

RATZLAFF: THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND MADE HIS DWELLING AMONG US

LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

Proclamation!

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS
SABBATARIANS
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2011
VOLUME 12, ISSUE 4

**NEVER
WITHOUT
BLOOD**

**JESUS WAS BORN
TO DIE FOR YOU**

ENJOY SABBATH REST TODAY



COLLEEN TINKER

He came as a baby

This year God sent two new babies into Richard's and my lives: our elder son's first child, Annaliese, and the first child of a young couple who are part of our spiritual family: Olivia. During the last six months these tiny girls have delighted us as they've begun to smile, vocalize, grab bottles, toys, and toes, and show their personalities.

It's astonishing to think about our Lord Jesus coming to us exactly as these baby girls came; He was born to a young mother and a devoted earthly father who had to keep Him warm, clean, and fed. They had to teach Him to eat solid

Jesus' resurrection made it possible for a new kind of birth—a birth such as we were honored to witness this past week.

food, to walk, and to talk. Our Creator took on mortal flesh and grew up among us exactly as we all have grown up.

He was different from us in one important way, however: He was God the Son, the eternal, sovereign Yahweh at the same time that He was Jesus the Son of Man. He looked and lived like one of us, but He carried eternal Light and Life into the human race. He came so His mortal body would bleed and die as the eternal payment for human sin, but His body's death could not kill His eternally living Spirit that was there from the moment of His conception. His intrinsic Life raised His body from death three days later, and at that moment He became the firstfruit of the grave. His Life exploded death from the inside out and broke the curse that kept us from God.

Jesus' birth to Mary identified Him with all of us who are born in the flesh; His resurrection made it possible for us to identify with Him when we are born of the Spirit.

Jesus' resurrection made it possible for a new kind of birth—a birth such as we were honored to witness this past week. A man who has been an Adventist for over 50 years admitted to us in a small group Bible study that he "hoped" he was saved but felt he had to be a better Christian. After the rest of us talked to him about Jesus declaring us righteous when we believe and read about the new birth in John 3, Richard asked him if he would like to pray and receive Jesus' finished atonement for him. He said yes, and we no sooner closed our eyes than he began to pray, telling God He wanted to

know the real Jesus and to have the security of knowing he was saved.

His eyes were shining as we showed him Ephesians 1:13-14 that explains the Holy Spirit now lives in Him permanently. His spirit had gone from death to life in those brief moments, and he knew he was saved—because the Holy Spirit was testifying that truth with his spirit as promised in Romans 8:16.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh," Jesus told Nicodemus, "and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Jn. 3:6). Jesus' blood is the reason we can be eternally forgiven the moment we believe; His resurrection is the reason we experience our spirits being made alive the moment we believe.

The reason Christmas is a big event is that it marks the birth of God the Son embodied in a mortal body as He entered time and space to bleed for human sin and to destroy forever the curse of eternal death for all who believe.

In this issue Martin Carey articulates the necessity of Jesus' blood, and Dale Ratzlaff explains why Jesus had to be human. Sheryl Barker compares the four common models within Christianity for understanding Sabbath rest and demonstrates why the "Today" model best reflects Scripture. Our friend Heidi Murphy shares her and her husband Dave's story of leaving the Jehovah's Witnesses—and discovering that their story is almost identical to ours. In their columns, Chris Lee and Carolyn Macomber reflect on living life as Christ-followers.

This Christmas we praise God for the new births He has given us this year: human births of dearly loved little girls and spiritual births of dearly loved new brothers and sisters in Jesus. Our prayer is that this Christmas, if you are not sure you are saved, you will receive the Life of the Son of Man Whom our Father sent to rescue you from the death into which you were born and to transfer you into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col 1:13). †

For further S T U D Y

- Back issues of *Proclamation!* and additional studies **LifeAssuranceMinistries.org**
- Books and other materials by Dale Ratzlaff and the option to donate online with your credit card **LifeAssuranceMinistries.com**

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LIFE ASSURANCE
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The cross with CHRISTMAS

Why do evangelical Christians mix the glory of Christmas with the agony of the cross?

We recently rented a U-Haul utility trailer to haul some mulch for our garden. I noticed, going down the road, that in my rear view mirror I could read, “55 MPH” written on the fender of the trailer. However, when standing by the fender, the writing was flipped and made no sense. It was specifically painted in a backwards position to be a constant reminder to the driver every time he glanced in the rear view mirror. Such are many of the Old Testament rituals, symbols, and events; they can only be perceived correctly when seen in the rear view mirror and lined up with the silhouette of the cross.

This shadow/fulfillment motif is evident in the New Testament as well. Focusing on the events of the birth and death of Jesus we discover that these two events have been merged together.

When Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms he said, “My eyes have seen your salvation.”¹ The writer of Hebrews links the Author of our salvation to the suffering of the cross.²

Simeon continued, “behold the child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel.”³ We can almost hear the dreadful words, “His blood be on us and on our children!”⁴ But not all would reject this Child. “And as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.”⁵

Addressing Mary, Simeon said, “A sword will pierce even your own soul.” I cannot image the horror, the agony, and pain that pierced the heart of Mary gazing at her Son, nailed to the cross.

When seeing the baby Jesus, aged Anna gave thanks to God for the coming redemption. But it was not until the cross that the redemption price was paid in full.⁶

Perhaps we can perceive some similarity between the swaddling clothes,⁷ the seamless tunic woven in one piece,⁸ and the linen cloths worn by the high priest on the Day of Atonement



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who, after the atonement had been made by the scapegoat,⁹ left those linen garments in the Holy Place.¹⁰ Now that the curtain has been torn from top to bottom,¹¹ the work of our High Priest is done. Could it be that the “linen wrappings” lying in the empty tomb¹² are to be a sign to us that the atonement for sin has been finished once for all, completed by our Lord, our High Priest who bore our sins away by suffering outside the gate?¹³

Yes, looking in the rear view mirror at the birth of Jesus and His death upon the cross, we see that these two events have been woven together into one seamless garment of divine purpose. He was born to die—for you and me! It is done! Listen, hear the angels singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”¹⁴ †

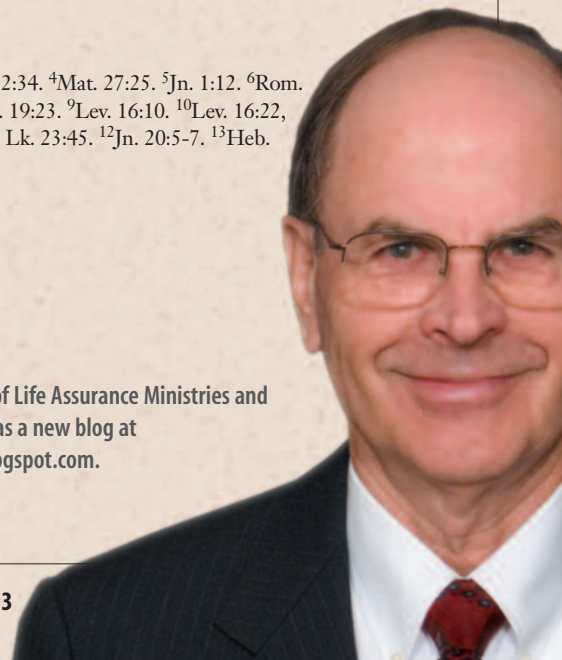


Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff have authored five books concerning Adventism: *Sabbath in Christ*—a volume that explains new covenant Sabbath rest, *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism*—explores the unique doctrine of a pre-advent judgment that decides eternal destinies, *Truth About Adventist “Truth”*—a little book that’s perfect to give to Christians that need to understand Adventism, *Truth Led Me Out*—in which Dale Ratzlaff tells his own story of following Jesus, no matter the cost, and *My Cup Overflows*—Carolyn’s autobiography. Each of these books is available at LifeAssuranceMinistries.com or by phoning 800-355-7073, or 520-836-9790.

Endnotes

¹Lk. 2:30. ²Heb. 2:10. ³Lk. 2:34. ⁴Mat. 27:25. ⁵Jn. 1:12. ⁶Rom. 3:24-26. ⁷Lk. 2:12 KJV. ⁸Jn. 19:23. ⁹Lev. 16:10. ¹⁰Lev. 16:22, 23. ¹¹Mt. 27:51; Mk. 15:38; Lk. 23:45. ¹²Jn. 20:5-7. ¹³Heb. 13:12. ¹⁴Lk. 2:14 KJV.

Dale Ratzlaff, the founder of Life Assurance Ministries and *Proclamation!* magazine, has a new blog at LifeAssuranceMinistries.blogspot.com.



Finally Free

From Jehovah's Witnesses to witnesses for Christ

HEIDI MURPHY
WITH COLLEEN TINKER

Dave and Heidi Murphy live in Southern California near the shores of Big Bear Lake.

Colleen: Seven years ago we met the Murphys. A mutual acquaintance introduced us one day when the Murphys visited Trinity church, and we invited them home for our Former Adventist Fellowship Sunday lunch. We were not prepared for what we discovered.

Dave and Heidi were former Jehovah's Witnesses. We had never personally known any Jehovah's Witnesses (JW's), but of course we had learned that Witnesses were a cult. In fact, I was taught that although Latter Day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah's Witnesses had organized during the years just preceding and just following the Millerite movement, only a few years before and after the Seventh-day Adventists organized, the Seventh-day Adventists were the only church with all the truth that emerged from that milieu of spiritual confusion.

Moreover, I understood that Jehovah's Witnesses had some early influence from the Adventists and that they borrowed a couple of key doctrines from us: soul sleep and Michael the Archangel being Jesus. (As it turns out, I had been wrong about the JW-SDA connection. JW founder Charles Taze Russell had connections with the Second Adventists that had been contemporary with both the SDA

and the JW movements and shared similar beliefs.) Nevertheless, as an Adventist I learned that JW's were not Christian, while we were the only Christians who had all "the truth".

So, on that memorable Sunday in 2004, Richard and I were deeply surprised when the Murphys began telling their story. Our own journey out of Adventism was still relatively new, but we had already made one big discovery: Christians consider themselves brothers and sisters in Christ no matter what denomination they espouse. As an Adventist I had believed that every denomination was like Adventism, that each one believed they were the "closest to the truth" and felt other Christians ought to join their group if they wanted to be "right". Becoming part of the body of Christ, however, had revealed that the details between denominational understandings were not the issues that united or divided Christians. Rather, knowing Jesus and placing the gospel and God's word at the center of one's life is what united Christ-followers. Now, hearing the Murphys story, we realized that our Adventist experience was far more like their JW experience than it was like the Christianity we were now embracing.



DAVE MURPHY

We were startled to learn that as JW's they believed the same things about their organization that we believed about Adventism. They used the same words and had the same values and fears we had as Adventists. Moreover, their experience of leaving the JW's for the sake of Jesus was eerily similar to our experience of leaving Adventism.

This similarity between our stories has been so impacting that we've asked Heidi to share their faith story in this issue. To learn that the organization in which I grew up and which I loved shares so many similar characteristics with the JW's, which I always believed was an anti-Christian cult, has been both sobering and revealing.

The great news, however, is that Heidi and Dave are now truly our brother and sister in Jesus. No matter what our backgrounds, all of us are equal at the foot of the cross. In Jesus we are eternally united, and God is our Father!

Heidi: I was raised a Jehovah's Witness. In fact, I was a fifth generation JW. Everyone in the religion refers to it as "the truth". I never questioned whether it was or not—of course it

was. I believed I was privileged to belong to the one and only true religion, restored Christianity, and to have the special knowledge only JW's had. I believed that everyone who was not a JW was part of "Babylon the Great" and that Jehovah God would destroy all of them at Armageddon—which I believed was imminent, "right around the corner". (Over the years the JW leaders had set specific dates when the end of the world would occur, but those dates came and went and were always reinterpreted—but never abandoned.) I believed that if I did everything required of me, I would live forever in paradise on earth.

At age 13 I knew that I wanted to serve God forever, so I was baptized. I took my JW life seriously and lived it out according to the way the Watchtower Society said a "true Christian" should live. I obeyed everything they said and avoided anything they said to avoid—holidays, birthdays, extra-curricular activities, college, and so forth. I did what was expected of me, going door-to-door, attending all the meetings, studying only JW literature, and dressing appropriately. I was a perfect little Witness girl.

Being a JW was everything to me. My entire identity was tied to this religion. My entire family were JW's; all of my friends were JW's. And of course, when I began to date, I only went out with other JW's. Eventually I met and married Dave. He had not been raised a JW, but he had been recruited into the group through a "free home Bible study" (a study of JW literature with Scriptural proof-texts to support their teachings). He had been searching for spiritual meaning in his life and was ripe for the picking. He was baptized as a JW in 1979. We were married in 1985, and we carried on with our lives as model JW's.

Disillusioned

After we married, we moved to Big Bear Lake, California, and began our life together. We attended the local Kingdom Hall, and eventually Dave became a "Ministerial Servant" (a position of honor in the congregation). Over the course of time we began to feel very disillusioned by the judgment, criticism, and general lack of love in the congregation, especially among the leadership. But we hung in there, believing Jehovah God would take care of things—we felt we just needed to have endurance. In 1988, our son Dustin was born, and we were raising him in "the truth" as well.

By the early 90s we were getting very tired of the lack of love in our congregation, so we set out to find it elsewhere in the U.S. Everywhere we looked our friends were having similar experiences—judgment, criticism, and lack of love. So in 1995, we thought we would leave the country and see if we could find that loving brotherhood we were always told we JW's had. We went to Fiji, but while there we found the same stories existed—judgment, criticism, and lack of love. We returned home so disillusioned we decided not to go back to the meetings at the local Kingdom Hall. We were so confused; we decided we just needed time to sort things out. We could not figure out why God's only true people did not have the love that Jesus said was an identifying mark of true Christians (Jo. 13:34-35). The



Dave and Heidi's current home where they still enjoy studying their Bibles—and it even has a front porch.

We spent the entire summer in 1995 sitting on our front porch glued to the Bible. In a matter of weeks, we knew we were in a false religion.

nagging question was, “If they do not have this love, then are they truly his people?” We didn’t doubt any of the doctrines of the religion, but we could not make sense out of this dilemma.

By now Dave was so disillusioned he began to doubt God Himself. He said, “If this is God’s true religion and people, then I don’t want anything to do with God.” It was at this point that I told him it wasn’t God who had let us down, but man. All of our issues were with people. I suggested we just stop dealing with people and start dealing directly with God—we should start reading the Bible and see what God wanted to say to us.

Now that was a radical concept because JW’s do not read the Bible alone and let it speak to them alone. In fact, they are taught never to trust the Bible alone. They are also taught that all other translations of the Bible except their own New World Translation are altered and untrustworthy. Somehow, though,

we decided that we needed a fresh outlook, so we decided not to read their translation but instead to read the other eight translations we had in our house.

We began to do just that, alternating translations daily. We also changed our usual approach. Instead of coming to the Bible with all of the answers, we asked God to speak to us and tell us what He wanted to tell us. We thought this method of study would strengthen our faith in the Watchtower Organization and that we would be able to return to the Kingdom Hall meetings stronger and with the endurance we needed to carry on.

Summer of Scripture

We studied this way all summer. When we got to the passage where Jesus tells us to ask for the Holy Spirit and we would receive Him (Lk. 11:13), we decided to take Him at his word. We prayed for God to fill us with the Holy Spirit. From that moment the blinders came off, and the Scriptures with which we had been so familiar took on new meaning. Instead of having our faith in the JW religion strengthened, God was showing us that we were in a false religion. It was shocking and hard to take. But as the Scriptures came alive, it was so exciting. The first thing we realized was that our religion was just like that of the Pharisees which Jesus condemned.

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth, and that is exactly what happened. The truth of Scripture hit us squarely in the face. We spent the entire summer in 1995 sitting on our front porch glued to the Bible. In a matter of weeks, we knew we were in a false religion.

That revelation was so unexpected—and shocking. Now what would we do? This reality would mean never returning to our religion. All of our friends and family were JW’s. How would we tell them what was happening? How could we share all of these truths we were learning with them? How would they react if we told them the truth?

At the same time, we were so excited and happy to have found the real truth—Jesus Christ. I fell in love with Him. Before I had only known about Him, but I did not know Him until now. It was so freeing. It was so thrilling!

But fear set in. What if I was deluding myself? I had always been told that if one left the JW religion, Satan would take over one’s mind. I was afraid maybe he had taken over mine. When those paralyzing doubts would come, I would ask myself, “I am praying everyday to God to reveal Himself and to reveal truth to me—how could it be Satan that is answering me?” Jesus said that God would not give us a stone if we asked for bread, and all we had to do was ask for the Holy Spirit and He would give Him. That meant it couldn’t be Satan answering my prayers.

Finally free

When we realized we had been in a false religion, Dave wanted to read as much as he could about the JW organization. I was terrified of reading any kind of anti-JW literature, and I was afraid of being led astray by some other group of people. Then I

DAVE MURPHY

received the book *Combating Cult Mind Control* by Steven Hassan. He described what it was like to be in a mind-control cult, and as I read the list of techniques used to control people's thinking, I realized they were describing my religion. I was confused, however, because the book identified such groups as cults.

I was in a cult? No way! Cults were full of wacky people who dressed funny or lived in communes. My religion was "normal"—or so I thought. But as I read, I realized that I was in a cult, and all cults use the same methodology regardless of their teachings. The doctrines may be different, but the mind-control methods were the same. This realization finally helped to free my mind of the power of these techniques that stopped my thinking processes. I was finally able to read other outside information. I didn't need to be afraid anymore, because I understood what a cult was. I would not fall victim to those techniques again. I was finally free!

I began to read. I read other people's experiences. So many were just like mine, and I broke down and cried. I wasn't alone in the way I had been feeling; there were others just like me. I read books that uncovered what went on inside the Organization, and I felt betrayed by my religion. I had trusted this group of men in New York who told me they were the ones imparting all of God's truths to me, that they were His chosen ones. I believed this teaching, and I believed that they would never do anything detrimental to any of the JW followers. Now I was finding out they had lied to us, and sometimes they knew it.

I couldn't get enough information. I needed to know what went on behind the scenes. I needed to know the truth about my former cultic religion, and I needed to understand other cults as well. Finally free to read, I studied and learned constantly.

Moment of truth

In October of 1996, the JWs found out we had attended another church in town. The elders came to our house and questioned us, asking if we still thought the JWs were the only true religion. It was our moment of truth. We had not been to the Kingdom Hall for over a year, and no one had visited us before that moment to "encourage" us to return. We had been ignored all that time. But here they were—and the axe was about to fall. We knew we had to tell them the truth, and we knew what the consequences would be—totally losing all of our friends and family connections because everyone would now have to shun us completely.

We also knew we had no choice. Jesus said, "If you deny me before men I will deny you before my Father" (Mt. 10:33). Once we knew the truth, we couldn't back away; we had to speak it. We had to stand for Christ and Christ alone, not for any religion. And so we were cut off—we lost all of our previous relationships.

We were on a new spiritual journey. It was exciting, but it was unknown. What would happen next? We did not know what the future would bring, but we knew the One who held the future. Because we trusted God, we were at peace, even though we were sad to lose the ones we loved. After over 35

years of my being a JW, this new life really was like being born again. I was starting my life over—my new life in Christ. Dave had spent 16 years in the cult. Dustin was seven, but now he had his whole life in front of him to live in freedom.

Unity in Jesus

In 2004 we were introduced to Richard and Colleen Tinker. We knew very little about each other's former religions, but when we sat and talked, we found that our stories were almost identical in many ways. Most importantly, we had shared the same experience of having Christ reveal himself to all of us through the Holy Spirit. Jesus had reached into both of our lives and led us to the real truth and through him he led us into a friendship based on Him and all that He is and has done for us. It is a friendship that is above any ordinary one.

Most profoundly, we shared the unity of the Holy Spirit because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God the Son who reconciled us to the entire Trinity!

We are on the *Proclamation!* mailing list and really enjoy the personal stories. I am always struck with how much like my own story they are. I am also struck with how angry some people are when they write to the editors and how much like my own former cult members they sound, often using the same language and argumentation mine used. When those of us who find out we have been lied to and led astray find the real truth, we want everyone to know it as well. We do not hate any of the people in our former religions, nor are we angry with them. To the contrary, we know exactly what life is like for them day in and day out. We know first hand what it means to be under that kind of control. We realize that these people are merely victims of a false religious system, and they need our love and prayers. We know the Tinkers, and we know that they love their Adventist family and want them to know the love of Christ as they do—just as we want Jehovah's Witnesses to know Him and experience His life.

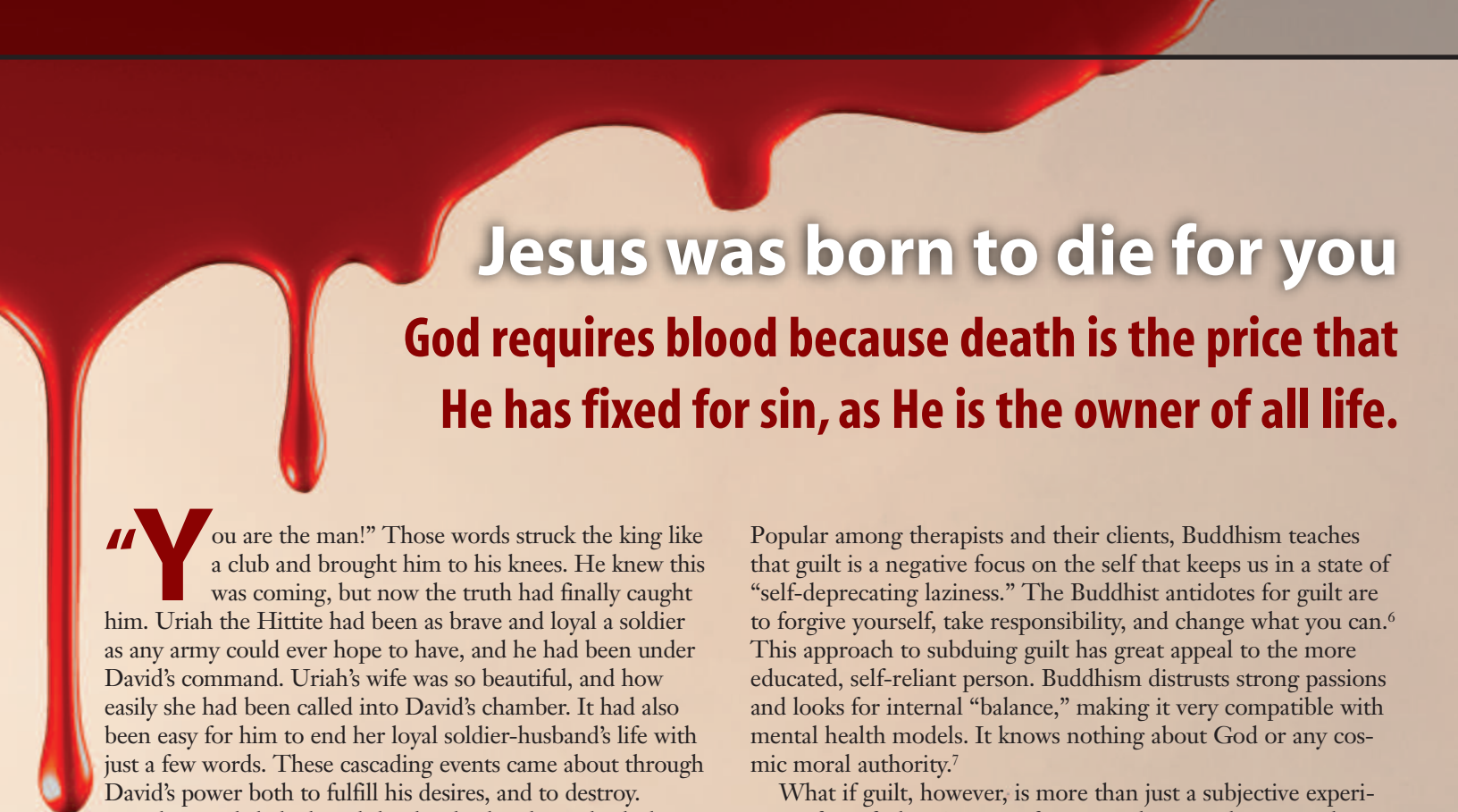
It has now been 16 years since the days we sat on the front porch discovering the real truth—Jesus—and it is He alone whom we serve. The years have not been easy, but they have been rewarding. No matter what one loses for the sake of Christ, He is worth the cost. He is faithful; He never withdraws or shuns us.

His promise is sure: "You will know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (Jn. 8: 32). †

Dave and Heidi Murphy live in Big Bear Lake, California. Their son, Dustin, also lives in the Big Bear area. As a family they were set free from the lie of the Jehovah's Witness religion in 1995 and began their discovery of what life in the "truth"—Jesus Christ—really is. They served as missionaries in the Inland Empire of Southern California for four years with Here's Life Inner City, an outreach ministry to the poor. After spending four years in Colorado, the Murphys moved back to Southern California in 2010 and are loving life in Big Bear—and in Christ.

NEVER WITHOUT BLOOD

MARTIN L. CAREY



Jesus was born to die for you

God requires blood because death is the price that He has fixed for sin, as He is the owner of all life.

“You are the man!” Those words struck the king like a club and brought him to his knees. He knew this was coming, but now the truth had finally caught him. Uriah the Hittite had been as brave and loyal a soldier as any army could ever hope to have, and he had been under David’s command. Uriah’s wife was so beautiful, and how easily she had been called into David’s chamber. It had also been easy for him to end her loyal soldier-husband’s life with just a few words. These cascading events came about through David’s power both to fulfill his desires, and to destroy.

When Bathsheba heard that her husband was dead, she lamented over him.

“And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord” (2 Sam. 11:27).

In Israel it was the custom for citizens to bring grievances before the king to receive his judgment. It was not a surprise, then, when Nathan the prophet came to visit the king and told him about a wealthy farmer who had stolen and eaten his poor neighbor’s pet sheep. This small crime kindled David’s wrath, and he delivered a scathing rebuke of the offender. “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die!” (2 Sam. 2:5). Thus David pronounced judgment against himself, the guilty defendant.

Therapeutic contract

“How can I deal with my guilt?” is the eternal question that has always plagued kings and commoners. The stakes are very high, for guilt destroys from within, and a life of guilt tends to finish badly. Guilt can be triggered by small mistakes, erroneous beliefs, as well as by real evil. We can usually get over our guilt generated by eating desserts or lying about our age, but when we cause others severe pain, we take guilt to another level. At that point, we need to look for help. In today’s moral environment, we think of guilt in subjective terms: what it feels like, what it does to our relationships, and how it affects our happiness.¹ Guilt is therefore a mental health issue that is best handled in therapy.

For mental health professionals, guilt is associated with depression,² bipolar disorder,³ and post-traumatic stress disorder.⁴ Therapy clients are generally encouraged to avoid punishing themselves, and are guided through behavior modification, cognitive adjustment, or feelings exploration until the guilt subsides.⁵

Popular among therapists and their clients, Buddhism teaches that guilt is a negative focus on the self that keeps us in a state of “self-deprecating laziness.” The Buddhist antidotes for guilt are to forgive yourself, take responsibility, and change what you can.⁶ This approach to subduing guilt has great appeal to the more educated, self-reliant person. Buddhism distrusts strong passions and looks for internal “balance,” making it very compatible with mental health models. It knows nothing about God or any cosmic moral authority.⁷

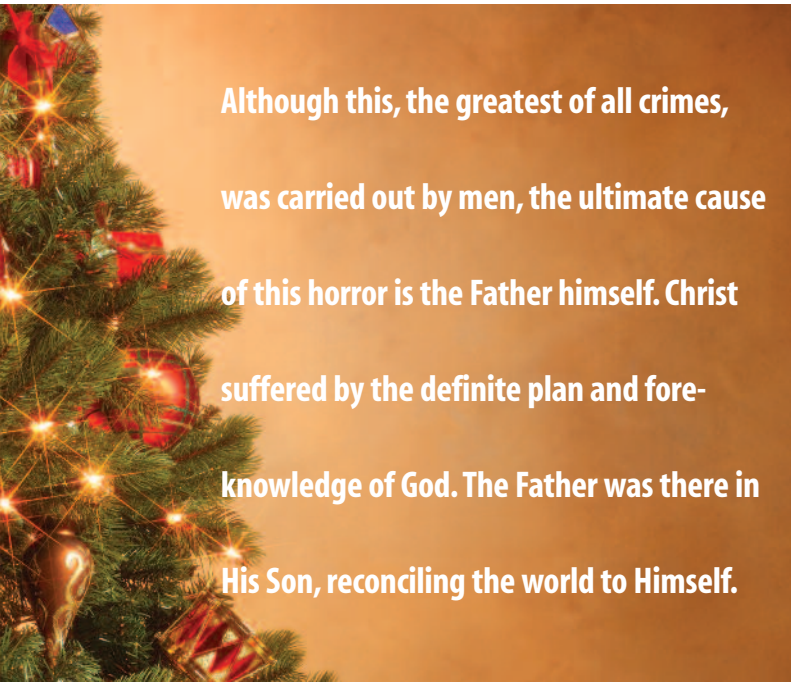
What if guilt, however, is more than just a subjective experience of our feelings? Most of us sense that it is also a moral response that touches our deepest convictions of right and wrong. Even when our guilt-feelings come from a badly distorted conscience or pathological self-loathing, our sense of rightness feels violated. Guilty feelings have an objective reference point; they arise when we believe we have violated some specified, objective standard we hold, something greater than ourselves, although we are not always explicitly aware of that external standard.⁸ This sense of violating something greater than ourselves differentiates guilt from shame, in which social expectations are the reference point.

If we treat guilt as merely a psychological problem, we will neglect the moral and spiritual aspects that underlie those feelings. Moreover, when we take those feelings to therapy for treatment, we place them before a therapist who is often agnostic about absolute moral standards. Getting “help” often amounts to finding an accomplice in the weakening of our consciences. We are most satisfied as therapy clients when we “discover” that nothing was our fault. On reflection, however, we often find that our guilt lies deeply and stubbornly out of reach, anchored to that greater “something”. Inducing others to validate our innocence may quiet the voice of conscience but will never satisfy our deeper hunger.

The broken heart

These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you (Ps. 50:21).

The charge against David has been laid. Now he stops running from the truth, and in Psalm 51, he pours out all his guilt before God, the One against whom he has sinned. This is a psalm where one doesn’t find clever psychotherapy techniques or the wisdom of the Buddha. David does not practice the detached, accepting



**Although this, the greatest of all crimes,
was carried out by men, the ultimate cause
of this horror is the Father himself. Christ
suffered by the definite plan and fore-
knowledge of God. The Father was there in
His Son, reconciling the world to Himself.**

attitude of “mindfulness.” Here is passionate conviction and all the anguish of a broken heart. His contrite spirit takes full responsibility for what he has done by calling it “sin,” for he knows he cannot minimize his actions. A righteous forgiveness must have a full accounting of the costs. David strips his guilty soul bare for all of history to see, with no hint of self-justification. He doesn’t just *feel* guilty; he knows he *is* guilty.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me (Ps. 51:3).

He has one goal: to cast himself on the mercy of a loving, faithful God. Psalms 51 is not about forgiving the self, being “strong,” or shopping for validation. David didn’t want good advice on how to do better next time. His goals are much loftier. This murderer and adulterer would only be satisfied by “abundant mercy” from the highest court in the universe. He could only be justified by faith alone and nothing less.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions (Ps. 51:1).

David understood that the most important problem with sin is its offense against God Himself. Sin always damages God’s creation, to be sure, but its first insult is to the Creator. The first and greatest commandment is to love Him with all one’s heart, soul, and might. When we love something else more than Him, we have committed treason. Thus the size of a sin is not measured by our feelings about it but by the greatness of the Owner of the universe against whom we have sinned. In other words, when we injure one of His creatures, we injure Him; it is personal, and it is remembered. That is why David said,

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment (Ps. 51:4).

David had no right to put God on trial or to question God’s justice. Here he accepts that God would be justified in carrying

out the law’s penalty of death for David’s sins. If God took his life, He would be blameless. God is merciful and just, so He does not forgive cheaply.

The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty (Ex. 34:6-7).

David’s repentance is total. Compared to his deep confession, our modern, therapeutic forgiveness looks cheap and tawdry. When guilt makes us feel bad, we want relief now. Everyone should just get over it and move on. We think forgiveness should be cost-free. As pastor Gary Inrig has said, we give and take forgiveness too easily, while the real work of forgiveness is expensive and difficult.⁹ Nothing will ever be set right inside us without first making peace with the God outside of us. David desperately craved an “alien” grace, a grace found only in a supremely moral Being. Only God knew how much damage would result from David’s sins, and only He could pay the cost of that damage. Divine forgiveness is very precious indeed, the most costly thing in the universe.

How much does it cost?

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life” (Lev. 17:11).

In the Old Testament, blood was considered the life in both animals and man, because its shedding caused death. In Leviticus Moses was not describing some mystical property of blood that made it especially suitable for sacrifice and atonement. There was no mysterious “life essence” released at the altar when an animal was slain, as many pagan religions believed. Rather, blood is a universal symbol of life that God ordained to prepare the Israelites to receive atonement.

The sight of blood stirs our emotions that spring from a deep place in our souls. When my son Matthew was four years old, we were renting a vacation house with a polished wooden floor in Yosemite. One afternoon he got the urge to gallop across that shiny floor in his socks—and quickly lost his footing. His face thumped hard against the floor and opened up a gash over his eye. My wife rushed over to save him, but when she saw the blood she suddenly said to me, “Honey, you’ll have to take over,” grew limp, and slowly fainted to the floor. Even a mother’s love couldn’t overcome her helpless reaction to the sight of blood. Today, Matthew’s little scar decorates his eyebrow as an emblem of that moment.

Our Creator gave us all an aversion to blood so we could share His love of life and hatred of death. When we see blood we feel our own mortality. When an Israelite had to cut the throat of his own lamb, he felt some of the real cost of his own sin as he took the life of that animal. The lamb didn’t deserve such treatment, but its short little life was accepted as payment for sin in the conscience of the Israelite. God requires blood because death is the price that He has fixed for sin, as He is the owner of all life (Rom. 6:23). God’s universe is not a moral free market where the value of life is negotiated. Life is by Him alone; it’s not for sale, and if it were, we couldn’t afford it.

Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice... But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me (Ps. 49:7, 8, 15).

No sparrow falls outside of God's rule, and no human life was ever brought into the world without His design. He doesn't decide a child is valuable after the mother has demonstrated she will provide a minimal "quality of life." Not even the most disabled or horribly neglected child is an accident. As David said,

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps. 139:13, 14).

The fact that only God can give and take life is the reason human justice is so limited in its power to make things right. Under human justice, crimes against human life cannot be reversed. Dr. Karl Menninger's 1969 book *The Crime of Punishment* argues against our justice system using pain and suffering as a part of criminal penalties. Punishing someone for their deeds, he argues, serves no purpose except to satisfy the revenge needs of society. No penalty can undo past wrongs, and prison sentences never reverse the victim's losses and pain.¹⁰ Menninger was right that no penalty can ever undo sins already committed—in our human courts of justice. However, undreamt of in his philosophy was an eternal Creator who "works all things according to the council of his will" (Eph. 1:11). He can blot out sins, give life to the dead, and declare things that are not as though they were (Rom. 4:17). In his hands, evil has already been undone, and any wrong can be redeemed.

A shadow gospel

Just as the bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament worship system feel barbaric to us, one man suffering for our sins seems foolish. Surely a loving God does not actually *need* a violent death to forgive sinners. The very idea of Jesus dying like a butchered animal to satisfy God's anger at sin does not feel loving to many people. They protest that this doctrine denies the power of forgiveness and encourages our revenge lust. They ask, "Can't God just forgive us without needing to vent His anger on anyone?"

Best-selling author and pastor Rob Bell, in his book *Love Wins*, speaks for the feelings of many about sacrifice and blood: "Those are powerful metaphors. But we don't live any longer in a culture in which people offer animal sacrifices to the gods." Those metaphors of sacrifice are only necessary for the unenlightened, he says, for "...there are pockets of primitive cultures around the world that do continue to understand sin, guilt, and atonement in those ways. But most of us don't."¹¹

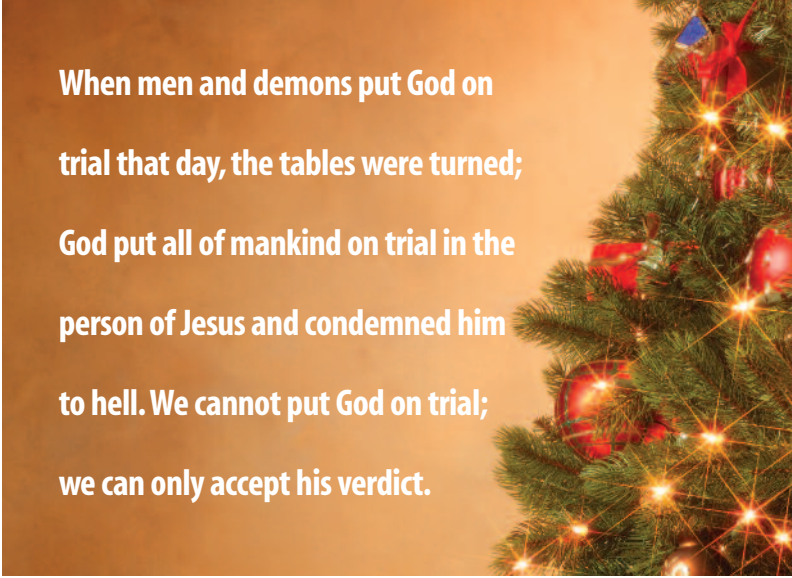
Why does the Bible speak of Jesus' death as a sacrifice with words like "propitiation" and "precious blood"? Bell offers an explanation: "What the first Christians did was look around them and put the Jesus story in language their listeners would understand."¹² Those early Christians, says Bell, were "brilliant and creative" in choosing metaphors that communicated an epic event in ways their listeners could understand. The New Testament writers knew that their symbols were not objectively "true", but they had to create a good story for their primitive audiences. In other

words, the original gospel story is only as powerful as our ignorance.

The late Adventist theologian A. Graham Maxwell also posed as a creative story-teller for enlightened audiences. He rejected the doctrine of Christ's sacrificial substitution for sinners, replacing it with a "trust-healing" gospel. We are alienated from God because we have believed Satan's lies that God is arbitrary, cruel, and angry. Christ and Satan are embroiled in a universal war for the loyalties of all citizens of the cosmos, and God's essential goodness is on trial. Great controversy doctrine holds that because Satan rules the world, all the pain and suffering in the world comes from him.¹³ Gregory Boyd tends to agree: "The New Testament everywhere assumes that the ultimate reason behind all evil in the world is found in Satan, not God."¹⁴

Maxwell taught that the classical Christian doctrines of the atonement have misrepresented God's character. When we understand that He never has anger or needs to punish anyone, we are able to trust Him and find healing. God does not require any payment for sin. The Cross did not change God's loving attitude towards us, Maxwell taught, for He can simply forgive sins without needing anyone to suffer the cost. Our sin problem is really a misunderstanding of a kindly God. When we see God's demonstration of love for us on the cross, how Jesus was willing to suffer a martyr's death, we become God's friends. Our hostility and distrust will change into love and friendship.¹⁵ By any meaningful definition, that is a moral influence gospel.

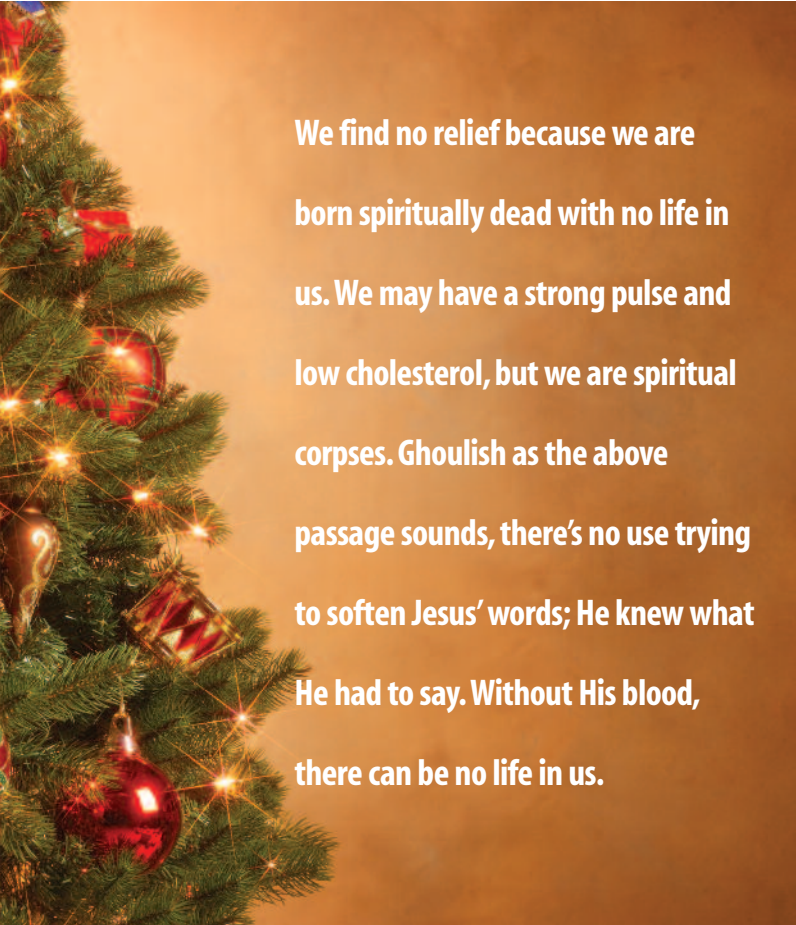
For Maxwell and Bell, no act of divine justice was accomplished on the Cross, for the work of the atonement is only something that happens inside us. The Cross was purely for show, an impressive work of moral influence theater. All that talk in the Bible about wrath, sacrifice, and reconciliation really is just language designed to move our hearts. It is only appearance and shadow, not the substance of reality. However, one might wonder, "How can that story effectively move our hearts when we know it is fiction?" Once we have been enlightened, we can "see through" the symbols. What lasting power can any symbol have if we know it is a mere stage prop to manipulate our feelings?



When men and demons put God on trial that day, the tables were turned; God put all of mankind on trial in the person of Jesus and condemned him to hell. We cannot put God on trial; we can only accept his verdict.

The ancient citizens of Athens had a sophisticated solution to the excessive emotions of guilt, fear, and anger. Greek theater provided drama for the audience to safely experience their strongest feelings while enjoying a good story. Intense drama raised the negative emotions to a conscious level, then allowed safe expression and release. This was to restore their internal balance and renewal. Aristotle called the purging benefit of theater “catharsis,”¹⁶ an idea later adopted by Sigmund Freud. Of course, the delicate sense of balance brought about by catharsis was only temporary. To maintain that equilibrium, theater lovers needed new plays written after the excitement of the old stories faded away.

The catharsis psychology of ancient Greek theater resembles our contemporary moral influence gospel. When the cross of Christ becomes mere drama for our psychological benefit, we empty it of its power. We may even like the story of Jesus’ death, and experience warm feelings toward God—or we may not. As the lead actor of moral influence drama, Jesus does not actually bear our sin and weakness, he just wants our appreciation. The drama gospel has limited power over our hearts and habits, for it is only a shadow of reality. Like the Athenians in Paul’s day who would “spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new,” our spiritual appetites will never be filled. In the past, God was able to overlook that kind of ignorance about Him (Acts 17:30). But the real Jesus has come, not as a pretender, but as our substitute.



We find no relief because we are born spiritually dead with no life in us. We may have a strong pulse and low cholesterol, but we are spiritual corpses. Ghoulish as the above passage sounds, there’s no use trying to soften Jesus’ words; He knew what He had to say. Without His blood, there can be no life in us.

Who has believed our report?

Isaiah 52 and 53 directly address unbelief in the Messiah’s mission and contains the most detailed and poignant description of him in the Old Testament. Both Jews and Gentiles are given an intimate view into the soul of the Messiah. When we see the Suffering Servant, He is not at all what we wanted or expected, and we are shocked by His pathetic appearance. This was the Jewish reaction, and it is very much our postmodern reaction. We cannot believe the reports because we prefer our own stories about Him. Standing before us He is an ordinary, even homely man who seems mysteriously troubled. People tell us lots of strange, even unbelievable stories about Him. He calls himself the “Son of Man” and says that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood or we have no life in us. He doesn’t look like a Messiah, certainly not the pretty one in the pictures.

Troubled people are troubling to us; we don’t want their problems to become our problems. In the Servant’s presence, we might use our best manners to politely dismiss him (vs. 4) or refer him for therapy. Probably most disturbing about this Servant is the sheer intensity of His suffering. This passage in Isaiah describes a level of torment so excruciating that the sufferer no longer resembles a human being (52:14). Such pain makes no sense to us, and who in his right mind would want to believe it? Why should the Messiah suffer like that? If God can just forgive us anyway, Jesus’ extreme suffering and death seem unnecessary.

When I was an agnostic, the terrible death of Jesus was one of the most annoying things about Christianity. I could “see through” the attempt to make me feel bad and force this “Catholic” symbol of guilt onto my conscience. This cross felt gratuitous, and I looked for healthier ways to resolve my guilt and find self esteem. However, what is described here goes far beyond dramatic license used to provoke us. Isaiah 53 takes the greatest theme of the entire Bible and encapsulates it—the glory of God in the suffering of Christ to show grace to the lost. He told us His suffering had a purpose:

Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? (Luke 24:26).

John the Baptist saw Jesus approaching and cried, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” He is, and always was, the Lamb slain, not merely a hasty solution for sin that the Godhead threw together after Adam and Eve’s fall. Jesus was the slaughtered Lamb, marked for death before any sin had ever been committed (Rev 13:8). The cross did not change God’s mind about mankind, for Jesus’ sacrifice was always the divine plan. The crucifixion was preordained and predestined from before time:

For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place (Acts 4:27).

Behold the Man!

In John 19, we are transported down into the noisy crowd as a witness at the Servant’s trial. There ahead of us, we can see a man

standing quietly before His judge, the Roman governor (vs. 9). Pilate believes He is innocent, but to appease the crowd, he has Him taken out back and scourged by his guards. These men carry a load of anger from dealing with many criminals, and they relish the task of unloading it all on Him. After they scourge Him, they throw on an old robe, a crown of thorns, and beat Him up with their fists.

Now Jesus is ready for display. Pilate calls him out, and He lurches forward to show Himself to the mob. Standing near Jesus is Barabbas the robber and two other nameless convicts. Barabbas has been hardened by years of crime and defies anyone to break him. He has a covenant with death, and he welcomes it. But the crowd only screams for Jesus to die. Pilate wants them to see how pathetic their most-wanted suspect really is,¹⁷ so he sarcastically calls out, “Behold, the man!” There stands the Son of Man in all His glory, and what a sight to behold!

As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance...(Is. 52:14).


He is draped in an old purple robe, filthy and spattered with blood, beard torn out, eyes swelling shut. His face shows He is obviously in a lot of pain; this is no stoic, tough guy. Everyone is startled by this tragic, damaged figure, and so are we. None of the great paintings of Christ have dared to portray His real appearance.

He came out to stand before the crowd so He could be jeered, hooted at, and cursed.¹⁸ The crowd really wants His blood, sending waves of their wrath to roll over Him. But pressing down on Him is a much greater wrath against evil, and this man has to drink that cup to the dregs. This was not an act; for this reason He came. He came to take what we had coming, so He could bear our condemnation and reproach. He came to feel our hurt: all our sorrows, our afflictions, and take them on his shoulders (Is. 53:6). This was not a generic suffering for anonymous individuals that God hoped to save some day. These were actual griefs and hurts felt by real people, individuals with names. On that day He also knew you and suffered for you personally. He did not turn away; He made your problems His problems.

But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed (Is. 53:5).

He was made to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:19), a most hated, accursed thing (Gal. 3:13), so that we can be blessed and comforted. Our sins lashed and wounded Him, so that we can be forgiven and adopted. Although this, the greatest of all crimes, was carried out by men, the ultimate cause of this horror is the Father himself. Christ suffered by the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23). The Father was there in His Son, reconciling the world to Himself.

This was not a tragedy. This was the afternoon of pain for which the universe was created. God’s primary purpose for creating His cosmos was not to give us a perfect utopia, or to produce perfect law-keepers to showcase His character. God’s glory does not find its best expression in His creation, but in His display of grace. The creation was very good, but the extreme suffering of Christ in the place of sinners was the greatest demonstration of God’s glory that will ever be.¹⁹ He said,



Any theology that is offended by the bloody cross of the Son of God is a lifeless invention of men. The bold spirit of Christ’s blood gives us the courage to love and trust like a little child.

When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am (Jn. 8:28).

Pilate finally gave up arguing with the crowd and said with resignation, “Behold your king!” The crowd had rejected their messiah, for they had no king but Caesar. Away with this man who troubled them! Then they took Him out, lifted Him up, and crucified Him. In those few hours on the cross, He became a most detestable object of evil that deserved eternal hell. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” was the scream of the damned.²⁰ He was alone when He carried the curse of our sins to the cross, and there was none to help Him. When men and demons put God on trial that day, the tables were turned; God put all of mankind on trial in the person of Jesus and condemned him to hell. We cannot put God on trial; we can only accept his verdict.

Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted (Is. 52:13).

In all the stories, there is no mythical hero like Jesus. Isaiah 63 portrays a mighty warrior returning from battle, striding across the land in his crimsoned garments. We inquire, “Who is this glorious figure?” He answers, “It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.” We ask, “Why are your garments red?” He replies, “I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me.” The day of vengeance was in His heart, and there was no one to help Him—or stop him. He crushed all His enemies in His wrath until blood spattered His garments. Now, the battle is over, and His salvation is complete. The blood on His garments is His own.

I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord (Jn. 10:18).

From “undead” to alive

The story of Jesus’ crucifixion is grotesque and disturbing, even after two thousand years of creative distortion. His words still shock us, words that would be stark, raving mad coming from anyone else:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you (Jn. 6:53).

If this were just an invitation to eat a little wafer with magical properties, it would be an easy command to obey. Even if He were asking us to eat dead human flesh, that would be far simpler to do than what He asks. If Jesus' words evoke for you scary Halloween images of "the undead," of walking zombies, groaning with desperation for living flesh to devour, you're actually not far from the truth. We are that desperate because we are the spiritually "undead" (Eph. 2:1). Without real life, we wander the night, biting and devouring one another (Gal. 5:15), craving relief from pain and guilty regrets. We find no relief because we are born spiritually dead with no life in us. We may have a strong pulse and low cholesterol, but we are spiritual corpses. Ghoulish as the above passage sounds, there's no use trying to soften Jesus' words; He knew what He had to say. Without His blood, there can be no life in us.

The "undead," sinful nature prefers a less outrageous gospel, a bloodless one that validates us. We have invented a moral influence gospel without the living intensity of the real one, and substituted God's intense holiness for bland abstractions about God's "friendship." The real flesh and blood gospel yanks us from our timid banalities about love and into the passionate fury and joy of the cross. Any theology that is offended by the bloody cross of the Son of God is a lifeless invention of men. The bold spirit of Christ's blood gives us the courage to love and trust like a little child.

Until we see our morbid condition and repent, we remain creatures of the night. Devouring Christ means we believe in His death as a sacrifice for our sin, and His life will become lit-

erally, truly ours. By eating and drinking Jesus, He will give us a new spirit and a tender heart of flesh (Ez. 36:26). He asks us to repent of our predatory, rebellious ways, and to trust Him with our very lives. In giving all of ourselves, we receive all of Him. His death and resurrection become part of us, just as if we ourselves had done the dying and rising (Rom. 6:8).

Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him (Jn. 6:54-56).

In the Christian life, we never advance beyond our helpless dependence on the sacrifice at the cross. Through the rent veil of Jesus' body, we can enter into the holy of holies with boldness, but never without His blood (Heb. 9:7). In abandoning ourselves to the severity and mercy of God, we find the answer to our deepest pangs of guilt. After we have finally become weary of all our games to justify ourselves, the offer of strong relief remains. Because He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with you, me, and Barabbas, there is nothing left for us to prove. It is time to stop pretending. We can stop haggling with God over our debts and declare bankruptcy.

Martin Luther began his 95 Theses with this: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said 'Repent,' he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance."²¹

Among all the gifts we will receive from the Spirit, nothing will ever surpass the sweet intimacy with God when with broken heart we plead, "Have mercy on me, oh God, according to your steadfast love!" †

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Since coming out of Adventism, Jesus' birth has taken on extra special meaning to me. I am often brought to tears around Christmas as I contemplate Almighty God (in the person of Jesus Christ) coming to redeem me. Incarnation is not just a big word to me; it is incomprehensible to my human mind. It takes my breath away and causes me to fall on my knees in worship.

As an Adventist I understood that Jesus came to earth to show how God's law can be kept and to die for my sins. Yes, I had the language right—"die for my sins", but the meaning was twisted around the priority of Jesus coming to earth as an example of perfect law-keeping. God's law, I believed, could be kept with the help of the Holy Spirit. I had the same resources that Jesus did to keep the law perfectly. Jesus' coming to earth, I believed, was to refute Satan's accusation against God's law. According to E.G. White, prophetess of the Adventist Church, Satan accused God of requiring perfect obedience to a law that was impossible to keep. Ironic isn't it? Can you see the twisted thinking in the above paragraph? Do you see truth mixed with error? Deceptive, isn't it?

The facts of Scripture are clear, though. I am doomed without Christ. I am born on earth as an enemy of God (Rom. 5:10). Romans 3:9-18 describes what I was at birth: I didn't seek God; I wasn't righteous; I didn't understand God; I couldn't do anything good; I didn't know the way of peace. Pretty depressing, don't you think? It gets worse. Ephesians 2 tells me that I was "dead" in my transgressions. Have you ever seen death up close and personal? It is not pretty; nothing moves, nothing breathes, nothing speaks. My pastor described "dead in my transgressions" as me lying in the water with my face down, arms outstretched. Drowned people don't move. He shared that God intervenes in my dead condition and gives me a choice: I could ask the Rescuer to rescue me by simply saying, "I can't make it to shore without your help; I need you!"

Scripture clearly states: "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin"(Rom. 5:20). Some Adventists would argue that reading further in Romans 5 we come to this, "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law."

Was the law given to be kept? Yes! The problem is you and I never could keep it. Sin was in the world before the law was even given (Rom. 5:13). Then why was the law given? Paul asks

I had been taught "Sunday" Christians claimed Christ abolished the law on the cross. I have since learned that Christ fulfilled the law—something I couldn't do!

the same question in Galatians 3:19. He also answers that question: the law was given to point us to the need of a Redeemer/Rescuer. "It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made" (Gal. 3:19b). The offspring to whom Paul is referring in this passage is Jesus!

Paul further expounds by writing that the law was "our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith." Paul becomes even stronger in his use of language, "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

What then of this conundrum? I had been taught "Sunday" Christians claimed Christ abolished the law on the cross. I have since learned that Christ fulfilled the law—something I couldn't do! Jesus says in Luke 24:44, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the

Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

Why am I amazed at the incarnation? It is so much more than I thought it was: an encouragement to keep the law. Rather, the incarnation means God came to be among us—to do what I couldn't do! I am no longer dead, but alive in Christ! I am rescued, because God entered His creation to redeem it. Hallelujah! †

Carolyn Macomber was a doctoral student at Andrews University when she discovered inconsistencies between Adventism and the Bible. She withdrew her membership from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2009. She is a member of The Chapel Evangelical Free Church in St. Joseph, Michigan, where she is the leader of a Former Adventist Fellowship. She teaches at an inner-city private school in Benton Harbor, Michigan, and she is a small group leader for Bible Study Fellowship in Granger, Indiana.



The Word



became flesh and

I well remember the day that our little Bruce—now a big, strong contractor—started asking questions. We lived in Napa, California, and were driving back from Conn Lake. Bruce was standing on the seat between Carolyn and me—those were the days before seat belts. Suddenly he asked, “Daddy, why...?” or “Mommy, why...?”

For the next half hour or so he asked a series of uninterrupted questions, one after another. We would answer one question, and then, as he pondered the answer for a few seconds, it would raise another question in his mind. In that half hour he took a giant step toward understanding the world around him. He began to see things in their relationship to each other.

The topic before us is similar. In the divine scheme of things, nothing occurs in isolation. The incarnation—God becoming flesh in Jesus Christ—is not something that can be seen apart from God’s wider revelation in Scripture, nor is it something we can fully comprehend. Our answers to two-year old Bruce that day were truthful but simplified into words that we felt he could grasp. God treats us the same way.

The incarnation can only be understood in relation to the atonement. Likewise the atonement can only be understood from the perspective of the incarnation. We see their combined glory through the polychromatic words of the gospel: salvation, redemption, reconciliation, substitution, representation, justification, death, resurrection and eternal life.¹ Even if we could fully understand all these, we cannot rest satisfied with only a theological understanding. We must push on in our quest and ask a few “why” questions until we understand what the incarnation means to you and me—personally. We will first consider some of the pertinent details in the biblical record of the incarnation and from these distill a deeper theological understanding and personal application. In this study I will be using the *New English Translation* unless otherwise noted.

DALE RATZLAFF

Gospel records of the incarnation

Matthew starts his gospel with the genealogy of Joseph, Jesus' legal father. This proves that Jesus truly is the "Son of David".² By mentioning these ancestors of Joseph in three groups of fourteen, some see in these numbers a symbolic fulfillment of the time, the end of an important epic.³ In support of this theory are the first words of Jesus in the gospel of Mark. "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the gospel!"⁴ Matthew includes several shady and unsavory characters in the genealogy of Joseph. There is no attempt to whitewash the list of ancestors. However, immediately after listing the genealogy of Joseph, Matthew is quick to correct what might be a misconception. He shows clearly that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born to a virgin, and Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus.⁵ This fact becomes a necessary foundation stone in correctly understanding the incarnation, the atonement, the gospel, and its application to us. The importance of the virgin birth and incarnation is underlined in its prominent place in the Apostles Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried...

Matthew 1:22-23 expands our understanding of this mystery showing that Jesus is divine. He is "God with us"—a true human, yes, but also true God.

- Jesus is our Savior.
- Jesus is Christ the Lord.
- Jesus is God with us.
- Jesus was destined from birth to bring mercy to generation after generation.
- Understanding the birth of Jesus brings great joy.
- The birth of Jesus is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
- Jesus is to be a light to the gentiles
- Jesus is for the glory of the people of Israel.

The apostle John does not give the details of Jesus' birth; nevertheless, his theology of the incarnation is extensive. One could write a doctoral dissertation unpacking the facts listed in just the first few verses of John's gospel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. The Word was with God in the beginning. All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. And the light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it... The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was created by him, but the world did not recognize him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. But to all who have received him—those who believe in his name – he has given the right to become God's children—children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband's

made his dwelling among us.

This all happened so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: "Look! The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him Emmanuel" which means "God with us".

Luke gives additional details describing how the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary to explain how her Son would be named Jesus, would be "Son of the Most high", and would be conceived by the Holy Spirit.⁶ He records how Mary, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said,

My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has begun to rejoice in God my Savior...from generation to generation he is merciful to those who fear him (Lk.1:46-47, 50).

The Shepherds heard an angel say,

Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people: Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord (Lk. 2:10-11).

As his parents presented baby Jesus to the Lord in the temple, Simeon, under the guidance of the Spirit, looked at Jesus and said,

"...my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples: a light, for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Lk. 2:30-32).

Here is a quick summary of the main facts brought out in Matthew and Luke:

- Jesus is the legal Son of David.
- Jesus was born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit.

decision, but by God. Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father (Jn. 1:1-5, 9-14).

In these few verses from the Gospel of John we learn the following about this "Word that became flesh":

- He is the self-existent One, not a created being.
- He is fully God, not just some person who developed a "God consciousness" or was exalted to become God at some distant time in the past.
- He is the Creator of all things. Lest we diminish the clarity of this statement, John adds, "apart from him not one thing was created that has been created."
- He is the Source of life. As the Source of life we can understand and believe His word to Martha and us: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies" (Jn. 11:25).
- His life is a revelation of light to all mankind. The light of this life is to shine to all nations and peoples; it is not limited to the sons of Israel.
- His revelation of light shines in darkness. It is designed to penetrate the depths of wickedness and sin. There is no hint that some future light would be needed, no last-day prophet to eclipse, change, modify or out-shine this communication.
- The darkness cannot overcome His light—there is no chance this "Light" will be deceived, blinded or overcome by Satan.

Darkness has no power over light. We are optimistic waiting for the consummation! The truth of Christ will stand!

- He was in the world—indicating that He was here before the incarnation. This raises questions. If He was here before, why was it necessary that He become human? Exploring the answer to this question will lead us to the heart of our study.
- The world (mankind) did not recognize its Creator. Here we see the spiritual blinding of our fallen, sinful nature.
- He came to His own people—the people of Israel—and they did not receive Him. They were blinded by their own self-righteousness.
- However, as many as did receive Him by believing in Him, He gave the right to become children of God who are born again by the Spirit. Here we see the fundamentals of the gospel. The light of Christ is for all—whosoever will—but a response is required. We must “receive Him”; then the miracle of new birth by the Spirit becomes reality.

With this background we come to the key verse:

Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father (Jn. 1:14).

As I ponder this verse in the light of the context—the bullet points above—my heart is filled with wonder. What an event! How could it be that the eternal God, the self-existent Creator of all things, the very source of life and light could “become flesh and take up residence among us?” He who created the earth and all the galaxies reaching to the outer limits of space, left Father God to come live with us! Questions of how, what, and why line up in our minds begging for answers. This verse tells us that:

The Word became flesh.

The Word became flesh, and the other gospel writers agree. He was the “only begotten (unique) son of God”.⁷ He was born of a virgin by the agency of the Holy Spirit. He was truly human, so he could be a high priest who could sympathize with our weaknesses. He was tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin.⁸ He was in the “likeness” of sinful flesh,⁹ but as the “last Adam” who gives the life-giving Spirit¹⁰ He was holy, innocent, undefiled, separate from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.¹¹ There is abundant evidence that He took the human nature of Adam before the fall.¹² There is even a greater reason for the incarnation not mentioned here. We will address it below.

He took up residence among us—in our neighborhood.

We read in Matthew who quotes Isaiah, His “name is Emmanuel” which means “God with us”. When the disciples of John heard him point to Christ and say, “Behold the Lamb of God”, they “followed Jesus”, and He invited them to come home with Him, and they stayed with Him that day. As we walk through the Gospels we see Jesus in “our neighborhood” dealing with sickness, demon possession, lepers, the lame, blind, and deaf. We see him relating to fishermen, theologians, prostitutes, unbelievers, proud, rich, poor, self-seeking, traders, the loyal, the honest, and thieves. He was a “friend of sinners”. He ate with them; He loved them. Yes, he walked through our neighborhood because we needed to understand God—but the incarnation had an even greater goal. We will address that below.

We saw his glory full of grace and truth

One reason Christ the Word became flesh and lived in our neighborhood was so that we could see His glory. There are many texts that speak of the eschatological glory associated with the second coming.¹³ We get a glimpse of this coming glory at the Transfiguration when Christ’s face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.¹⁴ After Jesus turned water into wine we read, “In this way he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him” (Jn. 2:11). When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick he said, “This sickness will not lead to death, but to God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it” (Jn. 11:4).

In Jesus’ high priestly prayer we read, “Now this is eternal life—that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent. I glorified you on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me at your side with the glory I had with you before the world was created” (Jn. 17:3-5).

Just a few hours before the anguish of the arrest, the mockery of His trial, Peter’s denying that he ever knew Him, the disciples fleeing, the slaps in the face, the crown of thorns, the cries of “Crucify Him, Crucify Him”, the weight of the cross, the piercing nails, His life blood flowing from His hands and feet, Jesus prays to be glorified. Yes, it is at this time Jesus pleads with His father to be glorified.

Soon we would hear this “Word” cry out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me”? We learn that it is at the cross where we see His glory revealed,—that “old rugged cross” despised by the world, filled with shame, guilt, reproach, rejection, and the very wrath of God. Here we enter into the mystery of the incarnation and atonement. It is at the cross where we learn:

- The exceeding sinfulness of our sin.
- The wrath of God against our sin,
- We learn that the death of Christ provided the “propitiation” needed to satisfy God’s justice.¹⁵
- The death of Christ on the cross now brings in real forgiveness. God appeared to be unjust prior to the cross in that He had often passed over many sins without dealing with them.¹⁶
- There at the cross God’s full justice is on display. He is just in the way He acquits sinners while they are still sinning.
- There at the cross God’s love for lost sinners is revealed in the redemption price—the death of Christ.
- It is at the foot of the cross that we perceive our true value.
- The cross stands as a symbol of reality of reconciliation and the destruction of enmity.
 - The death of Christ opened up a way that God’s attributes could be reconciled—mercy and truth, holiness and justice, wrath against sin and forgiveness of the sinner could now meet and kiss each other.¹⁷
 - At the cross God was reconciled to man.¹⁸
 - At the cross man could now be reconciled to God.¹⁹
 - At the cross reconciled men and women can be reconciled to each other.²⁰
- At the cross we see Christ, our Substitute—God made Christ who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God.²¹
- At the cross we see Christ our Representative. We died “in him”, we are raised to new life “in Him.”²²

- At the cross we see the very “righteousness of God” which is imputed to those who believe.²³

Standing at the foot of the cross looking up at our sinfulness and God’s mercy visualizing that terrible and wonderful event, we can almost hear the echo of the angel choir at his birth, “Do not be afraid! Listen carefully, for I proclaim to you good news that brings great joy to all the people: Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2:9-11).

As we ponder the mystery of the incarnation and the atonement we realize that we are like a two-year old trying to understand the complexities of nature. Like Paul said, these things seem to be “foolishness to the natural man...for these things are spiritually discerned.” Paul also would write to Timothy on this subject by saying,

And we all agree, our religion contains amazing revelation: He was revealed in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed on in the world, taken up in glory (1 Tim. 3:16).

Why did God have to become man?

The incarnation opened up a communication between God and man that was greater than that seen in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament there were many shadows, symbols, and rituals that pointed to Christ, but they were all incomplete, slightly out of focus, and fuzzy. Now that Christ has become flesh we see clearly.

After God spoke long ago in various portions and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets, in these last days he has spoken to us in a son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world. The Son is the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence, and he sustains all things by his powerful word, and so when he had accomplished cleansing for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:1-3).

After pondering all that has been written above, I asked myself, what exactly did God communicate through the incarnation that was not communicated in the Old Testament?

- Not His creative power, this is a major theme in the O.T.
- Not His holiness, this is a major theme in the O.T.
- Not His wrath against sin, this is major theme in the O.T.

- Not His love for His people, this is a major theme in the O.T.
- Not His power to save, this is a major theme in the O.T.
- Not His sovereignty, this is a major theme in the O.T.

With all these attributes of God communicated to man in the Old Testament, even though they may not have been seen as clearly as they are on this side of the cross, why was the incarnation necessary? I believe there is one major reason.

He was born to die

The deity, perfect humanity, death, and resurrection of Christ are the immovable foundational pillars upon which Christianity is based. It is true that Christ came to reveal the attributes of God more clearly. It is also true that He is our example in many ways but not in all things. However, the ONE overriding reason for God taking on real, human, sinless flesh was so that Christ could die, shedding His innocent blood for our sin. There in the garden, Jesus requested some other way.

Then he said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, even to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake with me.” Going a little farther, he threw himself down with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me! Yet not what I will, but what you will”...He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, your will must be done” (Mt. 26:38-44).

Jesus pleaded with His Father three times for some other way; but there was no other way. There at the cross we clearly see that the larger purpose of the incarnation was the atonement. We serve a God who has 100% integrity. The cross shows us the reality and the seriousness of the divine reaction against sin. At the same time it shows the reality and the greatness of divine love which provided the gift which averted the wrath against us. It is at the cross that we come to understand the words of the gospel: His Incarnation, our Salvation, our Redemption, our Reconciliation, Substitution for us, Representation for us, Justification for us, Death for Him, Resurrection and Eternal Life for us. The brilliance of the atonement shines like multi-colored rays of light streaming from the facets of a diamond; we can join the Bible writer and say, “...and we beheld His glory.” †

Endnotes

¹ By God’s grace at the next FAF weekend in Redlands, California, we will be able to see how understanding the words of the Gospel give us a more accurate world view and a deeper appreciation for the centrality of the cross of Christ.

² Mt. 1:1.

³ See William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 107-111 (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids MI. 1973).

⁴ Mk. 1:15.

⁵ Mt. 1:18-25.

⁶ Lk. 1:26-38.

⁷ Jn. 3:16.

⁸ Heb. 4:15.

⁹ Rom. 8:3.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. 15:45.

¹¹ Heb. 7:26.

¹² Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45; Heb. 4:15.

¹³ Mt. 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; Mk. 8:38; 13:26 to list only a few of dozens.

¹⁴ Mt. 17:1-6; Mk. 9:2-8; Lk. 9:28-36.

¹⁵ Rom. 3:25 NAS.

¹⁶ Rom. 3:25.

¹⁷ Ps. 85:10.

¹⁸ Col. 1:20-22.

¹⁹ 2 Cor. 5:20.

²⁰ Eph. 2:16; Mt.

5:24.

²¹ 2 Cor. 5:21.

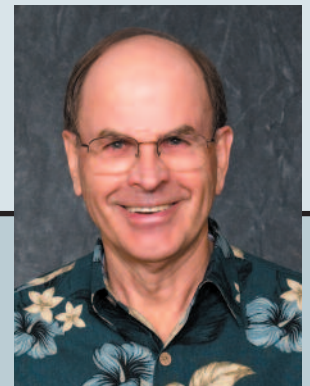
²² Rom. 6:1-13;

Eph. 2:6.

²³ Rom. 3:21-26;

Phil. 3:9.

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ENJOY SABBATH REST TODAY

SHERYL BARKER

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Introduction

The common understanding of Sabbath today is influenced primarily by the fourth commandment. Christians vary, however, in their interpretation of how Sabbath rest fits in the new covenant. Some consider it to be a specific day of physical rest for spiritual renewal; others interpret it to be a regular time period for the same purpose. This article takes a deeper look at Sabbath: common paradigms, its beginning, history, and purpose, and finally, we will discuss what Sabbath means for a Christian by exploring the “Today” paradigm of Hebrews 3 and 4. It is important to note that since the cross we are in the freedom of the gospel and under the ministry of the Spirit, and therefore respect should be given for each view. Moreover, all moral commands apply 24 hours a day every day; only the ritual laws were recurring and periodic. The Sabbath command was never an unremitting moral command; it recurred every seven days. Thus, Sabbath is now a matter of conscience as stated in Romans 14:5: “One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.” All verses are quoted from the NASB translation.

Common paradigms

The following chart briefly outlines the main paradigms various Christians hold today regarding the Sabbath:

The Christian Sabbath

When	Description	Presupposition	Support	Problem	End Result
Saturday	Seventh day kept holy as described in Commandment	Ten C’s are eternal and nothing has changed in their contents	Sabbath Day seems to have begun at Creation	Galatians states the law had an end; it’s impossible to keep specific day on a round world or in the timelessness of eternity.	Sabbath Day must be kept throughout eternity
Sunday	First day kept holy as described in Commandment	Ten C’s are eternal but Sunday replaced Sabbath at the Resurrection	NT and early church records mention believers gathering on first day		In practice, not as legalistic as Saturday keeping.
Any period	Principle of regular rest for spiritual renewal	Ten C’s stand but are morphed into principles as per Sermon on Mount	Colossians 2, Romans 14, and a rest at Creation	Contradiction: Ten C’s stand, yet one changed differently from the other nine	Sabbath is believer’s rest; also, physical rest principle
Today	Believer’s rest in Jesus’ finished work 24/7	Ten C’s with entire Torah as one unit were temporary (Sinai to Seed)—now under Christ’s Law	Colossians 2, Romans 14, Hebrews 4, Hebrews 8, Galatians 3,4 and 2 Cor. 3	Meaning of Sabbath-sanctification in Genesis 2 is debatable	Sabbath is now only believer’s rest in God’s finished work in Jesus Christ

The Saturday-paradigm group believes that the seventh-day Sabbath along with the entire 10 Commandments have existed from eternity and will always be in existence exactly as they are written. They believe it is essential for true Christians to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday as a sign of their allegiance to God, and they believe they will continue to do so in the new heaven and new earth throughout eternity. The main support for this view is that both Exodus 20 and Genesis 2 suggest that the Sabbath has existed at least since creation, pre-sin. Further support for seventh-day observance is derived from verses stating the Sabbath is a perpetual covenant (Ex. 31:16; Lev. 24:8; Is. 46:6), that in the new heaven and new earth all will come to worship God from Sabbath to Sabbath and from new moon to new moon (Is. 66:23), and that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever and states, “I change not” (Mal. 3:6). The main problems with this interpretation are the verses that state the law was temporary (Gal. 3:15-26), that a change in the priesthood required a change of the law (Heb. 7:12), and that the new covenant replaced the old (Heb. 8; 2 Cor. 3) besides the impossibility of keeping a literal day in every part of the world, let alone in the timelessness of eternity. Finally, there is the additional problem, as the Jews discovered, of figuring out exactly how the Sabbath should be kept.

The Sunday-paradigm group has the least biblical support of the four. There is no indication in the Bible that the seventh-day Sabbath as stated in the commandments was transferred to the first day of the week. There is, however, evidence that believers in the New Testament met on the first day of the week, thus explaining

why this group supports changing the day in the commandment. The Saturday group has a rebuttal for each mention of the first day in the New Testament as to why it was not really a regular church day, and the verses are a little ambiguous. If the command is still in place as it is written but now applies to a different day of the week, the Bible should certainly have made that perfectly clear, and it does not. This group is usually not as legalistic in their Sunday-keeping as the Saturday group is with theirs, and most do not observe the day from sundown to sundown.

The Any-Period-of-Time-paradigm group is one that believes the Ten Commandments stand as a unit and therefore the Sabbath command still applies in some sense, but Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 allows for the application of a Sabbath-principle rather than observance of a specific day. It is usually further asserted that a weekly rest is part of the natural cycle that began at creation. The Sabbath command is now viewed as taking regular time (a day or part of a day) to rest physically and to renew relationships with God and other believers. This practice includes a church day which is normally on Sunday, but it can be any day. The main problem with this view is that the Bible does not address the Sabbath in the New Testament as a beneficial time period for the believer—or, for that matter, as any type of command. Furthermore, the Sabbath commandment was not treated the same as the other commandments were in the Sermon on the Mount. The commandments Jesus addressed continued to mean not only what they meant in the Torah (do not kill, do not commit adultery) but also were taken to a deeper heart level (do not hate, do not look with lust). In contrast, none of the Sabbath commandment applies any longer as it is written, and neither Jesus nor the apostles taught observance of a Sabbath day. Thus, understanding Sabbath only as a principle at the heart level is inconsistent with the remaining commandments; therefore, we must see it as a different category of command.

The "Today"-paradigm group believes the Sabbath day was a symbol of the original rest that people had in an unbroken relationship with God before sin and a foreshadow of the believer's rest in Jesus that restores one's relationship with God through the cross and the resurrection. Support for this view is found primarily in Hebrews 4, and it agrees with the biblical evidence that there is no Sabbath time-period command for Christians.¹

The following table outlines the way the old covenant law is understood from the perspective of the "Today" paradigm:

"Today" paradigm's presupposition: view of old covenant law

The Ten Commandments are viewed as the summary of, or table of contents to, the entire Mosaic Law which is expounded in the first five books of the Bible, or Torah, and within which Jews have specifically counted 613 total commands. See Exodus 20 through 31, Exodus 34:1-28, Deuteronomy 4:13, and Deuteronomy 5 for evidence that:

- God only spoke the Ten Commandments before the children of Israel said they were afraid to hear more, so God spoke the rest of the commands to Moses.
- Much of the rest of the law God spoke to Moses was an elaboration of the Ten Commandments.

- The law God spoke to Moses ends with discussion of the Sabbath as a sign between God and the sons of Israel.
- The Ten Commandments are called "the covenant" and "the words of the covenant".
- This covenant (Ten Commandments, entire law spoken by God from Mount Sinai) was only made with the children of Israel, not with their fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob).

The entire law God gave at Mount Sinai, which specifically includes the Ten Commandments and is further elaborated throughout the first five books of the Bible, is the old covenant, as one unit. See Galatians 3:15-19, 2 Corinthians 3:4-17, Galatians 4, and Hebrews 8:13 for evidence that:

- The Law was temporary, given 430 years *after* the promise to Abraham and was to last only *until* the Seed.
- The "letters engraved on stone" were "the ministry of death" that faded away; they were replaced by the ministry of the Spirit, the new covenant.
- The old and new covenants are contrasted allegorically between Mount Sinai (bondwoman) and New Jerusalem (free woman), with instruction to throw out the bondwoman.
- The Old Covenant became obsolete at the rending of the veil and disappeared in AD 70 in the destruction of Jerusalem.

The old covenant commands, with the entire law and the prophets, depend on and derive from the greatest commandments. These are found in Deuteronomy and stated by Jesus in Matthew 22:36-40: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," and "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." This principle of Love is part of who God is in character and is an overarching principle through all eternity. It is also the essence of Christ's law of the New Testament, to love one another (Jn. 13:34) and bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). These "greatest commandments" trump the law, and believers are not under the old covenant law but are under Christ's law, ministered through the Spirit and not by the letter (Rom. 6:6; 2 Cor. 3). There are many specific instructions given in the New Testament explaining what this love in action does and does not look like (see for example Mt. 5, Gal. 5:16-25). In other words, the law of love is not "shorthand" for the 10 Commandments; rather, the law of love eclipses the 10 Commandments when we are in Christ.

In the beginning

The Sabbath day as a noun is first mentioned in the Bible in Exodus 16, but the commandment in Exodus 20 refers back to Creation as the reason for the Sabbath command.

"For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Ex. 20:11).

This verse is referring to Genesis 2:2, 3:

"By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

These verses at first glance seem to support the view that the Sabbath day began at Creation. There are good reasons, however,

After the Cross, there is no mention of the Sabbath as a sign or a benefit, nor is there any hint that Sabbath-breaking is a sin. Instead, Paul tells us that all the Sabbaths were a shadow of which Jesus is the substance.

why a different interpretation provides a better fit with the rest of Scripture and with the freedom of the Gospel.

Genesis 2 speaks only of God ceasing (the meaning of the underlying Hebrew word) from His finished work of creation and not about people resting. He did not take up creation work again on the day after the seventh day; it was completed once and for all. Interestingly, every creation day ends with the words “And there was evening and there was morning, one day” or second day, third day, etc. The seventh day is the only one that is not bracketed with those words. In other words, by the seventh day God had ceased from His work, and it was a day unlike the six days of creation: it had no beginning and no end. This grammatical detail conveys the reality that God’s rest, or His ceasing from His work, and His consequent blessing and sanctifying of the unending seventh day, were intended to be perpetual. God’s “rest” and “blessing” were not limited to only one physical day in every seven. In fact, the lives of Adam and Eve began at the beginning of that rest—they certainly had nothing from which to rest physically. There was no tiring work before sin, and Adam and Eve were in a right relationship with God at all times, so they needed no physical rest or spiritual renewal before sin. They were essentially created into a perpetual Sabbath that did not end until sin came and their relationship with God was broken.

Genesis 3 records God cursing creation after the fall into sin, and then Adam and Eve began to experience fatigue, pain, and spiritual separation. Still, God did not mention any Sabbath rest for them or for anyone else in Genesis. There is no indication from the biblical record that any person knew about or kept a Sabbath period of time until the Exodus.

The true beginning of a required Sabbath time-period as outlined in the commandment is recorded in Exodus 16. Like the ritual law of Passover, the Sabbath was given a few weeks before God gave the commandments at Sinai when He provided manna for the children of Israel and informed them there would be a double portion of manna on Friday that would keep an extra day. There would be none on the ground to gather on Sabbath. There is no mention before this time of any person observing a Sabbath day. This seemed to be new information which some people put to the test both by trying to keep extra manna on a day other than Friday, or by not gathering extra on Friday but willfully going out to find some on Sabbath.

Interestingly, the Torah gives two reasons for the children of Israel to keep the Sabbath. Exodus 20 cites God’s resting, or ceasing, from His work of creation on the seventh day of creation. When the 10 Commandments are repeated in Deuteronomy 5, however, they are stated a little differently, saying Sabbath obser-

vance was for the purpose of remembering how God rescued them out of slavery in Egypt.

“You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to observe the Sabbath day” (Deut. 5:15).

Here we glimpse what that day of rest symbolized: first, God created people in a sin-free, never-ending relationship with Him. That rest was entered on the seventh day after the six days of creation and was not interrupted until sin entered. Second, God rescued the children of Israel from slavery, beginning the journey back to that original rest.

Sabbath history

The Sabbath command was the very center of the old covenant for the children of Israel and was the sign of their special relationship with God as a nation.

“But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you’” (Ex. 31:13).

Normally it is the seventh-day Sabbath that is thought of in this context, because it is the one specifically mentioned in the 10 Commandments. However, there were multiple Sabbaths for the children of Israel: weekly (seventh-day Sabbath), monthly (new moon festival), yearly (seven fixed annual feasts), the Sabbath year (every seventh year) and the jubilee Sabbath (Year of Jubilee—the 50th year). Leviticus 23 and 25 discuss in depth each of these Sabbath festivals, and they are all tied together as an integral part of the Israelite’s life. Moreover, they are all treated the same: all are holy Sabbaths in which no labor was permitted. 2 Chronicles 8:12-13 lists many of these Sabbaths:

“Then Solomon offered burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD which he had built before the porch; and did so according to the daily rule, offering them up according to the commandment of Moses, for the sabbaths, the new moons and the three annual feasts—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths.”

Keeping the Sabbath holy was not optional, and God laid out some strict rules for how the Sabbath day should be kept in order to prevent any work. We know the rabbis added extensively to God’s specifications with their interpretations and safeguard rules. The Bible, however, lists specific things which God instructed Moses and later prophets could not be done on the Sabbath. These include:

- Don't bake (Ex. 16:23)
- Don't work (Ex. 20:10)
- Don't travel out of your place (Ex. 16:29)
- Don't light a fire (Ex. 35:3)
- Don't buy or sell (Neh. 10:31)
- Don't do your own pleasure (Is. 58:13)
- Don't carry a load (Jer. 17:21-22)

Keeping the Sabbath as God specified was important enough that intentionally breaking it carried the death penalty:

“Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death” (Ex. 31:14-15).

Numbers 15:32-36 records an incident when God had Moses carry out this penalty on a man who gathered wood on the Sabbath day. These passages reveal the high importance God placed on specific Sabbath times of physical rest for the children of Israel as the sign of the Sinaitic covenant signifying that they were God's chosen people in relationship only to Him.

The Israelites' history reveals that they often broke the Sabbath. God often reprovved and pleaded with them through His prophets to honor the Sabbath as well as to give up their idol worship. (See Neh. 13; Is. 56; 58; Jer. 17; Ez. 20-23; Amos 8).

In spite of the special place the God-given physical Sabbath rest had for the children of Israel, the record of the Gospels seems to indicate a transition away from the restrictive physical Sabbath introduced in Exodus toward its fulfillment when Jesus proclaimed the fulfillment of Jubilee. At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, as recorded in Luke 4:17-19, Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61, stating:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord... Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

This passage is often cross-referenced in Bibles to Leviticus 25 because the Year of Jubilee (the ultimate Sabbath) was about free-

ing the oppressed. The Jubilee, of which there is no record of its ever being observed, was fulfilled when Jesus proclaimed the beginning of His gospel ministry. Jesus' ministry was filled with many Pharisee conflicts over His breaking the Sabbath. He seemed to go out of his way to heal on the Sabbath, even telling a man to pick up his bed and walk (Jn. 5:8)—clearly against a prohibition given earlier by God not to carry a load, even a personal load as in the case of the man picking up sticks in Numbers. In Luke 6:4-6 Jesus calls Himself Lord of the Sabbath and made clear that He was not subject to its requirements. In addition, He defended His disciples' picking grain to eat on the Sabbath by equating it with David and his men eating the consecrated showbread: both acts were acceptable because both the Sabbath and the showbread restrictions were ceremonial, not moral.

In John 5:16-18 when the Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath, He did not deny it. Instead, He essentially said He was not subject to the Sabbath requirements by stating that both He and His Father have been and are working, which in turn caused John to say He was both breaking the Sabbath and making Himself equal to God—both of which were true (Jn. 5:18). This exchange further shows that since: a) Jesus was not subject to the Sabbath command He gave to the children of Israel, and b) exceptions to its historic observance were now being made from the time that Jesus began proclaiming the gospel and the Jubilee, therefore the command to honor the seventh day cannot be an eternal moral law. Rather, it was part of the ceremonial regulations foreshadowing redemption in Christ which found its fulfillment in Who Jesus actually is: Love and True Rest.

After the Cross, there is no mention of the Sabbath as a sign or a benefit, nor is there any hint that Sabbath-breaking is a sin. Instead, Paul tells us that all the Sabbaths were a shadow of which Jesus is the substance:

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

These verses cover the annual Sabbath festivals, the monthly Sabbath festival, and the weekly Sabbath day, and they are listed in

Shadow (Sabbath)	Substance (Jesus)
Rest of completed Creation	Rest of completed Salvation
Unbroken spiritual rest from Creation until sin	Unbroken spiritual rest restored in Jesus, never to be broken again
Sabbath was the sign of the old covenant, that Israelites were God's chosen people	Jesus' body and blood is the sign of the new covenant, that all who believe are God's chosen people
Israelites delivered from bondage in Egypt	Believers delivered from bondage to sin
Physical rest of body and mind	Spiritual rest of soul

Shadow	Fulfillment
Revelation of God through prophets	Jesus is exact representation of God
Levitical priest system	Jesus is our High Priest
Seventh-day Sabbath	“Today” Sabbath as Believer’s Rest in Jesus
Old covenant—unable to save	New covenant—Jesus saves, guaranteed
Blood of bulls and goats—many sacrifices	Blood of Jesus—once for all Sacrifice

a similar order to the order they are presented many places in the Old Testament. (See Ez. 45:17 for an almost exact parallel.) Paul also tells us in Romans 14:5-6 that we have the freedom to regard any day or no day.

Sabbath purpose

It is easy to lose sight of the purpose of the Sabbath shadow when one focuses mostly on the shadow. The Sabbath given to the children of Israel was a physical rest symbolizing the future spiritual rest that Jesus would give: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28). There are several ways the Sabbath was a shadow of the salvation rest Jesus came to give (see chart at bottom of last page).

Like the other shadows of the Old Testament, the Sabbath shadows (period of time: weekly, monthly, annual) pointed to things the Israelites could not fully understand at the time and were a physical representation of a future spiritual reality—albeit a reality set from the foundation of the world. These shadows were fulfilled in Jesus; the Substance replaced all shadows.

Christian meaning

Like most of the Old Testament ceremonies and ordinances, Sabbath shadows could not be entirely understood until after their fulfillment when the Gospel was more fully revealed to the apostles:

“By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph. 3:4-6).

Any paradigm that does not allow the New Testament to interpret the Old Testament, or does not line up with the teaching of the Gospel, is not complete truth. Jesus is the fullest revelation of God’s Word to us. Thus, we need to look closely at what the New Testament teaches about the Sabbath to know how it fits with the Christian.

The book of Hebrews is an excellent resource explaining that all Old Covenant shadows were fulfilled in Jesus (see chart above).

It is abundantly clear through studying Hebrews that the old is out and the new is in. Moreover, Hebrews show that God’s true rest was never the seventh-day Sabbath. There has been a change; the old is obsolete. Yes, this change even includes the Sabbath: there was a Sabbath shadow, and just as with the other shadows, the fulfillment of that shadow is all that actively remains. We need to know what that fulfillment looks like since now we live in it.

Beginning in Hebrews 3:12 and going through Hebrews 4, the writer of Hebrews contrasts between the rest the children of Israel did not obtain and the rest that is available to all who believe: “For we who have believed enter that rest” (Heb. 4:3). Here we find the first generation of Israelites to come out of Egypt did not enter the rest of the Promised Land because of their unbelief. Later, Joshua did give them physical rest in the land, but they never entered God’s rest. Observing all the various physical Sabbaths as a sign of that old covenant relationship were only shadows pointing to the believer’s restored relationship with God, entered through belief. In this saving relationship, the believer sets aside and rests from all his works because they are unable to save. Only belief in Jesus saves.

Hebrews 4:4 and 7 is where we find the shadow day versus the believer’s day. “For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all his works’...He again fixes a certain day, ‘Today.’” This is essentially saying that God’s rest, or His ceasing from His work on the seventh day, provided the basis for the shadow of physical rest on the seventh day. That day was fixed for the children of Israel. After the cross, God again fixes a certain day—this time for the believer’s rest—“Today”.

When is today?

It is always today, every moment, 24/7. Once we believe in Jesus, we find our spiritual rest in Him every moment of every day. As believers, we have passed from death to life (Jn. 5:24); we have been rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of the Son (Col. 1:12-14), and we already are seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-8). Believers are in that spiritual rest now.

It is interesting to note in Hebrews 4:8 that the physical Sabbath rest did not provide spiritual rest. If it had, God would

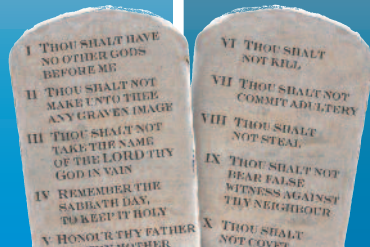
GOD'S LAWS³

1. GOD'S ETERNAL TRANSCENDENT LAW³

3. LAW OF CHRIST

2. MOSAIC LAW

SINAI



CROSS



WORLD HISTORY

1. God's eternal transcendent law

- There is an eternal transcendent law that is defined by God's very being. It is who and what He is. All that is consistent with God's nature is lawful. All that is against God's nature is sin.
- All creatures at all times have been and always will be subject to this ultimate law because they are creatures and God is the Creator.
- All those who fall short of this eternal law are condemned (see the first 5 chapters of Romans, especially chapters 1-3 for biblical support for points in 1.)

2. Mosaic law

- Ethnic Jews were under this law.
- It was only in place from Sinai to the cross (Gal. 3:15-25).
- People who lived before Sinai were not under this law (Deut. 5:1-3; Rom. 5:12-14).
- Gentiles were never under this law (1 Cor. 9:21; Rom. 2:12-14; 4:12-15; 7:6).
- New covenant Christians are not under this law (1 Cor. 9:20; Rom. 6:14, Gal. 5:18).

3. Law of Christ

- This law is variously referred to in the New Testament as "The Law of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21, Gal. 6:2),
- "The Law of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:2),
- "The Law of Liberty" (Js. 1:25, 2:12),
- "The Perfect Law" (Js. 1:25), and
- "The Royal Law" (Js. 2:8).
- This is the law under which new covenant Christians live.

not have needed to speak of another day, Today. Verses 9-11 explain what this believer's rest is:

“So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore, let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.”

It was already stated the physical Sabbath-day rest did not save and did not provide spiritual rest, but this “Sabbath-like rest” (a unique word found nowhere else in Scripture) that remains for believers is the real thing; it does provide saving spiritual rest, and we are commanded to enter it, the Sabbath rest that counts. Entering the believer's rest is how one “obeys the Gospel”—believing in Jesus and relying only on His works, thus becoming part of God's household:

“For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4:17).

Like all the other Old Testament shadows, the Sabbath shadows of the old covenant were also shadows of the Gospel. The believer's Sabbath is defined by our setting aside our works and attempts to be right with God and resting instead in Jesus' finished work for us.

The concept of the Sabbath being a shadow of the believer's rest as outlined in Hebrews 4 is found in one of the earliest Protestant description of beliefs, Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation in the section on the Sabbath commandment:²

36. Does God require us to observe the Sabbath and other holy days of the Old Testament? The Sabbath was a sign pointing to Jesus, who is our rest. Since Jesus has come as our Savior and Lord, God no longer requires us to observe the Sabbath day and other holy days of the Old Testament. Matt. 11:28, Matt. 12:8, Col. 2:16-17, and Heb. 4:9-10

The Catechism further states in number 37 that God requires Christians to worship together because of Acts 2:42, 46 and Hebrews 10:25, and that God has not specified any particular day to meet because of Romans 14:5-6 and Galatians 4:10-11.

The diagram created by Chris Lee illustrates the unique applications of the old and new covenants (see diagram on previous page).

Summary

The seventh day Sabbath was given only to the children of Israel, along with all the other commands and ordinances comprising the entire law. This law containing shadows of the Gospel was given 430 years after the promise of Abraham until the Seed (Jesus) (Gal. 3:15-19). Now that the Substance has come, the shadows are all obsolete.

This seventh-day Sabbath was a reminder that the children of Israel were God's chosen people, rescued from slavery in Egypt,

and brought to physical rest in the Land of Canaan. It also reminded them that God ceased from His work of creation which foreshadowed the coming rest of His completed work of salvation at the Cross. In a similar way, it reminded them of the perpetual rest Adam and Eve enjoyed in relationship with God until sin broke in, and foreshadowed that rest would be restored in Jesus through entering the believer's rest.

Jesus announced the fulfillment of the ultimate Sabbath, the Year of Jubilee, when he proclaimed the beginning of His ministry where the captives are released, and the oppressed are freed through the Gospel. Further, Jesus went out of His way to break the Sabbath as He did other ritual laws, thus showing that their shadows were no longer needed because He, the living Messiah to which they pointed, had come. He is Lord of the Sabbath—in other words, He is bigger than the Sabbath; the Sabbath is not bigger than Jesus; in Jesus the weekly Sabbath had met its fulfillment. God does not change Who He is, but He reveals Himself differently at different times. The Sabbath periods of time, like the other shadows, served a specific purpose and became obsolete upon fulfillment.

The believer's rest in Jesus is explained and contrasted with the seventh-day rest in Hebrews 4. Here we find that the seventh day was fixed at one time, but now another day is fixed, “Today”. No one entered this spiritual rest through the physical seventh-day rest. This “Today rest” is our forever rest in Jesus entered when we believe by resting from our works to be made right with God and resting in Jesus' finished work in saving us.

An individual who focuses on the idea that the Christian Sabbath is a time period for their physical rest and spiritual renewal is not wrong according to the freedom the Christian individual has in the Gospel. It is, however, outside what the Bible teaches. Therefore, making any model of a required day mandatory or even recommended for Christians minimizes the Gospel by turning the Sabbath into “doing” instead of “resting” in Jesus' completed work. This focus on a physical Sabbath can also cause people to lose sight of the reality to which the shadow pointed in the first place—the beauty of perfect spiritual rest in an unbroken forever-relationship in Jesus.

The Sabbath commandment was so much more than just a day. It was important in that it pointed forward to the rest that was restored to us in Jesus. When we accept Jesus' blood as the payment for our sin, we are saved, and from that moment forward, Jesus is our Sabbath rest—“Today” and every day. †

Endnotes

¹ For a thorough study on the Sabbath from the “today” paradigm, see Ratzlaff, Dale, *Sabbath in Christ*, LAM Publications, LLC, 2010.

² *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, Concordia Publishing House, 1986, pp. 66, 67.

³ Lee, Chris, “A Study of the Covenants,” <http://www.lifeassuranceministries.org/studies/covenants/covenants14.html>



Sheryl Barker lives near Cincinnati, Ohio with her husband Rick and daughters Amy and Lauren. They attend Royal Redeemer Lutheran Church in Liberty Township, Ohio, and are actively involved in a Bible study for former Adventists in Dayton, Ohio. She graduated from Spring Valley Academy in 1982, attended Andrews University, and earned an accounting degree from Indiana Wesleyan University.



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Fear! Fear! Fear!

I loved “Fear, fear, fear!” (July/August/September, 2011). If there’s one word that conveys the Adventist experience, that would be it. The fear that I lived with as a historical Adventist on a continual basis was crushing and took years for me to overcome.

Reading Carolyn Macomber’s article reminded me of this horrible fear that I endured on a daily basis. Sometimes my joy over leaving that fear-based religion is so intense that any other concern simply falls away.

GARDEN GROVE, CA

Persecuting God’s remnant people

Dear misguided proclaimators, I am so happy you have a cause to trample; it makes me giddy that Satan is working so hard to work against the Adventist church. This tells me that Jesus is truly coming soon. I was visiting with my dear mother this week in Arkansas and found this magazine in her pile of mail. My father was an Adventist pastor and passed away almost two years ago, and this magazine defiles everything he stood for, but I am sure you’re happy about that. I understand that in the last days there will be organizations like yours that

Proclamation! News

Send your email address to receive our soon coming weekly email of news and new content on the web at LifeAssuranceMinistries.org.

will seek to undermine and persecute God’s remnant people.

However, I will be praying for you and all those who may be led astray by your teachings. In the mean time please don’t send this magazine to my mother. She requests that you remove her from your mailing list.

HARRISON, AR

Read from cover to cover

Ever since attending one of your seminars at The Chapel in St. Joseph, Michigan, where my wife and I are members, we have been receiving your *Proclamation!* magazine. There are few magazines I read from cover to cover, but yours is one!

I’m a retired (I don’t like that word) pastor of Berrien Center Bible Church (four miles east of Berrien Springs, Adventist “mecca”). Your magazine has been a real eye-opener of Adventists’ beliefs...

Content in Christ,
BERRIEN SPRINGS, MI

Following “mother church” to perdition

Please remove us from your mailing list. What a pathetic form of Christianity you have. Why don’t you read your Bibles and have a Christ-centered theology? It seems you are very bitter against Adventism. From what I read in your magazine, none of the ex-Adventists ever were into reading the Bible but worshiped in form each week, with no conversion. [Ellen G. White] was not perfect, nor did she claim to be perfect. Neither were Moses, Joshua, David, etc. The Bible comes first, and it seems in your upbringing you somehow missed that [point] and only had a form of godliness.

By the way, nowhere in the Bible are the Ten Commandments done away with or modified. What set of rules (guidelines) do you think God will be operating by in the new kingdom we will inherit? Might be good to practice them. It certainly won’t save you but does shed light on where you have placed your allegiance. You seem to be following the “mother church”

right down the road to perdition the same as all the other “New World Order” churches. Please remove us from your mailing list.

WEST RICHLAND, WA

You outdid yourselves

Thanks so much for this issue (July/August/September, 2011) of *Proclamation!* You really outdid yourselves. This is the best issue I have ever read. I think the reason I feel this way is two-fold: the personal stories and the “filling in the gaps” in my transition from being an Adventist to learning all the truths of the Bible while shedding the untruths of Adventism.

I loved the cover article (“He Shall Never Die”) and the articles by Nicole Stevenson and Delina McPhaull. Your response to one of the letters on page 28 was an eye-

I am so happy you have a cause to trample; it makes me giddy that Satan is working so hard to work against the Adventist church. This tells me that Jesus is truly coming soon.

opener for me. I had not yet figured out that the great controversy was not true. Thank you for telling me that new-to-me truth. Richard Peifer’s article also opened my eyes to a new view of Revelation.

Thanks so much!
GOLD BAR, WA

Evangelical perverts

Your belief in an eternal hell is the key indicator that your teachings are nothing but a sham. Sorry about that!

If your teachings on hell were true, then Revelation 21:4 could never take place.

You people are really stupid. There’s more.

Oh, and thank goodness we are not, in your mind, evangelical. The evangelicals I know are ordaining queers and performing same-sex marriages, not to mention the ordination of female lesbians.

Thanks again for not lumping us in with those evangelical perverts!

LOCATION UNKNOWN

Wrong about the Adventist Jesus

I just finished reading the April/May/June issue of *Proclamation!* with your lead article on the Great Controversy theme. Do you believe you are justifiably right to knock Adventism and Ellen White the way you did? One of your most damning statements was your interpretation of Ellen White’s statement taken from her book *Patriarch and Propbets* (PP), p. 37, quoted below and on p. 13 in your article.

“The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor.”

Besides the fact that your footnote was wrong, your interpretation was wrong also. On p. 13, after footnote 26, you say,

“In the great controversy paradigm, Jesus was not the eternal, almighty God. Instead, God exalted him to be His equal at some time in the distant past.”

And on p. 16, in your summary, you say that Adventism deceptively “teaches a ‘different Jesus’, one who is not Mighty God, the I AM, but a diminished one.”

I admit, the quotation from PP 37, taken in isolation alone and quoted above, may be understood the way you interpreted it, but hopefully you can see by comparing it with PP 34 and 35 below that your interpretation is not correct. Note:

“Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the only being that could enter into the counsels and purposes of God” (p. 34).

“And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of

angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone" (p. 35).

From the two parallel statements (p. 35 and 37) we can see that to "invest" is the same as to "exalt". Both of these words can be defined as "to honor". Honor may be bestowed at any time, without the idea of any new quality being bestowed at any certain time. Do you understand what I'm saying? Ellen White makes it clear in the above quote from PP 34 (and many, many other places!) that Jesus was "one in nature" from eternity with the Father.

Considering you to still be an honest person, Colleen, I believe you will admit that your interpretation was a misrepresentation of the truth, even if an unknowing one.

I realize that even growing up Adventist you may not have been aware that the [Adventist] church definitely believes that Jesus was always fully God, and that he became fully man to be the Sacrifice for our sins. The official doctrinal statements are clear on this, as are all the writings of Ellen White. I will give you the benefit of the doubt.

But, if you remain an honest person, you must now admit the truth! So I am expecting you to concede this point either in print or in private. It would be nice (transparently honest!) if you would print this mistake in the next *Proclamation!* issue!

Please acknowledge this as an honest mistake! Otherwise, it will be counted as willful misrepresentation and slander before God and men. (That is my humble opinion at least!) Please remain honest!

CANUTE, OK

Editor's response: First, thank you for pointing out the error in footnote number 26 in the Great Controversy article in the April/May/June, 2011 issue of *Proclamation!* Second, I addressed the issue of Ellen Whites' apparent self-contradiction in the July/August/September issue of the magazine on page 28 in an editor's response to this same question.

What I want to address here is the question of honesty. Adventism claims to base its doctrines and beliefs on the Bible alone. Ellen White, they insist, merely points

MINISTRY News

Dale Ratzlaff at Calvary Chapel, Rialto

Dale Ratzlaff spoke for the two church services on Sunday, November 13, 2011, at Calvary Chapel, Rialto, California. His PowerPoint-illustrated sermon was entitled, "Sabbath in Christ". Senior pastor Terry Hlebo had invited Dale to speak at a Wednesday evening service in October, and he asked him to return and speak to the whole congregation when he learned he would be out of town on the 13th.

Pastor Hlebo's son Daniel, the worship pastor, hosted Dale and Life Assurance Ministries that Sunday, and the congregation was responsive. Over 750 copies of *Proclamation!* were handed out to members as they left the services.



Church in Redlands, California. Active members of the Former Adventist Fellowship ministry there, the Stephensons have a burden for ministering to Adventist youth who are struggling with their religion and searching for truth.

Carel is a structural engineer who graduated from CalPoly, Pomona, California; and Nicole, who has a degree in social work from La Sierra University, is a full-time mother.

The board is deeply grateful for the years of service from retiring member John Mace, Sr., M.D., and for his ongoing prayers and encouragement.

Thank you

We are praising God for the way He is providing for *Proclamation!* through those of you who have given gifts since we first told you of our financial condition earlier this year. As we write this, we have not yet received enough money to cover the cost of printing this issue, but we are trusting God. By the time you read this, you can know that because of God's provision and grace poured out through your generosity, He has provided the money needed to print and mail the last two issues of this magazine this year. He continues to "sell His cows."

We know how severe the economic situation is. We continue to pray that God will protect and direct this ministry and this magazine, and we continue to pray also that He will bless each of you with His peace, provision, and joy. We do not take your generosity for granted; we praise God for making it possible for us to be partners in publishing the amazing news that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and has died and risen again in order to declare us completely righteous in Him!

We pray for you; we praise God for you, and we wish each of you a Merry Christmas filled with the joy of Jesus. †



The LAM board: back (L to R): Martin Carey, Carel Stevenson, and Dale Ratzlaff; front: Richard Tinker and Cheryl Granger.

New board member welcomed

On Saturday, November 12, 2011, the Life Assurance Ministries (LAM) board met to vote and to welcome a new board member: Carel Stevenson. Carel and his wife Nicole have two children, Joshua and Abigail aged five and two, and they attend Trinity



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people to the Bible. Yet the entire story of Lucifer and Jesus before the creation of the world, a story which is the basis for the central theme of Adventism—the great controversy—is not biblical. It is found only in the writings of Ellen White.

It is not honest to insist that Adventist doctrines are based on the

how to pray and have enough faith to resist temptation and perfectly keep the law. I was taught He came to be an example to show us how to become like Him.

I was not taught the Jesus revealed in Scripture, but I was taught the “right” words about his identity. This very subtle deception

this picture over and over, and I see myself—not so much in worship but in despair [as I was some years ago] under an overhang of some big rock on top of Half Dome in Yosemite National Park. I was weeping and praying, agonizing over the pain, and in pain regarding the [Adventist] church and Ellen White in particular. It was surely a fork in the road, a time for a decision. Why this picture in this issue of *Proclamation!* forces itself upon my soul outside of its intended message, I don’t understand, but it has encapsulated a heart-wrenching memory.

About the time of that experience, as I agonized over Ellen White, I dreamed I saw an open Bible, and I heard three words: “This is sufficient.” My wife and I are beyond grateful that this is so! It is, indeed, sufficient....

We continue to hold you, yours, and your work up to our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus. May He bless everything you touch.

ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Hatred, animosity, and stupidity

It is sad to see the hatred and animosity that permeates everything that you write in *Proclamation!*

Your bitterness is such that you cannot see anything positive about your Adventist experience. I’m sorry for you. I cannot fathom going through life and working at finding fault with other sincere Christians who happen to understand God’s will differently than you. Please, read John 9:49, 50 [sic] and learn from Jesus how to treat other people who are doing the best they know.

That attitude is not Christian; it does not reflect the character of the one who said: “...learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Mt. 11:29).

Your frustration and unresolved youthful traumas only attract other disgruntled Adventists like yourself, and drive away the rest of us, and some might even laugh at your ridiculous “editorials”.

You probably have run out of things to criticize and now come up with the ridiculous idea that if

one trusts God, there is no need to study, earn a degree, educate properly our children, or take care of our health (July/August/September 2011 issue).

Don’t you have anybody to read your editor’s comments before you print such stupidity?

I wish you the best in your physical health, and praise God for your recovery. I will continue praying for your emotional health that in my opinion is the main problem in your life.

SANGER, CA

Thanks for Wretched Radio interview

Although I have been a visitor to the Life Assurance website [LifeAssuranceMinistries.org] for some time, it was only a couple days ago that I noticed the link near the top for the Wretched Radio interview [Colleen Tinker] did. Thank you so much for that! Although I grew up Adventist, I had never known or heard some of the beliefs stated so clearly. To hear it described by an outsider who used to be an insider was very enlightening.

Although I left the church years ago and then studied myself into Christ, the old tapes still play now and then. It helps to hear, from time to time, how aberrant some of those beliefs are.

Thank you all for your ministry. I am saddened by the angry letters in the *Proclamation!* magazine. There is so much denial which is hidden behind anger in order to avoid hearing the truth. I pray that more Adventists will hear the true gospel before it’s too late!

Thank you again.
VIA EMAIL

Editor’s note: Colleen Tinker’s interview with Todd Friel of Wretched Radio can be heard at this web address:
www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org.

I am saddened by the angry letters in the *Proclamation!* magazine. There is so much denial which is hidden behind anger in order to avoid hearing the truth.

Bible alone when the foundational suppositions are extra-biblical.

Moreover, I was clearly taught, as I grew up Adventist and attended Adventist schools, that Jesus was always fully God and that He became fully man to be the sacrifice for our sins. Nevertheless, the way I understood those facts was not the way the Bible explains them. I never understood Jesus as being of the same substance as the Father. I was taught that as a man He had no advantage over us. I was taught He could have sinned and did not know whether or not He would succeed and rise from the dead. I was taught He came to show us

is one of the reasons most Christians do not understand that Adventists have a different Jesus and thus a different gospel. Adventists are taught to say things about Jesus that Christians would also say, but in the background, the Adventist understands those things to mean something different than the Christian understands.

To be honest I must stand on Scripture alone. I cannot ignore the fact that Ellen White misrepresented the Lord Jesus, the nature of His mission and His person, and built a false paradigm through which to interpret the Bible.

If Ellen White and the Bible disagree on even one point, I have to believe Scripture and disbelieve her. The misrepresentation that I see is that Adventism insists it bases all its doctrines on the Bible—and then spends energy defending Ellen White. If she is not essential for Adventist belief and practice, there would be no need to defend her.

God has revealed Himself and His will to us in His word. We need no other source of truth.

Picture evokes tears

We continue to thank God for your ministry. Each issue of *Proclamation!* is read, re-read, and filed to be read again....

“Worship Jesus Because He Is” by Richard Peifer caught my attention—not so much the article, even, but the silhouette of the young woman lost in prayer [illustrating the article]. I have looked at

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

SEVENTH ANNUAL FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE

YES, I WANT TO REGISTER for the Former Adventist Fellowship Conference at Trinity Church in Redlands, California, February 17-19, 2012. Does not include transportation or lodging.

• Number adults _____ X \$85 (each person) = \$ _____

• Number teens _____ X \$65 (each person) = \$ _____
(junior-high, high school ages)

Total enclosed = \$ _____

• Vegetarian? YES (number) _____ NO (number) _____

NAME #1 _____

NAME #2 _____

NAME #3 _____

NAME #4 _____

NAME #5 _____

NAME #6 _____

Please return with check or money order in included envelope (space limited).

WORLDVIEW ALIGNMENT NEEDED!

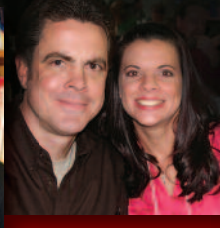
February 17-19, 2012



**NEW!
SPECIAL
FEATURES
FOR TEENS!**



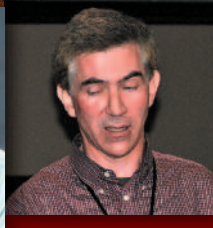
PHIL BUBAR



CAREL AND NICOLE STEVENSON



GARY INRIG



JON RITTENHOUSE



COLLEEN TINKER



DALE RATZLAFF



SHARON STRUM

NEVER-BEEN ADVENTIST TEACHING EMPHASIZED

The Seventh-day Adventist organization has declared 2011 "The Year of the Great Controversy" and has designated 2012 as the year its members are to send copies of Ellen White's *The Great Controversy* to non-Adventists. Those who are transitioning out of Adventism have had their worldview shaped by the great controversy motif, not only doctrinally but in the way they understand reality. The Adventist organization's emphasis on spreading this paradigm underscores the need for us intentionally to learn what is biblical and what is not. For this reason our 2012 FAF conference will especially feature never-been-Adventist teachers who will address central doctrinal issues from a biblical perspective, allowing us to ask questions and equipping us both to understand Scripture and to explain to Christians how the Adventist worldview differs from evangelical Christianity.

NEW! SPECIAL FEATURES FOR STUDENTS

Carel and Nicole Stevenson will lead breakout sessions, question and answer sessions, and activities for junior high and high school students. A discounted registration fee is offered—so bring your students along!

SCHEDULE (New this year...features for teens!)

• Friday, February 17, 9:00am – Sunday, February 19, 2012, 4:00pm

FEATURES

- Breakout sessions and activities for junior high / high school students
- Food and fellowship time, and sales area, including free stuff
- Communion, prayer, and testimonies Saturday evening
- Sunday lunch with the afternoon open for fellowship

TO REGISTER (SPACE LIMITED)

- \$85 per person (junior high / high school students: \$65 per person), must register before February 1, 2012. Sign up online or use coupon above.
- Fee includes meetings, handouts, lunch on Friday, three meals on Saturday, lunch on Sunday, and snacks. Scholarships are available!
- You must make your own lodging/transportation arrangements. A limited number of local church member's homes are available.

TO SIGN-UP ONLINE Go to FormerAdventist.com and follow the links.

FOR MORE INFORMATION Phone (877)-349-6984

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

The life **A F T E R** with Chris Lee

The cool, crisp air was invigorating and the golden sunshine glorious as I began my Saturday afternoon run. Rounding the corner onto Garret Lane I was dazzled by a corridor of blazing red formed by the fall-festooned oaks lining the street. Brilliant light shot through boughs as the scarlet leaves moved in the gentle breeze, giving the impression of dancing flame.

After church the next day I drove down the same street so my wife could share the majestic beauty. Disappointingly, the reds had faded a hue overnight, and leaves had begun to drop into the street. Just a few days later winter came in the form of large wet snow flakes clinging to the few remaining leaves.

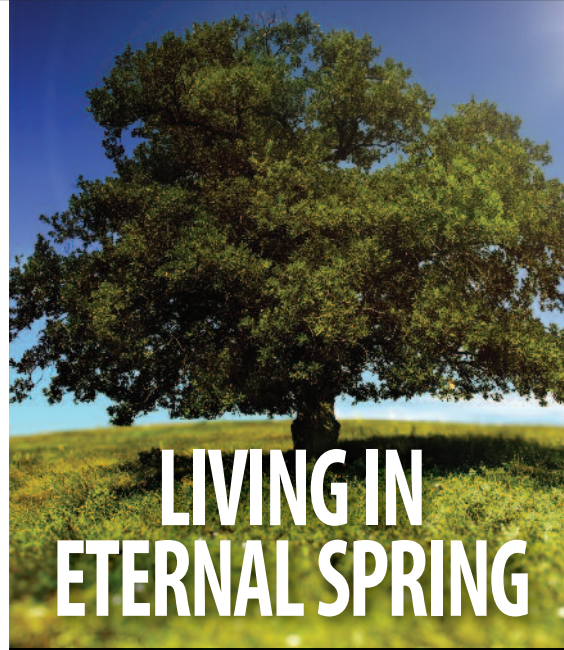
Lately, I've been feeling a bit like those oaks. At 42, few would call me "old", but in a culture obsessed with the blazing flash of celebrity and beauty, my colors are beginning to fade. I see it every time I look in the mirror and feel it during and after those jogs. If God grants me an average life span, this body is more than halfway through. Spring and summer have gone; I'm entering fall, and winter is coming.

For the believer, however, this inexorable march through life isn't the whole story. Every year, in the midst of winter, we celebrate a birth, the birth of the One who gave us new life. To be born again is not a metaphor, but a spiritual reality. Through Jesus, we have gone from being spiritually dead and separated from God, to having a live spirit that is now in union and communion with God's Spirit. We have eternal life now as a present possession. Even though this body will die, we will live on and never die. But it's so much more than that.

This life we have in Jesus is not



Chris Lee lives in Lincoln, Nebraska with his wife, Carmen, and daughters, Ashlyn and Alyssa. They attend the Lincoln Berean Church. Chris is a self-described "theology junkie" whose mission is to proclaim the unfathomable grace of Christ in a clear, understandable, and Biblical way. He leads a Life Group Bible study for former Adventists at Lincoln Berean. You may contact Chris by email at ambulator@gmail.com.



I lived the first half of my life for a lie. I want to live the last half for something that matters.

just quantitative, but qualitative. Through Jesus Christ we are equipped in every good thing to do His will because God is working in us for His own glory (Heb. 12:21). What's more, God has prepared good works for us in advance in order to show His workmanship (Eph. 2:10). That's life with purpose!

The world whiles away the boredom and emptiness by killing time with trivial entertainments, possessions, and other things that can't last. Most people drift through life with no real sense of purpose as, over and over again, spring turns to summer, summer to fall, fall to winter, and all of it fades away to nothing.

Honestly, I'm not so different some of the time, but I don't want to live like that. I lived the first half of my life for a lie. I want to live the last half for something that matters. I want to invest my time, talent,

and treasure in that which lasts for all eternity. However much time I have left here, be it a little or a lot, I want to finish well. I want to be on task and about the work that God has prepared for me to do.

This Christmas let us remember that Jesus came to this world not just to make us free, but to give us a new birth, and with it, abundant life. It's not enough simply to be free of a false belief system. God has a purpose for your life. He wants to show you off as a masterpiece of His grace. No matter your season of life, if you've trusted Jesus, you are in eternal spiritual spring. What better season to start living for that which has eternal value?

It's time to start living the life after. †

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