

From Torah-observant to discovering the New Covenant

JEFF AND SONDR A BRICKELL

LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

# Proclamation!

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS  
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS  
SABBATARIANS  
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

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**Are Adventists  
moving to  
feast-keeping?**

DALE RATZLAFF

**Waging war with  
the shadows**

DENNIS PALMER

**Road closed**

CORA HOLDER



## Freedom from Sabbath guilt

COLLEEN TINKER

**G**uilt flooded me. I was on my hands and knees scrubbing an embarrassingly dirty kitchen floor after sundown on Friday evening—again. Family and full-time work didn't leave me time to keep up with my own mess. I would have been stoned in Israel for working this way on Friday evening—but, I rationalized, I would be utterly unable to rest properly on Sabbath if I had to live in the squalor of my failure to complete six days of work before God's holy day.

Technically I was breaking the law, but 30 minutes of floor-scrubbing after Friday sundown seemed a smaller sin than 24 hours of anxiety over living with the tangible evidence of my own failure.

I could never figure out exactly how to keep the Sabbath in a modern world. If Sabbath work was forbidden (except for medical work, of course, since Jesus healed on the Sabbath), how did I justify the role of "unbelievers" who manned the power houses, the police and fire stations, and the pharmacies where, if we faced a medical crisis, we could obtain life-saving drugs (on an emergency basis only)? How could I, in good conscience, even hope that "unbelievers" would eventually come into "the truth" if it meant all of modern society would shut down if everyone kept the fourth commandment properly?

No one could answer my questions. Ellen White gave guidelines for proper Sabbath observance, but she advocated having all work done, the shoes shined, the clothes laid out, the baths taken, and the Sabbath food cooked one-half hour before Friday sundown. Those guidelines were clearly beyond my ability to accomplish. The Old Testament spoke against carrying a burden, doing one's own pleasure, lighting a fire, leaving one's tent, and warned against turning one's foot away from the Sabbath—on penalty of death. Nothing addressed my larger questions about Sabbath's implications for modern society in general.

I remember feeling superior to those who, like some of my mother's cousins, observed all the Old Testament feast days with their Herbert W. Armstrong Worldwide Church of God congregations. I was ignorant of the fact that their total immersion into feasting and "sabbathing" was more

consistent than was my sabbatarianism. Moreover, I was completely unaware of the truth about Jesus fulfilling the law.

I was a neurotic mess, feeling simultaneously guilt-ridden and superior to the benighted souls who didn't have "the truth."

Recently I discovered that Paul specifically addressed people like I was who believed the law, taught the law, felt superior to those who didn't "keep" the law, yet failed to keep it themselves:

"But if you... are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?... You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?" (Romans 2:17-23).

My rationalizing over scrubbing the floor during Sabbath hours had been sin. The Sabbath came with clear commands and consequences, and the Law left no room for rationalizing Sabbath-keeping for a modern society. Furthermore, the law also demanded observing the feast days as well.

I had no business teaching seventh-day Sabbath-keeping to people when I couldn't even keep the day properly. In fact, by doing so, I was actually dishonoring God myself. The law included no clause for doing the best I could; it demanded absolute obedience (Gal. 3:10-12).

What a relief when I learned that Jesus keeps the new covenant for me! "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises" (Hebrews 8:6).

Jesus fulfilled all the shadows of the Sabbath and is the reality behind every old covenant feast. He alone is holy, and in Him we experience true celebration and Sabbath rest (Heb. 4:1-12)!

**In this issue** Dale Ratzlaff examines the growing movement of observing the Old Testament feasts. Dennis Palmer writes of his long fight with the shadows of Colossians 2, and Jeff and Sondra Brickell tell their story of leaving Adventism, becoming immersed in the Hebrew Roots movement, and finally finding freedom in Jesus. Cora Holder compares her experience with an unexpected road closure to her journey out of Adventism.

We pray that you will come to know the reality of Jesus who is the Substance behind all the Sabbaths of the Old Testament (Matt. 11:28)! †

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## Is Sunday sacred?

**Question:** What do you say to people who advocate Sunday “sacredness” or keeping Sunday as a measure of one’s gratitude to God?

**Answer:** This is a good question, and the answer has many facets. Consider the following points:

It is necessary for Christians to have a planned time for corporate worship, instruction, celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and fellowship.<sup>1</sup> From its inception the Gentile church has chosen to meet on the first day of the week in honor of the resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

There is biblical support in the New Testament for giving special attention to the first day of the week. Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday morning.<sup>3</sup> Every appearance of the risen Christ—when a time is mentioned—occurred on the first day of the week.<sup>4</sup> (Notice especially John 20:19-23.)

**The new covenant focuses on the realities of the gospel—the life, death and resurrection of Christ and the resulting forgiveness of sin and new life in the Spirit. Ritual is diminished. Realities are exalted. Therefore, it is expected that little attention is given to the details of observance. The focus is on Christ.**

There is biblical support in the Old Testament for giving special attention to the first day of the week—the day after the Sabbath<sup>5</sup>, or the “eighth day”<sup>6</sup> which was associated with completion, worship, and freedom.

Unlike the Old Testament Sabbath, the first day of the week in the New Testament carries no baggage as to how it should be celebrated. The early church met on the first day of the week in honor of the resurrection,<sup>7</sup> to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, and to receive Christian instruction.<sup>8</sup> However, little else is mentioned.

The new covenant focuses on the realities of the gospel—the life, death and resurrection of Christ and the resulting forgiveness of sin and new life in the Spirit.<sup>9</sup> Ritual is diminished. Realities are exalted. Therefore, it is expected that little attention is given to the details of observance. The focus is on Christ.

Those who advocate the “sacredness” or the “keeping” of Sunday place themselves back under the dilemma of, “How?” Just how does one demonstrate his/her keeping? In what way does behavior correlate with sacredness? Who sets the guidelines? How does one know when he/she has kept Sunday appropriately? One well-known Sabbatarian



More answers can be found in Dale Ratzlaff’s four books available on the web at [LifeAssuranceMinistries.com](http://LifeAssuranceMinistries.com) or by phoning (800) 355-7073.

theologian, after reviewing *Sabbath in Christ*, said it is important in this fast-paced world to have a day dedicated to rest. I responded in an email asking, “If I choose Sunday as my day of rest, would that meet this ‘Sabbath requirement?’” He responded, “Yes.”

It is no longer “1–6 for us; the 7th is for Jesus,” but as Christ becomes our Sabbath rest, every day is for Jesus. This truth needs to be deeply impressed upon our minds and lived out in every aspect of our everyday lives. In every encounter with others we have an opportunity to be a reflection of Christ to them.<sup>10</sup> In every activity of work we have an opportunity to do our work as unto the Lord.<sup>11</sup> Living in the reality of the new covenant, our focus is no longer on our observance of rituals—no matter what the ritual may be—but on the realities of the gospel.

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God” (2 Cor. 2:14–17). †

### Endnotes

1. Heb. 11:23–25; Acts 2:23–27.
2. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2.
3. Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1.
4. Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:2, 9; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1; Jn. 20:19.
5. Lev. 23:11, 16.
6. Ex. 22:30; Lev. 9:1, 12:3; 14:10, 23; 15:14; 15:29; 22:27; 23:36, 39; Num. 6:10; 7:54; 29:35; 1 Ki. 8:66; 2 Chron. 7:9; Neh. 8:18; Ez. 43:27.
7. Often at dawn. See Walter A. Ellwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 649, 650.
8. At times the early church met at dawn and then reassembled later to have a meal of communion. Ibid. *The Didache*, an early manual of church instruction directed Christians to assemble on the Lord’s day to worship, Ibid. p. 648.
9. 1 Cor. 15:1–5; Rom. 15:16–19; 2 Tim. 2:8; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14.
10. Rom. 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:13; 15:5; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 32; Phil. 2:8; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24.
11. Col. 3:23

Dale Ratzlaff

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Psalms 51:12,13

# From Tor New

The Bible worker studying with us explained a teaching given in 1888 which the church had rejected but was now being recognized.

As I listened to him, the focus sounded good, better than the one I'd grown up hearing. I had the sense I was going toward something new, not returning to the past. The thought of looking for truth outside Adventism scared and overwhelmed me.

Jeff and I were baptized as members together. At first he believed the teachings because they seemed to all fit together like a puzzle. But he never could fully accept Ellen White as a prophet, and he could never get a satisfactory answer from anyone to questions such as, "Why keep the weekly Sabbath and not the other Sabbath days God commanded?" and "Why is Sunday worship a pagan practice, yet Christmas is okay?" He joined me for lack of a better alternative at the time.

After a few years of trying to be good Adventists, something prompted me to start a serious study of the New Testament. This may have been the first time I ever read it straight through. I was amazed at the contrast in focus I perceived between the New Testament and Adventism. It seemed fairly obvious the message of the early church was simply Jesus. I was shocked to see in Ephesians the true seal of God was the Holy Spirit. These verses jumped off the pages at me. The pivotal liberating truth came with the book of Hebrews. I realized Jesus was not investigating anyone in a heavenly sanctuary but had finished his atonement, once and for all, at the cross. I relegated the investigative judgment to the false teaching file, which also proved fatal to my already wavering belief in Mrs. White as a true prophet. This insight in Hebrews poured into my heart with an incredible joy I will never forget. We soon asked for our names to be removed from the church books. No one confronted us with a plea to return to the truth.

While we no longer believed Sabbath observance was the seal of God, we still wondered how a believer should relate to the law. We could not seem to get a grasp on the new covenant. We thought it only meant we received grace and forgiveness, but we still looked to the law for our standard of Christian obedience. I diligently studied and prayed over many issues as we were leaving the church, going through the fire of

### Sondra's Story

I grew up in a Seventh-day Adventist family, and my father was a pastor until I was about ten years old. I'm not sure which came first, Desmond Ford at Glacier View, or my parents' divorce, but one or both of these events marked the end of his ministry.

He shared with me his disagreement in the key doctrines of the church and also the evidence about Ellen White's plagiarism.

The ensuing years in Adventist schools during which I lived with my mother never persuaded me of the church's claims. With doubt firmly implanted, my foundation cracked, yet I didn't choose to abide in Christ. As I grew older, I developed a rebellious, self-destructive lifestyle, but God did bring me back to Him a few years later after he brought Jeff and me together. We began to attend church early in our marriage, and I finally experienced true repentance and faith in Christ.

After being disappointed by the first church we attended, I went running back to the familiar: a small Seventh-day Adventist church in a nearby town. I tried to weigh out what I'd learned from my father and wasn't sure which side to believe.

# ah-observant to discovering the Covenant

JEFF AND SONDRA BRICKELL

fear and doubt, begging God to lead me because I didn't trust myself or anyone else. But after leaving Adventism, it seems we abandoned our dependence on God and became confident we could find our own way.

At first we tried different Sabbatarian groups and found them all painfully cold and dead. We finally started attending a Bible Church, but it seemed so simple and boring to me. Looking back I realize the element I missed was the feeling of having a distinctive, special message other Christians didn't have, but everyone needed to know. The gospel alone wasn't enough. For me, obeying the law was driven by a need to be more right than other Christians.

Soon after we started attending the Bible church, a friend introduced us to a group he had been attending which observed the feasts of Israel. I'd recently begun learning about modern Israel, so it piqued my interest. The law from the Jewish perspective had a great deal of life and celebration to it, unlike the attitude of somber duty I'd been used to. I found this emphasis appealing, and I hoped this could be the answer we were looking for. To clarify, this was a group of Gentile Christians believing they had a right to call themselves Jews through belief in the Jewish Messiah. We now refer to it as the Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) in order to distinguish it from our Messianic Jewish brothers who do have a clear picture of the new covenant, yet still enjoy their rich heritage.

What started out as an optional lifestyle soon turned into an obligation of the Sinai covenant and the whole law. We became "Torah observant" and nearly as strict as many orthodox Jews. Space does not permit recounting all the negative spiritual fallout of choosing this path. We traded the reality of Christ for His shadow.

Five years later, my soul was in agony, and I had no idea why. I thought I was right, so I assumed I just needed to try harder. In December of 2006 I determined to once again seek God as I had done in the days of questioning Adventism. Daily fellowship with God through prayer and the Word had disappeared from my walk. Like a person clinging to a limb on the edge of a cliff, I clawed my way back to firm ground, and a firm hand pulled me up. Every day new life breathed into my soul, and once again, God answered His promise of sending His Spirit as a teacher. I became keenly sensitive to all the ways we were

denying Christ in our teaching and focus, yet claiming to be His followers. I read the Sermon on the Mount and realized we weren't following Jesus at all. About two months into my renewed Christian walk, God gave us an incredible gift by opening my husband's eyes to more than either of us had ever been able to understand.

## Jeff's Story

I was exposed to the Worldwide Church of God in my early 20's through my father. From a young age I had a fascination with mysterious, spiritual ideas, so I found the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong intriguing. As I studied his material, I believed that no one I knew was able to prove it wrong. I placed it on the back burner of my mind but continued to acquire a large library of his writings. Every now and then I would study them, dabbling with various ideas.

A few years after leaving Adventism we went through a period of financial struggle. I began to wonder if I wasn't experiencing financial success because I wasn't obeying everything I'd believed God wanted me to do. This thinking began our journey into the Hebrew Roots Movement. We knew of a group through a friend of ours, so I called and asked if we could visit the congregation with him. We immediately fell in love with the group and the message of the movement: the restoration of the ways of God in an immoral, pagan culture.

Sondra and I decided that we were going to live out this new lifestyle of keeping the Torah. After nearly a year, there were enough people interested in our own area that we felt a desire to start a group of our own, thinking we could avoid some of the negative pitfalls we'd already encountered. We did not want our group to be legalistic, and anyone would be welcome to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

**Jeff and Sondra Brickell** live near Fort Worth, Texas with their four children. Jeff is a finish carpenter, and Sondra enjoys teaching their children at home. They are members of Northwest Bible Church in Fort Worth.



DENNIS PALMER

# Waging war with SHADOWS

## Colossians 2:16–17



**Dennis Palmer** grew up in the Christian Church but converted to Adventism in his teens. He attended Union College, a Seventh-day Adventist school in Lincoln Nebraska, where he majored in theology. In 1978, just before he graduated from Union College, he became a Seventh Day Baptist. He is currently the pastor of the Seventh Day Baptist Church in Lake Elsinore, California. Dennis has notified his denominational leaders that he has plans to leave the denomination because of his conviction that the New Testament teaches that Sabbath rest is found and fulfilled in Jesus.

**“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”**

**T**he last bastion remained before I could declare victory over the non-Sabbatarian perspective! For over thirty years I have been waging war against the non-Sabbatarians, and my exegetical battalions ceaselessly bombed the mighty fortress of Col. 2:16-17. They are all wiped out! Brave reinforcements were added and blasted away. I attended three leading seminaries,<sup>1</sup> one university, and one Adventist institution, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska, with the hope of finding the exegetical tools that would give me an understanding of Col. 2:16-17. Every time, however, the tables would be turned. I would graduate from an institution of higher learning with my Sabbatarian position severely weakened. Even while at Union College, I was devastated that my teachers did not have the exegetical answers to harmonize Col. 2:16-17 with a Sabbatarian perspective. Beaten, bombed, shelled, maimed, and defeated, I will write my war memoirs making mention of the five strategies I used in attempting to defeat the clear teaching of Col. 2:16-17.

### **Initial Strategy: Read “Sabbaths” as Annual Sabbaths**

In 1972, while still in high school, I became a Sabbath-keeper despite resistance from family, friends, and teachers. I accepted the standard interpretation of the Adventist Church that the word “Sabbaths” in Col. 2:16 refers to annual Sabbaths. The argument was simplistic: the “Sabbaths” were those “which are a shadow of things to come” (Col. 2:17), i.e., the annual Sabbaths.<sup>2</sup> The weekly Sabbaths were not shadows and therefore Paul could not have been referring to these Sabbaths. I reasoned that Col. 2:16-17 should be harmonized

**I began to realize that too often denominational distinctives, particularly those within the Adventist Church (e.g., the investigative judgment), were vulnerable to attacks because they were not grounded in Scripture.**

with my understanding of all the other Sabbath references. Hence, I superimposed the seventh-day Sabbath perspective upon the text rather than jettison my Sabbatarian belief.

The appeal to the analogy of Scripture, however, seemed weak to me because there were military posts along the way that did not support the advancing Sabbatarian position. These military posts seemed less fortified (Romans 14; Gal. 4:9-10; Eph. 2:15). I reasoned that if I could kill the exegetical arguments in Col. 2:16 as presented by the anti-Sabbatarian brigades, I could send in exegetical tactical units that would storm these last outposts (Romans 14; Gal. 4:9-10; Eph. 2:15) giving the Sabbatarian platoon a decisive victory over what I then believed were the forces of darkness.

My euphoria began to crack when I read Samuele Bacchiocchi's *From Sabbath to Sunday*. Even though Bacchiocchi was attempting to defend the Sabbatarian position from a historical perspective, friendly fire from his regiment wounded my defense of the Sabbath. He pointed out that the logical progression of "annual, monthly, and weekly" sacred times was backed up by similar sequences in the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Col. 2:16 would contain a "needless repetition" if "Sabbaths" referred to annual Sabbaths because the word "festival" has reference to the annual Sabbaths.<sup>4</sup> Eight times the Old Testament groups together festivals (usually called "feasts"), new moons, and Sabbaths (1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Neh. 10:33; Is. 1:13; Ezek. 45:17; Hosea 2:11). Each time it is plain that the Bible is speaking of the annual, monthly, and weekly sacred times. The "feasts" within the enumeration always refer to the annual Sabbaths, and the word "Sabbaths" within that context refers to the weekly Sabbath. Sometimes the sequence is reversed (weekly, monthly, and yearly, e.g., 1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Neh. 10:33; Is. 1:13). Two enumerations are close parallels to Col. 4:16 and follow yearly, monthly, and weekly pattern:

Then it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offering, at the feasts, the New Moons, and Sabbaths, and at all the appointed seasons of the house of Israel (Ezek. 45:17).

I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her New Moons, her Sabbaths—all her appointed feasts (Hosea 2:11).

The triple sequence of festivals, New Moons, and Sabbaths is a summary of all sacred times.

This is obvious from the summations made in the above texts, e.g., "all her appointed feasts" (Hosea 2:11). This summation of all of Israel's sacred times is obviously in the triple sequence in Col. 2:16. Therefore, the word "Sabbaths" in Col. 2:16 cannot be reinterpreted as annual Sabbaths because to do so would eradicate the summary nature of the phrase "festival, new moons, and Sabbaths." Thus, the "Sabbaths" in Col. 2:16 are weekly Sabbaths.

With this tragic defeat, I began to realize that too often denominational distinctives, particularly those within the Adventist Church (e.g., the investigative judgment), were vul-

nerable to attacks because they were not grounded in Scripture. Denominational leaders often have a theological agenda, and they form their conclusion before doing an inductive study of the text. Their purpose, unfortunately, is often to support the teaching of their church enough to stay within the comfort zone of the denomination. Too often in doing theology they will make a downward exegetical spiral in trying to arrive at a difficult doctrinal distinctive. Early in my college life, I decided I would not take this dishonest exegetical route. I figured somehow I could exegetically justify my traditional Sabbatarian position, but the results were thirty years of wandering in the exegetical wilderness.

**Desperate Strategy: See the "Shadow" as a Positive New Testament Feature**

In despair, I fell back on Bacchiocchi's view "that the Sabbath can legitimately be regarded as the 'shadow' or fitting symbol of the present and future blessing of salvation."<sup>5</sup> I could see plainly from Col. 2:16-17 that the Sabbath is a shadow of grace. It is not the means of grace, but has the qualities of a shadow, viz., it "stands for the dim representation of the real things."<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 4:1-11 shows that the Sabbath foreshadows a spiritual rest that is in Christ. However, what bothered me and did not seem to trouble Bacchiocchi was the notion that by designating the Sabbath a "shadow" I was inherently classifying the Sabbath with the other ceremonial observances. The implications from Heb. 8:5; 10:1 is that a "shadow" is an Old Testament ritual that has its fulfillment in Christ, and consequently the ritual aspect is no longer obligatory. How could I say that the New Moons and annual Sabbaths are shadows and thus no longer mandated while at the same time holding that the seventh-day Sabbaths are shadows that are a mandate for all of humanity? The inconsistency was driving me senseless, and so I added another spin to my interpretation of the text.

**Defense Strategy: Redefine the Greek word Translated "Judge" to "Condemn"**

As a Sabbatarian, I found it hard not to pass judgment on others who, in my mind, were overtly breaking the Sabbath. I reasoned that if they really had a close relationship with God, they would keep the Sabbath. While driving over a toll bridge on the Sabbath, I inferred, "If these people would stop working on Sabbath, I would not have to pay to get to church or put up with all this traffic." I blamed my problems on non-Sabbatarians, and in doing so, I was passing judgment upon them. In some ways I saw them as less spiritual for I believed that they were constantly sinning on the Sabbath by refusing to keep the day. Little did I realize that I was sinning every time I passed judgment on my brothers and sisters in Christ for not observing the Sabbath.

When I found out that Col. 2:16 referred to the weekly Sabbath, I became less judgmental of the Sabbath or non-

Sabbath-keeping practices of others. However, there was still a covert operation of passing judgment in my heart. I was obviously participating in Sabbath evangelism, and in order to do so, I had to pass judgment that observing the seventh-day Sabbath was better than observing Sunday. In order to justify this slight degree of judgment, I attempted to read the Greek word that is normally translated “judge” (κρινωνφ) in Col. 2:16 as “condemn.” Hence, the translation, “So let no one condemn (κρινεωτφ) you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths.” I tried to substantiate this reading because elsewhere in the New Testament (John 3:17-18; Rom. 14:22) this word is translated “condemn.” However, in the vast majority of cases, this word is translated “judge” (Matt. 7:1; 19:28; Rom. 2:1, 3, 12; 1 Cor. 4:5; 5:3, 12; James 2:12; 1 Peter 1:17; 2:23; Rev. 6:10). Furthermore, the translation “condemn” in Col. 2:16 does not fit the context, for who goes about condemning others for their particular Sabbath practices? This would obviously be a very harsh judgment. Furthermore, it does not solve the most troublesome part of the text that says the Sabbath is “a shadow of things to come” (Col. 2:17).

Had I understood the radical nature of the old covenant and the newness of the new covenant, I would have seen a contrast between Num. 15:32-36 (the story of the man who was stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath) and Col. 2:17. The death penalty attached to the Mosaic covenant calls for the passing of judgment on overt acts that violated the Sabbath (Ex. 31:15). The newness of the new covenant says, “Do not pass judgment on those who do not observe the Sabbath.”

### **Offensive Strategy: Ambushing and Outmaneuvering My Non-Sabbatarian Opponent**

In reexamining Col. 2:16-17, I sought to ambush my non-Sabbatarian opponent. My strategy was to show that the pronoun “which” refers to anything but the Sabbath. I almost succeeded in my efforts. I made a tentative translation of Col. 2:16-17: “Therefore, do not let anyone judge you in meat (offerings) and in drink (offerings), either in respect of a festival, or a new moon, or Sabbaths, which things [that is, the sacrifices] are a shadow of things coming, but the body (is) of Christ.” I concluded that the two words βρφωσει and ποωσει refer to the meat and drink offerings in the Old Testament. This decision was made based on the premise that Hebrews 9:10 (cf., Ezek. 45:17) uses both words together in connection with sacrifices. However, the pros and cons of this part of my interpretation of Col. 2:16 are beyond the scope of this article, and whatever viewpoint one adopts has little to do with the settling of the Sabbath issue.<sup>7</sup>

Unwittingly I made the relative pronoun (“which”) refer only to the first half of Col. 2:6: “Therefore, do not let anyone judge you in meat (offerings) and in drink (offerings).” I had ambushed that part of the brigade allowing for the Sabbath troops to be set free from the stinging attack that the pronoun (“which”) was making on the seventh-day Sabbath. This interpretation freed the “Sabbath” from an ignoble connection with

the bygone shadows. In order to remain a Sabbath keeper, I felt I had to disassociate the Sabbath from the shadows because Heb. 8:5; 10:1 uses “shadow” as a reference to the tabernacle and its prescribed rituals. In many ways, I was thinking just like Frank B. Holbrook: “The apostle is not attempting to classify all elements of the sanctuary worship as shadows. . . . Paul’s argument is that the sanctuary system—as a system—was ‘a shadow of things to come.’”<sup>8</sup> However, God did not give me any peace with this interpretation. I first realized that the gender and number of the pronoun “which” was neuter plural as also was the word σαωββατφν. The pronoun was in agreement with the near antecedent, “Sabbaths.” The pronoun is not in agreement with βρφωσει and ποωσει (Col. 2:16a) which are both singular in number and feminine in gender. The most logical conclusion is that the relative pronoun refers definitely to the Sabbath including also the whole series of Jewish sacred times and the possible reference to meat and drink sacrifices. I was humiliated and completely defeated. For years I lived in utter hermeneutical chaos until I discovered the wonderful news of the new covenant as the solution to the Sabbath dilemma. My Sabbatarian position was a shattered pot, but the Lord put together those pieces in my life and now my theology is stronger and truer to the Word of God.

### **Final Strategy: Define Sabbath as the Gnostic Sabbath**

A widely held view of scholars is that the philosophy of “empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col. 2:8; cf., 2:18-23) is an incipient Gnosticism consisting of a fusion of ancient mysticism, Hellenistic speculation, and an old covenant Jewish mentality. Any material substance including the body was deemed as evil, and the all-spirit god was seen as totally apart from the material universe. This philosophy flowered during the second century. Although the entire movement is so amorphous that it is difficult to describe, one major strand of Gnosticism claimed that a long series of hierarchical emanations called “aeons” descended from an all-moral, spirit god. These “aeons” were known as angels, and the nearest one to God was the most pure, and the others were progressively inferior. Somewhere along the string of “aeons” was Christ who is regarded as a subordinate being known as a “Demiurge.”

With this background, I knew that I could convince others that the word “Sabbaths” (Col. 2:16-17) referred to the Gnostic Sabbath, and therefore had nothing to do with the biblical Sabbath. However, I was not swayed by the scholarly arguments put forth that “Sabbaths” in Col. 2:16 were Gnostic. The principal reason is that “Sabbaths” are defined as bygone shadows: “Which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (2:17). If Paul were writing against Gnostic sabbaths, he surely would not call them “shadows.” How could the Gnostic sabbaths be seen as a Jewish shadow revealing Christ? To call them shadows would be to blend a wonderful Jewish symbol with a pagan Gnostic day of observance.



**When I hear Adventists claim that the Sabbath will be the great end-time testing issue and that Sunday-keepers will receive the mark of the beast, I wag my head in shame to think that I once belonged to a group that arrogantly placed the Sabbath before the gospel.**

The attempts to redefine the “Sabbaths” in Col. 2:16 as Gnostic sabbaths are precarious. Samuele Bacchiocchi sees the “Sabbaths” in Col. 2:16 as days for the “veneration of ‘the elements of the universe.’”<sup>9</sup> He argues that this type of homage would “affect the observance of the Sabbath and of sacred times, since it was commonly believed that the astral powers, which direct the stars control both the calendar and human lives.”<sup>10</sup>

The purpose of the Sabbath would be changed if Paul were speaking of a Gnostic sabbath in Col. 2:16. However, Bacchiocchi’s view is an argument from silence. The Bible never explicitly states that the Sabbath is being observed in honor of the elements of the universe. The phrase, “festival or a new moon or Sabbaths” (2:16), sets the Sabbath among other Jewish festivals, and as we have previously noted, the phrase is nearly frozen for those festival days are used in that order or at least together in the Old Testament. If Paul were introducing a new type of Sabbath that he wanted Christians to refrain from observing, he would not likely lump it together with the other Jewish holy days.

If the “Sabbaths” in Col. 2:16 were Gnostic Sabbaths, then there would be a Sabbath to celebrate the creation of a material universe. The Gnostics abhorred the idea of creation. They held that God did not create the universe and is remote from it. One might argue the reverse, that the Gnostics (especially in the second century) did not observe the Sabbath because it was a celebration of God’s creation. Gnostics and people influenced by that philosophy may have been attracted to the observance of the first day of the week because of the Gnostic idea that the material world is evil. However, this perspective is not known from the Scriptures, and Paul’s advice is not to dispute over whether one observes or doesn’t observe the Sabbath (Rom. 14:5-6).

There is probably some link between the observance of Sabbath and the philosophy in Colossians which is commonly seen as the beginning stages of Gnosticism. However, the link is not as strong as Bacchiocchi makes it out to be. The Jewish component to the philosophy of incipient Gnosticism was that out of a love for asceticism some Gnostics observed Jewish rituals such as festivals, Sabbaths, circumcision (Gal. 2:11-12), rabbinical regulations (2:9, 21), dietary measures (2:16, 21), and extreme forms of fasting whereby the body was neglected (2:23). The possible observance of the Sabbath by Gnostics does not inherently change the character of the Sabbath that was instituted by God. Since the “Sabbaths” are treated as Jewish in Col. 2:16, it is better to see the deviant philosophy in Colossians as the embracement of the Jewish Sabbath rather than its complete distortion. Although some Gnostics may have distorted the Sabbath, Paul treats the Sabbath in Col. 2:16 as the Jewish Sabbath. We therefore have no grounds to contend that Paul is simply saying, “Let no man judge you about not observing the Gnostic Sabbath.”<sup>11</sup>

To counter the Colossian heresy, Paul emphasized that Christ is all-sufficient and that Christians are “complete in Him.”

(Col. 2:10). In many ways, my attempt to make the Sabbath a universal obligation was a subtle way of saying that Christ was not sufficient. Christ had fulfilled the Sabbath through his death on the cross, but I was blinded to the full implications of that salvific act. When I hear Adventists claim that the Sabbath will be the great end-time testing issue and that Sunday-keepers will receive the mark of the beast, I wag my head in shame to think that I once belonged to a group that arrogantly placed the Sabbath before the gospel.

### Conclusion: A Eulogy

Acknowledging God’s sovereignty, I have laid to rest these five inadequate interpretations of Col. 2:16-17. The center of the text is Christ. He is our Sabbath rest, and He has divinely fulfilled the Sabbath, a symbol of our eternal rest. Sabbath observance had its place in the old dispensation, but now under the new covenant the observance of the weekly Sabbath is no longer prescribed. We are not to pass judgment upon those who do not keep the Sabbath. This is the clear teaching of Col. 2:16-17 that is reiterated in Rom. 14:4-13, but for 30 years I have battled against this obvious conclusion. I have lost that battle!

Now is fallen the Sabbatarian position. Crowned with earthly laurels, his body lies softly in the battle field. The sky shines bright on his blue vestment. He is the fallen hero to all who love to live under the law. But a faded glory is the Sabbath, in the radiance of the new covenant, “a shadow of things to come” (Col. 2:17). †

### Endnotes

1. The graduate schools I attended are as follows: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.), Westminster Theological Seminary (Th.M.), and Biblical Theological Seminary (S.T.M.). I also graduated from San Jose State University (M.L.I.S.) in 1996.
2. Unless stated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*.
3. S. Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), 358-59.
4. *Ibid.*, 60.
5. *Ibid.*, 359.
6. S. J. Kistemaker, “Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews, New Testament Commentary*, W. Hendrikson and S. Kistemaker (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984): 272.
7. The traditional interpretation is built on the assumption that the phrase, “in food or in drink” (Col. 2:16) refers to Jewish ascetic practices. However, the Mosaic Law had few restrictions with regard to drink. A person who took the vow of a Nazarite would separate himself or herself from intoxicating drink, vinegar, or any food or drink made from grapes (Num. 6:3). Drinking vessels and what is in them would become unclean if they came into contact with an animal that dies (Lev. 11:31-34). Furthermore, there are prohibitions against the use of intoxicating drink especially for the priests who ministered in the tabernacle (Lev. 10:9). The latter restriction applies also to elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3:2-3; Titus 2:2-3), and all Christians are to remain sober at all times (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:21). Paul is certainly not saying to avoid passing judgment upon a situation where heavy drinking is taking place. Paul is not telling fathers and mothers not to be concerned if your teenager is drinking!
8. F. Holbrook, “Did the Apostle Paul Abolish the Sabbath?: Colossians 2:14-17 Revisited,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 13 (Autumn 2002), 71.
9. Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 361.
10. *Ibid.*

Are Adventists moving to

# Feast

# keeping?



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DALE RATZLAFF

WITH A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MINISTER

The Lord spoke again to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘The Lord’s appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations— My appointed times are these’” ...So Moses declared to the sons of Israel the appointed times of the Lord.

Leviticus 23:1-2, 44

**T**here has been a slow—some would say insidious—movement growing in the Seventh-day Adventist church. It has been fueled by the Messianic Movement in the Christian world. It started many years ago as a ripple, beginning with some independent groups, but the ripple is a growing wave, attracting increasing numbers of people within Adventism.

This movement has to do with keeping the feasts given to Israel. Mainline Seventh-day Adventists have held that the rituals of sacrifice and feast-keeping were done away with at the cross, but the Ten Commandments are still binding. Feast-keeping Seventh-day Adventists, however, believe that only the sacrifices came to an end at the death of Christ and that the feasts, the hundreds of statutes and judgments, including the Ten Commandments, must be kept today. In practice, though, they recognize there must be some exceptions. John Vandenburg writes in his book, *Holy History With the Commandments, Statutes and Judgments*,

Since the sacrificial system was fulfilled at the cross, there is no need to include the statutes of sacrifice; therefore, they have been eliminated except in such instances where eliminating them might cause the loss of the meaning of another statute. Those statutes that have to do with the church's execution of punitive judgment have also been eliminated. The state governments have assumed this right; therefore, such execution of physical punishment is left with the civil government.<sup>1</sup>

John Vandenburg has mailed his book to large numbers of Adventist homes in North America. Twice a year he hosts one of the larger feast gatherings near Tera Bella, California, with 150 to 250 people attending. His camp meetings have attracted some well-known Adventists as speakers including Dr. Mike Casey, Alan Fine, Hugo Gambetta, Charles Morton, Jeff Peppinger, Samuel Pipim, David Pogge, Patricia Robertson, Mary Lou Stollenmaier, Ted Tesner, Stephen Wallace, and Lewis Walton.<sup>2</sup> There are many other feast camp meetings around the country, but many people who are unable to travel keep the feasts at home or in small groups.

Among these various groups there is a vast difference in belief. Some believe that all the hundreds of statutes must be kept, and others believe only selected ones apply. Then there are those who argue over the exact dates on which to keep each of the feasts. Some are very adamant in using the barley harvest to define the date for the beginning of "God's holy year." Quite a few Seventh-day Adventist "feast-keepers" are now proclaiming that the Sabbath must be kept according to the "new moons" calendar and boldly state that most Seventh-day Adventists are keeping the wrong day for Sabbath.

Others are making statements that, since they are living in the "antitypical day of Atonement," all intimate sexual relationships between husbands and wives must now stop until Jesus comes. This same idea is applied if one desires to be one of the hundred and forty-four thousand who will be pure to finish the work of preaching the gospel to the world.<sup>3</sup>

Then there are those who believe that they not only should observe the feasts, statutes, and judgments, but they should also dress and look like Jews, with the yarmulke, or skull cap, on the head, the prayer belt, black clothes for men, unshaved beard during holy days, and the wearing of the prayer shawl, among dozens of other Jewish dress customs. With so many differing practices going on, much confusion exists among the different feast-keeping groups.

### **Confusion among Adventist leaders on the feasts**

Feast-keeping is becoming an issue within the Adventist church. Some church leaders are writing articles refuting the "keeping of the feasts." Before he died, Joe Crews wrote a little booklet against feast observance. Doug Bachelor, of Amazing Facts Ministry, has written a booklet and reportedly is producing a DVD showing that these feasts are no longer to be observed. Dennis Priebe has a website on the Internet against the keeping of the feasts.<sup>4</sup> Several booklets have been written by different people in the church and circulated among the members to help them understand that feast-keeping is obsolete.

Feast-keepers who are vocal in their churches are being chastised and disfellowshipped while, at the same time, there are conferences of the Seventh-day Adventist Church which are encouraging participation in some of the Jewish beliefs in order to appeal to the many Jewish communities scattered in different parts of the U.S., and in some foreign countries. In 2004 an article in the *Adventist Review* stated, "It's encouraging to see that 12 new [Adventist] synagogues have recently been formed in North America. It's a precious experience to participate in a worship service that has its roots in a service similar to the type Jesus attended during His life on earth."

Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, retired Adventist seminary professor, has written two books promoting the value of feast keeping today.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, he uses Ellen White to support his conclusions including the following statements:

In her book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen White devotes a whole chapter to "The Annual Feasts." Reflecting on their value for Israelites and Christians today, she writes: "Well would it be for the people of God at the present time to have a Feast of Tabernacles—a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to them. As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God had wrought for their fathers, and His miraculous preservation of them during their journeying from Egypt, so should we gratefully call to mind the various ways He has devised for bringing us out from the world, and from the darkness of error, into the precious light of His grace and truth." In this statement Ellen White clearly recommends the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles by the church today.<sup>6</sup>

Bacchiocchi also states,

I came to realize that the continuity or discontinuity of the Feasts is determined not by their connection with the sacrificial system, but by the scope of their typology. If the Feasts had typified only the redemptive accomplishments of Christ's first

Advent, then obviously their function would have terminated at the Cross. But, if the Feasts foreshadow also the consummation of redemption to be accomplished by Christ at His second Advent, then their function continues in the Christian church, though with a new meaning and manner of observance.<sup>7</sup>

The celebration of the great saving acts of God commemorated by the annual Feasts can bring about worship renewal by making our worship experience God-centered rather than self-centered.

The redemptive acts of God are commemorated in the Bible weekly through the Sabbath and annually through the Feasts. The latter fulfilled three basic functions which are still relevant for Christians today. First, the Feasts commemorated the past mighty works of God. Second, they anticipated the future divine deliverance. Third, they motivated the people to live in the present obediently before a holy God. These functions are still relevant for Christians today.<sup>8</sup>

From the *Pacific Union Recorder*, September, 2007, we find this statement:

When Ruth Limbert, a Jewish Adventist from South America, called the Pacific Union Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department to ask about the possibility of having a Passover Seder in Los Angeles, little did she realize what would develop. More than 70 people met in a Los Angeles hotel for a catered Passover meal and celebration of the Festival of Freedom, with special guest leading the service—Pastor Richard Elofer from Israel.

Elofer urged the group to continue meeting at least once a month, possibly on Friday evenings. The PARL department followed up with leaders of the Southern California Conference and with Pastor Will McCall of the Canoga Park Church, and plans were developed for ongoing meetings. The first Friday evening program in May commemorated the holiday of Shavuot, or the Feast of Weeks.

...The new group will be called Beth Ohavey Torah, which means "the house of those who love Torah." Torah refers to the five books of Moses, but also more generally to God's instruction.

...Seventh-day Adventists who attend will gain a deeper appreciation for their own faith and an increased under-

standing of Scripture, which is rooted in Jewish ideas and customs.

Bob Trefz, who publishes an independent newsletter called *Cherith Chronicles*, had this to say.

In Seventh-Day (sic) Adventism particularly, at every level now, from Jewish-Adventist scholars writing books, to Jewish-Adventist synagogues being planted at Andrews University and in the field, to Adventist youth being educated in Judaism at Jewish synagogues, to infiltrators coming to historic camp meetings advocating the feast days, wearing Rabbinic prayer shawls and praying to Yeshua, the battle is on.<sup>9</sup>

Most Seventh-day Adventists who oppose the feasts may not realize it, but their arguments fall on deaf ears of the feast-keepers for two reasons. First, there are Adventist leaders on both sides of the issue creating much confusion. Second, the feast-keepers can show from Scripture that one cannot separate the feasts, the hundreds of statutes, and the judgments from the Ten Commandments as they are all "The Law of the Lord." Feast-keeping, they would say, actually supports the concept of "keeping the commandments of God." Historically the Seventh-day Adventist church has held that of the 613 commandments in the Torah, only the Ten Commandments survived the cross. However, Adventism has no good biblical argument against the feast-keepers since the church has a strong emphasis on keeping the "commandments of God." The Ten Commandments are part of the whole law, or Torah—the one "Law of the Lord." Many believe that the Sabbath and the feasts stand or fall together. In fact Dr. Bacchiocchi makes the following supportive statement:

"What is true for the Sabbath is also true for the annual feasts. The weekly Sabbath and the annual feasts are grouped together in Leviticus 23 presumably because they both were *moadim*, that is, divinely "appointed times" with a prophetic significance. Terry Hulbert emphasizes this point, saying, "The reason for the introduction of the Sabbath [in Leviticus 23] was that both the feasts and the Sabbath were *moadim*. Both were appointed times. The feasts had been discussed elsewhere (e.g. Exodus 12 and Leviticus 16) and the Sabbath often had been mentioned before. But in Leviticus 23, they are specially and specifically treated as *moadim*. This phenomenon can only be explained as revealing a special characteristic common to both feasts and Sabbath. This characteristic is that, although each had real historical import for Israel, they also had real prophetic significance."<sup>10</sup>

### **The feasts of the Torah—are they for the Church?**

In this section our task is to determine if the feasts given to Israel should be celebrated by Christians today. At the outset we recognize that there are at least four possible answers.

**One:** the feasts should be kept by all Christians today. These feasts are designed to bring meaning to God's saving activities in the past and to prepare Christians for the future acts of God including the final judgment and second coming of Christ. They should be kept as part of the sanctified life in obedience to God's law, i.e. the Torah.

**Feast-keepers who are vocal in their churches are being chastised and disfellowshipped while, at the same time, there are conferences of the Seventh-day Adventist Church which are encouraging participation in some of the Jewish beliefs in order to appeal to the many Jewish communities scattered in different parts of the U.S., and in some foreign countries.**

**Two:** Only Jewish Christians should keep the feasts given to Israel as part of their national heritage. Not only should they keep the seven feasts outlined in the Law of Moses, but they should also keep the feast of Purim in remembrance of the deliverance brought by Esther and the feast of Hanukkah in celebration of the cleansing of the sanctuary after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanies.

**Three:** Christians are not required to keep any of the feasts or other rituals of the old covenant but will receive an added blessing if they do.

**Four:** Christians are not required to keep any of the feasts or other rituals of the old covenant as these were designed to commemorate God's saving activities in connection with His covenant with ancient Israel—the old covenant. They can and should be *studied* by Christians today, but their required *observance* may lead to legalism and actually detract from the simple gospel of Christ.

In my study of the material written to support present day feast-keeping,<sup>11</sup> I have found many, if not most, of the writers read into a given feast a meaning that is not obvious in the Old Testament record itself. Sometimes these derived meanings rely on rabbinical interpretations that were added hundreds of years later. How much weight these added meanings should have is a matter of speculation. With few exceptions I have chosen to limit this study to the Scriptures themselves. What follows is not intended to be an in-depth study of the old covenant feasts. Rather, it is a summary of what I consider to be the salient points with supporting references in the footnotes.

### The feast of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

As these two feasts are linked together both in their historical background and their time of celebration, we will consider them together. The origin of these celebrations is found in Exodus 11 and 12 which detail the instruction for these feasts in connection with God's act of delivering Israel from Egyptian bondage. I assume that most of our readers are familiar with these events; if not you may want to read Exodus 10 and 11 and note the many things that pointed forward to Christ. Most of the shadows and symbols, however, could only be rightly interpreted after the Christ event.<sup>12</sup>

In reading these two foundational chapters it becomes obvious that these feasts and rituals were for the members of the old covenant community *only*.

"Now this day [Passover] will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance... whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel... You shall also observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance... whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is an alien or a native of the land. You shall not eat anything

leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread" (Ex 12:14–20).

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat of it; but every man's slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it. A sojourner or a hired servant shall not eat of it (Ex. 12:43–45).

All four Gospels dedicate major emphasis to the last week of Jesus' life which was Passover week. It is clear that all the Gospels see the death of Christ in Passover imagery and thus give *new meaning* to the symbols associated with the Old Testament Passover. In so doing the Gospels see the Christ event as the *true fulfillment* of the Old Testament Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Consider the following:

- Jesus is designated as "the Lamb of God" (Jn. 1:29, 36).
- Jesus is the "bread of life" or the "living bread" (Jn. 6:35, 48, 51).
- We are redeemed with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18, 19).
- Key elements in the Old Testament Passover were the flesh and blood of the lamb. Jesus draws these symbols to Himself. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (Jn. 6:53–56).
- In the Old Testament the blood of the Lamb was applied to the doorposts with a branch of hyssop. On the cross Jesus was given sour wine with a branch of hyssop.
- John sees the fact that in Jesus' death no bones were broken as a fulfillment of the Old Testament instruction that no bones were to be broken in the Passover lamb (Jn. 19:36 cf. Ex. 12:46).

A careful reading of the Gospels indicates that Jesus and His disciples kept the Passover in accordance with the customs for its celebration. However, a central truth taught in the Gospels is that Jesus took the well-known Passover symbols of wine and bread and transformed them into the Lord's Supper. The Passover was only to be celebrated by the covenant community of Israel. If a foreigner wanted to join in this celebration he was only allowed to do so after he was circumcised.<sup>13</sup> However, as the new covenant gospel was to go to all nations,<sup>14</sup> a new ritual was needed that would separate it from the nationalistic Jewish laws. This ritual Jesus inaugurated at the Last Supper. Just as the Old Testament Passover had instructions as to why it should be celebrated and directions in how it should be done and remembered,<sup>15</sup> so Jesus instructed the men who were the founders of the new covenant church. Note the emphasized words below.

"And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the *new covenant* in My blood'" (Lk. 22:19, 20).

Years later Paul gave this instruction:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed

took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor. 11:23–26).

The Old Testament Passover *looked back* to Israel's deliverance from Egypt and dimly looked forward to the coming death of Christ.<sup>16</sup> The Lord's Supper *looks back* to the death of True Lamb of God, who died for the sins of the whole world<sup>17</sup> and *looks forward* to the Second Coming of Christ. The Lord's Supper is now the *repeatable sign* Christians of *all nations* are to celebrate in *remembrance* of Christ's death and foreshadowing His second coming.

Jesus said He would not drink of the fruit of the vine or "eat of it" until the kingdom of God comes.<sup>18</sup> Based upon this statement, some teach that the Passover will be celebrated in heaven<sup>19</sup> and therefore we should also celebrate it today. Paul makes it clear, however, that it is the Lord's Supper that looks forward to the Second Coming of Christ.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor. 11:23–26).

This passage leads us to conclude that Jesus had reference to the Lord's Supper, not the Jewish Passover, when he said he would not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

There are several other references or allusions to the Passover in the New Testament<sup>20</sup> that some interpret to mean the New Testament church observed Passover; therefore, they say, so should we.

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleav-

ened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people (1 Cor. 5:6–9).

The context of this section falls under the heading "Immorality Rebuked" and details how one of the Corinthian "believers" had his father's wife. Apparently, the church was boasting about this sin, and in this context Paul says, "Clean out the old leaven..." meaning sin in the congregation. Some would take, "Therefore, let us celebrate the feast" as instruction that Christians are to continue to keep the Passover. Most, however, believe that Paul is here using the Old Testament Passover as an illustration to help the Corinthian church clean up its act.

Paul's marked use of this imagery at this time has led to the generally accepted conclusion that he wrote this letter shortly before the Jewish Passover season, so that his mind was naturally filled with this imagery... But it would be unsafe to conclude that the old Jewish festivals were still celebrated in the newly formed Christian congregations.<sup>21</sup>

Most likely Paul's use of, "Let us keep the feast," means let us live the Christian life in holy consecration to God.<sup>22</sup>

Some have suggested that Paul may have kept Pentecost in Troas where he stayed seven days.<sup>23</sup>

To use this verse to prove the Passover was to be kept in the young Gentile churches is at best a week assumption. The main point of the passage is that Paul and his associates gathered with this Gentile church on the first day of the week to celebrate the communion service. We must remember that *description* is not *prescription*. The fact that on several occasions in the New Testament Christians spoke in tongues does not mean that all are required to do so. Some of the Corinthians were apparently being baptized for the dead,<sup>24</sup> but this practice is never taught as Christian theology.

To make the celebration of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread mandatory for the church today is contrary to the old covenant instruction that it was only for the nation of Israel, and it undermines the new covenant ordinance, the Lord's Supper.

### The Feast of First Fruits

Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it (Lev. 23:10, 11).

The fulfillment of this feast is the resurrection of Christ who is said to be the first fruits of those who are asleep.<sup>25</sup> In harmony with the fulfillment of this feast, Christ was raised on the day after the Sabbath<sup>26</sup> on the first day of the week.<sup>27</sup>

The term "first fruits" is variously used in the New Testament, but there is no hint that the Christian Church, especially the Gentile Church,<sup>28</sup> was to keep this feast.

**Most Seventh-day Adventists who oppose the feasts may not realize it, but their arguments fall on deaf ears of the feast-keepers for two reasons. First, there are Adventist leaders on both sides of the issue creating much confusion. Second, the feast-keepers can show from Scripture that one cannot separate the feasts, the hundreds of statutes, and the judgments from the Ten Commandments as they are all "The Law of the Lord".**

### **Pentecost—the Feast of Weeks.**

Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks was to be celebrated 50 days after the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.<sup>29</sup> There is no mention of the celebration of this feast in the four Gospels, and its first occurrence in the New Testament is found in Acts 2 in connection with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Luke's custom is to include a time marker in reference to the events he records:<sup>30</sup> "When the day of Pentecost had come."<sup>31</sup> Whether the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost because it was that day, or whether the Holy Spirit was poured out at that time because there were many pilgrims present in Jerusalem and it afforded an excellent opportunity for these people to hear the gospel is a matter of speculation. Probably both are true. Luke specifically records "Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven"<sup>32</sup> and then goes on to list some sixteen groups who were present. It is instructive to note that in Peter's Pentecost sermon there is no mention that the event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was in anyway a fulfillment of the Old Testament day of Pentecost. Peter sees this event as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel.<sup>33</sup>

By 270 A.D. the Jews held a common belief that the Torah was given at Sinai on the day of Pentecost.<sup>34</sup> This tradition may well be true, and if so, there is an interesting contrast between Sinai and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. When the law was given, Israel immediately fell into sin, and 3,000 of the people died.<sup>35</sup> When the Holy Spirit was given, 3,000 people repented, believed and were baptized into the church.<sup>36</sup>

There are a few other isolated references to Pentecost after Acts 2.<sup>37</sup> The feasts then, as our holidays do now, often served to designate seasons of the year. That Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost fits in perfectly with his evangelistic model. First, there would again be people there from all parts of the Roman Empire, and second, he observed Jewish practices when to do so would give him an evangelistic advantage.<sup>38</sup> There is no evidence that the Gentile church was instructed to observe this feast.

### **The Feast of Trumpets**

Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, "In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD" (Lev. 23:24, 25).

Every new moon in Israel began with a special celebration marked by blowing of trumpets.<sup>39,40</sup> This feast was a special new month celebration as it marked with certainty the beginning of the tenth month and thus the Day of Atonement.

Trumpets in the Old Testament signify many things: the beginning of months, when God spoke at Mt. Sinai,<sup>41</sup> a call to battle or victory,<sup>42</sup> a call to stop fighting,<sup>43</sup> a device to get attention,<sup>44</sup> a call of warning,<sup>45</sup> a call to worship<sup>46</sup> and more.

The Feast of Trumpets is not mentioned in the New Testament. However, trumpets are mentioned ten times. Three, perhaps four, of these are in connection with the second coming of Christ;<sup>47</sup> one refers to the Pharisees who sounded a trumpet before they put in their offering,<sup>48</sup> One refers back to Sinai,<sup>49</sup> and six are found in the Revelation with reference to something other than the second coming of Christ.<sup>50</sup>

The Jewish Rabbis suggested that this feast should be identified with the creation of the world. Others taught that it represented a day when mankind would be judged.<sup>51</sup> Many believe that the Feast of Trumpets points to the last-day judgment and/or the rapture. Even if this is so, there is no compelling data to suggest that this feast should be celebrated by the Christian church today. With the very limited information we have regarding the Feast of Trumpets and the plethora of meanings associated with this term, one should not be dogmatic in any modern-day application.

### **The Day of Atonement**

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the LORD. You shall not do any work on this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God" (Lev. 23:26–18).

The term "Day of Atonement" is not mentioned in the New Testament. The ritual of the Day of Atonement as recorded in Leviticus 16 is filled with sin offerings.<sup>52</sup> The purpose of the Day of Atonement was,

...to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once every year (Lev. 16:34).

The NT is filled with verses that clearly state that Christ's death and resurrection brought complete forgiveness of all sin.<sup>53</sup> Further, Scripture makes it clear that this atonement was a once for all event and applies Day of Atonement imagery to the death of Christ.<sup>54</sup>

**We must remember that description is not prescription.**

**The fact that on several occasions in the New Testament**

**Christians spoke in tongues does not mean that all are**

**required to do so. Some of the Corinthians were appar-**

**ently being baptized for the dead, but this practice is**

**never taught as Christian theology.**

For the death that He died, He died to sin *once for all*; but the life that He lives, He lives to God (Rom. 6:10).

For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices... because this He did *once for all* when He offered up Himself (Heb. 7:26, 27).

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here... He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; [Day of Atonement sacrifices] but he entered the Most Holy Place *once for all* by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11, 12 NIV).

By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all* (Heb. 10:10).

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, [Day of Atonement] make perfect those who draw near to worship... Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." *He sets aside the first to establish the second.* And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*" (Heb. 10:1–10 NIV).

From the Scripture record it is abundantly clear that the death of Christ was the fulfillment of the Old Testament Day of Atonement. Hebrews makes it clear that it was a once-for-all event, completed, done.

In contrast to the scriptural references, however, Samuele Bacchiocchi states:

The Day of Atonement typifies Christ's final act of cleansing that will be accomplished at His coming when He will cleanse His people of their sins and will place all accountability on Satan (Azazel). The cleansing accomplished by Christ at His return makes it possible to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles which foreshadows the rejoicing of the saints at the inauguration of a new life in the new earth.<sup>55</sup>

I believe Bacchiocchi's statement above is a complete contradiction of the forgoing biblical record and seriously undermines the gospel. Near the end of his chapter on the Day of Atonement he sums up:

The promise of cleansing of the Day of Atonement has both a present and future phase. In the present, the Day of Atonement summons us to search our hearts and forsake our sinful ways by the power of Christ's blood which can purify our lives (Heb 9:14). **The moral cleansing we experience in the present reassures us of the future and final cleansing** from the presence and consciousness of sin that will be accomplished on the antitypical Day of Atonement, when Christ "will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Heb 9:28). (my emphasis)

Anytime we look to our experience for assurance of final cleansing we have departed from the New Testament gospel. Our righteousness is always and ever grounded in the righteousness of Christ and never in ourselves. As Paul so clearly states:

...and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith

in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Phil. 3:9).

It is my conviction that any attempt by the Christian church today to celebrate the Old Testament Day of Atonement undermines the completed work of Christ.

### The Feast of Tabernacles:

The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated for seven days with a special 8th day ending<sup>56</sup> which many see as a separate (7th) feast.<sup>57</sup> This feast was a memorial of God's protection in the wilderness. Note that it was only for the "native-born" Israelite.

You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God (Lev. 23:42, 43).

This is the feast mentioned in John 7:37–39.

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

In the celebration of this feast in New Testament times, the priest would fill a golden pitcher with water from the fountain of Siloah and pour it out with the wine from the drink offering into two perforated flat bowls.<sup>58</sup> It is clear that Jesus took the shadowy symbols of this ritual, drew them to Himself and transformed them by giving a *new* and *expanded* meaning that was not clear in the Old Testament shadow.

### Are the feasts for today?

There are a number of things that one must consider in answer to the question above. I will summarize these as follows:

**Study does not equal required celebration:** Those who promote modern-day feast-keeping emphasize the importance of a more thorough understanding of the feasts. They picture all the feasts of Israel as shadows of the redemption of mankind. Whether or not this is true of all the feasts is a matter of opinion. We do know from Scripture that several of the feasts met their fulfillment in the Christ event. There is certainly nothing wrong with studying the Old Testament record to see how these shadows pointed forward to Christ. This is a good exercise that should be encouraged as it will strengthen faith in the Scriptures. From our Christian perspective we can look back and see that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.

**Feasts only for Israel:** Several of the instructions for the feasts in the Old Testament record, as pointed out above, specifically mention that they are for Israel only. When we carefully consider the wording of the instruction for all the feasts we can rightly infer that all of them are for Israel only. Note the many usages of "Speak to the sons of Israel!"<sup>59</sup> The New



Testament church had to face this issue as soon as the gospel went to the Gentiles. We have the clear and certain conclusion of the first church counsel as recorded in Acts 15—the observance of Jewish holy days was not required. The Gospel of John was written late and shows that the Christian church was moving away from Jewish celebrations. Note the way he describes the feasts as “feasts of the Jews” and not simply “feasts” as one would expect if they were to be kept by the church.

After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem (Jn. 5:1).

Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near (Jn. 6:4).

Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near (Jn. 7:2).

**The dilemma of observance:** Assume for a moment that the church is required to observe the feasts of Israel. How is this done? Is one going to sacrifice again? In observing the Day of Atonement, is one going to start killing lambs and goats again? Most feast-keepers today say no. Rather, they just try to keep every other aspect of the feast. I received an email from an Adventist feast-keeper who was advertising an upcoming feast on a particular day which was designated as a “Sabbath” (not the 7th day Sabbath), and with the invitation was a note that vegans could bring their vegetarian food for the feast. How does one celebrate the Feast of Trumpets? Do we need to find two trumpets that have been hammered out of silver,<sup>60</sup> should the trumpets be made from a ram or goats horn, or could one just borrow one from the high school band? Each of the annual feasts is considered to be a Sabbath. Just how does one keep the Sabbath? Are we to use Old Testament guidelines? These questions could literally be multiplied by the thousands, but the point should be clear: if one attaches value to the observance of a given feast, one is left with the dilemma of just how it is to be observed. This in turn allows for differing groups to reach conflicting conclusions, and thus the door is opened wide for legalism, judgment, and eventual separation from each other. Walls are rebuilt where Jesus broke them down (Eph. 2:14). The focus is moved away from the simple gospel to the details of feast observance.

**The required observance of the feasts and the required observance of the seventh-day Sabbath stand or fall together.** Leviticus 23 clearly lists all of them as “The Lord’s appointed times.” This is recognized by all, or nearly all, of those who promote feast keeping for today. Adventist Sabbath scholar Samuele Bacchiocchi, as noted above, recognizes that the Sabbaths and the feasts cannot be separated.

**The Jewish Church did not do well.** It is true that many of the New Testament Jewish Christians continued to observe the laws of Torah.<sup>61</sup> History tells us that these Jewish Christians did not do much for the expansion of the church. It was God’s design that the Jews and Gentiles be united in one church family.<sup>62</sup> They had the same gospel<sup>63</sup> and both were free from the laws of Torah.<sup>64</sup> However, as the Jewish Christians continued to cling to these rituals, they felt superior to other Christians and

looked down on the Gentiles.<sup>65</sup> If it had not been for the expansion of the Gentile Christian church, it appears Christianity would have become extinct. History, therefore, teaches us that when we add old covenant required rituals to the gospel we hinder the spread of the true, simple gospel of Christ.

**New Covenant or Old?** The foundational issue in modern-day feast keeping lies in how one understands the covenants. As I have written in depth on this subject in *Sabbath in Christ* and in articles in *Proclamation!*<sup>66</sup> I will not give an in-depth study here. May I suggest, however, that the reader carefully study Galatians by reading it through several times in one sitting and in different translations. Also study Acts 15, 2 Corinthians 3, and Hebrews 6-12. Christians are not under any of the old covenant rituals mentioned in Leviticus 23. The moral principles in the new covenant replace the moral laws in the old covenant and are a better guide to moral Christian living.

**Feast-keeping: encouraged or discouraged?** I believe that the old covenant feasts should be thoroughly studied but not observed. Certainly there is nothing wrong with occasionally observing a Seder to understand the shadowy imagery of Passover. But to make it a required ongoing practice would detract from the brilliance of the risen Christ. While Romans 14:5 allows for Christian liberty on the observance of days, Paul elsewhere comes down hard on those who require observance.

You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain (Gal. 4:10–11).

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ (Col. 2:16, 17).

**Christ fulfilled all the old covenant rituals.** On Sunday morning the risen Christ met two discouraged disciples and stated this truth:

And He said to them, ‘O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not neces-

**History tells us that these Jewish Christians did not do much for the expansion of the church. It was God’s design that the Jews and Gentiles be united in one church family. They had the same gospel and both were free from the laws of Torah. However, as the Jewish Christians continued to cling to these rituals, they felt superior to other Christians and looked down on the Gentiles.**

sary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures (Lk. 24:25–27).

Then, as if to underline the importance of this truth, some of the last words of Jesus were:

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:44–47).

It seems to this writer that our time would be much better spent in proclaiming the simple gospel of grace through faith in Christ rather than trying to work through the dilemma of how and when to observe old covenant feasts. †

## Endnotes

1. John VanDerBurgh, *Holy History With the Commandments, Statutes and Judgments*, Appendix, p. 69.
2. <http://www.bibleexplorations.com/html/calendar>
3. "No work can be performed on Yom Kippur. One must also refrain from all eating and drinking. Further, to be fully observant, there must be no washing or bathing, no anointing of the body (with cosmetics, deodorants, etc.), no wearing of leather shoes, and no sex." See <http://www.blogher.com/septembers-holy-days-part-iii-yom-kippur-day-atonement>. See also Rev. 14:3–5.
4. <http://www.dennispriebe.com/documents/New%20Light%20For%20Adventists.html>
5. See <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com>
6. See [http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/books/festivals\\_1/1.html](http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/books/festivals_1/1.html)
7. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
9. *Cherith Chronicles*, Feb-Mar 2004, Bob Trefz, p. 6.
10. See [http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/books/festivals\\_2/4.html](http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/books/festivals_2/4.html), p. 13.
11. Material from the Universal Church of God, Retired SDA scholar, Samuele Bacchiocchi, and a few other sources.
12. See Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11.
13. Ex. 12:43–45.
14. Mt. 24:14, 28:19; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:47; Act. 1:8.
15. See Ex. 12.
16. From our perspective on this side of the cross we see the true meaning of the Passover. However, based upon the Old Testament context and instructions it is unlikely that the Israelites saw in the Passover anything more than the historical deliverance from Egypt.
17. 1 Jn. 2:2.
18. Lk. 22:18.
19. Rev. 19:9.

20. Acts 12:3.
21. R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 1-2 Corinthians, P. 224.
22. Frank E. Gaebelien, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 10, p. 218.
23. Acts 20:5–7.
24. 1 Cor. 15:29.
25. 1 Cor. 15:20.
26. Mt. 28:1.
27. Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1.
28. Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 16:15; Jam. 1:18; Rev. 14:40.
29. Lev. 23:15, 16.
30. Luke, more than the other Gospel writers, includes time markers in his carefully researched account.
31. Acts 2:1.
32. Acts 2:5.
33. See Acts 2:17–21. cf. Joel 2:28–32.
34. See Merruck /C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 4, p. 693.
35. Ex. 32:28.
36. Acts 2:41.
37. Acts 20:16; 1 Cor. 16:8.
38. 1 Cor. 9:19–23.
39. Num. 10:10.
40. 1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:12, 13; 31:3; Ez. 45:17; 46:1–7; Hos. 2:11; Neh. 10:33; Isa. 1:13, 14.
41. Ex. 19:16.
42. Josh. 6:5; Jud. 3:27, 6:34; 7:18; 1 Sam 13:3 and many, many more.
43. 2 Sam. 2:28; 18:16.
44. 1 Kg. 1:34; Isa. 58:1.
45. Ez. 33:3–6.
46. Isa. 27:13.
47. Mt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16 and perhaps Rev. 4:1.
48. Mt. 6:2.
49. Heb. 12:19.
50. Rev. 1:10; 4:1; 8:2, 6, 13; 9:14.
51. See Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, p. 411
52. See Lev. 16:3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 15, 25, 27.
53. Mt. 26:28; Lk. 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14.
54. See Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, Appendix, p. 33–39 for additional evidence that the Most Holy place is here in view.
55. Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D., Andrews University, *God's Festivals in Scripture and History*, Vol. II., "The Fall Festivals," "The Day of Atonement in the New Testament." Chapter 5, paragraph 6.
56. Lev. 23:34–43.
57. *God's Holy Day Plan—The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*, p. 9, a publication by the United Church of God. In this presentation of the feasts, the Feast of First Fruits is left out and the seventh feast is the "Last Great Day, or eighth day."
58. See R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament*, John, p. 572–579.
59. Lev. 23:2, 10, 24, 34
60. Num. 10:2.
61. See Acts 15:5; 21:20; Gal. 2:11–21.
62. Eph. 2:14; 3:1–6.
63. Gal. 2:1–10.
64. Rom. Rom. 6:14, 15; 7:2–6; Gal. 3:23–29.
65. Gal. 2:11–21.
66. See "The Continental Divide of Biblical Interpretation," Download at [http://life-assuranceministries.org/Proclamation2001\\_JulAug.pdf](http://life-assuranceministries.org/Proclamation2001_JulAug.pdf)



**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 Adventist "Truth"*, and *Truth Led Me Out*. These are available through his website, [LifeAssuranceMinistries.com](http://LifeAssuranceMinistries.com).

**Excellent!**

I found your last issue of *Proclamation!*—"What happens when we die?"—to be absolutely excellent! My mother and I left the SDA church about six and seven years ago. We have been rejoicing in our freedom ever since! My mother still believes in the Adventist version of death.

When I was in my 20's I came to realize that we had a spirit, although I didn't know exactly what that meant. Later when I was thoroughly investigating the doctrines I was raised in, I took the *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* and looked up every word I could think of in relation to death: death, sleep, kill, die, heaven, Hades, *sheol*, and so on. Absolutely everything! It was truly an exhaustive study—unfortunately I didn't keep it. But for me it was inconclusive. I saw arguments on both sides.

Your articles gave me fresh ideas to ponder. I loved Chris Lee having Jesus say (in illustration), "Not only is my illustration false, but it's a satanic lie!" I loved it!! What a ridiculous notion that Jesus would use anything satanic to confuse us!

My mom's head was really spinning after she read this issue. (She amazes me, though, because she's 82 and still open minded enough to ponder fresh ideas—she's a wonder!)

Anyway, thank you for tickling the gray matter...it stimulated plenty of conversation between my mother and me, and she's keeping this issue!

VIA EMAIL

**Wonderful magazine**

The latest edition that we received is one that my husband and I both said we have to reread often! Over the years, reading my Bible became confusing because there was a difference in what I was reading from what I was taught in Adventist schools about death. We loved every article, but in particular, Chris Badenhorst's "A letter to my friend concerning the spirit"

**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

We appreciate this wonderful magazine.  
BOISE, ID

**I feel violated**

When your publications come to my house I feel so very violated by them. That woman, Colleen Tinker, oh my. And the whole magazine—oh my. Words escape me. Please, if you know anything at all about mercy, please exercise it and please don't send me any more of your magazines.

MILTON, WV

**Former third generation Adventist**

The July/August issue came at a wonderful time for me. My wife died on August 23 after a two-year fight with inflammatory breast cancer.

**There really was nothing I could do or had to do but trust Jesus. He had done it all. It was like a great light appeared in my mind—and peace which doesn't seem to leave.**

All the articles were very good; however, Colleen Tinker's touched me the most. Keep up the good work you are doing.

I was a third-generation Adventist. In 1982 we became aware it was a cult and bowed out and have never had any regrets.

CHINO VALLEY, AZ

**Add me to your list**

I would like to be on your list for sending *Proclamation!* magazine. I have read it several times and love it. I am a former Adventist of 20 years now, but I love the articles that are written. I also have had the revelation of the good news of the gospel. Praise God for our wonderful Savior!

I have read several other issues; each article is a Bible study in itself. Do you send any back issues? I am really interested in the last two issues so I can share them with others.

God Bless you and this ministry.  
SAN ANTONIO, TX

**God have mercy**

No more mail from you. I mean it. Get me OFF now. I don't want anything to do with your lies in my mailbox. What is a former Adventist, anyway? All Christians that believe in the second coming are Adventists. You people must not believe Jesus

is coming back again. Everyone that gets your magazine at my church trashes it. We are not to be fooled by you; we know what you are all about. May the blinders be removed from your eyes, and may God have mercy on you. It is so sad.  
ROCKY MOUNT, NC

**I will never be the same**

After many years of struggling and failing to know Jesus personally and intimately as an Adventist, I gave it up. Then *Proclamation!* entered my life in 2001. What a joy! However, I continued to struggle.

I read all the books and digested all the internet info on the issues but couldn't seem to shake seeing things through my Adventist (EGW) eyes.

And then the miracle occurred. Reading through 2 Corinthians 3, I reached the section "Lifting the Veil" in *The Message Bible*, and this is what happened. After years of searching (and suffering for things I had brought on myself), the Holy Spirit was able to lift my veil. It all became clear.

There really was nothing I could do or had to do but trust Jesus. He had done it all.

It was like a great light appeared in my mind—and peace which doesn't seem to leave. This happened on August 22, 2008, and my life will never be the same.

With Christian love and thanks,  
NEWAYGO, MI

**Deluded people**

Dale, I'm sure God has sent you message after message to warn you and your wife. But just like Lucifer, you reject all of God's efforts to show you that you are fighting against God. You enjoy the glory you feel from all your followers. You are doing Satan's bidding; you are one of his best disciples...

I stand firmly on the Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy. Sister White is not in any remote way a cult leader. You hate God that you profess to serve. And you have been working for years to destroy the faith of God's people. You hate sister White. Many hated God's prophets in Bible times...

Be honest. Don't call your [organization] "ministries." Call it what it is—Satan's Ministries. People that are deceived and follow you will one day wake up and know they were deceived. There will be no Life Assurance—only the wrath of God, and they will see just where their feet turned off the path to God. And they will be lost. There is no Life Assurance, only the second death that awaits them.

You and your wife gloat that you are persecuted...It amazes me how far people will go when they refuse the truth of God's word. They will attack every truth of God's word.

I don't want your *Proclamation!* It makes good trash. You have your supporters that praise you and love your papers. You are receiving the praise you want.

KEENE, TX

#### I had to get out of the boat

"In my case, I had no idea that Adventism was wrong. In all the places where the Bible didn't seem to agree with the doctrines, I just thought I didn't understand the Bible right. I was absolutely sure that Ellen White was a true prophet and certain that she explained the Bible. I believed that the Bible and her (sic) agreed completely." (Quoted from previous letter to the editor.)

I fell under the same spell. It took me a while after I left before I realized that while people are still inside Adventism, it is almost impossible to shake them out of their mesmerism. I usually now suggest that they put the Spirit of Prophecy [EGW] down and take six months off from church and church associates and spend that time going over Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Titus repeatedly and let the Holy Spirit bring them the true gospel. That's how God helped me.

It's as if, like Peter, I had to get out of the boat of Adventism and walk to Jesus, and once there, I could look back, while standing next to Jesus, and see what Adventism really was: the epitome of

deception. How clever Satan was to have EGW say we should never go where error is being preached, and that leaving the Adventist church is like jumping off the ark. We need to continue in prayer for those still caught up in that deception.

Azariah (God helps)

VIA EMAIL

#### The gospel of keeping the commandments

I'm not sure how I got on your mail list, but I do enjoy (no, not really "enjoy") getting your magazine. As an elder in my local Adventist congregation I view it as a sad commentary on what our church could be if we had learned to preach the gospel. If we had I do not believe you would be where you are. Don't misunderstand me; what you and I believe are poles apart. It's clear that you misunderstand the covenants, the nature of sin and atonement, the humanity of the Savior, and other vital points; but, it grieves me to see the tone of so many of your critics as published in your letters to the editor. Though well-meaning, most of their complaints are unchristian and only serve to drive you farther into your corner.

Yes, I believe your faith is misdirected, but I also believe that you, and I, will each come to judgment with only one question to answer: What did I do with that one talent, that gift of grace, that was so freely bestowed upon me? Did I rebel and resist grace, or was I compliant?

Did I bury it or did I allow it to grow and blossom in my life in development of a true Christian character? Did that Gift of grace manifest itself in me in obedience to all the commandments of God?...

As I read Greg Taylor's article (May/June 2008) my heart ached for him and his family. No, they did not choose "the easier way"; for all along the way he met nothing but briars and pricks from his "friends." However, regardless of what he and others like him may today think, he is in fact kicking against the Acts 9 gospel pricks, and that is definitely a hard way to go. What he says is true, he has not chosen the easier way, but the hard way: no, not hard, impossible.

I keep you and yours in my prayers that we may all come "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Character perfection? Obeying the commandments of God (including keeping the seventh-day Sabbath)? I know you don't like the notion, but that's what the gospel's all about.

LANCASTER, TN

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:

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## Trusting Jesus through difficult times

As we prepare to send this issue of *Proclamation!* to the printer, it is becoming routine to hear of banks failing and markets falling. Is this going to end our way of life, or only make it more difficult for a time—or is Jesus' coming just around the corner?

Do you know Jesus? Have you repented and trusted Him and His payment for your sins? If you can answer "yes" to those questions, then the hard times which seem to be crouching at our door are not fearsome. With Jesus we can pass through anything! The Good Shepherd portrayed in Psalm 23 is one who is with us and also provides for us, even while passing through the shadow of death.

#### Financial needs mount

Here at Life Assurance Ministries, we continue to answer the call for *Proclamation!* magazine to be mailed to nearly 35,000 homes, as well as providing the online versions in both English and Spanish. This work is not cheap. Our budget for this year is \$300,000, which pays for the magazines, websites, speaking appointments, and books and other literature. We thank our supporters who have already provided substantially this year. Please continue to remember us in two ways:

- Pray for us every day. Pray that we will remain faithful to the Lord and His Word, and to the work He has given us.
- If you don't already support this work, consider monthly or one time cash donations by check or credit card. Send your check in the envelope provided, or you may pay with your credit card online at [LifeAssuranceMinistries.com](http://LifeAssuranceMinistries.com). You may also phone with your credit card information, (800) 355-7073. This is also the phone number for purchasing Dale Ratzlaff's books.

We praise our Lord Jesus for providing all that we need and we look forward to seeing Him soon! If you would like to talk to someone about Jesus or have your Biblical questions answered, please phone toll free Colleen and Richard Tinker at (877) 349-6984 or Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff at (800) 355-7073.

## Two sides of Adventism?

Today your May-June 2008 issue of *Proclamation!* arrived and I immediately sat down in a quiet corner and read it from cover to cover.

This letter will be a test of your fairness and willingness to expose both sides of Adventism. Let me first identify myself.

I am a retired Adventist pastor, and former seminary New Testament Greek classmate of Desmond Ford. It always seemed to me that Dr. Loasby was always teaching Desmond, the rest of us were allowed to listen in! No question Desmond was a good student. One of your published letters mentioned him, leading to this comment.

I too am a third-generation Adventist, and noticed what appeared to be a clear bias toward printing letters from discourteous and acid-tongued Church members. Such responses to you and your staff raise a valid question as to their relationship with our Saviour Jesus Christ. I'm so sorry, and apologize for them.

The tenor of your articles seem always to be how glad former Adventists are to now be "free in Jesus," free from legalism, free from non-biblical bondage. This makes no sense to me. The Lord Jesus gave His life for all of us, it is a free gift, and no amount of works, Sunday or Sabbath-keeping, tithing, witnessing, etc. can merit the wonderful gift of salvation paid for by His blood.

We spent most of our ministry in South American jungles under General Conference assignment as Pastor-Pilot-RN. We reared our four children there. Two sons took medicine at Loma Linda, the rest of us settled for being RNs. I have thoughtfully concluded that both sons left the Loma Linda environment spiritually damaged.

Observations made there during long years and repeated visits to local Churches convinced me that many members had religious priorities that were not correct.

Your readers and article writers express understandable hurt at less than Christ-like attitudes toward them during their Adventist experience. This spiritual weakness is spreading and should not surprise us, since Satan is still alive and well. Their expressed complaints about un-Christian attitudes encountered are quite believable.

To escape such pressure would be a relief, though not the wisest solution.

You would probably agree with me that there is a preference in modern Christianity for Christ's free grace without the concomitant responsibility to obey God. It is attractive to be

"once saved, always saved," and avoid detailed obedience. This is not advocating salvation by works! I'm trusting your readers to understand what I mean.

Doctrinal doubts expressed by your writers seem to revolve around the concept of God's judgment, the lesson taught by the introduction in the Sanctuary Service of a "scapegoat," and whether God still has the option to communicate special instructions to His end-time people since men closed the Canon of Scripture several hundred years ago.

We all ought to study out these things.

I question how deeply your writers have actually delved into these matters. It's too easy to read what others say about a subject and then adopt a position. That is not the route we can safely take.

May God lead you and prepare you and your staff for the crisis that lies close at hand.

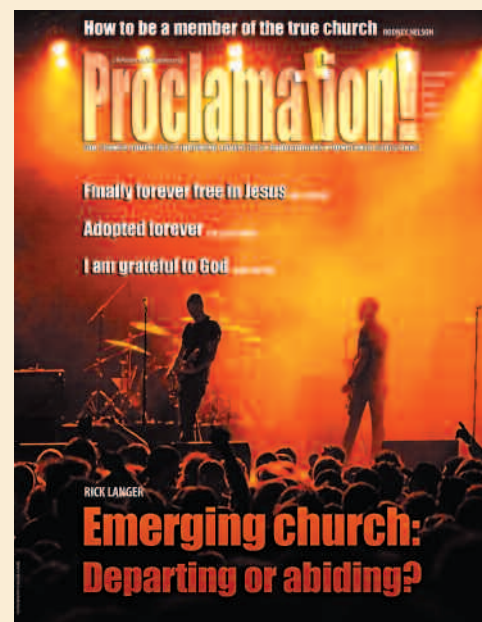
I'll be watching for a non-edited copy of this letter in your next edition, or shortly thereafter.

### Editor's response

First, I want to say that we normally don't print long letters like yours because of our limited space. But you have raised some issues we are happy to address.

We understand the disappointment and even sadness that you carry as a result of some of your experiences within Adventism. Second, we reiterate the fact that we did not leave Adventism because of hurts or disappointments. We all studied independently. Further, we did not only leave historic Adventism; we also left liberal Adventism that demeans the law, the atonement of Christ, the complete reliability of Scripture, and the sovereign authority of God including His wrath.

You are correct that there have always been people within Christian circles who deny the Lordship of Jesus in their lives. Grace is never free. Salvation is a free gift, but the grace that gives it was purchased at a cost beyond measure. The cross is the only way to see or understand grace. Jesus' death was not a down payment on salvation. It was not one component of salvation, nor was it an example to reveal God's forgiving character. Jesus' blood IS the source of salvation. When we believe in Jesus—Almighty God who could not fail in His mission and who shed human blood as our substitute—we are counted righteous just as Abraham was, and we are saved forever (Acts 16:31; Romans 4:16-17;



Back issues of *Proclamation!* magazine are available online at [LifeAssuranceMinistries.org](http://LifeAssuranceMinistries.org).

John 5:24). Without Jesus' shedding sinless human blood, there could not be any salvation (Hebrews 9:22).

When we receive the free gift of salvation, we must remember that God purchased His own grace with the blood of His own Son. He demanded the shedding of blood, and He personally took responsibility for dying. Our free salvation comes at the price of another Person's life. It is a debt we cannot repay, and it demands our full surrender.

When we believe in Jesus, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14), and our spirits are thus born again with the resurrection life of Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-5; Romans 8:9-11). This new birth is the essence of salvation (John 3:5-6) without which we cannot see the kingdom of heaven.

We do not obey to maintain this grace or to stay saved. God completes our sanctification (Philippians 1:6), and we are completely hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). The Holy Spirit in us convicts us of sin and the need to repent. This ongoing struggle with and surrender of our "flesh" does not cause us to lose our salvation (Romans 6 through 8). Our spirits are eternally alive, rescued from sin and death.

Because Adventism requires obedience to the law as the sign of being a Christian, it eclipses the eternal sufficiency of Jesus' death and resurrection and teaches what Galatians calls "another gospel." The evidence of belief is not law-keeping but the indwelling Holy Spirit and our consequent new birth and submission to Jesus.

The cross is the secret to our joy. Jesus is all we need. We contribute absolutely nothing. We can only bow in worship and unspeakable gratitude. †

## From Torah-observant to discovering the New Covenant FROM PAGE 5

study with us even if they were not Torah observant. We didn't believe in pushing it on anyone else who didn't already feel led to the same walk. Regardless of our noble intentions, our path took us farther from Christ and deeper into the worship of the law itself.

This open, accepting atmosphere soon fell by the wayside. I learned a valuable lesson. If you don't have a doctrinal statement, someone will come along that does have an agenda, and it will become yours. What we didn't accept, we tolerated. Some began to rid themselves of everything pagan, going beyond the initial rejection of Christmas, Easter, and Sunday worship. Nearly every word we had traditionally used to communicate our faith, such as God, Christ, Lord, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Christian, church, Bible, cross, and baptism were replaced with more appropriate names or pronunciations. We also focused on the minutia of the law, learning how to tie fringes for our clothing and some even made their own phylacteries. We had the law on our door posts, and somehow we even believed circumcision was still a valid practice as a sign of obedience to God. We spoke of the church in derogatory, insulting terms. Many in this movement reject the Trinity and divinity of Christ. Full conversion to Judaism and denial of Jesus proves to be a very short journey from these positions. We knew some who did go to Judaism. I was also plagued with irrational doubt for a time that Jesus was the Messiah.

By the fall of 2006 I found myself in a spiritual desert. I had become very critical of myself and others, and burnout was setting in. The next few months brought still more stressful burdens. By January of 2007 I told the congregation I needed to step down for awhile. I began to fast once a week and read the Word more diligently. On one of these days of fasting, my Bible fell open to the book of Galatians. I intended to study in another area of Scripture that day and I wasn't looking for the truth. I thought I had the truth, but the Lord had other plans. For some reason, I decided to read

where my Bible had opened, and God completely transformed my life. It was as if Paul wrote that letter just for me. I finally understood for the first time what it meant not to be "under the law." When I finished reading, I stood up with my hands on my chest of drawers and took a deep breath. I felt like the weight of the world just lifted off my shoulders. When I excitedly shared with Sondra what I'd seen, she responded with relief and thankfulness. God had prepared her heart for what He had shown me. Of course we had read Galatians before, but we always managed to twist it around to fit our perspective.

In the next few weeks, many layers of falsehood started to peel away one by one as the new covenant became crystal clear. The simplicity of it amazed and humbled us. We repented, knowing we had only ourselves to blame. The truth had been in front of us from the beginning, but through our own desires and lack of faith, we were blinded. We were shaken to the core when we realized how far we'd gone, and mystified as to why God would pull us out.

I initially hoped to move the group to a more balanced perspective, not teaching the shadow observances of the law as obligation but focusing on Christ and the New Testament. But after a great deal of discussion with the other elder, who refused to accept my new position, I was faced with the sad task of announcing our departure to our group. I confessed I had been leading them down the wrong road, asked their forgiveness, and left them in the hands of the man who would teach them what they wanted to hear. Some were in tears, others were angry. They were our family, and it was agonizing.

We found our way in a few months back to the simple Bible church we should have never left. They welcomed us with open arms, and we now jealously treasure the simple truth.

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).*

†

## Road closed FROM BACK PAGE

I missed the fact that I have been sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13) and not by keeping the 10 commandments. Trying to live by the commandments is a guaranteed death sentence; I break one of them within minutes of waking in the morning. Jesus told us that we only have to think the thought, and it's the same as doing the action (Matthew 5:22, 28).

Now, as a former-Adventist Christian, I don't have to keep wondering if I am keeping the Sabbath correctly, if I'm giving enough offerings, or if eating meat really does pollute "the temple." Those doubts kept me from experiencing Him. In Adventism I was parked on the road, facing the right direction, close—yet infinitely far from my destination. Now my focus has changed. I don't just see how majestic He is from afar. I have a full experience; I feel and smell and am able to taste and see that He is good. He cares about every detail of my life; I include Him. He corrects me when I'm wrong. I love Him!

If your desire is to know Jesus Christ, if you acknowledge His death and resurrection and what that means in your everyday struggle, if you accept His atonement for your sin—His blood poured over the mercy seat once for all, He will not leave you in deception.

You can drive down the road and come to a wash out, but your desire will not get you to your destination, no matter how sincerely you want to get there. The road is broken, and the route you are on is not navigable.

As an Adventist I said the words "atonement," "mercy," and "grace," but the meanings are so different now. I can't explain it.

I do know that if you are truly open to being led by the Holy Spirit, you won't be able to stay an Adventist. When the Holy Spirit shows you deception after deception, you have to see that you are waiting for a closed road to be cleared and opened. Make the choice to turn around.

Since telling my story to my new colleague, I learned that the flyer Genelle found wasn't placed on her car; instead, she found it lying in the grass. The flyers had been put into the teacher's boxes at her Adventist academy, and one of the teachers must have thrown his flyer away. Thank you to whomever it was that cared enough to place the flyers in the Loma Linda Academy teacher's boxes that day! What a miracle—the flyer one teacher discarded as promoting false teaching was picked up by God and blown into a teenager's path to bring truth to her household.

Praise God!

†

# 4TH ANNUAL FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND

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



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- **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](http://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**

A few weeks ago a new nurse came to work at the clinic. She is an Adventist, and eventually, during conversation, it came up that I had previously been one also. She insisted on hearing my story; she was horrified when I told her that someone had put a flyer one day on my daughter Genelle's car. The flyer had been an invitation to hear Mark Martin, a former Adventist preacher, speak at a local church. Genelle's attendance at that meeting led to our leaving the Adventist organization.

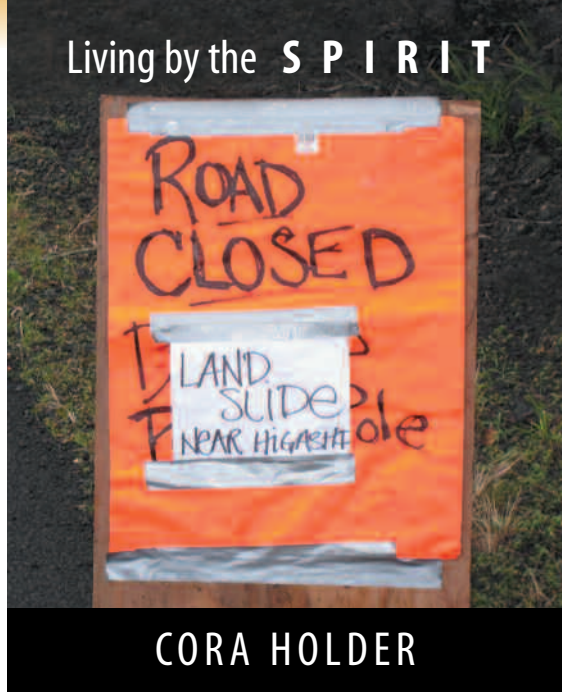
"They were wrong to do that" she exclaimed! I tried to explain to her that showing people they are going about things in the wrong way is a loving thing. One feels compelled to share that information with others once they find out that they have believed in a lie.

I am constantly faced with the accusations of being bitter, of questioning Adventists' sincere love of Christ, and of saying that an Adventist can't go to heaven. It is so frustrating to be so misunderstood.

I believe that God has helped me develop an illustration to explain my true concern.

Last November on a trip to the Big Island of Hawaii, we left Kona early one morning to go to Hana for a helicopter tour of the volcano. After the tour as we whizzed past Volcano National Park, we saw the volcano from the helicopter. Our plan was to tour a coffee plantation and get back to Kona for our last evening on the island.

We were less than 10 miles from our intended destination, Kona Coffee Country, and eventually our



CORA HOLDER

condo, when we spotted hand-made signs that stated ROAD CLOSED. What! You have got to be kidding!

We quickly pulled in at the Lilikoi Fruit Stand hoping that the signs were a joke designed as a ploy to get us to stop and try some of the strange fruits they were selling.

They were no joke. The landslide had happened in the morning. It was now early afternoon, and we hadn't seen any warnings along the way. Apparently Hawaii doesn't have an official

system of alerting travelers if a road is closed, and the lady at the fruit stand cared enough to warn travelers.

We had two choices. One would have entailed sitting in the car in a line of traffic waiting for the road to be cleared. This choice would likely have meant spending the night in the car and finally missing the plane in the morning. The other choice was to turn around and definitely be able to catch the plane.

Hawaii is called The Big Island for a good reason; it was a very long trip back around the island. We turned around, but in doing so we embarked on a more fulfilling experience than we would have had otherwise. This time we stopped at Volcano National Park. We were able to smell the sulfur and put our hands in the steam vent. We had seen it by helicopter, but we hadn't physically experienced it. In other words, we did have to retrace our previous route, but we were now able to enjoy something that we would have missed otherwise.

What was I missing as an Adventist? I lacked the joy, peace, and reassurance that even when I fall again into temptation, He is faithful and just to forgive me (1 John 1:9).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



**Cora Holder** is a graduate of Loma Linda University School of Nursing. She currently works as an RN for Kaiser Permanente in Colton, California. She and her husband Wally were both fourth-generation Adventists. Today they are approaching their sixth year of living in Christ's freedom. They have two adult children, and they worship at Calvary Chapel Redlands.

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