

# LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES, INC Proclamation!

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FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS • INQUIRING ADVENTISTS • SABBATARIANS • CONCERNED EVANGELICALS

*More than a book of memory verses:*

## How I discovered the Bible

Colleen Moore Tinker

**R**eading the Bible was a chore. It was almost as dry as a textbook—in some cases, even drier. I knew I must read it; we Adventists were The People of the Book. Ours was the only church to base all of its doctrines on the Bible alone. But it was hard to understand, and some things were not only difficult, they were troublesome.

scripture so I'd have defenses on the day "they" dragged me into court to convict me for my loyalty to the truth. If I went into those awful days unfortified with memorized texts, I would be vulnerable to their tricks and taunts.

I knew all these things, but I just couldn't concentrate when I tried to read. The Bible was like medicine; it saved your life, but it was hard to take it in.

*The Bible was like medicine; it saved your life, but it was hard to take it in.*

The prooftexts I knew were clear. They made sense, and our doctrines fit neatly among them. Some passages, though, especially in the New Testament, seemed to contradict some of the doctrines, but I knew those passages were obscure because they addressed certain cultural problems unique to the churches in Paul's day.

I knew that during the Time of Trouble, "they" would confiscate our Bibles, and the only thing we'd have left would be the verses we had memorized. I knew I really should be memorizing

### Niggling Doubts

I was twelve when some unsettling questions began to surface in my mind. How did we know we had The Truth? Of course, I knew the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and Catholics were dead wrong, but how did we know we were right? We read the Bible and found soul sleep, a pre-advent judgment, dietary laws, annihilation, the Sabbath, and three angels' messages. Other "Christians" read the Bible and found Easter, eternal souls, an ever-present Holy Spirit, eternal hell, and permission to worship on Sunday and wear diamonds. Who, I wondered, was the final arbiter of Biblical truth? Was the Bible even true?

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## Life Assurance Ministries (LAM), Inc

**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

# A dead doctrine?

**O**ne of the most frequently asked questions by “formers” is “What about the state of the dead? We will attempt to point these inquirers in the direction of an answer in this and perhaps future issues of *Proclamation*. First, however we must put this topic in proper perspective. How important is it that we know *for sure* what happens

*... where the Bible is clear, I could and should be certain. Where the Bible is unclear I should be tentative.*

after death? Actually, the Bible is full of evidence that there will be a resurrection of the body and an afterlife. Details about the intermediate state between death and the resurrection are less clear. Many from Adventist backgrounds will be quick to question the last sentence and go to the customary proof texts such as Eccl. 9:5 “For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten.” We will evaluate this and the other proof texts in this issue.

When I took ministerial training at Pacific Union College, the State of the Dead was included in a section entitled, “Testing Truths”. In other words, we were not to baptize anyone into the SDA church unless they agreed with the SDA teaching on man’s condition in death. The Bible, however, to my knowledge, never gives this topic such importance. I know of no text that says salvation is dependent upon one’s understanding of what happens after death. Rather, the testing truth is always belief in Jesus Christ and our relationship to Him.

I made an important discovery after leaving Adventism which all “formers” would do well to consider. Knowing that I had rejected the Sanctuary and remnant teaching of Adventism, many SDAs would often quiz me on my interpretation of Daniel or Revelation. I was at first embarrassed to say that I was not sure what these passages meant. My discovery was that I did not have to have all the answers, especially to questions dealing with the interpretation of apocalyp-

tic prophecies! Rather, I came to the conclusion that *where the Bible is clear, I could and should be certain. Where the Bible is unclear I should be tentative.* To be dogmatic in the interpretation of Scriptures that are unclear, or are honestly open to more than one interpretation, is the foundation of the disunity within the Christian church and the recipe for cultic teaching. As the years have gone by, I have seen this principle played out over and over again, not only with reference to Adventism, but Evangelicalism as well. Remember the *Eighty-eight Reasons the Rapture will be in 1988*? I recall of listening to the Bible teacher on Family Radio state emphatically that the Rapture was going to take place on a certain date in 1994. To prove his point this Bible teacher had amassed many linking proof texts—most of which were nothing more than assumptions—much like early Adventists did with Daniel 8:14 and 1844. Now I am no longer embarrassed to say that I do not know for sure what many of the passages in Revelation mean.

This same principle applies to our study of the state of the dead. Some aspects are open to more than one interpretation. Also, the amount of specific material describing the intermediate state is less than one would expect were this a “testing truth.”

I would encourage the reader to withhold judgment until all the articles are read and you do your own Bible study. Many of these studies will challenge your paradigm. Also, you may find the different contributors have slightly different conclusions. That is O.K. too. We are not seeking to make everyone line up with our understanding; rather, we are all seeking truth and are recording the results of our study.

Our conclusions about this topic will not change what God has determined. As the old song says, “What ever will be, will be.” Remember that this topic is *not* part of saving faith. It should not be something that divides Christian fellowship. It is hoped that a more nearly correct understanding of man’s condition in death will give much comfort and hope. Many of us have lost loved ones, some are enduring suffering or facing some type of persecution, and then there are those of us who see our own bodies deteriorating with age and stand, as it were, either peering into the grave or awaiting the experience of being at home with the Lord.

In the last two issues of *Proclamation* we discussed hermeneutics which deals with the pre-

## Proclamation!

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suppositions and principles of interpretation. In this issue we will seek to follow good hermeneutical principles. Colleen Tinker will share the new found joy that she and her husband, Richard, have found as they started studying the Bible in context, book by book, to *discover* truth not to *prove their preconceived ideas*. We have placed her essay first as it is an appropriate lead-in to the method of Bible study that is so important as we re-study issues that have been so deeply etched in our theological psyche by our previous indoctrination. Dr. Jerry Gladson, will present his study, "Confessions of a Troubled Conditionalist." Dr.

## **Remember that this topic is not part of saving faith. It should not be something that divides Christian fellowship.**

Verle Streifling will do a topical study on "The Nature of Man and Death." I will present a short exegetical study, "Paul and the After Life." Because of space limitations, Dr. Fred Mazzaferri will conclude his evaluation of the investigative judgment in the next issue. His complete study, however, with updated corrections, may be downloaded from our web site. Remember that 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. Pray for that guidance. Come; let us do some honest investigation together!

- Thank you!—to those who have contributed to keep the ministry alive! Without your help we could not continue. As I write this copy we are about \$9,000 short of having enough money to mail this issue to the 13,000 names on our mailing list. If you get this issue, you will know that God supplied the need through people like you! Thank you!
- When requesting a change of address, adding names to or deleting names from, our mailing list please write clearly. If we can't read it, we don't change it. If you are deleting a name, please give the name *as printed* on the *Proclamation* you received.
- Some have requested that their name not show up on a donor's list. Rest assured we will not publish a donor's list.

- One reader suggested that the letters in *Proclamation* were made up because no names were given. The letters in *Proclamation* are real letters we receive, none were made up. We have chosen to leave off the names for only one reason, we want people to be able to read and respond anonymously.
- The *Truth About Seventh-day Adventist "Truth"* booklet can now be downloaded from our web site free of charge. Simply go to [www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org](http://www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org). This book was designed for Evangelical readers, not SDAs. It has been translated into Spanish and will soon be available as a free download and also in booklet form.
- Back issues of *Proclamation*, and other studies, can be downloaded from our web site at [www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org](http://www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.org).
- Direct all inquires about attending or forming a Former Adventist Fellowship to Richard and Colleen Tinker. Mail to PMB 106, 700-U East Redlands Blvd., Redlands, CA 92373; or email to [formeradventist@aol.com](mailto:formeradventist@aol.com).
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Most importantly, we ask that you pray for our ministry that we would uplift Christ as Savior and Lord and make plain the simple gospel of grace.

—Dale Ratzlaff

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# Re-thinking life after death

By Jerry Gladson, Ph.D., A.P.C.

*It wasn't until I began to read the Bible more closely that I began to notice some disturbing information. I kept running across passages that imply some form of life, even consciousness, after death.*

**O**NE DOCTRINE of Seventh-day Adventists I used to advocate passionately is the idea that at death, a person does not go to either heaven or hell, nor to an intermediate place, but rather remains in the grave, there to await the resurrection. "Is there life after death?" I used to ask my evangelistic audiences, then answer by saying, "Yes—but not until the resurrection." This doctrine is formally known as conditionalism, or soul-sleep, i.e., immortality is conditional, rather than inherent, divinely bestowed upon the redeemed at the general resurrection. The dead are unconscious.

Seventh-day Adventists regard this as one of the crucial pillars of their theological system. Current Adventism expresses this view in these words:

The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people. When Christ, who is our life, appears, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet their Lord. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous, will take place a thousand years later.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps more crisply, the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia points out that since human beings are an "integral unity," at death, with the disintegration of this unity, "conscious existence is no longer possible." Immortality, the state of deathlessness, moreover, is "conditional on accepting Christ," and will be "bestowed simultaneously on all the saved of all ages, at the second coming of Christ."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, "death is not complete annihilation," observes *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, "it is only a state of temporary unconsciousness while the person awaits the resurrection."<sup>3</sup>

While a freshman at what is now Southern Adventist University, I remember researching a term paper on this topic, spending hours in the

stacks of the library doing a periodical literature search. One article I read discussed recent scientific research in parapsychology that attempted to determine the weight of persons before and after death to see if there were any differences in body weight.<sup>4</sup> The theory was that perhaps something—the "spirit" or "soul"?—departed, leaving the body less substantial.<sup>5</sup> I sighed in relief when the article concluded that there was no evidence that anything measurable had left the corpses at death. It confirmed my Adventist faith. Years later, when Raymond Moody, M.D., started writing about "out-of-body" experiences of people who have been resuscitated after they were believed to be dead, I cringed, even though I realized, however these experiences were to be explained, they involved living people. Although the jury is still out, it seemed as though science stood behind the Adventist view of death.<sup>6</sup> So far, so good.

IT WASN'T UNTIL I began to read the Bible more closely that I began to notice some disturbing information. I kept running across passages that imply some form of life, even consciousness, after death. To be sure, many of these texts are found in poetry, but the suggestion of such consciousness is nonetheless clear. In the grave (Sheol), says the Joban poet,

They [the dead] feel only the pain of their own bodies, and mourn only for themselves.<sup>7</sup> Job 14:22

The book of Isaiah contains a mocking dirge against the king of Babylon, imagining him entering the place of the dead, Sheol:

Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were the kings of nations.

All of them will speak and say to you: "You too have become as weak as we! You have become like us!" Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, and the sound of your harps; maggots are the

# Confessions of a troubled conditionalist

bed beneath you, and worms are your covering.  
Isaiah 14:9-11

Ezekiel paints an even more vivid picture when describing the descent of Pharaoh into Sheol:

Mortal, wail over the hordes of Egypt, and send them down . . . "Whom do you surpass in beauty Go down! Be laid to rest with the uncircumcised!"

When Pharaoh sees them, he will be consoled for all his hordes—Pharaoh and all his army, killed by the sword, says the Lord God . . . therefore he shall be laid to rest among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword." Ezekiel 32:18-32

Are these poems merely symbolic or mythical descriptions? Or do they suggest that some writers of the Old Testament, and presumably their audiences, did not think of the dead as entirely devoid of life or consciousness?

One glaring instance of this apparent anomaly is the extraordinary story of Saul's encounter with the spiritistic medium at a place called Endor (1 Sam. 28:3-25). When I taught Old Testament at Southern Adventist University, this passage always greatly disturbed me as well as most of the students in the class.

The incident in 1 Samuel 28 occurs at the apex of the rise of David to prominence in Israel, which begins in 1 Samuel 16 and concludes in 2 Sam 5:10 with the words, "David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him." The focus of the immediate section (1 Sam. 28:3-2 Sam. 1:27) is the final fall and death of Saul. Saul's death lies squarely in the middle of this section.

First Samuel 28 is the Old Testament's only Seance Narrative, or Narrative of the Appearance of the Dead. In this sense it is unique. Its closest parallel occurs in the New Testament in the Transfiguration narrative, when Elijah and Moses appear with Jesus on the mountain (Mk. 9:2-8 \*\* Matt. 17:1-8; Lk. 9:28-36).

Desperate with the menacing approach of the Philistine armies, Saul seeks divine guidance. Since Samuel is dead (v 3), Saul inquires of the Lord, no doubt using the sacred priestly stones, the Urim and Thummim.<sup>8</sup> No answer comes, whether through the sacred lots, or through

dreams or by word from the prophets (v. 6). This forces Saul's hand, compelling him to seek an alternative in a medium at Endor, not far from Gilboa, contrary to Israel's written law (Deut. 18:10-11; Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27) and against his own policies, (1 Sam. 28:7).

Frightened and somewhat reluctant, the medium conjures up Samuel, whom Saul recognizes because of his old robe (vv 8-14). Samuel then delivers a prophetic oracle of doom (vv 15-19). He reminds Saul that he is in this predicament because "the Lord has turned from you and become your enemy" (v. 16). Saul and his sons will join him in Sheol, the place of the dead, he says, by the morrow. Saul immediately drops prostrate to the ground, terrified. Then, after being urged to eat, he slips out into the night (vv 20-29).<sup>9</sup>

This strange experience has no antecedents in the Bible. Lord Byron called the story "the finest and most finished witch-scene that ever was written or conceived . . . It beats all the ghost scenes I ever read."<sup>10</sup> Although in itself it is not focused on the issue of life after death, indirectly it reflects attitudes toward such life that may have been common in Israel at this particular juncture, and which must be taken into account if one is to nuance a full-fledged biblical theology of the human condition in death.

Who or what is the medium Saul consults? The Hebrew expression used for her (v. 7) is *.eshet ba&alat-ob*, "woman mistress of necromancy,"<sup>11</sup> apparently derives from the root *.b*, "father, ancestor," and denotes one who communicates with the spirits of the ancestors.<sup>12</sup> In v. 3 this same word is used along with *yidde'oni*, "familiar spirit," that is, one who both has a knowledge of the unseen world and is an intimate acquaintance of soothsayers.<sup>13</sup> Obviously, these terms are synonymous expressions for what we refer to as a "medium," a person through whom messages from the dead are allegedly communicated. Cable television is currently featuring a medium by the name of John Edward in a show called "Crossing Over."<sup>14</sup> During each episode Edward allegedly communicates with and conveys messages from the deceased acquaintances and relatives of the live audience in the studio with him.<sup>15</sup> The woman whom Saul consulted must have been in ancient dress a person similar to this. Both Leviticus and

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Deuteronomy forbade consulting with such persons, and Saul himself had tried to root it out (1 Sam. 28:9).

Despite the clandestine nature of the experience, nevertheless Samuel appears to Saul. This episode has been the focus of considerable controversy, particularly over the nature of the apparition of Samuel. Was it really Samuel's spirit that appeared? And if so, how could it have been recalled by a medium? If the apparition was the devil, or some kind of impersonating evil spirit, how could it deliver a true prophecy?<sup>16</sup> Because of their view of death, Adventists have been quick to claim that this is really not Samuel at all, but an evil spirit masquerading as Samuel. Arguing that God would never have been involved in something forbidden, like necromancy, Leroy Froom, whom we may take as representative of the Adventist view, claims Saul's experience "was a gross deception, a simulation of Samuel by a depraved 'spirit,' palmed off on the desperate apostate king."<sup>17</sup>

The text, however, is not so certain of this as Froom. An *élohim* "comes up," says the medium, using a term that normally denotes "god" or "God" in its 2,570 occurrences in the Old Testament. Here the word appears to describe a nonhuman or supernatural being of some type.<sup>18</sup> The medium notices (v 14) that the apparition is wearing a "robe" (*me'il*), the same word used of the robe Hannah brought Samuel annually at Shiloh (2:19), and evidently the garment that distinguished Samuel throughout his career. Samuel wore this robe on the occasion of Saul's rejection (15:27).

Mention of the robe allows Saul to identify the apparition. "So Saul knew that it was Samuel" (28:14). In the next scene Samuel speaks to Saul (vv. 15-19). There is no indication on the part of the narrator that this apparition, strange as it may be, is anyone else rather than Samuel. A disinterested reader of this story gets the distinct impression that the actual Samuel is intended here. He delivers a message to Saul consistent with what Samuel had said while living (see 15:27-29). He is called "Samuel" without any qualification

(vv. 14-15, 20). Only in the initial phases of the seance, when the shadowy figure, the *élohim*, materializes, is there any doubt. The writer intends to give the impression this is Samuel appearing from Sheol, the "place of silence and stillness where the impotence of the shadow beings makes the boisterous vigour [sic] of real life quite impossible."<sup>19</sup> This was not only the intention of the writer, but also the belief of the implied readers of this story.<sup>20</sup> In a class in Samuel, which I currently teach at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, a student from one of

***Like other ancient cultures, I discovered, the Hebrews believed when a person died, while their earthly life ended, they did not fully relinquish existence or consciousness.***

the related Advent or Millerite churches, the Church of God General Conference, had difficulties with this natural sense of the passage.<sup>21</sup> Having asked him one day in class to translate the Hebrew of a portion of 1 Samuel 28 that mentions Samuel's return from the dead, I noticed his hesitation. "Do you have a problem with this passage?" I queried. "Yes," he sheepishly responded. "I don't believe the dead can return from the grave."

Like other ancient cultures, I discovered, the Hebrews believed when a person died, while their earthly life ended, they did not fully relinquish existence or consciousness. Instead, in a place under or outside the earth, known only to God, they lingered on, unaware of their former lives.<sup>22</sup> From Sheol, individual spirits, known as *élohim* or *numina*, could be

invoked for consultation. In this, the Hebrews were simply reflecting traditional concepts known to us in Mesopotamian and Canaanite literature.<sup>23</sup> Much later in the tradition (second century BC), in his praise of the ancient worthies of the Hebrew people, Ben Sira writes of Samuel:

Even after he had fallen asleep, he prophesied and made known to the king his death, and lifted up his voice from the ground in prophecy, to blot out the wickedness of the people. Sirach 46:20

The writer of 1 Samuel 28 along with the Hebrew tradition, therefore understands this apparition from the dead to be the prophet Samuel in a post-mortem state. Furthermore, the writer thinks of Samuel as having been "disturbed," that is, aroused out of the stupor of death.<sup>24</sup> If we therefore take Saul's experience at face value, as the narrator apparently does, what does this story suggest about the soul-sleep or conditionalist view of human beings in death? I found myself pondering this question more and more as my Old Testament students focused on this incident, demanding an account consistent with Adventism, and leaving me frustrated without an explanation that really made sense.

First Samuel 28 runs counter to the notion absolutely critical to the conditionalist theory that the dead are always in any and all circumstances unconscious. If, upon death, there is complete dissolution, as the conditionalist assumes, then there would be nothing to mediate consciousness, as this passage seems to require. The only possible response from conditionalism, without reading something alien into the text, would be to say that Yahweh, under these unusual circumstances, miraculously brought Samuel back to some form of consciousness and allowed him to reiterate to Saul what he had said while he was alive. But this is not the Adventist reaction.<sup>25</sup> Instead, it clings to the theory that the apparition is not really Samuel—contrary to the plain text—and that the devil is deceiving Saul. Ellen White explains that the female medium "had entered into a covenant with Satan to

yield herself to his control," so the apparition that appeared could not have been Samuel. "Samuel was not present in that haunt of evil spirits. That supernatural appearance was produced solely by the power of Satan."<sup>26</sup>

How could this be? I kept asking myself. The text does not yield anything remotely similar to such an interpretation. If one had only this text, one could never arrive at the idea this was an evil impersonation of Samuel. The passage plainly says, "And Samuel said to Saul . . ." (v. 15, author's translation). I knew, however, that Adventism had no choice but to give this explanation. Its doctrine of death is not open to any other possibility.

ADVENTISM APPEARS TO have acquired the conditionalist belief from Millerite preacher, George Storrs (1796-1879), who had developed it by 1841 before he joined the Millerites. Storrs, an exile from both Congregationalism and Methodism, had studied the Scriptures carefully and come to the conclusion that human beings do not possess inherent immortality, but receive it only as a gift through Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> The wicked, having refused the gift, will be utterly extinguished. Although William Miller opposed Storrs' view, as did Josiah Litch, the view stuck, and received its first full Seventh-day Adventist treatment with D. P. Hall. Hall, who later became entangled in the Messenger party defection from Adventism in the 1850s, seems to be the first Adventist to reason that since human beings are a unit, when a person dies, the whole dies. The soul therefore cannot be inherently immortal. Hall also recognized the implications of the view of the immortality of the soul for the Second Advent, the resurrection, and the final fate of the wicked. If souls go immediately to be with Christ, of what use is the Second Advent or the resurrection? "The views we entertain of man's nature," he wrote, "will give shape and color, to a very large extent, to our views of life, death, resurrection, heaven, hell, and, in fact, all the other subjects of revelation."<sup>28</sup>

So it has.

The doctrine went on to acquire a kind of "canonical" status, enshrined as one of the foundational beliefs of Adventism. In 1889 Ellen White listed it among what she called the "landmarks" of the Adventist movement. These were the "cleansing of the sanctuary," the three angels' messages, the Sabbath, and the "nonimmortality of the wicked."<sup>29</sup> She further declared the "immortality of the soul was one of those false doctrines that Rome, borrowing from paganism, incorporated into the religion of Christendom." It rests upon the "doctrine of consciousness in death," an

## *Adventism appears to have acquired the conditionalist belief from Millerite preacher, George Storrs...*

idea "opposed to the teachings of the Scriptures, to the dictates of reason, and to our feelings of humanity." The idea of inherent immortality will form one of Satan's last day deceptions—a "masterpiece of deception," she concludes.<sup>30</sup>

Strong words, those. But I couldn't shake the most obvious teaching of 1 Samuel 28 and the other passages in the Old Testament that seemed to run in a contrary direction. True, there were many texts that suggested soul-sleep,<sup>31</sup> but then, there were the others. The two ideas of "sleep" and consciousness seem to have co-existed in Hebrew thought, without any attempt at reconciliation.<sup>32</sup> Which conveyed the truth? On which side should a person come down? What was the exact condition of a person in death? The biblical presentation of death seemed far

more complex than the Adventist theory of conditionalism.

RECOGNIZING THAT BELIEFS change over time, I turned to the so-called Intertestament Period, the era between the Old and New Testaments (c. 300 BC - AD 50), to see what I might find about views of death before the coming of Christianity. What I found was just as disturbing. The Wisdom of Solomon, a wisdom book written about the middle of the first century B.C., comments:

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them . . . For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Wisdom 3:1,4

Even more explicit, the book of 4 Maccabees, a lecture on the mastery of the passions by religious reason, written sometime between c. 63 BC and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70, tells of the martyrdoms of Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother under the regime of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 BC). The "prize" of these Jewish martyrs, after death, was "immortality in endless life" (17:12). Even Antiochus "marveled at their endurance, because of which they now stand before the divine throne and live the life of eternal blessedness" (v. 17). For this and other crimes, Antiochus "was both punished on earth and is being chastised after his death" (18:5).<sup>33</sup> Despite having to die such a torturous death, these martyrs, along with their ancestors "have received pure and immortal souls from God" (v. 23).

In the Intertestament Period, like the Old Testament, the idea of some form of consciousness after death seems to have co-existed in early Judaism alongside notions of soul-sleep and the resurrection. The former, according to Otto Kaiser, has roots not only in popular belief, but also in Persian and Greek influences upon Hebrew thought; the latter is a distinctly Jewish solution connected with the expectation of a final judgment.<sup>34</sup>

Turning to the New Testament, I found essentially the same tension. One group of texts seems to regard the dead as uncon-

scious, at rest until the resurrection;<sup>35</sup> another, that the dead are conscious in some way immediately after death, possibly in paradise or hell, while they await the resurrection and the judgment. In the latter case, Hebrews refers to the “spirits of the righteous made perfect” who are already in heaven (12:23). Note also the apocalyptic reference to the souls under the altar in heaven, martyrs for Christ, who cry out, “Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood?” (Rev. 6:9-10). Consider, too, Jesus’ parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. In Hades the rich man “looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side” (Lk. 16:23). Several other New Testament passages suggest the same belief (2 Cor. 4:16-5:10; Phil. 1:21-23).<sup>36</sup> One introduces even more unusual notions. I refer to the strange passage in 1 Peter that has Christ preaching to the “spirits in prison,” the realm of the dead (3:19-20):

He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark. 1 Peter 3:19-20

This enigmatic passage has occasioned much debate through the centuries.<sup>37</sup> When did Christ do this? What spirits? How did Christ accomplish it? Three substantial interpretations have been advanced. The first insists that, prior to his incarnation, Jesus preached to the disobedient in Noah’s day. A second, following the text somewhat literally, assumes that between his death and resurrection, Jesus went down to the place of the dead and preached to the spirits of the people who had died in Noah’s time. The third interpretation also assumes an action between death and resurrection, but instead of the disobedient from the flood, Jesus proclaimed his victory over all principalities and powers to the evil angels who are mentioned in Gen. 6:2-4.

Which interpretation is correct? The opening prepositional phrase, *en hoi*, should be taken as “in which circumstances,” “while, or “when.”<sup>38</sup> If so, then the passage is referring to a time immediately following Jesus’

death. This would seem to rule out the typical Adventist response, namely, that this is referring to the proclamation in Noah’s day.<sup>39</sup> Who then are the spirits? One cannot rule out that these are the spirits of the wicked dead imprisoned in the underworld. One detects here something similar to the Greek and Roman notions of Hades.<sup>40</sup> At minimum, this passage agrees with those in the Old Testament that see the grave as a shadowy realm in which some form of consciousness remains.

By the time I reached the end of my study, I’d seen enough. It occurred to me

***The church . . . seized upon passages that support soul-sleep, and downplayed others that offer a different perspective.***

that the Adventist view of the nature of death, like so many other theological tenets of the church, had failed to reckon with the complexity of the biblical data. Instead of dealing realistically and maturely with the difficult material in the Bible, even though it might not be capable of synthesis, the church in its formative years had ignored some of it, and jumped to the conclusion that conditionalism was taught consistently in Scripture, and that this notion furthermore ought to be a foundational belief and a test of fellowship for Christians. The church, in other words, seized upon passages that support soul-sleep, and downplayed others that offer a different perspective. Perhaps in some century hence Adventism will recognize this rush to judgment and modify its dogmatic posture to permit more than one view on this matter.

Why did Adventism seize upon the conditionalistic interpretation and make it a litmus test for Christians? Not being a sociologist, I can only speculate. Because Adventism differed significantly from the established churches of the mid-nineteenth century, it eagerly grasped for ways of justifying its distinction. Naturally the differentiating teachings, such as the Sabbath, the three angels’ messages, and the state of dead, became symbols of identity. Hence they eventually evolved into tests of what it meant to be a Seventh-day Adventist. Today, Adventist evangelists customarily regard these as “testing truths,” because they tend to separate between those who want to become Adventists and those who do not. Adventists still cling to these points of identity, for they do not want to be classified casually along with other Christians.

Nevertheless, both Adventists, with their idea of the non-immortality of the soul, and those adhering to the immortality of the soul sincerely appeal to the Bible for support. The biblical evidence cannot, without distortion, be completely reduced to either view. The Bible cannot be forced entirely into either camp. Its portrayal of death transcends both conditionalism and the immortality of the soul. Why doesn’t the Bible resolve the issue? It is not the purpose of biblical revelation, in my opinion, to reveal the exact nature of the state of death, any more than it is to reveal the spherical shape of the earth, or the origins of the universe. In some of these matters, the biblical writers may merely reflect the common understanding of the time.

This makes it all the more surprising that Adventists have chosen to make their view of death a test of Christian fellowship. If a person believes in the immortality of the soul, or in consciousness beyond death, he/she cannot remain an Adventist in good and regular standing.<sup>41</sup> In my judgment, it is unreasonable to take such a matter—left unclarified in Scripture—and insist that a Christian take a position one way or another. “No person’s confession should ever have a binding force on another believer” Kirby Godsey wisely counsels. “We do not know enough to do that. A confession is a gift, not a test.”<sup>42</sup>



MY OWN THINKING has come a long way since the encounters around the meaning of 1 Samuel 28 and the experience of Saul in Old Testament classes at Southern Adventist University. I am still a conditionalist—barely—no doubt because of my Adventist heritage. But I now recognize how tenuous that model really is, and how incapable it is of holding together all the data within the Bible. And the biblical record is even more complex than what I've indicated here. I don't have all the answers. I have even fewer than I once thought I did. But then, I realize, my salvation doesn't depend on having all the answers. It depends on Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (Jn. 11:25). !

<sup>1</sup> Fundamental Belief, number 25, cited in *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Rev. ed.; Washington: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), p. 31. The following scriptural references are cited in support of this belief: Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 6:15-16; Eccl. 9:5-6; Ps. 146:3-4; John 11:11-14; Col. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:1-10.

<sup>2</sup> (Washington: *Review and Herald*, 1966), p. 333.

<sup>3</sup> (Washington: *Review and Herald*, 1988), p. 352.

<sup>4</sup> Parapsychology is a branch of psychology that deals with psychic phenomena, such as clairvoyance, telepathy, extrasensory perception, and other occult matters.

<sup>5</sup> This reminds me of the famous question in Ecclesiastes: "Who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth?" (3:21). All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the *New Revised Standard Version*, copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and used by permission.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of recent scientific experiments in parapsychology and their bearing on death, see John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* (3rd ed.; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1983), pp. 122-32.

<sup>7</sup> Compare the rich man's pain in Jesus' parable, "In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side" (Lk. 16:23).

<sup>8</sup> These stones are said to be upon the priests breast-piece of judgment, apparently a pouch containing the sacred lots (see Exod. 28:30).

<sup>9</sup> Compare Judas' departure from the Last Supper at "night" (Jn 13:30).

<sup>10</sup> Cited in T. Ashton, ed., *Byron's Hebrew Melodies* (1972).

<sup>11</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> J. Lust, "On Wizards and Prophets," in *Studies in Prophecy*, VTSup 26 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), pp. 133-42.

<sup>13</sup> Brown, Driver, Briggs, p. 396.

<sup>14</sup> This show airs on late-night TV on the SciFi Channel.

<sup>15</sup> When I watched Edwards' show, I noticed that the information conveyed was not always exact, and could be easily misinterpreted by an unwary person over anxious to hear something from a deceased relative. The room for outright deception is potentially huge.

<sup>16</sup> For a survey of this controversy up to 800 AD, see K. Smelik, "The Witch of Endor: 1 Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian Exegesis till 800 A.D.," *Vigiliae Christianae* 33 (1979): 160-79.

<sup>17</sup> *The Conditionalist Faith of our Fathers* (2 vols.; Washington: Review and Herald, 1966), vol. 1, p. 179. Similarly, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* argues that, since necromancy had been forbidden by the Levitical law, "the communication must have come from some other source" than God. That source was a "satanic impersonation of Samuel" (ed. F. D. Nichol [7 vols.; Washington: Review and Herald, 1954], vol. 2, pp. 586-87).

<sup>18</sup> Helmer Ringgren, "\_\_\_\_," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), vol. 1, p. 282. Isaiah 8:19 uses the word in a similar fashion.

<sup>19</sup> Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961-67), vol. 2, p. 211. For addition insight into the nature of Sheol in the Old Testament, see Deut 26:14; Isa 14:9-11. In the Apocrypha; note Sirach 30:18; Tobit 4:17.

<sup>20</sup> It is difficult accurately to date the book of Samuel. The final form of the book could not be earlier than the time of Solomon (tenth century BC), and is probably later, perhaps sometime in the sixth century BC. Saul's reign is believed to have been c. 1020-1000 BC.

<sup>21</sup> The view that the dead are unconscious until the resurrection may still be found in other groups who formed from the Millerite Movement, such as the Advent Christian Church and the Church of God General Conference (see Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* [10th ed., rev. Samuel S. Hill; Nashville: Abingdon, 1995], pp. 35-37).

<sup>22</sup> See Job 14:22; Ps. 22:29; 139:7-8;

<sup>23</sup> An Ugaritic text from the fifteenth century BC describes the place of the dead as a city, whose ruler must feed on mud and drink it "by cupful and barrel-full." See T. H. Gaster, "Dead, Abode of the," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. G. A. Buttrick (5 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1962-76), vol. 1, p. 787.

<sup>24</sup> G. B. Caird, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," *Interpreter's Bible*, ed. G. A. Buttrick (12 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1953), vol. 2, p. 1029. The Hebrew word translated "disturb" is *ragaz*, "quake, be perturbed, excited."

<sup>25</sup> "It would be contrary to every principle of righteousness to imagine divine authority being give to a necromancer to summon Samuel from his place of rest. To think that God, who had placed His ban on necromancy (Deut. 18:10-12), would yield to the request of a medium, and disturb His sleeping saint, Samuel, would be wholly inconceivable" (*Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, pp. 587-88).

<sup>26</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), pp. 676, 679.

<sup>27</sup> *An Enquiry; Are the Souls of the Wicked Immortal? In Three Letters* (Albany, NY, 1842).

<sup>28</sup> *Man Not Immortal: The Only Shield Against the Seductions of Modern Spiritualism* (Battle Creek: Steam

Press, 1854), p. 3. Cited in Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism & the American Dream* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1946), p. 30. The reference to the "nonimmortality of the wicked" must refer to the fact that death will be complete for the wicked, while the righteous will receive immortality from God as a gift at the resurrection.

<sup>30</sup> *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), pp. 549, 545, 561.

<sup>31</sup> E.g., Ps. 6:5; 30:9; 88:10; 115:17; 146:4; Eccl. 9:5-10. Since it is well known to the reader, I do not intend in this article to discuss this interpretation in full.

<sup>32</sup> "The two prospects, the communion of the departed in another place and the deep unconsciousness of the deceased, rather coincided for them, in the shadowy existence of the underworld" (Otto Kaiser and Eduard Lohse, *Death and Life*, tran. J. E. Steely [Nashville: Abingdon, 1977], p. 33). Job 14:21-22 has both ideas side-by-side.

<sup>33</sup> As he prepares to torture them, the brothers say to Antiochus, "We, through this severe suffering and endurance, shall have the prize of virtue and shall be with God, on whose account we suffer; but you, because of your bloodthirstiness toward us, will deservedly undergo from the divine justice eternal torment by fire" (9:8-9).

<sup>34</sup> *Death and Life*, p. 91.

<sup>35</sup> Jn. 5:28-29; 11:11-14; 1 Cor. 15:50-57.

<sup>36</sup> Adventists have, of course, attempted to blunt the force of these passages. See *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1957), pp. 511-609. The explanations given, however, only serve to confirm the essential ambiguity of the biblical record on this question.

<sup>37</sup> For what follows, I am indebted to David Bartlett, "The First Letter of Peter," *New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. L. Keck (12 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), vol. 12, pp. 293-95.

<sup>38</sup> See F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, tran. and rev. R. W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961), par. 219(2). Blass and Debrunner cite Rom. 2:1; 8:3; Heb. 2:18 as other examples.

<sup>39</sup> The *Adventist Bible Commentary* suggests that the passage either refers to Christ's preaching to the people in Noah's day in his pre-existent state or by the Holy Spirit. The idea that Christ preached to the spirits of the disobedient then held in Hades would mean that to them was given a second chance after death, something that is not accorded anyone else in Scripture (vol. 7, pp. 574-76).

<sup>40</sup> See 2 Pet. 2:4 where *Tartaros*, the infernal realm of punishment, is said to be the abode of the angels that sinned.

<sup>41</sup> The doctrine of the nonimmortality of the soul appears as noted above in the Fundamental Beliefs of the Church. A person is subject to church discipline, which includes excommunication, for "denial of faith in the fundamentals of the gospel and in the cardinal doctrines of the church or teaching doctrines contrary to the same" (*Adventist Church Manual*, p. 162).

<sup>42</sup> *When We Talk About God ... Let's Be Honest* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1996), p. 6.

# The nature of man and death

Dr. Verle Streifling

**...if the investigative judgment were true, then how were these many saints in heaven before their cases were reviewed, and before the resurrection?**

In her Dec 12 1844 vision, Ellen White records Jesus and her ‘winging our way upward’ in heaven, and “here we saw good old Father Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, Daniel, and many like them” (*A Word to the Little Flock* p.16, 1847). This was before accepting the sanctuary and investigative judgment teaching, by Bro. Crosier, that she established by vision Feb 1845. “The Lord shew me in vision, more than one year ago, that Brother Crosier had the true light, on the cleansing of the sanctuary, &c; and that it was his will, that Brother C. should write out the view which he gave us in the *Day-Star, Extra*, February 7, 1846.” (*ibid*, p.12)

But these views created conflict, for if the investigative judgment were true, then how were these many saints in heaven *before* their cases were reviewed, and *before* the resurrection? Her Dec 1844 vision supported the Evangelical view of death. Was this unbiblical? Or was the Investigative judgment view wrong, which she endorsed in Feb 1845? To hold their new accounting for Oct 22 1844, this part of her 1844 vision was expunged from later publication, and Ellen urgently recalled “any or all of my first views as published prior to 1851” (*Selected Messages*, bk 1, p.63)

Her ‘visions’ raise the issue if the Evangelical view of the nature of man and death is Biblical. Why is this view held by so many, but the Adventist’s view after 1844 and their investigative judgment is held by so few? Does Scripture support the Evangelical’s view?

In addressing this, we should note some principles of Bible interpretation needed to avoid error. First, the Bible alone is our authority for faith and practice. It should be its own interpreter, giving its definitions of its terms. Then the New Testament

must define the old—since it is God’s clearer and final revelation. The Bible must overrule our false logic from our fallen intellects, and we should use many scriptures for a point, rather than a few proof texts that may be capable of differing interpretations.

We must observe important contexts as when, where, who, how, why, etc., the cultural, covenant and historic contexts, as well as the literary genre. Poetic writing must not be used to overturn direct discourse, for example; and figures of speech need be identified and rightly interpreted. Also the original languages must be correctly translated. It’s wrong to rely on mistranslated Hebrew or Greek, as ‘hades’ being rendered ‘grave’ at 1 Cor 15:54 KJV, when the word ‘mnameon’ is ‘grave’ or ‘sepulcher’.

Sound doctrine must present antitheses and harmonize them with one’s thesis itself, so the unity of Scripture is preserved. This unity of Scripture will also account for the different dispensations and God’s greater self-revelation in the new covenant setting.

God made man with essentially two parts: an inward man (called the ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’), and an outward man (the body), so that the spirit is the real person which dwells within the body. Paul explicitly states “though our outward man is perishing, yet our inward man is being renewed day by day”, defining the outward as that which is seen and temporary, while the inward is unseen, but eternal, in 1 Cor 4:16-18.

James 4:5 says “The spirit who dwells in us, yearns to envy” while Eph 3:16 says we are “strengthened in the inner man”. Peter calls this the “hidden man of the heart”, using ‘heart’ figuratively for ‘spirit’ (1 P 3:4); and Daniel says “I was

**Angels, who are spirits, have the form or shape of a being (person). So too, men's spirits have form or shape.**

grieved in my spirit within my body" (7:15).

Zech 12:1 says God forms man's spirit within him, and 1 Cor 2:11 asks "what man knows the things of man except the spirit of man which is in him?" and many other Scriptures as Acts 17:16; Job 14:22; Ps 42:6; Ezek 11:19 and 36:26 predicting the rebirth of one's spirit (John 3:6), concur. In Psalm 103:1 David exclaims "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all my innermost being bless His holy name!"

From these we better understand Gen 2:7 KJV "God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living soul". This more accurately says "God breathed into man the living spirit and man became a living creature", for the Heb. 'nephesh' is 'creature' in Gen 1:21,24,28,30. John 3:7, 8 tells of the spirit's new birth as "The Spirit He breathes upon whom He wills..." (Alford's *NIV Interlinear*, or the *Renaissance NT*, Dr. Randy Yeager). In John 20:22 Jesus breathed on his disciples, saying to them "Receive ye the Holy Spirit", effecting their new birth, and becoming alive again, unto God.

We show the Holy Spirit is a person since he has essential personal attributes, namely mind, will, emotions and communicates. So do the angels, and so too the inward man, (his spirit), is the real person for having these same personal attributes, also applied to his heart when it's figuratively used for his spirit.

So passages as Eph 4:23 'the spirit of our mind' and 1 Cor 2:11 or Ps 139:4 saying his spirit knows him; or Job saying the Almighty gives man's spirit understanding and God's "as a man thinks in his heart" and many others as Gen 6:5; 8:21; 17:17; Ex 35:35; 36:2; Deut 4:39 all show man's heart can think, love, hate, etc., proving man's spirit has his mind with knowledge, and thus is his person.

Man's spirit also has its will. David sang "I will bless the Lord... My soul will make its boast in Thee." Here "I" is equated with "My Soul" in the couplet, and "will" shows his soul could purpose its actions. So also Heb 4:12; 1 Cor 14:25; Jer 30:24; Isa 14:13; Gen 8:21; 27:41 and scores of others show one's heart or spirit has its own will, as another essential personal attribute, thus being the real person.

Our spirit also has emotions. It cleaves (Gen 34:8); longs for (42:21); abhors (Lev 26:11); loves (1 Sam 18:1), etc. About 80 such samples occur in Scripture, and 100 more speaking of man's heart. 2 Pet 2:8 tells Lot "tormented his righteous soul day by day" when in Sodom. Thus one's soul can

be righteous or wicked, as Micah 6:7 "Shall I give... the fruit of my body, for the sin of my soul?" or Jer 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked".

The Spirit believes in Christ (Rom 10:9+10; 6:17; 1 Cor 7:37; Acts 8:37; Lk 24:25); it worships God (Ps 103:1; Deut 6:5; etc.). Indeed, the true worshippers must worship Him in spirit and in truth as Jesus said in Jn 4:23, 24 and Paul repeats in Phil 3:3; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16 and 1 Cor 14:15+16. True worship must be from the heart (soul or spirit) as opposed to mere lip service (Mt 15:8; Mk 7:6; Isa 29:13).

Man's spirit also communicates with God. Rom 8:16 says "The Spirit Himself, bears witness with our spirit" and Job 32:8 "There is a spirit in man and the Spirit of the Almighty gives him understanding".

Paul speaking in tongues is "not speaking to man, but to God... in the spirit" (1 Cor 14: 1, 2, 28). In Matt 17, Mk 9 and Lk 9 Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah, long since dead, at his transfiguration. And God says "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind" in Jer 17:10.

Angels, who are spirits, have the form or shape of a being (person). So too, men's spirits have form or shape. Zech 12:1 says "Thus says Yehweh who forms the spirit of man within him." 'Forms' is from the Hebrew word used in Genesis, when God formed man's body. The disciples saw Moses and Elijah in the form of men (Lk 9:32). 1 Sam 28:11-16 says "When the woman saw Samuel... she said to Saul 'I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth.' So he asked 'what is its form?' The Bible says Samuel talked to Saul, giving a true prediction of Saul's death.

Because one's spirit has a form, it communicates, believes in Christ and worships God, it has mind, will and emotions, etc., it is therefore the real person, which dwells within his body, called a 'house of clay'.

Thus one's body (the outward man) and his soul or spirit (the inward man) are not the same. Man is made in God's image. God, who is spirit, has a soul (Isa 1:14; Lev 26:11; Jer 4:31; 5:9; etc, Zch 11:8; Mt 12: 18; Heb 10:38), but His soul is not a body, so neither is man's. Jesus said "Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul" (Matt 10:28) "...fear him rather who after he has killed the body has the power to cast (the soul) into hell" (Lk 12:5). And Micah 6:7 reads "Shall I give my firstborn... the fruit of my body, for the sin of my soul?" showing the two are juxtaposed. Some reason from Ezek 9:5 'the soul that sins,

***Paul describes death as 'we depart and go to be with Christ which is far better' (Phil 1:21-24) and 'we rather to be absent from the body, and be present with the Lord' (2 Cor 5:8).***

shall die', that the body that dies is the soul. Many scriptures as above, dispel this fallacy. While the soul is where sin occurs, its death is being cast into gehenna where it is eternally separated from God—not annihilated. Quoting Isa 66:24, Jesus describes this as "where their worm dies not, neither shall their fire be quenched" in Mk 9:44, 46. Jehovah's Witnesses delete these from their Bibles. But the Gospel is, the soul who receives Christ, is regenerated by the Spirit, has eternal life, has passed from death to life, and the soul never dies though the body may yet perish in the grave. (Jn 3:16,17; 5:24; 11:25,26; 1Jn 5:11-13).

Thus man's spirit is his inward man, which leaves the body at death, so the body is dead. As James 2:26 says "The body without the spirit is dead". In 1Kings 17:17 the boy was dead for there was 'no spirit left in him', and in Gen 35:18 we read of Rachel 'her soul was departing (for she died)'. Paul describes death as 'we depart and go to be with Christ which is far better' (Phil 1:21-24) and 'we rather to be absent from the body, and be present with the Lord' (2 Cor 5:8). From this we easily understand Eccl 12:5-7 saying "the dust (the body) returns to the earth...but the spirit returns to God who gave it", or Ps 90:10 poetically "The years of our days are 70 or 80 years...soon they are cut off, and we fly away!" Paul wrote 'the time of my departure is at hand' (2 Tim 4:6) and Peter 'I must soon put off this tent'(2 Pet 1:14).

On the other hand, the dead body is resurrected by the spirit's return into the body. In 1 Kings 17:17 the prophet prayed "Let this child's soul come back to him", and we're told "the soul of the child returned to him and he revived". Also of Jairus' daughter "Then her spirit returned and she arose immediately". So we see that while the body is dead, the spirit remains alive as Jesus explained "I am the God of Abraham...Isaac...Jacob. God is not God of the dead, but of the living". (Matt 22:32; Mk 12:27; Lk 20:38). While their bodies were dead, their spirits were alive for "the inward man... is eternal" (2 Cor 4:16-18).

Thus the body is our outward man, it is seen, temporary, an earthly house, or a tent of flesh, and while we are in the body we are absent from the Lord. Conversely, our spirit is the inward man, unseen, eternal, a spiritual body, renewed and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, a building from God, eternal in heaven and when it is absent from the body it is present with the Lord. With all this we've found the spirit has mind, will, emotions, communicates, believes in Christ, worships God

and has form and shape, being the real person, and it stays alive while the body is dead.

So being with Christ in heaven, the believer's spirit is still very conscious of where it is, and who it is with. In Rev 6:9-11 the souls of those slain for the Word of God are in heaven asking God to recompense their death, and in Rev 15:1-3 we see those who were martyred in heaven, before the 7 last plagues are poured out in ch 16, and they are worshipping God! While Moses and Elijah had died, yet they spoke with Christ of his coming death, at His transfiguration. Paul told of being caught up to the 'third heaven' and what he saw, when speaking of his being stoned to death. Samuel correctly foretold Saul's death (above); and of the Rich man and Lazarus, we know Jesus would not use false teaching to promote God's Truth, for He'd be judged a sinner (Rom 3:5-8). Here 'Abraham's bosom' describes his immediate presence, as Christ being 'in the bosom of the Father' (Jn 1:18).

Some ignore the context of Eccl 9:5 'the dead know not anything' to conclude death is unconsciousness. But 'dead' applies to the body, (James 2:26) not the soul (above), which is eternal. If this be extrapolated to the whole person, Ecclesiastes is still speaking of the context "Under the Sun" meaning 'on the face of the earth'. The departed soul knows what's in heaven—but not on the earth. Yet forcing literal interpretation on this text brings error, for it also says 'neither have they any more reward'. Interpreting the first part, without its context 'under the sun', requires the same for the second part—thus repudiating the resurrection of the dead and heavenly rewards like the Saducees. But Eccl says by context they'll have no more reward 'under the sun' or 'on the face of this earth'.

Eccl 9:5 'the memory of them is forgotten' is taken to mean 'their own memory is non-existent'. Rather the text says 'the remembrance of them is forgotten', so they will no longer be remembered. Also Psalm 146:4 saying 'In that day their thoughts perish' does not mean they cease thinking, but rather 'their plans' or counsels (Heb. *esh-tonaw*) will come to nothing, as the man planning to tear down his barns to build bigger, when God said 'this day your soul will be required of you'. We see the weakness of using poetic texts to dispute the direct discourse of many Bible passages.

Psalm 49:19 'You will redeem my soul from the grave' is misused to show the soul is the body. But the Heb '*sheol*' is equivalent for the Gk '*hades*'

**Those teaching  
'soul sleep' know  
it's contrary to  
many Scriptures,  
as is so vividly  
portrayed in the  
SDA's Clear Word  
Bible with over 50  
passages changed  
by additions,  
deletions or  
rewording, so  
readers won't see  
what God says of  
man and death.**

speaking of the place for the dead inside the earth. It is not the literal grave for which the Heb 'qeborrah' or the Gk 'mnameon' is used. In Acts 2:31,32 Jesus' soul was not left in hell (hades), neither did His body see corruption in the sepulcher (mnameon). 'Hades' was mistranslated as 'grave' in 1 Cor 15:54 KJV. The new text reads "O Death' (Gk 'ho thanatos') where is your victory?" Speaking of David's not being in heaven, 'for his sepulcher is here to this day' in Acts 2, Peter spoke of his body in 'mnameon', not of his soul which is in heaven (Eph 4:8; Ps 68:18; Heb 12:24).

I often hear 'If the soul goes to heaven at death, there's no need of the resurrection!' But one's logic must not overturn the Scripture. God made man as a being with a body, and while the soul is presently redeemed, Paul says in Rom 8:21-23 we're all still waiting for the 'redemption of our body' as we still groan to be delivered from this bondage of corruption. This deliverance will be realized when Jesus comes for His Church, as Paul declares in 1 Cor 15.

Scripture shows the souls of those who've died in Christ, who are with Him in heaven, will return with Him for their resurrected bodies. 1 Ths 4:14 says "...even so God will bring with Him, those who sleep in Jesus." Since 'bring' is associated with 'come', while 'take' fits with 'go', this speaks of when Jesus comes from heaven, rather than taking saints back to heaven with him. 1 Ths 3:13 "...at the coming of our Lord...with all His saints" uses the Gk 'haggios' speaking of people, rather than 'angelos' which as 'saints' refers to angels. Paul assured the Colossians "When Christ who is our life shall appear, you also shall appear with Him in glory" (3:4). Jude 14 "Behold the Lord comes with ten thousand of His saints" echos Zech 14:5 "The Lord my God will come, and all the saints with you".

Why are they coming too? 1 Ths 4:13-18 says God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus, He will descend from heaven with a shout, and the dead will be raised.. By Bible definition, 'the dead' speaks of 'the body without the spirit is dead'. In 1 Cor 15, 'the dead' refers to 'the body' so the bodies of those who died will be raised, when reunited with their spirits which Jesus brings with Him when He comes from heaven. These bodies are raised different from how they died. 1 Cor 15:35-58 asks "How are the dead raised? With what body...the body is sown in corruption, it is raised in Incorruption, it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in Glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised

in Power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a Spiritual body...the dead will be raised incorruptible, we shall be changed...incorruptible, mortal will put on immortality"

Those teaching 'soul sleep' know it's contrary to many Scriptures, as is so vividly portrayed in the SDA's Clear Word Bible with over 50 passages changed by additions, deletions or rewording, so readers won't see what God says of man and death. For example, to the words 'depart and be with Christ' are added 'sentenced to death, and in the next moment of consciousness see Christ'(Phil 1:23). James 2:26 'the body without the spirit is dead' is changed to 'a person's body is useless without breath'. At Jn 3:6, 'that which is born of the flesh is fleshly, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' is changed to 'that which is physical is one thing and that which is spiritual is another'. 1 Ths 5:10 "...that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him" has "...whether we're alive or dead when He comes, we belong to Him and He will take us home to be with him forever". Finally, Lk 20:38 "For He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him" adds "they believed that God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living, and deletes "for all live to Him".

I've tried to briefly sketch an Evangelical view of man and death. As space disallows depth of presentation, there are still some unanswered questions. A reader wishing more detail will find a thorough work by Dr. Robert Morey, *Death and the Afterlife*, with an excellent appendix dealing with the theses of the 'soul sleep' view; and Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology* will be a good help to those seeking it. They also have good work on the related issues of 'hades' 'sheol' and hell, or 'gehenna'.

The many scriptures shared in this article lend support to Ellen White's vision of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Daniel, Noah and many other saints in heaven, Dec 12, 1844, before she endorsed the investigative judgment. Yet this judgment was to have begun on the Day of Atonement that year, so they should not have been in heaven after Oct 22, 1844 at all—or better said after Sept 23, the real Day of atonement, that year (see *Whitewashed*, Rev. Sydney Cleveland). So we now have the puzzle of "how and when were these saints expelled from heaven, and to where, to await their investigation, and subsequent resurrection from the dead?"

*Confronting a passage I used to run from:*

# Paul and the Afterlife in 2 Corinthians 5:1–9

by Dale Ratzlaff

**W**hen I was Seventh-day Adventist pastor and Bible teacher and had questions about this section of Scripture I used the “when-persecuted-in-one-text-flee-to-the-next” hermeneutic much like the Jehovah’s Witnesses. I would immediately turn to Eccl. 9:5 However, I will no longer permit myself this luxury. I must come to grips with what it teaches *in its own contextual setting*. Therefore let us carefully exegete the section regardless of whether or not it fits our paradigm of perceived truth.

While section headings are not inspired they nevertheless convey what the Bible translators understood the passage to be about. The KJV heads this section with “Paul’s assured hope of immortal glory.” The NIV leads with “Our Heavenly Dwelling” and the NASB entitles this section, “The Temporal and Eternal.” This section is didactic teaching by the leading theologian of the New Testament, the Apostle Paul. Therefore, it carries the highest teaching weight, more than poetry, more than old covenant, shadowy statements. But what *does* this section teach?

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

in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

In 2 Cor. 4, Paul describes his apostolic ministry. In verse 7 he states that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” What is the “treasure” of which he speaks? It is the Life of Christ, the eternal life we *now* have in the spirit. This becomes clear as we read v. 11, “...we are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the *life of Jesus* also may be manifest in our mortal flesh.” Then in v. 16 Paul states, “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man [body] is decaying, yet our inner man [spirit] is being renewed day by day.” He ends chapter 4 with, “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen [outer man, body] are temporal, but the things which are not seen [inner man, spirit] are eternal. Paul’s focus is not on the earthly life in the body, but is directed to the heavenly, eternal existence in the spirit. For this reason, he can face hardship, persecution and even death with confidence. This is the context. Now, in chapter 5, Paul will develop his theology further. We now do a verse by verse study using the updated NASB.

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens 2 Cor. 5:1. (This and the following Bible references unless otherwise noted are taken from The Updated New American Standard Bible)

This verse is loaded. First, note the confidence expressed—“*we know*.” This is not some wishful theory, some speculative

idea, but it is stated as well-established Christian theology known by Paul *and* his associates. It is designed to bring comfort to those who live in uncertain times. There is no question that Paul uses “earthly tent” here to refer to the body. It is the “house” in which we dwell. In other words, the body is the home of the soul or spirit. The body is not the personality; rather the soul or spirit is the person that lives within the body. If this tent is torn down (body destroyed in death) Paul states categorically that we *have* a building from God.... Again, note well the words. Paul does not say that we *will have* a building at some future time, but we now *have*, (we now possess this asset) a building (place to live) from God. This heavenly house is not made with hands (not of human devising) and is eternal in the heavens. When one form of existence comes to an end and our earthly tent (body) is folded up, we immediately have another existence awaiting us in heaven with God and this existence is eternal. There is no uncertainty in Paul’s teaching. “We know... We have.”

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

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

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

This verse has been variously translated. The NASB is very literal and supports the idea expressed by the Greek aorist participle that the “putting on” is an accomplished event. The NIV renders this verse, “because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked.” I believe the NASB is correct for two reasons. First, Paul is building assurance not doubt. Second, this agrees with Paul’s statement in 5:1 “We have,” the present continuous tense in Greek. While we may not see our heavenly clothing at this time, nevertheless *we have already put it on*. This happened when we first believed in Christ. Because of this accomplished fact, we will not be found naked without our heavenly clothing of Christ’s righteousness and life.

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

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

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

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

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

be pleasing to Him 2 Cor. 5:6–9.

These three verses must be studied together as the theme is intertwined throughout. The “Therefore” refers back to the fact that we have already received the Holy Spirit who seals all true Christians when they believe (Eph. 1:13; 4:30) and He guarantees our future inheritance in Christ. This, in turn, gives us good hope. Now we come to the “meat” of this passage. “knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord...” Again, note the assurance “Knowing.” This is not speculation or wishful thinking it is “knowing.” “While we are at home in the body” must mean the eternal spirit or inward man, mentioned in Chapter 4:16–18 that is living in our “tent” or body. In other words Paul means this life we are “absent from the Lord.” He inserts, “We walk by faith, not by sight.” Physical sight or visible evidence does not easily prove the after life. We must grasp it by faith. Not blind faith, but a faith which rests upon the resurrection of Jesus who is our life and the Holy Spirit inspired Word of God. Paul now reaffirms that he and his companions are of good courage, meaning that they are walking by faith because they have already claimed as their own what they have not yet experienced.

Again, Paul states, “I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.” Paul cannot be speaking of an existence after the resurrection of the body, for then he would not be “absent from the body.” Rather, he must be speaking of the intermediate state between death and the resurrection. He describes this existence as being “at home with the Lord.” We now come to the clincher, “Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.” Paul’s ambition is to be pleasing to the Lord both now in this life and in the after life *including the time between death and the resurrection of the body*.

To describe this existence as unconscious sleep, or partial annihilation, simply does not fit the context. “An ambition to

be pleasing” is strong evidence of an active intellect, emotion and will, not unconscious sleep—which is essentially annihilation. Therefore, when we look at the context of this section and what it teaches, I must conclude that there is a conscious existence between death and the resurrection when we will be “absent from the body and at home with the Lord. This existence is one that allows for the function of an active intellect, emotion and will that is to be “preferred” to our present life “in the body.” This is why in Philippians 1:21 Paul could say, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Paul desired “to depart (from the body) and to be with Christ for *that is very much better*.”

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

Again, this teaching is not a saving message, not a testing truth. But, as Paul pointed out, it certainly causes us be of good courage wanting to please our Lord now and forever! It fits into the new covenant paradigm of good news. It makes sense out of the statements of Jesus. “He who believes has (present continuous) eternal life” (Jn. 6:47) “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die” (Jn. 11:25, 26).

## How I discovered the Bible CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

For many years Psalms and Proverbs with an occasional foray into Ecclesiastes was usually all I could manage when I sat down to read. Those books resonated with my experience. The rest of the Bible was too confusing.

### Reading With Openness

In my mid-30's I seriously began to try to read the Bible. I had been through some devastating life experiences, and I had new questions and doubts. My trauma had left me convinced that God was real and God was love, but giant cracks had appeared in my Adventist underpinnings.

I believed the Bible was the word of God. I believed (as I had been taught) that all doctrine had to be based on the Bible. I

ated our own lessons. We covered many Adventist subjects, including the Sabbath, and as I prepared for those lessons, it became clear to me that what The Quarterly said and what the Bible said were not always the same. The Quarterly, in fact, often seemed superficial, never really examining what the Bible said about the subjects. I became critically aware that I had to understand what the Bible actually taught. If our doctrines were based on the Bible, I had to know what the Bible really said.

I began to pray each time I sat down to study, asking God to help me to read the Bible without an EGW overlay. I asked Him to help me read it and understand what it really said, not just to read it and automatically interpret the verses according to my

interpretation about a somewhat difficult passage. Our neighbor looked at us in some surprise and said, "Where do you find that in the Bible?"

It was Richard's and my turn to be surprised. We thought we had expunged all EGW interpretations from our minds; we thought we were approaching each study with complete openness. We realized with embarrassment that we had just offered an explanation right out of The Great Controversy.

### The Living Word

Our neighbors listened with growing amazement as we explained the role and importance of Ellen White in the Adventist church. We told them the many ways our understandings had already changed. As we talked, we described several Adventist perceptions of passages we had already discussed in Revelation, and they looked at us in bewilderment, repeatedly asking how we—and EGW—supported those interpretations.

After our friends left that evening, Richard and I realized with a sense of wonder and joy that God had guided us to study with them. If we had not had someone who didn't know EGW with whom to discuss Bible passages, especially those that Adventists have used to defend their "distinctive doctrines," we might never have discovered the pockets of Adventist understanding that were deeply embedded in our minds. They were planted in us so early that they seemed to be organic. We had no idea that we still hosted unbiblical understandings that colored our theology.

As our studies continued we found ourselves falling in love with the Jesus we found revealed in the Bible. The Scriptures seemed to be a living organism. Each time we opened them we learned something new. We began to see that each book we read meshed perfectly with the others. The Bible no longer seemed confusing and contradictory. It began to make sense as a unified whole. The old proof texts on

*I asked Him to help me read it and understand what it really said, not just to read it and automatically interpret the verses according to my Adventist understanding.*

also believed the Bible took precedence over E.G. White's writings. I did not, however, believe the Bible was infallible. I believed human authors had written it using their own experiences and words to interpret the truths God had revealed to them. I believed that their experiences had led them to see God's revelations colored by their cultural milieu. Certain things they wrote made sense to them, but they didn't work for us because we had different issues than the people faced in Bible times.

In the early '90's I began to team-teach a Sabbath School class in a large Adventist church. My team teacher and I used The Quarterly for our lesson topics, but we cre-

ated our own lessons. We covered many Adventist subjects, including the Sabbath, and as I prepared for those lessons, it became clear to me that what The Quarterly said and what the Bible said were not always the same. The Quarterly, in fact, often seemed superficial, never really examining what the Bible said about the subjects. I became critically aware that I had to understand what the Bible actually taught. If our doctrines were based on the Bible, I had to know what the Bible really said.

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which we had hung our doctrines had different meanings when we read them in context. The New Testament no longer seemed to contradict the Old.

Our life-long respect for EGW's "inspired" writings died. When we realized how twisted our understanding of the Bible had been because of her interpretations, we released her. We no longer needed her. We had the living word, the Bible, and we had something else: the Holy Spirit. When we released EGW from her foundational place in our hearts, we experienced the reality of the Holy Spirit teaching us and guiding us. He took the place she had held, and we discovered what it meant to be born from above, to experience a completely new reality in Christ.

We realized that the Holy Spirit had been guiding us for years, gently prompting us to want to know the truth; putting us in situations where we could learn and discover God's word. Now the Holy Spirit in us awakened us to the Holy Spirit's inspiration in the Bible. We discovered that the Bible is absolutely reliable. It is a unified whole; it is alive with truth because it is inspired by God.

#### **How To Begin Reading**

Our journey out of Adventism and into Biblical truth has given us some specific understanding of how to read the Bible in a way that teaches us what it really says instead of using it to reinforce our already-formed opinions.

Ask God to make your heart open to truth. Sometimes we want God to bless us spiritually, but we don't want to change our understanding of Him or of His will for us. Ask God to soften your heart and to reveal to you the beliefs and attitudes He wants you to submit to Him.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you as you read the Bible. Each time you read the word, ask God to open the eyes of your heart to know the truth He wants you to learn that day from the passages you read.

Specifically ask God to help you to be able to read the Bible without denominational overlays. We often grow up with doctrinal understandings that we automatically read into the biblical texts. These

understandings are not necessarily in the passages. We need the Holy Spirit to show us the truth in the words of the Bible with new clarity.

Ask God to guide you to someone with whom you can study the Bible honestly. We often need to confirm our scriptural insights with someone in order to know that we are reading the Bible accurately. Many of us needed pure Bible teaching as we left the Adventist church. God will guide you to an individual, a church, or a Bible study group where you will be able to study the Bible with scriptural integrity.

where he wants you to go, and release your cherished beliefs and fears to him. Let his love heal your heart, and let his peace and his Spirit replace the error you unwittingly honored in your life.

#### **A New Reality**

When we are born from above, we enter a new reality. We become spiritually alive, and we are truly new creations. It is frightening and risky to embark on a journey of faith and Bible study that may take us away from what we've always known.

***Our life-long respect for EGW's "inspired" writings died. When we realized how twisted our understanding of the Bible had been because of her interpretations, we released her. We no longer needed her.***

Let go of unbiblical authority you have honored in your heart. The Bible is the infallible word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. We do not need a prophet, a messenger, or a modern-day apostle to interpret the scriptures for us. Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to us, and he is faithful to teach us as we open our hearts to him in honesty and humility.

Watch your hermeneutics. When you read a passage in the Bible, first ask yourself: What did this mean to the first people to whom this was written? Only after you answer that question can you safely ask yourself what it means to you. A Bible passage cannot mean something completely different to you today than it meant to the first readers.

Be willing to grow. As the Holy Spirit begins to show you the truth in the Bible, let it change you. Trust God to lead you

But God is faithful. He will never leave us nor forsake us, and even when we feel as if we're losing ourselves by finding His truth, He holds us as we step by faith into that unknown future.

When we begin to study the Bible with eyes of faith and hearts desiring truth, we discover Jesus. We find our reasons for living. We discover freedom.

Praise God that he loves us and revealed himself through His Son. Praise Jesus that He came to earth and paid the price for our sin. Praise the Holy Spirit for inspiring the Scriptures and for revealing truth to our hearts.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!

**Editor's note: You may read Colleen Tinker's story on the web at: [www.formeradventist.com/stories](http://www.formeradventist.com/stories)**

**Editor's Note: We have received more letters than are here printed. We can only dedicate a page or two to this section and therefore, cannot print all of them. Thanks to all who have written. I wish I had the time to respond in person to each and every letter. Thanks for being open and honest in sharing your true convictions.**

Thank you for sending *Proclamation*. I really enjoy it and read all of it. I have read your books and no longer believe in Adventism. I feel a need to study subjects such as the soul, hell, etc. ... Enclosed is a donation for your ministry. May God bless your work.

Thanks for your ministry. The scales are falling off my eyes.

I'm a member of the \_\_\_ SDA church and not happy. I was discussing your wonderful book, *Sabbath in Crisis*, with the pastor of my church. He told me that at one time you knew the truth but your pride got in the way so you are now being used by the devil to further your lie. I don't think that's true. I also believe Ellen White is not the Spirit of Prophecy. Can you send me *Cultic Doctrine*?

Dale, once again I have actually read some of your stuff sent in this LAM (Life Assurance Ministries). Once again, I must say that you resort to fiction and deliberate deception. I have a hard time believing that you actually taught the Bible in any of our schools for any length of time after seeing your ability to distort truth. I must recognize that you did not write this article by Fred Mazzaferri, but you allow the stuff to be printed. This guy knows nothing about the Bible either or the Spirit of prophecy. First of all you still failed to explain your outright lie in your last issue about a statement that Mrs. White never made. Now you/he makes such an absurd statement that even a school child who studies the sanctuary would dismiss this article as a joke. "The blood of the sacrifice for individual sins never entered the sanctuary." What is the matter with you? The whole sanctuary service was about the individual sins. Of course the whole thing was done collectively. But it takes individuals to get a collective example. Duh, bet you didn't think of that did you. You are so determined to attack us you don't even use logic AND you contradict yourself on

top of it. You admit the altar of incense was for the "prayers of the saints" but you would have us believe that they weren't individual prayers. So God does not hear my prayers unless I go to church and have my prayers go up collectively. Come on, friend. You observations about the heavenly sanctuary are so absurd they are barely worth going over individually. You admit it says "pattern" and then deny it. Also where does EG White say the lampstand was a single lampstand and not individual lamps? You make a claim but do not give the quote. Probably another lie. Finally your statement that the sanctuary did not have two separate rooms is another joke. Where did you get that one and where is your scripture proof? You make another statement that is incorrect, that the bread was changed every day in the holy place. WRONG AGAIN, the bread was not changed daily it was changed on the Sabbath OOPS bad word, since you reject the Sabbath. Try reading 1 Chronicles 9:32 I will wait for your answers but as in the past I do not get them. I get only derogatory attacks on my church that have no truth or foundation.—*SDA Pastor*

Dear Dale, I have been reading your book *Sabbath in Crisis*... I have been studying the Scriptural references contained in the book, which is "chucked full of Scripture." It has been a fascinating and awe-inspiring experience. I was raised Seventh Day Adventist. I attended an Adventist School for a portion of my education. My father was an Adventist until the time of his death... My mother is a third generation Adventist. As a result, I was thoroughly indoctrinated in the oppressive mentality that is Adventism. All of my life, certain doctrines that were taught never seemed quite right. It seemed as if there were huge gaps in "the puzzle." Certain things just did not add up. I had a lot of difficulty embracing Ellen White as God's end time prophet and her work as *The Spirit of Prophecy*. I believed that the Adventist Church was the remnant church because that is what I was taught my whole life. However, I could not really understand why they were "the remnant church." I did not understand why God would have everyone in the whole world go through all of this only to save such a small group of people... Anyway, a friend purchased the book *Cultic Doctrine*. She began sharing the studies that were contained therein. This was such a blessing and a revelation to me. We began sharing the truth with a group

of friends that we were studying with. It made many of them very uncomfortable and some of them began distancing themselves from us. Others embraced the truth and are living as "free" Christians now. I would like to share these books with a number of Adventist friends who are "seeking"; to help them understand the truth about God. My whole concept of who He is and what the Bible is all about has changed through these studies. I would like to help them understand Christ's work on the cross and that His sacrifice is truly sufficient. I would like to let them know that they cannot earn salvation through works, that it is a gift. When my father was on his death bed, he was in great emotional and spiritual turmoil because he was not certain of his salvation. He fully believed in "The Investigative Judgement" and "Probation Closing" and all of the conditional mess that is taught in Adventism regarding your salvation. Some people around here even tell others that if they eat meat, they won't be translated. They can't go to heaven. They have people caught up in so much anxiety and mess until it is unreal. This was a beautiful, gentle man who had lived his life for Christ according to all that he knew. Salvation was his at the moment that he accepted Christ into his life. Yet at 81 years old, as he lay dying, he could not go peacefully because he had doubts about his salvation based on the Adventist fables that he had been taught. It is so sad. I have seen the "Adventist Truths" destroy lives. People make decisions to leave their spouses, families, children, etc., because of this "Adventist Truth." People allow that belief system to define their relationships, their career decisions, where they choose to live, etc. And it is all based on a bunch of lies. I am so happy that the Lord saw fit to reveal the real truth to me at this time. It is so liberating. It has given me a much greater appreciation and love for God. I thank you for allowing him to use you in such a spectacular way. I know that you have touched many lives in a profound way. You certainly have touched mine. I would like to know how I can order these books. Also, I would like to subscribe to your newsletter *Proclamation*.

Dear Dale, I am one of those on the 'fringes' of Adventism. Have been for years. My wife and I haven't been to church for years, but haven't pulled completely away either. It's like that final one inch of distance is a mile wide when, theologically and emotionally, the gap is already miles

wide. I have seen the worst 'inquisitions' back in the Brinsmead era, if you will, that I never would have believed could have happened in a modern 'Christian' church. I witnessed our state conference President at the time say a prayer at the opening of a church business meeting that had the semblance of Christian love and concern for the person under discussion, but did, in fact, presume the guilt of that person (guilt being that the person was tearing down the church and all that was holy under the guise of 'Justification by Faith in Christ alone' and needed to be put from among us). Then, my wife and I would see billboards occasionally alongside the freeway stating that the Roman Catholic Church was the Mark of the Beast and containing very vitriolic denunciations of said church such that if I was a Roman Catholic I would want to find the person that paid for that billboard's message and give them a verbal thrashing. I have gotten unrequested information in the mail from the group responsible for these messages and it is a group on the radical, hard-line, fundamentalist, (lunatic?) fringe of Adventism and I wonder how any seeming Christian church espousing love for God and love for our fellow man can espouse such information. And then, upon reading your letters in *Proclamation*, I was amazed once again at the difference in tone. I find no SDA bashing or hatefulness on those 'former' members. They are simply thankful for the grace of God and the Gospel message. On the other hand....."Go to hell"????!!!!!! Whoa! That's pretty heavy. It's amazing how vitriolic the tone of those letters is. You would think that...oh well. Anyway, I don't know how you got our name, but keep your journal coming and I will send financial help as much as possible. God bless.

In preparation for my lecture tomorrow on Adventism I have been reading *Cultic Doctrine*. What a beautiful peace of work. Maybe next year you can come and do this lecture at the Master's Seminary & meet John MacArthur.

I was a Pastor's wife of the Worldwide Church of God...and we as a denomination are coming out of legalism into the fullness of Christ...this includes our leadership... God is so good... *Proclamation* came and I read, "Is there life after Adventism?" by Jerry A. Gladson, Ph.D.

The article showed me that my husband and I have been on a spiritual recovery...I have seen so

many analogies with what we are going through...I see someone finally understands!...I feel somewhat sane!!!! ...The WCG has come a long way in their new understanding of the Gospel, Praise God for that!...God's blessings to you.

*Proclamation!* is a very disturbing piece of literature. I am a Bible-believing Seventh-day Adventist who was loved into this faith sixteen years ago. It is because of my love for my Savior that I stay in. Love is a characteristic I see missing from this magazine's pages. In its place is a peculiar arrogance that treats the church I love with such contempt. My personal experience differs greatly from the church that Dale Ratzlaff, Jerry Gladson, Fred Mazzafarri and Verle Streifling portray to their readers. I make it a practice to stay read-up on theology and I must tell you that the official stance of Adventism in the propensity of literature available is much different than what has been penned by these men. Life Assurance Ministries seem to be advocating justification in Christ without personal commitment (antinomianism). "Cheap Grace" as it were. (See *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer page 45-47). Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor executed by the Nazis for his faith, penned that phrase. Commandment keeping truly is from the heart (see John 14:15,21,23; Ps. 119:165; 1 John 5:3) and not a grudging compliance that God will reject. It is pastors, church administrators and lay people who do not truly understand justification by faith, the sanctuary model of Christ's priestly ministry and the nature of the true prophetic gift expressed in Ellen White's literature that stumble and fall and bring down even the very elect with them.

I understand that this organization was founded and is staffed primarily by former SDA's who once embraced this faith. To you as leaders I suggest you prayerfully re-read Eph. 4:3-5; Col. 2:8-14; Eph 2:14-15; Deut. 31:24-26; Rom. 10:14; 2 Tim 2-4; Isa. 28:9-13 (esp. KJV); 2 Peter 3:2 & 14-16; Heb. 5:11-14 and Heb. 6:4-6. Please repent of this unbiblical heresy and redirect your mission before it is too late

Dale, your books & teachings are so much appreciated. Our journey out of SDA started in 1980. This was a painful amputation, but, praise the Lord, the joy and freedom the gospel brings is so precious. Please continue to uplift Jesus as the only way to Life. My heart yearns for millions to accept Christ only for salvation.

...Sorry. I have to suppress a chuckle as I see "recovering" Adventists keeping Sunday.

(Editor's note: many who have left Adventism no longer "Keep" the Seventh-day Sabbath nor do they "keep" Sunday. Most see the new covenant "rest" as the rest of grace in Christ that one enters when he/she believes. Heb. 4:3)

Get my name OFF your mailing list! I DO NOT want to be ANY PART of a JIM JONES CULT or a DAVID KARESH CULF (sic) or a DALE RATZLAFF CULT! Thank you! Emphatically—\_\_\_ PS Get the MESSAGE, I don't want anymore of this "junk" or "crap" in my mail box!

Thank you for adding my name to your mailing list. I enjoy your articles, although at times, I feel intellectually inferior. I was born and raised in the SDA church. I did not understand EGW's sanctuary viewpoints in all my schooling years and still find I don't. The only difference is I no longer feel guilty for skipping over the "mumble-jumble" because I know those are all non-essential facts. Jesus Christ is my Savior—not the SDA church! I found the letters to the editor astounding! I have lent my copy of the most recent *Proclamation*, so I am not specific on the details of the various letters, but I do remember several writers judging your salvation and those of your readers. One specifically told you to "go to Hell" WOW!! This would seem to be to be the same type of hypocrisy that Jesus was pointing out to those in His days (Matt. 23)...

I, too, feel sorry for those people who today do the same thing. Paul was very straightforward regarding the dangers of judging (Rom. 2:1-7). Some may say I am judgmental in what I am saying in my letter but it is much different to point out behavior that is contrary to Christian character than to judge another Christian's heart condition. Praise God—He is the only judge of my heart! May God bless you as you continue your work for Him!—*An embarrassed SDA member*

...I pray a lot for the success of your ministry...The Lord is blessing your work. I pray it will expand greatly. Don't let the negative people get you down.

#### Mail letters and donations to:

**Life Assurance Ministries**  
PO Box 11587  
Glendale, AZ 85318

# Letter: Third generation captive set free

*Editor's note: The author of this letter approved the inclusion of names and places.*

Thanks so much for what you are doing to help set the captives free! I was a third generation SDA, completely schooled through college by the church, and sent all three of my children through church schools.

I was raised very much in the "historical" tradition, in that the Bible was always explained by the Writings of EGW. As a child I grew up in the terrible fear of the time of trouble and the close of probation, with no assurance of salvation. I knew that there was no possible way to attain the level of perfection necessary to gain entrance into heaven, and it seemed to me that God was a

much study, I was able to realize what the Acts 15 Jerusalem Counsel was all about.

It seemed I was a round peg trying to fit into a square hole. I knew that if I could ever be perfect enough to enter heaven, I would have many questions to ask of the Savior that I loved so much.

More and more, I grew confused by the contradictions between the writings of Paul and EGW. Finally, I gave up reading Hebrews and Romans completely. It seemed that Paul was a dangerous radical in his views of salvation by grace. According to EGW, things were just not that simple.

It seemed that if the SDA church was the remnant church of Revelation, there was little about it that was attractive enough to lead the world to it.

print as an SDA, to read what he had to say.

I lay down on the couch with the letter and asked God to give me the wisdom to separate truth from error, and as I read the writings of someone who had been through the same struggle I had with the controversy between law and grace, conviction and joy washed over me. I knew that there would be hope in Christ. His grace was sufficient.

I read Lang's book *Freedom and Power in the New Covenant* and found through a proper understanding of the covenants of God, the key to heaven.

The seal of God was not the 7th day Sabbath of the Sinai Covenant, but the entering of the true Sabbath rest of Heb. 3 and 4 and the receiving of the Holy Spirit into my life. A joy completely engulfed me that was as complete as the anger against the system that had enslaved both me, and also my friends, family and extended church family.

As I continued to pray and study my Bible, my understanding of the plan of salvation grew, and I could not keep from spreading the good news to all who would listen to me.

Many of my friends would attend SDA services on Saturday, then go to a non-denominational, Christ-centered church with me on Sunday, and most saw the difference clearly enough to leave the SDA church and come into the "Body of Christ."

My story is a long one. It also involved some very deep therapy that was necessary to heal the wounds I had received as a sensitive child by a cultic system of religion. By my mid 40's I was finally free!

I love your title Proclamation! We must proclaim freedom to the captives!

I am sending a donation so that I can do my part in helping your work. God bless you! **!**

## *More and more, I grew confused by the contradictions between the writings of Paul and Ellen G. White.*

tyrant who was playing a cruel experiment with his creation of which none had asked to be involved.

As I got into boarding academy at Laurelwood and Milo, I finally completely gave up trying, and became consumed by a blinding hatred of God and the church. I was so outspoken in my rage that I was asked not to return to school at Milo Academy for my senior year because of my negative influence on the student body.

At the age of 26, through a tremendous miracle of God, I finally saw Jesus as who He really is. My heart broke as I realized the depth of his love and compassion for even one who had done his cause so much damage.

Trying to bring my new born-again experience into the SDA church was something that was increasingly difficult. Much later, and after

More and more, I found that I could lead souls to Christ, but not to the SDA church. I cared too much for my friends to try to stuff their new, vibrant love for Christ into the lifeless, dead, straight jacket of the SDA church with all of its legalisms and endless rules.

In 1990, I was put onto a mailing list by a friend. A former SDA minister, Richard Lang, had seen the same thing I had and had left the church and formed a small group and was giving seminars on new life in Christ.

At first I wouldn't even read what came in the mail. I had been taught that anything non SDA was heresy and should be destroyed.

I never will forget the day when, on my way to the fireplace with another piece of "heretical" literature, a voice stopped me. It was the voice of Richard Lang, pleading with me through the

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