

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

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*“I . . . will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.”
(Jeremiah 33:6)*



The Non-Immortality of the Wicked (Part 2)

By Allen Stump

The Wages of Sin Is Death

Last month we read from 1 Corinthians 15:54 that the righteous will receive immortality at Christ’s second coming, but what does the Bible say about the destruction of the wicked? Let us first consider the final fate of the author of all sin, the devil. God, speaking through Ezekiel, declares concerning Satan:

Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more. (Ezekiel 28:18–19)

Using three of the strongest expressions possible, God declares that Satan will not live forever in an immortal sense. God says that he will cause a fire to “devour” Satan. Satan will be brought to “ashes,” and it is said of Satan that “never shalt thou be any more.”

The prophet Obadiah declares the final destruction of the followers of Satan. Prophesying of the wicked, he says:

For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been. (Obadiah 1:16)

The destruction of the wicked is so complete that they are spoken of “as though they had not been.” Malachi declares:

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. (Malachi 4:1)

Malachi declares that the wicked shall be as “stubble,” not as asbestos. He declares that the final judgment leaves “neither root nor branch” which Dr. Adam Clarke, in his

commentary, declares is “a proverbial expression for total destruction.”

Jesus declared that there was one who could destroy both body and soul in hell: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather *fear him which is able to destroy* (Greek *apolesai*) *both soul and body in hell*” (Matthew 10:28).

In discussing the narrowness of the pathway to heaven, Jesus said: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to *destruction* (Greek *apoleian*), and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14).

To the wicked “God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29). David prayed, “As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked *perish* at the presence of God” (Psalm 68:2).

Some people believe in a hell that has a terrible heat but is not hot enough to destroy the wicked; however, the Bible is very clear that the wicked are consumed. The biblical hell is hot enough to destroy all sin, and the sinners who cling to the sin will be destroyed with it. Someone has said that hell is a “highly efficient incinerator.” Peter says that even the earth and all its works will be destroyed:

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. (2 Peter 3:10)

Also in this issue:

Letters	p. 6
New Session Waldensian Center	p. 6
The Church (Part 3)	p. 7
Philadelphia (Part 1)	p. 14
The Apostle of Love	p. 17
Youth’s Corner	p. 18
Greetings from France	p. 20
France/Africa Trip Report	p. 21

We do not know how long this fire will burn, but we know it will not be eternally. It will be long enough to do the work it must perform. Jesus said:

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with *many stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with *few stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. (Luke 12:47, 48)

This will certainly be a time of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30), but it is not said to be eternal. Magnifying the concept of the time element in the destruction of the wicked, the Spirit of Prophecy states:

Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished "according to their deeds." The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah. (The Great Controversy, p. 673)

The Bible teaches that the wicked will be destroyed. This has not happened yet, for the Bible says, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to *reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment* to be punished" (2 Peter 2:9). Nobody today is in hell. God has a day of judgment coming which Jesus said would happen at the end of the world:

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. (Matthew 13:40, 41)

The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. (John 12:48)

Think about this, friend, if God cast people into hell at death, than Cain has been burning over five thousand years longer than Adolf Hitler. No sense of fairness or decency would allow such a matter in any human court! Surely our merciful God is more just than man. The Bible says that the dead are not in hell now, but waiting in the graves in a state the Bible refers to as sleep (Mark 5:39; John 11:11).

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrec-

tion of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (John 5:28, 29).

Satan Is Not in Charge of Hell!

Popular theology, supported by supposed visions of different people, picture hell as a place controlled by Satan and his angels and even by thirteen-foot-tall reptilian creatures. In this hell the wicked scream and wail for eternity, crying out to God, "How long lord?" And the reply thunders down, "F O R E V E R!"

As we have seen, however, this view does not harmonize with the Bible and, therefore, must be rejected. Satan cannot be in charge of hell, for he will be brought to ashes and never be again. The Bible says that Satan is "cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:10). Hell was not prepared as a place for Satan to torture humans for eternity. If this were so, then Satan would actually be in agreement with and working with God, to bring pain and suffering to men forever and ever! No, Jesus said that hell was "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

God, being by very nature love, does not wish that any perish. He says, "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel" (Ezekiel 33:11). However, God will not allow sin to continue for ever and ever, and he will perform what the Bible calls his "strange act" in the destruction of the wicked:

For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, *his strange work*; and bring to pass his act, *his strange act*. (Isaiah 28:21)

The destruction of sinners is considered God's strange act and work, since his great desire is to give life, not take it. However, sin must be destroyed, and those who cling to their sins will be destroyed with them. I am so thankful that we can flee to Jesus, who will forgive our sins and give to those who believe eternal life.

The Word Hell

The word *hell* is used thirty-one times in the Old Testament. It is always translated from the Hebrew word *sheol* which means grave or pit. For example:

Her feet go down to *death*; her steps take hold on *hell* (*sheol*). (Proverbs 5:5)

Her house is the way to *hell* (*sheol*), going down to the chambers of *death*. (Proverbs 7:27)

Notice that in its parallel structure, hell and death are equated, but this is not the only or the complete picture that the Bible has on hell. In the New Testament there are three basic words translated *hell*. The first word translated *hell* in the New Testament is *gehenna*. *Gehenna* is used twelve times for hell and is a transliteration of the Hebrew *Ge-Hinnon* which means the Valley of Hinnom. Just southwest of Jerusalem was a valley called Hinnom which served

as the garbage dump for Jerusalem. There the people's garbage was placed, along with animal carcasses. A fire was kept continually burning to burn the waste. Jesus used the Valley of Hinnom as a symbol of destruction and of the fire that will destroy Satan, his angels, and the lost. This fire was not unending, since it is not burning today.

The next word translated *hell* in the New Testament is *hades* which, like *sheol* in the Old Testament, means grave. *Hades* is used ten times. The final word translated *hell* is *tartarus* which means a place of darkness. It is only used once in the Bible, in 2 Peter 2:4.

Texts That Seem To Teach Eternal Hell

While there is an abundance of scripture that clarifies the truth about death and hell, there are some texts that people have misinterpreted, believing that they teach hell as an eternal, on-going experience, without any end. However, an honest viewing of these texts, comparing them with other texts, will help to clarify the matter fully.

Matthew 3:12 — Let us begin this section of our study by looking at Matthew 3:12, where we read that the Lord will “burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” What does this mean? Unquenchable fire, according to the Bible, is fire that cannot be put out but goes out when the fire has reduced all to ashes. Jeremiah 17:27 states:

But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

In 2 Chronicles 36:19–21, the Bible confirms that God allowed Jerusalem to be burned with fire, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, with the writer of Chronicles making reference to this verse in Jeremiah, yet we know that Jerusalem is not burning today.

Matthew 25:46 — What about “everlasting punishment”? A careful reading of Matthew 25:46 reveals that it is speaking of punishment, not punishing! The Bible tells us in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 that the punishment for sin is “everlasting destruction.”

Matthew 25:41 — Matthew 25:41 says, “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into *everlasting fire*, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Does this everlasting fire go out? Yes, it does, and the Bible explains this also. In Jude 1:7, we read:

Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

The same Greek word (*aionios*) is used in Matthew and Jude for “everlasting” and “eternal.” Interestingly, this word can mean eternal in an absolute sense but can also have a limited meaning, as we see in the verse from Jude. Jude says that Sodom and Gomorrha are an example of those who suffer

eternal, or everlasting, fire. In 2 Peter 2:6, we read further concerning this:

And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.

Peter says that this eternal fire resulted in ashes and that they are an example for those who afterward live ungodly. Today many believe that Sodom lies at the bottom of the Dead Sea, but irregardless of its location, we know that it is not burning today.

Revelation 14:11 — Revelation 14:11 and other texts (Revelation 19:3; 20:10) speak of the wicked suffering “for ever and ever.” Does the Bible give its own explanation of these verses? Yes. We can be thankful that the Word of God also speaks plainly to these verses.

Some words are relative in meaning. If I say “big,” what does that mean? It depends upon the context about which I am speaking. A cat is big compared to a mouse, but small compared to an elephant. The Bible uses the term for ever (forever) in a relative way, and you have to understand the context to know how to understand the term. In 1 Samuel 1:22, we read that Hannah brought Samuel to the temple to “appear before the LORD, and there abide *for ever*.” However, verse 28 tells us that Hannah said Samuel was “lent ... to the LORD; *as long as he liveth* he shall be lent to the LORD.” Allowing the Bible to interpret itself, we see that in this case for ever meant the length of Samuel's life.

Another example of how the Bible uses the term for ever is in Jonah. Describing his experience in the fish's belly, Jonah said “I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars *was about me for ever*” (Jonah 2:6), but according to Jonah 1:17, Jonah was in the fish's belly “three days and three nights.”

David said that the “LORD God of Israel chose” him “to be king over Israel *for ever*” (1 Chronicles 28:4), yet David's reign as king ended just before he died at the age of 70. David is certainly not a king today, for Peter said on the day of Pentecost:

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. (Acts 2:29)

One more example of how the term *for ever* is used in a relative way is found in the Book of Exodus. If a man had a Hebrew slave, the slave was to serve him for no more than six years. On the seventh year the slave was allowed to go free, but if he loved his master, he could choose to stay. In these cases a provision was made: “Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him *for ever*” (Exodus 21:6). There will be no slaves in heaven. Nobody will be a servant forever to another person, but the slave mentioned here in Exodus 21 would be a slave to his master as long as he lived.

Mark 9:43, 44 — Mark 9:43 and 44 speak of fire that is not quenched and of the worm that dieth not. We have already seen what the Bible says about unquenchable fire, but what about this worm that does not die? The texts in question say:

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell (*gehenna*), into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (Mark 9:43, 44)

The word translated *hell* in verse 43 is *gehenna* which we saw was a burning dump. Anything that the flames did not consume was eaten by maggots and worms which fed on the dead bodies. *Gehenna* became a symbol of total destruction. As we have seen the fires of hell are unquenchable because they cannot be put out by anyone; they will burn until their job is finished. *Gehenna* was burning even as Christ spoke, and it was a fitting description of the destruction of the wicked. The Bible does not



Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem

say that the worm here represents the soul of the person, but is rather that which would devour anything left of the person.

Instead of supporting the immortality of man, when carefully examined, these verses create a dilemma for such supporters. We say this because of what the fire and the worms are consuming. They are not working upon disembodied souls, but the flesh of bodies! Jesus taught that those who are cast into hell will go in bodily form, and these verses confirm that truth. The context (verses 43 and 44) shows that these bodies have hands and feet. In Matthew 5:30, Christ said that “the whole body” would be cast into hell.

Isaiah 66:24 presents the same *gehenna*-like picture of hell, with unquenchable fire and destroying worms, but in this verse the word *carcasses* is used to mean dead bodies, or corpses. This shows that the fire consumes dead bodies, not disembodied souls. Speaking of the LORD’s enemies, Isaiah says “the worm shall eat them like wool” (Isaiah 51:8). This is not a picture of eternal life, but rather of annihilation.

Revelation 20:10 — “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10). Though we have discussed the issue of *for ever*, there are two things we should note here. Firstly, the beast and the false prophet have already been cast into this lake of fire. However, Bible prophecy teaches that the beast and false prophet are not individual people but are, rather, the religious systems of the Roman papacy and of apostate Protestantism. These systems will meet their end at the second coming of Jesus. They will have been totally destroyed, and total destruction is the fate

How repugnant to every emotion of love and mercy, and even to our sense of justice, is the doctrine that the wicked dead are tormented with fire and brimstone in an eternally burning hell; that for the sins of a brief earthly life they are to suffer torture as long as God shall live. (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 535)

of the devil, too. Secondly, just before his destruction, Satan, along with the lost, will try to take the city of God, but we are told that they will be “consumed” (Revelation 20:9 ESV).

And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. (Revelation 20:9)

Luke 16:19–31 — The parable of the rich man and Lazarus has been noted for teaching the immortal soul and eternal hell, but does the story have a point outside of anthropology? According to Judges 9, trees can talk. So we know that not all stories or parables speak of real-life occurrences. The evidence is very clear that the story of the rich man and Lazarus is a parable, designed to teach a spiritual lesson, and is not a story of a real event.

Firstly, when the beggar died, he was taken by angels to Abraham’s bosom. I know of nobody who believes that Abraham’s literal bosom is the abode of the righteous. If it were, how many could fit? It is true that Jesus said the angels would gather the saints, but this happens at the second coming of Jesus (Matthew 24:31), not at death.

Secondly, in the parable, heaven and hell were separated by a “great gulf.” However, despite this wide expanse, the righteous and the wicked communicate back and forth. Who believes this will be literally true?

Thirdly, the rich man was in hell with a body. While most teach that the wicked soul goes to hell upon death, most all agree that the body goes to the grave. Yet in the story, the rich man is seeking relief for his body. This narrative must be a parable with a lesson and not a real story.

Fourthly, the request of the rich man is unrealistic. How much moisture and relief could he receive in such a manner?

The parable does teach an important lesson, however. The rich man represented the Jews. Only a Jew would pray to “father Abraham.” The beggar represented the Gentiles, whom the Jews considered unworthy to receive the truth. The Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:27 acknowledged that her people were beggars at the table of the Jews. Christ may have chosen the name of Lazarus because later he would actually raise a man named Lazarus from the dead. The real point of the parable is found in verse 31: “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” In fact, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, they still did not believe and even plotted to kill both him and Lazarus.



Many believe that Sodom and Gomorrah were located where the Dead Sea is located today.

Dr. R. F. Weymouth (1822–1902) was the Headmaster of the Mill Hill School and a Bible translator of the New Testament in Modern Speech. He said:

My mind fails to conceive a grosser misrepresentation of language than when five or six of the strongest words which the Greek tongue possesses signifying to *destroy* or *destruction*, are explained to mean “maintaining an everlasting but wretched existence.” To translate black as white is nothing to this. (cited in *The Unspeakable Gift*, p. 322; John Hancock Pettingell; emphasis in original)


The Bible speaks of a “second death” that the wicked will suffer (Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8); however, those who have surrendered their lives to Jesus will have eternal life.

Conclusion

Beloved, eternal life is promised to all who love God and who will surrender their lives to him. The majority of the world denies the truth about hell, but the majority on this earth is always wrong in matters of religion (Matthew 7:13, 14).

Knowing the truth about death and hell helps us to see the true merciful and righteous character of God. It is also an important safeguard against spiritualism. When we know the Bible truth about the nature of man in death, we need not be

deceived by Satan or his angels professing to be our deceased loved ones, who have come back to bring us messages from heaven that contradict the word of God.

May we be constrained, by the great love of God in giving his Son to *seek* after immortality and eternal life. 

Letters

The information that you provide is the most comprehensive that I have ever studied concerning God and his only begotten Son, Jesus. I am really blessed because of it. Words cannot express what I feel concerning the truth about God and Jesus. I could no longer stomach the teachings of the churches long ago, so I just left and read then on my own. I get questioned a lot about why I no longer go to church. When I tried to explain that lies are being told in the churches concerning the Bible, people just blew it off as it’s no big deal. For them just going is what matters. My heart still goes out to people in the churches who are believing the lies. It has been a burden for me since my youth, when ministers couldn’t answer my questions about why we weren’t following what the Bible teaches!? Nonetheless, I believe salvation is still available to those that God chooses to save through his Son, Jesus. My words cannot express how much I love God and his Son, Jesus. *Internet*

Dear Sir,

I’ve been reading the book *The Foundation of Our Faith* by Allen Stump.

I have to tell you that I am very overwhelmed by what I discovered concerning the trinitarian belief. I have been in the SDA Church for twelve years now. Even when I was hearing Pastor Stump lecturing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I was not quite sure he was right, though I was his interpreter, but after reading the book, together with the Bible, I came to the conclusion that trinity is a satanic concept.

Now I don’t know what to do because I stopped even going to SDA church, but I want to share this light with others.

I thank you very much.

Gilbert

New Online Session for the Waldensian Center

Pastor David Sims has asked us to announce that the Waldensian Center will be starting its next online session January 22, 2012. Please check the website for details www.waldensiancenter.org or call 530–294–1115.

The Church, Part 3

Health and nutrition education have made great strides over the last two decades in the public sector; however, there are still many misunderstandings. Today few would claim that a Big Mac® (a large hamburger sandwich) is healthy. With 52 percent of its 590 calories coming from fat and with its 1,070 mg of sodium, its 85 mg of cholesterol, and its few vitamins or minerals, a Big Mac® is a very unhealthy food. In an effort to eat better, some people have turned to the salad bar; however, in many cases, just a little lettuce and raw vegetables are placed upon the plate. These are then covered with a heaping supply of grated cheese and high calorie nuts and seeds and then topped with dressing. Americans think that they are eating a salad but are really eating something that is nutritionally comparable to a Big Mac®.

In the spiritual realm, people think that they are attending church, when in reality, many times they are visiting pagan temples that look like assemblies of believers. As we have seen in earlier parts of this study, the Greek word for church, *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία), means the called-out ones, those who are called out from the world.

According to Jesus the church is founded upon him and upon the truth that he is the Son of God (Matthew 16:13–18). Ellen White noted, concerning the confession of Peter that Jesus was the Son of God:

The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer's faith. (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 412)

Peter had expressed the truth which is the foundation of the church's faith. . . . (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 413)

The church belongs to God and Christ (Romans 16:16; Acts 20:28); therefore, it never belongs to any man, state, or group. Because it belongs to none of these, it can never be run, controlled, or directed by any man, state, or group.

Furthermore, we have seen that the church is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Timothy 3:15). Truth is to be obeyed, and the true church that belongs to God and Christ is an obedient church. We have been told:

All society is ranging into two great classes, the obedient and the disobedient. Among which class shall we be found? (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 296)

Notice that there are just two groups. True, we can think of many different groups—Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox (Eastern, Russian, Greek, etc.), and many non-Christian groups (such as Hindus, Buddhists, and others)—but, in reality, there are two groups—“the obedient and the disobedient.” We might class them as the saved and the lost. They will all either receive the seal of God or the mark of the beast. Ellen White continues

Those who keep God's commandments, those who live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, compose the church of the living God.

Those who choose to follow Antichrist are subjects of the great apostate. Ranged under the banner of Satan, they break God's law, and lead others to break it. They endeavor so to frame the laws of nations that men shall show their loyalty to earthly governments by trampling upon the laws of God's kingdom. (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 296)

Here we find another definition of God's church. In an earlier study we read on page 315 in the book *The Upward Look* that God's church “is the people who love God and keep His commandments.” In *Manuscript Releases* we see that the church is those “who keep God's commandments.” Those who do not “are subjects of the great apostate,” Satan. To call him an apostate means that he was once in the truth but left the truth (John 8:44).

Everyone belongs to either one church or the other, even if they do not realize it. We are either a member of the Church of Christ or a member of the Synagogue of Satan.

An important principle that we noted earlier was the principle of understanding the testimonies in reference to time and place (*Selected Messages*, book 1, page 57). When studying the testimonies, the time and circumstances that surround the testimonies must be considered; in other words, its full context must be considered. We noted last month different sets of statements concerning the General Conference being the voice of God and whether or not the *church* was or could become Babylon.

We also need to understand the meaning of words used. For example the word *law* can mean the Ten Commandments, the ceremonial law, the Pentateuch, or even all the writings of the prophets.

The word *church*, as we have seen, has at least nine different meanings, and we use many of those meanings when we use the word *church*. Ellen White used the word *church* in a variety of ways, also. It is, therefore, important to understand the context of what we are reading.

The Jewish Economy

The Jewish people became the first visible church, or called-out group. We are told “the observance of the Passover began with the birth of the Hebrew nation” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 75). Perhaps it would be well to ask the question: Does physical birth equal spiritual birth? In other words, does our birth—where we are born, who our parents are, and other such issues of the flesh—have a determining factor upon our spiritual status? Jesus told Nicodemus, “ye [plural] must be born again” (John 3:7). Nicodemus had been physically born of Jewish blood and was a leader of the Jewish church, but this was not enough to see the kingdom of God. What is important is spiritual birth.

To understand more of this, let us examine the story of Jacob and Esau:

And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray

thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright. (Genesis 25:29–34)

This was not the way that God intended Jacob to receive the birthright blessing. If Jacob had been patient, he would have received the birthright, for it “was his already by God’s promise” (*Education*, p. 138).

God had declared that Jacob should receive the birthright, and His word would have been fulfilled in His own time had they waited in faith for Him to work for them. (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 180)

Jacob understood that the birthright had great significance, and he desired it. The birthright blessing was a three-fold blessing. The firstborn would receive a double portion of the inheritance, would be the spiritual leader, and would be the ruler of the family. Reuben was Jacob’s firstborn, but because of his sin with his father’s handmaid, he was rejected.

Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph’s. (1 Chronicles 5:1, 2)

Joseph received the double portion which went to his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh; the leadership went to Judah, and the spiritual blessing, or priesthood, to Levi. By birth these blessings were designed to be Reuben’s, but because he did not live an obedient life, worthy of representing God, Reuben could not claim them.

Another interesting example of being born into Israel but not being recognized as worthy of the blessing is found in the sons of Eli. Eli was the high priest, and his sons were priests, but God called them “sons of Belial” (1 Samuel 2:12). Belial meant unworthy, wicked, and evil. It was the equivalent to being a son of the devil. God called the wicked sons of Eli sons of Belial because family heritage is not what matters in God’s eyes; character is what is important.

In the New Testament we find the Apostle Paul addressing this issue and clarifying that the important standing we have with God is derived from our faith in and obedience to God and not from a line of genealogy. Writing in Romans he states:

Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children:

but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. (Romans 9:6–8)

Paul says that not all literal Israel are counted of God as being of Israel:

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. (Romans 2:28, 29)

Again Paul makes a difference between those who are simply born into Israel and those who have faith. Even though they are uncircumcised in the flesh, he says that they have the circumcision of the heart.

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. (Galatians 3:6)

And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29)

Paul is teaching that if we believe like Abraham, regardless of who we are, we can be heirs according to the promise given to those who believe.

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. (Galatians 6:16)

If you are walking in the faith, you are a part of the Israel of God. This was certainly present truth for these people, for the Jews believed that everything revolved around who they were and how they were born.

And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29)

John the Baptist was a preacher who would prepare the minds and hearts of the people to receive the Messiah. Let us notice part of the message that he shared:

And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. (Matthew 3:9)

These words cut and cut hard. John warns the people, however, to not think their position with God is secure simply because they are born from the physical seed of Abraham. Jesus continued where the Baptist left off:

I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with *your father*. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, *If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abra-*

ham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. (John 8:37–40)

Notice that when Jesus spoke of their father, the Jews were quick to respond that Abraham was their father. They clearly perceived that Jesus was implying that Abraham was not their father. They retorted back that Abraham was their father, but Jesus said that if Abraham were their father, they would do the works of Abraham. The Jews were seeking to kill Jesus, something Abraham would never have done! Jesus continued:

Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. *Ye are of your father the devil*, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (John 8:41–44)

This cut deeply, for it cut into the very fabric of their being as a people and as a nation. Ellen White gives us a view into the mindset of those Jewish people:

The Jewish people cherished the idea that they were the favorites of heaven, and that they were always to be exalted as the church of God. They were the children of Abraham, they declared, and so firm did the foundation of their prosperity seem to them that they defied earth and heaven to dispossess them of their rights. But by lives of unfaithfulness they were preparing for the condemnation of heaven and for separation from God. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 294)

“And now also,” said the prophet, “the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” Not by its name, but by its fruit, is the value of a tree determined. If the fruit is worthless, the name cannot save the tree from destruction. *John declared to the Jews that their standing before God was to be decided by their character and life. Profession was worthless. If their life and character were not in harmony with God's law, they were not His people.* (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 107)

Beloved, it does not matter what sign or placard we put above a building or what name we give it. If the character of Jesus is not reflected there, it is not God's church! Character is what matters. Jesus “made himself of no reputation” (Philippians 2:7).

The Pharisees had declared themselves the children of Abraham. Jesus told them that *this claim could be established only by doing the works of Abraham*. The true children of Abraham would live, as he did, a life of obedi-

ence to God. They would not try to kill One who was speaking the truth that was given Him from God. In plotting against Christ, the rabbis were not doing the works of Abraham. *A mere lineal descent from Abraham was of no value. Without a spiritual connection with him, which would be manifested in possessing the same spirit, and doing the same works, they were not his children.* (*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 466, 467)

The professed church does not necessarily equal the true church. If you had lived in Germany in the last century and had listened to Adolf Hitler, you would have heard pleasing words, words that were welcome. Most of those people believed that he was building a Third Reich, a utopia, but in reality, he brought Germany to devastation. He deceived the people of Germany.

There is no record of Hitler pulling the levers that gassed the Jews, nor is there any record of him leading the troops into battle. These things were done by others who had learned to do what they had been told, despite burning consciences that something was terribly wrong. Today we wonder why the people did not think for themselves and make reasonable judgments.

We have spiritual church leaders who teach the church members to obey the commandments of men, but, beloved, we need church members who think for themselves and not merely reflect the thoughts of others.

Two Women

The book of Revelation presents two women that we need to consider, as we study the issue of the church. The first is found in Revelation 12:1: “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” In Jeremiah 6:2, we are told that this gentle woman is to what God compares Zion: “I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman.” Furthermore, Zion is said to be his people: “And I ... say unto Zion, Thou art my people” (Isaiah 51:16). In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul calls the church a “chaste virgin.” So we can see that God uses a pure woman to represent his true church.

The second woman we wish to consider is found in Revelation 17:1, and she is a “great whore that sitteth upon many waters.” The waters, according to verse 15, represent many people, so this whore represents an impure church that is over many people. Verse 2 tells us that she has “committed fornication [‘with the Kings of the earth’], and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” She has relations with nations (verse 2), she is rich in the things of the world (verse 4), her name is Babylon and she is the mother of harlots (verse 5), and she is a persecuting church which sheds the blood of saints and martyrs (verse 6). This harlot is the papacy, the antichrist. We find her to be against all that is Christian.

In the place of the Word of God, she offers tradition. In the place of the truth about God, she offers the trinity. She

replaces the one sacrifice of Christ with the mass. Instead of baptism by immersion, she has baptism by sprinkling. In the place of the Sabbath, she has Sunday. In the place of death, she has the immortal soul. Instead of being separate from the state, she is in league with the state and even controls the state. In the place of the seal of God, she gives the mark of the beast! Any church that participates in these errors cannot be God's church; instead, it becomes a part of Babylon.

Now let us make a point perfectly clear. Both of these women do not belong to Jesus! Jesus said:

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be *one* fold, and *one* shepherd. (John 10:14–16)

The Greek word translated *one* in verse 16 is a form of *eis* (εἷς) which is “one in contrast to more than one” (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*). Remember, we saw a little earlier that there are just two groups—the obedient and the disobedient. We are either a part of God's church, or we are not. There are people in the valley of decision today, but they are being polarized, and in the end, we will all be in one of two groups.

God's Faithful Church

God has a faithful people who, according to Revelation 12:6 and 14, went into the wilderness for 1,260 years. This time period usually is listed as AD 538–1798. In order to have been able to flee in AD 538, she had to have already been in existence. While the true church fled into the wilderness, something visible took its place that claimed to be the true church. Prior to 538, Satan used Imperial Rome to try to destroy the true people of God, but now the harlot, professing to be the true church, is the focus in the prophecy of Revelation as the power that has been and will continue to be a persecutor of God's people in an attempt to destroy them. In the last days this harlot is aided by the image of the beast (see Revelation 13:11–18) in an attempt to destroy the people of God.

This harlot is in opposition to the true church. The true church was to come out of hiding after 1798 and come up in an unpopulated area, giving the three angels' messages, including:

- The everlasting gospel
- The Sabbath and creation
- The hour of God's judgment
- The mark of the beast crisis

Another important characteristic of this church is that it has the testimony of Jesus which, according to Revelation 12:17 and 19:10, is the spirit of prophecy. However, the testimony of Jesus is more than a *spirit* of prophecy—it is the gift of *prophecy* itself.

And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets. (Revelation 22:8, 9)

The 144,000

Connected to the giving of the three angel's messages is a group the Bible calls the 144,000. This group teaches pure doctrine, for Revelation 14:5 states: “And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” The 144,000 also have the Father's name in their foreheads:

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. (Revelation 14:1)

The 144,000 are sealed in their forehead (Revelation 7:3, 4), and they serve God in his temple: “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them” (Revelation 7:15). To this we add Ellen White's statement from *Early Writings*:

And as we were about to enter the holy temple, Jesus raised His lovely voice and said, “Only the 144,000 enter this place,” and we shouted, “Alleluia.” (p. 18)

The Synagogue of Satan or the Church of Philadelphia

There are two groups we wish to consider now that are set in contrast to each other. One is called the synagogue of Satan and the other the church of Philadelphia.

The synagogue of Satan is described in the Spirit of Prophecy as those who are under the control of Satan and are children of disobedience:

Christ speaks of the church over which Satan presides as the synagogue of Satan. Its members are the children of disobedience. *They are those who choose to sin, who labor to make void the holy law of God.* It is Satan's work to mingle evil with good, and to remove the distinction between good and evil. Christ would have a church that labors to separate the evil from the good, whose members will not willingly tolerate wrong-doing, but will expel it from the heart and life. (*The Review and Herald*, December 4, 1900)

The synagogue of Satan is composed of those who do not believe in the possibility of overcoming all sin—who believe that Jesus came to this earth in a manner that gave him a great advantage over us so that he could overcome but we cannot.

In the above statement we also see, however, that the church of Jesus will labor to separate evil from good, and its “members will not willingly tolerate wrong-doing, but will expel it from the heart and life.”

The Bible teaches that there will be a time when the synagogue of Satan will worship at the feet of the saints. Speaking

to the church at Philadelphia, Jesus says: “Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee” (Revelation 3:9). Just like the Jewish rulers in the time of Jesus (John 8:44), this group has Satan as their father and ruler. Who compose the synagogue of Satan and when is this application of them fulfilled? Let us answer these questions by beginning with a statement of Ellen White that was published in 1847 in the pamphlet *A Word to the Little Flock*. Ellen White was writing in response to some statements by a Brother Eli Curtis. She stated:



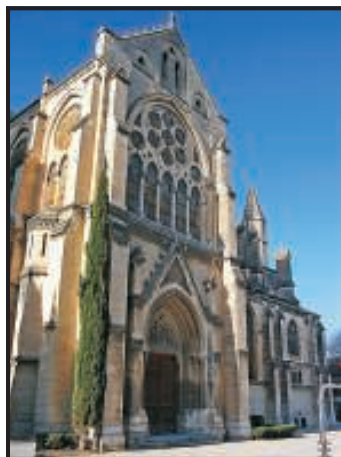
Is this a healthy meal?

You think, that those who worship before the saint’s feet, (Revelation 3:9), will at last be saved. Here I must differ with you; for God shew me that this class were professed *Adventists*, who had fallen away, and “crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” And in the “hour of temptation,” which is yet to come, to show out every one’s true character, they will know that they are forever lost; and overwhelmed with anguish of spirit, they will bow at the saint’s feet. (*A Word to the Little Flock*, p. 12; a response to Eli Curtis)

Let us notice, from this statement, some important points about the synagogue of Satan. We know she is speaking of this group, for she writes of those “who worship before the saint’s feet” and makes a specific reference to Revelation 3:9. Ellen White says that God revealed to her that they were professed Adventists who had fallen away. Notice she does not say first-day Adventists or even nominal Adventists, as in other places. These are people who once knew the truth, for they are, at the time within the prophecy, fallen away.

Furthermore, Ellen White speaks of their worshipping at the feet of the saints at a time in the future—during “‘the hour of temptation’ which is yet [future] to come.” These people will know that they are “forever lost.” This can only come after the close of probation. The truth is that nobody outside of Adventism has a proper understanding of the close of probation and how it will relate to the seven last plagues. Later in *A Word to the Little Flock*, we read:

By this time the 144,000 were all sealed



Is this a church?

and perfectly united. *On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious Star containing Jesus’ new name.* [Revelation 3:12.] At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us in prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and the wicked would fall helpless to the ground. *Then it was that the synagogue of Satan knew that God had loved us who could wash one another’s feet, and salute the holy brethren with a holy kiss, and they worshipped at our feet.* (*A Word to the Little Flock*, pp. 14, 15)

Here Ellen White connects the 144,000 with those who have God’s name written in their foreheads and with those whom the ones the synagogue of Satan bow to and worship.

Today the usual teaching on the church of Philadelphia declares that it represents Christians from a time period of about 1833 to 1844, followed by the church of Laodicea, lasting from 1844 until the coming of Jesus; however, the early Adventists did not see it as such. They believed that they were a part of the Philadelphian group and believed Laodicea to be fallen. For example, in commenting upon Zechariah 13:8, Joseph Bates wrote:

First part, SARDIS, the nominal church or Babylon. Second part, Laodicea, the nominal Adventist. Third part, Philadelphia, the only true church of God on earth, for they ask to be translated to the city of God. Rev.iii,12; Heb.xii,22–24. In the name of Jesus, I exhort you again to flee from the Laodiceans, as from Sodom and Gomorrah. Their teachings are false and delusive; and lead to utter destruction. Death! DEATH!! eternal DEATH!!! is on their track. Remember Lot’s wife. JOSEPH BATES. Fairhaven, Mass., Nov. 10, 1850. (*The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 1850)

Writing in 1846, Ellen White noted that in vision she had seen the synagogue of Satan worshipping at the feet of the saints for “a number of days” and sets the context of the synagogue of Satan worshipping at the feet of the saints as something that happens after the close of probation and shortly before Jesus comes:

And I saw a flaming cloud come where Jesus’ stood. Then Jesus laid off his priestly garment and put on his Kingly robe, and took his place on the cloud which carried him to the East, where it first appeared to the saints on earth—a small black cloud which was the sign of the Son of Man. While the cloud was passing from the Holiest to the East, which took a number of days, the synagogue of Satan worshipped at the saint’s feet. (*Broadside 1*, April 6, 1846)

The Shaking

In connection to the issue of the synagogue of Satan, we must study the *shaking*, for they are connected. Ellen White, writing in *A Word to the Little Flock*, notes:

Continued on page 16



"They do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." (1 Corinthians 9:25)

Daniel did not act rashly. He knew that by the time he was called to appear before the king, the advantage of healthful living would be apparent. Cause would be followed by effect. Daniel said to Melzar, who had been given charge of him and his companions: "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat and water to drink." Daniel knew that ten days would be time enough to prove the benefit of abstemiousness. (*The Youth's Instructor*, September 6, 1900)



Refrain from unhealthy food and from eating between meals.

Abstem

As our first parents were expelled from Eden, the regaining of Eden is through the exercise of self-control and passion. Abstemiousness, the conquering of the passions, will preserve the mind and have mental and moral vigor. The passions are the propensities under the control of the will, and to retain clearness of intellect and to distinguish between right and wrong, between sacred and profane, is the controlling power. The passions are the ruin of thousands, when, at a critical point, they would have no other temptation. The appetite will fail in perfect abstinence.

(The Health)

The Monarch of the universe and the spectators of this race; they are anxious to be successful overcomers and win the crown of life. God and heavenly Father are interested in the self-sacrifice, and the agonizing efforts of the Christian race. The reward given to every persevering energy and faithful earnestness in the great contest. (*Testimonies for the Church*)

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Reformer, August 1, 1875)

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the Church, vol. 4, p. 34)



"I therefore so run . . . I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27)

The apostle desired to arouse his Corinthian brethren to see the danger that menaced them through self-gratification, he therefore dwelt on the rigid discipline and abstemiousness necessary to develop soundness, vigor, and endurance in the competitors in the games. He drew a contrast between this preparation and its consequences, and the self-indulgent life of the Corinthian Christians, who had matters of eternal interest at stake, and needed the fullest strength of body and mind in order to come off victorious. (*Sketches from the Life of Paul*, pp. 166-7)



Abstain from alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and caffeine-like products.

From Patmos, Messages for Seven Churches



Philadelphia—All About Jesus, Part 1

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Revelation 3:7–13)

Volcanoes and Earthquakes

Not much remains today of ancient Philadelphia. The city was situated near a group of active volcanoes, now extinct, and earthquakes occurred frequently in the area. In AD 17 an unusually severe earthquake destroyed much of Philadelphia (and Sardis also, twenty-eight miles away), and frequent aftershocks were experienced long afterwards, so much so that “many inhabitants remained outside the city living in huts and booths over the vale and those who were foolhardy

enough (as the sober-minded thought) to remain in the city, practiced various devices to support and strengthen the walls and houses against the recurring shocks. The memory of this disaster lived long; the very name Catacecaumene [the ‘burnt land,’ the name given by them to the volcanic district]

was a perpetual warning. People lived amid ever threatening danger, in dread always of a new disaster, and the habit of going out to the open country had probably not disappeared when the seven letters were written” (W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 291). Writing within a few years of this great earthquake, Strabo, the ancient historian, wrote that the walls of Philadelphia were “daily shaken and split in some degree” and in another passage said “the

walls never cease being cracked, and different parts of the city are constantly suffering damage. That is why the actual



Amphitheater at Philadelphia



The Temple of Hercules at Philadelphia, with an elbow on the right and fingers on the left

town has few inhabitants, but the majority live as farmers in the countryside, as they have fertile land. But one is surprised even at the few, that they are so fond of the place when they have such insecure dwellings. And one would be even more amazed at those who founded it” (both statements from Strabo taken from Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, p. 156). “Philadelphia, probably closer to the epicenter, suffered many lesser tremors, perhaps for years afterwards. After an earthquake people seek protection in the open air. In Philadelphia this had become almost a way of life . . . The city was probably slow to recover, and its fears may have been renewed by later shocks in the area, notably that which destroyed Laodicea in AD 60” (*Ibid.*, p. 157).

Strategic Placement

Ancient Philadelphia is sometimes called the *Gateway to the East*. It lay on a gentle hill at the upper end of a long valley which opens from the sea. Mount Tmolus bordered it on the left, and on the right the valley rose up to the main plateau, 3,000 feet above sea level. It is not easy to climb from the valley to the top of the hills which rim the plateau; however, this is how trade and communication were maintained anciently between the harbor of Smyrna and the land to the east. It was an important road, “rivaling even the great trade route from Ephesus to the east” (Ramsay, p. 289). The imperial post road also passed through Philadelphia, carrying communication from Rome to outlying areas. So, we see, Philadelphia was valuable not only as a stage city in the movement of commerce, but also as a stopover city in the great movement of communication between Rome and the empire.

Archeological Finds

Not many sites from ancient Philadelphia have been excavated because the current city of Alasehir sits over the old city. We have, however, uncovered an amphitheater (of course!) and underground passageways of the amphitheater, a smaller theater, and a temple to Hercules. Ruins of a later-date Byzantine church have also been unearthed, but outside of these structures, we have little of archeological significance for the city life except for the considerable amount of coins minted in Philadelphia. On them are depicted an alliance between Philadelphia and Ephesus, a temple of a sun god, and a horse race in honor of Asklepios, the god of healing.

Names of the City

Another feature of Philadelphia we should address in this introduction is the names the city has used over time. The original name of Philadelphia comes from Attalus Philadelphus, perhaps the founder of the city, and was chosen because of the brotherly love and loyalty that existed between Attalus and his brother, Eumenes II, who was king of the city. Around 172 BC a false rumor reached Attalus that Eumenes II had been assassinated, so Attalus accepted kingship of the city. Eumenes II, however, later returned to town,

and on learning that he had been usurped, he freely forgave his brother, and Attalus then resumed his secondary position. In 168 BC Attalus went to Rome to defend his brother who was under suspicion of corresponding with the enemy, and there Attalus was pressured to supplant his brother, with Roman help, and he almost succumbed. He finally, and ever after (though continually pressured) refused Roman efforts to turn him against his brother. Attalus succeeded Eumenes II as king upon his death, and the city was called by Attalus’s name until after the great earthquake of AD 17, when it assumed an imperial name.

After the earthquake, the city became a new city with a new name. It had to be rebuilt, and Rome helped to accomplish this by remitting the city, for a few years, of its required tribute. The people expressed their gratitude for this relief by taking the name *Neocaesarea* for its city:

It was probably in commemoration of the kindness shown by the emperor on this occasion that Philadelphia assumed the name Neocaesarea: the new Caesar was either Tiberius (as compared with Augustus) or Germanicus (as compared with Tiberius). The name Neocaesarea is known both from coins and epigraphy during the ensuing period. At first the old name was disused and the new name employed alone; then the old name recurred alongside of or alternately with the new, and finally about AD 42–50 the new name disappeared from use. Philadelphia was the only one of the seven cities that had voluntarily substituted a new name for its original name . . .

Subsequently, during the reign of Vespasian (AD 69–79), Philadelphia assumed another imperial title and called itself Flavia, and the double name remained in use occasionally on coins throughout the second and third centuries.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 291, 291)

We see that Philadelphia has had three names—Philadelphia, Neocaesarea, and Flavia—and, interestingly, the message to the angel of the church at Philadelphia contains a reference to three names also—the name of the Father, the name of the city of the Father, and the new name of Jesus.

Next month we will discuss the message of Jesus to the angel of the church of Philadelphia in more depth, but for now let us review a few connections we can make from history to the message itself.

First of all, we know Philadelphia was prone to earthquakes, so much so that after the devastating one of 17, many of the residents chose to go out of the city and live in the country. The promise to the overcomer, however, is that “he shall go no more out,” a promise that was probably especially appealing to the Philadelphians. Secondly, are the references in the message to names—more so than in any other message—and lastly is the history behind the name *Philadelphia* itself—a name that has come to stand for steadfastness, love, and loyalty in spite of pressure from Rome to betray such faithfulness.

Ornycha Holt

“The Church,” part 3, continued from page 11

The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth, and to sacrifice for God and His cause. (*A Word to the Little Flock*, p. 31)

Remember that this was written in 1847. The shaking had already begun at that time. Ellen White speaks of some who are shaken out. But now we must know from what are they shaken out? Could she have been speaking of a church denomination at that time? No, for the denomination would not form for another sixteen years (in 1863). The shaking was already in progress before that. The context of her statement says that the unfaithful are shaken out of the “truth.”

In 1858, still five years before a denomination, she wrote:

I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen. I was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the true Witness to the Laodiceans. It will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver of the testimony, and it will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. This straight testimony some will not bear. They will rise up against it, and this will cause a shaking among God’s people. (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, pp. 184, 185)

It is the rising up against the straight testimony that causes the shaking. She also notes that by 1858 some had already been shaken out, thus confirming that she was not speaking of a church denomination:

The numbers of this company [the faithful] had lessened. Some had been shaken out, and left by the way. The careless and indifferent who did not join with those who prized victory and salvation enough to agonize, persevere, and plead for it, did not obtain it, and they were left behind in darkness, and their numbers were immediately made up by others taking hold of the truth, and coming into the ranks. Still the evil angels pressed around them, but they could have no power over them. (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 186; written in 1858)

Here we see that those who will be shaken out are those who will not prize victory over sin and salvation enough to agonize and persevere for it. They will be shaken out of the truth and left in darkness. Qualification for the succession of the faith is not dependant upon genealogy or upon church membership but, rather, upon faith that works by love and that purifies the soul.

Leaving Babylon

When people today warn you against being shaken out of the church, they usually mean the denomination; however, the testimonies are speaking about truth.

Today there is a denomination that brags that it is Laodicea, and since they claim that there is no eighth church, they feel secure that they cannot be taken from their place. As we shall see in the next section of this study, however,

Laodicea is the last church mentioned, but is not the last church to stand!

Writing in 1882, Ellen White noted that it is not a church denomination for which we are to stand in defense but, rather, the truth:

Already the judgments of God are abroad in the land, as seen in storms, in floods, in tempests, in earthquakes, in peril by land and by sea. The great I AM is speaking to those who make void His law. When God’s wrath is poured out upon the earth, who will then be able to stand? Now is the time for God’s people to show themselves true to principle. When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. *To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test.* At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 136)

The majority will be shaken out and will leave those following the truth. We are told that these people commit treason. Of all crimes, every nation considers treason the worst crime. As terrible as murder, child abuse, and rape are, treason is worse. Other crimes, though terrible, afflict only a comparatively few in number, but treason has the potential to affect the entire nation and put every person in that nation in a state of jeopardy! How dare we commit treason against the God and government of heaven?!

Beloved, we must be the spiritual children of Abraham and know God as our Father, having his character and name written in our foreheads. A most serious call to come out of Babylon is found in Revelation 18:4: “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” Coming out of Babylon is more than shifting our position, such as the day on which we worship, or our location of worship, it is coming out of the realm of disobedience and moving to the realm of obedience, and the only way we can do that is to have the faith of Abraham.

If we fail to come out of Babylon, we will finally be a partaker of her sins and receive of her plagues. Christ has people today who are in Babylon who will take the place of those now among his people who are or who will be shaken out of the truth. May we be covered with the righteousness of Christ “which is pure, unadulterated truth” (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel workers*, p. 65).

Allen Stump

The Apostle of Love

By M. L. Andreasen

(M. L. Andreasen is considered by many to have been the greatest theologian the Seventh-day Adventist Church has ever had. He was the loudest voice of dissent, and one of the first, when Questions on Doctrine was published in 1957. Not only was Elder Andreasen an excellent theologian, he was an able administrator, an educator, and an wonderful writer, as can be seen in this classic. Editor)

John was and is the apostle of love. That is his great theme. And rightly so, for God Himself is a God of love. He not merely loves—He is love. So let us find out from John himself what his conception of love is.

We ask: “John, just what is love?”

He answers: “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” 1 John 5:3.

“Why, John, we have been taught that that is a grievous and hard thing to do.”

“No, ‘His commandments are not grievous.’” Verse 3.

“We are perplexed, John, at this answer. You say that if we love God, we will keep His commandments. Now, we are not heathen; we are Christians. We know God. We love God, but we do not keep His commandments.”

“He that said, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 2:4.

“Why, John, this is almost worse than what James and Paul say. Do you really mean that if we love God, we must keep His commandments?”

“This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” “He that said he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.” 1 John 5:3; 2:6.

“How did Christ walk? Did He keep the commandments?”

“Yes. Christ says: ‘I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.’” John 15:10.

“Is it not enough to love God and the children of God, without having to keep the law?”

“There is no way that we can know that we love God or the children of God without keeping the commandments. ‘We know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments.’” 1 John 5:2.

“If we have God and the Spirit dwelling in the heart, do we need to keep the commandments?”

“God has promised to dwell in the heart of the man who keeps the law. ‘He that keeps His commandments dwells in Him, and He in him.’” 1 John 3:24.

“Are we then to understand that if we profess to love God, we must keep the commandments?”

“Yes, there is no other way. Christ Himself says: ‘If you love Me, keep My commandments.’” John 14:15.

These texts bring vividly to mind the fact that the love of God and the commandments of God are closely united. They do not give the least hint that the commandments have been repealed. John, the apostle of love, is also the apostle of the law. When John says that “this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments,” and that “he that said, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him,” there does not seem to be much to say in reply. 1 John 5:3; 2:4. If a man should say this to us, we might

be offended, for the words are very plain and do not admit of more than one meaning. But when God speaks, we keep silent. We admit our shortcomings and ask God for forgiveness and for strength to do what we ought. This is true Christianity.

So far we have not found anything in the New Testament that would give us the idea that we might play fast and loose with God’s law. On the contrary, we have found that the test of our love for God is our attitude toward the law. If we love God, we will keep the commandments.

This, of course, is as it should be. The law is an expression of God’s will. It defines sin and warns against it. For this we should be thankful. We would not have known sin, but through the law. We would not have known that it is sin to covet, any more

than did Paul, “except the law had said, Thou shall not covet.” Romans 7:7. As we should be thankful to a faithful guide who points out to us the danger of the way, so we should be thankful to the law for its insistence on righteousness and holy living. It is to be seriously doubted that one who does not love the law loves the Lord. He may be in ignorance, but when light comes, the man who loves God gladly accepts the law as his rule of life. (M. L. Andreasen, *A Faith to Live By*, pp. 206–208)



M. L. Andreasen

Youth's Corner

Missionaries on the Road to the Borderlands

Our story this month is about Beh Chin-chien and Tseng Hsiang-pu and their experiences in the borderlands of China. Brothers Beh and Tseng were Seventh-day Adventist colporteurs, and they volunteered to go into an isolated area in northwest China, along the Gobi Desert and the Mongolian grasslands, where no Seventh-day Adventist had yet gone. Very few people in this area had ever heard of Jesus. Brother Beh was young and eager to go on this adventure, with the older and more experienced Brother Tseng, but some of the leaders were fearful he did not fully comprehend the difficulties and dangers he was sure to face on China's frontiers, even though he had shown himself to be a good and sincere colporteur. Finally one of his fellow workers spoke up at a meeting in Hankow, and as the leaders listened, they changed their minds: "I was with him when he tried to sell our literature to a shop owner who heatedly and angrily cursed first him, then his parents, then his grandparents, and then his great grandparents! When he stopped for a moment to breathe, Brother Beh smiled and asked him if there was anyone else he wanted to curse, for he understood just how he felt. He said he used to feel the same way toward anyone who was a Christian, but he was different now, and he wanted him to be different, too. When the angry shopkeeper heard that, his heart softened, and he bought a subscription to the *Signs of the Times* and continued his subscription over the years because he wanted to change, too!"

For the first part of their journey, the two brothers rode a train from Hankow to the end of the track in Lingpao. Now Beh and Tseng had to walk to the next town, Sian, and from Sian, they walked to Pingliang. In these remote areas of China, self-appointed men took over the control of each village and town, something like small warlords would do, and when Beh and Tseng reached Pingliang, they found out the chieftain (a former bandit) would not let anyone pass through his city unless he knew who they were, where they were going, and why they were going there. In the 1930s, China was not a united whole, and these isolated places ruled themselves. If you did not please the ruler, you just might be put in prison, and your life could even be in danger. Two soldiers were sent to investigate Beh and Tseng, who told the soldiers they were missionaries for Jesus and only wanted to travel through Pingliang because they were on their way to the Sinkiang in order to share the gospel of Jesus.

"No you are not! You are spies! You are here on a political mission!" shouted the soldiers.

"We are only missionaries for Jesus," they answered.

The soldiers went back to their commander. "They say they are just missionaries and that they do not have any other reason for entering Pingliang."

The leader said, "You return to them and check everything they have." By this time the missionaries were asleep, but the soldiers woke them up and went through their belongings. They did not find anything unusual. They went back to the commander and reported that the men had nothing but books and literature with them and that they could find nothing wrong.

The commander said, "Bring them in. I want to see them." So the soldiers did just that, and when they arrived, the ruler demanded of the missionaries, "Why are you here?"

They replied that they just wanted to pass through his city on their way to Sinkiang, far away on the out reaches of China, where they wanted to share the gospel of Jesus. "We don't have any other reason for passing through your city. We just want to share what Jesus has done in our lives and what he can do for you, also."

Then the ruler said, "I don't understand this at all—someone who wants to go so far away just to share books and magazines? But I respect you for what you are doing, and here is \$100 to help with the hardships you are sure to face on the way."

The two missionaries were astounded, but said, "We can't take this money for our trip, but we can give you some literature for it!" And they sent an order to the Adventist publishing house in Shanghai for ten Chinese Bibles so that the chieftain could share them with his men and for other materials, as well! And with the profit from their sale, Beh and Tseng decided to hire a carter, a man with his own cart and a donkey to pull it, to haul them through the next two towns and then over Six Plate Mountain. Now they would not have to walk as they made their way north.

Brother Beh and Brother Tseng said to the carter, "Oh, by the way, when we get to the Peace Rest Day (which is how the word *Sabbath* was literally translated in Chinese), we will not be traveling. We will have to stop, for this is our Peace Rest Day."

Well, when the carter heard that, he said "No, no. I am not taking you. You don't stop on a trip and just rest. You will have to find another carter."

The missionaries hired another one, but he said the same thing—"What is this? It's crazy. You do not stop in the middle of a trip and waste a whole day! Find someone else; I will not take you!"

By this time Brother Beh and Brother Tseng thought, *We are not going to tell the next carter we are going to stop.* They loaded their things in the cart and tied them down. Then they hopped in, but before they took off, they said, "Oh, by the way (this was on a Friday), tomorrow is our Peace Rest Day, and we won't be traveling. We must stop this cart."

"What?! Get off of my cart! Nobody stops in the middle of a trip!" The carter then got up in the cart, untied their

belongings, and angrily rolled them into the dust of the road. Then he cracked his whip and left Brother Beh and Brother Tseng standing by the roadside with their dusty baggage. The colporteurs now realized that if they were ever going to make it out of Pingliang, they would have to do so by foot. So, they picked up their bags, shouldered them, and off they walked, north, out of Pingliang for the next town. It took them all afternoon to get there, and since the Sabbath was coming on, they stayed there. They did not know anyone in town, but they rested on God's Peace Rest Day.

Sunday morning they again shouldered their belongings and started walking. Between this town and the next was big Six Plate Mountain, which was the reason they wanted to travel by cart, but up the mountain they cheerfully hiked. When they crested the mountain, they met, coming up the other side of the mountain, a column of military men who were escorting several captured bandits to Pingliang. The military leader asked Beh and Tseng, "What are you doing out here?"

"We are on our way to Lanchow."

"Well, it is a good thing you are traveling today. If you had come over the mountain yesterday, you would have met these bandits. They would have robbed you and might have even killed you."

So Brother Beh and Brother Tseng were very happy they had rested on the Sabbath day. Then the military commander said, "If you hurry down the mountain, you will meet a carter. He has been robbed and his cart is empty. You may be able to get a ride with him."

"Okay, we will do that." And down the mountain they went as fast as they could, and, sure enough, they overtook the carter with his empty cart. And do you know which carter it was? It was the one who had cracked the whip and left them in the dust by the side of the road!

But this time he said, "Yes, you may ride with me, and I will rest with you on any Peace Rest Day you say!"

Brother Beh and Brother Tseng finally arrived in Lanchow. It had taken, from when they had first started on their journey, a long time to reach this city, and they spent a few weeks in it, selling their literature and subscriptions to *The Signs of the Times* magazine. Then it was time to turn west and make the long trip to the city of Sinkiang and then to Kasgar in Chinese Turkestan. To get there they had to travel through two Mohammedan cities and through Kansu, the Jade Gate, and the city of Anhsichow. It was at Anhsichow that our missionaries met the impossible. They could not

travel through Monkey Pass in the mountains of this city, for the pass was held by a Mohammedan warlord, General Ma Chung-ying, and he refused to let anyone or anything through. He was not Chinese, and he did not want anyone from China crossing over into his territory.

Brother Beh and Brother Tseng thought, *Now what do we do? We want to get to the other side of the mountain to share God's word.* They waited for several days to see if the warlord would change his mind, but he did not, and the only thing the colporteurs could do was to backtrack east, then swing up further north and then turn west and travel through the Gobi Desert and the Mongolian grasslands, avoiding Monkey Pass through the Heavenly Mountains. This new route took them seven weeks to complete. They had to sell their horses and purchase camels for the trip, but north through the desert and grasslands they went.

Today schools, churches, a dispensary, and a hospital have been established along these borderlands as the result of these two men sharing God's word with a people who had known nothing about the God of heaven and about the Jesus who lived, died, rose again and now ministers for us in the heavenly sanctuary. Because literature was dropped along

the way, knowledge blossomed and grew, and now there are many people who believe in God along the borderlands.

Two things are important to remember from the experiences of Brothers Beh and Tseng. Like them, you also may have the opportunity to share literature with people and will have no idea if it will change the hearts of the people with whom you share, but the word of God will grow and will not return unto him void. Something else to consider is the need to refrain from unnecessary travel on the Sabbath day. Brothers Beh and

Tseng did not do the convenient thing and travel on the Sabbath; instead, they rested on God's Peace Rest Day, as we also should do, for it is God's holy day.

What happened to Brothers Beh Chin-Chien and Tseng Hsiang-pu? We don't know. We do know they were on their way home (they had been gone for over two years), and the last word ever heard from them was a letter mailed from a city the rebel General Ma Chung-ying entered and conquered one to two days after the letter was mailed. When the rebel overtook the city, between five and six thousand Chinese were captured and killed. God's word, however, lives on and flourishes in the hearts of people from the seeds sown by these two faithful missionaries.



One of the mountain passes on the borderlands of China

Ornycha Holt

Greetings from France

Marc and Elisabeth Fury

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1)

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Jesus,

It is with joy that we had the opportunity to gather at our camp meeting at *La Cascade*. For those who attended, we miss you already! But for those who couldn't join us, I'd like to give you a little report.

For us, the organizers, the adventure started the 20th September, and ended the 29th of the same month, Tuesday the 20th, we took our car to go to the airport 130 kilometers to Toulouse. There, we welcomed Irina, Sasha, and their son Vasily for their first time in France. Pastor

Allen wanted us to invite them because Sister “Ira” is translating the magazine *Old Path* into the Russian language and she accompanied us during our trip in eastern Europe in November of last year. Their coming to France was an adventure for us and also for them because it is very difficult for Moldavians to get a visa for France. Since they would be coming as our guests, we were visited



Brother Germain Trival

by a policeman, and one week later without any notice two gendarms (a type of armed policeman with the army) showed up to question us! But may God be praised, everything worked well, and our friends got their visas.

Wednesday the 21st, I went back to Toulouse, where I picked up Pastor Allen Stump, and it was a great joy for us to meet again. I offered him a copy of our new edition of his book *The Foundation of Our Faith*, and we took to the road. While driving home, we stopped at Albi Piano, because we needed a keyboard for the camp meeting. There, the first miracle happened because the piano specialist had never sold any electronic keyboards so far and had gotten this very day his first model, exactly the one we needed!

Thursday morning went by fast, and soon the great moment of the beginning of the meetings was there. I opened the meetings with some spiritual reflections about God's love and the contrast which exists between God's Spirit and its satanic counterfeit in which is found no love, no joy and no peace. My wife, Elisabeth, then shared about God's plan for our lives. Brother Germain Trival exhorted us to be ready, since Jesus is ready and waits upon us to come back. Elie Stragapède exhorted us to dwell at the feet of Jesus and to be faithful, since he has the words of life. Each evening, Pastor Allen taught us the historic pillars of the Adventist faith, and

Friday afternoon we studied the subject of justification by faith, after which there was a holy convocation which was a big blessing.

Sabbath, the meetings went on, and each one had an opportunity to praise God and to better understand his

will for our lives. While Pastor Allen preached on the sanctuary message, Brother Henri explained to us the pagan origin of the trinitarian doctrine and its place in ecumenicalism, but he also pointed to the infidelity implied in belonging to the FPF, (The Protestant Association of France). We also listened to the testimony of Sister Irina from Moldavia, who shared many experiences of faith she has had with Jesus.

Very fast Sabbath came to an end, and Sunday was still a very rich day. In the morning, Brother Denis Thomas presented some useful items for situations of crisis and exhorted us to come out of towns to live in the country. Then, I showed the parallels existing between the current Adventist trinitarian doctrine, and Dr. Kellogg's apostasy at the beginning of the 20th century.

Sunday afternoon arrived finally, and Pastor Allen taught us about the true church of God, which is far from being

some kind of organization, but which rather is the assembly of the faithful to the truth. After this, Pastor Allen offered a last prayer, and at the same occasion, set my wife and myself apart for the

ministry. Then, we went to the river, where Sister Viorela was baptized. Sister Viorela came from Italy, with the hope to consecrate herself to God through baptism. Pastor Allen and I had already met her during our missionary trip in Italy last year. She gave her testimony, and we experienced rich and unforgettable moments.

Thus, our meetings at *La Cascade* ended. These meetings were a rich blessing for each one of us, and we can really say that God's Spirit was present. Thanks to God and to his Son Jesus for according us this spirit of love, of joy, and of peace. Thanks to all who contributed to the warm and brotherly atmosphere, and we already fervently wait our next meetings next year, God willing!



Pastor Stump sharing a point with Brother Fury



Irina and Sasha from Moldova

Report on Trip to France and Africa

By Allen Stump

I wish you could have been with me the latter part of September to the latter part of October, when I visited France for a week and then Africa for three weeks. I am glad, however, that you did not have to endure the twelve-hour plane rides in cramped coach seating and with crying babies, nor the dusty, hot, and cramped buses, with foul music playing for hours (praise the Lord for earplugs and ear muffs). Since you could not be with me, I would like to share some of the blessings of the trip with you in this report. On page 20 you will find a short report that Marc Fury wrote, sharing some additional perspectives from the France camp meeting.

France: Some of our readers and those who attended the 2010 Smyrna camp meeting may remember Brother Marc Fury of France. With a small amount of encouragement, he organized a camp meeting in southern France this year and invited me to attend. In connection with the visit to France, I planned to travel to Zambia to visit Brother Benny Kayamba. It has been ten years since Brother Lynnford Beachy visited this part of Africa, so we were urged to return and to share again.

Brother Fury picked me up at the airport in Toulouse, and we then made a few stops for equipment on the way to his house in the forest of southern France. One stop was to look at digital pianos, since there was a need for something to produce good quality music at this camp meeting and for future events. A nice model was found for a reasonable price. Brother Marc was not sure if they could afford the piano, but he bought it in faith that funds would come in to cover it and other expenses.

When we arrived at Marc's house, I was greeted by his wife, Elisabeth, and by his children Josué and Daniel, but I was also greeted by Sasha and Ira and their son, Vasiliy, from Moldova, whom Marc and I had visited earlier in the year! Ira had translated for us, and it was certainly a blessing to have them attend the camp meeting.

The next day (Thursday) we set out for the camp, and I found it to be a very beautiful place, nestled above a peaceful river, with lots of small chalets, cabins, camping areas, and a very nice meeting hall.

The theme of the camp meeting was "Landmarks and Pillars of Our Faith." We began that afternoon with thirty-five to forty people in attendance, and by Sabbath, we had somewhere around sixty people attending.

The meetings were all very good, and God certainly blessed. I was certainly thankful for the help that Brother Marc gave in translating my materials into French, so I could put them into an electronic slide presentation format (Keynote, the Apple version of Powerpoint). It certainly helped to

have the Ellen White quotations on the screen because of the language barrier, but also because it was a great educational tool to use during the presentations. As an added bonus, I was able to use some of these materials in Africa!

Besides Brother Fury and his family, there are some valuable personnel resources in France that I believe God is using for a great work. Firstly, there is Brother Antoine Thomas and his wife Lillian, the believers who arranged for my meetings in Paris last year. They were a great help at the camp, and they have labored hard to awaken many people to the truth for this time. Then there is Brother Germain Trival, a former Seventh-day Adventist pastor who has accepted the truth about God and is seeking direction. Though he is not officially a pastor today, he has not given up his calling and has been blessed with wonderful skills and talents. There is also Professor Henri Rasolofomasoandro, who has accepted the message and will not be quiet. This retired Adventist teacher has been speaking out in any way he can about the truth. He has so enraged the hierarchy that the leaders have even told him to quit having Bible studies in his home! How papal! But this modern-day Luther is willing to defy all such papal decrees!

Our schedule at the camp was busy, and Marc translated my messages into French for me; however, there was also a small group of people who understood English, but not French, and Sister Elisabeth was kept busy translating the French talks into English for them at a special table to the side. This included our family from Moldova and Brother Maurizio and Sister Viorela from Italy. Sister Viorela attended some meetings last year when I was in Italy. At that time she was not sure about the message, but since that time she has continued to study and was baptized at the camp meeting!

Our meetings drew much interest in France, and the last day I was scheduled to speak on the subject of the church. Some people had planned to leave early but wisely decided to make other plans in order to attend this last, but very important, meeting. We studied the subject for over two hours and then had several thoughtful questions. God gave some very good responses and the people were greatly blessed. After the last study there was an ordination service for Brother Fury and a dedication for his family, followed by the baptism. When the meetings were over, we realized that God had blessed with enough finances to cover all the costs of the camp and the new digital piano, as well!

Zambia: After the camp meeting in France, I was blessed to have one day to rest, wash clothes, and fellowship with Marc's and Sasha's families before I began the long trip to Zambia. From southern France I would have to fly north to Paris, then to London, where I would catch a plane for Africa. From London I flew south to Johannesburg, South Africa and then north again to Lusaka, Zambia. I had taken a bag full of books from the United States for Africa and was alarmed when I was told in Paris that I could not take them on

the flight from Johannesburg to Lusaka, due to an airline luggage restriction. I prayed a lot about it, and finally I was told that I *might* be able to take them. When I arrived in Johannesburg, I had to recheck my luggage, but to the glory of God, all the English and French materials were allowed to go on the plane as luggage.

I arrived in Zambia, to be welcomed warmly by Brother Benny Kayamba, who leads out in the work. Joining Benny to welcome me were Siloka and Peter, who would be my traveling companions for most of my stay in Africa. Peter was also be my main translator in Zambia. English is the official language in Zambia, but most of the people speak a native Bantu tongue called Bemba.

After arriving in Lusaka we first went to the embassy of the Democratic Republic of Congo to attempt to get a visa so I could visit there. Due to time restrictions and not having the proper invitation letter, I was not able to receive a visa while in the United States; however, Brother Benny assured me that it would be easy to obtain a visa in Lusaka. I had applied for a double entry visa from Zambia, with the intent of going to DR Congo and then re-entering Zambia to catch my flight home, but was told by Travel Documents, Inc., whose work it is to help people arrange for visas, passports, and such travel documents, that it was a useless request, for Zambia “never grants it.” But we prayed, and to our delight, we were blessed with the double entry, but this still would have been in vain without a visa for DR Congo. When we went to their embassy in Lusaka, we were told that I would still need a certified invitation letter and that there would be a five day waiting period after it was received. Due to issues in the schedule, it seemed impossible to be able to comply with these requirements, so, instead of going first to DR Congo, we planned to travel to Lupiya in the province of Luapula, on the edge of Lake Mweru, about three miles from the border of DR Congo. Right on the edge of the lake, there is a village about a half a mile from Lupiya that is composed mostly of fishermen and their families. These men spend all night on the lake, fishing with nets and lanterns. Though the village was mostly dark at night, since there is precious little electricity, with its hundreds of boats and fishermen, Lake Mweru looked like a city of lights.

The trip to Luapula began late in the afternoon, with a long bus ride through the night until we went as far as buses travel. Then later the next day, we were taken by taxi (seven passengers and a driver in a small sedan) for four hours over extremely dusty roads to the village we we were to visit. Benny, Siloka, Peter, and I were all covered and caked with dust upon arrival. Our clothes were permeated with dust, and it was in most of our belongings, as well; however, we were warmly greeted by the elders of the church in Lupiya and were given a chance to bath and change clothes before going to an evening meeting.

Lupiya is quite large for an undeveloped area. This village had few stores and virtually no homes with electricity or

running water. The people there all cook on small charcoal stoves and have mud-brick homes with grass roofs. Some of the homes were entirely made from grass.

The church that we met with was composed mostly of a group of about 200 former Reformed Seventh-day Adventists who had accepted the truth about God. They were very eager to have us visit and treated us with the very best that they had.

Our schedule there was busy. In the mornings I shared health reform messages with the church, followed by a series of talks on what the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy teach about the subject of the church. In the afternoons Benny would share gospel-related messages and then in the evenings, I would have public meetings for the church members and those in the community, speaking on the truth about God, the law, the Sabbath, and the mark of the beast.

God certainly blessed our efforts there and though our meetings in the evening were dark, except for a solitary light behind me and my faithful headlamp to read by, the people still came out to hear the word of God. God gave me good words but especially during the evening when I spoke on the mark of the beast. I was amazed at how God gave me many texts. Since the hall only had one small light, the people in the evening meetings could not see to read their Bibles, so I did not take time turning in the Bible to the texts but, instead, quoted most of the verses by memory to save time, and it worked really well.

When we left Lupiya I was sad to have to leave my new friends like Aaron and Doughnut (his name, I was told, was too hard to learn and everyone, even in Lupiya, calls him this). Aaron was a real gift to me, as he was a loyal helper and also had a solar charger with which he could charge (or, as they say in DR Congo, top off) my phone and even my laptop computer. Walking to Lake Mweru we could get a cell signal for calling or emailing back home.

Our food in Africa was very simple and mostly plain. Nshima, a food made from corn or maize, is the staple for most people. It is cooked like a very stiff cereal so it can be molded and eaten with hands. There might be some greens and either cooked potatoes or beans with a sauce made of tomatoes and onions. Three meals a day! Sometimes we might have some small bananas or oranges but little other fruit. Most of the people are poor, and food prices are very high in Zambia, especially when compared to the working wages. Maize is about the only food many can afford.

The twenty-four hours of traveling back to Lusaka seemed like a long time, as the conditions were very crowded and dirty. The buses travel four, five, and even six hours without any break or stop. Finding a sanitary bathroom with tissue paper was impossible. Carrying extra supplies is highly recommended when traveling to Africa; however, it is a small price to pay for being a servant of Jesus.

We arrived back in Lusaka to have meetings on Friday night and all day on Sabbath and Sunday. Our meeting on

Sabbath was in a rented school building, and the place was packed. We studied many issues but focused on the doctrine of the church. In these studies we examined who makes up the church and what an offshoot is. We also emphasized that the true church is founded upon the truth that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God.

Democratic Republic of Congo: While we were at Luapula, the brethren in DR Congo had not forgotten us. They were fully expecting us to come, so much so that they had rented a school room to hold a series of meetings and had printed some advertising flyers to pass out. We also learned that one of the sisters in this group worked for the government in their immigration department. She requested a copy of my passport by email and assured us that if we traveled to the border, we could obtain a visa there. Therefore, we set out for another long bus trip, but thankfully this one was not as long as the previous ones. Shortly after we arrived at the border of DR Congo, we were greeted by several brethren, including our sister who worked in the immigration department. Though the process seemed slow, we, indeed, obtained visas and were able to enter the country. Benny's nephew, Stephen, lives in Lubumbashi, to which we were traveling, and he had brought his mini-bus with the welcoming party to pick us up for the two-hour trip back.

There we met with some elders who were all still attending conference churches but who had learned the truth about God. As noted earlier, they had rented a hall and distributed flyers inviting the people to attend the meetings scheduled for each afternoon. This timing was not the most conducive for attendance, as many people still were working or in school, but those who could come were greatly blessed.


The biggest issue that needed to be addressed among the believers in DR Congo was the issue of who composes the church of God. Is it a denomination that has become apostate, or do faithful souls constitute the true church? The conference leadership in Lubumbashi heard of our meetings and straightly warned the church members not to attend. It was declared that I was a "white man from America" who had brought "dollars" to give to the people to entice them away from the true church. While I was certainly a "white man from America," I had not given the people in DR Congo a penny of money, nor did I ever offer any funds to any person or group. I did not even help with the cost of the hall rental. The group in Lubumbashi had covered all the expenses of the meetings, including our travel in and out of the country.

The room in Lubumbashi where we met was part of a Methodist school. While this building did not have electricity, a generator was used after the sun set, so we could have some lights. It also had a large blackboard we could use for notes and illustrations. Our meetings were usually followed by interesting question and answer sessions.

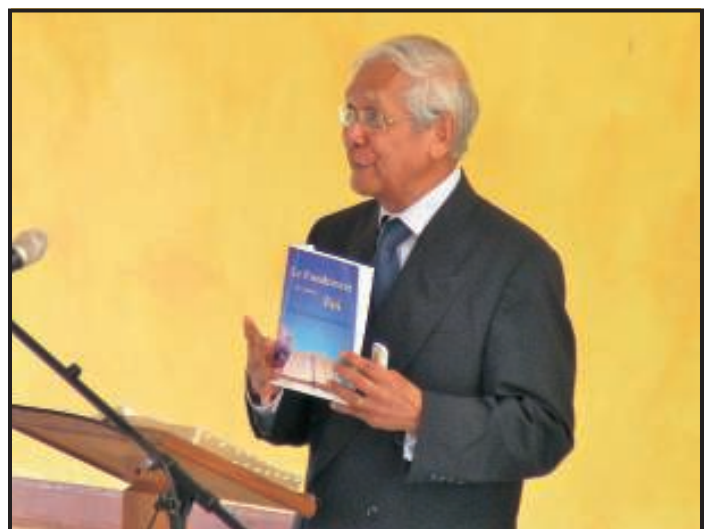
I had originally expected a large gathering on Sabbath, but almost all the believers attend the conference churches!—some perhaps due to the fear of the Jews and some because

they genuinely felt that they needed to go and witness concerning the truths they were learning. Our host and hostess agreed to allow us to use their home for Sabbath meetings, and with them we had two others for the morning study. In the afternoon a few more came, and we had an interesting history lesson on Adventism's background and its sad move into mainstream evangelicalism. French is the official language of DR Congo, but like Zambia, most people speak a native tongue. Most can read and understand some French, however, and as we met on the veranda that Sabbath, I was able to use some of my electronic slides in these studies.

That evening several of the elders came to visit and study. They also informed us that some, though they had not attended our Sabbath day meetings, had received summons from the pastors to appear in their offices the next day. We later learned that they were threatened with disfellowshipment, and, in fact, about a week later, three people were disfellowshipped for their part in the meetings.

Sunday morning we left Lubumbashi early to head back to the Zambian border and then to Lusaka, where I would spend the night before flying back to the United States via England and then France. Our trip from DR Congo to Lusaka was long, hot, dry, and saddened by seeing a man who had just been killed on the highway. I wondered what his last thoughts were just before his probation closed. I realized that I might never again see many of the people I had met on this trip. Had I said all that I should? Did I appeal strongly enough for them to follow truth? Had I lived a godly example? We may not all be able to go to Africa for mission service, but there are hosts of people around us wherever we are who need to hear the everlasting gospel. Are we all doing what we should to reach them? 

Photos from Trip



Professor Henri Rasolofomasoandro with a French edition of *The Foundation of Our Faith*



Meeting in Lupiya, Zambia



The children of Lupiya were happy to have their picture taken!



Typical home at Lupiya



Peter, my translator in Zambia



Gilbert, my translator in Democratic Republic of Congo, with Stephen and Siloka



Ira from Moldova, Elisabeth Fury translating, Viorela (originally from Romania) and Maurizio from Italy at the *translation table*



Bible study session during the France camp meeting

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