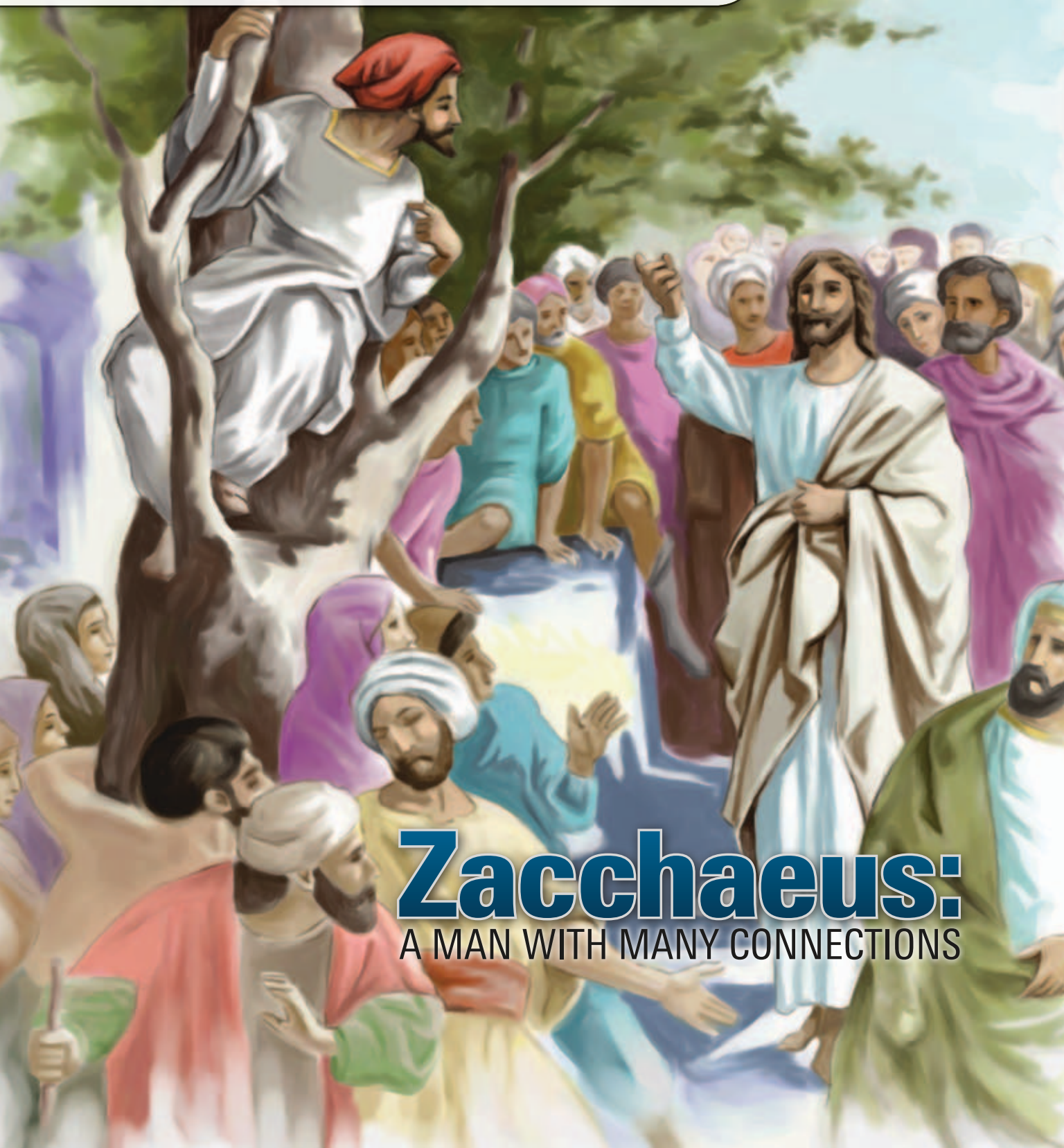


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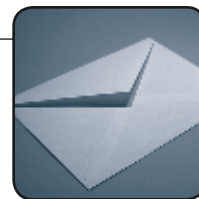
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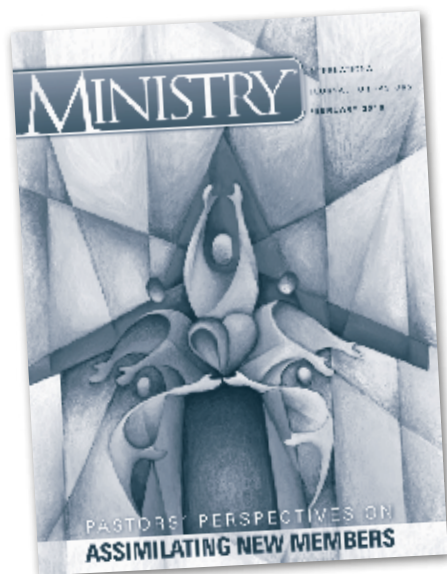
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“I WAS RECENTLY BAPTIZED AFTER ABOUT SIX MONTHS OF BIBLE STUDY WITH A YOUNG COUPLE WHO WERE RAISED ADVENTIST. ALTHOUGH I’M VERY FAMILIAR WITH THE ADVENTIST FAITH (BOTH MY PARENTS LEFT THE CHURCH AFTER ATTENDING AN ADVENTIST COLLEGE) I STILL FEEL SOMEWHAT LIKE I’M INVADING FOREIGN TERRITORY.”



Assimilating new members

This article (“Pastors’ Perspectives on Assimilating New Members: Part 1—Challenges and Needs”—February 2010) hits home. I was recently baptized after about six months of Bible study with a young couple who were raised Adventist. Although I’m very familiar with the Adventist faith (both my parents left the church after attending an Adventist college) I still feel somewhat like I’m invading foreign territory. And as a single adult surrounded by couples and families I feel like an oddball. I know a lot about Adventist culture and I want to do “all things Adventist,” having

experimented with other denominations for most of my adult life. Wanting to fit in is big on the list and wanting to know “how things work”—the hierarchy within the church—and how to become part of it. There is a need for helping “newbies” feel like they really belong and are welcome—and not letting them fall through the cracks.

—Brenda, email

I think this is very timely. We certainly grapple with the issues of new converts in my church. I wish we could unite and give the relevant support. It takes time but didn’t God take time out with us?

—Joan Scavella, Nassau, Bahamas

SOME THINGS ARE WORTH WAITING FOR

Watch for the special July/August 2010 issue coming next month

Look for details of the next Ministerial Student Writing Contest
in the September 2010 issue



The blessed hope

It was a regular activity every summer evening: attending evangelistic tent meetings with slides that depicted biblical themes. Most memorable—due to the nightmares they literally gave me—were the slides of the beasts of Daniel 7.

But what excited me the most were the slides depicting the Second Coming. Christ's return seemed so real, so imminent. I asked myself, "Am I ready to meet Jesus when He comes?"

What happened?

Many years have elapsed, and life has pushed other thoughts to the forefront more than I care to admit. Why? What happened? Three things in particular have transpired, personally. First, the "cares of this life" (Luke 21:34, KJV) have consumed my time and attention more than I ever thought they would. Even though many of these things are noble pursuits, the most insidious are: children's school extracurricular activities, Pathfinder meetings, and church work.

Second, I hear fewer sermons preached that focus on the Second Coming. It seems that there is a greater focus on the "now," whereas many preachers talked more extensively about the blessed hope, the "not yet," in years past. There often appears to be an emphasis on how God heals us when we are sick and pays our bills when we are broke—that God's ultimate role is to come to our rescue when we are in trouble.

Third, there has been a shift in music themes. While many churches still sing hymns and other churches incorporate a variety of musical genres, in many cases there has been a moving away from the songs that herald the Second Coming. I love the songs that pointed me toward a

glorious future, such as "It May Be at Morn," "Lift Up the Trumpet," and "Lo, He Comes." I still chuckle when I think back to my favorite eight-track cassette of music that I owned in the mid-1970s: *This Is Another Day*, a collection of songs written by the gospel musician, Andraé Crouch. Two of the nine songs on that cassette spoke of the imminent return of Christ ("We Expect You," and "Soon and Very Soon").

What needs to happen?

I confess that I spend more time reading newspapers, listening to news radio channels, and watching sporting events than I should. There's nothing wrong with that; but I have to keep things in perspective. Today's events quickly become tomorrow's history—as evidenced by the volume of newspapers I discard in the recycling bin after holding on to them for only a few days. But the Word of God endures forever.

So, what do I want to see happen, both for me and the church I love? First, I have intentionally increased my efforts to spend more time in prayer and Bible study. I do so by listening to less classical music on the radio en route to work and devote that time to prayer (multitasking in a positive fashion) as well as watching less television in the evening and spending more time with the Scriptures. It refreshes me to spend time contemplating the blessed hope, the return of Jesus for His chosen ones. It thrills me to wrap my imagination around knowing that one day I'll walk on streets of gold. It excites me that one day I'll see my grandparents after Christ resurrects them.


Second, I vow to preach more on the Second Coming. I remember hearing a sermon that Calvin B. Rock, at that time the president of

Oakwood College (now Oakwood University), preached in Dallas, Texas, in 1980, just prior to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' session. I vividly remember how, in his conclusion, he vowed that he was going to preach more on the Second Coming, for it was, he articulated, the solution to all the ailments of humanity.

Third, I want to see a greater emphasis on Christ's soon return in our church music. I think back to yet another gospel music classic written by Andraé Crouch: "Soon and very soon we are going to see the King . . . hallelujah, hallelujah! We're going to see the King," and I recall how such songs filled my heart with hope for something bigger than what this world could offer.

The ultimate solution

The only true answer to the issues of life is the blessed hope, for this hope lifts us above the temporal and fixes our gaze upon the eternal. In this life we move from one challenge, one frustration, to another. But God offers us an eternity with no pain, death, sorrow, or crying (Rev. 21:4).

So let's dream about it, talk about it, and prepare for it! 



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Zacchaeus: A man with many connections

Many have explored the Zacchaeus story (Luke 19:1–10) from the perspective of its relation to other passages in Luke. Some have related it to the stories about the rich ruler (18:18–24), the healing of the blind man (18:35–43), the daughter of Abraham (13:16), and the paralytic (5:18–26).¹ Others relate it not only with the rich ruler and the healing of the blind man but also with the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee (18:9–14).² Meanwhile, a few scholars suggest that the story of Zacchaeus relates to the story of the persistent widow (18:1–5) and that of the children coming to Jesus (18:15–17).³ They suggest that Zacchaeus had a low social status as had the poor widow, tax collector, little children, and blind man,⁴ or that Zacchaeus was offered salvation just as they were.⁵

This article explores the components and significance of these connections and the fact that Jesus met Zacchaeus *after* the events described above and *before* His entry into Jerusalem.

Jesus' journey to Jerusalem

Jesus' journey to Jerusalem begins on the Mount of Transfiguration, when Elijah, Moses, and Jesus Himself talked about "His [Jesus'] departure which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem" (9:31).⁶ They may have talked about the death of Jesus in Jerusalem and

even His ascension and the redemption all this would accomplish.^{7, 8}

After the Transfiguration, Jesus came down from the mountain (9:37) and, continuing His travel to Jerusalem (9:51, 52; 13:22, 33; 17:11), finally said to His disciples, "We are going up to Jerusalem'" (18:31). Jesus met Zacchaeus (19:1–10) before He arrived there (19:28–44). Zacchaeus, therefore, is the last named individual Jesus met before entering Jerusalem.

Characteristics of Zacchaeus

Luke 19, verses 2 and 3, present, straightforwardly, facts about Zacchaeus: (1) he is a chief tax collector, (2) he is rich, (3) he is not able to see Jesus, and (4) he is short. Zacchaeus, as chief tax collector, connects with the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector (18:9–14). In his prayer, the Pharisee not only describes what he *is not* but what *he is*. With seven self-descriptions, the Pharisee seems to be saying that "I am perfect";⁹ in contrast, the tax collector humbly says: "'God, be merciful to me, the sinner'" (v. 13). It is as if the tax collector is saying, "I am the sinner described by the Pharisee."

The word *telōnēs*, "tax collector," occurs 24 times in the New Testament (NT) and is found only in the Gospels. Luke uses it the most—11.¹⁰ The Pharisees and Jews classify tax collectors as sinners (5:30; 7:34; 15:1).

In Luke, the term "tax collector" occurs first in chapter 3, verse 12, where only one evil practice (of many) of the tax collectors is mentioned: collecting more than what is required. The term appears, for the last time, in chapter 18, verse 13, where the tax collector identifies himself as "the sinner" described by the Pharisee (vv. 11, 12). In chapter 19, verse 1, the word *telōnēs* actually appears once more but only as part of the word *architelōnēs*, "chief tax collector"—the only occurrence in the NT.

Zacchaeus is also rich. The adjective *plousios*, "rich," appears 16 times in the four Gospels, most often in Luke (6:24; 12:16; 14:12; 16:1, 19, 21–23; 18:25; 19:2; 21:1). There are accounts or sayings in Luke where the word *plousios* appears but is not found in Matthew and Mark: the woe for the rich (Luke 6:24), the parable of the foolish rich man (12:16–21), Jesus' saying about who should and should not be invited to a dinner (14:12–14), the parable of a rich man with his dishonest treasurer (16:1–9), the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (19:31), and the story of Zacchaeus (19:1–10). In Luke, rich men are described as having received their reward, disqualified for the kingdom of heaven (6:20, 24; cf. 16:25), selfish, and foolish (12:16–21). Jesus says: "'For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God'" (18:25).

Zacchaeus is as rich as the rich ruler (19:2; cf. 18:23), and both are somehow related to distributing to the poor (18:22; cf. 19:8). The use of the verb *sōzō*, “to save” (18:26), and *sōtēria*, “salvation” (19:9), suggests that both stories are concerned with salvation. In addition to these parallels, there are also contrasts between Zacchaeus and the rich ruler. The rich ruler, in responding to the words of Jesus, became very sad (18:22); Zacchaeus, in responding to the invitation of Jesus, received Him joyfully (19:6). The Greek word *archōn*, “ruler,

to this ruler contains two imperatives: “sell” and “distribute.” To sell everything the ruler has would not be a problem for him; to distribute it to the poor would be, however, a different case. About this rich ruler, Jesus said, “‘How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!’” (v. 24). If it is hard for the rich ruler, it might be also hard for Zacchaeus.

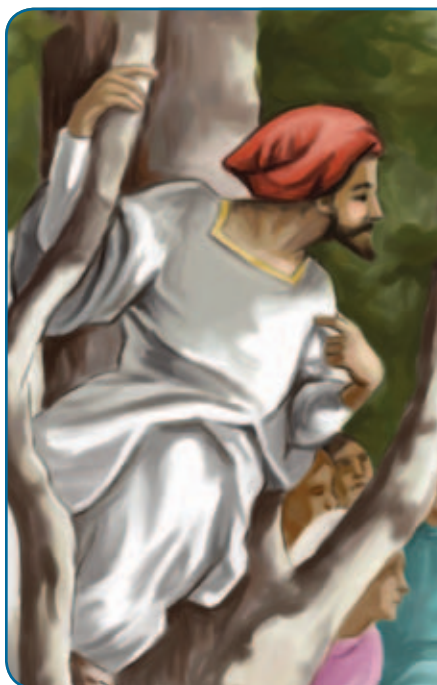
Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus but couldn’t “because of the crowd, for he was small in stature” (19:3).¹¹ This situation is similar to that of the

All the difficulties (or hindrances)—chief tax collector, chief sinner, and stature—that prevented these individuals from having access to Jesus are found in one person, Zacchaeus.

Is there hope for Zacchaeus?

Zacchaeus in the context of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem

On His journey to Jerusalem Jesus met Zacchaeus, the last named person before entering Jerusalem.¹² When Jesus expressed His intention



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SALVATION BECAME HIS.

official, chief” (18:18), does not occur in the story of Zacchaeus. However, that word implicitly coexists with the word *telōnēs*, “tax collector,” and both form a compound word *architelōnēs*, “chief tax collector.” This compound word tightens not only the connection of Zacchaeus to the characteristics of the rich ruler but also to those of the tax collector in chapter 18, verses 10 through 13.

Regardless of the obedience of the rich ruler to God’s commandments (vv. 20, 21), Jesus says that one thing is lacking: “‘sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor’” (v. 22). Jesus’ instruction

little children who were brought to Jesus (18:15–17) and the blind man crying for healing (18:35–43). The disciples rebuked those who brought their little ones to Jesus. Luke uses *epetimōn*, “they rebuked” in this passage, and he also uses *epetimōn* to describe the crowd that rebuked the blind man crying for Jesus’ mercy (18:39). There is also a hindrance for Zacchaeus to see Jesus: “because of the crowd” (19:3). Based on the context, it might be the same crowd that rebuked the blind man. The desire of Zacchaeus to see Jesus—“he was seeking to see Jesus”—echoes that of the blind beggar.

to stay in Zacchaeus’ house, the crowd murmured saying, “‘He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner’” (19:7). The complaint was addressed to Jesus, but the response came from Zacchaeus. This is unusual. In chapter 5, verses 30 and 31, when the Pharisees and teachers of the law protested Jesus eating together with tax collectors and sinners, the response came directly from Jesus (cf. Matt. 9:10, 11; Mark 2:15, 16). But now it was Zacchaeus who responded. However, his response was not to the crowd but to Jesus: “‘Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have

taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold" (Luke 19:8, NKJV).

A. J. Kerr suggests that the idea of fourfold restoration comes not from Jewish law but from Roman law. If Exodus 22, verse 1, is considered as the Old Testament background, Zacchaeus should have pledged to restore fivefold, not only fourfold, for what he had stolen could have been much more than the value of an ox.¹³ However, Bruce W. Grindlay comments, "If David makes a fourfold restitution, could not one [Zacchaeus] who had also 'cheated' as David had done make a fourfold restitution in the presence of the 'Son of David'?"¹⁴ This study supports Grindlay's observation. If Zacchaeus was familiar with the story of David's confession (2 Sam. 12:16), then he would probably be acquainted with the confessional prayer of David in Psalm 51.¹⁵

Jesus' response to Zacchaeus can be seen in the context of His

responses in previous passages. Jesus says about the tax collector, "'This man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other'" (Luke 18:14; emphasis added). About the little children, Jesus states, "'Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it'" (v. 17, NKJV). In responding to the wonderment of His disciples about the difficulty of a rich man to be saved, Jesus replies, "'The things which are impossible with men are possible with God'" (v. 27). To the blind beggar, who asks to receive his sight again, Jesus says, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you" (v. 42, author's translation). Jesus' answer to Zacchaeus also confirms his salvation: "'Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham'" (19:9).

The story of Zacchaeus ends with Jesus' famous statement: "'For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost'" (19:10). The use of the verb *apollumi*,

which occurs in the expression to *apolōlos*, "that which was lost" in chapter 19, verse 10, appears six times in Luke 15: the parable of the lost sheep (15:4–7), the parable of the lost coin (vv. 8–10), and the parable of the lost son (vv. 11–32). The situational setting introducing the three parables was just the same with what happened when Jesus went to Zacchaeus' house. People complained: "This Man receives sinners and eats with them" (see 15:1; cf. 19:7). Although all the three parables end with a joyful feast celebrating the finding/returning of the lost, it is not explicitly clear who is represented by the shepherd (15:4), the woman (v. 7), and the father (v. 20). Jesus gives the identity of the one seeking the lost: the Son of Man, Jesus Himself (19:10). In this sense, Zacchaeus had once been lost but was found by the Seeker of the lost.

The characteristics of Zacchaeus—a rich tax collector who is short and cannot see Jesus—reflect



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the descriptions about the tax collector, rich ruler, little children, and blind beggar. If it was difficult for these four characters to be saved or to have access to Jesus, then it would have been much more difficult for Zacchaeus himself, who personified them all.

Is there hope for Zacchaeus?

As pastors, we may find some members with multiple problems or hindrances like Zacchaeus. We should not lose hope to reach them. Jesus found Zacchaeus and salvation became his. God will guide us in reaching people like Zacchaeus.

With the Cross as our focus and source of motivation, we can overcome any obstacle in reaching even the most difficult members. This spirit of ministry is demonstrated by Jesus. He shows that reaching troublesome people is not impossible. The fact that Zacchaeus was the last named individual Jesus encountered before entering Jerusalem highlights the truth that, through the Cross, salvation is made possible for everyone, even Zacchaeus and those among us who are like him. 

- 4 Green, 666, 667. However, if the social status is the emphasis, then it is a bit difficult to explain the relation between Zacchaeus and the rich ruler, since the rich ruler comes from a high social status.
- 5 Stein, 466.
- 6 All Bible verses are quoted from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) unless specifically indicated.
- 7 Luke 9:51 indicates that Jesus' going to Jerusalem is in relation to *analepsis*, "a being taken up or ascension." This word occurs in its cognate verb *analamano* in Acts 1:11 in the phrase, "This Jesus, who has been taken up [*analempheis*] from you into heaven." In this text the verb *analamano* clearly refers to the ascension of Jesus.
- 8 When Luke repeats the purpose of Jesus going to Jerusalem, he says in Luke 18:31, 32, "And He took the twelve aside and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.'"
- 9 In his prayer, the Pharisee lists the seven causes for his gratitude to God (Luke 18:11, 12): (1) I am not like others; (2) I am not like the swindlers; (3) I am not like the unjust; (4) I am not like adulterers; (5) I am not like the tax collector; (6) I fast twice a week; (7) I give tithe of all I possess. The negative particle *ouk*, "not," occurs only once before all the first five characteristics. It does not only negate the first characteristic, but also the following four.
- 10 Luke 3:12; 5:27 [2x], 29, 30; 7:29, 34; 15:1; 18:10, 11, 13. Matthew uses it nine times (5:46; 9:9, 10, 11; 10:3; 11:19; 18:17; 21:31, 32), and Mark uses it only four times (2:14, 15, 16 [2x]), only in the account of the calling of Levi to be Jesus' disciple.
- 11 The Greek preposition *apo* followed by genitive *tau ochlou* is to be translated, "because of the crowd." At the same time, the conjunction *oti* bears also a causative meaning. Therefore, there are two reasons Zacchaeus could not see Jesus.
- 12 Luke does not include the name of the blind beggar in the story, unlike Mark who calls him Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46). Also, Luke put the story of the blind beggar in the setting of Jesus approaching Jericho, unlike Matthew and Mark who put it in the setting of Jesus going out from Jericho. Mark says: "Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging" (10:46). This text suggests that the story of Zacchaeus could fit well

within the phrase "Now they came to Jericho." Luke puts it reversely and places the story of Zacchaeus as the climax of the travel narrative before Jesus entered Jerusalem.

- 13 A. J. Kerr, "Zacchaeus's Decision to Make Fourfold Restitution," *Expository Times* 98 no. 3 (D 1986): 68–71.
- 14 Bruce W. Grindlay, "Zacchaeus and David," *Expository Times* 99 no. 2 (N-D 1997): 47.
- 15 Ibid. Grindlay suggests that Zacchaeus might be in the crowd of the blind beggar and probably heard the beggar call Jesus "Son of David" (Luke 18:38, 39).



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- 1 For example, David L. Tiede, *Luke*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1988), 319, says that the story of Zacchaeus shows the possibility for a rich man to be saved and accomplish what is humanly impossible; both Zacchaeus and the blind man are saved; Zacchaeus is saved as a son of Abraham just like the daughter of Abraham was also saved (Luke 13:16); Zacchaeus is just like the paralyzed man in Luke 5:18–26 who has to overcome obstacles to access Jesus.
- 2 For example, Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 478–483. A little different from Bock, Fred B. Craddock, *Luke*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1990), 218–220 does not relate the story to the parable of the tax collector, but adds the three parables of the lost as related to the story of Zacchaeus. So also Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 3, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical, 1992), 286, 287. However, Johnson does not include the three parables of the lost.
- 3 See for example, Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 666, 667. So also Robert H. Stein, *Luke: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992), 466. Stein, however, excludes the parable of the persistent widow.

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Saving righteousness

Since 1888, the phrase *righteousness by faith* has been central to the Adventist understanding of salvation. For three centuries before that, it was the core of Reformation theology. Today, as the biblical emphasis generated by the Reformation comes under increasing threat, it is crucial that we fully understand this essential doctrine and see it in relation to Paul's teaching concerning righteousness as a whole.

The essence of Paul's teaching emphasizes that there is a righteousness that saves. But Paul's doctrine includes more than "imputed" and "imparted" righteousness, important as these two concepts are.

As we attempt to analyze Paul's teaching concerning righteousness, we will see that his understanding can be summarized briefly in seven propositions.

1. *Saving righteousness is rooted in God.* In fact, saving righteousness is God's own righteousness, as stated in Romans 1:16, 17.¹ The righteousness Paul speaks of throughout Romans and, indeed in all his epistles, must be understood in the light of this seminal truth. The gospel reveals the righteousness of God. In every instance in the first three chapters of Romans where Paul speaks of righteousness, he always defines it, specifically, as God's righteousness (Rom. 1:17;

3:5, 21–26). There is not one exception. The righteousness that saves is always God's righteousness—a righteousness which, in Luther's words, "does not originate on earth, but comes down from heaven."²

This righteousness has a twofold character. First, it has a legal dimension. Scripture reveals that God is just and fair, and that the demands of divine law are fully met by the gospel. This represents the essence of Paul's argument in Romans 3:21–26. As Luther discovered, God is just, or righteous, not because He condemns or punishes sinners but because He saves them. He, who created mankind with freedom of choice and the possibility of sinning, has provided a way of escape from the consequences of that choice and the resultant sin. The very word *righteous* has the inherent meaning of justice—the justice, or righteousness, of God. The gospel reveals this divine justice for by it, the gospel, the demands of God's broken law are fully satisfied.

The second characteristic of God's righteousness is moral. The righteousness of God is that God Himself is not only just, but good, pure, holy, and perfect. The righteousness of God is all that God Himself is—His very own character encompassing the holiness, goodness, and sinlessness of God. As 2 Corinthians 5:21 implies, righteousness is the very antithesis of sin.

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God's righteousness, therefore, is both just and holy like a two-sided coin; it has both legal and moral significance and can never be one without the other. The righteousness of God, Himself, is the righteousness that saves, and in salvation God freely extends, to sinful humanity, both justice and holiness—the justice and holiness of our very God.

2. *Saving righteousness is a response to sin.* In Romans 3:5, Paul declares that human unrighteousness commends, i.e., recommends, the righteousness of God. The New International Version (NIV) states that our unrighteousness "brings out God's righteousness." On account of human unrighteousness, the righteousness of God appears. The human condition is the dark backdrop against which the righteousness of God shines so brightly. This divine righteousness is God's response to human sinfulness. We note here just one of the many important consequences of this truth.

If the righteousness of God is to be efficacious, dealing effectively with the sin problem in human experience, there must be, on the part of the sinner, both a recognition and understanding of sin. Indeed, God's saving righteousness can only be effective when sin becomes known, understood, recognized, and confessed.

This is true not only at the beginning of the Christian life when one becomes aware of having a sinful nature and past life of sin requiring forgiveness, but also at all times in the future as the Christian life progresses. A fundamental presupposition in Paul's teaching concerning righteousness is that at all stages of human experience men and women are essentially sinful, thus in need of the righteousness that saves. As Lesslie Newbigin so aptly put it, "to be human is to be sinful."³ Saving righteousness is the divine response to our humanity and revealed because "all have sinned" and because all "fall short" (Rom. 3:23).

3. *Saving righteousness is revealed in Jesus.* Paul asserts in Romans that our Lord, both in His life and death, was the incarnation of God's righteousness. However, this righteousness must be explained, as well as proclaimed, must be seen as well as heard, and must be demonstrated as well as argued. It must be revealed and understood before it can be received. Ellen White wrote, "The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive

are reclaimed from sin and death. Christ's shed blood, His substitutionary, sacrificial death, deals with human sin, guilt, and condemnation. The Cross reveals the justice of God by meeting the demands or requirements of the broken law. And this revelation of righteousness at the Cross is fundamental—a demonstration of the inherent justice of God.

Second, Romans 5, verses 10 and 19, sets forth the equally fundamental truth that the life of Jesus

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righteousness by receiving Him."⁴ The question, however, is how? How is the righteousness of God revealed in Jesus? Again, the answer is twofold.

First, as Romans 3:24, 25 asserts, Christ's redeeming death was the glorious manifestation of God's own righteousness. God revealed His justice through the propitiatory act of the Cross by which human beings

also reveals God's righteousness. Christ was obedient not only "unto death" but throughout His life. He revealed the righteousness, the holiness, the very character of God, in His everyday living. His obedience in its totality reveals God's righteousness and, therefore, the source of human righteousness.

The renowned New Testament scholar, F. F. Bruce, explains the

significance of Christ's obedient life: "The obedience of Christ to which His people owe their justification and hope of eternal life is not to be confined to His death. . . . It was a perfectly righteous life that He offered up in death on His people's behalf. The righteous life in itself would not have met their need had He not carried His obedience to the point of death, 'even the death of the cross,' but neither would His death have met their need had the life which He thus offered up not been a perfect life."⁵ The righteousness of God is both judicial and moral. Justice and holiness are revealed in Jesus, through His life and His death.

4. *Saving righteousness is received by faith.* Two things, particularly, should be noticed about the faith that enables sinful human beings to receive God's saving righteousness. First, it is a constant faith. Here we return to that text, central to the Epistle to the Romans, Romans 1:17. This verse states that the gospel reveals God's righteousness "from faith to faith." This is truly one of the crucial texts of the New Testament. The NIV reads, "by faith from first to last." Today's English Version reads, "through faith from beginning to end." J. B. Phillips says, "a process begun and continued by their faith."

We must understand what Paul means here. Citing the prophet Habakkuk (2:4) he states, "'The just shall live by faith.'" Does Paul speak of the believer's present life or future life? When will justified people live? Here and now, on earth or some day in the future when all things earthly have disappeared? This question is critical. The rest of Romans makes it clear that Paul's concern centers primarily with the life of the justified sinner in the present. God's saving righteousness becomes effective from the moment of first belief to the end of the believer's earthly life—a process begun and continued by faith. The justified person lives from the moment of justification by faith and lives by that faith until they cease to live. God's righteousness

is revealed in Jesus and received by faith "from beginning to end."

The second thing we need to remember continually relates to the nature of faith itself. The faith that Paul speaks of includes much more than intellectual assent, important though that is. Saving faith goes beyond knowledge. There is something submissive, dependent, trusting, about true faith. This faith transcends knowledge, evidence, argument, and understanding, although, of course, it does not dispense with any of these. Saving faith is more than what one writer calls "cerebral religion." Trusting faith receives the righteousness of God as revealed in Jesus constantly from the first moment of belief onwards.

5. *Saving righteousness is realized in justification.* Two words have traditionally been understood among Protestant Christians as signifying the essence of the plan of salvation—*justification* and *sanctification*. As we shall be reminded shortly, the complete gospel includes both. But first, we must consider justification as it stands alone.

In the process of justification, God reveals Himself as just, and the believing sinner is *declared* just, or righteous. God is demonstrated to *be* just on account of the Cross and the plan of salvation since it frees those who believe from guilt and condemnation. The believing sinner is *regarded* as righteous on account of the Cross and the sinless life of Christ that is imputed, or credited, to them. In justification, God imputes His righteousness in Christ to the believer.

Justification concerns the sinner's standing before God. Nothing visible actually happens in the life through justification. When a sinful human being exercises faith in God through Jesus Christ, they are accepted as righteous by the Father. God declares that person righteous on account of their faith in Jesus. It is called "imputed righteousness" (see Rom. 4:6). That declaration of God brings the sinner into a new

standing or relationship. Whereas before, that individual was sinful and guilty, now they are sinless, forgiven, and guiltless. At this point the sinner is not *actually* sinless in nature or character. As Luther famously said, "*Simul iustus et peccator*" ("at the same time righteous and a sinner").⁶

So, we can agree with the New Testament scholar, Leon Morris: "Justification is in essence a matter of right status or standing in the sight of God." It is "the name given in the Bible to the changed status, not the changed nature."⁷ And this happens as a result of God's own righteousness and on account of the righteousness of Christ imputed to the one who puts their trust in Jesus. In justification, the believer is accounted righteous and "Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned." This is, indeed, the very heart of the gospel. But there is more.

6. *Saving righteousness is recognizable in the Christian life.* We must now consider what has long been known as "imparted righteousness." The righteousness imputed in justification also becomes part of the believer's new life and can be seen as such in an authentic Christian lifestyle. Once again, Paul sets forth this truth in his epistle to the Romans, as well as in his other epistles.

Through the years since the Reformation, there has been an ongoing debate concerning Romans. Some affirm that Paul's main purpose in this epistle is to expound the doctrine of justification by faith. The book of Romans has often been preached from this standpoint. However, a strong case exists for a broader interpretation. Paul's exposition of justification by faith takes up the first five chapters of the epistle. Beginning with chapter 6 another emphasis appears, which runs on through chapters 7 and 8 and reappears in chapters 12 through 14. This emphasis centers on the life of the one who has been justified. In these chapters Paul talks repeatedly

about personal lifestyle, victory over sin, the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, a relationship with God, one's fellow-believers, and those in the unbelieving world. The inescapable truth remains that the gospel according to Paul includes both justification and sanctification. The later chapters of Romans are just as much a part of Paul's gospel as are the earlier chapters. We find this confirmed when we examine some of his other epistles. In 1 Corinthians 15:34, Paul's calls us to "awake to righteousness and do not sin." In Philippians 1:11, he admonishes Christians to be "filled with the fruits of righteousness." He urges Timothy to pursue righteousness, linking it with godliness, love, and gentleness (1 Tim. 6:11). It is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid the conclusion that Paul's gospel is one in which the righteousness of God becomes evident in the life of the believer.

How, then, does this happen? It happens as a result of God's presence and activity in the believer through the Holy Spirit, which is the crucial message of Romans 8. That is why we can categorically say that even when righteousness is imparted, it is still the righteousness of God and comes as the result of the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. It is what has been known through the Christian ages as sanctification. It is part of the gospel, the good news, that God helps us to live in harmony with His will.

7. *Saving righteousness is reaffirmed by hope.* There is one final, magnificent truth concerning the saving righteousness of God. In Galatians 5:5, Paul says that we "eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." God's saving righteousness, and the need for it, are constantly reaffirmed in the believer's life by hope. The final chapter in the gospel story is yet to be written. The ultimate experience of righteousness in the life of the believer and the ultimate


revelation of God's righteousness are still to come.

In Hebrews 11, Noah and others became heirs of "the righteousness which is according to faith," but all died not having received the promise. Elsewhere we are reminded of the new earth "in which righteousness dwells." The fact is that there is a strong eschatological dimension to the truth of God's saving righteousness. Its full consummation is not realized through any of the descriptions we have traditionally used and not totally encompassed even by the words *justification* and *sanctification* but not something fully attainable in this life. Many times, especially in Romans and Galatians, Paul uses the words *justify* and *justification* in a future tense, particularly in relationship to judgment and the last days.

Perhaps the clearest statement of this end-time dimension of saving righteousness is Paul's words to Timothy, "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day" (2 Tim. 4:8). Frankly, I do not know what a crown of righteousness is. There have been many attempts to precisely define what Paul means. He cannot be talking of a literal crown—that much is clear. It is equally clear that there is a future element in the human experience of righteousness as important as the present. Only the future will set the final seal on God's righteousness—the beginning and consummation of the plan of salvation. Therefore, we must allow that future to beckon us on. We must continually stretch forward in hope, reaching for that crown, the eternal reward of those who become and remain righteous in Christ.

And finally . . . In 1888, the message of righteousness by faith came to this church. Some think it was never fully received, some think it was not a complete message. Others think that even when it came, it was soon lost, at least in part. Many

think that it needs reviving in our time; the work of the Lord will not be finished until the third angel's message becomes, in reality, the message of righteousness by faith. One, at least, thought that. She wrote, "Clad in the armor of Christ's righteousness, the church is to enter upon her final conflict."⁸

I do not know what you think, but I think that all the foregoing is probably true. I also think that we should thank God constantly for the gospel that reveals His righteousness—fully, freely, consistently, and persuasively. God's righteousness, the righteousness that saves, revealed in Jesus and received by faith, realized in justification and recognizable in the Christian life, can one day be ours in its fullness and forever, if we live by faith and in hope. 

- 1 Biblical references are quoted from the New King James Version unless otherwise indicated.
- 2 Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to Romans* (London: Oliphants, 1954), 13.
- 3 Lesslie Newbigin, *Sin and Salvation* (London: SCM Press, 1956), 15.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1956), 18.
- 5 F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 120, 121.
- 6 Cited, for example, in Alister McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1990), 133.
- 7 Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (London: Tyndale Press, 1965), 290, 291.
- 8 Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), 725.



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Should we observe the Levitical festivals?: A Seventh-day Adventist perspective (Part 2 of 2)

Editor's note: In part one of this series, we reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of five arguments generally employed by Christians and some Adventists for celebrating the Levitical festivals of the Old Testament. In this issue we offer a possible proper approach toward such festivals.

Valuing the riches and blessings associated with festivals but also being aware of the problems that are implied in observing them, Christians, if they wish, may search for a proper way to engage in festivals. They could explore some way to mark the festivals. This practice should not only be conducted with theological lucidity but also with prudence and balanced wisdom, humility, openness, and a willingness to learn. A number of practical suggestions may help Christians find a meaningful implication of the festivals in their Christian life and worship.

The *would* versus the *should*

First of all, to understand the non-normative character of the festivals is important. The New Testament offers a good example of how Christians should relate to the festivals. Indeed many texts provide us with the typological function of the sacrifices and then warn against

the idea that they are still normative and necessary for our salvation. On the other hand, nowhere in the New Testament do we hear that we should *not* observe them. Actually, Jesus and His disciples kept celebrating them; and, later, the early Christians (Jews themselves living within a Jewish environment) as well as Paul, himself, followed the same practice. But they never felt it necessary to enforce the observance of the feasts on the Gentiles who desired to join the community of believers (Acts 15).

Wisely, they came to the conclusion "that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols [idolatry], from sexual immorality [ethics], from things strangled, and from blood [Levitical dietary principles]. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read . . . every Sabbath" (Acts 15:19–21, NKJV). Thus, the apostolic decree refers to three domains of the Law of Moses: idolatry, ethics, and the mosaic dietary laws. All these prescriptions were based on the reading of the books of Moses "every Sabbath," suggesting that respect for the fourth commandment, "the Sabbath," was also implied in the apostolic decree. No reference to the festivals is even implicitly given in the text. This attitude contains a principle

of tolerance, not only towards the Gentiles who were not to be troubled by the new, unnecessary burden, but also implicitly towards the Jews who wanted to join the church. For if it was considered inappropriate by the apostles to trouble the Gentiles by imposing on them a new lifestyle implying the observance of the laws of circumcision and the Jewish festivals, it would also have been inappropriate to trouble the Jews by imposing on them a new lifestyle implying the abandonment of those customs. The word *should* should not be used either to impose the festivals or to defend them. We should not say, "You should observe them," nor say, "You should not observe them."

Wisely and significantly, Ellen White uses the word *would* and not *should* to express her rather positive view on that matter: "Well would it be," she says, "to have a Feast of Tabernacles."^{*} Although her statement only refers to one festival, it suggests that Ellen White could have been in favor of exploring that possibility also for other festivals. For the reason she gives to justify this practice, "a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to them," could apply for the other festivals as well. At any rate, this remark shows not only an attitude of openness on the part of Ellen White—she was not afraid of



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exploring new avenues—but also an attitude of tolerance and wisdom. Indeed, the use of the word *would* rather than the word *should* not only denotes humility and openness but also shows respect for another point of view. Such an attitude of tolerance and prudence is to be commended, for it will avoid the risk of reaction and polarization, which has always degenerated into radicalization and fanaticism and ultimately led to divisions in the church.

A marking calendar

If we choose to *mark* the feast on the yearly calendar, we should do it with a clear understanding of what that feast means from a specific Seventh-day Adventist perspective. The choice of my words here, *marking calendar* rather than *liturgical*, and *mark* the festivals rather than *do* or *keep* or *observe*, is deliberate and intentional. The marking of the festivals should not be imposed as a doctrinal, liturgical/religious, or even an administrative obligation for the church as a whole entity. It should rather be suggested as

a free opportunity to remind of God's plan of salvation and of our prophetic identity and mission. It could serve as an opportunity to teach, learn, and proclaim at home, in the church, and in the world, the great dimensions of God's plan of redemption.

The festivals are nothing but a pedagogical or evangelistic tool to be used, just as we sometimes do when

we use the model of the sanctuary to witness through this object lesson to our unique message. It should be descriptive and instructive, not prescriptive. If we desire to mark the festival, it would therefore be advisable to do it during its season, not because we want or need to be faithful to agricultural, ritualistic, and legalistic norms, but rather as

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an opportune moment when other people think about it, just as we traditionally do for Christmas, Easter, or Thanksgiving (although these festivals contain some elements of pagan origin, such as Santa Claus, the Christmas tree, and the Easter bunny). Outside of the season, this practice will look awkward for all, be offensive towards others, and lose its communicative and signifying/semantic power.

The main problem resides, however, in the way the festivals could be marked outside of the Bible, considering the absence of revealed instructions in this context and without the help of a developed tradition of observance as we have in Judaism. To avoid wild, creative initiatives, which may undermine and compromise the whole project, two fundamental principles should govern and guide any attempt to mark the festivals:

1. *The respect of the original place* from where the inspiration of the

feasts has been taken, namely the Scriptures and the testimony of Israel. Learn about the genuine character of the feast and inform yourself about the Jewish traditions associated with it. Avoid deceitful and confusing misrepresentations. Make sure the feasts do not become occasions for the promotion of your personal ideas, fantasies, and hobbies that have nothing to do with the feasts, such as dances, spiritualistic and charismatic applications, inconsiderate blowing of the shofar, or putting on of exotic garments. Such expressions might be perceived as a disguising game and disrespectful behavior.

2. *The respect of the new place* where the inspiration of the feast has been imported, namely your church. Consult its leaders, including theological authorities and your friends (even and especially those who disagree with you), to make sure that your ideas of festivals and the information you have collected are well founded and consistent with the theology you

profess as a Seventh-day Adventist. Make sure also that your experiment will not be misunderstood, will not hurt other members, and will, indeed, serve the good of the church. Avoid separate initiatives, remain humble and modest, and do not try to impose your views and practices upon other church members who may not share your perspective and spiritual sensitivity. Be prudent towards your sentimental and mystical emotions on these matters and your convictions, and do not confuse them with the divine truth or the gift of the Spirit.

Conclusion

To the question "Should we observe the festivals?" my answer is, on the basis of the above discussion, a clear and an unambiguous "*No, we are not required to observe the festivals,*" for the following reasons:

(1) Festivals have lost their normative quality as they have essentially been fulfilled in Christ and are no longer dependent on the categories

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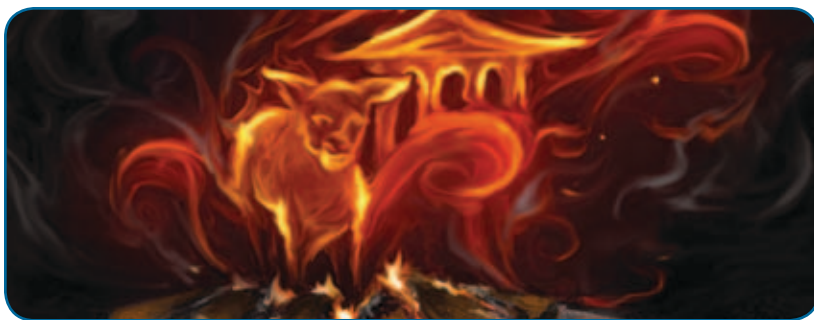


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of biblical revelation. The laws of the feasts are distinct from other laws such as the Sabbath and the dietary laws, which are not related to sacrifices or dependent on time, and are universal in character. It is indeed important to note and realize that God has not provided us with any instruction, any law regarding the way those festivals should be observed outside of the temple. If God has not indicated to us how to observe them in these conditions, how could He then require the observance of these laws? We are here dependent only on human traditions outside of biblical revelation.

(2) No Christian or Adventist historical tradition and/or custom exists about how these festivals have been and therefore could be observed.

(3) The specific mission and identity of the Seventh-day Adventist movement is not defined as a liturgical entity with a historical liturgical tradition to witness to. Instead, the Seventh-day Adventist Church identifies itself as a prophetic messenger with a universal scope and mission, transcending the variety of cultures and traditions, and pointing to the eschatological order.

On the other hand, this clarification should not exclude the following options:


(1) The pedagogical value of exploring and communicating (verbally or otherwise) the rich truths associated with the festivals, namely, their meaning in regard to the plan of salvation for the past, present, and future. Yet all this beauty and richness testified by the feasts does

not make them normative laws to be imperatively followed. They remain just a pedagogical tool.

(2) The marking of the festivals may be used as a means of contextualization in order to reach out to the Jews, just as it is done for other cultural groups whether religious (Christmas, Easter) or secular (Thanksgiving). Even here, however, one may wonder about the efficiency and even the questionable ethics of this evangelistic method of contextualization.

(3) Jewish Adventists, like the early Jewish Christians, should not feel obligated to abandon the enjoyment of festivals; and no one should

discourage them from doing so. Not only do the feasts belong to their cultural heritage, but they also provide them with an appropriate means of reaching out to other Jews. In this particular instance, in the light of the prophetic and theological dimensions of the Seventh-day Adventist message, their experience of the feasts may still become even more meaningful than in the past. These practices will be implemented, however, with a clear understanding that these laws and traditions are not prophetic revelation and no longer normative.

The last lesson to learn from the festivals is to relax and enjoy our religious life. All these tensions and discussions on whether we should observe the festivals, in fact, go against the very spirit of the feasts. Far from urging a serious and tense discussion and pressing obligation to observe or not observe, the message of the feasts is, on the contrary, a gracious invitation for joy and peace. 

* Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1958), 540, 541.

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When the “the mark of the beast” was a biochip!

Several years ago I received an email warning that the “mark of the beast” was imminent. The message explained that a company that develops smart card technology, in concert with a mobile phone provider, was manufacturing biochips to be placed in our right hands and foreheads. The email made other frightening claims. As is customary with sensational emails, there is always the manipulative plea at the end pressuring the reader to forward it on to everyone they know. There was only one problem: it was a hoax.¹ Unfortunately, many gullible people forwarded it on to their family and friends.

An Adventist perspective

This whole episode should reinforce for us the importance of clarifying, in our own minds and the minds of our church members, the truth about the controversial question of the mark of the beast. Many Christians do, indeed, believe that the mark of the beast is some form of technology that will be used to control the economic lives of earth’s citizens at the end of time.


Seventh-day Adventists, of course, have offered a very different explanation. Our explanation is not focused on technologies, seeing that as peripheral or even potentially irrelevant. The book of Revelation does not predict future

technologies. Its interests are theological, spiritual, and moral, drawing on the wider biblical narrative to develop its concept of the mark. The Adventist understanding seeks to build on this recognition.

What is the Adventist view? First, we should note that this explanation remains controversial and often misunderstood. We believe that at the end of time the whole world will have to choose between obeying God and receiving the seal of God or disobeying God and receiving the mark of the beast. The seal of God is understood to include the keeping of God’s seventh-day Sabbath; in contrast, the mark is considered a rejection of this for a manmade alternative.² In a healthy Adventist understanding, the seal of God is much more than Sabbath keeping.

To see why this is controversial is easy. It is often misunderstood because some think this is a claim about the present. However, we do not believe the mark presently exists, and will not exist until the final events of Revelation 13 take place. We do not actually believe that Sunday keeping per se identifies the mark of the beast (though unfortunately some Adventists do not properly grasp this point). The mark entails much more than this alone, and is restricted to a short period of time immediately before the Second Coming. For us, current

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Sunday keeping is only a manmade tradition. It will eschatologically become part of the “mark” but not until the fuller events portrayed in Revelation materialize.

The rationale

What evidence is there for the Adventist view? We have developed several explanations for this belief. These explanations have proved valuable, but more recent studies have helped produce an even stronger case. Some arguments have been external to the book of

the forehead and hand is drawn from verses that speak of the commandments being placed in the forehead and on the hands (Deut. 6:6–8; Heb. 10:16; Prov. 7:2, 3). This strongly suggests that the mark of the beast is the opposite of the commandments of God (including the Sabbath commandment). Accumulatively a case has been made, but much of it is indirect and external.

All this is good, and compelling, at least as far as it goes. But, is there more?

description of God’s people as those who “obey God’s commandments” (Rev. 12:17; 14:12).⁴

Which commandments are these? The Ten Commandments, of course. There is a special focus on the first four commandments, which deal with worship and obedience to God.⁵ From here a clear and consistent case begins to emerge.

Take, for example, the beast’s attempt to force the world to worship an “image of the . . . beast” (Rev. 13:15). This is a clear violation of the second commandment,

THE BOOK OF REVELATION DOES NOT PREDICT
FUTURE TECHNOLOGIES. ITS INTERESTS
ARE THEOLOGICAL, SPIRITUAL, AND MORAL,
DRAWING ON THE WIDER BIBLICAL NARRATIVE
TO DEVELOP ITS CONCEPT OF THE MARK. THE
ADVENTIST UNDERSTANDING SEEKS TO BUILD
ON THIS RECOGNITION.

Revelation and are still useful.

For instance, some often explain that the seal of God and mark of the beast are opposites. Therefore, if we can find out what the seal is, we can figure out the identity of the mark. This is clear and uncontroversial. The evangelist might explain that a seal has three necessary components: the name, title, and territory of the ruler. It will then be shown that the Sabbath fulfills these criteria, with its mention of the Lord (name), as the Lord God and Creator (title) of the heavens and earth (territory). This is a reasonable line of evidence, although external to Revelation 13.

A stronger line of evidence notes that imagery of a mark placed on

A deeper perspective

Does further collaborating evidence exist within Revelation 13 supporting the Adventist position and identifying the mark of the beast? In short, the answer is—Yes.

One example, in one of Jon Paulien’s articles, is that God’s response to the beasts is to call people to worship Him as Creator. Worship is a central issue in Revelation (see Rev. 13:4, 8, 15; 14:9–11), and God’s call to worship directly alludes to the Sabbath commandment (Rev. 14:7).³ Sabbath-based worship of God is the opposite to worship of the beast. This complements another important point, long noted by Adventists, of the identifying

which forbids the making and worshiping of images. A number of scholars have noted that more than one of the first four commandments are attacked or broken by the dragon and the beasts.⁶ In fact, we can see that all of the first four commandments are deliberately and consistently attacked by these entities.⁷ The consistency of the attacks on the commandments suggests that it is not possible to understand the mark of the beast unless the mark is understood in light of the beast’s antinomian actions. We should expect the mark to oppose, replace, break, or counterfeit one of the commandments. When we examine the mark of the beast more

The beasts' anti-commandments and God's commandments contrasted

Revelation 13—the Anti-Commandments	Exodus 20—God's Commandments
13:4 Men worshiped the dragon . . . and they also worshiped the beast,	20:3 “You shall have no other gods before me.”
13:15 He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed,	20:4–6 “You shall not make for yourself an idol . . . you shall not bow down . . . or worship them.”
13:1, 6 (v. 1) and on each head a blasphemous name (v. 6) He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name.	20:7 “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.”
13:16, 17—The Mark of the Beast (anti-Sabbath) <i>Beast's Name and Number</i> (v. 17) the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name <i>Regulation of Work and Economic Oppression</i> (v. 17) no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark ⁹ <i>Universal Extent</i> (v. 16) He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark.	20:8–11—The Sabbath of the Lord <i>God's Name and Number</i> (v. 10) “but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God” <i>Regulation of Work and Economic Protection</i> (vv. 9, 10) “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the . . . Sabbath . . . on it you shall not do any work.” <i>Universal Extent</i> (v. 10) “any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, not your animals, nor the alien within your gates”

closely, we find that it is actually a parody of the Sabbath. It is helpful to think of the mark of the beast as an *anti-Sabbath*. The diagram above illustrates the parallels between Exodus 20 and Revelation 13 and brings out the importance of the commandment and the Sabbath.⁹

In this diagram we see the whole world led into one final, universal rebellion against God. All of the commandments that concern our love

and worship to God are attacked, counterfeited, or replaced.

The climax is the attack on the Sabbath. The mark and the Sabbath express totally different realities. Whereas the Sabbath focuses us on the true Creator God, the mark leads us to obey false gods. The Sabbath provides people economic freedom and rest; the mark is enforced by economic sanction and oppression. Both of the commands are universal

in their extent. Unlike the Sabbath, which calls us to remember and honor our faithful Creator Redeemer, the mark exalts the authority of the creature. The two different marks are signs that reveal the true character of their authors.

666

Our study may also help us understand the tight connection between the mark, the name, and

the mysterious number of the beast (666). The text says that “no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man’s number. His number is 666” (Rev. 13:17, 18). The call to calculate, using insight or wisdom, encourages us to look at the number six, scripturally and theologically, rather than mathematically or numerically. We need to examine the meaning of a number from its place in the scriptural narrative.

The number of the beast, 666, is defined as the number of humanity. It is not God’s number. What is God’s number—and by extension His mark or seal? Our study suggests that the Sabbath is God’s mark bearing His name (Lord your God) and number (seventh day).¹⁰ Interestingly, the symbolic roots of the numbers of both the beast’s mark (666) and the Sabbath (7th day) share the same biblical background. In Genesis 1, humanity was created on the sixth day. In creation, “6” is the number of humanity. But in Genesis, creation was not complete until the seventh day when God Himself rested, blessed, and sanctified it. In creation, then, “7” is the number of God and His Sabbath.¹¹

What does this mean? The number 666 appears to point to a final human refusal to worship and acknowledge the Creator and His memorial sign—the Sabbath. Humanity not only refuses to worship the Creator, it also sets up an alternative mark—an anti-Sabbath. Genesis shows that we are complete only in our Creator.


Instead, creation’s goal is God with us and us with God. That is Sabbath. The Sabbath shows we find meaning and completion only in our Creator God.¹² The Sabbath points beyond itself to God. The final crisis is not just about obedience but about a revelation of God’s

character in comparison to the dragon and the beast.

Conclusion

The mark of the beast is not about biochips, but about relationship, faith, love, and obedience. Someone could tie you down and tattoo “666” on your forehead or they could insert a biochip into your right hand. But neither of these acts

THE REAL ISSUE IS WORSHIP,
THE YIELDING OF HEART, MIND,
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would mean that you would have the mark of the beast. The issue is not technology or literal markings on our bodies. The real issue is worship, the yielding of heart, mind, body, and all to God. It is about who God is and what He is like. 

7 Ranko Stefanovic on page 415 of his commentary *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 2002), concludes that the sea beast’s activities are well-planned attacks on the first four commandments of the Decalogue.

8 This diagram is adapted from my AUSS article, MacPherson, 277.

9 To “not work” on the Sabbath in Exodus is explained as to not “buy or sell” in Nehemiah 10:31; 13:15–22. It has the same meaning as the beast’s mark. The mark is about worshipping the beast, while the Sabbath is about worshipping the true God.

10 *The Treaty of the Great King. The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 18, 19; emphasis supplied. Studies in ancient Near East covenants suggest that the Sabbath is

the mark or a seal of God within the Ten Commandments. Meredith Kline writes, “As a further detail in the parallelism of external appearances [between suzerainty treaties and the Decalogue] it is tempting to see in the sabbath sign presented in the midst of the ten words *the equivalent of the suzerain’s dynastic seal* found in the midst of the obverse of the international treaty document. Since, in the case of the Decalogue, the suzerain is Yahweh, there will be no representation of him on his seal, but the sabbath is declared to be his ‘sign of the covenant’ (Exod. 31:13–17). By means of his sabbath-keeping, the image-bearer of God images the pattern of that divine act of creation which proclaims *God’s absolute sovereignty over man, and thereby he pledges his covenant consecration to his Maker*. The Creator has stamped on world history the *sign of the sabbath as his seal of ownership and authority*. That is precisely what the pictures on the dynastic seals symbolize and their captions claim in behalf of the treaty gods and their representatives, the suzerain.”

11 We can also note that it is only in the mark of the beast and the Sabbath that we appear to have a converging of mark (seal/sign), name, and number.

12 This is true of salvation as much as creation. Just as humanity refuses the Creator’s love and authority, so it also refuses the Savior’s grace and mercy. People seek to establish a religion of human traditions and works of their own making. In contrast, the Sabbath memorializes God’s saving and sanctifying work. Just as we find life only in the Creator, so we find forgiveness, grace, and spiritual rest only in our Savior. An identifying mark of God’s people will be that they trust in His grace and mercy and submit to His authority and commands. The other side to this (and the more important side) is that the true God is a saving, gracious God who provides physical and spiritual rest to His creation.

1 See <http://www.snopes.com/politics/business/mondex.asp>.

2 The seal of God in Revelation is not identical to the seal of the Holy Spirit described by Paul in Ephesians 1:13; 4:30. The seal of the Spirit happens at conversion and is true for all time. The seal of God in Revelation is an eschatological seal for a specific end-time situation. The imagery of the seal of God/mark of the beast is not drawn from Ephesians but from Old Testament sources like Ezekiel 9:4. In Ezekiel just before the judgment of Jerusalem God marks the faithful on the forehead (compare Rev. 7:1–3; 14:1–5).

3 See Jon Paulien “Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, vol. 9/1, 2 (1998): 179–186.

4 All Scriptures, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New International Version.

5 Even the introductory and concluding scenes to the vision of chapters 12–14 highlight the Ten Commandments (see references to the “ark of the covenant” and “testimony” in Rev. 11:19; 15:5).

6 For examples see, Anthony MacPherson, “The Mark of the Beast as a ‘Sign Commandment’ and ‘Anti-Sabbath’ in the Worship Crisis of Revelation 12–14,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 43, vol. 2, 267–283, 2005.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

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Sharing the hope again: Discussing the North American Division evangelism initiative

Editor's note: The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America voted to designate 2009 as the Year of Evangelism. Other areas of the world also used similar designations. The editors share reports from three individuals who gave their perspectives on 2009 as the Year of Evangelism.

The impact of the "Year of Evangelism"

(G. Alexander Bryant)

Two thousand and nine, designated as the Year of Evangelism, had a tremendous impact on the North American Division. First, over 46,000 people joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America through baptism or profession of faith. This represents the largest number of people baptized in any year in the church's history.

Secondly, this represents the largest percentage of membership increase in decades for North America. Prior to 2009, our baptismal

average per year was around 34,000. Our highest had been 38,000. Even though we did not reach our goal of 100,000 baptisms, it was still quite a remarkable year. However, although the numbers are good, from my perspective this is not the most significant impact of the Year of Evangelism. The greatest impact centers on what it has done for some of our churches who no longer believed public evangelism was effective in this division. We had churches hold evangelistic meetings that had not done so in years. They accepted the challenge and watched individuals get baptized into their church. As a result, there is a renewed sense of what God can do here in this part of the vineyard. Because of this emphasis, we have seen more administrators give more attention, energy, and leadership to public evangelism. All of this energy and focus awakened

something in the soul of this division. More people are beginning to believe that public evangelism can, again, work here. While the increase we did experience was not achieved by thousands being baptized in one location, it was the result of thousands of members being instrumental in seeing a few baptized here and there that contributed to the increase. In some ways, this is even better because it allows more people to see that their contribution can make a difference.

It's exciting to see what is happening in North America. The most significant thing is that the fervor of evangelism is back in the air. You can sense it everywhere you go, from New York to California, from Washington State to Florida. Public evangelism, in innovative and creative ways, continues being reborn throughout this division. Leaders and members alike are discovering

that relationship-building and involvement in the community is essential to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. During the Year of Evangelism, we have learned, in this division, that it is no longer true that one size fits all. We have learned that evangelism has to be tailor-made to fit the unique environment, community, and individual in the areas

we are trying to reach. As a result, we are becoming more sensitive, aware, and tuned in to this particular challenge. In addition, we have learned that the paid clergy cannot be our only means of evangelism and outreach. Ellen White says, "Not only are the ministers called upon to labor for the salvation of souls, but every individual member

of the church should make efforts to enlighten his friends and neighbors, every member must see that God has called them too."¹ Because of this wide participation of members, we are finding ways to unleash the laity to do the work God has called them to do. We are looking for a greater impact in 2010 as we see the result of Share the Hope Again.

Sharing the hope again

(Ron E. M. Clouzet)

Adventists have always been a people of hope. They genuinely expect Jesus, their Savior, to come to take them home. The Second Coming is called, in the words of Paul, "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13) and has been like that

since the Millerite Movement of the 1840s, when men and women of faith from every stripe of Protestantism joined hearts and minds to lift up the trumpet and proclaim that Jesus is coming again.

Because of this conviction, last year the Adventist Church in North America launched the Share the Hope initiative in order to reawaken pastors and members to our primary objective: prepare a people for the return of Jesus. The number of people who joined the church,

as a result, was the highest ever! God began to stir in the hearts of churches across our land the conviction that we do not live for ourselves but for the benefit of others. And since the Spirit's awakening does not happen overnight, the initiative for 2010 is simply to Share the Hope Again.

Four clear objectives

1. *Intentionally prioritize the need for spiritual renewal at every level of the church by taking every*



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possible step, including fasting, prayer, and study of God's Word. Spiritual renewal and Bible study make sense, but do we need fasting and prayer? According to the Bible, we do. For instance, when God's people sought repentance and forgiveness (Neh. 9:1–3; Joel 2:12, 13, 15–17), when in need of serious intercession for others (Neh. 1:2–11; Dan. 6:17, 18; 9:2–4; Joel 1:14, 15), when in need of faith (Matt. 17:18–21), when in search of a breakthrough to know God's will or understand His Word (Ezra 8:21–23; Acts 10:30–32), when in search of an open door for evangelism (Acts 13:1–3; 14:21–23), when Israel was threatened to extinction by enemies (2 Chron. 20:1–4; Esther 4:1–3, 15–17), and when facing serious challenges and/or temptations (Matt. 4:1, 2), fasting and praying did wonders. They can usher in miracles today as well.

The objective here emphasizes doing this together as a church. Corporate results will follow

corporate effort by seeking the Lord together.

2. *Work towards engaging all church members, pastors, and leaders in direct evangelism.* Ellen G. White made this point clear: "Do not lead the people to depend upon you as ministers; teach them rather that they are to use their talents in giving the truth to those around them. In thus working they will have the co-operation of heavenly angels, and will obtain an experience that will increase their faith, and give them a strong hold on God."²

We deprive others of joy when we do not encourage and support their efforts to win souls to Jesus. And the same thing happens to us. Sometimes leaders excuse themselves from participation in direct outreach because of their numerous responsibilities or that they have not been in touch with that kind of ministry for some years. When we think that way, we fail to realize that is the exact excuse many members make, especially

busy professionals. We both lose out by busying ourselves to the point where there is no room to give a Bible study, visit an interest, or even help with some evangelistic endeavor.

3. *Disciple new believers for participation in the mission of the church.* Approximately 46,000 new believers joined the church in North America last year—more than ever before. Most of these are eager to share their faith with family and friends so they, too, may know and experience what they have. They do not need to be convinced to share, they need to be guided regarding how to do it. The pastor has a key role to play here: teach new members how to give Bible studies, teach them to articulate their faith clearly, help them with answers to objections, and then encourage seasoned members to accompany them to benefit from the contagious enthusiasm of a recent convert.

4. *Reconnect with inactive and former members in the ministry of*





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Jesus. The time has come to call back those who, for one reason or another, have become discouraged, disillusioned, or distracted from being a part of this remnant movement. This will take patience and genuine love to accomplish. But much could be accomplished when bringing a lost sheep back to the fold—there will be rejoicing all around (Luke 15)! All church elders should consider this work among their ministry priorities. The best way to do this may be by agreeing to meet once a week, and after prayer together, fan out to visit those who are missing from the body. They can

share their stories, challenges, and joys with one another each week. And God will certainly give success to their efforts.

For more help on these steps, check www.sharethehope2010.com.

Share the Hope Again initiative also includes eight measurable goals, such as 50 percent of all new believers to be trained for ministry and outreach, 100,000 lay members to be trained and/or engaged in evangelism, for every leader at every level of the church to participate in evangelistic activity. What matters most of all is simply sharing the hope again.

WE DEPRIVE
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Sharing the hope on the front lines

(Robert S. Folkenberg Jr.)

When it comes to church growth, shifting from addition to multiplication can only be accomplished when men and women, comprising the Body of Christ, have a clear sense of ownership of both the message and the mission of the church. We cannot “finish the work” by increasing our evangelism budget. Evangelism is not about events or programs. Let me express this conviction by asking the following question: How would we fulfill the gospel commission if we had no money? The answer to this question takes us to the heart of the issue: the gospel would be preached to the world by the church, with each member involved and consumed with Christ and His cause!

The call has always been for more workers to go out

and bring in the harvest (Matt. 9:37, 38). Share the Hope Again is a call to focus on just that kind of mobilization—to focus our best efforts in calling our churches to embrace the mission we have been given by Christ. Then, equip them and lead them into the harvest where the Lord has the harvest ready to be picked and brought safely into the storehouse.

The Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

has embraced this call. We have focused our training and mobilized our efforts on resourcing churches to organize local outreach teams. Across our conference, over 30 outreach teams have formed and work together to reach their communities with a level of intentionality that speaks of passion for the mission of Christ. They prayerfully embark on an ongoing cycle of evangelism. I recently spoke with a married couple who belong to a small church. They



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told me they had joined an outreach team and were excited about how the Lord was using them to reach their community.

The outreach team, led by a conference sponsored Bible worker coordinator, has fanned out across their community, knocking on doors, doing surveys, and starting many Bible studies. When they shared their experiences with me, they spoke with excitement, with a

The counsel of Ellen G. White becomes so clear and pointed when she says, “We are living in a special period of this earth’s history. A great work must be done in a very short time, and every Christian is to act a part in sustaining this work. God is calling for men [and women] who will consecrate themselves to the work of soul-saving. When we begin to comprehend what a sacrifice Christ made in order to save a

intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great day of Pentecost. Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the Word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lighted with the heavenly influence.”⁴

THE TIME HAS COME TO CALL BACK THOSE WHO,
FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER, HAVE BECOME
DISCOURAGED, DISILLUSIONED, OR DISTRACTED
FROM BEING A PART OF THIS REMNANT MOVEMENT.

sense that God was truly working by their side.


As a conference, we are training these teams during intense week-end sessions, providing materials and literature for members to share with their neighbors, friends, and coworkers. All across the conference, members are obeying the call of Christ to boldly share the life they have found in Him.

Share the Hope Again calls us to focus our greatest time and efforts on this single point—involve the membership of Christ’s church in fulfilling the mission of Christ to seek and save the lost. Granted, it would be easier to fund a few evangelistic meetings here or there. But the call of Share the Hope Again is bigger than budgets or two-week meetings. It calls for the church and its members to embrace a lifestyle of evangelism—one that fully involves them in the great cause of Christ.

perishing world, there will be seen a mighty wrestling to save souls.”³

Share the Hope Again takes us right to this point. First, evangelism is not merely a one-year endeavor, not a single all-out effort to reach more people for Christ. No, it must be the very lifestyle of the church of Christ, and is the all consuming mission of the disciples of Christ to “save a perishing world.” In fact, Ellen White was shown, in a vision of the church as it would appear at the end of time that this church is alive and vibrant—one consumed with sharing the hope they have in Christ, again and again and again—until Jesus comes! This is her description of the end-time church.

“In visions of the night representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God’s people. Many were praising God. The sick were healed, and other miracles were wrought. A spirit of

This is who we are going to be. Let’s become that now! 

1 Ellen G. White, “The Work of Reform,” *Signs of the Times* (June 3, 1889).

2 White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 200.

3 White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 9:125, 126.

4 *Ibid.*, 126.



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Arminianism and Adventism conference

Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States—Andrews University will present a seminar October 14–17, 2010, celebrating the soteriological heritage of Adventists.

This event, “Arminianism and Adventism,” commemorates the 400th anniversary of the Arminian Remonstrance. The conference will discuss the Adventist understanding of salvation with its roots in seventeenth-century Arminianism and Wesleyan thought. Top scholars will explore issues relating to a biblical understanding of human nature, freewill, God’s grace, atonement, and predestination.

Plenary speakers include: Barry Callen, Denis Fortin, George Knight, Gary Land, Hans K. LaRondelle, Roger Olson, Ángel Rodríguez, and Woodrow Whidden. Other speakers include: Richard Davidson, JoAnn Davidson, and Jiří Moskala.

This event is sponsored by: Andrews University, Adventist Theological Society, the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and Andrews University Press. Participants can register at www.PlusLine.org. For more information, visit www.andrews.edu/arminianism or email arminiansymposium@andrews.edu. [Keri Suarez]

Why some teens will remain Adventists as adults

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—A study of active Seventh-day Adventist youth in Europe offers a snapshot of what factors could be associated with young Adventists who foresee themselves in the church in 20 years.

Key preliminary indicators include a congregation that offers a “thinking climate.” The study suggests that youth who felt they could develop an original position in their faith by asking questions and challenging church leaders said they are more likely to remain in church compared to youth in congregations that just emphasize conformity.


The Valuegenesis Europe study is the first of its kind for the Adventist Church on the continent. Researchers hope the new data, based on 6,000 responses, can serve as a tool for church leaders shaping management of Adventist ministry in Europe.

Manuela Casti, a lecturer at Newbold College in England and the study’s chief researcher, said high exit rates among youth in Europe motivated her involvement in the study. The new data could highlight a need for increased administrative support for the Church’s Family

Ministries, said **Corrado Cozzi**, youth director for the Church’s Euro-Africa region, who also serves on the study’s research committee. He said a young person’s decision to become an Adventist was found to be more influenced in the long run by family, a church pastor, and other adults at church than by a youth pastor or peers.

And while researchers said mothers are usually the bedrock of faith in the home, it is fathers who might actually determine a positive decision for church. Survey respondents who discussed faith issues with their father were 70 percent more likely to foresee themselves remaining in the church than those who said their father did not discuss religion with them.

In addition to the importance of family and other adults, researchers found relevance in church programming itself. Respondents who heard preaching that was “helpful to their daily lives” at church were 450 times more likely to want to remain active in their faith than those who did not identify with weekly sermons.

Whether a young person has supportive parents or a supportive church congregation, the key is to provide an environment of frank, open, and transparent exchanges, Casti said. She is grateful to adults who allowed her to grow up in such an environment. “That’s why I’m still here.” [Ansel Oliver, Helen Pearson/ANN] 



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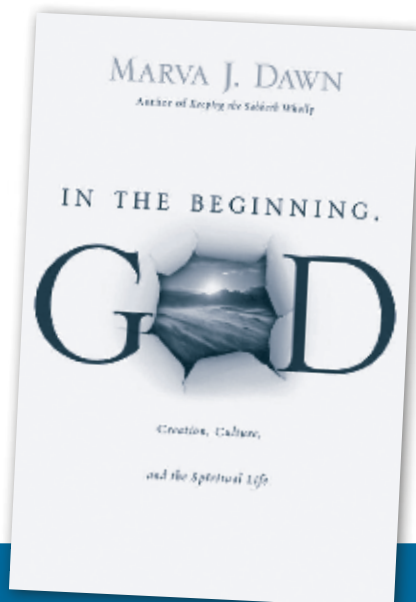


In the Beginning, God: Creation, Culture, and the Spiritual Life

By Marva J. Dawn, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

Have you ever tried to tell a story only to have someone interrupt and tell their own? Marva J. Dawn, a theologian, author, and professor at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, suggests we may be doing just that when we approach our study of the Bible by asking the wrong questions. It is common to approach a biblical passage by

of the Triune Persons in this passage? The book explores these questions by examining the first three chapters of Genesis. Though often devotional in nature, the book is also insightful.



of God. As the author of *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, it is understandable that she would see the seventh day as the capstone or crown of God's creation. The Sabbath, she suggests, speaks to the design or purpose behind all of God's creation. With this as a foundation, the Creation account of Genesis 2 takes on a complimentary but different emphasis. She is not troubled by the seemingly contradictory accounts because here the emphasis is on human beings as tillers of the ground and their relationship to God and others. This setting, then, prepares the reader for the third chapter of Genesis where the impact of the Fall becomes painfully clear.

In the first three chapters of the Bible, therefore, we are provided with enough detail on which to build

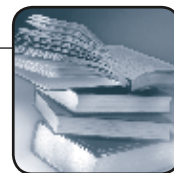
THE FIRST QUESTION SHOULD BE ABOUT WHAT
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RECOGNIZING THIS SHOULD PROMPT SUCH
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asking *How does this apply to me?* or *How will I live out this text?* Doing so shortchanges the bigger picture by which a multitude of critical character-forming insights can be discovered. The first question should be about what God tells us about Himself, not about us. Recognizing this should prompt such questions as, *What is God doing in this text?* and *What is God revealing about one or all*

Central to the development of this passage, Dawn suggests, are not questions of science, *What?* and *How?* but insights designed to bring forth responses of adoration and the desire to glorify God. Getting to this point opens a whole vista of reasons to praise the Creator God. Dawn sees the days of Creation as a liturgy, providing the readers and hearers a means of participating in the worship

a biblical worldview enabling us to process whatever comes our way. Regardless of one's position about the "science" of Genesis, we can recommend the book for its spiritual import that explores reasons for trusting the God of creation. **M**

—Reviewed by Larry R. Evans, DMin, undersecretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



The Other Side of Sadness: What the New Science of Bereavement Tells Us About Life After Loss

By **George A. Bonanno**, New York: Basic Books, 2009.

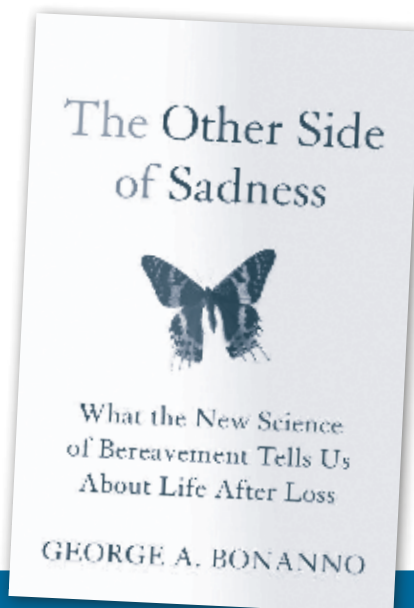
After years of research, George Bonanno makes the claim in this book that empirical evidence does not support the “stages of grief” idea. Adjusting to the loss of a loved one is complex and takes a different trajectory for everyone who loses. The Kubler-Ross *stages of grief* model was not intended to be prescriptive,

but this does not mean that no pain or sadness exists.

Sadness is viewed negatively by some theorists, but the author states that “sadness turns our attention inward so that we can take stock and

the implications of our loss, but this is not a constant 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our minds swing toward other people and events in the present. We connect with people and even engage in humor. Then we move back to the process of mourning.

He addresses, but does not recommend, strong views about single-session debriefing for the general population after exposure to trauma. The World Health Organization’s Department of Mental Hygiene and Substance Abuse says the early intervention “is likely ineffective and some evidence suggests that some forms of debriefing may be counterproductive by slowing down natural recovery.” The need for help should first be determined. Then the problem should be identified, followed by referral to the appropriate professional.



THE READER MAY DISAGREE WITH THE AUTHOR’S VIEW OF IMMORTALITY AND THE HEREAFTER, BUT THE CONTENT OF THIS BOOK SHOULD MAKE PASTORAL SUPPORT FOR THE GRIEVING MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE.

as reactions are not the same for those who grieve the loss of a loved one. Unfortunately, “stages” and “tasks” have been viewed by some as regulatory. George Bonanno’s research group found that there are no specific stages everyone must go through in order to adjust.

The author presents good material about resiliency in grief. Most of us do not experience overwhelming or unending grief. We manage to regain our equilibrium and move on,

adjust.” It helps us focus with deeper and more effective reflection. In this way, sadness helps us accommodate to our loss. It puts life in slow motion, giving time to evaluate the meaning of the loss and make plans for the present and the future.

Sadness becomes destructive when we obsessively linger on it and allow it to control us.

Bonanno emphasizes the oscillating nature of grief. We focus on the pain and sadness. We explore

The reader may disagree with the author’s view of immortality and the hereafter, but the content of this book should make pastoral support for the grieving much more effective. *One size fits all* does not fly. Especially helpful in today’s globalization is his insight into grief in different cultures. ■

—Reviewed by Larry Yeagley, BA, now retired, has served as pastor and chaplain. He now lives in Gentry, Arkansas, United States.

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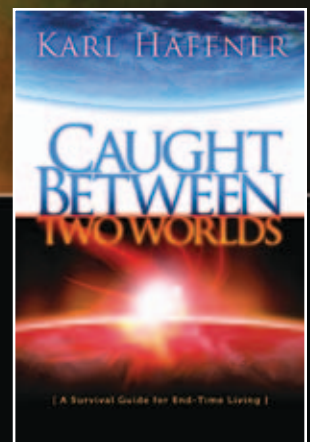
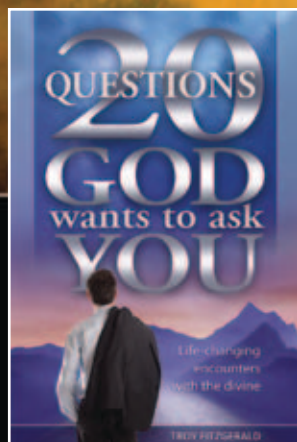
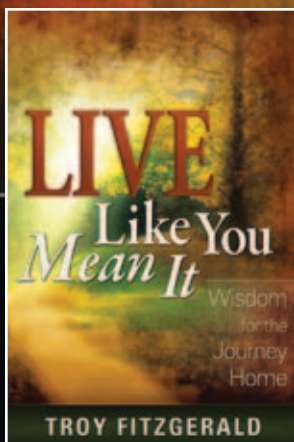
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