

Former Adventist Fellowship Weekend Highlights | Summer tour plans

LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

Proclamation!

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS
SABBATARIANS
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

MARCH/APRIL 2009
VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2

My cup overflows

**The source of
resurrection life**

**The Gospel foundation
for resurrection life**

No fear in resurrection life

**Resurrection life begins
at the cross**

*Resurrection
Life!*





COLLEEN TINKER

We can rejoice with Paul that when we come to die, we will not cease to exist except as a memory in the mind of God.

Proclamation!

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Resurrection life in mortal flesh

On Sunday, March 15, 2009, I sat with my mom in the emergency room at Loma Linda University Medical Center. Her admitting diagnosis: pulmonary edema and atrial fibrillations. Her cardiologist had told her this condition eventually would be the likely development of the class four mitral valve leak she had in her heart.

As she awaited admission while the emergency team intervened with oxygen and intravenous heart medications and diuretics, mom—a former life-long Adventist who left that church about ten

years ago to embrace Jesus alone for her salvation—looked at me and said, “I told God that I’d really like to get well, but my life is His, and whatever happens is O.K.”

“Doesn’t it make all the difference just knowing you won’t cease to be when you die?” I asked her.

“It surely does,” she responded with a little smile.

During the next few days as Mom was stabilized in the cardiac ICU and her medical team determined that mitral valve replacement surgery was her best option for treatment, her peace with God was clear. While the immediate future looked uncertain and even foreboding, the eternal life of God sustained her spirit as she faced the mortality of her body. She knew absolutely that, should she die, she would be with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8).

During this past week I have reflected that the miracle of God giving us eternal life by the resurrection life of Jesus—even while we are in these mortal bodies—is the event that changes reality for us. It is Jesus’ resurrection that gives us hope and security. Our bodies are dead in sin, but our spirits are alive because of righteousness (Rom. 8:10). The same Spirit who raised Jesus from death gives life to us in these mortal bodies (Romans 8:11).

To be sure, Jesus’ blood reconciles us with God, but the resurrection life of Jesus is what saves us and secures us for eternity (Romans 5:10, 1 Cor 15:17-18). As Mom has been fond of pointing out to her friends who argued for the doctrine of soul sleep, Jesus Himself said that when we believe in Him, we pass from death to life and will not come into condemnation or judgment (John 5:24). We will never die (John 11:26).

We can know for sure we are saved, and we can live with the deep peace of certainty that not even



Colleen with her mom, Margaret Moore, the day before she was released from the hospital.

death will separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38). We can rejoice with Paul that when we die, we will not just be a memory in the mind of God. Rather, as born again believers, we will “be with Christ,” and our position in Him even in death “is very much better” than is our life in these mortal bodies (Phil. 1:23).

On Friday, March 20, Richard and I stood beside Mom’s bed, watching and listening as the surgery resident answered our questions and the nurses tethered Mom to an unbelievable assortment of IV drugs and monitors while the ventilator gurgled rhythmically. It seemed impossible that her frail 83-year-old body could have withstood the trauma of seven hours of open-heart surgery. I knew, though, that even though her body was deeply sedated to help control her heart rate and pressure, her spirit was alive at that moment to God.

Amazingly, less than a week later, Mom is ambulatory—albeit weak—and she will be discharged in a day or two. Her body is still frail, but the resurrection life of Jesus is the power and the hope that sustains her in re-learning to live with a mended heart.

This Easter edition features four different looks at the resurrection by four different authors: Chris Badenhorst, Thomas Francis, Dale Ratzlaff, and Linda Arnett. In addition we share a report of the fourth annual Former Adventist Fellowship weekend, and Carolyn Ratzlaff tells her faith story.

Our prayer is that you will meet Jesus in a new and compelling way as you read this issue of *Proclamation!* This Easter, we pray you will experience the resurrection life of Jesus transforming you and giving new purpose and power as you live for His glory. †

For further S T U D Y

• Back issues of *Proclamation!* and additional studies
LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

• Books and other materials by Dale Ratzlaff
LifeAssuranceMinistries.com

When the Sunday law comes

Q. What are you going to do when the Sunday law is enacted and you see your errors?

A. Personally, I am not concerned about Sunday laws. For those who are, I suggest that you go to: www.nonsda.org/study8.shtml.

This question does, however, bring up the subject of the time of trouble which is something we do need to consider. Today some teach that Christians will be raptured before the time of trouble and thus will not experience it. Others believe we will live through the time of trouble. Our duty is to daily walk with Christ and let the Holy Spirit guide us¹ as we study God's word² and pray.³

Whether or not Christians will be present during the great tribulation, it is evident that many will go through a time of trouble. Today in many areas of the world Christians are facing persecution, hardship, and even martyrdom. It appears our country also is rapidly abandoning Christian principles. If this trend continues there is a real likelihood we could face hostility and persecution.

The question we need to consider is this: how will we react in such times? As Adventists we were taught that during the time of trouble we were to flee to the mountains to hide from those who were out to kill us because we continued to worship on Sabbath.⁴ For those of us who are living "the eternal kind of life," we may want to consider the following words of Jesus:

"And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you'" (Jn. 20:20–21).

Jesus left the glories of heaven to save sinners in this dark world of evil, and His commission to us is to take the good news of the simple gospel to the entire world.⁵ We are to go as sheep in the midst of wolves.⁶ This is not a picture of peace and prosperity!

"But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony" (Lk. 21:12–14).

The preceding words of Jesus specifically apply to the destruction of Jerusalem. However, this event mirrors what

will happen during the last days.⁷ Therefore, it gives us a new paradigm for facing times of trouble. Rather than being primarily concerned for our own lives, which are secure in Christ, we should reframe times of trouble as special opportunities to communicate the gospel. Often during times of trial people are more receptive to sharing their concerns and are also more open to the gospel.

Rather than being primarily concerned for our own lives, which are secure in Christ, we should reframe times of trouble as special opportunities to communicate the gospel.

When we hear the concerns of friends, neighbors and even those we do not know, we can respond, "John, would you mind if I prayed about (your concern) this week?"⁸ Most will say, "Please do." Then we can take their concerns to God in prayer and later get back to them to see what God is doing in their lives. When the opportunity presents itself, then we can share the gospel. Thus, instead of fleeing⁹ to save our lives, let us transform times of trouble into opportunities for Christ to reach lost sinners through our associations. †

Endnotes

¹Jn. 16:13.

²Ps. 119:105.

³Lk. 21:26.

⁴Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 626.

⁵Mt. 24:14.

⁶Lk. 10:3.

⁷Note the close association of these two events in Mt. 24.

⁸www.prayingforyou.org I highly recommend the "Praying for You" seminar.

⁹I am not saying that there is never a time to flee. We should not have a martyr's complex, but we should be attentive to the opportunities to share the gospel and think of others first.



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

Dale Ratzlaff



My Cup

Overflows

CAROLYN RATZLAFF

I grew up in a fifth generation Seventh-day Adventist Christian home in Phoenix, Arizona. When I was very young, I fell in love with Jesus. I loved going to Sabbath school and church. My third grade in school probably had more spiritual impact on my life than any other year. In Bible class I learned about a woman who believed she received a call from God for a very special mission. I was inspired by the story of Ellen White, and I, too, wanted to hear a call from God to work for Him. I gave my heart to Jesus one day when I was out in the pasture between my house and my grandparent's house.

I joined a baptismal class and was baptized at the age of nine. Our church had about twelve steps with a foot-wide banister on each side leading up to the foyer and main sanctuary. Children often used the banister as a slide, even though we had been told not to. After being baptized, I slid down this banister. My older sister Jeanine was at the bottom, and she scolded me. We got into a little squabble. I was devastated! I thought baptism would make me perfect. Why did I still want to fight with my sister? I was worried. At school, I had just memorized 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That night I told Jeanine I was sorry and also asked Jesus to forgive me. I prayed a similar prayer for many years after that, always asking Jesus to for-

give my sins, and to help me be ready to go to heaven when Jesus would come, but never going to sleep with the assurance Jesus wanted me to have.

When I was ready for high school my family moved from Arizona to Oakdale, California, where Jeanine and I would be attending Modesto Union Academy. Our first Sabbath in California some girls were showing us the school yearbook. "There is your third-grade boyfriend Dale Ratzlaff!" Jeanine exclaimed as we were looking at the pictures of the students. I was embarrassed and angry at being reminded of a third-grade boyfriend and denied the picture was of the same Dale Ratzlaff I had known and liked in the third grade, but in my heart, I knew it was—and felt myself blushing.

Monday morning Dale got on the bus shortly after we did. "That is Dale, and you should talk to him," Jeanine insisted. I wasn't about to do such a bold thing, but a couple of days later Dale asked if he could sit with me on the bus ride home. We began sitting together regularly during the hour's ride to and from school, and before long we began going steady. We often prayed that our relationship would be pleasing to God.

Both Dale and I were reading *Messages to Young People* by Ellen White and believed this book held special guidelines for young people of our day. I was so earnest about following every counsel in the book that I would not allow my picture to be taken for the school yearbook my sophomore year.

Meanwhile, Dale and I responded to several calls of commitment to Christ, and at a Youth Congress in San Francisco, we committed to being missionaries.

Dale stayed out of school a year to support his mother between his sophomore and junior years, so we were both juniors during the same year. We transferred to Monterey Bay Academy, but during that year our teachers convinced us to break up. We might be getting too serious, they said. We were both devastated, but we wanted to do God's will, so we complied. By our senior year, however, we knew God was directing our relationship, and we got back together.

At the end of Dale's first year at Pacific Union College (PUC), we were married. On our honeymoon, we spent Sabbath in the woods reading *The Adventist Home* by Ellen White. Dale had another year of college, but money was very tight, and he dropped out of school to work. During these years Dale had a life-changing experience in which he committed his life and future to the Lord Jesus. Shortly after that experience, Dale became convicted that God was calling him into the ministry and that he needed to return to Pacific Union College.

I was delighted. When I was only five years old, I had adored our pastor's wife. She always hugged me and made me so happy I had come to church. I had decided then, "When I grow up I want to be just like her—I want to be a pastor's wife." My dream was coming true!

Questions Begin

After three years at PUC and then two at Andrews University in Michigan, Dale began pastoring in Santa Monica, California. We spent three years in Southern California, and then Dale was asked to teach Bible at Monterey Bay Academy. I became the administrative assistant to Principal Harvey Voth. One of my responsibilities was to prepare the daily faculty newsletter. Always at the top of the letter I would put a quote from Ellen White. I was getting up at 5:00 each morning for my devotionals and was reading from *The Desire of Ages*, so most of the quotes were from that book. When we became concerned about diet, our attention was directed to the book *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, and my quotes then were taken from that book. We were trying so hard to follow all the counsel of Mrs. White, and we thought others should also.

Dale taught Bible for seven years at MBA, and then he was asked to pastor the nearby church in Watsonville. At that time I sought employment and was accepted with the conference as a Bible worker. My duties were to work with the area pastors in following up their interest leads. I enjoyed my work and saw many people accept Jesus.

One day Dale told me he was becoming disturbed by information that was coming to him regarding the 1844 investigative judgment doctrine giving evidence that it was a non-biblical doctrine. He wanted me to begin reading and studying what he had been studying. I told him I was not interested and cautioned him to be careful because I did not want him to do anything that would cause me to lose my job.

Troubling information regarding Adventist doctrine was arriving in our mail box each day. One day I decided I must study the investigative judgment doctrine for myself, and my study would be only from the Bible. I got a roll of white shelf paper, Strong's concordance, and my Bible. I didn't have the luxury of a computer! Starting at Genesis, I wrote down every text that said anything about judgment. When I got to the New Testament my paper was about twelve feet long. John 5:24 was the clincher for me. "Truly, truly I say unto you, He who hears my word and believes in me does not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."

"Praise God!" I said. Now, I knew I could no longer believe in a judgment as understood by Adventists, and I also realized this position was contrary to the Adventist doctrines I was being paid to promote.

As the information was coming to us showing the problems of plagiarism with Ellen White and the investigative judgment doctrine, Dale was preaching good gospel sermons from the book of Romans. One Sabbath his sermon was from Romans 6 with emphasis on verse 11. "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." It was a good sermon and filled me with hope and courage, as his sermons usually did.

I was driving to a Bible study on Monday when the truth of this verse really struck home. Suddenly, I realized that since God looks at me as if I am dead to sin, who am I to argue with Him? I was moved to tears and had to pull the car over for a few minutes. I thanked God for showing me that He wanted me to see myself as covered by the perfect righteousness of Christ. This new perspective did not mean that I was suddenly perfect. It did mean that when God looked at me, He did not see my failings and imperfect obedience, but He saw me clothed with the perfect righteousness of Christ—the very "righteousness of God". And if the judge had acquitted me and declared me not guilty, why should I condemn myself? I decided then and there I would agree with God's verdict. Yes, I would consider myself "dead to sin" and "alive to Christ Jesus"!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Carolyn Ratzlaff is the wife of founding editor of *Proclamation!* Dale Ratzlaff and serves on the board of Life Assurance Ministries Inc. Carolyn and Dale have been married 51 years and have two married sons and four grandchildren. Carolyn and Dale made the decision many years ago to follow Jesus and leave Adventism. Carolyn has just completed her first book *My Cup Overflows*, detailing her life and experience of leaving Adventism. Dale and Carolyn live in Peoria, Arizona.



CHRIS BADENHORST



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

The Source of Resurrection

The Christian faith stands or falls on the resurrection of Christ from the dead.¹ If there is no resurrection, there is nothing salvageable in Christianity. Furthermore, the authenticity of the resurrection depends on the essential veracity of the resurrection record. This is vouched for by the apostles who were eye-witnesses of the resurrected Christ.² Paul could confidently state that "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" (1 Cor. 15:20) because the risen Christ appeared to him personally as He did to many others.³

The early apostles and disciples took seriously the fact that they had been commissioned to be "witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46-48). That is why the book of Acts is filled with declarations testifying to the Lord's resurrection from the dead.⁴ Paul wrote to Timothy, "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead... This is my gospel" (2 Tim. 2:8). The resurrection of Christ is therefore part of the Gospel. Without it there would be no Gospel or good news. Paul states: "If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then we have nothing to preach and you have nothing to believe" (1 Cor. 15:14).

God's Foundation

Before we consider Christ's resurrection and its fruit in the life of the believer, we need to look briefly at the bigger picture—the foundation that God laid for the salvation of man 2000 years ago. This foundation consists of Christ's death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension to the right hand of the Father "with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him" (1 Pet. 3:22).

This foundation constitutes the gospel, or good news. It is clear and certain as well as final, complete, finished, and all-sufficient as a basis for our salvation whether we believe it or not. Our faith does not produce it, but when it is preached "by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven" (1 Pet. 1:12b) faith is created in us to accept what God has done for us in Christ.⁵

1. The Death of Christ

The first aspect of the Gospel foundation mentioned above is the death of Christ which can be examined in two parts: a) the blood He shed, and b) the death He died. By means of His shed blood, Christ made atonement for all the sins of mankind—sins in thought, word and deed. Because of these sins man is guilty before God and held accountable by Him for the payment of the penalty He has levied against man for them. The good news is that, by His blood atonement, Christ

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redeemed (paid) man's debt with God in full (Rom. 3:24), thus solving the problem of his guilt before God.

When a person believes Jesus shed His blood for him, the benefit he receives is justification—the verdict of acquittal by God the Judge.⁶ Paul says, therefore, that believers are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus [because] God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement...in his blood...[Therefore], we have...been justified by his blood” (Rom. 3:24, 25; 5:9).

Additionally, Paul states that “The death [Jesus] died, he died to sin once for all” (Rom. 6:10). The sin here is the one sin behind the many sins people continually commit. Sin in this context is personified as a master that has dominion over its slave⁷ or a king that reigns over its subjects.⁸ By dying “to sin” on man's behalf, God solved the problem of man's enslavement “to sin.”

The person who believes Jesus died “to sin” is now “dead to sin” (Rom. 6:2). In being dead “to sin,” therefore, he “has been freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7)—freed from its reign, freed from its power, freed from its control, and freed from servitude under its dominion.⁹ As a result, the believer is no longer the slave of sin,¹⁰ and sin is no longer his master.¹¹ He therefore need no longer obey its dictates or do its bidding as before. Thus the question posed by Paul, “shall we go on sinning...? By no means!” is his answer. And the reason? “We died to (the reign of) sin” (Rom. 6:1, 2, 12).

2. Christ's Resurrection

We now come to the theme of this article—the resurrection of Christ from the dead—the second aspect of the Gospel foundation mentioned above. Paul gives two reasons why the justified believer will not continue in the service of sin. The first reason is that he “died to [the reign of] sin” (Rom. 6:2, 12). The second reason is that “just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Rom. 6:4).

Based upon the resurrection of Christ, therefore, the believer enters upon a new kind of life—a new lifestyle. Paul continues: “If we have been united [with] Christ in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection [thus beginning a new life]” (Rom. 6:5). “Now if we died with Christ [thus ending the reign of sin in our lives], we believe that we will also live [a new kind of life in our faith union] with him” (Rom. 6:8).

What Paul is saying here is that just as the death of Christ “to sin” is followed by His resurrection, so will the believer's death “to sin” be followed by a new kind of life; just as the believer benefits by the death of Christ by receiving freedom from guilt and the reign of sin, so he will benefit by the resurrection of Christ by receiving the start of a new life.

The Divine Purpose

In order to better understand the meaning of this “new life”, we need to understand God's purpose behind it. Paul states: “The death [Christ] died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God” (Rom. 6:10). Then follows the exhortation to believers: “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God with Christ” (Rom. 6:11).

In view of this, Paul gives another exhortation: “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God...and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness” (Rom. 6:13). By this Paul is telling us that God demands an unreserved and unconditional commitment from every believer. Therefore, this new life the believer has entered is not dedicated “to sin”, the old master, but dedicated “to God”, the believer's new Sovereign.

Based on the resurrection of Christ, therefore, God imparts to the believer a new life enabling him “to serve [God] without fear in holiness and righteousness” (Luke 1:74, 75). Paul says, “But now that you have been set free from sin [you] have become slaves to God” (Rom. 6:22). This was the original plan of God for man—a plan He has never abandoned and which, through the Gospel, is still being realized.

How important, therefore, that we understand the purpose of God in our salvation: it is not only to save us from hell and eternal death, but more importantly, to save us for His purpose where we will again be under His reign and authority, doing His will for His glory. For this purpose man was created and saved, and only in this purpose will man find fulfillment, contentment, and happiness.

The Holy Spirit

This new life that we receive on the basis of Christ's objective resurrection is imparted to our spirits subjectively by the Holy Spirit. This impartation of a new life from God is referred to as a “new birth.” The apostle Peter puts it as follows: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). Paul states that, because of Jesus' resurrection, God "saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5b, 6).

The apostle John recorded the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born...of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to [man's] spirit" (John 3:5, 6). Thus could John say that those who are born again in this way "become children of God—children born not of nat-

ural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12, 13).¹²

Furthermore, just as children who are born of their natural parents partake of their life and nature, those who are born of God partake of "the life of God" (Eph. 4:18) and "the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). This new spiritual birth is an inner work

by the Holy Spirit¹³ which accomplishes a radical and complete transformation in the believer's spirit.¹⁴ And by virtue of this inner transformation, the believer becomes a "new man" (Eph. 4:24 KJV; Col. 3:10 KJV) or "a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17), which is "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:24).

The believer's spirit is thus regenerated—made alive to the things of God—by means of the Holy Spirit's ministry—a ministry that is based solely on the resurrection of Christ from the dead.¹⁵ The fruit of this regenerating work of the Spirit is that "the righteous requirements of the law [God's will]...might be fully met in us who live...according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4). The apostle John explains this fruit by saying, "that everyone who does what is right has been born of [God]" and that "No one who is born of God will continue to sin".¹⁶

The results of this transformation of the believer yield tangible changes in his disposition—from one of lawlessness, godlessness, and self-seeking¹⁷ into one of trust and love, of repentance for past rebelliousness and unbelief, and of loving compliance with God's revealed will. This transformation also enlightens the blinded mind to discern spiritual realities¹⁸ and liberates the enslaved will, energizing it for willing obedience to God.¹⁹

The life of a child of God—one who has been born of God—is therefore characterized, not by continuing in the old life of sin,²⁰ but by doing the will of his heavenly Father,²¹ by his love for his fellow believers,²² and by his experience of faith's victory over the world and the things of the world.²³ In

all this the believer is being "conformed to the likeness of [God's] Son".²⁴ As a result he will seek to please God in all things²⁵ as did Jesus,²⁶ and God's purpose will be fulfilled in his life for the glory of God.²⁷

We can say that in solving man's sin problem, God had a higher end in mind: imparting new life to him so he could become spiritually alive to God and to His will and purpose.²⁸ Here we must also be clear about another fact: unregenerate man is not only a slave of sin committing all kinds of sins against God, he is also spiritually dead—a state in which he is totally unable to serve God and do His will regardless how religious he might be.²⁹ God, however, solved this problem of spiritual impotency once for all by raising Christ from the dead so that, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, man might become spiritually alive to serve God and do His will.

Without this clear understanding concerning God's purpose for those He saves, many believers become backsliders instead of being dynamic Christians with a clearly defined purpose: to serve God and do His will for His glory.

Conclusion

The objective Gospel foundation which God laid 2000 years ago is the only basis for all the subjective spiritual blessings that we receive from Him.³⁰ Christ alone is our foundation; Paul clearly states that "no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).

Paul further states: "So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong...to him who was raised from the dead, in order that [you] might bear fruit to God" (Rom. 7:4), thus fulfilling God's eternal purpose for man.

"What shall we conclude then?" (Rom. 3:9): man does not merit justification from his sins because justification is based solely on the blood of Christ; he does not merit deliverance from the reign of sin because deliverance is based solely on Christ's death to sin on man's behalf; he does not merit the new birth and regeneration by the Holy Spirit because new birth is based solely on the resurrection of Christ from the dead. All our praise and worship go to Him who loved us and gave himself up for us (Gal.2:20b). †

Endnotes

¹1 Cor. 15:1-4, 17-19.

²Acts 1:22.

³1 Cor. 15: 5-8.

⁴Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:30; 10:39, 40; 13:30, 31; 26:16.

⁵1 Pet. 1:1.

⁶Rom. 3:23, 24.

⁷Rom. 6:14.

⁸Rom. 5:21.

⁹Rom. 6: 14, 18, 22; 8:1, 2.

¹⁰Rom. 6:6c.

¹¹Rom. 6:14.

¹²1 John 2:29; 3:9, 10; 4:4.

¹³Titus 3:5; Eph. 4:24.

¹⁴Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23.

¹⁵Rom. 6:4; 1 Pet. 1:3.

¹⁶1 John 2:29; 3:9; cf. 1 Pet. 1:23-2:1.

¹⁷Rom. 3:9-18; 8:7.

¹⁸1 Cor. 4:6; Col. 3:10.

¹⁹Rom. 6:14; 17-22; Phil. 2:12, 13.

²⁰1 John 3:9; 5:18.

²¹1 John 3:7.

²²1 John 4:7.

²³1 John 5:4; 2:15-17.

²⁴Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 3:18.

²⁵2 Cor. 5:9.

²⁶Jn. 8:29.

²⁷Eph. 1:12.

²⁸Rom 6:4b, 5, 8, 13b.

²⁹Rom. 7:14, 18-19; 8:6a-8.

³⁰Eph. 1:3.



The Gospel foundation for *Resurrection life*

DALE RATZLAFF

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The resurrection of Christ is the foundation stone upon which the Christian church is based. Paul clearly tells us that without the resurrection our faith would be worthless, and we would still be in our sins.

Paul and the other apostles would be false teachers if the resurrection were not real, and their preaching would have been in vain. He states that of all people, Christians without a living Christ would be the most pitied.¹ There simply is no room for anyone who claims to be a Bible-believing Christian who does not believe in the literal, bodily resurrection of Christ. The following verses are loaded with meaning.

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

The preceding verses warrant our careful study. In some churches there are several “gospels” among which members can choose, but Paul does not allow such “diversity.” There is one gospel. It is simple, clear and powerful.

- It can be proclaimed.
- It can be received.
- We can stand in the gospel.
- We are saved by the gospel.
- We are to hold fast the word of the gospel.
- We can believe in vain—belief without trust.
- It is of first importance.
- Paul received this gospel—from Christ Himself.²
- Paul delivered this same gospel to his followers.
- Christ died for our sins.
- The gospel has its roots in the Scriptures.
- Christ was buried—proving his bodily death.
- Christ was raised on the third day in fulfillment of the Scriptures.

Note what is *not* mentioned in this clear gospel statement. There is no mention of law or obedience. The only thing for us to do is to believe—express belief and trust—in the gospel of Christ. We can participate in its proclamation which should be based upon Scripture. This is the simple new covenant gospel. Obedience will be manifest in the lives of Christians, but any obedience is to be “worked out” and not “worked in”.

Note what is not mentioned in this clear gospel statement. There is no mention of law or obedience. The only thing for us to do is to believe—express belief and trust—in the gospel of Christ.

We can picture the resurrection of Christ as a large flat slab of white granite engraved with the words: “The Resurrection of Christ.” Upon this secure foundation we turn our attention to the next building block of Christian faith: the very righteousness of God.

God’s Own Righteousness

As some churches today promote multiple gospels, they also are unclear on the full, eternal deity of Christ. In fact, often the false gospels that some promote today are founded on their understanding of who Christ is. If a church believes—or allows its members in good and regular standing to believe—that Christ is the first created being, Michael the Archangel, or the incarnate Christ with the nature of Adam after the fall, then of necessity its gospel is flawed and its definition of righteousness is warped.

Scripture makes it clear that Christ is fully God. And this fact is vital to a correct understanding of righteousness.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God (Jn. 1:1, 2).

Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus (Tit. 2:13). (The Greek construction makes it clear that “our Great God and Savior” is the same person as Christ.)

If we believe that Christ took on the post-fall nature of Adam, then our “gospel” will lean toward “example theology.” Example theology teaches that with the power of the indwelling Spirit we can reach the same level of obedience to the law that Christ manifested. Thus, our character development becomes a factor in our salvation and in our readiness for the coming of Christ. The most deceptive error is that which mixes valid truth with a little error. The quotation below serves as an illustration.

“Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.”³

The above quotation includes some truth. However, to state that Christ will not claim His church as His own until His character is perfectly reproduced in His people opens up the false gospel of “example/remnant theology”. This theology teaches not only that Christ did not settle all the issues in “the great controversy” but also that the claims of Satan will only be fully unmasked when “the remnant” prove to the on-looking universe that God’s law can be perfectly kept. This theology robs one of Christian assurance and puts its adherents under the bondage of the law.

However, if we believe in the full, eternal deity of Christ, recognizing that Christ took the pre-fall nature of Adam, then our assurance of salvation and readiness for

the coming of Christ is not based on our obedience to the law or our attempt to perfectly reproduce the character of Christ. Rather, we will see that our only hope of salvation is to accept by faith the free gift of “God’s righteousness”—a righteousness that is far above “the righteousness of the law” or any righteousness that we can produce.

There is yet another subtle error in the above quotation from Ellen White. She says that Christ will not claim us as His own until we perfectly reproduce His character in our lives. This statement is at best a misunderstanding of the gospel, or at worst, rank heresy. The fact that she made this statement late in her life (1900) and it was reproduced several times in her other books (until as late as 1913) indicates that this concept was never abandoned. This statement of Ellen White is in direct contradiction to the good news of the gospel: “This man receives sinners” (Lk. 15:2).

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:16, 17).

There are some who want to move away from substitution theology to example theology. I believe this movement is a subtle deception of the devil. Only substitution theology provides the full “righteousness of God”. I want to make this point clear beyond a shadow of doubt.

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:21–26).

But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works (Rom. 4:5, 6).

For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation. For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (Rom. 4:14–16).

For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:19–21).

For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom. 10:4).

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly (Gal. 2:21).

...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).

The simple new covenant gospel leaves no room for us to depend on any character development of our own for our assurance of salvation or our readiness for the second coming of Christ. It is 100% by God’s grace through faith in Christ our Substitute. Christ takes our sin and accounts us righteous with the very “righteousness of God.”

Building on the large flat slab of white granite engraved with the words: “The resurrection of Christ”, we place the next stone in our gospel theology. Picture a large block of pure red jasper covering one third of the white granite underneath. On the red jasper stone inscribed in gold letters we read, “The Righteousness of God”.

Once we understand that Christ rose bodily from the grave and accounts believers with the very righteousness of God, we are then free to understand and accept eternal life.

Eternal Life Now

After I discovered justification by faith, I was happy to live in that blessed assurance for many years without fully understanding eternal life. O, I knew the texts on eternal life, but I saw them only as an assurance that after the second coming of Christ I would live forever in heaven. It seems I am often so slow to understand what the Bible makes plain. Sometimes passages become so familiar we skip over them. Look with me again as if for the first time at some key texts on eternal life.

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

Many of us were taught that only the names of those who professed to believe in God would come into judgment. Actually, this verse teaches the exact opposite! Believers don’t come into judgment. They have already been judged in Christ when they believed. Christ took their judgment for them. That is what the cross is all about! The instant we truly believe in Christ and are born-again, at that instant we are given eternal life.

And the testimony is this, that God has given [a past event] us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has [a present reality] the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life (1 Jn. 5:11–13).

God not only wants us to have eternal life, He wants us to know we have it! He wants us to have that assurance. Look very carefully at the next few verses.

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world" (Jn. 11:23–27).

Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Mt. 10:28).

I will not here do an in-depth study of 2 Corinthians 5:1–9, a key text on life after death, as I did this in the May/June, 2001 issue of *Proclamation!*.⁴ Nevertheless, as I read the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew and John quoted above and study the theology of Paul below, I must conclude that the very next moment after death our soul or spirit will be with the Lord.

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

While our understanding of the intermediate state between death and the resurrection is not a salvation issue, to internalize the truth that the very next moment after our body dies our soul or spirit will be with the Lord gives us a great deal of comfort as we face death.

We know little about the intermediate state, but here is what we do know. We will be out of the body and with Christ. This state is to be preferred to our lives here on earth, and we can be pleasing to God. This means that we will have intellect, emotion and will. I believe this is the fulfillment of the prayer of Christ in John 17.

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word...Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world (Jn. 17:20, 24).

Moreover, at the second coming we have this promise.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in

Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

If we really believe what Christ said, what John wrote, and what Paul taught, then we know that our eternal life starts the very moment we trust Christ for salvation. That truth, when incorporated into our spiritual armament, will help us face whatever comes to us in this life with deeper assurance, dynamic motivation, and undying joy.

Now we are ready to place the next stone in our gospel theology. It is a translucent green emerald placed next to the red jasper, and it covers the central third of the white granite underneath. In shining letters of golden light we read, "Eternal Life Now."

Heaven Is Real

There is yet one more foundation stone we must place before we can fully understand what it means to live the eternal kind of life. This sky blue stone says in shimmering letters, "Heaven is Real" and covers the last one third on top of the white granite stone representing the resurrection of Christ.

In Philippians 3:21 Paul says that at the second coming, our bodies will be transformed into conformity to Christ's heavenly body. What kind of bodies will we receive at the resurrection? The Gospels give us some clues.

First, glorified bodies obey different laws of physics than we know now. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus invited Christ to stay with them. After Christ blessed the bread, he suddenly disappeared from their sight. When the disciples were together behind locked doors, the risen Christ suddenly appeared. Can't you just imagine how much fun kids would have playing heavenly hide and seek if they could make themselves suddenly disappear and then reappear?

Second, we will eat in our glorified bodies. To show that Jesus was not just a ghost, He asked for a peace of fish and He ate it in their presence. Moreover, at the last supper, Jesus said He would never eat that meal again until the kingdom had come. Picture a large banquet in heaven where we will eat the communion supper together and share our testimonies of God's grace, love and care! Further, we will eat from the tree of life.

Third, glorified bodies are tangible and material. The disciples could touch Christ and see the scars on his hands. In heaven we will be real people—but different from now! No longer will we have the curse of sin.

From the biblical record it appears that animals were not afraid of people until after the flood. Wouldn't it be fun to be able to get an up-close look at some of God's wonderful creations?

The central attraction in the world made new, however, will be our God. Isaiah received a glimpse of heaven, and it changed his life. Paul speaks about being caught up into

Paradise and hearing inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. Near the end of the book of Revelation we have this description.

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever (Rev. 22:1–6).

Yes, heaven is real. Now with these four foundation stones of the gospel: the Resurrection of Christ, the Righteousness of God, Eternal life now, and Heaven is real, we are now prepared to build on this gospel foundation and begin living the eternal kind of life.

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1–2).

How did Christ endure the pain and shame of the cross? He did it by looking past the cross to “the joy set before Him.” Paul, too, lived the eternal kind of life.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Rom. 8:18).

Living the eternal kind of life allows us to view our existence here through the lens of eternity. Too often we measure our life by years down here. Often our values, our goals, our plans, our toil, our decisions are all predicated on our life here with little thought of eternity. We consider death to be the end when in reality, for the believer, death is just the beginning. It is my conviction that once the four foundation stones of the gospel are firmly placed in our thinking and we discipline our minds to think of eternity first, it transforms the way we view life here and now.

Sickness, pain and facing death

Carolyn and I recently talked with a lady who was a regular member of a church we pastored. She told us that she was diagnosed with lung cancer and was given only a month or two to live. In our conversation she told us how the peace of God had flooded her soul. With the four foundation stones of the gospel firmly in place, she was looking forward to being with Christ. Knowing that the same powerful Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in her,⁵ that she was clothed with the very right-

eousness of God and now had eternal life, she could look into a certain future with assurance and joy.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away (Rev. 21:4).

Suffering and persecution

But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish (Lk. 21:12–18).

Living in the security of the eternal kind of life allows us to change the focus of persecution from what happens to us into an opportunity to witness for Christ. It gives us a passion for others. We have good news to share with those who wish to do us harm.

Living the eternal kind of life helps us face loss for the sake of the gospel... Now, however, we have a larger “gospel family”: We have hundreds of brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers in Christ.



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Loss for the gospel

Living the eternal kind of life helps us face loss for the sake of the gospel. By leaving the Adventist church Carolyn and I have been estranged from some of our family members. Some who were our friends now look at us with suspicion or outright hostility. Now, however, we have a larger “gospel family”. We have hundreds of brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers in Christ. Now some of our “gospel family” are as close as our own family. God’s promises are true.⁶

Financial loss

Living in the assurance of the eternal kind of life helps us face financial loss: Some of us are upside down in our mortgages. Some have seen a large portion of their savings go down the garbage disposal of political corruption and corporate greed. Some have lost their jobs because of recent cutbacks. If you have lost a large part of your savings, I encourage you to check the balance of your heavenly ledger. We are children of God and joint heirs with Christ. If our Lord could feed 5,000 with a few loaves and fish, we have nothing to fear. Even if we are destitute here in this life, we know who holds the future.

...I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (Phil. 4:11–13).

Identity and Significance

Living the eternal kind of life gives us identity and significance. I well remember one day many years ago I was walking on the beach at Monterey Bay Academy. I was thinking how privileged I was. I was a citizen of the United States—the best country on God’s green earth. I was an ordained pastor in the Adventist Church—the one and only true, remnant Church of Bible prophecy. I was a Bible teacher at Monterey Bay Academy—then considered to be the best Adventist academy in the world. Wow! What a privilege, what an identity, what significance!

But as you know that was not a true, lasting identity.

Transitioning out of Adventism left us wondering who we were. We felt cut off from family and friends. We weren’t sure of our theology. All we knew for sure was that we were trusting Christ

alone for salvation and we had a clear conscience as we were trying to follow God’s Word. Some of you, our readers, may be going through the same experience in your transition out of Adventism. You may feel that you have lost your identity and your significance. Adventism affects every part of a person’s life. It tells us what to eat, what to wear, where and when to worship, how much to give and what to believe. Adventism encompasses the whole of life, and to exit Adventism one must form a totally new identity, build a new theological paradigm, and find a better source of significance. It is not easy, and it does not happen overnight. But when the four foundation stones of the gospel are firmly in place and we know who we are in Christ, we will find a true, everlasting identity and significance.

An eternal perspective on everything

Living the eternal kind of life gives an eternal perspective on everything. After describing the events at Sinai the writer of Hebrews says,

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect (Heb. 12:22, 23).

The foundation of the gospel is well laid in the resurrection of Christ. We have the assurance of salvation based on our faith in the grace of God who considers us righteous with the very righteousness of God. We don’t have to wait until the second coming to receive eternal life. We have it now, and heaven is real. These gospel facts allow us to live the eternal kind of life with dozens of benefits, some of which are listed below:

- We can face pain, suffering and death with assurance and joy.
- We can transform persecution and hardship into opportunities to witness for Christ.
- We can face the estrangement of family and friends, knowing that our family in Christ is large, loyal and lasting.
- We can endure financial loss knowing our treasure is safe in heaven and we are joint heirs with Christ.
- We have true and lasting identity and significance as children of God.
- Living the eternal kind of life gives us an eternal perspective on every aspect of life.

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not



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.

on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory (Col. 3:1–4).

If you are unsure of your salvation, if you are trusting partly to Christ and partly to your own obedience to law, I encourage you to take the step of faith. Faith is more than an intellectual assent, it is trusting your life to the resurrected Christ who paid the full price for your sin and offers you His own, perfect righteousness, eternal life and a home in heaven—all free of charge. At the tomb of Lazarus Jesus said to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”

As we celebrate the momentous event of the resurrection of Christ, our Lord speaks to us through His word with the same question He asked Martha, “Do you believe this?”

Endnotes

¹1 Cor. 15:1–19.

²Gal. 1:11, 12.

³Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, 1900, p. 69. See also Pamphlets on Recreation, 1912, p. 14; *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 1913, p. 324.

⁴http://lifeassuranceministries.org/Proclamation2001_MayJun.pdf

⁵“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11).

⁶Mt. 12:48–50.

Ministry NEWS

BibleStudiesForAdventists.com



New website for Adventists launched

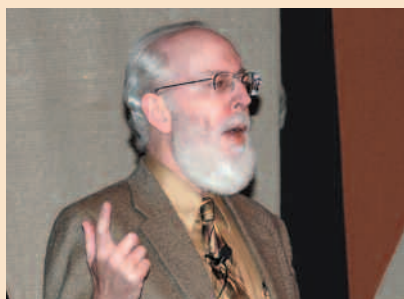
In January Life Assurance Ministries launched a new website, BibleStudiesForAdventists.com. This website features commentary on the *Sabbath School Bible Study Guides*, formerly known as “The Quarterly”. Authors including Dale Ratzlaff, Mark Martin, Colleen Tinker, Richard Tinker, Chris Lee, Phil Harris, Steve Pitcher, Roy Tinker, Brian Cain, Martin Carey, and Gabriel Proksch have written daily commentary for each week’s lessons.

The studies for the first quarter of 2009 were entitled *The Prophetic Gift*, and their purpose was to endorse Ellen White as a true prophet of God. The commentary on our new website exposes the underlying assumptions and non-biblical positions taken in the Sabbath School lessons and presents the biblical counterpoint to the Adventist arguments.

The commentary for the second quarter’s lessons are currently being added to the same website. The title of the second quarter’s studies is *The Christian Life*.

Weekend meeting audio and video online

Audio and video files from the Former Adventist Fellowship weekend are now online. To hear Paul Carden, Gary Inrig, Dale Ratzlaff, Bill Born, Elizabeth Inrig, or Jon Rittenhouse (and to see



some pictures from the weekend), go to www.formeradventist.com and follow the links to “FAF Weekend 2009.”

Paul Carden’s important presentation, “The Apostolic Imperative and the International Adventist Challenge” is available online in video and audio formats.

Summer tour plans

Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff will be traveling this summer on a Tour of Encouragement. Richard and Colleen Tinker will join them for most of the engagements. Paul Carden will also attend the St. Joseph and Huntsville meetings.

Meeting topics will include: “A Comparison of Adventism with Evangelical Christianity”, by Dale Ratzlaff; The Apostolic Imperative and The International Adventist Challenge” by Paul Carden; “What about the Fourth Commandment” by Dale Ratzlaff. Each presentation will be followed by a Q&A session.

Please consult www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org for updates.



Praying for provision

Most of us have experienced financial loss because of the economic slowdown, and this ministry is no exception. We have been at financial rock bottom before, but with God’s blessing and your liberality the need was supplied. With our expanded mailing list our needs are great.

Added to our normal budget are the projected expenses for this summer’s Tour of Encouragement. We have prayed that God would open new doors of ministry so that we might proclaim the simple gospel of God’s grace in Christ by faith alone. Right now we stand before an open door. We plan by faith to walk through this open door even though we do not clearly see from where God’s provision may come.

From time to time Life Assurance Ministries has been blessed with large donations that met our need. However, regular gifts from many people are just as important. Would you join us in prayer that God will supply the need? We are praying that God will rise up more partners with us in ministry: prayer partners, contributing writers, and financial partners.

We are praying for you. Would you pray for us?

No fear!

In Resurrection life

THOMAS FRANCIS

HOME WITH JESUS, APRIL 2, 2009

Daily, the headlines tell the grim news. “Markets Down”, “More Jobs Lost”, “Major Corporation To Declare Bankruptcy!” You can feel danger in the air. People who have lived in a time of great wealth are in deep trouble. For generations Americans have come to expect their piece of the American dream as their right.

“Work hard and you will succeed”, is a mantra we have all grown up with. Now, in a matter of a few weeks, the dream seems to be gone. Promises of hope and change have become nightmares of gloom and despair. There is fear everywhere.

Circa 30 A.D.

It had been an amazing day! The crowds had been huge, the teaching electrifying. Excitedly they had left Him and had begun their slow night cruise to the other side of the sea. Then, without warning—danger! Winds howled; the storm raged; waves threatened to sink their ship. Though they were experienced in the ways of the sea, they could feel that they were in deep trouble.

Then, as if the storm were not generating enough fear, they saw a figure walking on the water over the awesome waves. They were terrified!

The Bible says, “But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, ‘Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.’ Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped” (Mk. 6:50-51 NASB). They were astounded! How could this man do these things?

Now, huddled in the upper room, memories crowded their tired minds. For three years they had followed Him, fully expecting Him to establish His kingdom and make them important officials. Instead, it had all ended with the terror of His

arrest, torture, and crucifixion. They had scarcely escaped with their lives, and now they were hiding, expecting to be the next victims of the angry Jewish leaders.

There had been rumors, too crazy even to hope for, that He was alive. They knew better; they had watched Him die, and from a distance, they had watched two wealthy Jewish officials take him from the cross, embalm him, and place him in the tomb. Bereft and grief-stricken, they hunkered down in despair.

Fear was in the room. It was the evening of the first day of the week. The door was bolted. The lights were low, and the lookout was posted to watch for approaching danger.

And then ... He was there! He spoke to them, “Peace be with you!” The unthinkable was true. Jesus was alive!

Jerusalem, seven weeks later

It had been seven weeks since that horrible, amazing weekend. Events had happened so fast they were blurring in their memories. They had known terror, complete joy, and finally amazement as they had watched Him go away into heaven. The two angel messengers had promised that He would be coming back. He had told them to go into Jerusalem and wait until the Holy Spirit would come upon them. Then they were to be His witnesses.

Witnesses to what?

Suddenly the room shook with a mighty wind. Flames of fire appeared on each of them. The ability to speak languages they had never spoken or understood before came to them. Throngs of Jews from all over the Mediterranean world were gathering at the sound of the event.

It was early on that Pentecost Sunday morning, and Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached the very first sermon of the church that was Christ's body. What did he preach?

His message was the very first presentation of the Gospel, the message of the resurrection. Note the points of His sermon. He began by explaining that the prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah. He came, and the people killed Him by hanging Him on a tree. "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" (Acts 2:34 NASB). We are His witnesses to this singular event. He is now at the right hand of the Father. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 3:36).

The message was powerful. It always has been and still is powerful each time it has been presented. The listening crowds were convicted; they were pointed to Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins, and three thousand were baptized in a single day.

Personal peace

Today, as in the days of the early church, our culture has let us down. As St. Augustine is loosely quoted as saying: "My soul shall find no peace until it finds its peace with Thee". The need of our culture is not restoration of what was, but the discovery of true peace—the perfect peace and *sabbatismos* rest (Heb. 4:9)—that comes through the message of the resurrection. The message of the resurrection is the pure, sweet, soul-saving Gospel preached by Peter and by all the great preachers of the church from that day until now.

The Apostle Paul clearly defined the gospel: "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time...then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also" (I Cor. 15:1-8 NASB). Notice the simplicity, the clarity, the assurance. But did you notice the hook?

Of first importance, Christ died for our sins, according to—or as foretold by—the Scriptures. He was buried. And, most importantly of all, He was raised on the third day—again, according to the Scriptures. Have you ever wondered why the Christian church has made such a big deal out of this message? Here is your answer. Because it is by believing this good news of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, by receiving it, and by taking your stand on this news that you receive your salvation. Without the the resurrection event, Jesus would have only been a failed preacher who died a noble death for a lost cause. But because of this wonderful event, the Gospel is the "power of God to salvation to all who believe".

And there is the "hook". Paul's gospel ended with, "last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also." Paul acknowledged that he was not worthy of seeing Jesus, yet with such humility he stated, "He appeared to me also". For Paul, the Gospel was

not a theory, a theological statement, or even a doctrine; it was personal. "He appeared to ME."

The great reformers of the sixteenth century had four great statements which were the pillars of their faith. The foundational statement was *Sola Scriptura*, Scripture alone as the only written revealed word of God, without error and sufficient for salvation. From Scripture, they believed as did Paul, came the next three statements: *Sola Gratia*, that salvation is the gift of God's grace alone, *Sola Fide*, through faith alone, and *Solas Christos*, through trust in the death and resurrection of Christ alone. Paul made the same claim in Ephesians, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). You can't earn salvation. In fact, Paul says if you try, you are severed from Christ and fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4). Fearful words!

The Gospel message of the resurrection is a message that must be received personally. It doesn't come with added light or rules and restrictions that make you work hard to earn God's favor. It comes with a gentle whisper from the One who said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). It comes with a command, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." (Jn 6:29.) It comes with assurance, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." (Jn 5:24) And it comes with a promise, "the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out" (Jn 6:37).

At the same time, it comes with a requirement: you must believe and trust, even if it seems too easy to be true. As John stated in his first letter, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life" (I Jn 5:13).

The promise of the resurrection is blessed; it is true; it is sure; it is paid for with blood, guaranteed by the empty tomb, and sealed with the Holy Spirit's presence in you (Eph. 1: 13-14). Can you hear His soft whisper?

"It is I, don't be afraid. Come to Me and I will give you life that will never end." Can you say with assurance that the promise is yours? If not, why not now? If not now, when? †

Thomas Francis went home to the Lord on Thursday April 2, 2009. His son Eric writes, "We are mourning our loss, yet rejoicing in his gain. He suffered with diabetic-related illnesses for over a decade, yet he never gave up, never gave in, and lived for Jesus Christ every day. I am aware he has written several articles for *Proclamation!* over the years and has touched unknown lives for Christ. I thought you would want to know. Your ministry meant a great deal to my dad, Thom, in that you allowed him to reach others who had been misled by "wolves in sheep's clothing". Thank you for following the Lord in your ministry—our prayers will be with you.



4TH ANNUAL FORMER ADVENTIST

Paul Carden delivers the opening talk of the 2009 FAF Weekend on Friday, February 13, at 7:00 PM.



This banner welcomed the participants as they arrived at Trinity Church.



After the farewell luncheon on Sunday, February 15, special prayer was offered for Richard and Colleen Tinker and Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff.



Sharon Strum and her praise band leads worship at the evening communion service.



Bill Born, worship pastor at Trinity Church, discussing how biblical worship counteracts fear, doubt, and depression.



Greg and Paula Taylor led a breakout session on transitioning out of Adventism.

The fourth annual Former Adventist Fellowship Weekend, Submitting to the Word, both inspired and nourished those who attended and participated. The conference opened on a stormy Friday evening, February 13, with a meeting to which the public was invited. Sharon Strum assisted by her husband Scott, Jamie Rabenstein, Sarah Schumacher, and Roy Tinker led worship, followed by Brian Cain of Yucaipa, California, sharing his story of coming to faith in Jesus at last year's Former Adventist Fellowship weekend. Shirley Burton from Winnipeg, Manitoba, delivered a report of the ways she has reached out to evangelical pastors in her city to inform them about the reality of Adventism and its public evangelistic crusades.

Paul Carden, executive director of the Centers for Apologetics Research, was the keynote speaker for the

evening. Paul originally worked with the late Walter Martin at the Christian Research Institute and co-hosted the radio show, The Bible Answer Man, with Martin for six years. Carden was direct and honest, confessing his long reluctance to investigate Adventism but explaining his growing conviction that he needed to understand what it was beneath the public veneer. He outlined the subtle web of Adventist evangelism and the ways it preys on new Christians, both in North America and in foreign countries.

Carden compared Adventist evangelistic organizations with the mythical many-headed hydra and concluded, "Because of Walter Martin's generous judgment on behalf of Adventism, we find far too many people not taking it seriously as a heretical system of doctrine, a threat to Christian faith and witness, and a people to be evangelized... But we are called to discern and maintain the boundaries of our fellow-

NTIST FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND

Martin Carey led a breakout session entitled, "Opening Orion".



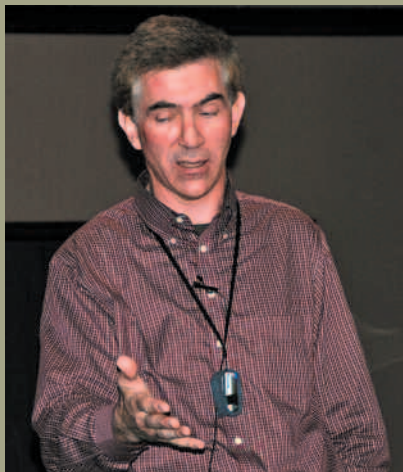
Carolyn Ratzlaff gave her faith story on Saturday after lunch.



Rebekah Morgan, LynnRae Dupree, and Sarah Beth Mollner from Trinity Church were part of the hospitality team for the weekend.



Gary Inrig, senior pastor at Trinity Church, taught from 2 Corinthians 11.



Jon Rittenhouse led a Christianity.EDU session on God's faithfulness to keep His promises.



Dale Ratzlaff lead a breakout session on the Time of Trouble.



Pauline Deeb and Jonathan Bilima led a session entitled, "Life After Adventism".

ship, and the Christian church has lost tremendous ground by partnering with the Adventist church in far too many venues."

The evening ended with a Q & A session addressed by a panel comprised of Paul Carden, Dale Ratzlaff, Greg Taylor, and Colleen Tinker moderated by Jonathan Bilima.

Saturday began with breakfast at 7:00 AM followed by Gary Inrig, senior pastor of Trinity Church, teaching from 2 Corinthians 11 for the morning devotional. He emphasized our need to be on guard against putting up with "fools" and "false brothers" who infiltrate the body of Christ and teach false doctrines. After lunch, Carolyn Ratzlaff shared her faith story, and Dale Ratzlaff gave the next general session entitled, "Living the Eternal Kind of Life".

During most of the rest of the day, attendees could choose from a variety of classes and breakout sessions. The

classes in the Christianity.EDU track included a session given by Trinity's worship pastor Bill Born on "How Biblical Worship Confronts Fear, Doubt, and Depression" in which he emphasized the Psalms and worship songs as means of internalizing and expressing the truth not only of our own feelings but also of God's faithfulness to restore and redeem. Elizabeth Inrig, Trinity's pastor for women's ministries and an adjunct professor at Talbot Seminary, taught a class entitled "In the Image of God: Implications for Death and Eternity" in which she showed that what the Bible tells us about Jesus' experience of death and resurrection is the pattern of our certain future, and we can know that we, like Jesus was, will be with God when we die and will come back to life with glorified bodies. Jon Rittenhouse, an adjunct professor at Biola University and a 30-year Campus Crusade for Christ campus mentor,

Former Adventist Fellowship weekend FROM PAGE 19

taught in the afternoon. “Does God Always Keep His Promises?” was the title of his talk, and as usual he challenged his class with truths about God’s faithfulness and sovereignty.

Breakout sessions included Dale Ratzlaff teaching on “The Time of Trouble”, Greg and Paula Taylor discussion “Transitioning Out of Adventism”, Martin Cary sharing his amateur astronomer’s research on “Opening Orion”, Jonathan Bilima and Pauline Deeb addressing “Life After Adventism”, and Richard and Colleen Tinker presenting “The Spirit of Adventism: overcoming the grief, doubt, and loss of leaving Adventism”.

Greg Taylor spoke on “Christ Our Substitute” and led the group in communion and a time of sharing on Saturday night, and Paula Taylor gave her faith story.

Sunday morning Dale Ratzlaff gave his final talk, “Deliverance from bondage—our victory in Christ”, at 8:00 AM, and afterward weekend attendees attended Trinity’s church service and heard Gary Inrig preach from James 2:14-26, the “faith without works is dead” passage that is iconic for many Adventists. It looked completely different from a new covenant perspective. Former Adventist Esther Shu and her husband Stanford hosted a farewell dinner in their home following church, and many of the conference attendees found it hard to

say good-bye after the richness and warmth of the weekend.

A group of five women from Trinity Church—Thais Kanold, LynnRae Dupree, Rebekah Morgan, Sarah Beth Mollner, and Jennifer Simmons—who have no connection with Adventism—took charge of preparing and serving food for the weekend. Their presence, commitment, and the delicious meals surprised and impressed many who attended; the idea of members of the body of Christ sacrificing a weekend and reaching out to help as an act of love and service with no personal ulterior motive was startling to many.

Trinity’s pastor of community Steve Springsted and his secretary Ann Mixon also deserve warm thanks for their facilitation of the weekend.

Participants during the weekend included a spectrum of people who have been out of Adventism and involved in the body of Christ for years to people who are still Adventists. One attendee said, “FAF Weekend is appropriate for the curious SDA as well as for the former SDA. I hope and pray that the FAF Weekend will happen again next year and that many more people will be able to attend.”

Audio and video files of the weekend’s presentations are available at FormerAdventist.com. †

My cup overflows FROM PAGE 5

Follow Adventism—or follow Jesus?

The gospel was becoming the deciding issue. We realized we were going to have to choose between following a denomination that taught a false doctrine and following Jesus and the true gospel. This was a hard decision. Adventism was our life. We loved everything about it until we began to see the truth. We never thought there would be a dividing wall between Adventism and Jesus. The first step toward the door of freedom in Jesus was to realize that the 1844 judgment doctrine was false. The second step was realizing that since this doctrine was strongly supported by Ellen White, we could not believe in other things she wrote—especially since we were learning that she copied so much from other writers of her day.

We spent many hours in prayer during this time, crying out to God for guidance and assurance. The Holy Spirit spoke strongly to me one morning as I was reading these verses in Matthew 10:24-39:

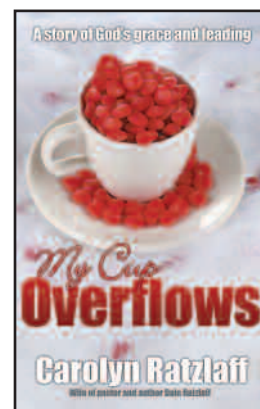
A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household! Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But

the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows. Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword...He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

After reading these verses, I knew it didn’t matter what people were saying about us or how they were treating us. The important issue was that we would be true to our convictions and the leading of the Holy Spirit. We knew that our stand must be on the side of truth and following Jesus only. Together Dale and I made the decision to leave Adventism and we have never regretted it. Now I know with assurance that my sins are forgiven, and I am ready to meet Jesus—even if it is today.

There is no greater joy than knowing and following Jesus! †

You may read much more of Carolyn Ratzlaff’s story in her new book available at www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.com, or by phoning toll-free: 1-800-355-7073.



Thrilled by assurance

I so much enjoyed the latest issue of *Proclamation!*, as always. In the latest issue [vol. 10, issue 1] I was thrilled again by the words that Chris Lee wrote in his response to the letter “Death, heaven, and Chris Lee”: “The article was written to those people who know they are in Christ...He is completely sufficient, and because of that I have great assurance and confidence.”

Again that message brought the thrill to my heart that I first experienced back in 1975 (age 33) when I began a word by word study of the book of Romans and then the short epistles of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians followed by the book to the Hebrews. Paul’s letters in the New Testament had never made sense and seemed not to fit with my trained thought patterns of how I would get to go to heaven.

I know that my [growing] comprehension of the gospel was brought about by God’s Spirit, for I had been trained as a child and young adult that Jesus’ death was for my past sins. Now it was an ongoing work for me and the Holy Spirit to get me through to the Second Coming or death...

This letter was written to bring you and the entire team encouragement in your ongoing work. I was born in an Adventist home and tried for 32 years [1975–2007], within the Adventist community where I live, to help others learn from the God’s Word the assurance of their eternal salvation and what it means to live a life of faith and trust regardless of the circumstances that happen in life (Rom.8:28–39). I finally had to disengage myself from that fellowship, for I could no longer support emotionally or financially a belief system that was not in harmony with God’s Word.

With full assurance in Christ,
CERES, CA

Hate in your hearts

Congratulations to Colleen Tinker and Dale Ratzlaff for getting a PhD in “The Art of Bashing Religious Organizations: Seventh-day Adventism First.”

Unfortunately there are many topics—millions of topics—in the Bible that you people could write about, but you choose to use all your energies attacking the church that you used to belong to. This tells me one thing: that you have hate in your hearts, and that you are going to use your resources to attack

into the text what it does not actually say. Exodus 20:11 is preceded by verse 8 which says, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (NIV). Revelation 14:7 begins with these words, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come.”

We cannot interpret “Remember the Sabbath day” to mean the same thing as “Fear God and give him glory”. The Adventist argument that the call to worship in Revelation 14:7 is a call to “proper worship”—i.e. Sabbath-keeping—is not support-

Thank you again for laboring in this effort to inform the body of Christ of subtle errors within the Adventist church. I really appreciate your heart to reach those caught in the snare of Adventism. I suppose many don’t understand why you are doing what you are doing, but I say, keep running in this race...

that church to the nth degree, obviously satisfying your GUILTY feelings.

You remind me of Ahmadinajad of Iran and Hugo Chavez of Venezuela who, in their hopes of diverting their people’s minds of the poor conditions in their countries, bash the US in every speech they make. Empty and narrow minds. Stupid people talk about people, average people talk about things, but brilliant people talk about technical research and how to make this world a better place.

Writing some really good scriptural text from your own research without having to base your article on some church will show me your depth of knowledge.

VIA EMAIL

Sabbath in Revelation?

Berit Fischer (“Amazed by the Bible”, January/February, 2009) asked why the Sabbath is not mentioned in Revelation. She needs to check Revelation 14:7, where we are reminded that God created the heavens, the earth and the sea. The wording is much like that of Exodus 20:11, where God is pointed out as the Creator, who created those heavens, earth and sea in six days, and rested the seventh day.

EAGLE RIVER, WI

Editor’s note: Sabbath is not mentioned in Revelation 14:7. The fact that it identifies God as Creator as does Exodus 20:11 does not imply that the Revelation passage is making a “Sabbath statement”. We cannot read

ed in the text. We cannot superimpose our biases onto the text; we must read it by understanding the plain, normal meanings of the words. Further, we should not get our theology from apocalyptic passages.

Worship in spirit and truth

Thank-you for the information in your magazine. I only hope to be able to help support it someday. Can you help me with John 4:24 when it says we are to worship God in spirit and in truth? How do I do that? I cannot see, touch, hear, smell, or really know where my spirit is. Is it just something we do by faith? Any ideas of what this really means would be appreciated.

PUYALLUP, WA

Editor’s response: The full text of John 4:24 is this: “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” This statement is related to Jesus’ statement to Nicodemus in John 3:6 which explains being born again: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

Understanding the new birth is key to understanding how to worship in spirit and truth. When we accept Jesus, we are made alive with Christ by God (Eph. 2:4–5), sealed by the Holy Spirit who indwells us (Eph. 1:13–14), and thus we become alive to the things of God, being able to understand spiritual things because we have “the mind of Christ” and are being taught by the indwelling Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:11–16).

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

Being born of the Spirit means we have access to God “by the blood of Jesus” through His body (Heb. 10:19-20). This new connection we have to God by means of His Spirit indwelling us and bringing our own dead spirits to life is what enables us to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Truth is the essence of reality; when we are born of God, we finally are able to know, both spiritually and cognitively, what is real and true. We can perceive the difference between right and wrong; we know who Jesus is and what He has done, and we know we owe everything to Him.

When our spirits are alive, both our minds and our spirits honor Him and worship Him for His righteousness and death and resurrection. We praise Him for saving us and for being King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

True worship is not merely knowledge-based. Instead, it involves a heart-response as well that is only possible when the Holy Spirit makes our spirits alive and grateful that God has transferred us from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13) and that we have passed from death to life (Jn. 5:24).

We only worship in spirit and truth when we are born of the Spirit, and when we are spiritually alive, our spirit cannot help but worship when we contemplate the truth of the gospel and of Jesus’ intervention in our lives.

Demon in my environment

Every time your magazine comes to my home, I get the feeling that a DEMON has entered my environment. If you want to leave the simple truth and go to the devil, just go and

leave the people of God alone. Of course, I know that is a silly request because that is exactly how the devil works.

I feel pity for you who were once so wise and now so blind as not to be able to understand the simple truth of the great controversy. It’s all very simple; God is God and supreme, the law giver and the standard of how life among his creatures is to be lived. If you don’t want to accept that, then you will cease to be. The two great points of apostasy from Lucifer down to our day are the unwillingness to accept the authority of God and the belief that God will not destroy in death those who want to destroy His Kingdom and run it their way. So live your life; you have made your choice; you have joined the ranks of the papacy, SO SAD. But leave me alone, depart from me, and remove me from your mailing [list].

MOLINO, FL

Clear Word article well-researched

I wanted to thank you again for working with Stephen Pitcher on the “Is This Word Clear?” article. I found it very informative and well-researched. Please tell Mr. Pitcher that I thoroughly enjoyed the article; the extent of his knowledge was evident by his examples.

Thank you again for laboring in this effort to inform the body of Christ of subtle errors within the Adventist church. I really appreciate your heart to reach those caught in the snare of Adventism. I suppose many don’t understand why you are doing what you are doing, but I say, keep running in this race to the reward of the eyes of the Lord and His gospel of freedom.

VIA EMAIL

Clear Word easier to understand

Thanks for your magazine which featured “Is This Word Clear?” I read as you placed a passage side-by-side from *The Clear Word* and another version of Scripture. *The Clear Word* is so much easier to understand. Thanks for pointing this out. My next book [purchase] is *The Clear Word Bible*.

BROOKLYN, NY

Writers are dishonest or ignorant

After reading many issues with an open mind to see if there was anything of value or a shred of substance to your criticisms, I am convinced that most of your writers are either dishonest or ignorant. Most have a very blatant objective of finding fault so as to undermine the truth of what you do not want to accept for whatever reason. In some cases you rail against bogeymen of your own making. You try to cast Adventism in an extreme light that is not representative, but may have reflected some personal experience that you then try to extrapolate to the entire religion. Strangely, your tactics of attack are guilty of the very thing you attack Adventism for, namely legalism! I am not a cultural Adventist and consider myself a Christian first and a student of the Bible over the past 28 years. Your publication is a travesty to the word of God, taking Scripture out of context, distorting the meanings, and never really examining the true outcomes of some of your interpretations that would be in direct conflict with the whole of Scriptures. Selective reading of the Bible taken out of context merely demonstrates that it is not God that you believe in, but only yourselves.

HOBE SOUND, FL

Inspirational and intellectually balanced

I was raised in the Adventist church and sent to their schools through high school. I then lived a life in the flesh and away from the things of God. As a young husband and father, God’s Spirit reached me as never before, and I was re-baptized into Christ’s liberty and joined the Baptist church. I attended seminary. I pastor a local Baptist church and serve as a bi-vocational pastor. I have known the freedom and assurance of a life filled with the grace of God through Christ and by His Holy Spirit. Before, I knew about laws and human effort.

While I am assured and completely confident in the Cross of Christ and the efficacy of the shed blood by Jesus plus nothing more, your publication is clearly inspirational and intellectually balanced. I believe that it is an encouragement to others, and I thank you for sending it to me.

VIA EMAIL

Ellen White Claimed Prophetic Authority

On page 8 of the November/December, 2008, issue of *Proclamation!*, Chris Badenhorst quoted these words from Ellen White: “In ancient times, God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days, He speaks to them by the testimonies of His Spirit...The Lord has seen fit to give me a view of the needs and errors of His people.”

The page number we printed in the citation for that quotation was wrong. The accurate reference is this: *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 661.

This passage was not her only claim to prophetic authority rivaling that of Scripture. Following is another of her assertions which has contributed to the foundational fear many Adventists have when they question Adventism’s beliefs and claims:

“It is Satan’s plan to weaken the faith of God’s people in the *Testimonies*. Next follows skepticism in regard to the vital points of our faith, the pillars of our position, then doubt as to the Holy Scriptures, and then the downward march to perdition. When the *Testimonies*, which were once believed, are doubted and given up, Satan knows the deceived ones will not stop at this; and he redoubles his efforts till he launches them into open rebellion, which becomes incurable and ends in destruction” (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 211).

Party on!

I like your gospel; it suits my desires: no doing of the will of the Father, no conforming to the image of His Son, and no following the example of Jesus Christ; no effort, no struggle, no obedience, no faithfulness, and no cooperation with His purpose. For I trust in what He did; that's my righteousness.

My body can sin all I want because I have living spirits inside of me, and I can participate in whatever is unclean and still be saved, just the way I am, without repentance.

Celebrate! Cheers! Trust is our righteousness! What I want is all that's required. I do not have to keep the seventh commandment or that other one which is about the seventh. Thanks for the liberation of your gospel!

Party on! I lift my cup to you! You're one of my own; I love you.

LOGAN, IL

Editor's response: I'm afraid you might

find us quite dull; our "partying" runs toward shared meals followed by impromptu Bible studies.

Our salvation is secured entirely by Jesus' work on the cross, and when we repent before Him and believe in His faithfulness to forgive our intractable sin with His blood, our faith is credited to us as righteousness (Rom. 4:9-12; Eph. 2:8-9). After we are saved and our spirits are made alive by the indwelling Holy Spirit, He gives His life to our mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11), and we honor God with our bodies (1 Cor. 6:20) and offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1) for His purpose. We definitely celebrate, but our celebrating is not self-indulgence or destructive behavior.

Trust is not righteousness. Rather, Jesus' own righteousness is credited to us when we have faith in His promises and finished work. We now make it our goal to please Him (2 Cor. 5:9), for whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

Thank you for supporting me

It's been almost two years now that I have left the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I have gone through a terrible emotional and spiritual experience during this period. However, I would like to thank you and your staff for supporting me with each edition of *Proclamation!* that I have received. I cannot describe in words the support that came to me through this magazine during the difficult times. I also have read the books I've ordered from you...the Bible has a completely different meaning for me now. I am still praying for my friends in the church, but they refuse to study any of the given material.

VIA EMAIL

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:

Editor, Proclamation! Magazine
P.O. Box 905
Redlands, CA 92373

OR EMAIL EDITOR: proclamation@gmail.com

SUMMER 2009

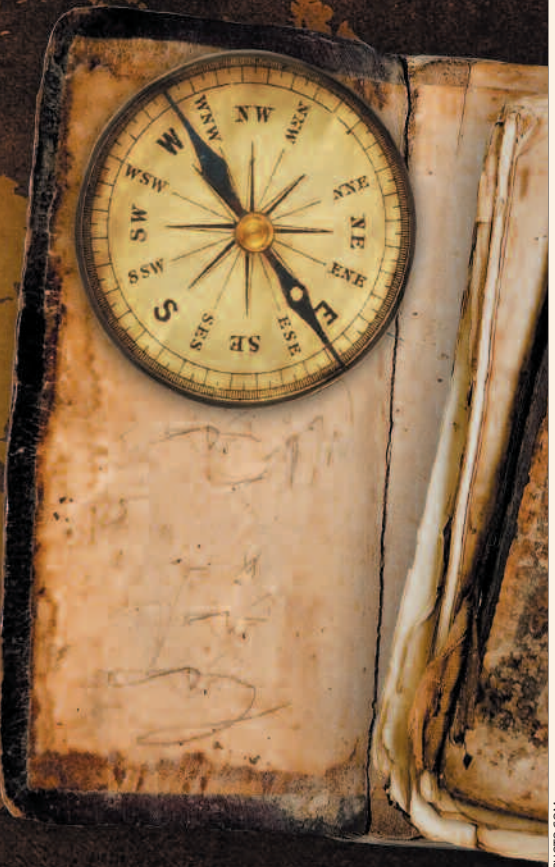
Tour of Encouragement

Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff will be traveling this summer on a Tour of Encouragement, and Richard and Colleen Tinker will join them for most of the engagements. Paul Carden will also attend the St. Joseph meetings and the Huntsville meetings. Venues and dates are mostly confirmed and include:

- June 9, 10** Sacramento/Auburn, CA, First Baptist Church of Auburn
- June 12, 13** Roseburg/Days Creek, OR, Foundation Fellowship
- June 26, 27** Lincoln, NE, Berean Church
- July 7, 8** St. Joseph/Berrien Springs, MI, Chapel Ev. Free Church
- July** Huntsville, AL, (Date and location will be announced)

Updates, and times will be posted at: www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org. If you live near one of these areas, mark the dates and plan to attend!

if you plan to attend one of these meetings please inform us by email, dale@ratzlaf.com, or phone (877) 349-6984. We look forward to meeting you!



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The sight of the cross is a painful one. Our Savior endured a brutal beating, inhumane treatment so severe that most of us would never have survived to the cross. The Lamb of God was nailed to a cross unrecognizable, drained of his blood, ridiculed, and spat upon. Yet, we're drawn to the cross.

Michelangelo created a masterpiece, the Pieta, picturing the crucified Christ in his mother's arms; a photographer published a book of over a thousand pictures of the Pieta, and a well loved author penned a book after being moved by the photographs.

Only God could take the cross, a symbol of hate, pain, anguish, fear, and death, and turn it into a symbol of love, hope, grace, forgiveness, and eternal salvation.

As I passed a church on a walk one day, I stopped and pondered at the sight of the cross lifted high above the edifice. I was filled with thanksgiving, love, joy, and awe as my face was fixed with a radiant smile. How could that be when the cross originally represented control by the Romans, torture for those placed upon it, and grief for the loved ones of

those hanging on it? How could we 2,000 years later look at a cross and be filled with love, joy, and awe? It is because of Who was nailed on the cross and what was nailed with Him to the cross. God the

RESURRECTION LIFE BEGINS AT THE CROSS

LINDA ARNETT

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Son, obedient to God the Father, willingly went to the cross so that our sins could be nailed with Him. Just as the Savior transformed the image of the cross, He transforms lives.

If we see, understand, and believe this reality, then we can have hope when we are in the deserts of our lives. If God can turn the agony of the cross into victory for the world, surely He can turn my disappointments of life and yours into victory. Even when we see no way out of the circumstances we are in, we can

focus on the cross; we can meet Jesus at the foot of the old rugged cross. He will understand our pain. He will comfort and hold us. He will stand with us through the trial even if He chooses not to take us out of it.

Brennan Manning tells the story of a priest who sees a peasant praying by the side of the road. The priest says to the man, "You must love God very much", to which the peasant replied, "Oh yes, He is very fond of me!" Somehow we buy into the lie that God only loves us when He rewards us with good things and pleasant circumstances. Yet, here was a man that had nothing the world has to offer but had everything that mattered; the knowledge that God loved him.

I think that is one reason why I am so enamored by the sight of a cross. It is a tangible picture representing to me that God is very fond of me. He loves you and me so much He sent His only begotten Son. The Son, Jesus, loves us so much that He went to the old rugged cross to die for you and for me. Yes, God is very fond of me. He is very fond of you.

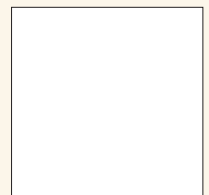
Let the cross be the place where our desire to be loved and Jesus' desire to show His love meet. Meet Jesus at the cross today and every day until He calls you home, and in His presence you will forever know that He is more than fond of you—He adores you. †



Linda Arnett and her husband of 35 years have lived in Yucaipa for the past four years. Prior to that they lived in San Gabriel Valley, California, where Linda, a registered dental hygienist, worked alongside her husband in his dental practice. They attend Trinity Church in Redlands where Linda is a co-leader in women's Bible study. Linda has two grown children, two grown step children, and two teenaged grandchildren.

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