the Explorer threatened to skate off the corridor of ice that now constituted I-29. Every quarter mile—or less—we saw yet another car, truck, or semi that had careened into one of the ditches on either side of the interstate. Others were pulled off, idling on the shoulder.

I continued on, determined to reach home after a long winter weekend in Minnesota. Despite the relative chill of the vehicle's cabin, I felt a thin sheen of sweat on my brow as I glanced over at my wife who was similarly on edge and frequently checking on our frightened children in the back seat. One false move and we would join the other travelers, waiting out the blizzard in a ditch.

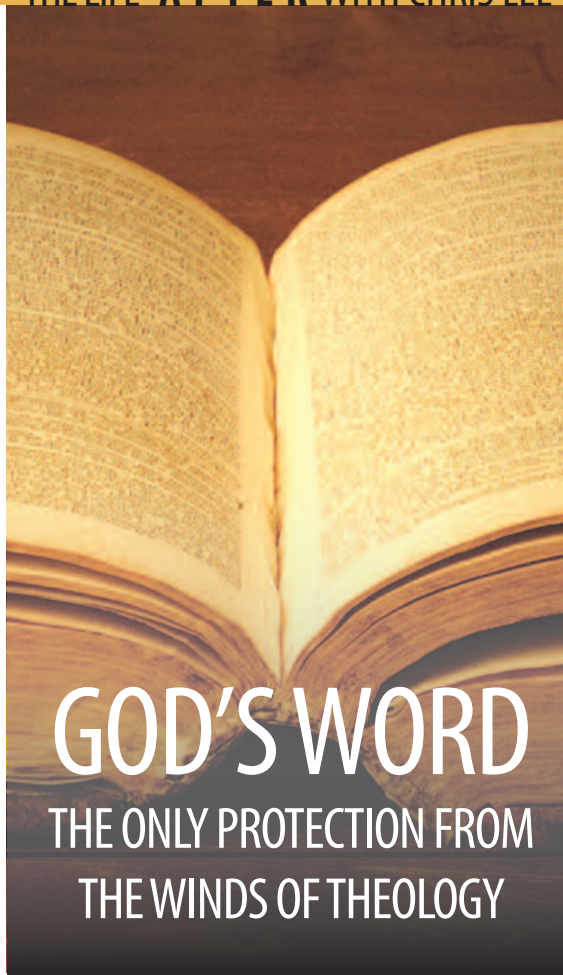
Perhaps you have had a similar driving experience, perhaps not; but if you are a fellow traveler through the life after Adventism, then you've almost certainly had a parallel journey. In Adventism you have "the Truth" on nearly every topic imaginable, and you have the assurance of being in God's true remnant church. Things aren't nearly that simple after Adventism, though. In fact, there's a good chance that you, like me, have spent some time lurching back and forth between one ditch or another.

When I first came out of Adventism, I found myself flirting with some of the more fringe elements at the edges of the charismatic movement. Over-steering back from the brink of that ditch, I went in the opposite direction and drove straight

down into a liberalized version of the seeker-sensitive movement. I spun my tires in that ditch for quite a while before God pulled me and my family out and got us back on the road of our spiritual journey.



**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](mailto:ambulator@gmail.com).



So how did God get us back on track and where He wanted us? The answer is through a focus on the Word. Early in my journey, God had introduced me to the line-by-line exegetical teaching of a pastor named Bryan Clark who has a gift for making the Scripture come alive while teaching through whole books of the Bible. I continued to listen to Bryan's sermons on-line while attending church elsewhere. Hearing the Bible taught like that was the equivalent of refocusing on the road and allowing the ditches to fade into peripheral vision.

At the risk of pushing the analogy too far, the Bible paints the solid white lines at the edge of the highway. It tells us what is in bounds, what is out of bounds, and where the ditches are. It also highlights the center line, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which keeps us focused on moving forward in the right direction. Having these guides, we can let off the gas, relax our

grasp, and enjoy the ride, secure in the knowledge that God is in control.

I see so many former Adventists who, like me, seem to go from one questionable belief system to another, tossed about by the winds of theology. There is really only one remedy: getting deeply immersed in the Word while being plugged into a healthy, well-balanced community of believers. We need the Word and, as we recover from Adventism, we need the guidance the Holy Spirit provides through the church so that we can see and understand the Word in the way He intended. I eventually found that Word-centered community in my home church, and I pray that you will too. It's time to start living the life after! †