

Are humans more than living bodies? COLLEEN TINKER

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FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS • INQUIRING ADVENTISTS • SABBATARIANS • CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

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DALE RATZLAFF

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MICHAEL HICKS



On the death of my dad COLLEEN TINKER

On Monday morning, October 15, 2001, the phone rang. Exhausted from days of anxiety and sadness and nights of staying late at the hospital, I answered and heard the words with a numbing finality: my father had died just minutes before.

Richard and I met my mother at his room, and we sat mostly in silence while we waited for the undertaker to arrive. This was the first death we had personally experienced since leaving

Adventism about three years before.

"I know he's with the Lord," my mother finally spoke, "but it's hard actually to believe it."

"I know," I answered. "It's amazing how a lifetime of

being programmed to believe 'soul sleep' was truth makes me question what I know the Bible really says."

I sat with my internal struggle, seeing the wasted frame that clearly no longer housed my father, praying that God would ground me in truth and reality at that moment.

During the preceding years, God had opened my heart and mind to the Scriptures that taught to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6; Philippians 1:22-23). These texts had filled me with amazement and surprising joy.

As an Adventist I had repeatedly heard that believing in soul sleep was a great comfort; we were protected from believing in spiritualism because we knew the dead were dead, and we knew we weren't making them sad with our continuing sinning and heartaches because nothing of them remained except in the memory of God from whence He would bring them back into existence at the resurrection.

Even so I had never fully reconciled myself to the claim that soul sleep was a comfort; sometimes I even had vagrant thoughts about wishing it could be true that the dead were with Jesus instead of being nowhere while their bodies turned to dust. I would quickly discipline such thoughts, not wanting to entertain Satan's great deception in my mind.

And now I sat in the presence of my father's lifeless body. I knew he was not there. I knew also that he had trusted Jesus; he had embraced the gospel and followed Him out of over 70 years of loyal habit and tradition, leaving Adventism and claiming his new identity as a "regular" Christian just a few years before.

Quite unexpectedly I found myself in an internal crisis. At the moment of my first close encounter with the death of a loved one, my mind raised all my old indoctrination from its not-too-dusty archive. I had no proof that my father's essence was consciously with the Lord. What sort of self-protecting delusion was I pursuing, attempting to believe some sort of life continued after the last breath?

As I prayed silently and faced the unfamiliar void of my dad's departure, I realized no proof would be given to me except the proof of God's own word. Either I would fall back into the familiar, rational view that death was the end of life, that humans, like animals, turned to dust when the breath left their bodies, or I would by faith accept the plain words of Scripture and believe that Jesus broke the power of death and gave my father eternal life (John 5:24), and that now my dad was absent from his body and present with the Lord.

I had no physical proof for either belief. I either had to accept by faith the teaching of the Adventist church and its prophetess, Ellen White, or I had to accept by faith the clear teaching of God's own word. I chose to believe God.

In this issue Chris Lee presents a Bible study on the state of the dead. Dale Ratzlaff shares an exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:1-9, and Chris Badenhorst lets us read a letter he wrote to a friend explaining how the new birth is impossible unless we have spirits that are not mere breath. I discuss why understanding that "spirit" is not breath is essential for knowing who Jesus is and what it means to be in His image. Phil Harris shares his faith story, and Michael Hicks tells of his unconditional surrender.

Since my father's death God has continued to reveal to me the truth that nothing, "neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future... will be able to separate [me] from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). We pray you, too, will come to know this reality. †

As I prayed silently and faced the unfamiliar void of my dad's departure, I realized no proof would be given to me except the proof of God's own word.

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New covenant giving



Question: Should we adhere to the 10% tithing system, or are we free to give whatever we can to whoever is doing the Lord's work? Can our giving go to homeless programs, children's orphanages, *Proclamation!*, or other ministries or charities?

Answer: I do not believe the New Testament (NT) teaches tithing *per se*. However, it does teach that Christians are to be liberal givers, and it gives a number of principles that are to guide us in our giving. Following are twelve New Testament principles that I have found. What follows are only summaries of this study. The full text of the Bible quotes with considerable helpful commentary may be found at: www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.com/giving. I strongly encourage you to read the full study as it will clarify in greater detail some of the issues raised by the points below.

- **We are to give to support the ministry of the local church we attend.** In fact, pastors who are gifted at preaching and teaching by carefully exegeting the word of God should be paid well. Notice Paul's instruction to Timothy, "The laborer is worthy of his wages" (1 Timothy 5:17, 18).

- **The NT supports giving to gospel causes separate from one's local church.** Paul commended the church at Philippi for supporting his ministry in other cities (Philippians 4:16–18).

- **The NT supports giving to help other Christians in need.** "They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do" (Galatians 2:9, 10).

- **The NT teaches that money should be handled with circumspect integrity.** "When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me" (1 Corinthians 16:1–4; 2 See also Corinthians 8:19–24).

- **The NT supports the principle of blessing proportional to our giving** (2 Corinthians 9:6–9). One must be very careful applying this principle. I believe this principle is true, and I have personally seen God fulfill this promise a number of times. However, some TV evangelists, as well as some pastors, have abused this principle in fund raising techniques and used it as an enticing yet legalistic lever to put emotional pressure on others to give toward their causes. I personally do not believe this principle should be used in this way. We must remember that blessings do not always come in like kind. If a person is persuaded by someone to

give money for the express purpose of getting more money back, that person may well be disappointed if he is looking only for the monetary blessing. The blessing from giving may come in many different forms according to God's mercy, grace, and will.

- **The NT supports the principle of proportional giving** (2 Corinthians 8:11–15; Luke 21:1–4). Many Christians follow the Old Testament practice of tithing and have been blessed by doing so. One can support this principle in that Abraham gave one tenth of the spoils from the war with the local kings to Melchizedek king of Salem¹ and the writer of Hebrews mentions this event.² The context of Hebrews, however, is not specifically enforcing the principle of tithing; rather he is showing the superiority of Christ's high priestly ministry over the Levitical priesthood.

- **The NT supports the principles of voluntary giving** (2 Corinthians 9:7).

- **The NT supports the principle of secret giving** (Matthew 6:4).

- **The NT teaches that givers should first give themselves to the Lord** (2 Corinthians 8:1–5).

- **The NT teaches that we cannot purchase God's blessings with money** (Acts 8:13, 18–23).

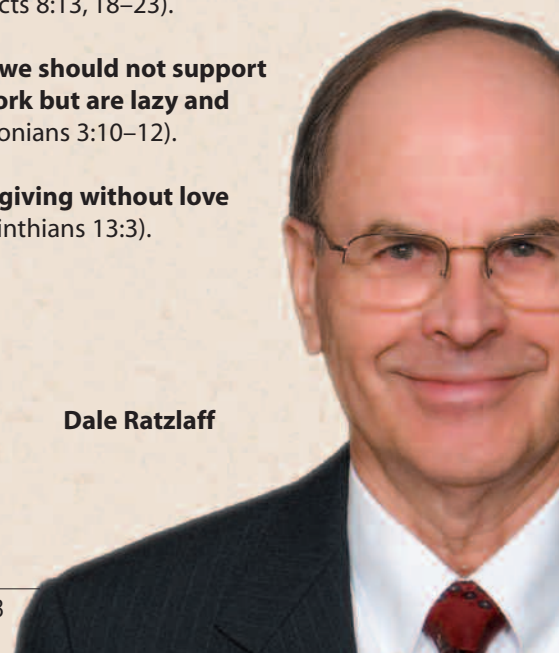
- **The NT teaches that we should not support those who are able to work but are lazy and refuse to work** (2 Thessalonians 3:10–12).

- **The NT teaches that giving without love profits us nothing** (1 Corinthians 13:3).

Endnotes

1. Genesis 14:20
2. Hebrews 7:4

Dale Ratzlaff



Jesus is our Scapegoat and the one to whom we confess our sins. To suggest that anyone else carries responsibility for our sins in any way is heresy.

I am in the arms of Jesus

PHILLIP E. HARRIS, JR.

I grew up in the fourth generation of a family of Adventists. Dad's grandfather was an Adventist lay preacher, and his own parents were medical missionaries who were trained and married at the St Helena Sanitarium. From there they were sent to China by Ellen G. White herself. Mother's grandmother was a nurse at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, trained by Dr. Kellogg's staff. I remember my dad's parents living near Ellen G. White's home at Elmshaven, California, before they moved up the hill to Angwin near Pacific Union College. We lived at Angwin for over two years so dad could be near granddad during his declining years. I spent my first, third, eighth and ninth grades in Adventist schools. Even though I am no longer an Adventist, my sense of "family" ties me to these people whom I will always love.

When I was six and my brother was four, our grandmother asked us to invite Jesus into our hearts as our Savior. We eagerly did so. Shortly after that my brother Shermmy died of leukemia, and I was assured that he was in heaven and safe in the arms of Jesus. As I grew older I was taught that I had to keep the Sabbath, avoid certain foods, confess all my sins, join the "true church" by being baptized into it, become perfect, and then maybe I would learn that I was saved when I stood before Jesus at the great white throne judgment. When I was sixteen a visiting preacher told us that at least 90% of us were going to hell.¹ At that point I saw no reason to continue the struggle and left the church. If my salvation depended on my ability to do the right works, I was obviously lost anyway.

God's faithfulness

When I was in the third grade at the Westlake Adventist School, some of us were playing a game of "kick the can" during recess one day when one of the other boys threw a section of

roofing shingle at me. It hit me in the face resulting in cuts on both sides of my left eye. They required twenty-one stitches—but my eye was not harmed. Later, this intervention became God's testimony to me that He had always been with me.

As I grew into my teen years, my struggle to overcome sin led to a very poor self-image. Other people could do things and live happy lives—but not me, because I was different. After high school I went directly into the Marine Corps; the Lord used this stage of my life to change how I saw myself. When I passed the apprentice test at the shipyard, it was a revelation to discover who I really was and what I could do.

At Mare Island, while inside a submarine missile tube I was building, a welder brought out his pocket New Testament in response to my bragging about what a wild weekend I had just had. For the next two years that man prayed for me, and he became my closest friend. He helped me meet and court my future wife, and his wife led my wife to the Lord.

Because of my friend I began reading my Bible. After I read Romans 8:31-36 over and over, the voice of the Holy Spirit revealed not only that I had been saved with my brother all those years ago when I accepted Jesus but also that He had never and would never abandon me. This new-found knowledge was life-changing.

By then I was married and we were expecting our first child. We had been fellowshipping with a small group of Christians who were meeting in a local mortuary in the center of a cemetery. The songs, the prayer, the love they expressed—and above all, the intense Bible study were almost overwhelming. This worship experience introduced a major conflict in my mind because I still believed that Adventists were the only true "remnant" church. We visited the Adventist church and found it very deadening. How could this be? At this point I decided that I had to resolve my conflict by putting Seventh-day Adventist doctrine to the test of Scripture and letting the Holy Spirit guide me to where the truth of the matter lay.

Having been well-trained in Adventist theology, I believed that the investigative judgment was their unique, core doctrine that I needed to test. My study led me to Leviticus 16. In verse



My mother holding me and my brother Shermmy, on the left.

When I finally understood how Ellen White's teaching had affected me and realized that she was the foundation behind much of my thinking, I beat on the walls of the little trailer where I was living and burst into tears.

five I learned that the two goats—the sacrifice and the scapegoat—were a single sin offering because the sacrifice provided the means for God's atonement, and the scapegoat carrying away our sins provided the sacrifice's effect. This fact implies that both goats represented Christ on the cross. In verse twenty-one, Israel's sins were confessed over the scapegoat. The claim that the scapegoat represented Satan because the "goat of departure" is "evil" or "cursed" is not confirmed in the Bible. Jesus hung on the cross, and Deuteronomy 21:23 teaches us that the cross was a curse. Galatians 3:13 further teaches that Jesus became a curse for us. Clearly, Jesus is our Scapegoat and the one to whom we confess our sins. To suggest that anyone else carries responsibility for our sins in any way is heresy.

According to Scripture, if what a prophet teaches is wrong, that person is a fraud, and his or her words are to be ignored because they are not from God. This fact put Ellen White, who taught that the scapegoat represented Satan, in a bad light. For about five more years I continued my research, and I intellectually rejected the beliefs of Adventism. What was harder for me, however, was to surrender fully to the control of the Holy Spirit and let Him make changes in me.

Surrender

By 1984 I had again turned to worldly living, and my wife and I were separated. I had to do some deep soul-searching about what I had done with my life and where I was headed. When I finally understood how Ellen White's teaching had affected me and realized that she was the foundation behind much of my thinking, I beat on the walls of the little trailer where I was living and burst into tears. Simultaneously I saw that my own love of myself was what had kept me from fully surrendering to the lordship of Jesus. That night I released my desires and goals to Him.

The next day when I came home from work there was a phone call for me. My wife wanted to put our lives back together. Needless to say, I was overcome and cried some more.

Since that time, my life has no longer been about me. Rather, it is all about Jesus.

God demonstrated his care immediately. During our separation my wife and I had lost our home. When we reunited, one Christian couple offered us land next to where I was already living. Within another couple of days, another Christian couple insisted that we take their mobile home because they had to get it off their property. God didn't stop there, however. Even more amazing than the land and the home is the fact that we have now been totally debt free for over ten years, and life has been a series of miracles that demonstrate how God works when he is in control.

Eventually I left the shipyard where I had worked for years and asked the Lord for a job with "a short commute." He answered. It now takes me all of six minutes to drive to work. Sometime after beginning my new job, I was driving the company truck on a Friday night during heavy commute traffic across the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in a torrential rainstorm. I was feeling sorry for myself, wondering if God really was doing anything in my life. Right at that moment the truck lost all power. I was terrified and completely blinded by the rain. The truck coasted up, over the center of the bridge, and to the off ramp without hitting anything. I steered to the shoulder and stopped. A jeep pulled up in front of me, and the driver offered to tow me to the nearest weigh station. As soon as we were there, another car pulled up beside me with a sign on the side that said "Auto Angel." This driver offered a cell phone, and I called my boss and told him what had happened. The lesson I learned was simple but profound: look out to be astounded when God moves in your life.

Recently the Lord used the experience of my having two total knee replacement surgeries to deal with another level of my pride where I have protected my tendency to be a recluse. During the first operation, I stopped breathing on the operating table. The next day a blood clot went to my lungs, and I nearly died again. Being totally dependent for my every need—indeed, for my very life—was humbling and led me to the understanding that I need to have a heart for others and also allow myself to be vulnerable enough to share my life with them.

Shortly before he went to be with Jesus, my Bible study and teaching partner, who was suffering from terminal cancer, took me to the hospital for my second surgery. He and his wife spent most of the day there, and I will never forget the smiles reflecting the love of Jesus on their faces when I came out of recovery.

When I finally saw how Adventism had shaped my worldview, God also revealed to me my deep self-centeredness. As I released both to Him, I was finally free to experience His faithfulness more fully. Now I realize I am part of a family that is far larger than merely my wife, kids, aunts, and uncles; I am part of God's family. The central focus of my life is the Lord Jesus Christ, His saving grace and His complete atonement for my sin.

I submit my life to Him. †

Endnote

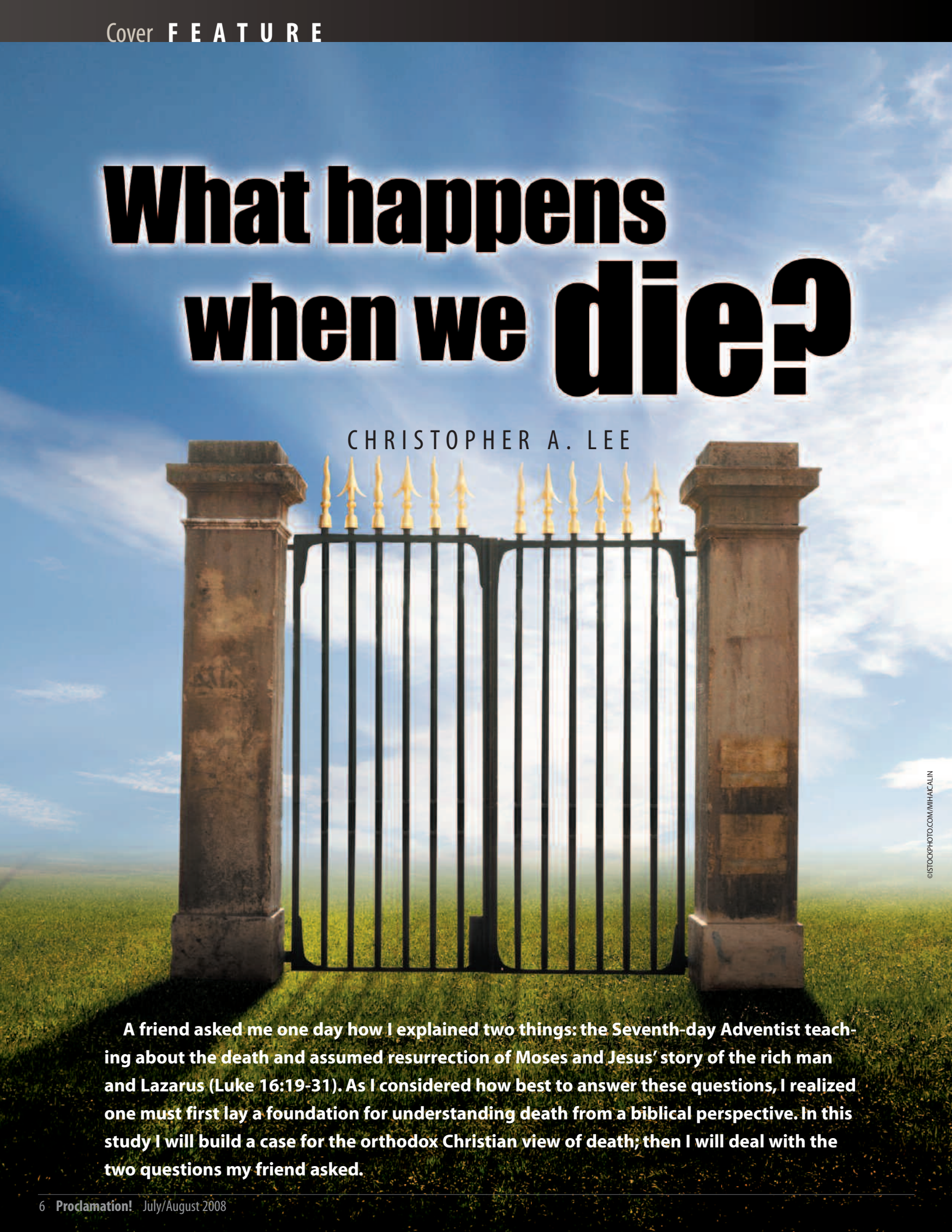
1. Ellen White wrote that "not one in twenty whose names are registered upon the church books are prepared to close their earthly history..." (GCD.1893-02-04.009)

Phil Harris and his wife Janeane have been married 42 years and have three children and six grandchildren. After 25 years of ship fitting, Phil changed careers and now works as a maintenance mechanic at a local food processing plant. He and Janeane live quietly on two-and-a-half wooded acres on Puget Sound, Washington, where they both teach Bible study classes. Faith in Jesus and their family and friends are the focal points of their lives.



What happens when we die?

CHRISTOPHER A. LEE



A friend asked me one day how I explained two things: the Seventh-day Adventist teaching about the death and assumed resurrection of Moses and Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). As I considered how best to answer these questions, I realized one must first lay a foundation for understanding death from a biblical perspective. In this study I will build a case for the orthodox Christian view of death; then I will deal with the two questions my friend asked.

Breath or being?

The word translated “spirit” in English is the Greek word *pneuma* in the New Testament and the Hebrew word *ruach* in the Old Testament. Most of us grew up being told that these words usually mean “breath” when used in the Bible. These Greek and Hebrew words certainly can mean “breath” or “wind” in the right context, but that’s not how they are usually used in the Bible.

In proper biblical hermeneutics, context always determines the meaning of a word.

According to Zodhiates’ well-respected Greek lexicon *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, when “spirit” [*pneuma/ruach*] is used in the Bible, it usually has one of the following three meanings:

1. Man’s immaterial nature which enables him to communicate with God, who is also spirit.
2. An incorporeal, immaterial being, such as an angel.
3. The Holy Spirit.

Try an experiment to test the context of “spirit.” Read the following verses and substitute the word “breath” every time you see the underlined words “spirit” or “Spirit”:

Proverbs 20:27 – The spirit [*ruach*] of man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the innermost parts of his being.

Romans 8:15-16 – For you have not received a spirit [*pneuma*] of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit [*pneuma*] of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit [*pneuma*] Himself testifies with our spirit [*pneuma*] that we are children of God.

Hebrews 12:9 – Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits [*pneuma*], and live?

John 3:5-7 – Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit [*pneuma*] he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit [*pneuma*] is spirit [*pneuma*]. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

Simply put, “spirit” does not usually mean “breath” as used in the Bible. The suggestion that it does is a falsehood that not only violates context, but it also violates at least three essential Christian doctrines:

1. The new birth. I listed John 3:5-7 last in the above list in order to highlight its essential message of the Gospel. If we boiled the Bible down to its most basic essence, it is this: man sinned and experienced spiritual death. Since then we have all been born dead in our sins, separated from God, and in need of a Savior. Jesus paid the price for our sin and offers us life and relationship with God. When we come to faith, our dead spirit is regenerated and is now able to commune with God’s Spirit. Our dead spirits are born again of the Spirit, and we have eternal life as a present possession. The new birth is not merely

metaphor; it is the essence of salvation and is central to the Gospel message. If we interpret our spirits to be mere “breath,” we have destroyed the reality of a new birth and spiritual life. To say that our “breath” is born again is contrary to what the Bible teaches and is destructive to our understanding of what it means to be saved.

2. God’s being. Insisting that *pneuma/ruach* mean “breath” in the Bible violates the Christian concept of God’s being. God is pure spirit—an incorporeal, immaterial being. That’s what

If we interpret our spirits to be mere “breath,” we have destroyed the reality of a new birth and spiritual life. To say that our “breath” is born again is contrary to what the Bible teaches and is destructive to our understanding of what it means to be saved.

Jesus says in John 4:24: “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” In fact, Jesus is reinforcing the same teaching he delivered to Nicodemus in chapter 3. He is implying that because God is spirit, those who worship him must have a spirit that is alive to do so. Once again, if you insert “breath” into what Jesus is saying, His words become complete nonsense.

3. The identity of the Holy Spirit. Insisting that *pneuma/ruach* mean “breath” in the Bible infringes upon the personhood of the Holy Spirit. “Holy Spirit” is *hagios pneuma* in the Greek. So if we insist that *pneuma* must mean “breath” we end up with the “Holy Breath.” This interpretation would be closer to the Jehovah’s Witness’ idea that the Holy Spirit is merely a force than the Biblical teaching that He is a person.

What happens when we die?

The next logical question is, “If our spirit is not merely our breath, what happens to the body and the spirit when we die?”

The condition of the body at death is not the same as the condition of the spirit. The Bible often refers to death by the euphemism “sleep.” However, that euphemism is only applied to the body, never to the spirit. “Sleep” describes the appearance of the body at death, but not the state of the spirit. “Sleep” further promises that the body will rise again.

According to Scripture, at death the spirit departs the body and returns to God where it is consciously with the Lord. At the second coming God will bring those spirits of the departed saints with Him when He comes and raise up for them imperishable bodies in the resurrection.

Look at the following texts:

At death the spirit departs the body.

Luke 8:53-55 – And they began laughing at Him, knowing that she had died. He, however, took her by the hand and called, saying, “Child, arise!” And *her spirit returned*, and she got up immediately; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat.

James 2:26 – For just as the body *without the spirit* is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

The absence of the spirit is the definition of death.

The spirit returns to God.

Ecclesiastes 12:5-7 – Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Notice that this text speaks of man, not breath, going to “his eternal home.”

Acts 7:59-60 – They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell asleep.

Again, it makes little or no sense to insert “breath” here.

God would not use an example that is a satanic lie to teach something that is true. However much of this passage might be symbolic, it is clear that the Bible depicts departed saints as being consciously in the presence of the Lord.

Stephen is asking Jesus to receive that immaterial part of him that departs the body when the body sleeps in death.

The spirit is consciously with the Lord.

Revelation 6:9-11 – When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar *the souls of those who had been slain* because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and *they cried out* with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

Even if there are symbolic elements in this passage, God would not use an example that is a satanic lie to teach some-

thing that is true. However much of this passage might be symbolic, it is clear that the Bible depicts departed saints as being consciously in the presence of the Lord.

At the second coming God will bring those departed saints with Him when He comes.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 – But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so *God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.*

I have been to Adventist funerals where verses 13 and 15 are read, but verse 14 is skipped over as if it did not exist. It's inconvenient to Adventist theology to have the departed saints coming with Jesus when He comes.

He will then raise up for them imperishable bodies in the resurrection.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-16 – For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and *the dead in Christ will rise first.*

1 Corinthians 15:52 – ...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and *the dead will be raised imperishable*, and we will be changed.

All of the texts above support the idea that the human spirit is other than breath and survives death. Now we will examine two of the strongest New Testament didactic (teaching) passages dealing with death.

Absent from the body; present with the Lord

We will begin by examining 2 Corinthians 5:1-9.

2 Corinthians 5:1 – For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Paul here uses the symbolism of a tent to represent our current perishable bodies. A tent is not a permanent dwelling. It's easily torn down, just like these bodies. But the good news is that we can look forward to having, at the resurrection, an imperishable body from Heaven that is permanent and will never be torn down.

2 Corinthians 5:2-4 – For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.

Those who have departed are said to be “unclothed.” The idea that we can be “unclothed” strongly suggests that there is

something real there to unclot, namely our spirit. To be spirit without body is not a natural state. The Christian worldview is not platonic, but very physical. What we look forward to is the final state when we will again be clothed—this time with our imperishable eternal bodies.

2 Corinthians 5:5-9 – Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be *absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord*. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

This passage is the source of the oft-repeated Christian refrain, “Absent from the body, present with Lord.” The plain meaning of the text is clear: when we are in these bodies, we are absent from the Lord. When we are absent from these bodies, we are at home with the Lord. If we don’t have spirits, but only breath as Adventist doctrine teaches, how could we possibly be absent from our body and at home with the Lord? The only way Paul’s thought makes any sense at all is if we have a real spirit that can be absent from the body and be with Christ awaiting the resurrection.

Notice also two other very important things:

1. Paul says he would actually “prefer...to be absent from the body”! This statement can only make sense if he is consciously with Christ. Paul can’t possibly be saying he would prefer to be non-existent or unconscious. Further, Paul is not just looking forward to the second coming and the resurrection because he specifically speaks about a time when he is absent from the body and at home with the Lord. This presence with the Lord can’t refer to the resurrection because Paul states he is absent from the body. Paul is describing a conscious existence, absent from the body but present with the Lord, which he sees as preferable.

2. Paul indicates that it is possible to be pleasing (the Greek word is present tense and active voice) to the Lord when in the body or absent from the body. The only way we could actively be pleasing to the Lord when absent from the body is if we are conscious and active in some way. To say that Paul is talking about a non-existent or unconscious state makes his teaching nonsense; rather, he specifically refers to being absent from the body.

To die is gain

Paul’s teaching in II Corinthians 5:1-9 is consistent with his teaching elsewhere in Scripture. In II Corinthians we saw that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord and that we can continue to be pleasing to the Lord when absent from the body. Philippians 1:21-26 picks up on the same themes, but in a much more personal way. Paul is in prison and possibly facing death.

Philippians 1:21 – For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Paul sees death not as a non-existent state, but as a state that can actually be described as “gain”.

Philippians 1:22 – But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.

In fact, Paul is so eager to be with the Lord that he can barely choose which possibility he prefers, living or dying. Also note that there is no indication at all that the options are living on in the flesh or being non-existent. Rather the most natural way to understand Paul’s dilemma is to understand the possibilities as living on in the flesh or living on in the spirit.

Philippians 1:23 – But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better;

Both possibilities, living on in the flesh or living on in the spirit, are desirable to Paul. Paul knows that if he remains in the

Paul sees death not as a non-existent state, but as a state that can actually be described as “gain”. In fact, Paul is so eager to be with the Lord that he can barely choose which possibility he prefers, living or dying.

flesh he will be able to continue his work and serve the fledgling church. He also knows, however, that being with Christ is a far better thing. The only way that being with Christ can be considered better than continuing on in this life is if it is a conscious existence with Christ.

Philippians 1:24 – ...yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

Again, ask yourself, “What is the direct contrast to ‘remain on in the flesh’?” The most direct contrast is to “depart in the spirit”.

Philippians 1:25-26 – Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

As badly as he wants to depart and be with Christ, Paul instead accepts that he will remain and continue the work. This entire passage, including the choice Paul faces, is predicated upon the biblical teaching that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. As Christians, it is very comforting to know that to die is gain—to be in the very presence of our Lord.

What about Ecclesiastes 9:5?

“The dead know nothing.” We have probably all heard that phrase dozens of times, and most of us believed that that was the definitive statement on the state of the dead. But what does this partial quote from Ecclesiastes 9:5 really mean when examined in context?

First we must consider the context of the immediate passage. Then we must consider the context of the book, the contextual implication of the type of literature, its context within its testament, and lastly its context within the whole Bible. Only then can we say that we have examined the context of the text. As we trace the context of Ecclesiastes 9:5 through each ring of the hermeneutical spiral it will become evident that this passage, as we were taught it, was ripped from its context at every level of the hermeneutical spiral.

Context is everything

Read Ecclesiastes 9:1-9 to see the passage in which verse 5 is embedded. The context of the passage is that the dead have no more part in anything “under the sun” (i.e. anything that is done in this world). Christians do not believe that the dead are roaming the earth as spirits. Christians do not believe in ghosts

Christians do not believe that the dead are roaming the earth as spirits. Christians do not believe in ghosts or séances or any other form of spiritualism. The dead are either with the Lord or in Sheol awaiting judgment. They are not here on earth “under the sun” and they are no longer directly involved with the activities of this world.

or séances or any other form of spiritualism. The dead are either with the Lord or in Sheol awaiting judgment. They are not here on earth “under the sun,” and they are no longer directly involved with the activities of this world.

Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon (or in the voice of Solomon) during his apostasy. The context of the entire book is the futility of life apart from God. The Hebrew word translated variously as “futile,” “meaningless,” or “vanity” is used 33 times in the book of Ecclesiastes, and each time it conveys the idea of hopelessness. Several passages recommend that the reader live it up: eat, drink, and be merry because this is all there is. Several passages suggest there is no difference between the destinies of the righteous and unrighteous dead.

Christians, however, don’t believe that life is meaningless, and they certainly don’t believe that there is no difference between the destinies of the righteous and the unrighteous. Is Ecclesiastes teaching falsehood? Absolutely not! Rather, Ecclesiastes is intended to teach us about the hopeless outlook of life apart from God, not about the state of those who have been made alive in Christ.

Furthermore, Ecclesiastes is part of what is known as “wisdom literature” which is not usually intended to be didactic

doctrinal literature. Because wisdom literature is designed to portray certain truths about life in memorable, picturesque ways, we need to be very careful in drawing our doctrine primarily from wisdom literature. Rather we should use didactic passages to interpret wisdom literature.

The entire Bible is inspired; the entire Bible is true (2 Tim. 3:16); but Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God (Hebrews 1:1). The teachings of Jesus and his apostles made plain things that were mysteries in the Old Testament. This fact does not mean that the New Testament corrects the Old, only that it provides more information that expands and clarifies many things that were not fully known in the Old Testament. Some examples of things that were either mysteries or partial mysteries in the Old Testament but were more fully revealed in the New include the nature of God’s Messiah, the Trinity, the Church, resurrection, and death. We have a much clearer picture of death in the New Testament than in the Old, so we must use the New Testament as our foundation for our doctrine of death.

When we begin with the solid foundation of very clear teaching that is given to the New Testament Church, we are able to interpret correctly the Old Testament, including the wisdom literature. Conversely, when a doctrine has been based largely on Old Testament wisdom literature, it is suspect because it is not grounded in the revelation of the Lord Jesus as explained in the teaching of the New Testament.

Finally, we should never interpret any passage in such a way that it contradicts something that is taught elsewhere in Scripture. The Bible is remarkably internally consistent. We know that if we ever interpret anything in such a way that it contradicts something else in the Bible, it is we, not the Bible, who are in error. This principle means we cannot interpret Ecclesiastes 9:5 in such a way as to contradict other parts of the Bible including Paul’s teaching in 2 Corinthians 5 and Philippians 1.

What about Moses?

One other Adventist teaching many of us believed is that Moses was bodily resurrected from the grave with a perfect, imperishable resurrection body just like we will have some day. The biblical evidence, however, does not point to Moses being resurrected. Here is a summary of the reasons that it is highly unlikely that Moses was resurrected from the grave with a resurrection body:

1. The Bible never says that Moses was resurrected; it only says that God buried him (Deuteronomy 34:1-12).

2. The Bible specifically calls Moses “dead” (Joshua 1:1, 2).

3. The non-canonical work *The Testament of Moses*, alluded to in Jude 9, does not claim that Moses was resurrected with a resurrection body but that Michael the archangel buried his body.

4. Jesus is the first fruits from the dead, the first to have an imperishable resurrection body, not Moses (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Jesus is the One who conquered death, and He is the first to rise from the grave with a resurrection body.

The rich man and Lazarus

I grew up believing that the idea of conscious existence after death was the first lie Satan ever told when he said to Eve, "Thou shalt not surely die" (Genesis 3:4).

Therefore, any teacher, preacher, movie, song, TV show, or book that suggested a conscious existence after death must be satanic in that it was promoting Satan's lie and was introducing us to spiritualism. But if conscious existence at death is Satan's lie and those who teach it are false teachers, what does that say about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Jesus tells a very interesting story in Luke, chapter 16:19-31, about a rich man who died and went to Hades and a poor man named Lazarus who died and went to Abraham's bosom. Read it before we discuss it.

Some try to dismiss this passage by saying, "It's only a parable, and the main point isn't the state of the dead." This may very well be only a parable, but if it is, then it is the only recorded parable of Jesus where he uses a name for one of the characters. Because of this fact, many commentators believe that Jesus is recounting actual events involving people some in the crowd would have known. Let's assume, however, that this is "only a parable."

We can say that Jesus' parables always used true-to-life illustrations to illustrate even greater spiritual truths. Jesus would not use a falsehood to illustrate a truth. Can you imagine Jesus saying, "You know that point I was making? Well, it was a true point, but the illustration I used was absolutely false. In fact, I was using an illustration that is a satanic lie to make my point. My illustration is dangerous spiritualism, but the point is still valid."

It almost feels like blasphemy to write the preceding paragraph, yet that's essentially what those who try to explain away this passage are saying once we peel away all their layers of double talk. We're talking about God in the flesh. Jesus, who is eternally God and cannot lie (Titus 1:2), would not say something that was completely false and thereby mislead generations of Christians. We're talking about the greatest Teacher, Preacher, and Prophet ever to walk among us. This is the illustration He chose, and the people in His illustration are conscious and communicative after death.

This parable isn't "spiritualism." Rather, it reflects a spiritual reality that Christ knew to be true, and the rest of the Bible confirms it. Although I would not want to make a passage like this the primary source of my doctrine, Jesus' illustration fits perfectly with the rest of His teaching and with the didactic teaching of His apostles, so I can accept this story as representing spiritual reality. I don't need or want to explain it away and dismiss it.

Jesus would not use a falsehood to illustrate a truth. Can you imagine Jesus saying, "You know that point I was making? Well, it was a true point, but the illustration I used was absolutely false. In fact, I was using an illustration that is a satanic lie to make my point. My illustration is dangerous spiritualism, but the point is still valid."

Conclusion

I believe we have been guilty of falsely accusing some of our Christian brothers and sisters of spiritualism for preaching and teaching things that the Bible itself preaches and teaches. I know I personally have to repent of such accusations that I have made. My accusations and judgments were made out of my own ignorance, but I bear the responsibility for that ignorance.

Based on contextual Bible study, I now believe that at death I will be consciously with the Lord awaiting the resurrection of my perfect, imperishable body. I don't know exactly what this reality means or what it will be like, but I know that, as Paul said, it will be "better by far" than this life, as rewarding and rich as this mortal existence can be.

I rest in the promise in 1 Corinthians 2:9: "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." †

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COLLEEN TINKER

ARE HUMANS MORE

“I used to think Jesus’ miracles were like the healings the disciples did,” my friend Rosalie admitted to me as I held the phone with one hand and plucked old blossoms off my patio plants with the other, “you know, supernatural manifestations He was able to do because of external power from the Holy Spirit.”

“Exactly!” I exclaimed, pacing now as I followed her train of thought.

“I didn’t think of Him doing miracles by His own internal power because He was God,” she continued.

Indeed. We both realized we had believed that Jesus had no advantage we don’t have. Sure, He was “fully God”; but we had grown up believing that He set aside all His “God-power” so He could live exactly like one of us. In fact, we had been taught that He had to depend upon the Holy Spirit in order not to sin, that because He as one of us kept from sinning by relying on the Holy Spirit, so could we.¹

The significance of “spirit”

What, then, made Jesus different from everyone else? How could I know He was God? What was the source of Jesus’ power? How did He keep from sinning? Moreover, did Jesus keep from sinning because He was sinless, or was He sinless because He managed not to sin?

Over the past few years I have realized that the Adventist understanding of “spirit” underlies all the confusion over Jesus’ nature and His sinlessness and over the meaning of our being made in God’s image.

As I have moved out of Adventism, I have discovered, contrary to what I formerly understood, that the Sabbath and its role in end-time events is really not Adventism’s most defining mark. Their definition of “spirit” is what lies under all Adventist

understanding. The Adventist doctrine of “spirit equals breath” is foundational because it defines the Adventist understanding of who humans are and of who Jesus is.

The Hebrew word *ruach* and the Greek word *pneuma* are the words underlying the English word “spirit.” Literally these words refer to wind, breath, or air. In biblical context, however, they usually mean something different. The word *ruach* frequently referred to God’s divine power in the Old Testament, although it sometimes also meant the human spirit. In the New Testament, however, the word *pneuma* occurs 379 times. Of those occurrences, 250 refer to the Holy Spirit. Forty times the word denotes the part of the human personality that can have a relationship with God. The rest of the word’s appearances refer to demonic, unclean, evil, or heavenly spirits. In spite of the root words’ literal meanings of breath, air, or wind, their contextual use, particularly that of *pneuma* in the New Testament, clearly denotes a non-physical yet real component of humans, the essential nature of God, and angelic beings.²

Begin with God

Both Ellen and James White taught that both Jesus and God had literal physical bodies. Ellen wrote, “I have often seen the lovely Jesus, that He is a person. I asked Him if His Father was a person and had a form like Himself. Said Jesus, ‘I am the express image of My Father’s person.’”³ James argued that “the old unscriptural Trinitarian creed” caused “spiritualizers” [those who declared that God is “Spirit”] to dispose or deny “the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁴ Implicit in this argument is White’s distinction between Jesus and the Lord God as well as his clear denial of the Trinity. The Whites also maintained that the doctrine of God being “without body or parts” as described in the Methodist creed⁵ was a heresy that “took



THAN LIVING BODIES?

away all the glory of heaven” and “burned up in the fire of spiritualism” the “lovely person of Jesus.”⁶

The Adventist notion that God has a body was also implicit in Ellen White’s later works, *The Great Controversy* and *Education*. “In the beginning, man was created in the likeness of God, not only in character, but in form and feature.”⁷ She further wrote, “When Adam came from the Creator’s hand, he bore, in his physical, mental, and spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker. ‘God created man in His own image.’”⁸ “They bore in outward resemblance the likeness of their Maker.”⁹

When Adventists think about being created in God’s image, often their understanding of this idea includes physically resembling some literal physical qualities of God. Many Adventists assume that since Jesus became a man, we were created in His image. At the time of creation, however, Jesus had not yet become incarnate. In fact, at His incarnation Jesus was made in every way like we are (Hebrews 2:17). His body was made like ours. Certain contemporary non-biblical organizations such as the Latter Day Saints and the Jehovah’s Witnesses also teach that God has a physical body.¹⁰ The Bible, however, teaches something quite different.

When He spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus declared the truth about God—and about humanity. The woman asked Jesus where the proper location for true worship was, and Jesus told her that physical designations for worship were obsolete. “Yet a time is coming and has now come,” Jesus responded, “when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24, NIV).

Jesus clearly declared that “God is spirit.” The plain meaning of this sentence is obvious; there is no physical body defining

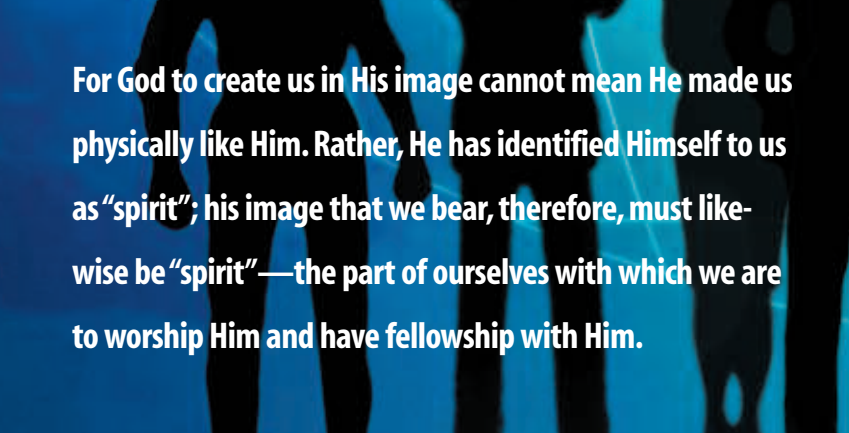
God. Jesus further stated that true human worshippers must worship Him “in spirit and truth.” In other words, humans have spirits that can worship God.

The implications of this text turn the Adventist paradigm upside down. First, God is not physical; He is spirit. This fact means that “spirit” is real and conscious, albeit immaterial. God is the eternal Source of all power, truth, wisdom, creativity, law, and reality. The definition of spirit as related to the Person of God cannot be merely “breath.”

Second, the fact that true worship is done in “spirit and truth” means that the human spirit is capable of worship—but only if it is informed by truth. “Truth” is identified in the Bible as the gospel (Colossians 1:5), God’s word (Isaiah 119:160, John 17:17), the law (Psalm 119:142), and Jesus Himself (John 14:6). Further, John tells us that the law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus (John 1:17). Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 2 that the truth of God is not perceived by human wisdom. “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us,” he writes in verse 12.

Clearly we can worship in spirit and truth only when our spirits are informed by the Holy Spirit. Unless we receive the Holy Spirit, the things of God will not make sense to us, and we will not be able to worship Him.

The third aspect of the Adventist paradigm which John 4:23-24 overturns is the notion that we are created physically in the image of God. For God to create us in His image cannot mean He made us physically like Him. Rather, He has identified Himself to us as “spirit”; his image that we bear, therefore, must likewise be “spirit”—the part of ourselves with which we are to worship Him and have fellowship with Him.



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Spiritual implications

When Nicodemus met Jesus, He delivered to him one of the core truths of salvation:

“I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (John 3:5-6). “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

If we are created with spirits reflecting God’s image, why would Jesus say we need to be “born of... the Spirit”?

Ephesians 2:1-2, 4-5 give us the context: “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”

When I was an Adventist, I assumed this passage (if I considered it at all) was just a metaphor. I knew that we were all sinners because Adam sinned, but I didn’t really know what that meant. I also knew that God had said that if they ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve would die when they ate it (Genesis 2:17). I further knew that Satan said they would not die but would have their eyes opened (Genesis 3:4-5).

I learned that although it appeared Satan was correct because Adam and Eve did not really die, they actually began to die. God’s declaration that they would “surely die” when they ate, I learned, was true (if misleading); they didn’t immediately experience the effects of death, but the process began.

Again, the Bible teaches something different. Romans 5:12-14, 1 Corinthians 15:22, and Ephesians 2:1-5 clearly say that we are all dead in sin because of Adam. Obviously, this statement cannot refer to physical life because humans are born and breathe. As an Adventist, I had no way to understand this situation except metaphorically. Since I understood “spirit” to equate “breath,” I assumed that “death” must mean physical demise. The fact that all people alive have physical life left me confused about the concept of spiritual death, and I assumed it referred to accumulated genetic deficits that left one vulnerable to sin.

Let’s go back to Adam and Eve. They had no hint of any sort of existence apart from complete openness with God before they ate the fruit. After they ate, their bodies remained alive—apparently making Satan’s comment true and God’s declaration unreliable. Something new, however, did happen. The moment they ate, they knew they were exposed and naked. They cobled coverings for themselves, and for the first time they hid.

When God came to the garden he called, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9) Immediately Adam responded that he was afraid because he was naked, so he hid.

I used to think God’s question, “Where are you?” was a bit like a parent playing hide-and-seek with a child. God is God; He obviously knew where Adam was. Adam and Eve, however, were suddenly exposed. Their shame and fear were intense. They could not be in the presence of God comfortably. Their spirits, which had known God, died—the minute they ate the fruit. They were disconnected from God, and they had no covering of God’s righteousness and presence to keep them from being naked and ashamed.

God obviously knew where Adam and Eve were hiding, but his question, “Where are you?” had spiritual implications. He knew they had sinned because their spirits were no longer with His.

Only the shedding of human blood could rectify this death (Hebrews 2:16-17; 9:22). God promised that He would send a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15), and He preserved humanity. It was not until Jesus died thousands of years later, however, that Adam and Eve’s sin was fully atoned (Romans 3:21-26). Not until the curtain was torn in the temple was the barrier of sin removed, and not until Pentecost was the spirit of God reunited intimately with the spirit of man in power.¹¹

When Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born again of the Spirit, He was not speaking metaphorically. He was speaking literally of needing to be united with the Spirit of God so his own dead spirit could come to life.

If the human spirit were merely breath, the new birth would make no sense at all.

What about Jesus?

We have established that God is spirit, not a physical body. Similarly, we have seen that our own spirits are to worship the God who is spirit. This means that our spirits are not mere “breath”; rather, they can receive, recognize, and honor God Himself. We have further seen that in order to be able to honor God, our own spirits, which are born dead in sin, must be born of the Holy Spirit and thus brought to life.

Hebrews 2:17 says that Jesus was made like His brothers in every way. Does this statement mean that He also was born with a dead spirit?

As an Adventist, this question never occurred to me. I believed that Jesus was body plus breath, just as I believed I was. If Jesus the Man was only body plus breath, the essence of His sinlessness had to be about managing to keep the law perfectly in spite of his human limitations.

The Bible, however, tells us that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). Jesus is the only human ever to be born with God’s Spirit giving Him life from the point of conception. This fact means that Jesus is the only human ever born (Adam was created) who was born spiritually alive and did not have to be born again. Further, Jesus’ spiritual life was not external to Him. It was intrinsically His own life, because He is God.

Parallel structure: flesh and spirit

Romans 1:3-4 defines Jesus’ identity as son of man and Son of God. Verse three says He “was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,” and verse four says He “was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead according to the Spirit of holiness.” These verses are parallel in structure. Verse three describes His Davidic heritage “according

to the flesh,” or His humanity. Verse four describes His divinity demonstrated by His resurrection “according to the spirit of holiness,” or God. Jesus was intrinsically man and intrinsically God. He rose from the dead by His own spirit of holiness. (See also John 10:17, 18.) His power was not derived or acquired. The life in Him was His own. He was always spiritually alive.

Jesus was not sinless because he perfectly accessed the external power of the Holy Spirit. He was sinless because He was God, spiritually alive from conception. He absolutely had an advantage we do not have—but it was not for His own sake. He suffered for us and became sin and a curse for the world.¹²

Why does it matter?

We have seen that the belief that the human spirit is merely breath results in at least nine errors that lead to heresy:

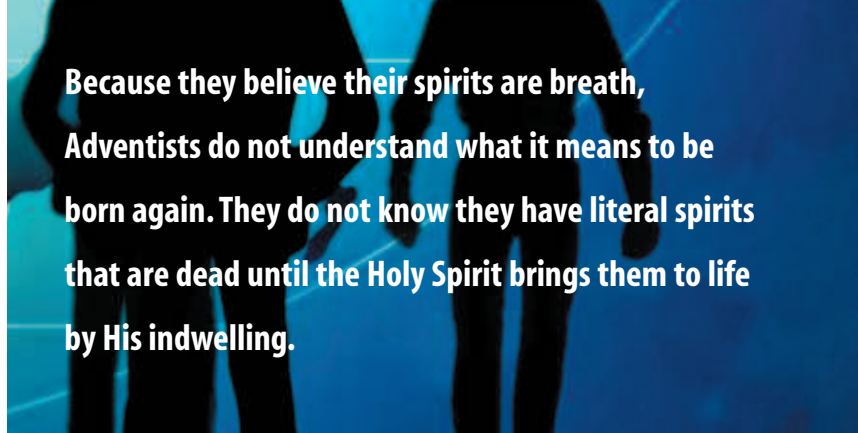
1. Disbelief in God’s identity as “spirit” without a physical body.
2. Disbelief in humans having a spirit that can know and worship God.
3. Disbelief in the human spirit being the image of God in man.
4. Confusion about our naturally dead spirits being original sin.
5. Misunderstanding the need for and nature of the new birth.
6. Belief that Jesus is merely “body plus breath”
7. Lack of understanding His sinless nature.
8. Lack of understanding the advantage of His intrinsic Deity.
9. Misunderstanding that God’s righteousness is completely His and cannot be perfectly duplicated nor emulated.

At the practical level, the belief that spirit is merely breath leaves Adventists with an unbiblical worldview. Because they do not understand that God is spirit without a body, they do not grasp that He is unlike them. Consequently, they do not perceive Him to be sovereign over all reality, even over evil and the decisions of man. Because they do not believe they have immaterial spirits in the image of God, they believe sin to be primarily physical, a cumulative effect of genetic flaws that leave them vulnerable to temptation. Because they perceive sin to be primarily physical, weakening the will power and the mind, they believe that salvation means gaining access to the Holy Spirit’s power so they can resist temptation and become increasingly able to keep the law.

Moreover, the conscience is not the Holy Spirit. Romans 2:15 identifies the “conscience” as a function which all men have, whether they are believers or not. The conscience can be mis-taught, and when a person is born again, the conscience will be re-educated by the Spirit’s revelation of truth.

Because they believe their spirits are breath, Adventists do not understand what it means to be born again. They do not know they have literal spirits that are dead until the Holy Spirit brings them to life by His indwelling.

Perhaps the worst result of the doctrine that spirit equals breath is that Adventists do not understand that the Lord Jesus is not primarily their example; He is their substitute. He did not come to demonstrate how to keep the law. Jesus did not come to demonstrate how to overcome temptation by leaning on the external power of the Holy Spirit for His victory. Adventists do not understand that the power of Jesus’ blood to pay for sin comes from the fact that He has intrinsic life—not from the fact that He perfectly obeyed.



Because they believe their spirits are breath, Adventists do not understand what it means to be born again. They do not know they have literal spirits that are dead until the Holy Spirit brings them to life by His indwelling.

When we understand that the spirit is an immaterial reality that is made in the image of God, we finally have hope. We know that we are not nonexistent when we die. We know that Jesus had a divine advantage that made Him our substitute in every way: He was God who took our form so He could shed perfect, sinless blood as the sacrifice His own law required. Because we have literal spirits, we are literally brought to life and eternally connected to God by His Spirit when we are born again. We do not merely have God’s power available; we have God Himself making us new, living creatures who are “born of God” (John 1:13).

I know now that Jesus, even in his incarnation, was always fully God (Colossians 1:19). The miracle is not that He was able to be a perfect human but that, as God, He has destroyed the power of sin by shedding sinless human blood. He has opened a new, living way to the Father through His body (Hebrews 10:20), so I can now be in His presence without shame or nakedness. I know that I have become His righteousness because He became my sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), and I experience His righteousness—which is alien to me and is not my own perfection—because He lives in me by His Spirit and credits His own righteousness to me (Romans 5:18-21). I know that my life is hidden with Him in God (Colossians 3:3).

Now I rejoice with Paul, my brother in Jesus: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). †

Endnotes

1. As one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences. “In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren.” Heb. 2:17. If we had to bear anything which Jesus did not endure, then upon this point Satan would represent the power of God as insufficient for us. Therefore Jesus was “in all points tempted like as we are.” Heb. 4:15. He endured every trial to which we are subject. And He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us. As man, He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him from God. He says, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.” Ps. 40:8. As He went about doing good, and healing all who were afflicted by Satan, He made plain to men the character of God’s law and the nature of His service. His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God. *Desire of Ages*, p. 24
2. *New Bible Dictionary*, third edition, reprinted 1997; Inter-Varsity Press; p. 1125
3. *Early Writings*, p. 77. See also pp 55 and 92.
4. White, James, *Day Star*, January 24, 1846.
5. *The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1888, pp. 16, 17
6. *Early Writings*, p. 77
7. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 644, 645
8. *Education*, p. 15
9. *Ibid.*, p. 20
10. http://www.beliefnet.com/story/80/story_8035_1.html
http://www.beliefnet.com/story/80/story_8034_1.html
11. Some believe the apostles received the Holy Spirit before Jesus’ ascension (John 20:22) but received the power of the Spirit at Pentecost.
12. 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 3:13

A letter to my friend concerning the spirit

Chris Badenhorst

Dear Rikki,

Once again I appreciated your comments about our past in Adventism – that it constituted a definite barrier to a deeper spiritual walk and fellowship with the Lord. Although the details of our individual spiritual paths are different and unique since leaving Adventism, the general direction seems to be the same: to experience a closer and more intimate walk with God. I am glad that you, too, are learning the importance of daily living by the Spirit and having fellowship and communion with God through His Spirit who indwells your spirit.

For the sake of clarity, I would like to point out that we are dealing here with the *subjective* spiritual house we as believers are building for the glory of God. This house is founded upon the *objective* immovable bedrock foundation laid for it by God two thousand years ago in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ into heaven. It is important that we differentiate clearly between God's objective foundation and our subjective spiritual house built on that foundation. This differentiation, however, is another subject for another time.

To understand this subjective aspect of communion and fellowship with God better and to experience it more fully, we must understand the nature of man, how he has been made and with what faculties God has endowed him so that the divine purpose for man in his creation might still be fulfilled in the lives of those whom He has redeemed. Paul gives a clear description of man's constitution in his first letter to the Thessalonian believers. He says, "May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:23b). Based on this description of man I see him as a trinity—"spirit, soul and body." Some theologians refer to this as a "trichotomy."

Our bodies are the seat of world-consciousness; our souls are the seat of self-consciousness; our spirits are the seat of God-consciousness. Through our physical bodies we are in contact and have communion with the physical world around us by means of our five senses. Our souls, comprising the mind (with which we think), the emotions (with which we act or respond) and the will (with which we decide), constitute our personality - our individual self. Our spirits, which consist of the conscience and intuition, is that part of the believer that is indwelt by God in the person of the Holy Spirit. By means of this faculty we are capable of knowing God, worshipping God, serving God, and entering into a relationship with God and having fellowship with God.

From the beginning God intended that man's spirit, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, should control his being through the soul. Whenever the Holy Spirit instructs us concerning God's will, He does so through the spirit. This instruction is passed to the soul, which in turn exercises the body to obey the command from the Holy Spirit via the human spirit. So, according to God's original design, the human spirit is the highest and most important part of man's constitution. Therefore, it is most important to understand the human spirit and its role in our knowing God. As Adventists, we did not understand what the Bible teaches about the human spirit because Adventism teaches that humans are purely physical beings composed of soul (mind/personality) and body and that the human spirit is only oxygen—the breath we breathe. As a result, we did not—neither could we have—an intimate fellowship with God based on a dynamic relationship with Him.

Related to their belief in "body and soul" is Adventism's teaching about the state of the dead: the "soul sleep" doctrine. This doctrine rejects the Evangelical teaching that the believer's spirit goes to be with the Lord at death (Eccl 12:7b). To substantiate this rejection, it re-interpreted the human spirit to mean oxygen—the "breath we breathe". Thus, in the teaching of Adventism, man is purely a physical being consisting of mind/personality (soul) and body. This belief is also the teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

But the Bible tells us that we are composed of body, soul and *spirit*. The unbeliever's spirit is, of course, "dead" to God and the things of God because it is "separated from the life of God" (Ephesians 4:18) and God's Spirit (Ephesians 2:1-3). But when a person is saved,

he is “born again from above” by God’s Holy Spirit (John 3:1-8). By this experience, the believer’s spirit becomes “alive” to God and the things of God because God’s Spirit now indwells his spirit. We need to understand that God, being Spirit, created the human spirit (Numbers 16:22; Hebrews 12:9) so there could be fellowship between God and man. “Spirit” can only communicate and have fellowship with “spirit”. This fact is the foundation for the statement of Jesus that “the true worshippers will worship the Father in *spirit* and truth...[and that] God is spirit, and His worshippers must worship [Him] in *spirit* and in truth” (John 4:23, 24).

Spiritual things not discerned by the mind

In retrospect it became clear to me that one of the problems I encountered in Adventism was trying to discover and understand spiritual truths by means of the intellect (mind) alone. By this means, though, I had at best only a theory of the truth in the form of religious information (doctrines). I subsequently discovered that spiritual truth is received by *revelation* from the Holy Spirit into our spirits that have been made alive by Him (1 Corinthians 1:6-16). When the Holy Spirit reveals biblical truth to our spirits, that truth is not mere knowledge or information. Rather, truth is alive and dynamic and is the means by which our relationship and fellowship with God is enhanced.

This basic teaching of the Scriptures seems to be lost to many Christians. Throughout the mainline denominations which my wife and I have visited and where we have worshiped, many members are like the Pharisees who thought that truth could be discovered directly through the intellect. In this idea they were confusing the intellectual with the spiritual. Jesus, however, rebuked the Pharisees for thinking that “eternal life”—God’s life—could be received solely by means of studying the Scriptures and cramming religious information into their heads (John 5:39, 40). I can sympathize with these Christians in this regard because I was once where they are now.

The Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches, on the other hand, often err in the opposite extreme. Their relationships with God and their worship of Him are often driven by a quest for emotional experiences. Those believers who seek “experience” over grounding in Truth as revealed in the Bible are confounding the emotional with the spiritual. However, a person’s emotional faculty is not part of his spirit but of his soul (his personality) just as is his intellect (mind).

Where did this misunderstanding between “soul” and “spirit” come from? I think church history could provide us with part of the answer. It is a fact that the ancient heathen philosophers, in their interminable speculations about life and God, began to ask, *What is man?* They concluded that man is body and soul—or body and mind/personality. The first century Christians, however, had no interest in what these philosophers believed and taught. They knew they had the eternal life of God in their spirits through faith in the finished work of Christ. They also knew that by this divine life they were having sweet fellowship with God.

During the second and third centuries, some of these pagan philosophers became Christians. Unfortunately, their ideas, based on their speculations, came with them and began to rub off on fellow Christians. This gave birth to so-called “Christian Philosophy”—a philosophy that included the pagan idea that man consists of body and soul—his unique mind and personality. The sad news is that the idea of man as “body and soul” remained while the understanding of “spirit” became obscure.

(Continued on page 22)

Chris Badenhorst is a retired civil engineering technician who still works part time on one of South Africa’s oil refineries in the city of Durban on the east coast. He is married with three step-children and one grandchild. His wife is also a former Adventist who shares his enthusiasm for the gospel of God’s grace. Although they are not members of a particular denomination, they attend a local Baptist church for worship and fellowship.



What does Paul teach in 2 Corinthians?



Absent from the body, Present with the Lord

DALE RATZLAFF

This section of Scripture is foundational to interpreting the New Testament understanding of the human spirit and what happens to Christians at the point of death. While section headings are not inspired, they nevertheless convey what the Bible translators understood the passage to be teaching. The KJV heads this section with “Paul’s Assured Hope Of Immortal Glory.” The NIV leads with “Our Heavenly Dwelling,” and the NASB entitles this section, “The Temporal and Eternal.” This section is didactic teaching by the leading theologian of the New Testament, the Apostle Paul, who received the gospel from the risen Christ (Galatians 1:11–12). Therefore, it carries the highest teaching weight, more than poetry, more than the old covenant shadowy statements. But what does this section teach?

Remember our first rule of hermeneutics: we must consider the context. In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul contrasts the old and new covenants. He likens the Sinaitic Covenant, including the expanded covenant (written with ink v.3) and the words of the covenant—Ten Commandments¹ (written on stone v.7) to a ministry of “condemnation” (v.9), one that was “fading away” (v.11) and one that actually “veils” the glory of the new covenant. He concludes the chapter by stating that “the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face [free from the Sinaitic covenant]² beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

In 2 Corinthians 4 Paul describes his apostolic ministry. In verse 7 he states that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” What is the “treasure” of which he speaks? It is the Life of Christ, the eternal life we now have in the spirit.³ This becomes clear as we read v.11, “...we are constantly being delivered over to

death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifest in our mortal flesh.” Then in v.16 Paul states, “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man [body] is decaying, yet our inner man [spirit] is being renewed day by day.” He ends chapter 4 with, “While we look not at the things which are seen [physical], but at the things which are not seen; [spiritual] for the things which are seen [outer man, body] are temporal, but the things which are not seen [inner man, spirit] are eternal.” Paul’s focus is not on the earthly life in the body, but it is directed to the heavenly, eternal existence in the spirit. For this reason, he can face hardship, persecution and even death with confidence. This is the context. Now, in chapter 5, Paul will develop his theology further. We now do a verse by verse study using the updated NASB.

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Corinthians 5:1).

This verse is loaded. First, note the confidence expressed—“we know.” This is not some wishful theory, some speculative idea, but it is stated as well-established Christian theology known by Paul and his associates. It is designed to bring comfort to those who live in uncertain times. There is no question that Paul uses “earthly tent” here to refer to the body. It is the “house” in which we dwell. In other words, the body is the home of the spirit. The body is not the personality; rather the spirit/soul is the person that lives within the body. If this tent is torn down (body destroyed in death) Paul states categorically that we have (present indicative active in Greek) a building from God. Again, note well the words. Paul does not say that we will have a building at some future time, but we now have,

2 Corinthians 5:1–9

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this (house) we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. (NASB)



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(we now possess this asset) a building (place to live) from God. This heavenly house is not made with hands (not of human devising) and is eternal in the heavens. When one form of existence comes to an end and our earthly tent (body) is folded up, we immediately have another existence awaiting us in heaven with God, and this existence is eternal. There is no uncertainty in Paul's teaching. "We know... We have."

For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven (2 Corinthians 5:2).

As the years pass and old age approaches, Paul's statement becomes more understandable. Yes, in this body we do at times "groan." We long to be transformed into our eternal existence to escape the deterioration, pain and suffering experienced as this "tent" is being torn down. There is a real sense in which Christianity is focused on the next life. We long for it, we wait for it, and we desire it above all else. It is this assurance that allows the Christian to face death without fear.

Inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked (2 Corinthians 5:3).

The NASB is very literal and supports the idea expressed by the Greek aorist participle that the "putting on" is an accomplished event.⁴ Paul is building assurance, not doubt, and this rendering agrees with Paul's statement in 5:1, "We have," the present continuous tense in Greek. While we may not see our heavenly clothing at this time, nevertheless we have already put it on. This happened when we first believed in Christ.⁵ Because of this accomplished fact, we will not be found naked without our heavenly clothing of Christ's righteousness and life in the spirit.

For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life (2 Corinthians 5:4).

In this verse Paul describes us all. We do not want to be "unclothed" in nonexistence. We do not look forward to having the worms destroy our body, nor is there any comfort in simply being nonexistent until the resurrection. Rather, Paul's hope is that there will be an immediate transfer of life that now exists in the mortal tent of our bodies directly into the heavenly existence of life in the spirit with Christ. One level of life will be "swallowed up" by the next.

Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge (2 Corinthians 5:5).

God is the one who has been working for us and in us for the express purpose of mortality being swallowed up by life. The Holy Spirit, given to all true believers, is the great down payment, guaranteeing the coming change.

Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— [7] for we walk by faith, not by sight— [8] we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. [9] Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him (2 Corinthians 5:6–9).

These three verses must be studied together as the theme is intertwined throughout. The "Therefore" refers back to the fact that we have already received the Holy Spirit who seals all true Christians when they believe,⁶ and He guarantees our

future inheritance in Christ.⁷ This, in turn, gives us good hope. Now we come to the “meat” of this passage: “knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord...” Again, note the assurance, “knowing.” This is not speculation or wishful thinking; it is “knowing.”

“While we are at home in the body” must mean the eternal spirit or inward man, mentioned in Chapter 4:16–18, that is living in our “tent” or body. Notice that Paul very clearly indicates that his existence is separate from the body which is the temporary “home” for the spirit. Now Paul clearly says that during this life we are “absent from the Lord.” He inserts, “We walk by faith, not by sight.” Physical sight or visible evidence does not easily prove the after life. We must grasp it by faith. Not blind faith, but (1) a faith which rests upon the literal resurrection of Jesus who is our life; (2) the Holy Spirit-inspired Word of God and (3) the reality of the new birth—being born of the spirit.⁸ Paul now reaffirms that he and his companions are of good courage, meaning that they are walking by faith because they already know they have an invisible but real dwelling from God.

Paul states, “I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.” Paul cannot be speaking of an existence after the resurrection of the body, for then he would not be “absent from the body.” Rather, he must be speaking of the intermediate state between death and the resurrection. He describes this existence as being “at home with the Lord.” We now come to the clincher, “Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.” Paul’s ambition is to be pleasing to the Lord both now in this life and in the after life including the time between death and the resurrection of the body. To describe this existence as unconscious sleep—really annihilation—simply does not fit the context. “An ambition to be pleasing” is strong evidence of a living personality that has active intellect, emotion and will and not unconscious sleep—which is essentially annihilation. Therefore, when we look at the context of this section and what it teaches, we must conclude that there is a conscious existence between death and the resurrection when we will be “absent from the body and at home with the Lord.” This existence is one that allows for the function of an active intel-

lect, emotion and will that is to be “preferred” to our present life “in the body.” As mentioned above, this theology and the resulting assurance it brings hinges on the certainty of the historical bodily resur-

rection of Jesus, the trustworthiness of the Word of God and reality of the miracle of the new birth which regenerates our dead spirit such that we can be called “new creatures in Christ Jesus.” In harmony with this conclusion later in this same chapter Paul states,

“Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Corinthians 5:16, 17).

Assurance

Several years after I left the Adventist Church I served as the pastor of the Neighborhood Church in Santa Cruz, California. I will never forget the first funeral I attended in this Christian & Missionary Alliance Church. One of the older church members who had been friends with the District Superintendent, Rev. Dick Taylor, had died. The family requested that Rev. Taylor do the service. There was a rousing time of singing joyful, upbeat songs. There were many happy faces. The message was not only one of hope in the resurrection but also of a present assurance that our brother in Christ had “gone to be with the Lord!” Sure, there were a few tears after the service, but the mood was one that I had never experienced at an Adventist funeral. The joy at this funeral was based upon the present reality that our brother in Christ was now rejoicing at home with the Lord—which is far better!

The theology of the eternal, born-again human spirit fits into the new covenant paradigm of good news. It makes sense out of the many statements of Jesus. “He who believes has (present continuous) eternal life” (John 6:47) “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die” (John 11:25, 26). †

Endnotes

1. The Ten Commandments are the very words of the old covenant. See Exodus 31:18; 34:28; 40:20; Deuteronomy 4:13; 9:9; 9:11; 9:15; 1 Kings 8:9, 21.
2. Galatians 3:17–29; Romans 7:6; Hebrews 8:13–9:4.
3. See also John 6:47, 63; Romans 8:2, 11; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 6:8.
4. *The New King James* renders this verse, “if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.”
5. John 3:4–6.
6. Ephesians 1:13; 4:30.
7. See also 1 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Ephesians 2:22.
8. John 3:4–6.



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 *Sabbath in Christ*, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventist “Truth”*, and *Adventist to Christian*. These are available through his website, LifeAssuranceMinistries.com.

Truly amazing

I just listened to some of the last Former Adventist Fellowship weekend online. It was truly amazing! I look so forward to seeing *Proclamation!* magazine come in my mailbox. You have done such a great job with it, and I know there are so many people who have come to a full understanding of what happened at the cross because of you and everyone there.

We have been former Adventists since 2001; we are in a Spirit-filled, thriving Christian Community, and yet it just feels so good to still encounter ex-Adventists (especially through the ministry of your magazine). I think that is because it takes so long to heal from childhood indoctrination, and it actually helps us heal when we are seeing others healed.

NEW BERN, NC

Get a fortune teller

I have an idea! Why don't you stop wasting your money sending *Proclamation!* to historic Adventists and invest in establishing a "club"! Then you can booze, dope, eat ham sandwiches, and "swing"! You don't have to get permission to sin or think up ways to justify it!

We don't care! God doesn't either.

It's a personal matter! Don't send your "maggie mag" to me anymore! My mailbox is already stuffed with letters of praise to God, spiritual testimonies, and new friends that have found "peace past understanding".

In truth, I shouldn't have wasted this paper!

P.S. Go get a fortuneteller to tell you your fate!
HOLLIDAYSBURG, PA

Dealing with Adventism in Slovenia

I am a missionary in Slovenia, Europe. Just two years ago the Lord guided us to move to a region in Slovenia where there were only three born-again believers. We are doing church planting, apologetic work, evangelism, writing, and more.

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

Just a month ago, we were on furlough in the States, and Dr. Norman Geisler suggested we get your books, since we have issues with Adventism in our town, literally around the corner. They come to our Wednesday Bible studies and often try to insert their own beliefs. They also hope to be equipped to do their own church planting. We are trying to be courteous and respectful while firm in our conversations. Your writings have been very helpful in understanding their background and some details in their theology. We love them, yet hope to help them find freedom in Christ. Anyway, just wanted to let you know that your work is making a difference on the other side of the world, too. Thank you. May the Lord give you health, strength, and wisdom as you strive to follow Him.

SLOVENIA, EUROPE

God's wrath

As one who studied their way into the Adventist Message from the Bible only, I know that you are misrepresenting Adventists or perhaps outright lying about them. With the signs of Christ (sic) soon return all around us, it is obvious to me that you are doing the work of Satan in opposing the work of God for this time. And because of this, you will suffer the wrath of God and your organization will come to naught. Remove my husband's name from your mailing list promptly.

PAW PAW, MI

Signs of a cult

Thanks for your publication. I think it is great hearing about people being set free in Jesus. In regards to those Adventists' emails that are negative—they just show the signs of a cult. They think your magazine is anti-Adventist. The Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others all say the same thing. They don't like being contradicted, and the shameful thing is people like this don't like reading that their prophet is wrong. Meanwhile they are very critical towards the evangelical church. Just keep doing the Lord's work; Satan does not like Adventists hearing the truth that Ellen White is a false prophet. I am an evangelist that has dealt with the cults for many years.

VIA EMAIL

Satan coming into my home

I did not order your *Proclamation!* magazine, so please don't send it to my home anymore. I do NOT agree with your beliefs. You are the very example of what God tells us in His Word about how we are going through the "great shaking." You are part of the signs of Jesus' return—He will weed out the unbelievers of the fullness of the truth. I will not be deceived by your misinterpretations of God's word and His commandments. You may still be a believer in Jesus, but you are not a true follower. If you love Him you would do as He

commands. There are two parts to God's law—two tablets of stone. The first tablet is part one, commandments one to four which tell us how to honor God. The second tablet is part two, commandments 5-10 which tells us how to treat others. If you don't honor God then you are honoring the devil (you can't serve two masters... so pick one!). If you practice the traditions of man you honor the man or men that make those traditions... you are not honoring God. If you fail to honor the 4th commandment you certainly are not honoring the first which is to have no other gods before Him as well as the 2nd and 3rd.

You talk about Ellen White, but Adventists base our beliefs on God's word (the Bible) and that's where Ellen got her wisdom from. So please repent and don't send me any more of these horrible publications of your magazine. If you send me anymore magazines I will throw them out. Just touching it makes me think of Satan coming into my home. Please pray for guidance and deliverance to depart from these teachings. I pray you will see the true light.

VIA EMAIL

Good work

I've been getting your great magazine and decided I just had to send you a donation to help your ministry. Keep up the good work.

GA

Discovering Adventism

I am not an Adventist or former Adventist but have an interesting story regarding an Adventist situation.

I attended a singles' ministry for 20+ years (off and on as I was struggling seriously with my faith in some of that time) at [a local] Presbyterian Church... [During] the last few years the church no longer provided a full time pastor [for this ministry], and the ministry struggled to continue as faithful lay men and women led it. In those last few years a new member, who was also attending theology school while working, volunteered to help lead the group.

I also made a new friend in those years who attended an Adventist church. I knew nothing about Adventists at that time, other than they worshiped on Saturday (I thought that was unusual but discounted any problems with that church)...

Everything changed last November... [The] church announced around September that they were discontinuing the ministry. The singles resolved to find another church as it's sponsor, and I was chosen to lead the transition team to another church. Four churches were presented for consideration, including an Adventist church recommended by my Adventist friend. A couple of new attendees to [our church] brought to my attention some issues with Adventism. I said I was not aware of any issues but wanted to investigate for myself.

As I started to investigate Adventism I became alarmed and shocked at what I found. I used as many sources as possible to determine the truth. I approached my Adventist friend twice, gently trying to explain why I was going to motion to remove the Adventist church from consideration.

What happened next stunned me then—and still does. When I tried to explain Adventism in a meeting of 20 or so friends whom I have known for years, they did not want to hear anything I had to say nor see my material. They were only concerned about whether I had offended my friend.

I needed to know where they stood, so I forced

a vote to remove the Adventist church from our list. The new leader who was in theology school did not support me and used *The Kingdom of the Cults* to prove I was wrong. Only four stood with me, and I resigned that night. Fortunately, they did not end up at the Adventist church.

I have now become immersed in the doctrine of Adventism, and God has already used me to help one person avoid it. I am amazed how ignorant true believers are about Adventism. I could not find anything in the Christian bookstores opposing it, and I never hear messages about the erroneous cultic doctrine of Adventism. I have felt

very alone at times and questioned myself again and again, researched again and again to make sure I did the right thing. I know I have done the right thing, and my heart breaks for my friends. It has cost me so much, but I pray God will continue to use me to help others avoid Adventism.

VIA EMAIL

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:

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A letter to my friend concerning the spirit FROM PAGE 17

As a result of this emphasis on the mind, intellectualism emerged in the church, and people began to see truth as defined by their brains instead of through a revelation by the Holy Spirit to their spirits. Over the centuries this idea has become deeply ingrained in Western thinking, and, unfortunately, the Christian faith has suffered spiritually because of this error. As a result, Christians have been building denominational walls based on their doctrines that separate believers from each other.

My present understanding is that man's personality resides in his soul, which consists of his mind, emotions and will. But the living Lord, through His Spirit, resides in the believer's spirit which was made alive to God and the things of God at his "rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5b). Through the new birth, the Holy Spirit imparts the eternal life of God to our spirits, and by this life of God, we as believers are now to live and function under the governance of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, modern godless philosophers, like their ancient counterparts, have no understanding of this matter. They could not comprehend such a thing even if it is spelled out to them simply because this is "spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14)!

In view of what I have said above, it is important that we as believers grasp this most basic teaching of the Scriptures about the role of our spirits in order to progress in our relationship with God and to enjoy intimate fellowship with Him. This is what

Jesus referred to when He said, "I have come that they (who believe in Him) may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

What I have said above also applies to "spiritual warfare," as I have learned by experience. We as believers cannot fight Satan and his demons (who are spirit beings) with anything physical. Paul states: "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:3, 4). To stand victorious against demonic powers and strongholds we are admonished to "be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power (and to) put on the full armor of God" (Ephesians 6:10, 11). This armor is clearly not something physical but spiritual, just as the enemy we confront is spiritual! The bottom line here is that we can only fight spirit with spirit, just as spirit can communicate and have fellowship only with Spirit!

God Bless, Your Friend Chris †

Editor's note: Among Christian theologians there is a difference of opinion regarding whether humans comprise a trichotomy (body, soul, and spirit), or a dichotomy (body and soul or body and spirit). The most important issue connected to this subject, however, is the understanding that man has a spirit that can know God and be born again and discern truth by His Spirit.

Unconditional surrender! FROM BACK PAGE

Adventism had told me of a Bible study for former Adventists at the local Evangelical Free church. I decided then and there to find this group. The Former Adventist Fellowship welcomed me to the study of the Scriptures and provided many books rich in Biblical exposition for my personal study.

I was finally willing to look at the teachings of Adventism that I had known were in conflict with Scripture but for which I had been hoping to find convincing explanations that would stop the roaring dissonance in my mind. My study of the word revealed how high and thick the walls of Adventism really were. The veil was finally torn, and I began to see that Christ Jesus was my eternal rest. God

himself had taken me captive, and when He removed the blindfold from my eyes, I found that I had surrendered to a new Commander who loved me as his adopted son.

The burden I carried for years has been lifted. My new Commander has given me so much more than one meal before sending me on my way. Jesus gave me his broken body as the bread of eternal life. The battle between my old human nature and my new life of freedom in the Holy Spirit continues (Romans 7 and 8), but I know that the victory has already been secured by Jesus through His blood shed on the cross.

I have finally made my unconditional surrender.

†

4TH ANNUAL FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND

FEBRUARY 13–15, 2009 • TRINITY CHURCH • REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA



- **Presenters include** Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff, Greg and Paula Taylor, John Rittenhouse, Joan and Galen Yorba-Gray, Sharon Strum's praise team, and more!
- Breakout sessions addressing issues former Adventists face.
- Food and fellowship time, and sales area.
- Communion, prayer, and testimonies Saturday evening.

SCHEDULE

- Friday, February 13, 2009, 6:00 to 7:00 PM • Arrival/registration
- Meetings and breakout sessions Friday to Sunday morning
- Plan to stay for worship service with Trinity Church (our host church) on Sunday morning and then enjoy a lunch hosted by the Redlands Former Adventist Fellowship.

TO REGISTER (SPACE LIMITED TO THE FIRST 150)

- \$65 per person, must register before January 23, 2009
- Sign up online or use coupon below.
- Fee includes cost of sessions, handouts, three meals on Saturday, and snacks. Scholarships are available!
- You must make your own lodging/transportation arrangements. A limited number of local church member's homes are available for those with limited financial resources. Call for more information.

TO SIGNUP ONLINE

Go to www.FormerAdventist.com and follow the links.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Phone toll free (877)-349-6984

YES, I WANT TO REGISTER for the Former Adventist Fellowship weekend at Trinity Church in Redlands, California, February 13–15, 2009. (Does not include transportation or lodging.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Number attending _____ X \$65 (each person) = Total amount enclosed \$ _____

Vegetarian? YES # _____ NO # _____

Please return with check or money order in included envelope *before* January 23, 2009.

LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES, PO BOX 905, REDLANDS, CA 92373

Living by the S P I R I T

Unconditional SURRENDER!



MICHAEL HICKS

During the month of January, 1861, the southern states seceded, one by one, from the United States of America. In February of the same year, they established their own Confederate government. On April 12, one month and eight days after President Lincoln's inauguration, Confederate forces attacked Fort Sumter in what became the initial engagement of the Civil War.

Nearly one year later, on February 16, 1862, Union General Ulysses S. Grant sent a message to Confederate General Buckner: "No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted." With that message, U.S. Grant became known as "Unconditional Surrender" Grant.

It was not until April 9, 1865, that U.S. Grant's terms were finally met and the war was brought to an end. When General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Grant that day, he knew Grant would offer him no conditions. In spite of Grant's terms of unconditional surrender, however, he was generous enough

to provide 25,000 meals to very hungry Confederate soldiers and allowed them to go home with their horses so they could start spring planting.

My love of history and my study of the civil war has taught me a lot about surrender. As a civil war re-enactor I have surrendered many times to the enemy. Of course, my surrenders were feigned. I only symbolically gave up my weapons, my freedom, and my plans for

praise and honor in victory. I was acting the part for the audience.

My years of re-enacting have caused me to ask myself about the role of surrender in my life. When I thought of unconditional surrender to Jesus in relationship to my years in the Seventh-day Adventist church, I realized that I often feigned surrender to many external behaviors required by the church. Being "born" into Adventism gave me an identity that actually held me captive. When I was born again by faith in Christ I was finally able to enjoy the freedom for which He

had set me free. What might have been my incentive to surrender to church mandates? The surrender was in reality conditional upon gaining approval by family and friends, of having the privileged status of being in the "one true remnant church," and of having the praise of people for performing well.

Burden lifted

In 1980 I began to evaluate why I found so many conflicts between the unique teachings of the Adventist church and the Scriptures. It took over 20 years for me to be shown by the Holy Spirit why the conflicts would not go away. The conflicts existed because the Adventist teachings were false.

Releasing my grip on the security blanket of Adventism was a form of surrender. My final letting go was in July of 2003. That evening I stopped by the Adventist church in which my wife and I had been singers in the praise band a couple of years before. I was thinking of returning to the comfort zone of acceptance by rejoining the worship team. The conversation with the leader was as cold as ice.

God had planned a different appointment for me that evening. More than a year before a friend at work who had left

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



Michael Hicks grew up Adventist and attended Southern Adventist College and Andrews University. For the past 29 years he has been a Physician Assistant in emergency and family medicine. He and his wife Janice have three children and three grandchildren between them. They are civil war re-enactors and are pictured here as Captain and Mrs. Ellis Spear of the 20th Maine Infantry Regiment. They worship at Trinity Evangelical Free Church in Redlands, California and are active in Former Adventist Fellowship.

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