Letter answered: addressing the key point

The following letter is from Elder Douglas L. Inglish, pastor of the Sunnyvale Seventh-day Adventist Church in Centralia, Missouri. Pastor Inglish is the same Adventist pastor whose letter we published in the July/August issue of Proclamation. We appreciate his sincere comments and questions which I will address at the conclusion of his letter.

You dismissed my observations without addressing the key point I was making.

Your response to my letter on the article by Jerry A. Gladson dismissed my observations without addressing the key point I was making, namely that the article discounts Biblical authority all too readily. Certainly I will coincide that some SDA pastors have a liberal view of inspiration, but unlike you, I find them to be in the minority. And even if this is so, what has that to do with the fact that Dr. Gladson, and to all appearances your editorial board as well, does not accept the Bible as infallible? It may be true that some within my church have issues with inspiration, but my church clearly has a position on inspiration. Despite the fact that you quote the Bible authoritatively when it suits your purposes. Articles such as Dr. Gladson’s leave one with the sense that you don’t have a coherent point of doctrine so far as I can determine. The one thing that unifies all I have said is that you do not have a consistent view of inspiration, but unlike you, I find them to be in the minority.

Editor’s comments

Pastor Inglish, thank you for your letter. You raise a number of good and important points, which answer fully, would take this whole issue. However, with the limitations of space, here are a few observations which I hope will be helpful.

It may be true that Dr. Gladson has, what you would call, a more liberal view of inspiration than I, or some of the other contributors to Proclamation, do. We must each be true to our own conscience. When seeking truth there must be an openness to carefully evaluate all the evidence and not limit ourselves only to the material that agrees with our position. You discredit Dr. Gladson for the way he treats Ecclesiastes in general and Eccl. 9:5 in particular but are you willing to take as inspired or authoritative the following texts from Ecclesiastes which are only a sampling of problem statements in this book?

So I congratulate the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living. But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun. Eccl. 4:2-3
Do not all go to the same place? Eccl. 6:6
The day of one’s death is better than the day of one’s birth. Eccl. 7:1
So I commend pleasure, for there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and to drink and to be merry, and this will stand by him in his toils throughout the days of his life which God has given him under the sun. Eccl 8:15
Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything that is to come will be futile Eccl 11:8

You state that it appears we do not accept the Bible as infallible. Do YOU accept the above statements from Ecclesiastes as infallible? When I attended the SDA Seminary, we were explicitly taught that SDAs should never claim the Bible as infallible. My professors went to great lengths to show that the parable of the Sower in Mark 4 was not spoken by Christ but was added many years later. For the first several years after leaving Andrews University I did not use this portion of Scripture. Now with a more conservative view of inspiration, I feel most comfortable to use this section. Another professor pointed out the “error” in Leviticus 11:6 which states that the rabbit chews its cud when in reality it does not. I have seen many attempts to correct this “error” but very convincing. It is my understanding that SDAs do not officially hold to the infallibility of Scripture per se, rather they state that “...the Holy Scriptures are the infallible rev...”

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Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.
PO Box 11587
Glendale, AZ 85318
How does one live “life in the Spirit”?

I would like to introduce this issue of Proclamation with a letter I recently received. It was written in response to Greg Taylor’s “Is leaving Adventism all that Great” printed in the last issue of Proclamation:

I was saddened by Greg Taylor’s article that as a former SDA pastor he didn’t have the courage to band together within the SDA church to pray for “renewal and revival” among us Pharisees. I believe it was Morris Venden (Well known SDA pastor) that asked you clean the church from the inside not the outside. I think Jesus said that too. From Manuscript Release (of EG White), Vol. 21:155 (we read), “Of the prayers that have been ascending for the fulfillment of the promise—the descent of the Holy Spirit—not one has been lost. Each prayer has been accumulating, ready to overflow and pour forth a healing flood of heavenly influence and accumulated light all over the world.” NOT ONE PRAYER HAS BEEN LOST! Do you see why every prayer-meeting night should include prayers for the descent of the Holy Spirit? Engelskine, “30 Days To More Powerful Intercessory Prayer.”

Some in the Adventist Church are praying for “renewal and revival.” As a lifetime SDA I’d like to ask one more request of you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly “right on” with the Word of God. We would defintely like to include you in your mailing list for future issues and can hardly wait until the next one comes. My wife got your address and some other “formers” did not discover Jesus, His love, His grace, His precious justification, His new birth, His new garments. When Jesus referred to cleaning the inside of the church, he had reference to the heart and not an organization. It was Jesus who said that one cannot put new wine into old wineskins. It is our prayer that by our work on the outside of Adventism, true reformation will come on the inside of the seventh-day Adventist church.

Thank you! Thank you to all of you who are praying for this ministry! It is so encouraging to us to know that so many are lifting us up day by day! We thank all of you who have so faithfully—and many sacrificially—financially supported Proclamation. It is very gratifying to see the hand of God as He provides, through you, the funds needed each month! May God richly bless you in every way!

1 See Matt. 23:25–27.

Editor’s Comments

To Greg Taylor: I write to thank you on behalf of my friend and Bible study partner, Michigan. She no longer attends the SDA church but the elder and some members have been visiting her and inviting her to return. However, she is not an Adventist and is planning to formulate some questions from our studies of the various SDA doctrines and the life of E.G. White and her claims. When we have these questions together, will pay the church a visit and confront the leaders with the questions forcing them to “come clean”?

Proclamation!
Publisher
Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.
Editor Dale Ratzlaff
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Next Issue

- IAM, Inc. expands ministry
- What about original sin?
- Born saved or lost?
- Are you “born again”?
- Salvation: God’s or man’s choice?

In regards to cleansing the church from the inside and not the outside: History does not necessarily support this. It took a Lutheran who was willing to step outside of the established church to bring at least some reformation to the inside of that church. Without a Ronald Reagan, Russia would not have had the reformations when it did. Without a Desmond Ford who was cast out of the SDA ministry, the simple gospel of faith would not now be so accepted within the SDA church. In reality, it takes people both on the inside and on the outside to move a well-established organization. Those of us on the outside can speak without fear of financial or career endangerment. When Jesus referred to cleaning the inside of the church, he had reference to the heart and not an organization. It was Jesus who said that one cannot put new wine into old wineskins.

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1 See Matt. 23:25–27.
Strange bedfellows

I appreciate your willingness to print letters that do not support your positions as well as those that are in harmony with your purpose. I was also grateful that you clarified your position on Sunday worship in response to my letter on your use of early church fathers. I had thought you believed like many evangelicals and fundamentalists that Sunday was a holy and sacred day by logical deduction then I would assume you agree with the SDA Church when we see no Bible instruction that God directed His followers to worship on Sunday. If He had intended this then it would have been appropriate for Jesus to teach this before he sealed the New Covenant with His blood on the cross. The fact is that Jesus seems to have held the Sabbath in highest regard: His statement that it was “lawful to do well” on the Sabbath, and that the Sabbath “was made for man” in the context of creating man suggests He considered the Sabbath to be a blessing. I am fully convinced that if Jesus were to come back to earth today He would concur that the Sabbath was given for something much more valuable than just a day of rest. The Sabbath was given for worship, and we would expect Him to do so today. 

Editor’s note: Thanks for your sincere letter. You make several good points and ask several good questions. You state that Jesus “held the Sabbath in highest regard.” Remember that Jesus lived during the closing days of the old covenant and we would expect Him to do so. However, if you were to look at this in context you would find that Jesus was observing the Sabbath in quite early is an effort to show that Sunday was observed much earlier than many realize.

Who designed this building, anyway?

The other day while driving we encountered upon a most unusual house that caused us to stop and gaze at it in amazement. It was a hodge-podge if ever I saw one. There was no specific design to it. It looked like a mixture of unrelated rooms that were patched together by some architect. Each section was a different color. There was no pattern to the roofline, and the foundation, which was on different levels, was all cranked up. Yet it looked relatively new, as though it was being worked on. Obviously whoever was building it was working on it without a master plan or blueprint. It was a happening!

That structure reminded me of much in modern Christianity. Why are there so many pieces to it? Am I alone that do not support your positions as well as those that are in harmony with your purpose. I was also grateful that you clarified your position on Sunday worship in response to my letter on your use of early church fathers. I had thought you believed like many evangelicals and fundamentalists that Sunday was a holy and sacred day by logical deduction then I would assume you agree with the SDA Church when we see no Bible instruction that God directed His followers to worship on Sunday. If He had intended this then it would have been appropriate for Jesus to teach this before he sealed the New Covenant with His blood on the cross. The fact is that Jesus seems to have held the Sabbath in highest regard: His statement that it was “lawful to do well” on the Sabbath, and that the Sabbath “was made for man” in the context of creating man suggests He considered the Sabbath to be a blessing. I am fully convinced that if Jesus were to come back to earth today He would concur that the Sabbath was given for something much more valuable than just a day of rest. The Sabbath was given for worship, and we would expect Him to do so today. 

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trayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you. Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now attempting to attain your goal by human effort? Galatians 3:1-3.

Paul's question was: after beginning entirely by faith, are you now trying to maintain your standing with God by trying to observe the law? Does God release you from the law only until you are saved and then send you back to the same law to prove your stuff? That is what Paul said. Just as God can save you by faith in Christ alone, so, by His Spirit, He can keep you by faith alone. You do not have to revert to the law to prove anything! Then in Romans 3:31 Paul seems to reverse himself.

Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Confusing? To the man without God's original blueprint as a guide, this apparent contradiction makes no sense! Then, to illuminate those born of the Spirit, in a statement that further confuses the carnal mind, Paul said this regarding the 10 commandments: Now, if the ministation of death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory… will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?… But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. 2 Corinthians 3:7,14,15.

Here again, the law on stone and the Old Covenant seem to find no place in the gospel commands of Paul. He indicates that people do not have this main focus to try to win favor and loyalty to God by observing the law on stone so do because they are blinded by a veil that is pulled over their heads. How do we put this together with the next statement by the same writer?

So then, the law and the commandment is holy and righteous and good (Rom. 7:12).

Compare this with what he wrote in Romans 3:20:

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law.

If a person is not made righteous by observing the law; nor does he maintain his right standing with God by observing the law, what does it have to do in the life of the Christian? The problem is that some have not recognized the original blueprint that God gave us. Many have never seen God's original blueprint. They cannot even tell you whether or not the 10 commandments, which were the essence of the Sinai Covenant, were carried over into the post-cross era to become part of the New Covenant of faith or not. Most would guess that they were, with a few exceptions, of course. The main exception being the 4th commandment which required Israel to observe the Sabbath, a commandment which could not be transferred to Christians. However, the Sabbath is a type used to point to Christ, who fulfilled the law.

To clarify, let us see what Paul meant by the term “law.” The Greek word for “law” is nomos. It is a general term that may refer to a law, ordinance, custom or a tradition. It does not refer to the 10 commandments per se! It may include the Sinai law but is not limited to that law. Nomos generally refers to the whole Torah which in turn includes all the Jewish religious customs and laws. Nomos does not distinguish between the 10 commandments and the other Torah laws.

When Paul wrote that “we uphold the law,” he was saying that the law was not a mistake, but that God had a definite purpose in pointing Israel to the coming Redeemer. Having done its work, Israel was released from its tyranny (Acts 15:10; Rom. 7:6,10; Gal. 3:24, 25) and was freed to live by faith as did Abraham before them. In that sense the nomos (Law) was holy and just and good.

Are You Playing With Lego Toys?

The confusion arises when people take their favorite sections of the Bible out of context and use them like children playing with Lego toys. Out of the same pieces one makes a car, another makes a boat while another will create a house. It is not enough merely to keep texts in context within their own epistle. For example: The letter Paul wrote to the Romans was not intended to cover the entire gospel message. It was written to address some particular problems that existed among the believers in Rome. The letter to the Galatians was not written to reveal the whole gospel either, but to deal with a particular problem facing the church in Galatia, and so on with the other letters Paul wrote.

Even Paul’s letters in their entirety were not meant to be studied apart from the gospel. Even when he talks to the battle of dry financial Naughtiness. Here we can find principles that guide us to the infallible truths of God’s Word and what they mean in real life. Here are just a few of the major tenants of hermeneutics. Study every test in the wider context. Try to find out what Peter meant by the passage under consideration meant to the writer and to whom it was addressed. Search for the eternal moral principle behind a given situation and then apply that principle to today’s culture. Because the revelation of Christ far surpasses that within the Old Testament, the New Testament must always be the norm and all Old Testament statements must be interpreted by the New. As Christ is the central theme of all Scripture, our interpretation must be Christ centered. The epistles are the inspired and infallible interpretation of the Christ event and were written to young Christian churches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; therefore, they are to be considered as the pinnacle of doctrinal correctness. No important teaching is based on a single statement. We should place the emphasis where Scripture places the emphasis. Doctrine should not be derived from esoteric or apocalyptic portions of Scripture, but from clear, didactic, contextual teaching. Where the Bible is clear, we can be certain. Where the Bible is unclear or can honestly be interpreted in several ways, we must be tentative. We must be careful not to let our theological paradigm blind us to the statements that do not fit our system of truth. A correct, biblical perspective of the covenants is essential to a right interpretation.

Considering these principles, regardless of what Ecclesiastes says, from the New Covenant point of view we can say with assurance: Life is good. There is purpose to life. Being is better than nothing. Born again believers are sealed, there will not be a second chance after the grave. All do not go to the same place. Birth is better than death (unless at death one goes to be with the Lord as Paul says).

You suggested that I “slammed” Ellen White in my answer to your question. I don’t know what is the right word or not but I did point out some of the problems with the writings of EGW and there are many. I was a firm believer in EGW for many years, many years as your former students to testify I was also under her bondage and was blinded to that fact until I started studying the Bible without her commentary. I personally know dozens (if not hundreds) and have communicated with many hundreds (if not thousands) of people whose lives have been terribly warped by the bondage of trying to live by her “Testimonies”. And speaking of Ellen White, are you one of her favorite students?”

I have many Adventist friends. I often pray for Adventists, many of whom are in enthusiastic agreement with most of the articles in Proclamation and support this ministry both with their prayers and finances. I willing to accept her writings as a “continuing and authoritative source of truth…” as the Fundamental Beliefs of SDAs state, and with which all baptismal candidates are to agree in a public vow before they can be baptized into the local congregation.

You also state that “I just don’t like Adventists!” Here you are wrong. I have many Adventist friends. I often pray for Adventists, many of whom are in enthusiastic agreement with most of the articles in Proclamation and support this ministry both with their prayers and finances. I do dislike the apparent duplicity in Adventism, but no church is perfect. I continue to pray that Adventist leaders, professors and pastors will be true to Scripture and jetison the cultic teachings of historical Adventism.

You say we do not have any reason to exist other than to dislike Adventists and slam EGW! I don’t know how long you have been reading Proclamation, but if you read all the issues, I think you will see that we do speak about God’s love and it is our desire to make Christ central as we promote the simple gospel of God’s grace. Readers must remember that our target audience is different. Seventh-day Adventists and other sabbatarians, many of whom are still under the bondage of false guilt, have little assurance of salvation and are filled with questions that must be addressed before they can experience the freedom offered in the new covenant gospel.

Pastor English, I hope this answers your questions more fully. May God bless you and yours as you proclaim the simple gospel of Christ.
Again on that last day of Tabernacles, Christ stood up and cried out If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink... out of his inner being will flow rivers of Living Waters... This He spoke of the Holy Spirit whom those who believe on Him would receive... (John 7:37-39). So Revelation 7:17 says of Him, The Lamb...will shepherd them and lead them to Living Fountains of Water. And Ezekiel 47:1-9 where the rivers of living waters flow from the throne in God’s Temple and bring healing wherever they go; getting deeper and wider the farther they go, and when reaching the Dead Sea, they heal the waters of the dead sea and bring it to life.

Jesus’ invitation of Isa 55, John 4, and 7 is still for us today. How John on Patmos who was in the Spirit’ and said such wonderful things, must have felt the bursting of God’s love in his own heart as he penned the words The Spirit and the Bride say come, and let him who hears say come, and let him who thirsts come, and whosoever wills, let him come and take of the Water of Life FREELY! (22:17).

He is our source of power to live the Spirit led life. He’s our source of power to witness for Christ and without fear to publically declare the wonderful works of God. He’s the One who confirm the gospel as preached with signs following, and He’s the source from which we’ll bear His fruit of love, joy, peace, etc. in our daily living.

May our lives be a continual worship of God in the Spirit and in reality, offering spiritual sacrifices to Him, and daily walking as the Spirit leads us in greater knowledge of God and the revelation of His will for our lives.

Above all you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. This text warns us not to depend only on our reasoning powers to figure out what Bible the means. We must let the Bible be its own interpreter lest we split the body of Christ into hundreds of fragments. Peter himself faced this challenge. In 2 Peter 1:15, 16 He wrote:

Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

For the final authority in understanding statements that on the surface appear contradictory, we should verify this in Romans 3:21. His web address is: www.abraham911.com In the US order from Life Assurance Ministries (LAM) or Former Adventist Fellowship eventually— please indicate that you are a FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP DATABASE

Proclamation!

If you are interested in finding other formers in your area and email address to formeradventist@aol.com. If you are willing to be the contact person in your area and email address to formeradventist@aol.com. If the purpose of the Law was to help prepare a people to receive Christ as redeemer, then its purpose was accomplished when the Redeemer came. Its job was done, or fulfilled, to use the words of John 10:17. He’s our source of power to live the Spirit led life. He’s our source of power to witness for Christ and without fear to publically declare the wonderful works of God. He’s the One who confirm the gospel as preached with signs following, and He’s the source from which we’ll bear His fruit of love, joy, peace, etc. in our daily living.

May our lives be a continual worship of God in the Spirit and in reality, offering spiritual sacrifices to Him, and daily walking as the Spirit leads us in greater knowledge of God and the revelation of His will for our lives.

Do its fulfillment destroy, or validate a prophecy? It is almost amusing to see how writers go through all manner of mental contortions to try and nullify the theme of Righteousness by Faith, which is not of works, lest any man should boast. Why should we struggle to understand what Paul meant, when Jesus explains this perfectly? Facing a similar challenge from the Pharisees who judged the teachings of the Lord, He replied this way:

Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law and the prophets; I have come not to destroy but to fulfill it. For truly, I tell you, until the sky and earth pass away, not one letter or one smallest hook [identifying certain Hebrew letters] will pass from the Law until all things [it foresaid] have been accomplished (Matt. 5:17,18, Amp).

What was the main goal or objective of the Law and the prophets? Let us read Jesus’ own words again. And these [these very Scriptures] testify about Me. John 5:39 (Amp). It is clear that the goal and purpose of the Law and the prophets was to prepare Israel to receive Jesus the Messiah. Paul verifies this in Romans 3:21:

Now but a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

If the purpose of the Law was to help prepare a people to receive Christ as redeemer, then its purpose was accomplished when the Redeemer came. Its job was done, or fulfilled, to use Jesus’ own words. The Law was not destroyed. It had simply run its course and ceased to have any further function. Would you say that when a prophecy comes to pass it is destroyed? Absolutely Not! It is fulfilled! The Law was not destroyed but it was holy and just and good, and it completed the purpose for which it was designed. It was a schoolmaster pointing Israel to the coming Messiah (Gal 3:24).

Looking at Paul’s statement in Romans 3:31 in the light of Jesus’ words, we find that there is no contradiction in what Paul was saying. He was simply saying that the Law was, and remains, proof that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah. The Law was designed to show Israel that they could not win God’s favor by ceremonies or by rule keeping, but they that needed a Redeemer from beyond themselves. The Law and the prophets identified Jesus as the true fulfillment of that hope. They were fulfilled in Him!

Conversely, Jesus’ life and ministry validate and authenticate the Law that foretold His coming. That proof will remain for all time. Today the Law stands valid, not because we are still under its authority, but because it verified our Foundation, which is Jesus Christ. Because He remains the testimony of the Law stands. For example, when the ancient Roman Empire had run its God assigned course, it’s purpose was fulfilled. Its contribution to history remains to this day, but we are not subject to it because after it’s purpose was fulfilled, it was replaced. In the Scriptures the words “Law” and “covenant” are often used synonymously.

For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. By calling this covenant new,He has made the first one obsolete: and what is obsolete and old will soon disappear (Heb 8:13). Having fulfilled the Law, Christ replaced it with grace. Grace succeeded Law. To find our way out of the religious wilderness, which is the product of human reasoning, we must start at the beginning by asking ourselves some questions. How can we expect the hearer then to take us seriously so long as our own house is divided over the central theme of the gospel? Who gave Abraham the Covenant of Righteousness by Faith? Who was the mediator of the Abrahamic Covenant? Who gave Moses the Sinaitic Covenant? Who was the mediator of the Sinaitic Covenant—Christ or Moses? What was the relationship between the Sinai Covenant and the 10 commandments? What time span was allotted by God to each of those covenants? How can these themes impact my personal relationship to Jesus?
An accurate knowledge of the role of the Holy Spirit is fundamental for a correct understanding of the new covenant and it is also necessary for a right interpretation of the Sabbath. The role the law filled in the old covenant is filled by the Holy Spirit in the new. Scripture compares and contrasts the law with the Spirit in many ways. A subtle example of this is seen in the events surrounding the giving of both covenants. After the law was given, the children of Israel immediately went into disobedience and fell under condemnation. They made a golden calf, worshiped it, sacrificed to it, and said, “This is your God, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt” (Ex. 32:8). Because of this sin “about three thousand men of the people fell that day” (Ex. 32:28). These three thousand were killed by their brothers at the command of God. At the giving of the Spirit in the new covenant, on the other hand, we find a different and better outcome! There were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). I believe these numbers are recorded to point out the contrasting nature of the two covenants and show the relationship between the law and the Spirit.

Notice thoughtfully how the Holy Spirit takes the place of the law in Paul’s comparisons and contrasts between the old and new covenants in 2 Cor. 3:13-18.

Thus the New Testament contrasts the OT Law covenant with the New Covenant of the Holy Spirit. The old pertained to outward rituals of the flesh but the New has the inward realities of the Spirit. The Old covenant was sealed by outward physical circumcision, so that the Jews prided themselves for being circumcised, compared to others who were uncircumcised dogs. But in the New covenant, at our new birth, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, while the outward circumcision would sever us from Christ. Thus Paul explains in Phil.3:3 “We are the true circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, and put no confidence in the flesh.” The real Jew is not one who’s circumcised outwardly, but inwardly and the NT Church is separated from the outside world (or unbelievers) by their lifestyle of continually worshipping God “in the Spirit and in reality.”

The Old had ritual animal sacrifices and outward commandments, but the New has reality Spiritual Sacrifices and the inward cleansing of the heart. 1 Pet 2:4-8 says we are a Royal Priesthood and a Holy Nation, and we are called to offer Spiritual Sacrifices to God who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light!” These Spiritual Sacrifices are such sacrifices as giving our hearts wholly repentant to God. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart,” David said. In Luke, Jesus spoke of the publican, who broken in heart, went away justified. So James entreats us “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up” (4:6-10). There’s the Sacrifice of Praise as we read in Hebrews 13:15: “By Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” And there’s the sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving. “Let my prayer be set before you as incense and the lifting of my hands as the evening sacrifice,” David wrote. And there’s the Sacrifice of Joy and Rejoicing as in Psalm 27:6: “Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle.”

God also wants the sacrifice of righteousness. Paul says “Present yourselves to God… and your members as instruments of righteousness” (Rom 6:13), and David explains, “You shall be pleased with sacrifices of righteousness.” John says “He who practices righteousness is righteous just as He is righteous” (1Jn 3:7). This includes sacrificing our bodies as Paul said, “I beseech you brethren… that you present your bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship” (Rom 12:1-2).

In addition, God wants us to offer the spiritual sacrifice of sharing or giving for other’s needs. Jesus told the rich young rules, “If you will be perfect, sell what you have, and give to the poor.” In the early church those who were better off sold their goods to provide for those without, because of the oppression they suffered when receiving Christ. In Heb 13:16 we read, “But do not forget to do good (for others) and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” In Matt 25 Jesus shows our final judgment will be in how we have lived out His New Covenant Law of Love, by giving to the poor. “I was hungry and you fed me, I was naked and you clothed me…” Just as the Old ritual sacrifices were replaced by the New Covenant’s Spiritual sacrifices, so too the Old ritual worship, at designated places and on specified days and times, were replaced by Christ’s New Covenant reality: worship in Spirit as a continuous worship in the Spirit.

After the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost we see the central role the Holy Spirit played in the church, God’s new covenant people. In Peter’s sermon he quotes Joel and says, “It shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour forth of My spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy (Acts 2:17,18). Peter told the people, “Repent and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself” (Acts 2:38,39).

Life in the SPIRIT

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Worshiping God in the Spirit

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

case, because the Samaritan woman asked “which is the right place…’ the context requires "in the Spirit" to be locative. Moreover, as Christ desires worship from our hearts, and as ‘heart’ and ‘spirit’ are synonymous of the inward man, then this certainly fits. In Rom 8:9 Paul said ‘but you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you’. As He lives within man’s spirit, and since He came to glorify Christ, our worship must come from within.

It can mean ‘as being Led by the Holy Spirit’. In Galatians 3:9 Paul asked the rhetorical question “Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” They were led by the Holy Spirit into salvation by faith in Christ. When they believed in Jesus, they were born again of the Spirit who then dwelled in them, making them sons of God. Paul said “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14). So too, the Holy Spirit leads believers in True Worship of Jesus Christ.

This may even be ‘in other tongues as given utterance by the Spirit’. In Acts 2, the believers were filled with the Spirit, and when speaking in other tongues they were praising God for his wonderful works. In 1 Cor 14:1-2 Paul states ‘He who speaks in a tongue is not speaking to man, but to God, for no one understands him, but in the Spirit he is speaking mysteries.” Here ‘in a tongue’ is equated to ‘in the Spirit’. Yet Paul said he would worship both in tongues and with understanding “I will pray in the Spirit and I will pray with understanding. I will sing in the Spirit and I will sing with understanding.”

Genuine worship comes from within man’s spirit and it is led by the Holy Spirit who indwells man, who is ‘the Temple of the Holy Spirit’.

The OLD COVENANT:
Written with ink
On tablets of stone
Not of the letter
The letter kills
Ministry of death
Ministry of condemnation
Came with glory
Glory has faded away

The NEW COVENANT:
Written with the Spirit
On tablets of the heart
But of the heart
The Spirit gives life
Ministry of the Spirit
Ministry of righteousness
Abounds in glory
Glory remains

Unless the new covenant Christian understands the role of the Holy Spirit and experiences His presence, he will long for Sinai. It is only the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit that can write the principles of the new covenant law of love on our hearts so that we have an ever-present person who will teach us all things (Jn 14:26), guide us into all truth (Jn 16:13), and testify to us of Christ (Jn 15:26). The old covenant law was external—written on stone. The new covenant law is internal—written on our hearts. The new covenant Lawgiver is present in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit and the Word

Today the church has, to a large degree, bought into the western world view, which eliminates the supernatural. That is not the view of Scripture. The Book of Acts, as well as the whole of Scripture, is filled with the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit. It is my belief that the New Testament Christian who seeks to live by the Spirit, and in faith, and with his mind governed by the Spirit, will long for the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control against such things as lawless passions.

The above section is so important that I want to comment on each key element:

Paul’s statement, “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law,” agrees perfectly with our findings thus far. To be led by the Spirit is to follow just where the Spirit leads. The Christian no longer needs an external set of rules if he is in step with the Holy Spirit and feeding on the Word of God. The struggle is not between the Christian and the law, as portrayed in Romans 7:23–24, where Paul depicts what life is like for the law-centered religion. Rather, the war the Christian must fight is between the Spirit and the flesh. The outcome is determined by who is master of our lives: the Spirit or the flesh. Paul does not define evil as transgression of the law because Christians are free from the law. Rather he defines evil as the deeds of the flesh. Those deeds are the natural outgrowth if we follow the promptings of our fallen nature. Those deeds of the flesh Paul says “are evident.” The mature Spirit-filled Christian does not need to be told these are wrong. The Holy Spirit working in the conscience of the believer grounded in Scripture is a sufficient guide.

While the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be boxed in or perfectly described, it is important that the Christian not try to live by the written word without the Holy Spirit as a guide to interpret it or, to live by the Holy Spirit without allowing the Holy Spirit to speak through the written word.

How, then do we live?

In the book of Galatians we have the clearest teaching about the reign of law. It came in with Moses and ceased with Christ. Paul, under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, forewarned the questions some of the immature Christians in Galatia who had been sidetracked by a law-focused “gospel” would ask. Therefore, we have his clear answer to the implied question “Paul, are we not under the law anymore, then how do we live?” His answer is clear, powerful, and relevant to those of us who come from a law-centered religion. Read this section through in context and then we will clarify what is taught.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. These are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.” Gal 5:16-26.

The old covenant was written on stone, the new covenant is written on our hearts. The new covenant Lawgiver is present in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Those who seek to live by the “promptings of the Holy Spirit” do not require a study of the written word. They are not bedeviled by a study of biblical law, for the Spirit speaks a language that the heart understands. Those who seek to live by the Holy Spirit read their Bible as the Spirit inspired word of God and therefore, the Holy Spirit is their personal teacher, their Counselor, and their Lord. Today the church has, to a large degree, bought into the western world view, which eliminates the supernatural. That is not the view of Scripture. The Book of Acts, as well as the whole of Scripture, is filled with the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit. It is my belief that the New Testament Christian who seeks to live by the Spirit, and in faith, and with his mind governed by the Spirit, will long for the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

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The deeds of the flesh

Now let us consider Paul's list of the deeds of the flesh which can be subdivided into five categories:

Sexual sins:

“Sexual immorality” would include adultery, sex outside of marriage, or, we might say, the “natural sexual sins.”

“Impurity” would include the unnatural sexual sins such as homosexuality, bestiality and incest and bestiality.

“Sensuality” has the overtones of portraying, even in public, an attitude of indifference to or inappropriateness toward the sexual sins and desires.

Loyalty sins:

“Idolatry” is allowing oneself to become intuited and enamored with anything or anybody apart from Almighty God. This sin is rampant in the western world and in the church.

“Sorcery” has two basic connotations. The root word implies a use of drugs. Later the meaning of this word came to be used for any activity involved with the powers of evil including secret meetings with evil spirits. Today it would include a vast number of activities associated with the occult. Practicing sorcery is seeking power or guidance from some evil or source other than God and the Holy Spirit. This would include Ouija boards, horoscopes, fortune tellers, books on extra-sensory perceptions, etc. All power is not of God!

Social or relationship sins:

“Enmities” are hostile negative feelings.

“Stife” refers to people taking sides, fighting wars of words, forming cliques, and doing unloving acts.

“Jealousy” is seen when we envy others and often secretly hate them because they are perceived as being better than we are.

“Outbursts of anger” are hurtful words hastily spoken when state and energy are present.

“Disputes” refer to arguments as to who is right and who is wrong.

“Dispositions” reflect division, disloyalty and negative attitudes.

“Factions” are an outgrowth of the above works of the flesh. They occur when people align in groups, and the groups then champion their own agendas without concern for others.

Self-control sins:

“Drunkenness” is abusing any substance to such a degree that it affects one’s thinking and/or hurts one’s self or others.

“Cursing” refers to activities such as wild parties which are often associated with people who are out of control and where unnecessary temptation and evil are present.

“And things like these.” Here Paul implies that this list could be extended.


We must also note Paul’s clear warning against those who make it a practice to give in to the deeds of the flesh. He did not say that they will go to heaven but just not get the same rewards as those who do not do such deeds of the flesh. Rather, he said, “as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” In other words, those who make it a practice to follow the deeds of the flesh are not genuine Christians. They are not controlled by the Holy Spirit. They have another lord and master. Within the new covenant there is no open door to “living in sin’ and having the company of salvation. True, we all fall short, but our loyalty to God is seen as we keep in step with the Holy Spirit residing in our lives and not following the flesh.

The fruit of the Spirit

Having outlined the deeds of the flesh, Paul now turns to the fruit of the Spirit that will be manifest in the genuine Christian’s life. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such things there is no law.

Here is another insight worthunderlining. The new covenant law can be summed up in one basic overarching principle.

This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Jn. 15;12

In Galatians we find that the fruit (singular of the Spirit) is manifest first in love. We love because He first loved us. Here is the guideline for new covenant living! While the “gifts” of the Spirit are given severally as the Spirit wills, all are to participate in the fruit of the Spirit. These virtues are a greater evidence of the Spirit and go to any of the more spectacular gifts as mentioned in Corinthians 12–14. Let’s examine the wonderful thing called the fruit of the Spirit. We will note that all the aspects of the fruit of the Spirit are supernatural and are outside the realm of personal achievement without the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

“Love” is agape love—a selfless love that loves not for its own sake but for the sake of the other person who needs our love. It is a sacrificial love, an unconditional love and a never-ending love. It is a wholesome attitude toward others that results in positive actions and is supremely modeled by Christ.

But God demonstrates, His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us… (Eph. 5:2)

This love is not a natural love that can be worked up it is truly a “fruit of the Spirit.”

...the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Rom. 5:5).

“Joy” is an inner attitude of cheerfulness that is not dependent upon circumstances. It is a supernatural joy often expressed in the very face of persecution and difficulty.

But the Israelites provoked the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Acts 13:50–52.

A

Edventists teach that the scapegoat represents Satan upon whom all the sins of God’s people will be placed as God makes the “final atonement” just prior to the second coming of Christ.

When Christ, by virtue of his own blood, removes the sins of His people from the heavenly sanctuary at the close of His ministration, He will place them upon Satan, who, in the execution of the judgment, must bear the final penalty (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 422).

The scape-goat was sent away into a land not inhabited, never to come again into the congregation of Israel. So will Satan be forever banished from the presence of God and his people, and he will be blotted from existence in the final destruction of sin and sinners (Ellen G. White, Spirit of Prophecy, Vol. 4, p. 267).

Biblically untenable teaching

I believe this teaching is biblically untenable for the following reasons:

1. To my knowledge, no other Old Testament shadow represents Satan; why, then, should Israel’s most holy service include a “shadow of Satan”?

2. While there is evidence, as pointed out in the foregoing article, that there were certain “goad” ceremonies practiced in Old Testament times that may have been dedicated to some desert demon; this does not mean that the Day of Atonement scapegoat ceremony and ritual represents some demonic force, or Satan himself. We normally associate a “serpent” with Satan and the Bible makes this comparison dozens of times, however, Scripture—and Christ himself—did not interpret the “serpent” placed on a standard by Moses as Satan. Rather, Christ took this symbol of Satan and used it to represent one aspect of His atonement. And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived (Num. 21:9).

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up (Jn. 3:14).

3. When Paul referred to the old covenant holy days, which include the Day of Atonement services, he called them a “shadow” and in context, it is a shadow of Christ and not Satan.

The atonement of Christ carries such a vast load of truth that one sacrifice was inadequate to picture the atonement of Christ. Therefore, the Old Testament used many sacrifices and symbols to point forward to Christ. For me the key truth presented by Pastor Houghton Sr. is his conclusion that Christ not only died for our sins but also carried them away, never to be seen again. This interpretation is biblical, Christ-centered and in harmony with the new covenant gospel of grace! Yes, both points point forward and bring the good news of a finished atonement and removal of sin! It is impossible to bear for the Christian, and even the non-Christian, to bear a glut of sacrifices and symbols in the Old Testament.

Therefore do not be any judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Col. 2:16,17.

The same holds true in Hebrews 10:1 where we have a clear reference to the yearly services of the Day of Atonement and no mention is made of Satan. Rather, they are part of the law and are “only a shadow of the good things to come…”.

For the sake of the present, it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect them who make those near (Heb. 10:1).

4. The atonement of Christ carries such a vast load of truth that one sacrifice was inadequate to picture the atonement of Christ. Therefore, the Old Testament used many sacrifices and symbols to point forward to Christ. For me the key truth presented by Pastor Houghton Sr. is his conclusion that Christ not only died for our sins but also carried them away, never to be seen again. This interpretation is biblical, Christ-centered and in harmony with the new covenant gospel of grace! Yes, both points point forward and bring the good news of a finished atonement and removal of sin! As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us (Ps.103:12).

I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you (Isa. 44:22).

For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more (Heb. 8:12).

Hide Your face from my sins And blot out all my iniquities. Ps. 51:9

In those days and at that time, declares the Lord, “search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found; for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant (Jer. 50:20).

Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? Who is the one who justifies (Rom. 8:33).

And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin (Heb. 10:17,18).
This opinion is recognized to be in contrast to the opinions of Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, as they believed that the scapegoat sacrifices taken during the Day of Atonement were symbolic of the death of Jesus and the cleansing of sin. However, the Dead Sea Scrolls present us with evidence that at least two male goats were involved in this ceremony, indicating a more complex understanding of the ritual than was previously thought.

A third possibility is that the scapegoat sacrifices were merely symbolic of the judgment of sin, as suggested by Carl Schultz, who proposed that "azazel" refers to a place of judgment or a boat that carries sin. In both of these passages one can see an expectation of dual judgment, with one goat being sacrificed and the other being sent into the wilderness, which is seen as a symbolic representation of the judgment of sin.

Perhaps the inadequacies of all these positions indicate a failure to appreciate the significance of two goats and what they indicate about the nature of God. In its unregenerate condition the heart is desperately sick, and to attempt anything short of a supernatural change is to court disaster. It is the supernatural gift of the gospel. It is peace with God.

Goodness is a divine quality that motivates us to be good to all, to be patient when wronged (2 Tim. 2:24). Patience is tested not just when we have to wait for something, but when we are in the midst of suffering, persecution, or hardship. It is the peace of God.

The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. Mt. 12:35 and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. Mt. 12:35

In the quotation of Jesus above, it is clear that the heart must be renewed by the Holy Spirit. It is the "new man" that must be created in us, not just the outward acts. It is the inward change that is truly significant, and it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that this change can be brought about.

It will be the supernatural quality of kindness expressed to all who will point them to our kind God. "Goodness" is a divine quality that motivates us to be good to all, not just to ourselves or to those who are like us. It is the peace of God.

It is also the peace of God. The peace of God is not merely the absence of worry or trouble, but a deep inner contentment and serenity of mind. It is the peace of God that allows us to face the challenges of life with courage and strength.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1). It is also the peace of God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7).

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slow-ness, and patient endurance that waits hopefully for God's intervention. It is this kind of patience that allows us to endure the trials and testing of life, knowing that God is working all things together for good for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).

The Holy Spirit not only guides the believer but supplies the supernatural quality of kindness expressed to all who will point them to our kind God. "Goodness" is a divine quality that motivates us to be good to all, not just to ourselves or to those who are like us. It is the peace of God.
The problem of Azazel in the Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement was the holiest day of the Hebrew year. The ritual prescribed by the Lord for this day was rich in meaning, yet this meaning is not easily translated across the time and cultural barriers that exist between then and now. The tendency among Christians is to look back into the richness and texture of the Old Testament and see only the face of Jesus, and in doing so they believe that they have added fresh meaning to stale old rituals.

It is the intent of this paper to show that the truth is contrary to this impression—in other words, the modern reader does not add to the meaning by simply seeing the act of God in Jesus at the cross when he looks at the ritual associated with the Day of Atonement. This type of culturally insensitive handling of scriptures takes away from the intensity of the Day of Atonement.

In this case the root word gives us only a minor amount of help because the word azazel is only used four times in the Old Testament, all within the context of the Day of Atonement. There are four primary theories concerning the etymology and meaning of azazel:

- Many have taken the position that this word means “the goat that departs” from the Hebrew words for “go” and “turn off.”
- Some state that this word comes from the Arabic word azazel, meaning “banish” or “remove,” and have rendered it as “for the entire removal.”
- Rabbinic interpretation generally sees the word as designating the place to which sin was sent or the height from which the goat was thrown.
- The fourth and final possibility is that it designates a personal being that is opposite of the good God.

Implications of the semantic range in interpreting the text

One who uses only the Revised Standard Version is confronted with suggestions 3 and 4, and since these are closely related—the name of the place and the name of a personal being who dwells in a place—we will deal with them as one. In Lev 16:7 we find the RSV renders azazel as for Azazel, and in v. 10 as first for Azazel and then as to Azazel, indicating that both a place and personality where sin is carried are the most possible. Support for this is widespread among scholars, and both scriptural and extra-biblical literature seem to add support to this theory.

First, this is not the only biblical mention of Israel sacrificing to demons. Lev. 17:7 refers to sacrifices made to goat demons (NASB or satyrs, RSV). Additional mention of these types of beings is in Isa 34:14, where the prophet talks about God destroying Edom and causing it to become a wilderness filled with wild animals and birds, among which are the satyr and Lilith, the “night hag.” 2 Chron 11:15 also refers to the satyr as an object of worship.

Additionally there is an account of a sacrifice for a recovered leper found in Lev 14:1-9 involving two birds. One bird is killed and the leper and the other bird is both touched with the blood of the first and then the second bird is released. This second bird carried the evil, the leprosy, away into an open field at which point the leper was pronounced clean.

In the extra canonical literature, Azazel is found to be the leader of the angels who desired to know the daughters of men (Gen 6:1) in 1 Enoch. Azazel was eventually bound by Raphael and cast into a dark wilderness.

One must also be aware of a parallel to this scapegoat ritual that existed in Babylonian culture. As part of the New Year festival, a sheep was slain and carried from the city and thrown into the river, signifying the removal of evil from the city. The person who carried this animal carcass to the river was considered to be unclean until the end of the day—as was the man who led away the azazel goat.

However, it is the position of this author that the reference to Azazel and to satyrs and Lilith when taken in context cannot be related. If one believes that Scripture is true and not just a collection of Jewish folk tales, then the situation described in Leviticus cannot mean that homage is being paid to any deity other than the Lord. Since the prescriptions of Lev 16 are said to have come from the Lord himself, it is unthinkable for these to be referring to an offering to demons. J.H. Hertz as quoted by G.J. Wenham concurs, pointing out that since the worship of satyrs is considered a heinous crime in Lev 17, the incongruity would be too great if we take chapter 16 to refer to such worship.

Additional evidence against this view is found in the way that the Septuagint renders this word with various forms of the Greek word that means, meaning to carry away. The Latin Vulgate also uses similar language here.

If one approaches this text from the perspective of a holy and righteous God who is creator and designer of all things, then a consistency of design for two Messiahs to come to Israel, one political and one religious. Perhaps the ritual imagery of the Day of Atonement contributed to that thinking. When we consider the two goats we ask how people might have seen in them an expectation of dual messiahship involving a political savior and a religious savior. The first goat seems to correspond well with the concept of a religious or spiritual savior and with the “suffering servant” language of Isaiah’s prophecy that through his willing sacrifice the nation of Israel is cleansed from sin. The second goat seems to track well with the idea of a political savior who

If, as some have suggested, these ritual sacrifices were intended as a forerunner to the Messianic prophecy that through his willing sacrifice the nation of Israel is cleansed from sin, it is possible to reconcile the cultic ritual of the nation of Israel on the Day of Atonement with the work of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross at Jerusalem? It is the position of the author that despite what appears to be a conflict between these accounts, no such conflict exists in reality.

Dual nature of messianic expectation in first-century Israel

There is strong indication that some, if not many, of the faithful households of the first century were looking for two Messiahs to come to Israel, one political and one religious. Perhaps the ritual imagery of the Day of Atonement contributed to that thinking. When we consider the two goats we ask how people might have seen in them an expectation of dual messiahship involving a political savior and a religious savior. The first goat seems to correspond well with the concept of a religious or spiritual savior and with the “suffering servant” language of Isaiah’s prophecy that through his willing sacrifice the nation of Israel is cleansed from sin. The second goat seems to track well with the idea of a political savior who
Michael V. Houghton, Sr.
The problem of Azazel in the Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement was the holiest day of the Hebrew year. The ritual prescribed by the Lord for this day was rich in meaning, yet this meaning is not easily translated across the time and cultural barriers that exist between then and now. The tendency among Christians is to look back into the richness and texture of the Old Testament and see only the face of Jesus, and in doing so they believe that they have added fresh meaning to stale old rituals.

It is the intent of this paper to show that the truth is contrary to this impression—in other words, the modern reader does not add to the meaning by simply seeing the act of God in Jesus at the cross when he looks at the ritual associated with the Day of Atonement. This type of culturally insensitive handling of scriptures takes away from the intensity of the ritual and the understanding of its ultimate meaning—both to the Hebrew and to the modern, what the author implies.

As far as such a thing is possible, this paper will attempt to look at this day devoid of modern Christological assumptions in an attempt to understand this day the holiest day of the Hebrew calendar. This effort will be made using semantic and theological tools and will focus on two areas:

- The problems associated with the semantic range of the inseparable preposition “le” in Azazel.
- An attempt will be made to define the theological implications of the atonement.

The semantic range of the preposition “le”

The TWOT lists a range of meaning as follows: to, at, in, in reference to, of, by and even occasionally from. When one sees the tremendous flexibility of the preposition “le,” the questions concerning the text in Leviticus begin to demand attention. This paper will address the following questions:

- Is the correct rendering here “to azazel,” making azazel a location where sin is isolated from mankind?
- Is the correct rendering “of azazel,” making azazel the intended result of the ritual performed on the goat?
- One has many of the position that this word means “goat that departs from” the Hebrew words for “goat” and “turn off”.
- Some state that this word comes from the Aramaic word azala, meaning “to banish” or “remove,” and have rendered it as “for the entire removal.”
- Rabbinic interpretation generally sees the word as designating the place to which sin was sent or the height from which the goat was thrown.
- The fourth and final possibility is that it designates a personal being that is opposite of the god Azazel.

Implications of the semantic range in interpreting the text

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First, this is not the only biblical mention of Israel sacrificing to demons. Lev 17:7 refers to sacrifices made to goat demons (NASB) or satyrs (RSV). Additional mention of these types of beings is in Isaiah 66:14, where the prophet talks about God destroying Edom and causing it to become a wilderness filled with wild animals and birds, among which are the satyr and Lilith, the “night hag.” 2 Chron 11:15 also refers to the goat as an object of worship.

Additionally there is an account of a sacrifice for a recovered leper found in Lev 14:1-9 involving two birds. One bird is killed and the leper and the other bird are both touched with the blood of the first and then the second bird is released. This second bird carried the evil, the leprosy, away into an open field at which point the leper was pronounced clean.

In the extracanonical literature, Azazel is found to be the leader of the angels who desired to know the daughters of men (Gen 6:1) in Enosh. Azazel was eventually bound by Raphael and cast into a dark wilderness.

One must also be aware of a parallel to this scapegoat ritual that existed in Babylonian culture. As part of the New Year festival, a sheep was slain and carried from the city and thrown into the river, signifying the removal of evil from the city. The person who carried this animal carcass to the river was considered to be unclean until the end of the day—as was the man who led away the azazel goat.

However, it is the position of this author that these references to Azazel and to satyrs and Lilith when taken in context cannot be related. If one believes that Scripture is true and not just a collection of Jewish folk tales, then the situation described in Leviticus cannot mean that homages is being paid to any deity other than the Lord. Since the prescriptions of Lev 16 are said to have come from the Lord himself, it is unthinkable for these to be referring to an offering to demons. J.H. Hertz as quoted by G.J. Wenham concurs, pointing out that since the worship of satyrs is considered a heinous crime in Lev 17, the incongruity would be too great if we take chapter 16 to refer to such worship.

Additional evidence against this view is found in the way that the Septuagint renders this word with various forms of the Greek word σάτυρος (satyr) meaning to carry away. The Latin Vulgate also uses similar language here.

If one approaches this text from the perspective of a holy and righteous God who is creator and designer of all things, then a consistency of approach is to be expected. However, if one approaches from the opposite perspective, namely that these stories are simply Hebrew folk tales written down after generations of oral transmission, then it is possible to see them as simple stories designed to convey complex religious truth to a simple and backward nomadic people. The author rejects this idea as unproven.

This leaves us with the first two positions to be considered: is this word from two Hebrew words: “goat” and “turn off,” or is it from the Arabic azala, meaning to “banish” or “remove”? Is this the goat that departs or the goat that removes? The TWOT tells us that the meaning of this word is at best unclear. The BDB lexicon gives only one definition, “remove, as in the entire removal of sin from the camp into the wilderness.” Both of these sources favor the Arabic etymology, but their rendering does not exclude the possibility of a Hebrew origin, resulting in the goat that departs. Without further evidence it must be concluded that it is most probably a reference to a person who is the opposite of the Lord, nor is it likely that it is, in spite of the rabbinic traditions, the name of a place to which sin is banished. Either option is acceptable in light of the revealed nature of God found in Scripture, but one cannot be favored above the other. That leaves us with a ritual involving two male goats that shows one goat dying to cleanse the people from sin and another goat carrying those sins entirely away from the people into the wilderness.

Theological implications of this interpretation

If, as some have suggested, these ritual sacrifices were intended as a foreshadowing of the Messiah, how can we reconcile the dual nature of this sacrifice with the one person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus? Does this not seem contradictory to the concept of a single Messiah? In light of what we know from the New Testament accounts, it is possible to reconcile the cultic ritual of the nation of Israel on the Day of Atonement with the work of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross at Jerusalem? It is the position of the author that despite what appears to be a conflict between these accounts, no such conflict exists in reality.

Dual nature of messianic expectation in first-century Israel

There is strong indication that some, if not many, of the faithful Israelites of the first century were looking for two Messiahs to come to Israel, one political and one religious. Perhaps the ritual imagery of the Day of Atonement contributed to that thinking. When we consider the two goats we asked ourselves how people might have seen in them an expectation of dual messiahship involving a political savior and a religious savior. The first goat seems to correspond well with the concept of a religious or spiritual savior and with the “suffering servant” language of Isaiah’s prophecy that through his willing sacrifice the nation of Israel is cleansed from sin. The second goat seems to track well with the idea of a political savior who...
was to permanently remove all unrighteousness from the people of Israel.

The debate has long raged over the meaning, in light of the Christ event, of the symbols in the Day of Atonement ritual. Many have insisted that the high priest is the type of Christ, yet his need for such elaborate purification is problematic. Others have stated that the goat that is killed is the type of Christ since it is said of God that brings about the destruction of sin—this seems more plausible, yet it is still incomplete, as the death of Jesus alone would not be sufficient to bring about the salvation of mankind. A third possibility is that the scapegoat or Azael goat represents Christ, since the sins of all the people are placed on his head—this also seems inadequate, since this goat is turned loose in the wilderness and has no further contact with the people.

Perhaps the inadequacies of all these positions indicate a failure to appreciate the significance of two goats and what they indicate about the nature of our Savior. People have long debated the nature of Jesus, who died on the cross and through his blood brought about cleansing from sin, and the second goat, who removes sin completely from the people, in a type of the divine nature of Jesus that works in the lives of believers to thoroughly remove sin. The two male goats become a type of the one Son of God, who has two natures—divine and human. This is the mystery of God that our minds and hearts would find difficult to understand without the light of the Christ event, of the symbols in the Day of Atonement ritual. People have long debated the nature of Jesus, who died on the cross and through his blood brought about cleansing from sin, and the second goat, who removes sin completely from the people, in a type of the divine nature of Jesus that works in the lives of believers to thoroughly remove sin. The two male goats become a type of the one Son of God, who has two natures—divine and human. This is the mystery of God that our minds and hearts would find difficult to understand without the light of the Christ event, of the symbols in the Day of Atonement ritual.

In the quotation of Jesus above, it is clear that the heart must be renewed by the Holy Spirit. It is the “new man” that must present on the inside before we can bring something good from the heart. It is the unregenerate condition of the heart is desperately wicked and unclean. “Gentleness” is a divine quality that is careful not to cause harm or hurt. It is a quality that is needed when we seek to restore others.

But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you. Phil. 2:17

“Peace is an inner contentment and serenity of mind. It is what I call ‘living the eternal kind of life.’ It is knowing that we are saved and that no matter what happens to us, we will be with Christ. It is experiencing eternal life NOW! Peace is the assurance that everything is right between us and God. It is a peace that is different from the false peace of the world. Peace is the peace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1). It is also the peace of God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7).

Patience is patient endurance that waits hopefully for God’s timing. It is a divine quality that allows us to endure behavior and their offensive actions without these circumstances triggering the deeds of the flesh and causing us to retaliate. It is the grace those who cause us frustration or real hurt as needing our offer of forgiveness and our prayer of encouragement. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). The Lord’s bond servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged (2 Tim. 2:24).

Patience is tested not just when we have to wait for something. Patience is a quality of character as is gentleness. It is the patience of a child who has not been wronged and does not react to the one who wronged us.

“Kindness” is not only an attitude that wishes others well, but a divine quality that moves us to positive actions which are approved by others.

Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? Rom. 2:4

It will be the supernatural quality of kindness expressed to others that will point them to our kind God. “Goodness” is a divine quality that motivates us to be good people. Good people avoid hurting others and seek the good of all.

The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good, and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. Mt. 12:34

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Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, each one looking to yourself, so that you too may not be tempted. Gal. 6:1

Gentleness has a long reach—even if anyone is caught in any trespass he/she is to be treated with a spirit of gentleness. “Self-control” is an all encompassing virtue given by the Spirit. A self-controlled person is not one to have outbursts of anger or disputes. Self-control allows one to be truly free—free to choose how he/she will respond to varying and adverse circumstances rather than be controlled by unbridled passions and lusts. A self-controlled person is a mature person, one who needs few, if any, external laws to govern behavior.

Paul concludes this section by saying, “Against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Gal. 5:23–25.

It becomes patently clear that one who walks by the Spirit does not need the old covenant law to govern external behavior for he has the internal guide and power of the Holy Spirit. Life in the Spirit is mature life—a life led by a few overarching principles taught by Christ and interpreted and applied by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thoughtfully look over the list of the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. They cannot coexist! Both are expressions of the inner man, or heart. Either one is motivated by the flesh or by the Spirit. Yes, indeed, life in the Spirit produces righteousness far beyond the law! Now it becomes clear how and why the Spirit replaces the function of old covenant law in the life of the believer! Summary

The Holy Spirit plays an indispensable role in the life of a Christian teaching him “all things,” “testifying about Christ,” guiding into all truth. and disclosing what to do.”

In the new covenant the Holy Spirit plays much the same role as did the law in the old covenant.

The Holy Spirit actually indwells the believer, and there is the secret of life in the Spirit.

If a Christian is led by the Spirit, he/she is not under the dominion of old covenant law.

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The Holy Spirit indwells the believer and supplies the power to live the Christian life.
The deeds of the flesh

Now let us consider Paul’s list of the deeds of the flesh which can be subdivided into five categories:1

Sexual sins:

“Sexual immorality” would include adultery, sex outside of marriage, or, we might say, the “natural sexual sins.”

“Impurity” would include the unnatural sexual sins such as homosexuality, bisexuality, and bestiality.

“Sensuality” has the overtones of portraying, even in public, an attitude of indifference to or inappropriateness toward the sexual sins and desires.

Loyalty sins:

“Idolatry” is allowing oneself to become intuited and enamored with anything or anybody apart from Almighty God. This sin is rampant in the western world and in the church.

“Sorcery” has two basic connotations. The root word implies a use of drugs. Later the meaning of this word came to be used for any activity involved with the powers of evil including secret meetings with evil spirits. Today it would include a vast number of activities associated with the occult. Practicing sorcery is seeking power or guidance from some evil or source other than God and the Holy Spirit. This would include Ouija boards, horoscopes, fortune tellers, books on extra-sensory perceptions, etc. All power is not of God!

Social or relationship sins:

“Enmities” are hostile negative feelings.

“Streife” refers to people taking sides, fighting wars of words, forming cliques, and doing unloving acts.

“Jealousy” is seen when we envy others and often secretly hate them because they are perceived as being better than we are.

“Outbursts of anger” are hurtful words hastily spoken when state and presence are present.

“Disputes” refer to arguments as to who is right and who is wrong.

“Discontents” reflect division, disloyalty and negative attitudes.

“Factions” are an outgrowth of the above works of the flesh. They occur when people align in groups, and the groups then champion their own agendas without concern for others.

Self-control sins:

“Drunkenness” is abusing any substance to such a degree that it affects one’s thinking and/or hurts one’s self or others.

“Cursing” refers to activities such as wild parties which are often associated with people who are out of control and where unnecessary temptation and evil are present.

“And things like these.” Here Paul implies that this list could be extended.

We must also note Paul’s clear warning against those who make it a practice to give in to the deeds of the flesh. He did not say that they will go to heaven but just not get the same rewards as those who do not also make this practice of the flesh.

But the fruit of the Spirit

Having outlined the deeds of the flesh, Paul now turns to the fruit of the Spirit that will be manifest in the genuine Christian’s life.

The deeds of the flesh can be summed up in one basic overarching principle.

This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Jn. 15:12

In Galatians we find that the fruit (singular) of the Spirit is manifest first in love. We love because He first loved us. Here is the guideline for new covenant living! While the “gifts” of the Spirit are given severally as the Spirit wills, all are to participate in the fruit of the Spirit. These virtues are a greater and a more wonderful gift than any of the more spectacular gifts as mentioned in Corinthians 12–14. Let’s examine the wonderful thing called the fruit of the Spirit. We will note that all the aspects of the fruit of the Spirit are supernatural and are outside the realm of personal achievement without the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

“Love” is agape love—a selfless love that loves not for its own sake but for the sake of the other person who needs our love. It is a sacrificial love, an unconditional love and a never ending love. It is a wholesome attitude toward others that results in positive actions and is supremely modeled by Christ.

But God demonstrates, His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

Walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us… (Eph. 5:2)

This love is not a natural love that can be worked up it is truly a “fruit of the Spirit.”

... the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Rom. 5:5).

“Joy” is an inner attitude of cheerfulness that is not dependent upon circumstances. It is a supernatural joy often expressed in the very face of persecution and difficulty.

But the Jews inculcated the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Jerusalem. And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Acts 13:50–52.

The atonement of Christ carries such a vast load of truth that one sacrifice was inadequate to picture the atonement of Christ. Therefore, the Old Testament used many sacrifices and symbols to point forward to Christ. For me the key truth presented by Pastor Houghton Sr. is his conclusion that Christ not only died for our sins but also carried them away, never to be seen again. This interpretation is biblical, Christ-centered and in harmony with the new covenant gospel of grace.

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2. While there is evidence, as pointed out in the foregoing article, that there were certain “goad” ceremonies practiced in Old Testament times that may have been dedicated to some desert demon; this does not mean that the Day of Atonement was a solution to any of these demonic forces. In fact, God represents some demonic force, or Satan himself. We normally associate a “serpent” with Satan and the Bible makes this comparison dozens of times, however, Scripture and Christ himself did not interpret the “serpent” placed on a standard by Moses as Satan. Rather, Christ took this symbol of Satan and used it to represent one aspect of His atonement. And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard, and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived (Num. 21:9). As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up (Jn. 3:14).

3. When Paul referred to the old covenant holy days, which include the Day of Atonement service, he called them a “shadow” and in context, it is a shadow of Christ and not Satan.

Biblically untenable teaching

I believe this teaching is biblically untenable for the following reasons:

1. To my knowledge, no other Old Testament symbol represents Satan; why then, should Israel’s most holy service include a “shadow of Satan”?2

We must also note Paul’s clear warning against those who make it a practice to give in to the deeds of the flesh. He did not say that they will go to heaven but just not get the same rewards as those who do not make this practice of the flesh.

When Christ, by virtue of his own blood, removes the sins of His people from the heavenly sanctuary at the close of His ministration, He will place them upon Satan, who, in the execution of the judgment, must bear the final penalty (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 422).

The “carousing” refers to activities such as wild parties which are often associated with people who are out of control and where unnecessary temptation and evil are present.

The “drunkenness” is abusing any substance to such a degree that it affects one’s thinking and/or hurts one’s self or others.

The “anger” is an emotional attitude of resentment that is not dependent on circumstances. It is a supernatural anger often expressed in the very face of persecution and difficulty.

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Col. 2:16, 17.

The same holds true in Hebrews 10:1 where we have a clear reference to the yearly services of the Day of Atonement and no mention is made of Satan. Rather, they are part of the law and are “only a shadow of the good things to come…” because the “true” sacrificial system is in the New Testament.

4. The atonement of Christ carries such a vast load of truth that one sacrifice was inadequate to picture the atonement of Christ. Therefore, the Old Testament used many sacrifices and symbols to point forward to Christ. For me the key truth presented by Pastor Houghton Sr. is his conclusion that Christ not only died for our sins but also carried them away, never to be seen again. This interpretation is biblical, Christ-centered and in harmony with the new covenant gospel of grace.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us (Ps. 103:12).

I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you (Isa. 44:22).

For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more (Heb. 8:12).

Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Ps. 51:9.

In those days and at that time, declares the Lord, “search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found; for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant (Jer. 50:20).

Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies (Rom. 8:33).

And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin (Heb. 10:17, 18).
Worshiping God in the Spirit

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

by the Holy Spirit into salvation by faith in Christ. When they believed in Jesus, they were born again; the Spirit and I will pray with understanding, I speaking to man, but to God, for no man understands what things are as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the Sons of God. (Rom 8:14). So too, the Holy Spirit leads believers in True Worship of Jesus Christ.

This may even be ‘in other tongues’ as given utterance by the Spirit. In Acts 2, the believers were filled with the Spirit, and when speaking in other tongues they were praising God for His wonderful works. In 1 Cor 14:1-2 Paul states “He who speaks in a tongue is not speaking to man, but to God, for no one understands him, but in the Spirit he is speaking mysteries.” Here ‘in a tongue’ is equated to ‘in the Spirit’. Yet Paul said he would worship both in tongues and with understanding “I will pray in the Spirit and I will pray with understanding, I will sing in the Spirit and I will sing with understanding”.

Genuine worship comes from within man’s spirit and it is led by the Holy Spirit who indwells man, who is ‘the Temple of the Holy Spirit.’

In the Spirit” may also be ‘within the enrolling presence of the Spirit’. On Patmos, John wrote “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” and again “immediately I was in the Spirit and beheld a throne set in heaven…” telling of his visions given to him by the Spirit. From this, if we seek Jesus’ meaning from the text instead of bringing our own into the text, we rightly conclude that ‘in the Spirit’ has both locative and instrumental uses, for it tells both. Where real worship occurs, as well as how it occurs. Genuine worship comes from within man’s spirit and it is led by the Holy Spirit who indwells man, who is ‘the Temple of the Holy Spirit.’

This worship as led by the Holy Spirit would include praising God in the Spirit (above), when being filled with the Spirit we “sing in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Eph 5:18-19) and praying in the Spirit. While Paul said “I will pray in the Spirit” (1 Cor 14), he also explains “for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (Rom 8:26). Paul also exhorts “Build yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.” (vs 20)

Yet in Romans 12 Paul speaks of being transformed by the renewing of our minds, which is your reasonable service of worship. This indicates that one’s worship must be a way of life. Thus worshiping God in the Spirit must also include a lifestyle of walking in the Spirit. Paul told the Galatians “Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh…” if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law... if we live in the Spirit, we also walk in the Spirit” (5:16, 18, 25).

Our living in the Spirit must include love in the Spirit, having the Love of the Holy Spirit for our brethren in Christ” (Col 1:8; Rom 15:30; 1 Thess 5:15). As such, it would also produce the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ in our lives.

Our walking after the Spirit, as led by the Spirit, frees us from condemnation of the law as Paul emphasizes in Rom 8:1-2 “Thus there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death.” Peter adds “For this reason the gospel was preached to those who were dead, that they might…live according to God in the Spirit” (1 P 4:6)

The OLD COVENANT:
 Written with ink
 On tablets of stone
 Not of the letter
 The letter kills
 Ministry of death
 Ministry of condemnation
 Came with glory
 Glory has faded away

The NEW COVENANT:
 Written with the Spirit
 On tablets of the heart
 But of the heart
 The Spirit gives life
 Ministry of the Spirit
 Ministry of righteousness
 Abounds in glory
 Glory remains

Unless the new covenant understands the role of the Holy Spirit and experiences His presence, he will long for Sinai. It is only the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit that can write the principles of the new covenant law of love on our hearts so that we have that every present person who will teach us all things (Jn 14:26), guide us into all truth (Jn 16:13), and testify to us of Christ (Jn 15:26). The old covenant law was external—written on stone. The new covenant law is internal—written on our hearts. The new covenant Lawgiver is present in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

If anyone loves Me he will keep my word, and My Father will love Him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him (Jn 14:23).

The Spirit and the Word

Today the church has, to a large degree, bought into the western world view, which eliminates the supernatural. That is not the view of Scripture. The book of Acts, as well as the whole of Scripture, is filled with the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit. It is my belief that the New Testament Christian who rejects the present-day “gifting” of the Holy Spirit is not experiencing the fullness of new covenant life: a personal relationship with the indwelling Christ... who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us (Eph 3:20).

The Bible makes it clear that the Holy Spirit’s preferred way of working is through the written word of God, the Bible. We believe that the Bible is the Spirit inspired word of God and therefore, the Holy Spirit takes this written word (logos) and as we prayerfully read and study it and He speaks to us the living word (rhema) of God. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God Eph 6:17.

Those who seek to live by the “promptings of the Holy Spirit” without a corresponding study of the word of God place themselves in a position where they may think they are receiving specific direction from the Holy Spirit when, in reality, they are hearing from their own subconscious mind or wishful thinking. Sometimes we hear people saying “God told me this,” or “God told me that,” and following these comments are statements that are inconsistent with the written word.

The struggle is not between the Christian and the law, as portrayed in Romans 7:24, where Paul depicts what life is like for the Christian in the old covenant context. Rather, the war the Christian must fight is between the Spirit and the flesh. The outcome is determined by who is master of our lives: the Spirit or the flesh.

Paul does not define evil as transgression of the law because Christians are free from the law. Rather he defines evil as the deeds of the flesh. These deeds are the natural outgrowth if we follow the promptings of our fallen nature. These ‘deeds of the flesh’ Paul says “are evident.” The mature Spirit-filled Christian does not need to be told these are wrong. The Holy Spirit working in the conscience of the believer grounded in Scripture is a sufficient guide.
Dale Ratzlaff

But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter (Rom. 7:6). We need to understand the central role the Holy Spirit plays in the new covenant. Without this insight we will be left with nagging questions. Without His indwelling, we will be left longing for Sina! When Jesus entered His ministry as the Covenant Messenger He was baptized in water by John, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove (Lk. 3:22). From that point on we see Jesus being led by the Spirit and demonstrating all the gifts of the Spirit! Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was led about by the Spirit (Lk. 4:1). And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Lk. 4:14). The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me (Lk. 4:18).

**SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2002**

**Life in the SPIRIT**

After the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost we see the central role the Holy Spirit played in the church, God’s new covenant people. In Peter’s sermon he quotes Joel and says, “It shall be in the last days, God says, that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall speak the word of God with boldness” (Acts 2:17). The Spirit and the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will disclose to you what is to come (Jn. 16:13).

**SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2002**

...The Old ritual worship, at designated places and on specified days and times, were replaced by Christ’s New Covenant reality: worship in Spirit as a continuous worship in the Spirit.

An accurate knowledge of the role of the Holy Spirit is fundamental for a correct understanding of the new covenant and it is also necessary for a right interpretation of the Sabbath. The role the law filled in the old covenant is filled by the Holy Spirit in the new. Scripture compares and contrasts the law with the Spirit in many ways. A subtle example of this is seen in the events surrounding the giving of both covenants. After the law was given, the children of Israel immediately went into disobedience and fell under condemnation. They made a golden calf, worshiped it, sacrificed to it, and said, “This is your God, O Israel, that brought you up out of the land of Egypt” (Ex. 32:6). Because of this sin “about three thousand men of the people fell that day” (Ex. 32:28). These three thousand were killed by their brothers at the command of God. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will disclose to you what is to come (Jn. 16:13).

Thus the New Testament contrasts the OT Law covenant with the New Covenant of the Holy Spirit. The old pertained to outward ritual worship of the flesh but the New has the inward realities of the Spirit. The Old covenant was sealed by outward physical circumcision, so that the Jews prided themselves for being circumcised, compared to others who were uncircumcised dogs. But in the New covenant, at our new birth, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, while the outward circumcision would sever us from Christ. Thus Paul explains in Phil 3:3 “We are the true circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, and put no confidence in the flesh.” The real Jew is not one who’s circumcised outwardly, but inwardly and the NT church is separated from the outside world (or unbelievers) by their lifestyle of continually worshipping God “in the Spirit and in Reality.”

The Old had ritual animal sacrifices and outward cleanings, but the New has reality Spiritual Sacrifices and the inward cleansing of the heart. 1 Pet 2:4-8 says we are a Royal Priesthood and a Holy Nation, and we are called to offer Spiritual Sacrifices to God who has called us out of dark- ness into His marvelous light.” These Spiritual Sacrifices are such sacrifices as giving our hearts wholly repentant to God. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart,” David said. In Luke, Jesus spoke of the publican, who broken in heart, went away justified. So James entreats us to be humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up” (4:6-10). There’s the Sacrifice of Praise as we read in Hebrews 13:15: “By Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” And there’s the sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving. “Let my prayer be set before you as incense and the lifting of my hands as the evening sacrifice,” David wrote. And there’s the Sacrifice of Joy and Rejoicing as in Romans 12:4: “Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle and praise Him in the way of thanksgiving.”

And God also wants the sacrifice of righteousness. Paul says “Present yourselves to God… and your members as instruments of righteousness” (Rom 6:13), and David explains, “You shall be pleased with sacrifices of righteousness.” John says “He who practices righteousness is righteous just as He is righteous” (1Jn 3:7). This includes sacrificing our bodies as Paul said, “I beseech you brethren… that you present your bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship” (Rom 12:1-2).

In addition, God wants us to offer the spiritual sacrifice of sharing or giving for other’s needs. Jesus told the rich young ruler, “If you will be perfect, sell what you have, and give to the poor.” In the early church those who were better off sold their goods to provide for those with- out, because of the oppression they suffered when receiving Christ. In Heb 13:16 we read, “But do not forget to do good (for others) and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” In Matt 25 Jesus shows our final judgment will be in how we have lived out His New Covenant Law of Love, by giving to the poor.”I was hungry and you fed me, I was naked and you clothed me…” Just as the Old ritual sacrifices were replaced by the New Covenant’s Spiritual sacrifices, so too Old ritual worship, designated places and on specified days and times, were replaced by Christ’s New Covenant reality: worship in Spirit as a continuous worship in the Spirit.
Eph 5:20, “Giving thanks always for all things to God!” 1 Ths 5:16-19 “Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing.” Eph 5:18, “continually being filled with the Spirit;” Gal 5:16 “continually walking in the Spirit;” etc.

In these passages the perfect tense has both aspects of beginning and continuing in the action. In Ps 34:1 David declares, “I will bless the Lord and sing praises to Him forever,” which means that he has already begun to bless the Lord, and will continue to do so. The early church continued in the temple daily praising God, even as in heaven “they cease not praising Him, day and night, forever and ever” (Rev 4:8-11; 7:9-5). So, New Testament Christians never limited their worship to a certain day, nor taught that if one worshiped on a given day of the week, he’d receive the mark of the beast!

The continual life of worshipping God in the Spirit results from the believer’s continually drinking from the Holy Spirit. In Psalm 36:9 and Jer 2:13 Jehovah is spoken of as the fountain of living waters. In Isa 55:1 God offered, “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters…” and He went on to say that all who come to the water will become as rivers flowing to the sea.

Does its fulfillment destroy, or validate a prophecy? It is almost amusing to see how writers go through all manner of mental contortions trying to harmonize this with the main theme of lightness by Faith, which is not of works, lest any man should boast. Why should we struggle to understand what Paul meant, when Jesus explains this perfectly? Facing a similar challenge from the Pharisees who were accusing Jesus of destroying the laws of Judaism, He replied this way:

Do not think that I have come to do away with or undo the Law and the prophets; I have come not to do away with or undo, but to complete and fulfill them. For truly, till you have seen the earth and sky pass away and perish not one smallest letter nor one smallest hook [denoting certain Hebrew letters] will pass from the Law and all things [it foretold] have been accomplished (Matt 5:17,18, Amp).

What was the main goal or objective of the Law and the prophets? To make us see the话说的 truth of the Law and the prophets? Let us read Jesus’ own words again. And these [very Scriptures] testify about Me! John 5:39 (Amp). It is clear that the goal and purpose of the Law and the prophets was to prepare Israel to receive Jesus the Messiah. Paul verifies this in Romans 3:21: Now no righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

If the purpose of the Law was to help prepare a people to receive Christ as redeemer, then its purpose was accomplished when the Redeemer came. Its job was done, or fulfilled, to use Jesus’ own words. The Law was not destroyed. It had simply run its course and ceased to have any further function. Would you say that when a prophecy comes to pass it is destroyed? Absolutely Not! It is fulfilled! The Law was not a mistake; it was holy and just and good, and it completed the purpose for which it was designed. It was a schoolmaster pointing Israel to the coming Messiah (Gal 3:24).

Looking at Paul’s statement in Romans 3:31 in the light of Jesus’ words, we find that there is no contradiction in what Paul was saying. He was simply saying that the Law was, and remains, perfect, proof that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah. The Law was designed to show Israel that they could not win God’s favor by ceremonies or by rule keeping, but that they needed a Redeemer from beyond themselves. The Law and the prophets identified Jesus as the full fulfillment of that hope. They were fulfilled in Him!

Conversely, Jesus’ life and ministry validate and authenticate the Law that foretold His coming. That proof will remain for all time. Today the Law stands validated, not because we are still under its authority, but because it verified our Foundation, who is Jesus Christ. Because He remains, the testimony of the Law stands. For example, when the ancient Roman Empire had run its God assigned course, its purpose was fulfilled. Its contribution to history remains to this day, but we are not subject to its authority because after it’s purpose was fulfilled, it was replaced. In the Scriptures the words “Law” and “covenant” are often used interchangeably.

If there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no problem would have been sought for another. By calling this covenant “new” He has made the first one obsolete: and what is obsolete and becoming soon disappear. He replaced the old Law with what? Grace.

Having fulfilled the Law, Christ replaced it with grace. Grace succeeded Law. To find our way out of the religious wilderness, which is the product of human reasoning, we must start at the beginning by asking ourselves some questions. How can we expect the heaven then to take us seriously as long as our own house is divided over the central theme of the gospel? Who gave Abraham the Covenant of Righteousness by Faith? Who was the mediator of the Abrahamic Covenant? Who gave Moses the Sinaitic Covenant? Who was the mediator of the Sinaitic Covenant—Christ or Moses? What was the relationship between the Sinai Covenant and the 10 commandments? What time span was allotted by God to each of those covenants? How can these themes impact my personal relationship to Jesus?
trayed as crucified, I would like to learn just one thing from you. Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Galatians 3:1-3.

Paul’s question was: after beginning entirely by faith, are you now trying to maintain your standing with God by trying to observe the law? Does God release you from the law only until you are saved and then send you back to the same law to prove your stuff? That is what some Paul said. Just as God can save you by faith in Christ alone, so, by His Spirit, He can keep you by faith alone. You do not have to revert to the law to prove anything! Then in Romans 3:31 Paul seems to reverse himself.

Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Confusing? To the man without God’s original blueprint as a guide, this apparent contradiction makes no sense. Then, to illuminate those born of the Spirit, in a statement that further confuses the carnal mind, Paul said this regarding the 10 commandments: Now if the ministation of death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory… will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?… But their minds were made dull, for to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. 2 Corinthians 3:7,14,15.

Here again, the law on stone and the Old Covenant seem to find no place in the gospel commands of Paul. He indicates that people do those main things to be done by the Spirit by observing the law on stone do so because they are blinded by a veil that is pulled over their heads. How do we put this together with the next statement by the same writer? So then, the law and the commandment is holy and righteous and good (Rom. 7:12).

Compare this with what he wrote in Romans 3:20: Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law.

If a person is not made righteous by observing the law, nor does he maintain his right standing with God by observing the law, what place does it have in the life of the Christian? The problem is that some have not recognized the original blueprint that God gave us. Many have never seen God’s original blueprint. They cannot even tell you whether or not the 10 commandments, which were the essence of the Sinai Covenant, were carried over into the post-cross era to become part of the New Covenant of faith or not. Most would guess that they were, with a few exceptions, of course. The main exception being the 4th commandment which required Israel to observe Sabbath. The New Testament writers show how both Jesus and Paul, who never lived in Judaism, who lived in a Gentile world, welcomed to them the right to desecrate the sabbath, they merely shrugged and go on to the next topic. We’ve got to be able to do better than that if we wish to reach the world.

To clarify, let us see what Paul meant by the term “law.” The Greek word for “law” is nomos. It is a general term that may refer to a law, ordinance, custom or a tradition. It does not refer to the 10 commandments per se! It may include the Sinai law but is not limited to that law. Nomos generally refers to the whole Torah which in turn includes all the Jewish religious customs and laws, Nomos does not distinguish between the 10 commandments and the other Torah laws. When Paul wrote that “we uphold the law,” he was saying that the law was not a mistake, but a gift of God-ordained purpose in pointing Israel to the coming Redeemer. Having done its work, Israel was released from its tyranny (Acts 15:10; Rom. 7:6; 104; Gal. 3:24, 25) and was freed to live by faith as did Abraham before them. In that sense the Nomos (Law) was holy and just and good.

Are You Playing With Lego toys?

The confusion arises when people take their favorite sections of the Bible out of context and use them like children playing with Lego toys. Out of the same pieces one makes a car, another makes a boat while another will create a house. It is not enough merely to keep texts in context within their own epistle. For example: The letter Paul wrote to the Romans was not intended to cover the entire gospel message. It was written to address some particular problems that exist among the believers in Rome. The letter to the Galatians was not written to reveal the whole gospel message, but to deal with a particular problem facing the church in Galatia, and so on with the other letters Paul wrote.

Even Paul’s letters in their entirety were not meant to be studied apart from the gospel. No, this is not to say that the epistles are the inspired and infallible interpretation of the Old Testament. Jesus included those letters as part of the whole counsel of God. The question arises: If the inspired and infallible interpretation of the Old Testament was not for the church, then how did it become a part of the Bible? Some say that the books of the New Testament were not written to replace the law, but to explain the law and the importance of using a lateral translation of the Bible when doing careful Bible study.

It seems to me that Dr. Glardon pointed out, that the writer of Ecclesiastes is not stating ultimate truth. Rather, he is evaluating life UNDER THE SUN from his limited Old Testament perspective. I do not believe one can solve the problems in Ecclesiastes with slogans and clichés on infallibility or inspiration. Rather, the answer, will be found in hermeneutics. How does one interpret this book and its difficult statements? Here we have something we can sink our theological teeth into and try to make sense out of this difficult book. Dr.Gladston was seeking to do. This is why several of the early issues of Proclamation were devoted to the principles of hermeneutics. It is these hermeneutical principles that give us a foundation of truth that is not based on doctrine or denominational correctness. Here we can find principles that guide us to the infallible truths of God’s Word and what they mean in real life.

Here are just a few of the major tenants of hermeneutics. Study every test verse in its wider context. Try to find out the original passage under consideration meant to the writer and to whom it was addressed. Search for the eternal moral principle behind a given situation and then apply that principle to today’s culture. Because the revelation of Christ surpasses that which is found in the Old Testament, the New Testament must always be the norm and all Old Testament statements must be interpreted by the New. As Christ is the central theme of all Scripture, our interpretation must be Christ centered. The epistles are the inspired and infallible interpretation of the Christ event and were written to young Christian churches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; therefore, they are to be considered as the pinnacle of doctrinal correctness. No important teaching is based on a single statement. We should place the emphasis where Scripture places the emphasis. Doctrine should not be derived from esoteric and apologetic portions of Scripture, but by clear, deep, didactic, contextual teaching. Where the Bible is clear, we can be certain. Where the Bible is unclear or can honestly be interpreted in several ways, we must be tentative. We must be careful not to let our theological paradigm blind us to the statements that do not fit our system of truth. A correct, biblical perspective of the covenants is essential to a right interpretation.

Considering these principles, regardless of what Ecclesiastes says, from the New Covenant point of view we can say with assurance: Life is good. There is purpose to life. Being is better than nothing. But the privilege Jesus offered for the grave is all. Do not go to the same place. Birth is better than death (unless at death one goes to be with the Lord as Paul says)!

You suggested that I “slammed” Ellen White in my answer to your question. I don’t know if that is the right word or not but I did point out some of the problems with the writings of EGW and there are many. I was a firm believer in EGW for many, many years as for my former students I was also under her bondage but was blinded to that fact until I started studying the Bible without her commentary. I personally know dozens (if not hundreds) and have communicated with many hundreds (if not thousands) of people whose lives have been terribly warped by the bondage of trying to live by her “Testimonies” And speaking of Ellen White, are you aware that...

I have many Adventist friends, I often pray for Adventists, many of whom are in enthusiastic agreement with most of the articles in Proclamation and support this ministry both with their prayers and finances. I willing to accept her writings as a “continuing and authoritative source of truth…” as the Fundamental Beliefs of SDA states, and with which all baptismal candidates are to agree in a public vow before the house of God is opened. I have no problem with the basic Evangelical statement that God can save you by faith in Christ alone, so, by His Spirit, He can keep you by faith alone. You do not have to accept her writings as a “continuing and authoritative source of truth…” as the Fundamental Beliefs of SDA states, and with which all baptismal candidates are to agree in a public vow before the house of God is opened. You also state that “I just don’t like Adventists!” Here you are wrong. I have many Adventist friends. I often pray for Adventists, many of whom are in enthusiastic agreement with most of the articles in Proclamation and support this ministry both with their prayers and finances. I do dislike the apparent duplicity in Adventism, but no church is perfect. I continue to pray that Adventist leaders, professors and pastors will be true to Scripture and jettison the cultic teachings of historic Adventism. You say we do not have any reason to exist other than to dislike Adventists and slam EGW! I don’t know how long you have been reading Proclamation, but if you read all the issues, I think you will see that we do speak about God’s love and it is our desire to make Christ central as we promote the simple gospel of God’s grace. Readers must remember that our target audience is former Seventh-day Adventists and other sabbatarians, many of whom are still under the bondage of false guilt, have little assurance of salvation and are filled with questions that must be addressed before they can experience the freedom offered in the new covenant gospel.

Pastor Inglish, I hope this answers your questions more fully. May God bless you and yours as you proclaim the simple gospel of Christ.
A most painful transition

Thank you for helping us during a most painful transition period. God bless you and your ministry.

I have found great joy and peace

I thank God for your ministry. I am a fourth generation Adventist. After four years of study I finally left the Adventist fold. The two red books by Dale Ratzlaff entitled Cultic Doctrine and Sabbath in Crisis were the final and most effective reasons to leave. I have found great joy and peace in an evangelical church in my area and have been liberated from the dogma of Adventism for quite some time. My family is all Adventist and they have tried to bring me back to the fold in many ways. Now they are simply convinced I’m going to hell. It is a very sad thing for me to know they feel that way. I pray and hope they can be brought out. Thank you for your incredible book in that ministry. There are not enough “thank-you’s” in all languages combined to express my appreciation.

Church every weekend should be a joyous celebration of God

I currently attend an SDA Church. I had become a member some 32 years ago in another country. Shortly after leaving an SDA I began to have questions about EGW. I was not the most bible savvy or spiritual person, but I wondered why pastors would take to the pulpit several EGW books, then read out one or two scriptures and then constantly page quote this or that page from EGW’s books during their sermons. I believed the in keeping the Sabbath to the point that no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ if any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, his work will be shown for what it is... it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he builds survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss... I imagine! Paul said that even if it were possible to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ, but use our own ideas (which God considers as nothing but wood, hay or straw, in designing the super structure), such work will be rejected and burned up! It is possible to start building on the foundation of Jesus Christ using our own ideas for what we build? That, friends, is it possible for us to build on the original foundation, with each one of us using our own grandiose ideas for building God’s kingdom? I make a distinction between the term “Christianity” as it is used today, and the original “Christ-centered faith” that was the foundation of the saints from the beginning of time. Many people do not know what “Christianity” means today. Most people think of Christianity as a religion which may include a variety of conflicting flavors poured into the same bottle like the Heinz variety of ketchup. One of the hottest topics dividing Evangelicals today is, what role should Old Covenant laws play in the Christian faith? The church has come full circle to where the believers in Galatia were in the days of Paul. Was there a place for Old Covenant laws in the Christ-centered faith? In shock and amazement Paul wrote to them, “For you foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you!” Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly por...
How does one live “life in the Spirit”?

I would like to introduce this issue of Proclamation with a letter I recently received. It was written in response to Greg Taylor’s “is leaving Adventism all that Great” printed in the last issue of Proclamation:

I was saddened by Greg Taylor’s article that as a former SDA pastor he didn’t have the courage to band together within the SDA church to pray to the Bible and study it, finding the Savior of the Advent message. You couldn’t be doing us a greater favor. … Retired SDA Professor

We thank this person for her letter. Yes, many former SDAs are praying that the SDA church and other churches as well, would receive an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We pray that God will use this issue of Proclamation to that end. To bring things into focus, Paul’s question to the Galatians in regards to cleansing the church from the inside and not the outside: History does not necessarily support this. It took a Luther who was willing to step outside of the established church to bring at least some reformation to the inside of that church. Without a Ronald Reagan, Russia would not now be so accepted within the SDA church. In reality, it takes people both on the inside and on the outside to move a well-established organization. Those of us on the outside can speak without fear of financial or career endangerment. When Jesus referred to cleaning the inside of the church, he had reference to the heart and not an organization. It was Jesus who said that one cannot put new wine into old vessels.

It is our prayer that your work on the outside of Adventism, true reformation will come on the inside of the seventh-day Adventist church.

Thank you! Thank you to all of you who are praying for this ministry! It is such an encouragement to us to know that you are lifting us up to God each and every day! We thank all of you who have so faithfully— and many sacrificially—financially supported Proclamation. It is very gratifying to see the hand of God as He provides, through you, the funds needed each month! May God richly bless you in every way!

For those of us who long for more of the Holy Spirit in our church and lives, we must once and for all come to grips with the fact that the Holy Spirit comes with the proclamation—and its reception—of the simple gospel of Christ and not by the works of the law. We trust that the following articles will clarify this truth.

In regards to cleansing the church from the inside and not the outside: History does not necessarily support this. It took a Luther who was willing to step outside of the established church to bring at least some reformation to the inside of that church. Without a Ronald Reagan, Russia would not now be so accepted within the SDA church. In reality, it takes people both on the inside and on the outside to move a well-established organization. Those of us on the outside can speak without fear of financial or career endangerment. When Jesus referred to cleaning the inside of the church, he had reference to the heart and not an organization. It was Jesus who said that one cannot put new wine into old vessels.

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1 See Matt. 23:25–27.

NEXT ISSUE

1. LAM, Inc. expands ministry
2. What about original sin?
3. Born saved or lost?
4. Are you “born again”?
5. Salvation: God’s or man’s choice?

I have given up my job as a police officer. Then I came to America and was active in the church holding several church positions. Then something happened in the church. I was a member of a church in Houston, Texas. As a result I walked away from the church and never set foot on any Adventist premises for nearly eight years. I joined Sunday churches where I thoroughly enjoyed their lively praise and worship services. I believe that going to church every weekend should be a joyful celebration of God…

I am depressed and saddened

Would you please remove my name from your mailing list. I do not appreciate the magazine. Those are not a “bush of fresh air.” I am depressed and saddened to see how you twist the Scriptures and try to lead people away from the Bible truths. The Scriptures pronounce a curse on those who lead others away from the truth.

How could you ignore God’s commandment to “remember the Sabbath Day”? As for the PUC graduates that left the church, look at the hundreds that are all around the world teaching the Advent message.

Thanks you so much for Proclamation. You have been a great tool for the work you are doing. Please pray for my father, that your publication may open her heart to God’s grace.

We trust God to give us the wisdom

Dear Pastor Ratzlaff, I write to thank you on behalf of my friend and Bible study partner. She no longer attends the SDA church but the elder and some members have been visiting her and inviting her to return. However, she is not an Adventist and is planning to formulate some questions from our studies of the various SDA doctrines and the life of E G White and her claims. When we have these questions together … will pay the church a visit and confront the leaders with the questions forcing them to ‘come clean’.

Please pray for us. We are trusting God to give us the wisdom that everything will be done in love. Once more thanks for the Proclamation.

We especially found the article ‘The role of conscience in Belief’ very enlightening. Please continue to send Proclamation to us.

What a shame and a pity

It made me think of Clay Peck, and many other ‘formers,’ did not discover Jesus, His love, His grace, His precious justification, His new covenant promises and the wonderful assurance of our presentation of gospel and prayer. I hope that others will respond to this by studying the Bible, finding the SDA church as she has been blessed by the Holy Spirit, rather than spending your time and money trying to create doubt and disaffiliation in others.

It is really a valuable tool

I recently received your Proclamation because I asked questions on the Life Assurance Ministries web site. I think it is really a valuable tool for the work you are doing. Please pray for my sister, that her publication may open her heart to God’s grace.

Dear Pastor Ratzlaff, I write to thank you on behalf of my friend and Bible study partner. She no longer attends the SDA church but the elder and some members have been visiting her and inviting her to return. However, she is not an Adventist and is planning to formulate some questions from our studies of the various SDA doctrines and the life of E G White and her claims. When we have these questions together … will pay the church a visit and confront the leaders with the questions forcing them to ‘come clean’.

Please pray for us. We are trusting God to give us the wisdom that everything will be done in love. Once more thanks for the Proclamation.

We especially found the article ‘The role of conscience in Belief’ very enlightening. Please continue to send Proclamation to us.

What a shame and a pity

It made me think of Clay Peck, and many other ‘formers,’ did not discover Jesus, His love, His grace, His precious justification, His new covenant promises and the wonderful assurance of our present salvation while they were still SDAs. He must have felt that legalistic practices, binding standards and strictures, and harsh doctrinal presentations were what Adventism was all about. What a shame and a pity.

In all, he missed the beauty. He missed the Advent message. In fact one of the reasons Pastor Taylor left the SDA church was because he felt he could not in clear conscience teach other Adventist doctrines without compromising his loyalty to the simple gospel of grace.

Mail letters and donations to:
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To proclaim the good news of the new covenant gospel of grace in Christ and to address the key point

Proclamation! for Former Adventists • Inquiring Adventists • Sabbatarians • Concerned Evangelicals

The Christian’s life of Worshiping God in the Spirit

Verle Streifling

In the early 1980’s a popular and informative Christian-growth film series was making its way around Evangelical circles, called “How Then shall We Live?” It was produced by the great Christian thinker Francis Schaeffer, from his book of the same title. Then in the late 1990’s another book hit the market How Now Shall We Live? by Chuck Colson, dealing with issues facing Christians today. Almost 2000 years ago, Jesus gave us his insight into the same issue, from his dialogue with the Samaritan at Jacob’s well. The lady had asked in essence ‘which is the right place and way of worship? ’ or ‘Who's religion is right?’ He responded “The hour is coming, and now it is, when the true worshippers will worship God in Spirit and in Truth… God is Spirit, and is seeking such to worship Him who will worship Him in the Spirit and in Truth.” (John 4:23-24)

Some today emphasize Jesus’ words “and in Truth” to urge that unless one has all the Truth, and nothing but the truth in their teachings, their worship is false worship. Yet it seems this wasn’t what Jesus meant, for while the Greek word alethia which He used takes the meaning truth, it equally means reality or genuine, and He was addressing the “hows” or rituals of worship that the lady asked about, rather than doctrines which weren’t in the discussion. Moreover, all the truth cannot be found in doctrines, but rather in the person of Christ, who said “I myself am the way, the Truth and the life”.

So Jesus was saying that true worship wouldn’t be that done in rituals, but rather the genuine or real worship that comes to God from man’s heart. Indeed His indictment against Israel’s ritual worship was “They worship me with their mouths, and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.”

But the phrase “in the Spirit” that Jesus used, can be misunderstood for it carries at least four different uses in the New Testament, so that one may easily bring the wrong definition into this text:

It can be locative, ie, speaking to the question “where?” that’s answered by “in man’s spirit.”

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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 works of our own, that no one should boast." Ephesians 2:9, 10