

Old Paths

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. Jeremiah 6:16

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant. Psalm 25:14

The Coming King is at the Door

By Allen Stump

Last Sabbath we had the privilege of having Brother Howard Williams from Restoration Ministries speak at the Smyrna Chapel on the certainty of the soon coming of Jesus. We as a people have been blessed by the promise of the coming of the Lord, and Brother Williams' sermon provoked me to do some serious reflection as we begin a new year.

As Adventist people, we have believed in the imminent coming of Christ for over 158 years. Does that seem contradictory? Soon, near, imminent, at hand for 158 years! What kind of celestial timetable does God work on? Is the message wrong? Does it sound like we, as a people, have been fooled or misled? How can we explain the seeming delay in Christ's return? Recently a visiting "Adventist" remarked to one of our Smyrna church family that he didn't see the big deal about the anticipated soon coming of Jesus and that he didn't expect to see the Lord return in his lifetime (and he is not an old person).

The Apostle Peter prophetically spoke of such people. He wrote: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3:3, 4)

Jesus stated emphatically that He would return again. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3)

Paul states in Hebrews 10:35-37: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Inspiration states that Jesus will come and will not tarry and admonishes us not to lose our confidence.

Here we are almost 2000 years after these statements were made. Why should we believe any more than anyone else who has ever lived,

Prayer Requests

This month we wish to encourage our readers to remember the governments of the world and their leaders in our prayers, especially the United States and Iraq. A war between these countries will leave many dead and many more in distress. The Scripture tells us: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." (1 Timothy 2:1-3)

While we know that a confederacy of church and state will be used of Satan, especially in the last days, we are to pray for peace that the gospel may be given and that men may live in peace. Some communists and Islamic nations still persecute Christians, even taking their lives. *Editor*

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that we are living at the end of time just before Jesus returns? For over 158 years since 1844 we have had a hope that Jesus would come *soon*.

We can and should believe Jesus is coming because the Word of God through the prophecies tells us so. Adventists have been people of prophecy. Clearly, the prophecies have pointed to the days after the “time of the end” (around 1798) as a period in which Jesus could have come. While all the prophecies must be fulfilled, events had come to a head in such a manner that by the early stages of the Advent movement, the final events could have happened very rapidly and the Lord would have returned. Sadly, the movement which began so well, started to get off course. In 1888 Sister White wrote:

“The facts concerning the real condition of the professed people of God, speak more loudly than their profession, and make it evident that some power has cut the cable that anchored them to the Eternal Rock, and that they are drifting away to sea, without chart or compass.” (*Review and Herald*, July 24, 1888) Later that year God sent a message through Elders Jones and Waggoner at the Minneapolis General Conference Session that was designed to provide the “chart and compass” to return the people to the pathway of truth. The work began to have a serious effect on the people and just four years later Ellen White wrote:

“The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth.” (*Review and Herald*, November 22, 1892)

As the year 1892 was ending, the church was alerted that the latter rain was being given through the “revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer.” This was a direct reference to the work of Jones and Waggoner. Obviously, 110 years was not needed to finish the work. The latter rain was cut off! Ellen White explains why. “Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would *before* this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory.” (*Desire of Ages*, pp. 633, 634, emphasis supplied, first published in 1898) The church *was not* doing her work and *could not* do her work due to the failure to fully accept the message from heaven. Writing to P. T. Magan, Ellen White stated:

“We may have to remain here in this world *because of insubordination* many more years, as did the

children of Israel, but for Christ’s sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action.” (*Spalding and Magan Collection*, p. 202—Letter dated, December 7, 1901, emphasis supplied)

I want to make two observations about the above statement. First, the reason mentioned for the delay is not the Lord’s doing or fickleness on His part, but rather the insubordination of His people. Second, the date of the testimony is intriguing. Exactly forty years later, the United States naval base in Pearl Harbor was attacked by Japanese bombers and the United States entered World War II. You might be thinking, “Are you suggesting that the Adventist people have a responsibility for World War II, or perhaps even 9-11?” I believe if we are honest with ourselves we will have to answer “yes.” God has entrusted a people with a message to warn a wicked world about the coming of a holy God. The fact that we are still here testifies that we have failed! Peter makes it clear that the actions of God’s people can hasten or delay the coming of Jesus. He wrote: “Looking for and *hasting* unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” (2 Peter 3:12)

The rebellious children of Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness. I once heard it noted by a preacher that God finally took the children of Israel in. However, he didn’t mention that none of the adults went into the promised land except Caleb and Joshua. Our God does not change. (Malachi 3:6) He cannot, and will not, take a stiff-necked rebellious people into the heavenly Canaan.

Writing about the professed people of God living in the last days, Paul stated: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Not only has the world become exceedingly wicked, but the professed people of God have lost their vitality and strength. Instead of having a vital, connected, relationship with Jesus Christ, most Christian have only an empty shell for their experience. It is

just as apparent to see what is happening in the church today as it is to see the evil conditions in the world.

This world is on the verge of being destroyed by its occupants, and the occupants are on the verge of destroying each other, and for the first time in the history of this world, they have the power to do it. Not just the United States of America and Russia, but several countries and terrorist groups have nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons that could bring about carnage.

Sister White wrote that “.... angels will do a work which men might have had the blessing of accomplishing, had they not neglected to answer the claims of God.” (*Review and Herald*, December 15, 1885) God, even in His transcendence, can wait only so long on man. The gospel message will be given if the rocks must cry it out. Unlike those living in the 19th and 20th centuries, we do not have the luxury of waiting around for another generation. Almost all the prophetic signs that point to the coming of Christ have been fulfilled. The remaining prophecies will be very quickly fulfilled. “Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and *the final movements will be rapid ones.*” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 11, emphasis supplied)

This last Sabbath we sang F. E. Belden’s song, “The Coming King is at the Door.” Please contemplate the words carefully for they speak the truth stronger today than when first written.

The coming King is at the door,
Who once the cross for sinners bore,
But now the righteous ones alone,
He comes to gather home.

The signs that show His coming near
Are fast fulfilling year by year,
And soon we’ll hail the glorious dawn
Of heaven’s eternal morn.

Look not on earth for strife to cease,
Look not below for joy and peace,
Until the Saviour comes again
To banish death and sin.

Then in the glorious earth made new
We’ll dwell the countless ages through;
This mortal shall immortal be,
And time, eternity.

At the door, at the door,
At the door, yes even at the door;
He is coming, He is coming,
He is even at the door.

“Are you suggesting that the Adventist people have a responsibility for World War II or perhaps even 9-11?”

Friends, are we serious about the times in which we live? The Master is coming soon. Jesus said that the “evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming.” (Matthew 24:48) In this parable the evil servant is not even brazen enough to say out loud that he believes his Master delayest His coming, but only keeps it in his heart. Today, it must be a very wicked servant that says out loud that the Master delays His coming. Friends, I don’t want to be a wicked, evil servant. I want to be ready for the Lord’s return.

“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” (2 Peter 3:8-14)

Just because our people did not do the work in the past or just because we failed to do all we could when we were younger, doesn’t mean that things have to stay that way. We can arise and be about our Father’s business. We can bring our lives into line with the plain, straight testimony of God’s Word which will allow us not only to be ready for the Lord’s return, but will also fit us to share the message with others and help prepare the world for the return of the Lord. “If we would draw sinners out of the swift-running current, our own feet must be firmly set upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.” (*Ministry of Healing*, pp. 469, 470)

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Youth's Corner - A Lesson From One of God's Prophets

The birth of John the Baptist had been foretold by prophets, and an angel was sent to notify Zacharias of the event. The heavenly messenger expressly enjoined upon the father to bring up the child with strictly temperate habits. Some may inquire why the Lord should be thus particular; but God, who made man, knew that Satan's most powerful temptations would be on the point of appetite. Through the indulgence of appetite, the physical, mental, and moral strength becomes enfeebled; and lest Zacharias should follow the prevailing custom, God sent an angel from the courts of heaven with directions for the training of this child of promise. It was necessary for him to have a simple, unstimulating diet, in order to prepare him to accomplish his sacred mission. And it is said of him: "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts until the day of his showing unto Israel."

John did not feel strong enough to stand the great pressure of temptation he would meet in mingling with society. He feared his character would be molded according to the prevailing customs of the Jews; and he chose to separate himself from the world, and make the wilderness his home. He denied himself the ordinary comforts of life; his food was simple; his clothing, a garment made of camel's hair, and confined about the waist by a leathern girdle. But although John passed his childhood and youth in the desert, he was not unreconciled to his life of hardship and seclusion. So far from being lonely, gloomy, or morose, he enjoyed his life of simplicity and retirement, and his temperate habits kept all his senses unperturbed.

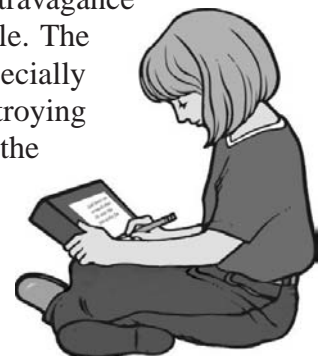
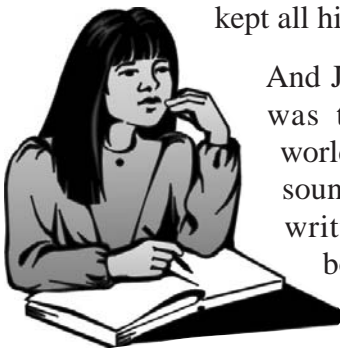
And John was not indolent. He was thus secluded from the world that he might secure a sound education from God's written word and the great book of nature. The mountains and perpetual hills, the ever-flowing

brooks, were company for him. Through them he communed with God. Everything that surrounded him in his mountain home was to him a book of instruction, containing lessons of deepest importance in regard to the character, the benevolence, and the love of God.

John had a special work to do for God. He was to deal with the sins and follies of the people. In order to be fitted for this important public work, he must qualify himself in private by seeking heavenly knowledge. He must meditate and pray, and by studying become acquainted with the prophecies and the will of God. Away from the busy world, whose cares and alluring pleasures would divert his mind and pervert his thoughts and imaginings, he was shut up with God and nature. Here he would not be influenced by evil surroundings, his understanding would not be blinded, nor his spirit become familiar with wickedness. In the calm retirement of the wilderness, John became strong in spirit. By his strictly temperate habits he secured to himself physical, mental, and moral health. His discernment was clear, his judgment correct.

John accustomed himself to privations and hardships, that he might be able to stand among the people as unmoved by circumstances as the rocks and mountains of the wilderness that had surrounded him for thirty years. A great work was before him; and it was necessary that he should form a character that would not be swerved from right and duty by any surrounding influence. He was to lead out as a reformer, and by his abstemious life and plain dress rebuke the intemperate habits and sinful extravagance prevailing among the people. The indulgence of appetite, especially in the use of wine, was destroying the health and weakening the intellect, so that the people did not regard sin as offensive to God. His work required firmness and

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The Coming King is at the Door

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We can decide that now, and by God's grace, we will be a humble submissive people, instead of a stiff-necked rebellious people.

I am especially encouraged by the fact that we are currently seeing a world-wide restoration of the truth about God and Christ which was swept under the church's doormat during the first part of the last century. This truth is an essential ingredient to the plan of redemption and the giving of the message which is, even now, beginning to lighten the world with the glory of God. (See Revelation 18:1.)


"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." (Romans 13:11-13)

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (2 Peter 3:17, 18) 

Youth's Corner

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integrity; for he would have opposition to meet from those whose hearts were given to pleasure and the gratification of appetite. He was to reprove the wrong and vindicate the right. He was fitting himself to understand the peculiarities of human minds, and learning how to move hearts.

John was an example to the young people in these last days, to whom have been committed important and solemn truths. God would have them temperate in all things. He would have them see the necessity for the denial of appetite, for keeping their passions under the control of reason. This is necessary that they may have mental strength and clearness to discern between right and wrong, between truth and error. There is work for every one of them to do in the vineyard of the Lord, and he would have them fit themselves to act a useful part. (Mrs. E. G. White -*Youth's Instructor*, January 7, 1897) 

Answers to Objections

(As many of our readers are aware, we have been producing a series of video and audio cassette tapes on the truth about God. We have entitled this series, "The Good News About God." "Answers to Objections" is taken from our latest study in this series. Editor)

In "The Good News About God" series we have seen vital, and dynamic truths about God our Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and their Holy Spirit. While these studies have been truth packed, due to time constraints, we have not been able to deal with every Bible text that comes up in discussions concerning the subject of the Godhead. That is where this study fits into the series. It is here that we wish to carefully examine some texts that we have not had the chance to explore, yet that are commonly brought into the discussion, especially by those who accept the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, and the various forms of it. To help examine some of these texts, we have assembled a panel of Bible students composed of:

Pastor David Clayton of Restoration Ministries, Jamaica, West Indies. Pastor Clayton has been the main speaker in this series, "The Good News About God."

Brother Lynnford Beachy of Smyrna Gospel Ministries. Brother Beachy is a real student of the Scriptures. Lynnford is the editor of *Present Truth* magazine, a monthly publication with a special focus on presenting study materials on the plan of redemption.

Brother Howard Williams, of Restoration Ministries, Jamaica, West Indies. Brother Williams has been a lifetime Christian and student of God's Word. He is currently the head of Restoration Ministries' publishing.

Now for the sake of those who may not have had the opportunity to study the prior messages in this series, we want to begin by doing some review. If you have seen or heard the earlier studies, you will appreciate the words of Paul as he was writing to the Church in Philippi when he wrote: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." (Philippians 3:1) It's not grievous, but in fact, safe, and good, to review Bible truth.

Beloved, what is important is the Word of God. What the Bible says! Not necessarily what men teach. Years ago I learned a little poem that has meant a lot to me. It goes like this:

What says the Bible, the blessed Bible?

This, my only question should be.

The teachings of men do so often mislead me,

What says the book of God, to me?

The Father

In prior studies in this series, we have found the Bible teaches that there is one God, a personal, spiritual being, the Creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal; infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth and mercy; unchangeable and everywhere present by the Holy Spirit.

This “one God” is not a unified committee of three beings, nor one being that takes on three different modes of existence either simultaneously or at different times. Neither is this one God “a trinity of three persons in one being. The Trinity doctrine stated in its simplest form is: “One God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal persons.” (Fundamental Belief #2 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church) This concept is what most evangelical church creeds and fundamental beliefs are based on.

Now let us review some of the Bible texts that clearly demonstrate the real truth about God and see if the basis of the creeds can be reconciled with the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians. 8:4-7 states:

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that *there is none other God but one*. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) *But to us there is but one God, the Father*, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Howbeit [or however] there is not in every man that knowledge.

Paul says that the one God of the Christian is not a committee of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but simply, “the Father.” He says “to us,” that is Christians, there is “one God, the Father,” and “one Lord, Jesus Christ.” Let us reread part of these verses supplying the creed’s definition of God into the verse and see if it makes sense. “But to us there is but one God [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit], the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ.” Clearly, this does not make sense. Paul is telling us truth essential for eternal life. Yet, if the Trinity doctrine is true, then we are left to be confused by what should be the plain word of God.

Sadly, Paul confessed that the true knowledge of God is not in every man. Writing later to Timothy,

Paul expressed the true knowledge that he wished for all Christians to have. He wrote: “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 2:3-5) The truth that inspiration wants us to come to is the knowledge that there is one God, the Father, and one mediator between this one God and men, and that mediator is Jesus Christ.

Jesus Himself, praying to the Father said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3)

Instead of the one true God that Jesus knew, the Trinity doctrine teaches that there is in reality three supreme individuals, who are co-equal, co-eternal, immortal, all worthy of worship, adoration, and service. This teaching destroys the sovereignty of God. This theology confuses people as to whom they worship, pray to, repent toward, and have faith in. As we will notice later, it also attempts to destroy the atoning death of Jesus.

Jesus Christ

In this series we have studied extensively about this one Lord and mediator, Jesus Christ. He is the only begotten Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom the Father created all things, and by whom they do consist; that he lived our example, died a total death on the cross for our sacrifice, and was raised on the third day by God the Father.

The Bible teaches that at some point in eternity past, only one divine Being existed. Then, this one divine being brought forth a Son, “not a son by creation, as were the angels, nor a son by adoption, as is the forgiven sinner, but a Son begotten in the express image of the Father’s person.” (*Signs of the Times*, May 30, 1895) The Bible does not try to explain how this process of begetting or birth occurred, yet it emphatically maintains the literal Sonship of Jesus Christ prior to His incarnation and birth in Bethlehem. While the Son of God shares an equality of nature, divine glory and honor with His Father, all these divine attributes were initially “given” or, as it says in Hebrews 1:4, “inherited.” It is for this reason that even after the millennium and the eradication of sin, the Son will be subject unto God.

Now let us review some of the Bible texts that clearly demonstrate the real truth about Jesus Christ.

That most loved, and best known of all Bible texts, John 3:16, states: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Instead of teaching that Jesus is the second person of a triune God, the Scriptures teach that He is the only begotten Son of the Father. This is also clearly brought out in Proverbs 8:24, 25. There Christ, speaking of Himself under the symbol of wisdom, says: “When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth.” The Bible teaches that God demonstrated His great love in giving His only begotten Son to die the death we deserve and then the Father raised His Son from the grave.

Speaking to the Jewish leadership after the healing of a lame man, the Apostle Peter declared, “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.” (Acts 4:10) And Paul wrote: “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.” (Galatians 1:1)

In John 14:28, Jesus said, “My Father is greater than I.” And along this same thought, the Apostle Paul writes, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” (1 Corinthians 11:3) Paul continues in the same epistle and states that after all sin and evil have been put down and destroyed, “the Son also himself [shall] be subject unto him [God] that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” (1 Corinthians 15:28)

In John 5:26, Jesus said, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” This life of God flows out through His Son into all creation.

Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews writes, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” (Hebrews 1:1, 2) No wonder we read in Philippians 2:10, 11, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Beloved, the false theories about Christ and God teach that the terms “Father” and “Son” are merely titles to help us to understand the “role” which deity acted out. This is actually deceiving people about God. This theology concludes with a belief that when God gives us His Son, instead of giving up a person who was once a literal part of Himself, He is giving us someone other than Himself; thus not giving of Himself at all. With this understanding, people are left without the knowledge of the supreme sacrifice and love of our heavenly Father.

The Holy Spirit

Before we go to our questions and answers, let us review a little on the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24) Beloved, we have seen that the Bible teaches the Holy Spirit is the non-bodily, personal presence of God himself. Nowhere does the Bible teach that the Holy Spirit is the third being of a triune God.

In Genesis 1:26, the Bible says that Adam, (man-kind), was made in the image of God. This is important because Paul, writing in 1 Corinthians 2:11, states: “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” In other words, man’s spirit is to man, as God’s Spirit is to God. When I say, “My spirit is grieved,” you would not think for a moment that I am speaking of someone other than myself. My spirit is my mind, character, and personality. It is the element that is really me. You can cut my hand away, and I am still me. Cut my arms off, I am still me. Cut my legs off and I am no less a person, even though I have less of a body.

It is by God’s Spirit that He is omnipresent. In Psalm 139:7, David writes, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” Here David uses Hebrew parallelism to express himself. This type of Hebrew parallelism expresses a thought one way, then uses a complementary thought to express it another way. In the first line he states, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit?” The second thought that is equivalent to the first is, “whither shall I flee from thy presence?” David is saying that God’s presence is equivalent to God’s Spirit.

Now we have just given a short sampling of some of the Bible passages used before in this series. I encourage you to go back and review and study more.

Remember, hearing the truth again is not grievous, but safe.

Our format will be simple. A text, or a question based on a text that is often used to promote a false theory of God, will be presented and one or more of our panelists will respond with a Bible-based answer.

Bible texts that may seem to support a Triune God

We'll begin with a text that even Trinitarians have found difficult to fully explain, but one they believe supports their position. It's found in 1 John 5:7, 8. It reads, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." Brother David, at first glance that would at least seem to support the Trinity doctrine. What can you tell us about that?

David Clayton

Most reputable authorities agree that a part of these verses was most certainly added to the Bible during the period known as the "Dark Ages." Specifically, the part which reads, "in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth." If the questionable portion were taken out, the verse would read:

For there are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

Of all the questionable verses in the Bible this one has the most evidence against it being a legitimate part of Scripture. F.M. Blaiklock, in the *Commentary on the New Testament*, states:

...Erasmus omitted the passage from the first printed Greek Testament of 1516, but undertook to introduce the words if a Greek manuscript containing them could be produced. He was faced with a late manuscript which did in fact contain the passage, and against his judgment kept his promise. So, by way of Erasmus' 1522 edition the interpolation invaded the text of the Greek New Testament. The action of the RV in cutting out the spurious words was tardy justice. We should treasure every word of the inspired record, but we want no invasion of that record by the addition of men, however sound the theology expressed.—F. M. Blaiklock, *Commentary on the New Testament*, p.246)

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary says basically the same thing:

The disputed words found their way into the KJV by way of the Greek text of Erasmus. It is said that Erasmus offered to include the disputed words in his Greek Testament if he were shown even one Greek MS that contained them. A library in Dublin produced such a MS (known as 34), and Erasmus included the passage in his text. It is now believed that the later editions of the Vulgate acquired the passage by the mistake of a scribe who included an exegetical marginal comment in the Bible text that he was copying. The disputed words have been widely used in support of the doctrine of the Trinity, but, in view of such overwhelming evidence against their authenticity, their support is valueless and should not be used. In spite of their appearance in the Vulgate, *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* freely admits regarding these words: "It is now generally held that this passage, called the *Comma Johanneum*, is a gloss that crept into the text of the Old Latin and Vulgate at an early date, but found its way into the Greek text only in the 15th and 16th centuries." (Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1951, p. 1186) (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 675)

Some people would object strongly to the very suggestion that errors may have crept into the text of the Bible in any way whatsoever. However, it is interesting to note what Ellen White had to say concerning this in *Early Writings*, pages 220, 221.

I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition. But I saw that the Word of God, as a whole, is a perfect chain, one portion linking into and explaining another. True seekers for truth need not err; for not only is the Word of God plain and simple in declaring the way of life, but the Holy Spirit is given as a guide in understanding the way to life therein revealed.

Even more interestingly, Ellen White, in all her thousands of pages of writing and thousands of Scripture quotations never once quoted 1 John 5:7, the text which we are presently considering.

However, even if we were to accept this verse as a legitimate part of Scripture, does it really teach three beings? In verse 8 we are told that there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood and that these three agree in one. That is, they bear a united witness.

Here we see that one does not have to be a living person to bear witness. The water bears witness and the blood bears witness, yet no one would suggest that

the water and blood are persons. Why then should we insist that because the spirit bears witness in heaven it must be a living person?

There are three ways in which witness is borne to the truth in heaven. These witnesses are one, or they bear a united witness. It does not mean that they are one person, one being, or one God. Jesus explained what this oneness means when He prayed that we all might be one as He and His father are one. (See John 17:22.) Not that we might become one human, but simply that we might be in perfect harmony, even as He and His Father are in perfect harmony.

In heaven, God bears witness to the truth, so does Christ, and so does the Holy Spirit! However, while God and Jesus may witness audibly by the words they speak, the Holy Spirit, whether in heaven or on earth, witnesses by making impressions on the hearts of those who are willing to learn, giving them understanding of the truths of the plan of salvation.

In heaven there are three avenues of witness, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. On the earth, there are three, the water, the spirit and the blood. Are the three on earth a Trinity because they are mentioned in the same breath, or because they agree in one? Certainly no intelligent person would claim this. By the same reasoning we would have to conclude that the Father, the word and the spirit are not necessarily a Trinity simply because they are one (or are in harmony) or because they are mentioned in the same breath.

Allen

I believe that David's answer really made that very clear. Matthew 28:19 is another text used a lot to teach the doctrine of a triune God. Who would like to respond to that?

Lynnford

I would like to address that Brother Allen. This verse is probably used more than any other verse in the Bible to try to prove that God is made up of three persons. Let's read this verse ourselves. Jesus said:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Matthew 28:19) What did the disciples think when they heard this? Did they understand Christ to be commanding them to baptize people into a trinity? If so, we would expect to find them using this formula whenever they baptized people.

Let's turn in our Bibles to where this command of Jesus was obeyed for the first time. In Acts 2:38 Peter said, “Repent, and be *baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ* for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Peter instructed these people to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, rather than in the names of three separate persons.

Just in case this was a slip on Peter's part, let us take a look at some of the other places where people were baptized. In Acts 10:48 we read that Peter “commanded [Cornelius and his brethren] to be *baptized in the name of the Lord.*” From these verses it is plain that Peter didn't understand Christ to have commanded him to baptize into a trinity.

must have understood the command of Jesus differently than most Trinitarians understand it today. As we continue in the book of Acts we find that Peter was not alone in his understanding of this command.

In Acts 8:16, when Peter and John came to Samaria they found a group of people who had been “*baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*”

What about Paul? Keep in mind that he claimed to have received the gospel directly from Christ. How did Jesus teach Paul to baptize?

When Paul visited Ephesus, he met some brethren who had only been baptized with John's baptism. Paul instructed them about Christ, and the Bible says, “when they heard this, they were *baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*” (Acts 19:5)

There is no record in the Bible of anyone baptizing in three separate names of three individual persons. Now there are a few possibilities that could explain why the disciples always baptized in the name of Jesus.

- ☞ The disciples may have been in direct rebellion against Jesus.
- ☞ They may have misunderstood what He said.
- ☞ The text may be a gloss. Perhaps Jesus never gave this command.

Now, none of these sound reasonable. But there is another possibility.

- ☞ The disciples may have understood the command of Jesus differently than most Trinitarians understand it today.

Jesus commissioned us to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Was Jesus trying to teach us that God is a Trinity? I do not think so, or He would have been contradicting other

statements He made, and many statements made by other Bible writers. There is nothing in the verse that says that God is made up of three persons. There is nothing in the verse that says who God is. The word “God” is completely missing from the verse. We learn elsewhere in the Bible that the “one God” of the Bible is the Father. Paul wrote that there is, “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Ephesians 4:6) The Bible uses the phrase, “God the Father” thirteen times, but it never says, “God the Son,” or “God the Holy Spirit.”

The word *name* in the Bible often refers to a person’s character. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel because his character had changed. If we believe this verse to be referring to actual names of three individuals, as most Trinitarians suppose, then it would not be possible to fulfill the command. Simply reciting the words, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” is not fulfilling the command. To literally baptize someone in the name of a person we must know the person’s name. It would be possible for us to baptize in the literal name of the Father, for He has a name. It would also be possible for us to baptize in the literal name of the Son, for He also has a name. But it is not possible for us to baptize someone in the literal name of the Holy Spirit, for the Bible does not even hint that such a name exists.

So we can see that Jesus was not giving a specific formula of words for the preacher to recite at a baptism. We know this because:

- ☞ There is no record in the Bible of anyone using that formula at a baptism.
- ☞ All the recorded examples of people baptizing after this command was given show that it was done in the name of Jesus.
- ☞ It would not be possible to literally baptize in the proper name of the Holy Spirit because the Bible makes no mention of such a name.

The word “name” in Matthew 28:19 has reference to the character rather than to proper names of individuals. Once we realize that Christ was commissioning His disciples to baptize into the character of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, it is easier for us to understand His words. This command is closely connected with the command to teach. Christ wants His disciples to understand the truth about God, His Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three of these are vital in a Christians life. The Father loved us so much that He gave His Son to die for our

sins, and He gave His Spirit to guide us in our lives. If a person lacks the knowledge of any of these aspects, his relationship with God will suffer. That is why Christ specifically mentioned all three.

From this we can see that Matthew 28:19 certainly does *not* prove a Trinity, nor does it prove that the Holy Spirit is a separate being from the Father and His Son. If we are to find proof of these doctrines in the Bible, we must look somewhere else.

Allen

Brother Howard, 2 Corinthians 13:14 has been dubbed by some as the most sublime text of all Scripture, especially in light of the supposed teaching of the Trinity. It says, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.” Doesn’t this seem to speak of three individuals in the Godhead?

Howard

These are Paul’s final words from his second letter to the Corinthian Christians.

Some say these words proves a Trinity, but I want you to examine these words with me, and let us see if Paul was, by these words, saying a Trinitarian farewell. The text speaks of:

- ☞ 1.) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ☞ 2.) The love of God.
- ☞ 3.) The communion of the Holy Ghost.

In this verse the title God is used only once and it is used in reference to a specific person. Obviously, it is God who loves us and, according to John 3:16, He loves us so much that He did something, and that was, He gave His Son to give grace to us that we can be drawn into communion with Them both through the Spirit. This is noted in John 14:23.

Please observe that Paul did not say we would commune *with* the Holy Ghost, but he speaks *of* “the communion of the Holy Ghost.” What does he mean by this? When Paul spoke of the communion *of* the Holy Ghost, he was showing how our communion would be. It would be by the means of the Holy Spirit that we would commune or fellowship *with* God and Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:3 states, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and *truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*”

According to John, we have fellowship with the Father and his Son, *through* the Holy Spirit. So Paul wanted to have this experience remain with these Christians in Corinth and with us today; the experience of true fellowship with the Father and His Son *through* the Holy Spirit.

Allen

Pastor Clayton, Matthew 3:16, 17 describes the baptism of Jesus. The Father spoke and the Spirit descended. What does this really mean?

David

Let me read the text: “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Trinitarians insist that in these verses we see a clear demonstration of the Trinitarian nature of God. Without adding human bias or wishful thinking, what may we discover from reading the passage?


To begin with, it is very evidently there are two persons present; one is Jesus, the other is the owner of the voice which declares, “this is my beloved Son...” Clearly, the speaker is God the Father. What is the identity of Jesus according to the passage? God Himself identifies Jesus as “my beloved Son,” not as the second person of a co-equal Trinity. This alone denies the assertion that we find a Trinity here. However, does this passage demonstrate the Holy Spirit is a personal being apart, or separate, from the Father? Are there three persons present? While the Son is clearly a person, and the Father is unmistakably a person as demonstrated by the voice and the words which He speaks, what may we discover from the symbol used to represent the Holy Spirit? Here, the Spirit is represented as a dove. Never is the Holy Spirit represented by any symbol which indicates that it is a person. It is represented by oil, water, wind, fire, and here, as a dove. It really is stretching the imagination to suggest that here we see a third person. In actual fact, the passage declares that it is the Spirit of God! It is the Spirit which belongs to God. Here, as everywhere else in Scripture, the Holy Spirit is represented as belonging to someone; as being the property of God, rather than being an individual person with his own identity.

Ellen White sheds light on this point in the *Review and Herald* of January 21, 1873. She says,

Never before had angels listened to such a prayer as Christ offered at his baptism, and they were solicitous to be the bearers of the message from the Father to his Son. But, no! direct from the Father issues the light of his glory. The heavens were opened, and beams of glory rested upon the Son of God and assumed the form of a dove, in appearance like burnished gold. The dove-like form was emblematical of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. While the people stood spell-bound with amazement, their eyes fastened upon Christ, from the opening heavens came these words: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

..... *To be continued*

New Video in “The Good News About God” Series

The above study, “Answers to Objections,” is an edited portion of the latest production from the series, “The Good News About God.” This study-tape is scheduled to be available January 2003. It will be available in both NTSC and PAL formats. There will be a version for Adventist (AV) and non-Adventist (NAV) as well. Please specify which version when ordering. For video cassettes, request tape number GNAG-V-06. The suggested donation is \$7.00 per tape plus actual postage. For audio cassettes, request GNAG-A-06. The suggested donation is \$2.00 plus actual postage. 




Panel Discussion from the video “Answers to Objections” From left to right: Howard Williams, Lynnford Beachy, David Clayton, Allen Stump

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Florida Revival Retreat

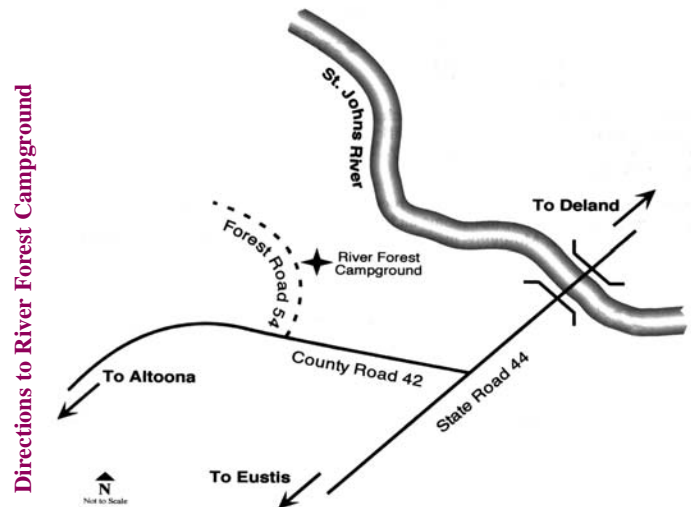
The church in Orlando, Florida, has asked us to announce that they will be hosting a Revival Retreat, February 26th to March 2, 2003, at the River Forest Campground located in the southeast corner of the Ocala National Forest, on the scenic St. Johns River. All are invited to attend. The theme of the meetings will be, "Repairers of the Breach."

Meals will not be provided, but a nice kitchen is available. You might wish to consider bringing simple fruits and pancakes or waffles for breakfast, and simple salads and bean dishes for dinner, enough for your family. This way, if you choose to combine your meals with others, they will be compatible.

There are no RV hookups, but plenty of room for RVs and tents. There is a main building for meetings, showers, restrooms and, as mentioned earlier, a kitchen. If you can make it, please come. Mosquitos may be present, so be prepared. For more information, contact Bill James. Phone: (407) 694-2156; e-mail: abj2289@gte.net. 

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Old Paths is a free monthly newsletter/study-paper published by Smyrna Gospel Ministries, HC 64 Box 128-B, Welch, WV 24801-9606 U. S. A. The paper is dedicated to the propagation and restoration of the principles of truth that God gave to the early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers. *Duplication is not only permitted, but strongly encouraged.* This issue, with other gospel literature we publish, can be found at our web sites. The urls are: <http://www.smyrna.org> and <http://www.presenttruth.info>. Phone: (304) 732-9204. Fax: (304) 732-7322.

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