

TED WILSON REAFFIRMS HISTORIC ADVENTIST MESSAGE ONCE AGAIN

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# Proclamation!

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS  
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS  
SABBATARIANS  
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

WINTER 2014  
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## FROM ELLEN WHITE TO THE **TRUE LIGHT**

ROLAANT MCKENZIE



COLLEEN TINKER

## IMMANUEL: FAITHFUL TO HIMSELF

In the mid-90s, as the internet was beginning to burgeon, Richard joined an early email list called SDA Net. He didn't write much, but he became interested in the discussions about Adventist doctrine, Ellen White, and the Adventist church. He followed the sometimes heated exchanges between those who had serious questions about accepted Adventist beliefs and those who defended them.

As the weeks went by, Richard began to notice that one writer in particular had well-reasoned, supported, and articulated observations and responses. He began to tell me, "Rolaant McKenzie has such great points. His arguments make the most sense."

**"ROLAANT MCKENZIE HAS SUCH GREAT POINTS. HIS ARGUMENTS MAKE THE MOST SENSE."**

At first I was interested but not impacted; then I began to notice that more and more, Richard was sustaining his own serious questions about Ellen White in particular and Adventist doctrines in general. Gradually he began printing out posts by Rolaant and others as well as articles he was finding on the still-emergent internet, and asking me to read them.

I did, and I began to share his incredulity and conviction.

Months passed, and as virtual conversations so often do, the exchanges on SDA Net began to polarize. As the Adventist apologists grew more strident, some of the more thoughtful participants began to disappear—including Rolaant McKenzie. By then Richard was doing his own research online, forming clear conclusions, and he eventually stopped subscribing to the email list as well.

Richard thought about Rolaant every now and then over the years. He had no idea who he was, but judging from his wealth of knowledge and personal research, his clear explanations and articulate writing, he imagined Rolaant was a mature scholar with years of experience either in academia or perhaps at the general conference level.

In 2012 we finally met Rolaant and his wife Milie at the first Michigan FAF Conference. Richard was delighted finally to meet the man who had been so helpful in his early months of discovery as he tried to find answers about Ellen White and Adventism. No, Rolaant is not a retired professor or clergyman, either! We are pleased to share his faith story in this issue of *Proclamation!* In fact, it is our featured article because of the detail he gives as he

unfolds his own research of Ellen White and his discovery of the new covenant—the two things that worked together to release Rolaant from his cognitive dissonance into freedom in Jesus and His finished work.

Also in this last issue of 2014 we look at the first witnesses of God's fulfillment of His promises to send the Messiah to earth. The unexpected testimony of two unknown women carrying miraculous pregnancies and the response of an unborn baby are three of the eternal confirmations of the identity of the Lord Jesus. In the kingdom of His Son which the Father was inaugurating, even women and the unborn are treasured by God. In fact, He chose a gentile author, Luke, (a mere "gentile dog" to the first century Jews) to be the only gospel writer to record the praise, worship, and confirmation of God's faithfulness that marked the moment Mary met Elizabeth in her home.

Dale Ratzlaff examines Ted Wilson's sermon delivered at the annual Fall Council held at general conference headquarters in Silver Spring this past October. Dale points out the clear affirmation of historic Adventism and the Ellen White focus of Wilson's content.

We also take a backward glance at the Michigan FAF Conference held in September, and we hear from our regular columnists Rick Barker, Chris Lee, and Carolyn Macomber. In addition, we introduce our new venue for our ninth annual Redlands FAF Conference to be held February 13-15, 2015. This year we will meet at The Anchor Bible Church, just yards from Loma Linda city limits, and our featured Friday night speaker will be well-known and much-published Christian apologist Rob Bowman. Gary Inrig and Dale Ratzlaff again will be our keynote presenters.

We pray that because of Jesus' finished work of dying for our sin, rising from death, and ascending to the right hand of the Father, His joy will be made full in us. He is Immanuel—God with us! †

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

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# DID JESUS HAVE A HOLY, SINLESS NATURE?

**A**s we approach another Christmas season our thoughts turn to the baby Jesus. He was to be the Savior of the world. What kind of nature did that require? Mainstream Christianity holds that Jesus was fully God and fully man. We believe that the human nature of Jesus was completely sinless, patterned after Adam's nature *before the fall*. This belief causes us to look to the righteousness of Christ outside of ourselves, that perfect righteousness that is credited to our account on the basis of faith.<sup>1</sup> It also means that we, with our fallen natures, filled with the Holy Spirit, will advance in personal righteousness—but our righteousness will never match the holy righteousness of Christ. We can never say we are sinless or that we reflect the image of Jesus fully before we are transformed at the second coming of Christ. However, all the while we can “be ready” for the coming of Jesus.

In our ministry to transitioning Adventists, we must point out that the whole structure of historic Adventism is built on the acceptance of the sinful nature of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Historic Adventism believes that the human nature of Christ was patterned after Adam's human nature *after the entrance of sin*. Historic Adventists believe Jesus lived the perfect life even though he had a fallen nature identical to all of us. He did this by relying on God's power and strict self-discipline. Therefore, Adventists would argue that by his death Jesus forgave our past sins, and now we are to follow His example in being an overcomer. The goal for the last generation of Adventists is to “reflect the image of Jesus fully”, a term frequently used by Ellen G. White. It is this last generation that will settle Satan's charges that God's law cannot be kept.

Dr. Herbert Douglass, Adventist college administrator, editor, and author, understood the importance of Adventists holding to the belief that Christ had a fallen nature. (All the following quotations come from the same source.)<sup>3</sup>

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ACCEPTING THE **IDEA**  
**THAT CHRIST HAD A FALLEN NATURE ARE**  
**HUGE. JESUS HIMSELF WOULD NEED A SAVIOR.**

The question of the nature of Christ is not a debate over certain theological fine points....Either the cleansing of the sanctuary that began in 1844 is to purify and perfect a people to stand without sin or our denomination is the result of the inability of a group of dis-oriented fanatics to admit that their prophetic understandings of Daniel were wrong. The real issue is upon the point of overcoming sin. If Jesus could not enter the conflict and overcome in our flesh, then we cannot.

We would agree with Douglass that historic Adventism stands on the fallen human nature of Christ. As he expressed his understanding in articles in *Ministry*, he, like all who support historic Adventism, turned to the writings of Ellen White for support.

Why Jesus became man...can be understood only from the standpoint of the great controversy—a perspective largely missing in “orthodox” Protestantism as well as in Catholicism....There were several issues, but none more important than Satan's charge that sons and daughters of Adam could not keep God's laws, that such laws were unrealistic and not in the best interest of created beings. Such primary issues determined the kind of humanity our Lord would assume in order to satisfy justice and silence Satan (*Ministry*, Aug., 1985, p. 10-11).

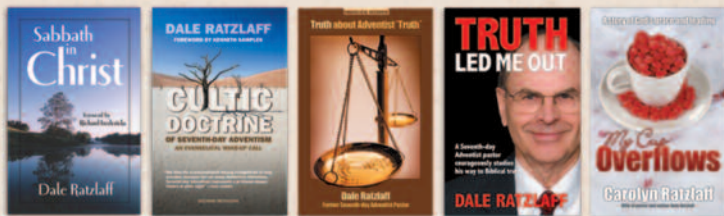
“He knows how strong are the inclinations of the natural heart” (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 177) Just how does He know this? “He knows by experience...where lies the strength of our temptations.” (*Ministry of*

*Healing*, p. 71) Without question, Jesus has experienced the strength of the inclinations of the natural heart.

In Gethsemane “His depression and discouragement left Him.” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 694) Was not Jesus drawn to discouragement by His own thoughts and natural inclinations?

“He had the same nature as the sinner.” (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10, p. 176) The question must be addressed—Was Adam in Eden a sinner? Is a nature partly like Adam and partly like us the same nature as sinners? The reality is that all sinners have fallen natures and are drawn strongly by them.

The implications for accepting the idea that Christ had a fallen nature are huge. Jesus Himself would need a Savior. The only way for us to be saved would be to reach the place where we “reflect the image of Jesus fully.” The historic Adventist “gospel” is not the Christian gospel of God's abundant grace. †



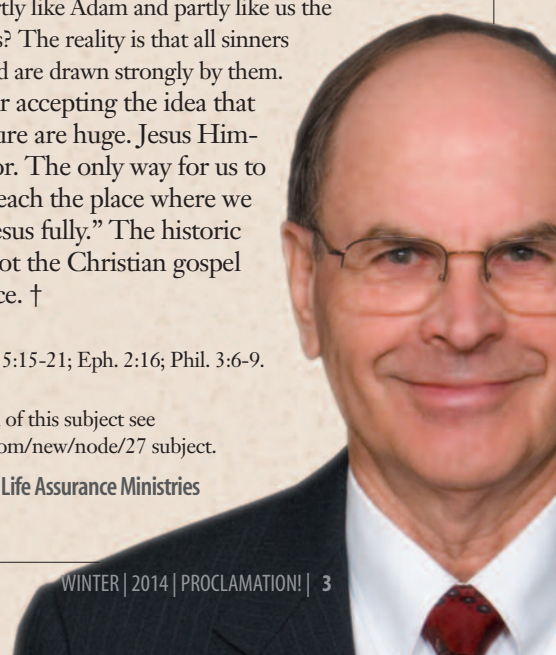
Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff have authored five books concerning Adventism: *Sabbath in Christ*—a volume that explains new covenant Sabbath rest, *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism*—explores the unique doctrine of a pre-advent judgment that decides eternal destinies, *Truth About Adventist Truth*—a 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 [Ratzlaff.com](http://Ratzlaff.com) or by phoning (928) 554-1001.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:15-21; Eph. 2:16; Phil. 3:6-9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Jn. 1:8; Rom. 3:23.

<sup>3</sup> For an extended discussion of this subject see <http://www.dennispriebe.com/new/node/27> subject.

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





# FROM ELLEN WHITE

AGAIN JESUS SPOKE  
TO THEM, SAYING,  
“I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”

ROLA ANT MCKENZIE

I was born and raised in a Seventh-day Adventist home. My father was an educator who served as principal of an Adventist academy in California and as president of Adventist colleges and universities in several countries in Africa. My mother served as a nurse for many years at an Adventist hospital in Los Angeles. Because my grandmother on my father's side had converted, I could claim that I was a third generation Adventist.

I was baptized into the Adventist Church when I was 11. I remember standing before the congregation with another man in baptismal robes expressing agreement with a list of vows presented by the pastor. Among them were the following:

6. Do you accept the Ten Commandments as still binding upon Christians, and is it your purpose, by the power of the indwelling Christ, to keep this law, including the fourth commandment, which requires the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord?

8. Do you accept the Biblical teaching of spiritual gifts, and do you believe that the gift of prophecy in the remnant church is one of the identifying marks of that church?

9. Do you believe in God's Remnant Church, and is it your purpose to support the church by your tithes and offerings, your personal effort, and influence?

11. Knowing and understanding the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is it your purpose, by the grace of God, to order your life in harmony with these principles?

13. Do you believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy, Rev. 12:17,

and that people of every nation, race, and language are invited and accepted into its fellowship? Do you desire to be a member of this local congregation of the world church?

At the time I did not perceive anything wrong with this list of vows, including the five in particular quoted above. I knew nothing but Adventism and was really unaware of anything else with which to compare it. I was taught that what we had—the Sabbath, our distinctive teaching on the Sanctuary, Ellen White's “inspired” writings, and so forth—was “the truth”. It certainly did not occur to me for some years that I should test those teachings by the Bible alone without help from the “little red books” by Ellen White.

## UNEASE

I attended Adventist schools exclusively from kindergarten through college. I attended Loma Linda University (La Sierra Campus) in Riverside, California, where I graduated with a theology degree. After that, I served a term in South Korea as an English teacher at one of the many Adventist English language schools in that country.

I was quite immersed in the beliefs and culture of Seventh-day Adventism. In fact, it was my whole life, and in some ways it was easy to be comfortable in there, and all my immediate family and friends were a part of it.

## UNEASINESS GROWS

Yet concurrently, there was an underlying uneasiness deep within that was with me much of my life. As an Ad-



# TO THE TRUE LIGHT

WHOEVER FOLLOWS ME WILL  
NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT  
WILL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE.”

JOHN 8:12

ventist I was never sure I would make it to heaven. In fact, I never felt good or worthy enough to be allowed into God’s kingdom. I knew myself well enough to know that there was more than ample sin in my life to sink me. If, as I had been taught, I forgot to confess a sin I had committed, I was doomed. Furthermore, if I were to be alive during the time of trouble described in Ellen White’s book *The Great Controversy*, I had no hope that I would be able to stand sinless before a holy God without the benefit of Jesus being my Mediator (p. 425). I did not understand at the time that the Bible taught something completely different and better. Hebrews 7:23-25 says:

The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

If someone were to ask me if I believed I was going to heaven, I would have said that I hoped I would make it, but I really had my doubts. I used to pray to God asking Him to burn me quickly if I didn’t make it! The reason I thought this way is that Seventh-day Adventism teaches that the unsaved are eventually annihilated in the lake of fire and will cease to exist, rather than believing the Biblical teaching that the lost suffer eternal punishment (Mt. 25:41-46; Mk. 9:43-48; Rev. 14:9-11). I lived under the assumption that I would likely be lost because I would never reach a state where I would be able to keep all the

commandments of God or the rules of Ellen White perfectly. I knew my frailties all too well.

## DISCOVERIES IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

While I was attending Loma Linda University (LLU) pursuing a theology degree, I worked at the university library in the Special Collections department, or the “Ellen White Room”. It was the mid-1980s, and the controversies surrounding Desmond Ford and Walter Rea were creating waves throughout Adventism.

Ford, while expressing his admiration of Ellen White and her ministry, nevertheless disagreed with the investigative judgment doctrine that she endorsed. He wrote a nearly one thousand page treatise presenting his Biblical presentation of Jesus’ atonement and judgment versus the investigative judgment. Also during that time, Rea, an Adventist pastor for several decades and a devotee of Ellen White, discovered in his research that she copied (or plagiarized) much of her writing from other authors, some of whom were her contemporaries while others pre-dated her. All the while, she claimed her words were inspired by God, and she denied copying from others. Both men in time were relieved of their employment and of their ministerial credentials in the Adventist organization.

These events had a significant impact on me in that they encouraged me to do my own research into these matters. In retrospect, it was God’s providence that these historic upheavals happened while I was working in the “Ellen White Room”, particularly in the room at the LLU library on the



La Sierra campus. To my knowledge, no other “Ellen White Rooms” at Adventist colleges or universities contained the breadth of material found at LLU. There I had access to the latest editions of Ellen White’s writings and to earlier editions of those same writings, to apologetics by those who defended her prophetic role as well as to critiques by those who did not believe in it, and to the writings of those from whom she copied. This unique situation provided an excellent opportunity for me to discover the truth.

## STUNNED

I was stunned at what I discovered. For example, I found in an earlier edition of *Spiritual Gifts* dated 1864 that Ellen White stated the Tower of Babel was built before the flood rather than after it, as the Bible says:

The Lord first established the system of sacrificial offerings with Adam after his fall, which he taught to his descendants. This system was corrupted before the flood by those who separated themselves from the faithful followers of God, and engaged in the building of the Tower of Babel (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 301, 1864 edition).

This mistake was later expunged from the 1870 edition of *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 266.

I also found an example of a false prophecy in *Early Writings*, p.75-76:

Then I was pointed to some who are in the great error of believing that it is their duty to go to Old Jerusalem, and think they have a work to do there before the Lord comes. Such a view is calculated to take the mind and interest from the present work of the Lord, under the message of the third angel; for those who think that they are yet to go to Jerusalem will have their minds there, and their means will be withheld from the cause of present truth to get themselves and others there. I saw that such a mission would accomplish no real good, that it would take a long while to make a very few of the Jews believe even in the first advent of Christ, much more to believe in His second advent. I saw that Satan had greatly deceived some in this thing and that souls all around them in this land could be helped by them and led to keep the commandments of God, but they were leaving them to perish. I also saw that Old Jerusalem never would be built up; and that Satan was doing his utmost to lead the minds of the children of the Lord into these things now, in the gathering time, to keep them from throwing their whole interest into the present work of the Lord, and to cause them to neglect the necessary preparation for the day of the Lord.

Another example of a false prophecy occurred just over 158 years ago. Mrs. White declared, during an 1856 meeting in Battle Creek, Michigan—purportedly based on a vision from an angel from God—that some of those present at the meeting would die, some of them would live to experience the seven last plagues, while still others would be alive at Jesus’ return:

“I was shown the company present at the Conference. Said the angel: “Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 131-132).

One can travel to Jerusalem today and see a large, very built-up city of nearly 1 million people. Furthermore, there are no Adven-

tists today that can be found who were at the 1856 conference meeting. These were only a few of a number of examples I found that certainly qualify as false prophecies subject to the condemnation of Deuteronomy 18:20-22.

## DOCTRINAL DISCREPANCIES

The investigative judgment is a key distinctive doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism largely because it was endorsed by Ellen White’s claimed revelation. According to this doctrine, beginning on October 22, 1844 (not at His ascension), Christ entered the Holy of Holies in heaven (*The Great Controversy*, p. 362-373). It maintains that Christ transferred the record of believer’s sins to the heavenly sanctuary where sins that have been specifically confessed will be cleansed at the conclusion of the investigative judgment, Adventism’s day of atonement. On that day, unconfessed sins are not cleansed and remain to condemn the believer.

Ellen White said:

The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin. It would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 357).

For the Adventist who holds to this “central pillar” of Seventh-day Adventism, sins are not cancelled or forgiven yet; moreover, those sins forgotten and remaining unconfessed stand against the believer. It is little wonder so many Adventists have no genuine assurance of salvation until this supposed investigative judgment is finished. This doctrine certainly played a key role in my own lack of salvation assurance.

Apart from a gracious miracle of God, the Adventist Church cannot abandon this doctrine on Biblical grounds because it would mean destroying Ellen White’s prophetic status. Moreover, it would mean that her writings could no longer be used as an inspired, infallible interpreter of Scripture. The theological foundation of Seventh-day Adventism and its exclusive claims would collapse.

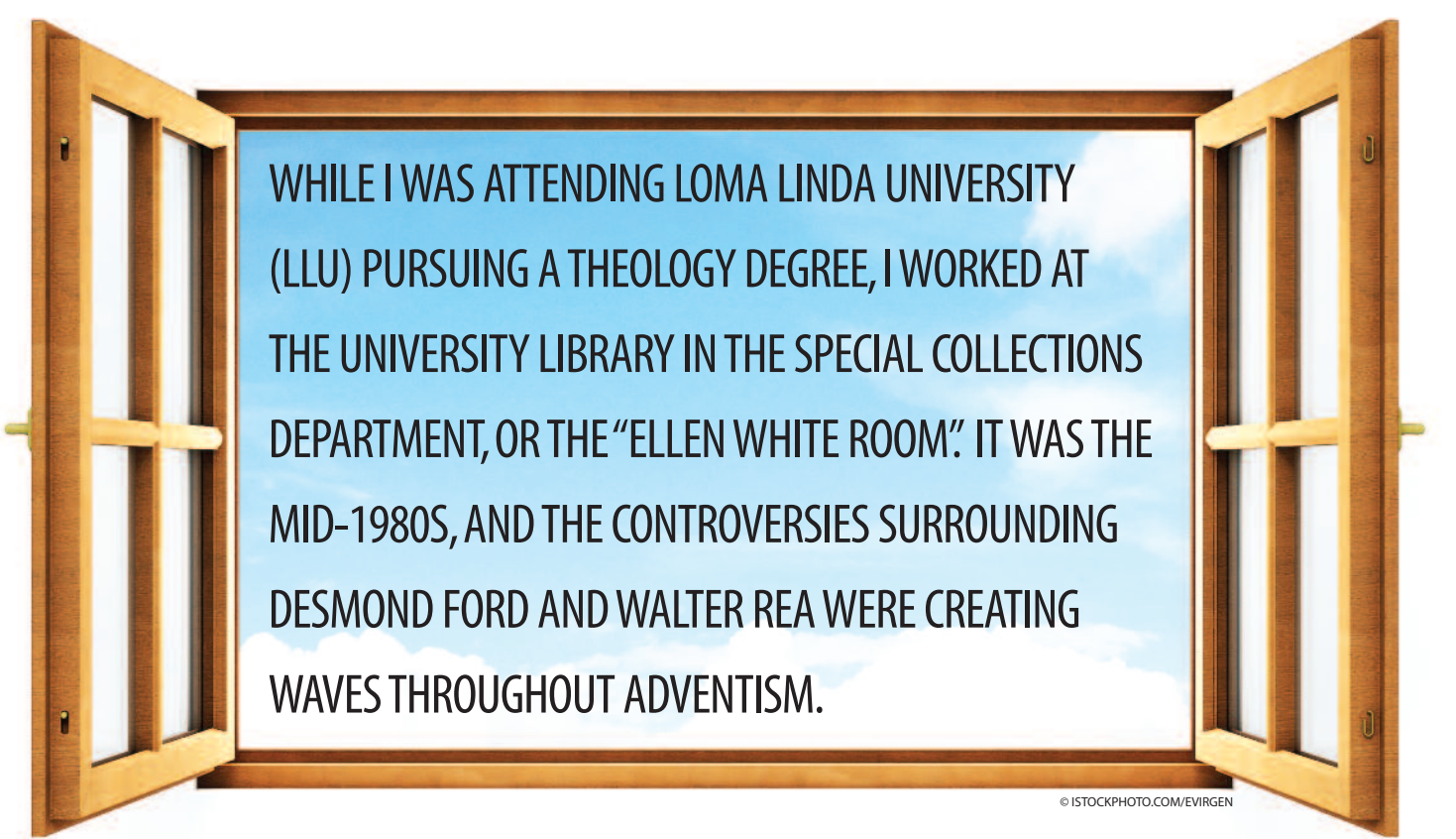
Thank God, His word provides a different and greater testimony:

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11-12).

Jesus, through His own blood, entered in (past tense) once for all (not in 1844) into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for those who trust in Him. Other passages of Scripture that caused me to reject the investigative judgment include:

Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit (Jn. 19:30).

Christ’s atonement was final and complete. The word translated “finished” in the text is the Greek word *tetelestai*—a word that means “paid in full.” On the cross Christ paid the full penalty for our sins. It was not a partial payment needing 1844 to come along to continue it.



WHILE I WAS ATTENDING LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY (LLU) PURSUING A THEOLOGY DEGREE, I WORKED AT THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN THE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT, OR THE “ELLEN WHITE ROOM.” IT WAS THE MID-1980S, AND THE CONTROVERSIES SURROUNDING DESMOND FORD AND WALTER REA WERE CREATING WAVES THROUGHOUT ADVENTISM.

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He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 3:18).

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

Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness” (2 Tim. 2:19).

I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, (Jn.10:14).

If the Lord already knew His own when these passages were written in the first century A.D., why was there a need to investigate believers starting in 1844? To vindicate God in the eyes of His creation? Not likely, since God’s thoughts are higher than His creation. He does as He pleases and is not answerable to His creation (Is. 55:8; Ps. 115:3; Job 38-42).

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn. 1:9).

And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3).

The cleansing of sins was done at the cross, and Jesus ascended to the holiest place in the universe—the right hand of His Father in heaven. He sat down, indicating the atonement was done, not something to be continued centuries later when 1844 arrived.

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach (Col. 1:21-22).

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross (Col. 2:13-14).

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation (Rom. 5:8-11).

Hebrews 4:13, moreover, exposes the Adventist limitation on Christ’s omniscience—a limitation which allows Adventists to be untroubled by the idea that God has to investigate His people:

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Since Jesus knows all cases already, why must He investigate?

## SIN-BEARER

A related Adventist doctrine is that Satan, not Jesus, is the scapegoat for sinners who will be saved. Ellen White says in *The Great Controversy*, p. 422:

When Christ, by virtue of His own blood, removes the sins of His people from the heavenly sanctuary at the close of His ministration, He will place them upon Satan, who, in the execution of the judgment, must bear the final penalty.

Satan, according to Adventists, becomes the scapegoat of Leviticus 16. This lack of clear distinction between the forgiveness of sins

at salvation and the blotting out of sins at some time in the future makes it impossible for anyone to know, even at death, whether he is saved or not—in spite of God’s assurance in Isaiah 44:22, to say nothing of His new covenant statements of security throughout the New Testament. This convoluted doctrine destroys true assurance of salvation for Adventists who hold to this teaching of Satan-as-scapegoat and to the investigative judgment. Having the sins of the saved laid on Satan assigns to Satan an indispensable role in the blotting out of sins. This teaching nullifies the all-sufficiency of the finished work of Christ.

## IMPLICATIONS

As my study progressed, I found numerous examples where Ellen White made false predictions, contradicted the Bible, added to the Scriptures, and contradicted herself. I was compelled to come to the conclusion that Ellen White was a false prophetess whose writings were not truly a “continuing and authoritative source of truth.”

This realization had some significant ramifications for me. I was pursuing a theological degree with the prospect of entering ministry work in the Adventist Church. I could have continued on in that work and simply ignored what I discovered, promoting Adventist teachings I knew were not Biblical. But I could not live such a dishonest life. I could have tried to work within the system, but eventually I knew that I would be compelled to leave and lose my livelihood.

What I decided to do was to complete my degree program and go into another field of work; I chose to pursue a career in information science. My “compromise” was never to use Ellen White’s writings as a support for anything, but to use just the Bible. I did not yet understand the Biblical gospel, so I remained an Adventist.

After serving the Adventist Church as an English teacher in South Korea for a year, I returned home to attend the University of Michigan to pursue a graduate degree in information science. At that time the Internet was just becoming a popular tool for communication and sharing information with people virtually anywhere in the world. I joined a few Adventist online discussion forums since theological discussion, and most importantly Biblical truth, was still of great interest to me.

I asked a lot of questions and participated in many discussions. It was beneficial to me also to be in discussion with non-Adventists in the online forums. Their understanding of Scripture encouraged me to be a Berean and to search the Bible for myself apart from the filter of Ellen White’s writings. Although I still did not yet understand the Biblical gospel, I nevertheless sought to reconcile what I read online with what Scripture taught. To my growing dismay, I was finding that, more and more, I could not reconcile Adventist teachings such as the Sabbath being the seal of God, the investigative judgment, or the incomplete atonement with what I was reading in Scripture.

Around this time I became familiar with someone in one of the Adventist forums in which I participated. Her name was Janet, and she was as ardent an apologist for Ellen White and Adventism as I had ever seen or heard. Often I would see her postings online in both Adventist and Christian forums zealously promoting Adven-

tist teachings. I considered her like a Saul of Tarsus for Adventism (without the persecution). After some time had gone by, however, I noticed her online messages were beginning to change. They were becoming more questioning of certain “pillar” Adventist doctrines such as obligatory Sabbath day observance for salvation at the end times and the investigative judgment. I was taken aback. I certainly had some questions of my own, but I did not expect someone like Janet to question those doctrines. I decided, therefore, to contact her privately online to ask what had happened to cause her to question what she had been so certain in promoting before. The conversation that began there would eventually have a profound effect on my life and would lead me, eventually, to understand and believe the Biblical gospel unto salvation.

Janet shared with me her attempts to find support from the Bible alone for doctrines including the investigative judgment and obligatory Sabbath day observance. To her surprise she could not. As she dug deeper, she also discovered that Ellen White could not pass the Biblical tests for a true prophet. At the time I was corresponding with Janet, I already realized the problems with the investigative judgment doctrine and Ellen White’s prophetic role, but obligatory Sabbath day observance was still a stumbling block to me. It was preventing me from seeing and understanding the gospel.

## DISCOVERING COVENANTS

Pastor Mark Martin, a former Adventist pastor had (and still has) a ministry to current and former Adventists. He had produced a study called *The Gospel and the Covenants*. Janet sent me a copy of this study, and I examined it closely with my Bible. Pastor Martin showed from the Scriptures that from Adam until the present day, God’s covenants with His people followed a specific pattern. Particularly interesting to me was learning how the Mosaic covenant was different from the other covenants God made.

I had not learned how specific Scripture is about when, why, or for whom God made this covenant, nor did I understand what a covenant sign was.

What is the old covenant according to Scripture?

So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments (Ex. 34:28).

So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone (Deut. 4:13).

Also read Deuteronomy 5:1-22; 9:9-12, 15; 10:4; and 1 Kings 8:9, 21.

What was the sign of the old covenant? Exodus 31:12-13 says,

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “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.’”

Moreover, the Ten Commandment law was not given before Sinai. Deuteronomy 5:2-3 says,

The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, with all those of us alive here today.



# OLD COVENANT

# NEW COVENANT

You shall have no other gods before Me (Ex. 20:3).

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them (Acts 14:14-15).

You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth (Ex. 20:4).

Little children, guard yourselves from idols (1 Jn. 5:21).

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain (Ex. 20:7).

But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment (Jas. 5:12).

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy (Ex. 20:8).

No Corresponding Commandment

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you (Ex. 20:12).

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right (Eph. 6:1).

You shall not murder (Ex. 20:13).

You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell (Mt. 5:21-22).

You shall not commit adultery (Ex. 20:14).

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

You shall not steal (Ex. 20:15).

He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need (Eph. 4:28).

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Ex. 20:16).

Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices (Col. 3:9).

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (Ex. 20:17)

But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (Eph. 5:3-5)

## ADVENTISM'S BELIEFS CHANGING

**A**t the annual Fall Council held at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists headquarters in October, 2014, the administrative committee recommended several changes to the wording of the organization's 28 Fundamental Beliefs. These changes still need to be ratified by a vote at the 2015 General Conference Quinquennial session to be held this next summer but likely reflect what will be adopted into the new official statement of beliefs.

Arguably one of the most significant changes to those looking at Adventism from the outside is that made to fundamental belief #18, "The Gift of Prophecy", which explains, in words adapted for the public, Adventism's belief about Ellen White's authority. In the 2005 edition of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, statement #18 reads as follows:

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

The amended version removes the words "the Lord's messenger" and the phrase "a continuing and authoritative source of truth." Instead, it says, "Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church."

"Prophetic authority" is a phrase common within the new apostolic movement and within charismatic circles. For example, self-proclaimed apostle Scott Wallis has described "prophetic authority" this way:

"John the Baptist was a man sent by God. God anointed John. People went into the middle of the desert to hear John. John was established as a prophet, and he was recognized as a prophet. All Israel went to hear John the prophet. This is prophetic authority".\*

Adventism has long described Ellen White as God's voice crying in the wilderness preparing God's people for Jesus' second coming as John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus' first coming.

The proposed change in wording is simply an attempt to obscure the continuing Adventist belief that Ellen

White's writings are current sources of truth and biblical interpretation provided by God for His "remnant church". †

\*(<http://www.prophetcentral.com/2011/09/prophetic-authority.html>)

Then he gives the Ten Commandments in verses 6-22. Thus the old covenant including the Ten Commandments had a definite beginning—and it was not at creation. Moreover, Paul clarifies further that the old covenant had a specific ending:

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made (Gal. 3:19).

This passage clearly states the law was added until the seed should come. Another passage in the same chapter gives even more understanding as it describes the function of the law of the old covenant:

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor (Gal. 3:23-25).

Even more, a new covenant has come to replace the old:

And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (Lk. 22:20, see also Heb. 9:15-16).

You may ask, what happened to the Old Covenant?

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear (Heb. 8:13).

## SABBATH CHALLENGE

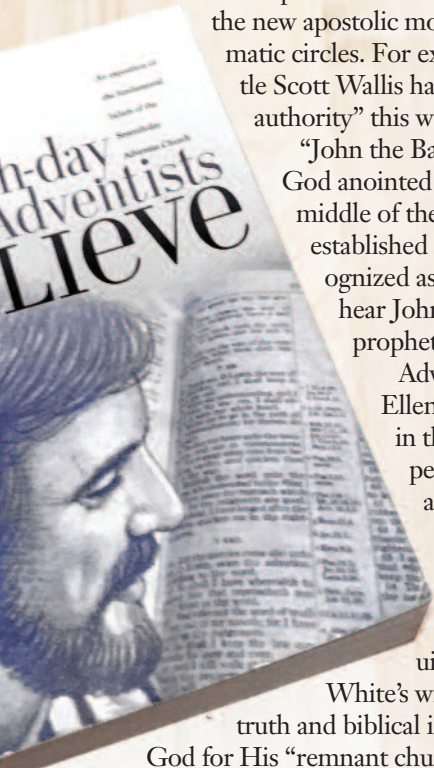
It never ceases to amaze me how many of us believe something because it is a part of a tradition with which we grew up or that we adopted, only to find out later in life that the belief was not true. For example, I was challenged to find a passage in the Bible that required gentile Christians to observe the Sabbath day. I thought that such a passage would be easy to find, but to my surprise, I found none. I did, however, find a couple of passages I had not really noticed before:

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).

One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God (Rom. 14:5-6).

These passages helped me to understand for the first time that Sabbath-day observance was not required for Christians, and the Lord used this insight to help me to understand the Biblical gospel.

I finally understood that the law of Moses was a covenant made with the people of Israel who came out of slavery in Egypt. The initiating sign for this covenant was circumcision, and the ongoing sign was weekly Sabbath observance. This covenant was not made with the gentiles. Those who come to faith in Christ as the passage above teaches are no longer under old covenant law.





Under the new covenant, the initiating sign is water baptism while the ongoing sign is the Lord's Supper. The obligatory observance of the Sabbath day or any other day is not a part of this covenant. That cessation of obligatory day-keeping is the reason the gentile believers coming into the church were under no obligation to observe the Sabbath, or any other of the other days set apart by the Lord in Leviticus 23. The observance of days or their non-observance is left up to the individual believer (Rom. 14:1-5; Col. 2:16-17).

But, I wondered, if the Ten Commandments were a covenant no longer in effect for those believers entering the new covenant, then what about lying, stealing, adultery or the other commandments? I discovered in the New Testament that all of these commands were repeated in the instructions for new covenant living. The only things not repeated as a command were circumcision and Sabbath-day observance (See table).

From my study I learned that the Sabbath was a sign of an old covenant no longer in effect. It was a shadow of things to come. It was a symbol pointing to Christ and to the rest He provides to lost humanity, the rest of perfect union with God that was lost in Eden. I realized that it is not the day that is important anymore, but my relationship with Christ. Anyone who accepts Christ enters into His true Sabbath rest because he is reconciled to God.

Under the new covenant brought into effect by Christ's blood (Lk. 22:20), there is no longer a holy or sacred day of observance as in the old covenant. After all, if the old covenant was destined to pass away (2 Cor. 3:11; Gal. 4:30; Heb. 8:13), so too were the old covenant signs (Gal. 4:10-11; Rom. 14:4-5; Col. 2:16-17). If someone emigrates from England to the United States and becomes a citizen, that person would no longer live under the laws of England, though many of the laws would be the same (i.e. laws regarding murder, fraud, property rights, etc.). That person would live under United States law.

A flag typically acts as a symbol for a particular country. It is a representation of the principles and culture it embodies. A person who emigrates from England to the United States would no longer live under the Union Jack but under the Stars and Stripes. That person would no longer live under the rule of the Monarch, Prime Minister, and Parliament of England, but under the rule of the President and Congress of the United States. It is the same for one who becomes a Christian. Such a person is not under the Ten Commandments of old covenant law (along with the other 603 commandments) and its signs, or flag—circumcision and the Sabbath (Ex. 31:12-18); instead, he or she observes the Law of Christ, which is the gospel, along with its signs, or flag, water baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 19:3-4; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:11-12; 1 Pet. 3:18-22; Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 4:30; Mt. 26:26-28; Mk. 14:22-24; Lk. 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:25).

When Jesus was on the mountain where He was transfigured, the Father's voice was heard by Peter, James and John. His voice continues to echo to this day: "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" (Mk. 9:7; Lk. 9:35).

Jesus makes this invitation to all who listen to Him:

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR

YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Mt. 11:28-30).

When I ceased from my efforts to gain God's favor by trying to be "good" and simply trusted in the merits of Jesus alone, I began to experience the rest given by Jesus as a gracious gift. The gift of eternal life began the moment I entered that rest. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:7-11). †



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# THEIR TESTIMONY

COLLEEN TINKER

The story is familiar—but how can we believe it?

It's a story that begins in Luke 1. Israel had not had a word from God in over 400 years—not since Malachi wrote God's last prophecy to the nation. Then, one ordinary day, Gabriel appeared in the temple to an obscure elderly priest whose life was playing out in a minor key: his wife Elizabeth was barren, and she was past the age of childbearing. Zacharias (that was the priest's name) kept praying, but he and Elizabeth were out of time. In an instant, ordinary became unforgettable. Gabriel stood before him on the right side of the altar of incense—and Zacharias was terrified. The angel told him not to be afraid and proceeded to deliver shocking news: God had heard his prayers. Elizabeth would bear a son! More than that, the promised baby would be great in God's eyes. He would be named John and would be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in Elizabeth's womb. Even more amazingly, he would be the one to fulfill Malachi's prophecy that a prophet would come as a forerunner, turning the hearts of fathers back to their children, the disobedient to righteousness, "so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."



# SHOCKS THE WORLD

Zacharias was incredulous. “I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years,” he reminded the angel. “How will I know this for certain?”

One can understand his incredulity. The angel’s promise seemed impossible! But Gabriel delivered a sign to Zacharias, a sign that was both a judgment for his unbelief and confirmation of the baby’s prophetic identity when he finally arrived: Zacharias would be unable to speak until his son was born.

Zacharias mutely finished his week of temple service and returned home to a no-doubt stunned Elizabeth. Even the timing of this baby’s birth was predetermined by God; he would be born at the “proper time”. Neither their ages nor Elizabeth’s barrenness was a barrier to God’s will, and exactly as Gabriel had promised, Elizabeth became pregnant shortly after her husband arrived home.

As the brief story of Elizabeth develops, we see one of God’s interventions that transforms an ordinary, unknown woman into a key witness in the greatest, most unbelievable event in history.

Filled with joy, worship, and gratitude, Elizabeth went into seclusion for five months. Zacharias, after all, was unable to talk with her about this miraculous intervention, and she poured out her heart to her God who had seen her shame and longing: “This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men.”

John the Baptist was formed in the womb of a woman who knew he was a living soul from the moment he was conceived. She had spent most of her life under the shadow of disgrace; to be barren in Israel was to be perceived as being under God’s judgment. When she became pregnant—an impossible development without God’s provision—she never thought of her baby as mere “potential”. He was alive from the moment he was formed, and Elizabeth spent her confinement rejoicing and praising God for removing the disgrace of her barrenness. This child growing in her was God’s favor poured out on her!

## A VIRGIN WILL CONCEIVE

Six months after Elizabeth conceived her son, God sent Gabriel on another mission, this time with a message that would consummate God’s promises that began in Eden: the Seed of the woman would be born! “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

Gabriel’s destination this time could not have been a greater contrast from his earlier appointment with Zacharias inside the

golden temple in Jerusalem. This time God sent His angel to a young virgin named Mary who was living with her parents while she waited for her nuptials with her betrothed, a builder named Joseph, in the nearly-unknown village of Nazareth in the Galilee region of northern Israel.

As Gabriel entered the room where Mary was, he delivered a startling greeting that perplexed Mary, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

What could this mean? Mary had no way to understand either why this glorious being was standing before her nor what he meant by this blessing from the Lord. Gabriel quickly reassured her, “Do not be afraid, Mary,” and he repeated the words that had so puzzled her, “You have found favor with God.”

Giving her no time to figure out what was happening, Gabriel continued with a message which was even more impossible than his message to Zacharias had been, “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.” He continued with the words that promised this baby would be God’s own Son and would sit on David’s throne. All God’s treasured promises to Israel were coming to pass in this impossible pregnancy announced by God’s angel to an unknown girl in the tribe of Judah.

Stunned, Mary asked the obvious: “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

The angel answered, explaining this glorious impossibility, this miracle that had no precedent and would have no repetition: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”

Then Gabriel told her of God’s provision for her. She was on the threshold of something so big, so unexpected, that her life and imminent marriage were about to be shaken to the core, but God had provided confirmation and support that she could not have imagined: “And behold even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Not even Mary’s mother and father would be able to provide the comfort and context she would need as Joseph nearly broke off his marriage to their daughter, as the public began to whisper about her supposed sin. Even if they trusted God and believed Mary—which they likely did—this calling that God ordained for their daughter would affect their reputations also. The virgin who would carry God’s Son would find no peer in Israel, but God provided an older woman who was experiencing her own miraculous pregnancy; Elizabeth would understand and believe Mary and encourage her.

“Behold, the bondservant of the Lord,” Mary replied to Gabriel; “may it be done to me according to your word.” And then Mary was alone.

## UNLIKELY WITNESSES

Luke’s unfolding story of these two women at opposite ends of life, each pregnant with miraculous babies, each trusting God’s faithfulness as they accepted His will for them, reveals that God was doing more than bringing John and Jesus into the world through miraculous interventions. He was honoring His promise to Eve that her Seed would crush the serpent, and He was also beginning to reveal that in the kingdom of His Son which He was

a psalm and is remarkably similar to the praise that poured from Hannah’s heart when she delivered her son Samuel to the temple to dedicate his life to the service of God (1 Sam. 2:1-10). Separated by centuries, these two mothers bearing miraculous babies—one who would usher in the kings of Israel and the other who would fulfill all God’s promises as Israel’s King—spontaneously uttered praise to Him that eternally declares His faithfulness to His promises and to His people.

**“My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name. And His mercy is upon genera-**

# ...IN THE KINGDOM OF HIS SON WHICH HE WAS ABOUT TO INAUGURATE,

about to inaugurate, all people, from the least to the greatest, are equal in His sight.

Women in Israel were not considered equal with men. In fact, Jewish men typically thanked God that they had not been born gentile dogs or women. Moreover, the testimony of a woman was not accepted in a law court. Women received their social standing by bearing children and being wives of respected men.

In this story we see God honoring both Elizabeth and Mary with miraculous motherhood. Each would bear a child foretold by the prophets, and God specifically chose them for these roles. Not only do we see God honoring the unique role of motherhood with His intervention in these women’s lives, however, but we also see God giving these women His words to speak—but we’re getting ahead of the story.

Scripture does not tell us how Mary revealed the substance of Gabriel’s message to her parents, but it does tell us that “at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.”

That greeting began one of the most remarkable accounts of God’s revelation and confirmation recorded in Scripture. “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting,” Luke 1:41 tells us, “the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Months before, Gabriel had told Zacharias that the baby Elizabeth would bear would be filled with the Holy Spirit before he was born. The moment Mary entered their house and called out her greeting, God confirmed that He had given Elizabeth’s unborn baby spiritual life; he leaped in his mother’s womb, and Elizabeth also was filled with the Holy Spirit.

**“Blessed are you among women,” Elizabeth cried out, “and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.”**

Mary’s response to Elizabeth’s words was to utter a hymn praising God for His faithfulness. Known today as “The *Magnificat*” (the Latin word that means “exalts”), this hymn is constructed like

**tion after generation toward those who fear Him. He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble. He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed. He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever.”**

Only one sentence summarizes the rest of Mary’s visit with Elizabeth: “And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home” (Lk. 1:56).

## CONFIRMED BY THE LEAST OF THESE

Both Elizabeth’s response and Mary’s song have received much attention over the past two millennia. In fact, many have exalted Mary to near-deity, sentimentalizing her maternity and her God-inspired hymn. Instead of grappling with the weight of God’s assignments to her and also to Elizabeth, instead of acknowledging the reality that God chose these two ordinary women as His messengers and heralds of the new covenant that was about to dawn, centuries of tradition have placed them out of reach of common people.

Luke is the only gospel that tells the stories of Zacharias and Elizabeth, of Gabriel’s announcement to Mary, and of the details of Jesus’ birth in an animal shelter where Mary laid him in a feeding trough. Amazingly, this story of the birth of the One who would fulfill all that was written in the law, the prophets, and the Psalms, was written by the one gentile author in the New Testament: a physician named Luke. A man who, by first-century Jewish standards was considered a “dog”, was the writer God appointed to tell the story of His kindness to the unlikeliest witnesses the Lord chose to confirm the birth of His Son. Specifically, Luke 1 reveals the kindness of God to three of His unlikeliest witnesses: Elizabeth, Mary, and the unborn John.

When the fullness of time had come for Eve’s Seed to be born, the One who would crush the serpent’s head, He marked the time with two impossible pregnancies. First, He removed Elizabeth’s shame of barrenness and ushered her and Zacharias into the fulfill-



ment of God's promises. They not only became the parents of the prophet specifically foretold who would come in the spirit and the power of Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord, but God gave them a place in His eternal word.

Next God's Spirit visited Mary. No analysis can explain what God did or how He did it, but He entrusted Mary with the assignment of being the mother who would give birth to her own Savior.

Not only did God entrust Mary and Elizabeth with bearing the Savior and His forerunner, but through them He began to reverse the historic devaluing of women. He entrusted them to witness to Jesus' identity and to God's faithfulness. When Elizabeth cried out as Mary entered her home, she confirmed what she could not have known on her own: Mary had been chosen out of all women for

elderly priest who received the first message from God in over 400 years, would not have been perceived as a likely prophet. Joseph, the man of integrity from the backwater town of Nazareth, believed the angel when he told him Mary's child was God's Son. Canceling his plans to divorce Mary, Joseph accepted God's assignment to protect and nurture Mary and Jesus, whisking them to Egypt to avoid Herod's mad infanticide and moving them back to Galilee after Herod's death.

The shepherds in Luke 2 were the lowest class of citizens in Israel, yet God chose them to hear and see the choir of angels announcing, "Glory to God in the highest! And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased" (Lk. 2:14).

Two more insignificant people appear in gentile Luke's gospel,

## ALL PEOPLE, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST, ARE EQUAL IN HIS SIGHT.

the blessing of bearing the Savior. Moreover, she identified Mary's unborn child as her own Lord and wondered how she could have been chosen for Mary, carrying the Lord, to visit her. Finally, Elizabeth confirmed, as she was inspired by the Holy Spirit, that Mary was blessed because she believed that what God had promised her would come to pass.

Then Mary, hearing Elizabeth confirming her own experience and God's message to her, spoke a psalm that exalted God and revealed her own need before Him. "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior," she said. With those words Mary herself uttered words from God that tell the truth about herself: she was not sinless but needed to be saved, and she recognized God as her Savior.

She identified herself, as Paul would identify himself just a few years later, as God's bondservant. She quoted the Psalms and affirmed that God had "given help to Israel His servant," explaining that He was keeping His promises to Abraham and his descendants.

Both Mary and Elizabeth, unremarkable women, were given remarkable pregnancies. Moreover, God gave each of them His unerring, eternal word. These two women who believed God still bear witness that He keeps His promises and that He sent His Son.

There's one more witness in this story that we often overlook—the unborn John. God had promised that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb, and He gave that six-month-old fetus the awareness that His Savior had entered the room—even though Jesus was only an embryo in his young mother. John leaped in Elizabeth's womb when Elizabeth heard Mary's voice—and he leaped for joy.

The record of this incident is a central confirmation in the story of Jesus' incarnation. By this we know that God values the unborn and sees them as living children. In fact, He gave John new birth before he had been physically born, and by the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, John testified while still *in utero* that his Savior, also still *in utero*, was in his presence.

### NONE ARE INSIGNIFICANT

Elizabeth, Mary, and John are only three of the unlikely witnesses God appointed to confirm His Son's identity. Zacharias, the

bearing witness that Jesus was the One for whom Israel had been waiting. First is Simeon, a man who lived in Jerusalem. Luke describes him as "righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him" (Lk. 2:25). Remarkably, the Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he saw the Lord Christ.

When Joseph and Mary brought the eight-day-old Jesus to the temple to be circumcised, Simeon was there. The Holy Spirit revealed to him that this baby was the One for whom he had been waiting, and he took Jesus into his arms, blessed God, and said,

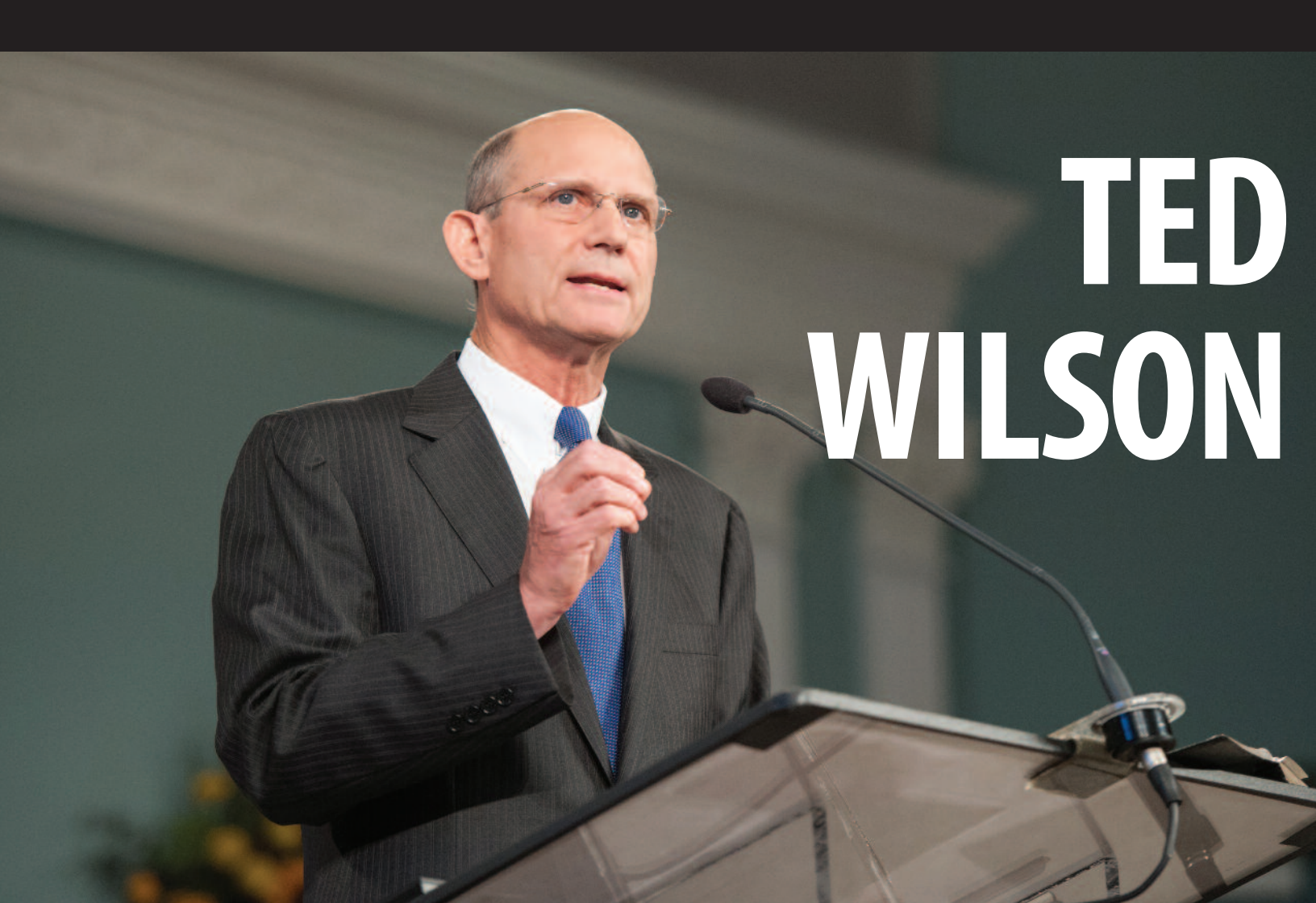
**"Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel" (Lk. 2:29-32).**

Amazed, Joseph and Mary listened to Simeon prophesy, and then an 84-year-old widow named Anna stepped up. Anna had been married for seven years before her husband died, but she had spent the rest of her life living and working in the temple. Anna also recognized Jesus' identity, and she too praised God.

God the Son became incarnate to bring salvation to all people. He is the Savior of the outcast as well as of the privileged—and He came to break down the barrier that separated people from each other. As the incarnate Son of God died on the cross, He fulfilled all the requirements of the law and paid the price for human sin. Through His blood we are reconciled to God, and in Him "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for [we] are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

God knew the doubts depraved men and women would have about the story of Mary's pregnancy, and He provided witnesses to the truth of what He had done—witnesses who could not have invented what happened.

In Jesus God has given men and women equal value before Him; in Jesus we are all His witnesses. In Jesus we see that all life, including the life of the unborn, is honored by God. In Jesus our sin has been paid for, and our dead spirits have come to life. In Jesus our shame is redeemed, and in Jesus all God's promises are "Yes!" †



# TED WILSON

ANSEL OLIVER/ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

**O**ur ministry to former and transitioning Adventists necessitates that we evaluate the message presented by the President of the General Conference, Elder Ted Wilson, on Oct. 11, 2014, at the recent Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland. The full text of his message may be found at [AdventistReview.org](http://AdventistReview.org) (search for “Prophetic movement, message, and mission and their attempted neutralization by the devil”).

We at Life Assurance Ministries (LAM) are often accused of misrepresenting Adventist teaching. People will say, “We don’t believe that anymore;” “Adventists no longer teach the investigative judgment.” “We don’t get our doctrines from Ellen White, they are based upon Scripture.” “We don’t believe that we will have to live without a mediator as you claim.” In our evaluation of Adventism we must take its official teachings such as the 28 Fundamental Beliefs and/or the presentations by people in authority, such as the President of the General Conference—the church’s highest elected position.

I am sure that there are some Adventists, including Adventist scholars, who would not agree with all that Elder Wilson states. However, based upon the many comments it appears that most do. Here are a few of the 68 comments I saw on their site.

Another powerful call to Bible-based unity and the revival and reformation thus brought! May the Lord strengthen Elder Wilson and his family every day!! Our prayers go out, each hour and moment, to the leaders assembled at Annual Council.

An excellent message for our time. I thank him for his strong urgent reminder to connect with Christ through Scripture and inspired writings.

I am so thankful for Elder Wilson, the right man at the right time to lead God’s church!

Sadly, I find Elder Wilson’s sermons almost unlistenable, not to mention unreadable. They sound like they are for Adventists only, and make that case through code words and jargon.

[A response to the above comment] He is the leader of the SDA World Church and he is addressing SDA’s concerning SDA issues. I’m sorry he disappoints you but he is doing what God has called him to do.

A truly inspired message from the Holy Spirit through our Church’s Leader! How true it is that Satan is attacking because he knows his time is short. But we must never forget that God’s grace is always far greater than our trials. And we must never forget that our denomination was raised for a distinct purpose—we are not just another denomination! We have the Three Angels’ Message to declare. May God grant us daily courage and strength!

### **Wilson’s source of authority**

As one reads through Wilson’s message, one of the first impressions is that he is basing most of his admonition on the writings of Ellen White. For example, Wilson quotes about 28 passages from Ellen White and only about 9 from Scripture—nearly a three to one ratio. Moreover, the Scriptures he mentions are seldom ex-



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egeted. However, this ratio does not reveal the whole truth regarding Wilson's source of authority. The listed quotations from Ellen G. White contain about 1413 words compared to about 332 words from the Bible. So in actuality, Wilson's source of authority for his messages is based on Ellen White over the Bible by about a 4:1 ratio in actual words quoted.

## Adventist "*sola scriptura*" = Bible and Ellen's Writings

Wilson continues,

On this point you might say, "Why does Wilson always refer to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy? Isn't the Bible sufficient for all that we need to know?"

Of course it is. As Seventh-day Adventists we believe in "*sola scriptura*." We believe that God's Word is the final authority of all Christian faith and practice. And it is in that very Word of God that the Lord reveals that His last-day people would be *guided by the prophetic gift!* The Spirit of Prophecy is a wonderful blessing to lead us back to the Bible and to make clearer its meaning and application in our lives [Emphasis mine].

I have felt a great burden as I have traveled and spoken around the world in so many of your fields these last four years to reignite through the power of the Holy Spirit a love for the Holy Word of God and the great blessings of the Spirit of Prophecy. My colleagues, I entreat you to *let God speak to you through His Word and the Spirit of Prophecy* during this Annual Council [emphasis mine].

It is in the Word of God *and* the Testimony of Jesus — the Spirit of Prophecy — that we find our identity as God's remnant church and our marching orders as God's end-time messengers. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been entrusted with the last proclamation of a saving message from God — a message for Mission to the Cities, a message of "comprehensive health ministry," a message to "reach the world," a message that embraces the wonderful programs of our departments, institutions, and entities, a message that encompasses all that we affirm in our 28 Fundamental Beliefs, and a message that Christ is soon to return in the clouds of glory! As our upcoming 2015 General Conference session theme tells us, "Arise. Shine. Jesus is coming!" [emphasis mine].

## Support for Adventist's failed prophecy of 1844

Near the beginning of his message we find this summary of early Adventism:

We see this vividly portrayed in the book of Revelation. Chapter 10 foretells the experience of our Advent pioneers as they looked forward to Christ's return. After the disappointment, an experience described as "bitter in the stomach," their attention was turned to Christ's work in the heavenly sanctuary and the divine mandate to "prophesy again to many people, nations, tongues, and kings."

The above statement lends veracity to Adventist's prediction and disappointment regarding the failed prophecy that Christ would come in 1844. Adventists believed that the "little book" which the

angel told John to eat was the book of Daniel. The bitterness in the stomach [disappointment] then was the result of the obedience of John to “eat the book”. Thus they could “blame God”—as Ellen White did—for the error of the failed 1844 prophecy resulting in the great disappointment. The “prophesy again...” refers to the Adventists morphing their October 22, 1844, message into the investigative judgment.<sup>1</sup>

### **Seventh-day Adventists, God’s only remnant church (Ellen White & Sabbath)**

This prophetic movement, described in Revelation 12:17 as God’s remnant people who “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus,” is constituted in only one body of faith today: the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Thus it is no surprise to see Satan warring against us with unbridled fury.

Here Wilson states forthrightly that the Adventist church is God’s remnant people, and His remnant “is constituted in only one body of faith today: the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” Note the two traditional qualifications for this belief: the remnant “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.” We cannot just skip over this without a careful evaluation. People thinking of leaving the Adventist church need to know that they should not fear that they are leaving God’s only true, last-day remnant church.

### **“The Commandments of God”**

“Keeping the commandments” for Adventists means keeping the Seventh-day Sabbath; however, the fourth is the only one of the Ten Commandments not repeated in the New Testament. The Sabbath was never given to the gentiles but was a special ritual<sup>2</sup> between God and the “sons of Israel”. The risen Christ never met with His disciples on a Sabbath after the resurrection. When a day is mentioned, it was always the first day of the week. In fact, all the Sabbath meetings in the book of Acts were in a Jewish setting. Furthermore, there is no instruction on Sabbath-keeping given in any letters written to new gentile Christian churches, and Sabbath-breaking is never mentioned in any lists of New Testament sins. Add to this the fact that John in his gospel and three letters never uses ἐντολάς, translated “commandments”, for old covenant law. When he wants to refer to old covenant law he always uses νόμον, “law”. Moreover, Jesus gave a new commandment, that we love one another as He loved us (Jn. 13:34).

### **“The testimony of Jesus”**

The word “testimony” comes from a root word which in its various forms in Greek means testifying, testimony, witness and martyr. The underlying meaning is the proclamation of truth regardless of consequences. The “of Jesus” part of this phrase can be understood in two ways. It can mean the testimony from Jesus, or it can mean the testimony concerning Jesus. The first meaning stresses the fact that this testimony has Jesus as its source. The second meaning stresses the idea that this testimony has Jesus as the subject matter. Either interpretation is valid as far as the Greek syntax is concerned.

In other words, the phrase “testimony of Jesus” means proclaiming the truth of (either from or about) Jesus. When we stop to think about it, this is not a bad definition of the gospel. It is a

proclamation of the truth both from and about Jesus. From a linguistic definition we would say the “testimony of Jesus” is a term which stands for the gospel as it is fearlessly proclaimed.

Let us now look at all the passages in the book of Revelation which use the terms “testimony of Jesus” or just “testimony” and seek to discover the meaning of this term.

**The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John; who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw (Rev. 1:1, 2).**

**I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1:9).**

**And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained (Rev. 6:9).**

**And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4).**

In these verses the “testimony of Jesus” or just “the testimony” is used as a term for the gospel. John bears witness to the gospel, the truth about (or from) Jesus (Rev. 1:1, 2). The souls under the altar had been slain because they maintained the truth about (or from) Jesus.

With this background let us now return to the two texts in question and see if our definition of “testimony of Jesus” fits within their context.

**And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:17).**

Who are these people with whom the dragon is angry? They are the people who keep the new covenant commandments of God and hold to the truth about (or from) Jesus! Notice the close parallel verse in Revelation 14:12.

**Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.**

These two verses seem to say the same thing. In one the saints are described as those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. In the other they keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. Therefore, the term “testimony of Jesus” and keeping their “faith in Jesus” are parallel in meaning.

It is quite evident that the term “testimony of Jesus” has reference to the gospel. It is the truth about (or from) Jesus. If this is true, then what does the Revelator mean when he says “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”?

**And I [John] fell at his feet to worship him [the angel] and he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow-servant of yours**



and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10).

Here the angel says he also holds the “testimony of Jesus.” In other words, the angel also believes the truth about (or from) Jesus. Focusing on the last phrase, we read, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” To paraphrase, “The truth about Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Notice how this verse is variously translated or paraphrased.

For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus (New Living Translation).

Those who bear testimony to Jesus are inspired like the prophets (The New English Bible).

For the truth revealed by Jesus is the inspiration of all prophecy (Weymouth).

For the testimony of Jesus is what inspires prophecy (Goodspeed).

It is the truth concerning Jesus which inspires all prophecy (Knox).

The purpose of all prophecy and of all I have shown you is to tell about Jesus (Living Bible).

These translators have captured the essence of what John is seeking to communicate. All prophecy, when rightly interpreted, in some way points to the truth concerning Jesus.

You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me (Jn. 5:39).

O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures (Lk. 24:25–27).

It is clear that the Adventist concept of its being the only true, remnant church is built on the haphazard proof texting of the early pioneers of Adventism who were seeking some way to justify their false prophecies. The sad part is that President Wilson continues to promote such poor biblical scholarship.

### Sabbath, Sunday and the death decree

Again we quote Ted Wilson:

Chapter 13 [of Revelation] outlines Satan’s twofold war plan to destroy God’s last-day people: 1. an ideological war of lies and errors challenging the truth; and 2. firefights — outright persecution culminating in a death decree against all who defy his presumed authority.

Here Wilson is giving support to Ellen White’s teaching that there will be a death decree issued against Seventh-day Adventists who continue to worship on Sabbath when the United States commands everyone to worship on Sunday. The “ideological war of lies” probably refers to Adventist’s claim that the Catholic Church changed the Sabbath to Sunday which is not true despite what



Adventism’s President Ted N. C. Wilson delivers the sermon on which this article is focused, “God’s Prophetic Movement, Message, and Mission and Their Attempted Neutralization by the Devil,” during the Saturday (Sabbath) worship at Annual Council at the denomination’s world headquarters on October 11. ANSEL OLIVER/ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

some Catholics may have said. Christians were worshiping on the first day of the week long before there was a Catholic church.<sup>3</sup> For the sake of our readers who do not have the books noted in the foregoing footnote, here are two quotes from early Christian sources which show that the Christians were worshiping on the first day of the week very early in Church history.

In the *Epistle to Barnabas*, written between 70–132 AD we read,

“...your new moons and Sabbaths I cannot stand.” Therefore he has abolished these things, in order that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is free from the yoke of compulsion, might have its offering, one not made by man...this is why we spend the eighth day in celebration, the day on which Jesus both arose from the dead, after appearing again, ascended into heaven.

Ignatius of Antioch, 107–110 AD, wrote,

... for if we continue to live in accordance with Judaism, we admit that we have not received grace...If, then, those who had lived in antiquated practices come to newness of hope, no longer keeping the Sabbath but living in accordance with the Lord’s day, on which our life also arose through him...”

The above statement was authored only a few years after Revelation was written. Considering the fact that first century Christians were meeting on the first, or the Lord’s Day, and writing about their theological reasons for doing so should put to rest the fear that worshipping on Sunday is a Catholic deception that will lead to the mark of the beast and a death decree for Sabbath-keepers. That whole concept is unbiblical and promotes fear and anxiety.

### Sinless perfection, confusing false gospel

Yet, God’s people are not merely victims of Satan’s assaults. Revelation 14 reveals the Lord’s counteroffensive — His remnant people demonstrating His character and proclaiming His final appeal to the world. The three angels’ messages.

Behind Wilson’s statement, “His remnant people demonstrating His character...” is the perfectionistic teaching that Adventists



**“Those who are living upon the Earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator,” stated Adventism’s President Ted N. C. Wilson at Annual Council on October 11. ANSEL OLIVER/ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK**

much reach a state of sinlessness before the second coming of Christ. This underlying meaning becomes clear in his choice of Ellen White quotes listed later.

Time on this Earth is short. Probation is closing soon. Preparation to see God face to face by repentance and forsaking of sin needs to be done now. *The Great Controversy*, page 425, explains that: “Those who are living upon the Earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil.”

Notice the stress on character. Granted, Christians should have a righteous character, but their standing before God is wholly on the righteousness that is “in Christ” and not on the righteousness that is in them. Here Wilson, following Ellen White, replaces the righteousness of justification’s “blood of sprinkling” with the personal righteousness of character. In other words, the way Adventists can become “conquerors in the battle with evil” is two-fold: (1) through the grace of God coupled with (2) their own diligent effort. This “joint effort” is not the new covenant gospel.

**He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5, my emphasis).**

### **Adventist character set for eternity BEFORE the Second Coming**

However, when probation closes, the work of mediation is over. Your character will be set and your destiny eternally decided. That is why every day we need to be revived and reformed through our Bible study and prayer connection with Christ. We must receive His all-encompassing righteousness through justification and sanctification as daily, through His power, we become more and more like Him.

Adventists believe that it is at the “close of probation” when Jesus takes the sins of the righteous who are “found worthy” and places them on Satan who will suffer for them in the lake of fire. This final transfer of guilt from the saved to Satan ends Christ’s mediation. Following this event there is an unknown period of time—the time of Jacob’s trouble—before the second coming. Thus, whatever personal righteousness one may possess at that time will be fixed for eternity. This mandate for complete sanctification prior to the time of trouble explains why Wilson expresses such an urgent need for Adventists to pursue revival, reform, Bible

study, prayer and connection with Christ. Note again that, “We must receive His all-encompassing righteousness through justification AND sanctification as daily, through His power, we become more and more like Him.”

Wilson’s urgent appeal focuses for the most part on infused, imparted, or personal righteousness, in contrast to the imputed righteousness “in Christ”. According to this historic Adventist teaching, Adventists cannot look to the transformation that takes place at the second coming to perfect their characters in any

way since the condition of their characters has been set sometime prior to the close of probation. Some Adventist theologians have framed this character perfection as “being safe to save”. There must be enough character transformation that takes place in this life before the second coming to ensure that in the next life we will not start another rebellion as did Lucifer. With this theology, it is evident that one never knows if he has enough personal righteousness to be “safe to save”.

This underlying belief is disguised perfectionism.

What does the Bible say about reaching perfection and what happens to us at the second coming?

**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).**

As we have said many times before, “fall short” is in the present continuous tense in Greek. Here on this earth we will always be short of God’s ideal in personal righteousness.

**If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 Jn. 1:8).**

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

**For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:53-58, my emphasis).**

**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing (2 Tim. 4:7-8).**

### **Investigative Judgment, mark of the beast**

Many Adventists with whom we come in contact tell us that the Adventist church no longer teaches the investigative judgment and the mark of the beast. President Wilson, however, confirms it does.



The powerful truth of these unique messages would break completely the deceptions of Satan if proclaimed as God intends. The message of the first angel gives the gospel to the world, announces that we are living in the time of the pre-advent investigative judgment, and calls on every nation, tribe, tongue and people to honor God as their Creator by keeping holy His seventh-day Sabbath. The second angel heralds Babylon's fall. While finally the third angel warns us — in language too plain to misunderstand — not to worship the beast, the image of the beast, or receive the mark of his rebellion, which is a sign of disloyalty to God's Word.

Most Adventists do not understand the investigative judgment nor its history, and for good reason. It is built on some 22 assumptions, is contrary to Scripture, and undermines the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

Over the years we at LAM have ministered to hundreds if not thousands of transitioning Adventists. Many of them confess the anxiety and fear they had when reading the writings of Ellen White or listening to Adventist teachers on the subjects of the investigative judgment, the time of Jacob's trouble, the preparation for Adventist's "latter rain", standing in the sight of a holy God without a mediator, and forgotten and unconfessed sins standing against us. The message of Ellen White continues in the Adventist church to this day.

In a view given June 27, 1850, my accompanying angel said, "Time is almost finished. Do you reflect the lovely image of Jesus as you should?" Then I was pointed to the earth and saw that there would have to be a getting ready among those who have of late embraced the third angel's message. Said the angel, "Get ready, get ready, get ready. Ye will have to die a greater death to the world than ye have ever yet died." I saw that there was a great work to do for them and but little time in which to do it.<sup>5</sup>

I found it interesting that Ellen White uses "get ready" about 117 times. Yet that term is never used in the Bible regarding the preparation for the second coming. Rather, the Bible says "be ready". "Being ready" is something every born-again Christian can do. We can live in the state of being ready every day. Many, but not all, of Ellen White's admonitions, especially in the early years, were aimed at developing personal righteousness with little mention of Christ's righteousness.

With solemn earnestness we sought, as a people, to purify our lives, that we might be ready to meet Him at His coming.<sup>6</sup>

But if you are indolent, and fail to dig deep in the mines of truth, you will not be ready for the crisis that is soon to come upon us. O that you would realize that each moment is golden. If you live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, you will not be found unprepared.<sup>7</sup>

These words are not necessarily bad admonition. However, there is no focus on the righteousness in the person of Christ upon which we place 100% of our assurance. There is almost a complete absence of the gospel in Adventism before 1888 and even after that, as can be seen in Wilson's message.

### The true gospel

I cannot end this article without presenting the true gospel. How wonderful it is to understand and believe the new covenant gospel of grace. Instead of the continual anxiety look-

ing at our own performance measured by law, we can look away to Jesus and realize that,

**Even when we were dead in our transgressions, He made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:5-6).**

We can now "be ready".

**Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12).**

We don't have to be anxious about our salvation; rather, we can live at peace with God.

**Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Rom. 5:1).**

Rather than agonizing over how to purify our lives, we can turn away from self and gaze at the glory of the new covenant gospel and thereby be transformed by the gaze of grace.

**Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17-1, emphasis mine).**

Instead of fussing about how to keep the Sabbath more strictly as Ellen White says,<sup>8</sup> we can have the true "Sabbath rest" of soul. Yes, and we can have it "today"—the moment of saving faith.

**Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light (Mt. 11:28-30).**

**For we who have believed enter that rest... Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." (Heb. 4:3, 7).**

We can look forward to the coming of Christ with joy and not with anxiety and fear.

**Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass (1 Thes. 5:23-24). †**

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> After these seven thunders uttered their voices, the instruction comes to John, as to Daniel, in regard to the little book: "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered." . . . John sees the little book unsealed. . . . Then Daniel's prophecies have their proper place in the first, second, and third angels' messages to be given to the world. The unsealing of the little book was the message in relation to time. Ellen G. White, *Christ Triumphant*, p. 344.

<sup>2</sup> "...the Sabbath's importance is suggested by its being the only ritual law in the Ten Commandments,..." Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *Biblical Literacy*, p. 429 (William Morrow and Company, Inc. New York, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> See Riggle, *The Sabbath and the Lord's Day*, p. 117-145; Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ*, chapter, "The First Day of the Week".

<sup>4</sup> See Ratzlaff, *Cultic Doctrine*, for a complete study of this and related subjects.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White, *Maramatha*, p. 253.

<sup>8</sup> "If we desire the blessings promised to the obedient, we must observe the Sabbath more strictly...At all times and in all places God requires us to prove our loyalty to Him by honoring the Sabbath." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 8, p. 360.

## Adventism's Fundamental Belief #12: The Church

The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to all mankind, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the bride for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will present her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages, the purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish.

While the Seventh-day Adventist (Adventist) Fundamental Beliefs splits the description of the doctrine of the church from the doctrine of the remnant church, these two teachings cannot be completely separated within Adventism, and we address them together in a single article.

As we have seen in many previous Fundamental Beliefs, this 12th Adventist doctrinal statement contains wording that would appear consistent with evangelical Christian teaching about the universal church. In fact, I found its wording so convincing that when I initially reviewed the Fundamental Belief statements, I didn't look at the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* to read the official commentary on the belief. Instead I simply concluded that this belief statement accurately presents the biblical concept of the universal church. Unfortunately, however, Fundamental Belief #12 is completely negated by Fundamental Belief #13 regarding the "remnant church".

The incongruence between a universal church of all believers and a remnant (Adventist) church should be apparent no matter the amount of Adventist double-speak on the subject. I was a little surprised, however, how plainly *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* explained the Adventist code words for us:

Just so today, He intends to lead His people into His visible church, characterized by loyalty to God's commandments and possessing the faith of Jesus, so they may participate in finishing His mis-

## ADVENTISM'S FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #12: THE CHURCH

## ADVENTISM'S FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #13: THE REMNANT AND ITS MISSION

# WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

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sion on earth (Rev. 14:12; 18:4; Matt. 24:14; see chapter 13 of this book).<sup>1</sup>

Everyone familiar with Adventism knows what specific "visible church" the passage is describing with the familiar phrasing of Rev 14:12—loyalty to God's commandments (or "keeping the commandments of God") and possessing (having) the faith of Jesus. These words, quoted from chapter 12 of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, are describing the same church as that which is explained in chapter 13, "The Remnant And Its Mission": the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

When we understand that Adventists have defined the "visible church" as their own church organization, their definition of the invisible or universal church begins to become clear:

The invisible church, also called the church universal, is composed of all God's people throughout the world. It includes the believers within the visible church as well as many who, although they do not belong to a church organization, have followed all the light Christ has given them (Jn. 1:9). This latter group includes those who have never had the opportunity to learn the truth

about Jesus Christ but who have responded to the Holy Spirit and "by nature do the things contained in the law" of God (Rom. 2:14).<sup>2</sup>

In other words, according to Adventists the universal church consists of Adventists (visible church) and many who do not belong to a church organization. It even consists of those who have never heard of, or learned about, Christ. Instead of salvation only being available through faith alone in Christ, according to this Fundamental Belief, a person can be counted by God as being one of His people simply by doing good things.

There is no mention here or anywhere within the chapter of people in other churches also being part of the universal church. In contrast, a typical, mainstream Christian expression of the universal church would be similar to this explanation:

At the same time, all believers are members of the universal church. The universal church is made up of every single person who has exercised faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, including members of every local church body throughout the earth (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23).<sup>3</sup>

## Adventism's Fundamental Belief #13: The Remnant and Its Mission

**The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the ar-**



rival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness.

Once again, the casual reader who is unfamiliar with Adventism isn't likely to grasp all that is meant by this statement. There are meanings buried beneath this belief statement that are explained in Adventist literature to which the average Christian would have little access; therefore, the real meaning of this fundamental belief would be unlikely to be examined by the Evangelical Christian community. While Adventists have invented many fancy dodges to the question, "What is the remnant church?", the simple truth is that the official teaching of Adventism is that the Remnant Church is, both historically and currently, the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The baptismal vows in the official Adventist church manual confirm this internal understanding:

13. Do you accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy and that people of every nation, race, and language are invited and accepted into its fellowship? Do you desire to be a member of this local congregation of the world church?<sup>4</sup>

Also from the Seventh-day Adventist church manual:

28. In accordance with God's uniform dealing with mankind, warning them of coming events that will vitally affect their destiny, He has sent forth a proclamation of the approaching return of Christ. This preparatory message is symbolized by the three angels' messages of Revelation 14, and meets its fulfillment in the great Second Advent Movement today. This has brought forth the remnant, or Seventh-day Adventist Church, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. (Amos 3:7; Matt. 24:29-34; Rev. 14:6-10; Zeph. 3:13; Micah 4:7, 8; Rev. 14:12; Isa. 26:2; Rev. 22:14.)<sup>5</sup>

Fundamental Belief #13 begins with truth: "The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ," and then it inserts a qualifier that negates this truth, "but in the last days". This double-speak is a common characteristic of Seventh-day Adventist doctrinal descriptions; there is a big "but" that separates them from biblical Christianity. In reality, there is no such thing as a remnant church that is unique and distinguished from the universal church.

Rev. 14:17 says, "So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest (remnant) of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

This symbolic woman first gave birth to Jesus, and He is the only child of this woman mentioned in the chapter. The rest (or remnant) of her children are all of the adopted children of God. For the Adventist church to claim to be the rest of her children is a direct denial of the universal church.

## THIS DOUBLE-SPEAK IS A COMMON CHARACTERISTIC OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST DOCTRINAL DESCRIPTIONS; THERE IS A BIG "BUT" THAT SEPARATES THEM FROM BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY.

Furthermore, according to Scripture it is not this remnant who announce the judgment hour, but an angel. Nothing in the scriptural passage of Revelation 14 suggests that these angels are symbolic of a church. Interestingly, Seventh-day Adventists do not consider any other angels in the book of Revelation to be symbolic of a church. In fact, nothing links these angels to the remnant, nor is there anything in Revelation 14 indicating the believers are called to join the angels in making this proclamation. The idea, therefore, that "Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide

witness" is not supported by the passage.

The notion that the proclamation of this message corresponds to a work of judgment going on in heaven is yet another extra-biblical insertion into the belief statement. The proclamation in Revelation 14 is that judgment has come, not that it is in the process of taking place in heaven. Moreover, the language used by the angels in Revelation 14 is the same as the language used in chapter 18. The sole reason that Adventists link Revelation 14:7 with the idea of a judgment that is in the process of taking place in heaven is that they use this passage to validate their investigative judgment doctrine. This idea, however, is simply not found in the words of the passage. Moreover, the judgment in Revelation 14:7 is a judgment of the wicked. The investigative judgment of Adventism is a judgment of professed believers.

In summary, this fundamental belief is not founded on *sola scriptura*. Adventists have skewed the meanings of the words of the Bible to validate their unique, unbiblical doctrines. Consequently, Fundamental Belief #13 clarifies the underlying Adventist meaning of Fundamental Belief #12. Taken together, these belief statements reveal many extra-biblical ideas that are camouflaged by "evangelical wording" but which actually describe unique doctrines that are completely unsupported by the biblical passages they cite.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2005, Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., P. 171, par. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 3

<sup>3</sup> <http://christianity.about.com/od/churchandcommunity/a/thechurch.htm>

<sup>4</sup> [http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Resources/ChurchManuals/CM2005\\_\\_D.pdf](http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Resources/ChurchManuals/CM2005__D.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

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



# MICHIGAN **FORMER ADVENTIST CONFERENCE** CREATED

The Michigan FAF Conference convened this year on Friday, September 26, for two full days of meetings and worship at The Chapel in St. Joseph. Dale Ratzlaff was the keynote speaker, and the title of the weekend was No Shame, a study of Romans 1 through 8. He taught powerfully on the gospel, explaining our depravity as outlined in the first three-and-a-half chapters, and he delved deeply into Romans 4 and 5 as he taught the faith of Abraham and the new Adam who brought righteousness to us through His act of obedience: death on the cross.

**SEVERAL OF THOSE PARTICIPATING CAME FROM PAINFUL FAMILY SITUATIONS IN WHICH ONE SPOUSE KNEW JESUS AND HAD LEFT ADVENTISM, AND THE OTHER WAS STILL STAUNCHLY ADVENTIST.**

Corey Kugle, assistant pastor of The Chapel, presented one session on Friday covering Romans 2:1-16 on the justice of God’s righteous judgment, and Colleen Tinker presented a study on Psalm 73, a psalm of Asaph that reveals the danger in turning one’s frustrations inward instead of openly lamenting to God. Asaph regained his stability when he went to the house of God and the fellowship of God’s people and stopped isolating.

Jim Valentine gave an interesting talk entitled “Spiritualism and Ellen G. White”. He reviewed Ellen White’s (EGW) letter in which she recounted meeting her dead husband James in a dream and getting advice from him. Jim also read what Scripture says about communicating with the dead and taking direction from them; the conclusion about EGW’s status was clear: she cannot be a prophet of God.

Mary Seeley-Stockler gave her faith story, and George Schultz from The Chapel presented one session on Romans 4. Friday ended with communion led by senior pastor Phil Bubar.

Saturday began with worship followed by Dale Ratzlaff teaching from Romans 5 to 6:14, “Freed from Sin and the Blessings of Justification”, and after lunch from Romans 6:15-17 and 7:1-14: “Freedom from Bondage to God’s Law”.

Chapel member John Castady presented two talks on Saturday, one in the morning and one after lunch. They were entitled “Understanding Abuse” and “No Shame”. Because of the spiritual abuse implicit in the false gospel of Adventism, weekend coordinator Carolyn Macomber asked John to talk to us about these common problems we face: our shame-based reactions to the events in our lives and the abuse — spiritual or otherwise — that helped shape these automatic reactions.

Carolyn Macomber presented talks on Romans 7:14-25, “Struggles Between Two Natures”, and on “Life in the Spirit” from Romans 8:1-13. Colleen Tinker concluded the afternoon sessions with a talk on adoption from Romans 8:14-30.

Saturday evening the Chapel members were invited to a meeting entitled “Equipped To Speak Truth To Adventists”. The



1. The Michigan FAF Conference enjoyed worshipping together led by teams organized by The Chapel’s worship leader Kent Wade.



2. Mary Seeley-Stockler shared her faith story.



3. Richard and Colleen Tinker watched the sun set over Lake Michigan on their last evening after the conference.



# WONDERFUL MEMORIES

evening's speaker was Dale Ratzlaff who delivered a compelling talk entitled "The Big 3 of Adventism". He explained the seduction and necessity of the three cardinal Adventist doctrines: Ellen White's authority, the Sabbath, and the investigative judgment. Without any one of these, the entire structure of Adventism collapses. Nevertheless, the Adventist organization clings to these doctrines even though they clearly oppose biblical authority and teaching, thus revealing Adventism's underlying foundation.

During the evening Esther Aust gave her faith story, and four people, Richard Tinker, Carolyn Macomber, Rolaant McKenzie, and Colleen Tinker, delivered five-minute vignettes explaining what caused their dissonance that resulted in questioning Adventism and discovering the gospel, leaving their childhood culture behind. Carolyn and Chapel member Elfie Stadelmayer did a skit beautifully portraying the ways Adventists talk to Christians without revealing their real meanings, and the evening ended with a Question and Answer session including panel members Phil Bubar, Dale Ratzlaff, Carolyn Macomber, Colleen Tinker, and Richard Tinker moderating.

The entire weekend was live-streamed, and some of the sessions yielded lively chat among the viewers online. Videos of the meetings will be posted on YouTube.

There were about 30 people present during the conference from places as far away from each other as Connecticut and Georgia, Ohio and Manitoba. Several of those participating came from painful family situations in which one spouse knew Jesus and had left Adventism, and the other was still staunchly Adventist.

# ROMANS NO SHAME

Worship for the weekend was led by Chapel worship leader Kent Wade and his team, and the meals were prepared and served by a Chapel member who volunteered her time. We thoroughly enjoyed her amazing squash soup as well as the lasagna, pizza, and sandwiches which she provided.

The weather was lovely, and even the fall colors put on a show. When we arrived in Michigan on Wednesday afternoon, all the trees were green. When we arose on Thursday morning to prepare centerpieces and set up equipment, the tops of trees had turned red overnight, and each day the red and yellow spread, painting the branches with brilliant color variegated with green.

Sunday after church we convened at Silver Beach Pizza on the shore of Lake Michigan. We ate together, sharing pizza and conversation, wishing the good-byes could be postponed.

We thank Carolyn Macomber, Phil Bubar, Corey Kugle, and the entire Chapel staff and the members for supporting this conference and for providing a wonderful venue for the meetings. †



- A. Shirley Burton from Manitoba and Carolyn Ratzlaff prepare gourds for centerpieces.
- B. Carolyn Macomber hosted and coordinated the Michigan FAF Conference.
- C. Dale Ratzlaff spoke to the public Saturday evening about the Adventist doctrines that undercut the gospel.
- D. Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff enjoyed pizza with the rest of the attendees who were still in town after church on Sunday.



Robert Bowman, author and noted apologist coming in February.

## Annual FAF Conference to feature world-renowned apologist Robert Bowman

This next year's Former Adventist Fellowship Conference in Redlands, California, will feature Robert Bowman as a guest speaker. The conference, held this year on the weekend of February 13-15, includes a public meeting on Friday evening at 7:00 which offers insights about Adventism and about ministry to people caught in new religions. This year Rob Bowman will speak at the Friday evening meeting as well as to the conference attendees on Saturday.

In 1984 Rob began working as a researcher and editor at the Christian Research Institute (CRI) under Walter Martin. Today he is the director of research at the Institute for Religious Research (IRR); prior to working with IRR, Rob was the manager of Apologetics and Interfaith Evangelism for the North American Mission Board which is an agency of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Paul Carden, executive director of the Centers for Apologetics Research, worked in the 1980's with Rob at CRI under Walter Martin. Paul says that today Rob is arguably the fore-

most Christian apologist in the world. He has authored close to sixty articles and a dozen books, and his most recent books reflect his concern with doctrines that tamper with the deity of Christ or with the person of the Holy Spirit. He has written extensively on Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormonism and also on the Word of Faith movement.

We have also run one of Rob's articles, "The Bible Is Absolutely Reliable", in the Summer, 2012 issue of *Proclamation!* You may access the article online at this address:

<http://www.lifeassuranceministries.org/proclamation/2012/2/bibleisabsolutel.html>

## Inrig and Ratzlaff to teach from Revelation

If you haven't yet decided to attend the 2015 FAF conference, we urge you to do so! Besides our guest speaker Rob Bowman, our keynote speakers again this year will be Gary Inrig and Dale Ratzlaff teaching Bible studies from the book of Revelation. Our desire is to learn what Revelation actually teaches in the passages Adventism uses to support its unique doctrines. Subjects will include the seal of God and the mark of the beast, the Three Angels' Messages, judgment and hell, the "commandments of God" and the "faith of Jesus" which is the "spirit of prophecy", the 144,000, and the millennium. You may register by mail or online at:

[http://www.ratzlaff.com/Donations-to-LAM-Inc\\_c3.htm](http://www.ratzlaff.com/Donations-to-LAM-Inc_c3.htm)

## Year-end needs explained

At the same time that we are planning for the annual FAF Conference in Redlands, California, we are facing the reality that our summer income has been low. While a summer drop is typical, it appears that the general economy is affecting the ability of *Proclamation!* readers to give. We are appealing to you, our partners in this ministry, to give us feedback and to join us in praying that God will raise up donors to continue this work.

We share on the next page part of a letter written by Nikki Stevenson, wife of board member Carel, after the annual Life Assurance Ministries board meeting held on November 15, which she posted in several online venues.

## NEW VENUE FOR FORMER ADVENTIST CONFERENCE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



The 2015 Former Adventist Fellowship Conference held in Redlands, California, will be held at a new venue. The Anchor Bible Church is a church plant in Redlands just a few hundred yards from the city limits of Loma Linda. The pastor, Todd Barnett, was eager to host the conference and wants his members to understand how to minister to Adventists. Located at 215 Park Ave, #3, in Redlands, The Anchor's pastor and leadership team extended their invitation to us to hold the conference in their church with much anticipation of this new ministry opportunity.



Our mailing list consists of just under 30,000 addresses. Of these, most have been added by means of people giving LAM names of Adventists, many of whom have attended Loma Linda University or have been lay leaders or clergy in Adventist churches. These are names from whom we seldom if ever hear, but we do hear from those who have found the magazine in relatives' homes, from those who had anonymously received the magazine for years before realizing that the gospel exposed Adventism as heretical, and from others who have been Christians for years but have been helped by the articles and doctrinal explanations in *Proclamation!* Because of the need for anonymity as Adventists question their religion and seek truth, we have been committed to mail this magazine even to those who do not respond because we know it sometimes takes years before one is able to make contact with anyone for help and support.

Nevertheless, we are considering some options as we seek to alleviate this year-end shortfall. We solicit your input as we consider these options:

1. Print and mail three issues per year and put one, probably the summer issue, only online.

2. Print and mail two issues per year to the full mailing list, and print and mail the other two only to those who have specifically requested the magazine or who donate—a list closer to 4,000–5,000 names.

3. If you wish to continue receiving the printed magazine and have not contacted us, please mail the enclosed response envelope with a note that states you wish to continue receiving it. We want to provide the printed magazine for those who read it.

4. It is worth noting that if everyone on our full mailing list gave

\$5.00 per year, there would be ample funds to print and mail our four issues per year.

5. If you have not been contributing to Life Assurance Ministries, we ask you to prayerfully consider whether or not God might be asking you to do so, even on a small scale.

We do not take the gifts to LAM for granted; we know many of you are giving at a sacrificial level, and we pray that God will pour out His blessings and provision on you. Please pray with us for God to provide what is needed for the work He wants us to do.†

Dear Friends of Life Assurance Ministries

On November 15, 2014, the Life Assurance Ministries (LAM) board met for their annual meeting in Redlands, California. In discussing LAM finances, Richard Tinker (LAM president and designer of *Proclamation!*) revealed that again this year he and Colleen Tinker (*Proclamation!* editor) have gone without personal income for the last three months to ensure that we all receive our printed issues of the magazine. Income always drops during the summer and fall, but the Tinkers have chosen not to take their designated stipend in order to have enough money to pay for the printing and mailing of the magazine for several reasons:

- 1) They continue to receive many requests for the magazine, emails from questioning Adventists, phone calls from those in transition, and requests to join the online forum.
- 2) They continue to need printed issues for questioning Adventists from both remote areas of North America and from less developed countries where internet access is limited.
- 3) God has not released them from this work and continues to reveal the need for it in the lives of those He is calling into freedom.

The board discussed the fact that LAM resists soliciting donations because Adventism solicited intensely. Many former Adventists, however, have stated that they want to be informed of LAM's needs. Therefore, we are again letting you know that there is a great need for donations in order to print and mail this year's fourth issue of *Proclamation!* as well as to be able to pay Richard and Colleen before the holidays!

Please know, however, that the entire board is grateful for the shared vision and support that former Adventists have consistently offered to LAM.

Sincerely,  
Nicole Stevenson

# OUR RESCUER HAS COME

OUR REACTIONS DO NOT  
CHANGE THE REALITY OF A  
FAITHFUL GOD WHO  
FULFILLS HIS PROMISES.

Sometimes I feel as if I need rescuing. Do you? Do life's circumstances weigh you down? Do you feel as if no matter what you do, you can't get ahead or make life "work" the way you think it should? Do you wish your relationships were more solid, more caring, more compassionate? Is there some circumstance you are facing that you hope will go away or change or be healed? You are not alone, dear one. A whole nation of more than a million people felt the need for a Deliverer. The Israelites were those people.

Scripture described them as "oppressed" (Ex. 1:11), living "bitter" lives (Ex. 1:14), being treated "ruthlessly" (Ex. 1:14), "beaten" (Ex. 2:11), hunted and "killed" (Ex. 1:16). They did the only thing they had control over, they "cried out" (Ex. 3:7) and "groaned" (Ex. 2:23). Sometimes the only thing we have control over is our own crying out and groaning, too.

A Rescuer heard. Scripture described this Deliverer with the following words; "So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Ex. 2:24); He looked on the Israelites and was "concerned about them" (Ex. 2:25); He had "indeed seen the misery of" His people (Ex. 3:7); He was "concerned about their suffering" (Ex. 3:7b); He had "watched over" them and seen what had "been done to" them. The Rescuer heard, saw, watched over, and was concerned.

The amazing thing to me is not that the Rescuer was aware of what was happening, but that He acted. Scripture records His promises; "I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians" (Ex. 6:6a); "I will free you from being slaves" (Ex. 6:6b); "I will redeem you" (Ex.

6:6b); "I will take you as my own" (Ex. 6:7a); "I will be your God" (Ex. 6:7b); "I will bring you to ..." (Ex. 6:8a); "I will give it to you ..." (Ex. 6:8b).

Their Redeemer had powerful words for them. But the Israelites were unconvinced. They "did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labor" (Ex. 6:9). Are we any different? Do you have trouble trusting and believing the Lord's goodness in the hardships of life? Our reactions do not change the reality of a faithful God who fulfills His promises. The Israelites had to wait awhile longer before they were finally "driven" out of Egypt, and then they waited 40 more years before they entered into the land God had promised. In fact, things became worse for the Israelites, before life got better. Read Exodus 5-12.

The Rescuer then gave them an amazing work to do and a promise. "Then have them make a sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell among them." (Ex. 25:8) It amazes me that an Almighty God would desire not only to rescue His people, but to dwell among them.

We know that He rescued the Israelites from bondage to slavery. We also know that He came to rescue us from a life of sin: "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). In fact, He rescued Israel and us because He is faithful; He fulfilled His promises to us. "Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall

bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which translated means, 'God with us'" (Matt. 1:22-23). His name is not only "Rescuer", but "Immanuel", God with us. Our Rescuer has come. We have been rescued from our sin, and we will be rescued from a world that is groaning in pain. As we live on this wayward planet we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our "adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:23).

Our Redeemer hears, sees, and promises to return (Jn. 14:1-4). He desires once again to dwell among His people (Rev. 21:3). The old order of things will be over, and there will be no more hardships, no more sorrow, no more pain (Rev. 21:4).

Like the Israelites, you may be discouraged, but God is still faithful regardless of your ability to listen and believe. He will fulfill His promises just as He did with the Israelites. He will return to dwell among us and be our God. He has come, and He will come. Praise the Lord! †



**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 and is a marriage and family counselor.





### Thank you for abortion article

I want to thank you for your article in *Proclamation!* about the abortion mills in the Seventh-day Adventist hospitals. This issue was one of the major reasons I left the Adventist church in the 1990s. Whenever I would bring this issue of Adventist abortion mills to the attention of Adventists, most of them responded with yawning indifference. The pastors with whom I spoke about this subject did not seem greatly concerned about it, either.

Surprisingly, most of the so-called “historic” Adventist ministries ignored it. Crews, Grotheer, Spear, and others just would not confront it. To the best of my knowledge, the only “historic” ministries concerned about the Ad-

### 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

ventists and abortion were those led by Drs. Colin and Russell Standish and Vance Ferrell.

I suppose, in a way, this blindness by Adventists on the problem of abortion in their institutions and among their members is much like Adventists’ blindness toward financial corruption in the organization as well as other abuses. As long as these things don’t immediately impact them, the typical Adventist is not concerned about it.

Continue to fight the good fight.  
MAUGANSVILLE, MD

### Lack of moral voice

I just completed reading the article on abortion in the Adventist Church. What an amazing article. Thank you for bringing this to light. I had read some things about

## YOUR SMILES AND JEWELRY WILL LOOK PRETTY STUPID WHEN THE JUDGE OF THE UNIVERSE RETURNS TO REWARD THE FAITHFUL!

this, but never in this much detail. I left the Adventist Church almost five years ago. I always struggled with the lack of “moral” voice in the church, but was brought up being taught morality would be a sign of the “true” church in these last days. I don’t think most non-medical working Adventists are aware of this abortion problem, either. Thank you.

RUSSELL, KS

### Watch it burn

Obviously you can’t resist proselytizing your lies and deceit to satisfied, current Adventist members. My thoughts regarding *Proclamation!*: why fill up the landfills with more garbage? I’ve found something that eagerly eats up every word of your magazine. I hear it’s going to be a cold winter, and my campfire hungrily awaits another issue. Not only did I enjoy watching it burn last time, I enjoyed the warmth of the flame. The next one will be toast also, so

go ahead and keep ’em coming (although I’d rather you didn’t)!

ELFERS, FL

### Men in prison need truth

Praise the Lord. First, I must thank you all, your *Proclamation!* has really helped me in here, and I am able to share your teaching with other men. I read your article on abortion, and how [Adventist] hospitals are doing abortions. I need this information. The men in here need to know the truth. Please forgive my writing; I am now 71 years old, and I have been in here for 25 years now. Please pray for me.

**Editor’s note:** The Adventist organization has a large, active prison ministry.

### You’ll cry for the rocks

Proclamation of lies and hatred, how will you stand in the judgment? Being critical and liberal to the extreme, read 1 Timothy 4:1-2. Pride comes before a fall!! Your smiles and jewelry will look pretty stupid when the Judge of the universe returns to reward the faithful! Sorry, but you will cry for the rocks to hide you!!! Look at all the people you have deceived!

CHAMPAIGN, IL

### Encouragement to me

“Your labor is not in vain.” As the world darkens and what is called “the church” sees increasing apostasy, your humble stand for God’s word is an encouragement to me.

WINNETKA, IL

### Fuel for another fire

I am getting a new wood stove, and I just want you to know, I will use your magazine to start the first fire in my stove! You should be ashamed of the things you write,

and you will have to answer to God for your trying to take people OUT of God’s remnant church!

VIA EMAIL

### Send another copy

Hi, would you please send two copies of this magazine to our church? Right now, we receive one for our senior pastor, but the youth pastor would also like to receive one. Thank you!

BENTON HARBOR, MI

### Unsolicited advice

I know this is unsolicited advice, but I will give it anyway. If you are truly followers of Christ, you would stop attacking the 7th Day [sic] Adventist church and preach your own teachings which your group thinks are taught in the Bible. I am sure you would agree with me that there is no religion/denomination/religious group on earth that has no faults. There will always be things that people think are wrong in every organization. Instead of wasting your time trying to convince Adventists that they are in the wrong denomination, why doesn’t your group just concentrate on preaching your own teachings without having to malign the Adventist church? I believe if you did that, you would become more successful than you are with the constant onslaught on a worldwide church like the Adventist church. May the Lord allow you to see the light.

ACCOKEEK, MD

**Editor’s note:** The following letter is from Nancy Paige, the granddaughter of Carrie Johnson credited with writing the book *I Was Canright’s Secretary* (Review and Herald, 1971). This book has been used to prove that Dudley Canright, a contemporary of James and Ellen White and a preacher who worked for them for several years, returned to the Seventh-day Adventist Church before he died. Canright’s own books tell his story of disagreeing with the Whites and of leaving Adventism, returning to his original Baptist roots. Nevertheless, the Adventist organization has ac-

tively promulgated the idea that Canright “recanted” and returned to Adventism before he died. The following letter is an interesting insight into Carrie Johnson from her own granddaughter.

#### Did Arthur White deceive us?

I contacted you about my grandma’s book, *I Was Canright’s Secretary*. Just this week I began reading it for the first time in years. My suspicion that she did not write most of the book is confirmed.

The forward has inaccurate information about my grandparents. The first chapter and part of the second chapter were written by her, but she did not author chapters 3 through 10. Chapter

ical and biographical content.

It also may interest you to know that my grandparents were kicked out of the Niles, Michigan, Adventist church in the early 1960s, and they never attended church again. So much for the claims that they were highly involved members. The forward of the book also states that they lived in Dowagiac and attended the Decatur church. They never lived there or attended the Decatur church because they’d already stopped attending church by then.

I do not know the circumstances of their being disfellowshipped from the Niles church. I was about four years old at that time. They never spoke of it except to say how unfairly they had been treated.

## FINALLY, OUR STUDYING LED US TO THE GOSPEL AND TO TRUTH. I NEVER HAD TO EXPLAIN THE INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT TO MY FIVE-YEAR-OLD.

14 has been revised by another writer. Parts of it sound like her, but most of it does not match her style.

I doubt she would have had such sophisticated opinions at age 19. She was never sophisticated.

Chapters 15 and 16 also appear to have been revised. Chapter 18 has also been highly edited. I do not believe she wrote chapter 19, and I suspect she wrote only the first half of chapter 20.

The reason I am convinced of this is because the style changes from a personal narrative to a third person, “researcher” style. She was very simple and untrained. Yes, she was opinionated, but one can see a difference between her private opinions and the supposed historical record.

It is my belief that Arthur White [grandson of Ellen White and former director of the White Estate] is the author of the forward as well as most of the histor-

This information is not a big deal in the scheme of things. There is such a mountain of evidence against the Adventist organization that my grandma’s book is just a pesky fly in the ointment. But, understanding the deceit of Arthur White and the methods he used to discredit Dudley Canright, does put some pieces of the puzzle in place for me.

I hope this is useful for you.  
NANCY PAIGE

#### Coconut shell matter

I am being nice, but enough is enough. Don’t be brain-less. Stop harassing me by sending your trash magazine to my address. Whoever you are sending this magazine to does not live here anymore. If you have any usable matter in that coconut shell of yours above your neck, use it. Stop sending your magazine to my address.

CORONA, CA

#### Negative vibes and prayers

God’s blessings. Throughout the years, off and on, I have had the chance to read some of the writings in *Proclamation!* One thing that stands out, for sure, are the negative vibes, unrest, and almost hate that are so evident. I just want to say that Jesus loves you and that many of God’s faithful pray for you day and night. May the Lord bless you and make His face to shine upon you and give you His peace. You are loved.  
SAN BERNARDINO, CA

#### Thank you for your proclamation

As an Adventist I was increasingly dissatisfied with the Adventists’ central doctrine of the investigative judgment. Before my son was born I didn’t care to understand it, but by the time my son was five years old (I was determined to raise him Adventist—an agreement my once-agnostic husband had made with me before we married) I wanted to be able to explain it to him in the simplest of terms. I quickly found this convoluted theory was so twisted that even I, at age 39, could not understand it, much less explain it!

I became so obsessed with this topic that I started asking my brother (who was attending seminary at Andrews University) to explain it. I looked in the Bible for it (silly girl!), and I finally turned to my husband who had been raised Adventist to explain it. I could not distill anyone’s answer into something I could explain to a five-year-old. I began to remember why I didn’t like Adventism, but I had no idea there was another option! Then it just so happened that while we were on a road trip to Arizona, and my seminary brother just happened to be along. The topic of the current Sabbath School lesson came up, and it just happened to be on the investigative judgment! My brother asked my husband’s opinion on the topic, and my husband said he really hadn’t studied it but would like to have sources that were both pro and con on the subject. Well, my brother mentioned several, but the one that

stuck in my husband’s brain was a man who had written against this doctrine: Dale Ratzlaff!

Dale Ratzlaff led to Life Assurance Ministries and *Proclamation!* magazine. *Proclamation!* magazine led to much study, first by my husband, who then shared his findings with me. Our studying led us to prayer, more studying, and lots of reading. Finally, our studying led us to the gospel and to truth. I never had to explain the investigative judgment to my five-year-old. He is now 13, and he and my husband and I now know that Jesus is our Savior. We are alive in Him!  
GRAND TERRACE, CA



#### Enjoyed the Clear Word article

Thank you for yet another outstanding issue! I read and re-read every issue, and have kept all of them on file ever since I started receiving them. I especially enjoyed the article about the Bible, especially in view of what the Bible says about people who take away from or add to the Bible. Haven’t I heard about Adventist evangelistic meetings where *Clear Word Bibles* were promised to people who attended all meetings? Or was I imagining such a thing? Please keep up the good work.

PEDRICKTOWN, NJ

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:

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P.O. Box 7776  
Redlands, CA 92375  
OR EMAIL EDITOR:  
proclamation@gmail.com



# WINTER CONFERENCE 2015 • SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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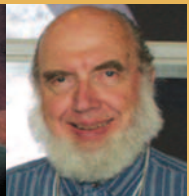
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## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2015

- 9:00 Revelation #1, Gary Inrig
- 10:30 Revelation #2, Dale Ratzlaff
- 11:45 Breakout Sessions (Dale, Martin, Jim, Carolyn)
- 1:45 Revelation #3, Gary Inrig
- 3:30 (TBA)
- 6:30 Public Session, Robert Bowman with Paul Carden

### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2015

- 9:00 Revelation #4, Gary Inrig
- 10:30 Robert Bowman (Topic TBA)
- 11:45 Breakout Sessions (Dale, Martin, Jim, Carolyn)
- 1:45 Revelation #5, Dale Ratzlaff
- 3:15 "Breakout Sessions (Dale, Martin, Jim, Carolyn)
- 4:30 Robert Bowman (Topic TBA)
- 6:30 Revelation #6, Gary Inrig (Communion)

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2015

- 9:30 Worship Service: The Anchor Bible Church (Host Church)
- 12:00 Fellowship Lunch

## REGISTRATION INFORMATION

### COST

- \$85/person for Friday through Sunday (Scholarships are available).
- Fee includes all sessions, session book, handouts, free stuff, snacks throughout, lunch on Friday, lunch and catered dinner on Saturday, and lunch on Sunday.
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THE LIFE A F T E R WITH CHRIS LEE

**P**lan B: it's what you do when your best laid plans go awry. I guess I've always thought of Christmas as God's Plan B. Maybe it's the dubious stories I grew up with that pictured the aftermath of the fall of Adam and Eve. In these tales, the Son pleads with the Father to allow him to go to earth to save mankind; the Father only reluctantly agrees to the plan.

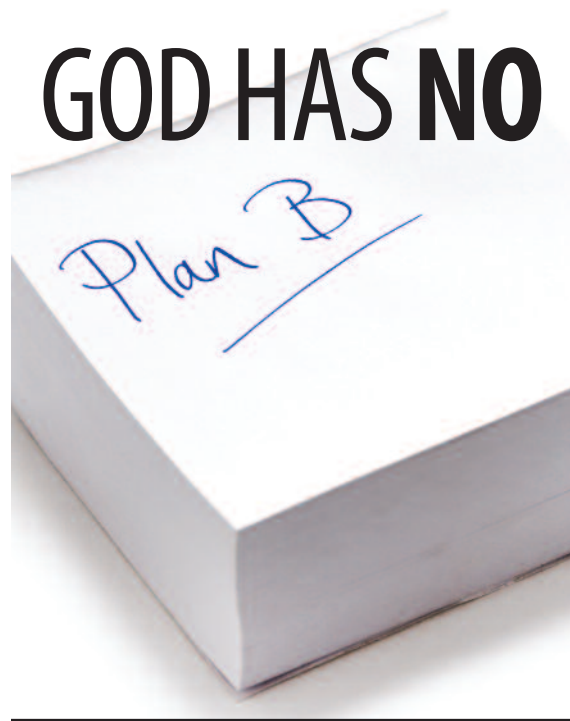
I'm no longer convinced that seeing the incarnation as a last ditch fall back plan adequately acknowledges God's sovereignty, omniscience, omnipotence, or eternal timeless nature. Lately, our church has been studying through the book of Ephesians. In doing so, we've touched on some parallel material in Colossians. Space doesn't permit an in depth discussion here, but I encourage you to read at least the first chapter of Colossians and the first three chapters of Ephesians. In these chapters the incarnation sounds very much like God's Plan A from all eternity.

In reference to the Son, we're taught that "all things have been created through Him and *for Him*" (Col. 2:16) [emphasis mine]. We're also told that God's purpose has always been "the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth..." (Eph. 1:10). Amazingly, we're included in God's purpose: "...He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the intention of His will..." (Eph. 1:4-5).

Nothing surprised God. Nothing happened outside His permissive will. Nothing ever could. God foreknows everything perfectly, and yet He chose to create this particular world. Why did God allow everything to happen as it has? I can't give a definitive answer any more than I can fully comprehend God's ways, but I do think some of the passages above give us a



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little glimpse into the mystery of His eternal will.

What if the incarnation was always the point? What if God's eternal purpose was always to wed Himself to His creation via the person of Jesus? What if the incarnation isn't just a desperate effort to salvage a botched job, but God's eternal plan for the Son and for the adoption of many heirs through Jesus? What if Christmas has always been Plan A?

In my old life, I used to know all the answers. Every Bible story had copious amounts of "inspired" filler. In the life after Adventism, I confess that I don't know much. I read, I pray, I ponder, and I benefit from the godly counsel of those more experienced in the faith. I don't claim to have all the answers anymore.

I do know that my view of God has changed significantly. I now see Him as truly sovereign over all. I now see Jesus as highly exalted, the center and focus of all. In turn, my view of Christmas has begun to change. We often say, "Jesus is the reason for the season," but then immediately skip to how that benefitted us.

What if the person of Jesus, Jesus Himself, the incarnated God-man, is really the reason for all of creation? What if it's not so much about me, but all about Him and His incarnation? For me, such thoughts only serve to magnify the wonder that He chose to include me at all. He didn't have to do any of this. He didn't have to create this world. He certainly didn't have to come into it, and He didn't have to take on a human nature. For whatever reason, God, from all eternity, chose for the Son to add a human nature to Himself, forever, and via that act to make me a son and joint heir. Viewed as Plan A, Christmas is nothing short of astonishing.†