

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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The Truth of the Gospel

By David Clayton

The gospel is the central teaching of Christianity. In fact, we may rightly say that there is no truth contained in the Bible which does not find its center in the gospel. The word “gospel” signifies “good news,” and this focus on good news is what separates Christianity from every other religion. While other religions focus on how we can find a path to God, Christianity proclaims that God has made a path to us and dealt with all the factors which separated us from Him.

Fundamentals of the Gospel

It is through His Son, Jesus Christ, that God has brought mankind back to Himself. By the incarnation, life, death and present ministry of Christ, God has removed all the barriers which stood in the way of humanity being fully reconciled to Himself. The work of Christ on our behalf may be briefly summarized in the following four points:

- God’s love for us was revealed in the gift of Christ. (John 3:16)
- Christ revealed God by the life which He lived. (John 1:18; 1 John 5:20)
- Christ passed through our experiences so that He could represent us. (Hebrews 2:16, 17)
- Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins. (Romans 6:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Hebrews 2:14)

Let us take note of each of these points. It is most important that we recognize the significance of what Christ has done. This is the gospel. Without these four points the whole of our faith is a vain, meaningless exercise. It is a failure to recognize these points, to believe them and to come to grips with them which has led to the impotent, frustrating sham which today passes for Christianity in much of Christendom.

Satan’s Primary Objective

In order for Satan to prevent the overthrow of his kingdom and keep his subjects (humanity) in bondage, his first objective had to be to prevent Christ from fulfilling His mission. His most persistent and earnest efforts were put forth to prevent Jesus from fulfilling the four above-mentioned tasks. If he had been able to do this, mankind could never have been reconciled to God and so, Satan concentrated all his efforts on stopping the work of Christ. This he attempted to do for the entire duration of Jesus’ life, from the manger to the grave.

First, he tried to destroy Him when he was born, then he hounded Him for every moment of His life, attempting to provoke Him to such an extent that He would display some characteristic which was not consistent with God’s nature of love; something which would have revealed that there are flaws in the character of God

Prayer Requests

Please continue to keep Sister Janet Cox in your prayers. She came through her heart surgery fine and is now at home resting.

Please continue to remember Maria Corklin in Pennsylvania. Maria has respiratory health problems and is challenged with many of the day-by-day issues of life.

Please also continue to lift up my family in prayer. My wife, Charmaine, is still struggling with respiratory and other problems and I would appreciate your prayers greatly.

Please remember the Smyrna family. We desire a closer walk with the Lord and feel our spiritual poverty and the need to draw close to the Lord for our own needs and to be fitted to be used in the work of God. Also, remember us as we are seeking God’s will for the best manner in which we can serve Him and be a blessing to others.

Editor

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and that He is a person who cannot be trusted to do what is right when He is put under pressure. Later, as Jesus approached the moment of His death, Satan did everything possible through the enemies of Christ and even through His disciples, to turn Him away from His purpose. Even while He hung dying on the cross Satan desperately attempted to move Him from His purpose with the taunts of the those who watched.

“He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.” (Matthew 27:42, 43)

Satan’s Next Best Move

All these efforts of the enemy were defeated by the Son of God. Jesus demonstrated conclusively that the essence of God’s nature is self-sacrificing love and that all the pain and suffering in the universe cannot turn God away from the way of love and mercy. Yet, in spite of this, Satan’s battle was not finished. He did not lay down arms and surrender when Jesus finished His work on earth. Though Christ was out of his reach, he could still continue the fight by assaulting the subjects of Christ here on earth. We are familiar with the record of his atrocities against the people of God. Millions have been cruelly tortured and murdered in the most dreadful ways by men who were the agents of Satan in seeking to turn the people of God away from His service.

Yet, Satan’s success by using persecution was only limited. He has worked in another, less direct and far more cunning way, and has achieved far greater success in destroying the faith of the people of God.

Though Jesus has faithfully and perfectly carried out His work on man’s behalf, if Satan can prevent people from believing and, therefore, benefitting from these key truths he will, to all intents and purposes, make the work of Christ of none effect! If he could present an idea which would lead to the conclusion, or suggest that Jesus’ work was not genuinely what it appeared to be, or that it might have been a sham, if he could

somehow get Christians (of all people!) to believe in something which would undermine their faith in the reality of Jesus’ great achievements on their behalf, then he would nullify the effectiveness of Christ’s work.

Christ has done all this for man, but if man will not believe and accept what has been done, the work of Christ will avail nothing! It is here that Satan implemented his next best plan and has had marvelous success in carrying it out.

Satan could not prevent Christians from *professing* the four great truths contained in the gospel. The Bible statements are too plain for any professing Christian to openly deny these truths. However, it does not really matter what we profess if in our hearts we really believe something else. Our behaviour is determined by what we really believe rather than by what we profess to believe. Therefore, because of believing falsehood in their hearts, while professing the truth, Christians would be unable to benefit from what Christ did, even though the work had been accomplished.

Christ is the center of the gospel. He is the heart of all that the Bible stands for. He is the only hope of mankind. Whatever opposes Him and obscures His work is the most dangerous enemy of God and humanity. Nothing else can be as destructive. The Bible has coined a word to describe such an enemy—a word which represents that which is most to be feared of all opponents of the gospel. This fearsome word is *antichrist*. In it is embodied all that is most harmful to the cause of God.

The Papacy has been identified for many centuries as the great antichrist of Bible prophecy. Even before the time of the protestant reformation, holy men saw in this paganized mockery of Christianity, the embodiment of satanic principles which made it, with the Pope as its key representative, the very essence of antichrist. However, as people have focused on the antichrist over the centuries, their perspective has been a little warped and to a great extent they have missed a most important point. Most of those who have identified the Papacy as the antichrist have focused on the persecutions carried out by this power against Christians along with the changing of the

law of God and the massive introduction of pagan practices into the worship of Roman Catholicism.

“Antichrist” in the Bible

It is most interesting to note, however, that the word “antichrist,” is never used in the Bible in connection with any of these well-known works of the Papacy which most Christians focus on. The word “antichrist” is mentioned only four times in the Bible and in every place it refers to a false teaching concerning Christ.

The word “antichrist” is first mentioned in 1 John 2:18. Here it says,

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” (1 John 2:18)

From this verse we can learn a little of the understanding which the early Christians had concerning the antichrist. First of all, they believed in a great antichrist or antichristian power which would arise sometime in the future during the last days. John stated that there were already (in his days) many antichrists and, to him, this was an evidence that they were living in the “last time,” or the last days.

It is evident that John believed in a single great antichrist power. He said, “Ye have heard that antichrist (or *the* antichrist) shall come.” This was the understanding of John and those early Christians. Yet already some people had arrived on the scene to whom John referred as “antichrists.” If they were not *the* antichrist, why does he refer to them as “antichrists?” Is not the main idea of antichrist primarily that of an eschatological figure (appearing at the end of time) that is a destroyer of Christians by persecution?

Evidently, there is another, more fundamental identifying characteristic of the antichrist. So fundamental is this identifying quality that even when a person does not live at the end (as in John’s time) and is not actively persecuting God’s people, yet he may still bear the name and character of antichrist if he possesses this particular quality. What is this key identifying characteristic of antichrist?

Marks of an Antichrist?

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” (1 John 2:22)

The first teaching of this verse is an obvious one. It hardly seems necessary to mention it, and yet, in light of the tremendous deception which has overwhelmed Christendom, we point out that John says that antichrist is a liar. It is fundamental to the spirit and principles of antichrist that he is opposed to the truth. This principle is the foundation of his kingdom and, therefore, in his teachings, we look for lies at every turn. We should be careful about believing what he says.

First Lie: What is his first lie? He denies that Jesus is the Christ (the anointed one). Such a teaching would be understandable if John were referring to the heathen who deny this. It would also be simple to comprehend if he were speaking of the Jews who also deny this. But he is speaking of neither a Jew nor a heathen teacher. The term and the concept of antichrist suggest one who works from within (2 Thessalonians 2:4; 1 John 2:19). He is a professed Christian who sits in the Christian church. This is why it is so amazing to see the things which he denies. His teachings deny that Jesus is the Messiah!

Second Lie: His second lie is that he denies the Father and the Son. How does he do this? Does he deny the reality of their existence or the Father/Son relationship which exists between them.

It is highly improbable that this is suggesting that he denies the existence of the Father and the Son. Nobody professing to be a Christian could deny such a thing. It is far more likely that what John is saying is that the antichrist denies the fatherhood of God in relation to the Son, Jesus Christ.

Third Lie: “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” (1 John 4:2, 3)

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. (2 John 1:7)

The third lie of antichrist mentioned, is the denial that Jesus Christ came *in the flesh*. What is implied by this term “in the flesh?” For many years there has been a heated debate within the Seventh-day Adventist community concerning this verse. Some say that when Jesus came to this earth He took the unfallen, sinless nature of Adam before he committed sin. The other party insists that He took the fallen sinful nature of man which developed after Adam transgressed. They point to these verses here in John as a warning against the belief that Jesus took the sinless nature of Adam before he fell. They claim that the term, “in the flesh,” signifies that he took *sinful flesh, or fallen flesh*, meaning that He took the nature of man, suffering as it was from four thousand years of degeneracy. They point to other verses in the Bible where the term, “the flesh,” is used to suggest a person in a sinful state or with a sinful mind. (See for example, Romans 7:5, 18.)

However, this term, “in the flesh,” has another meaning in the Bible, and when we carefully examine these statements of John and examine the Papal antichrist in light of these statements, it is evident that we are to apply the other meaning to this phrase.

“In the Flesh”

What is the other meaning of the phrase? In this other usage, it simply means that He was actual flesh and blood. In other words, He was not a spirit, or a supernatural being. The term, “in the flesh,” is used with this meaning in the following verses:

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death *in the flesh*, but quickened by the Spirit.” (1 Peter 3:18)

“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us *in the flesh*, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.” (1 Peter 4:1)

“And the Word *was made flesh*, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his

glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

What John is telling us is that Jesus was an actual human being. The term “in the flesh,” signifies literal humanity. To fully appreciate the truthfulness of what I am saying we need to understand some of the misconceptions concerning the Christ, which people held during the time of the apostles. Some of the statements made by the Jews from time to time give us clues as to some of the ideas they had concerning the Messiah. It was the failure of Jesus to meet all these expectations which puzzled His disciples and led many of the Jews, and later apostate Christians (1 John 2:19), to deny that He was the Christ.

Misconceptions About Christ

Let us examine the four passages below as we look at these false expectations of the Jews.

a) They believed that Christ would be immortal. He could not die.

The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? (John 12:34)

b) They believed that Christ would be omniscient, knowing all things.

The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. (John 4:25)

c) They believed that Christ would have no origin.

Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. (John 7:27)

d) They believed that Christ would possess supernatural power.

And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done? (John 7:31)

Two Errors: One Foundation

What is the common element which runs through all these expectations? What misconception is evident as we look at

these verses? It is clear that the Jews expected the Messiah to be a supernatural superman. They expected someone who was far more than a human being; someone who, in fact, was a spirit or in other words, one who did not come “in the flesh.” The fact is, Jesus was too human for some of them. (1 John 2:22) In their estimation He was too human and these were the people who denied that He was the Christ.

On the other hand there were others who accepted that He was the Christ but who insisted that Jesus was not fully a human being. (1 John 4:2) They taught that He did not come “in the flesh,” but that He was a supernatural being. Why did they teach this?

They believed He could not have done the things which He did unless He was a superhuman being. The mighty works of God through Him convinced them He was not a flesh being.

In one case, he was too human for them to accept Him, and in the other case, His works were too superhuman for them to believe that He was fully human.

What is the common error which we find here? What is the consistent element which runs through the belief of both these groups of people? Both were teaching different things. One said, Jesus was not the Christ. The other said, He was the Christ, but He was not human. Both errors were founded on the same basic false belief. What was it? It was that **both groups believed in a supernatural Christ**. Both groups believed in a Messiah who was more than human; somebody whose chief identity would be His power and supernatural abilities rather than His pure spotless character.

The underlying spirit of antichrist is the spirit which holds to the concept of a supernatural Messiah. Here we see the very essence of Roman Catholic philosophy, the idea that the main evidence of divinity is supernatural deeds (miracles) rather than purity of character. No matter how holy a person might have been, no matter how much good he might have done, he cannot be canonized or made a saint in the Roman Church unless several miracles have been associated with him, either during his lifetime or after death.

It is in Roman Catholicism that we find an emphasis on relics, little items which have some connection with some “holy person,” and which supposedly are invested with some miraculous power. It is in this system that we find apparitions of Mary or other dead people, which are eagerly accepted as an evidence of divine interaction with humanity.

This is the predominating spirit or principle of antichrist; an emphasis on power rather than character. Let us consider this point carefully and prayerfully because it is a most important point.

False Beliefs Which Follow

This concept of a Christ who was more than flesh and blood leads immediately to other false doctrines, which hit at the very foundation of Christ’s work. Some of these were:

- The belief that Christ could not really die.
- The belief that we need a mediator who is truly human (Christ is not; therefore we need Mary and the saints.)
- The concept that it was Christ alone who suffered (since it was merely physical pain) rather than Himself and the Father.
- The belief that all that Christ suffered was the physical pain of the beating and the crucifixion because, as God, He possessed all knowledge and had full awareness of what was really happening. Even His cry, “My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?” was simply a part of a well-orchestrated act, rather than the bewildered cry of a suffering Son. If Jesus was possessed of all these powers, then He could have known no real separation from His Father. He could have felt no real distress of mind at the prospect of God forsaking Him at Calvary. All that He could have suffered is the physical pain on account of His having assumed a human body.

It is interesting to note that the movie, “The Passion,” directed by the Catholic Mel Gibson, focuses on the physical suffering of Jesus. Those who have watched it have been moved by the brutal punishment which was inflicted upon Him as

portrayed in the movie. But that is as far as it can go. For a Roman Catholic, who believes that Jesus was the second person of a three-part God, there could have been nothing else than that Jesus put on flesh so that He could, and did feel physical pain. The emotional and spiritual agony which He experienced, and which were infinitely more terrible, cannot be perceived by those who believe that He possessed all the knowledge and power of the almighty God while He was here in human form.

The Trinity Doctrine is Antichrist

The Bible declares the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, immortality and immutability as being characteristics which are exclusive to God. They are fundamental to His being and cannot be separated from Him. Those who declare that Jesus is a part of a Trinitarian God have no option but to believe that He was in possession of all these attributes while He was here on earth, and that all He did was to assume a human garb, while He remained, on the inside, the omnipotent God. This really denies the fact that Jesus came “in the flesh.” It is, in fact, the very essence of the spirit of antichrist. It is the belief that Christ was a supernatural superman.

Was Christ a Supernatural Being?

Some have suggested that Jesus was indeed possessed of all the powers of divinity while He was here on earth, but that He never once used these powers. It is necessary to say that He never used His powers, because of the reasons mentioned above. Did Jesus have these powers or did He not have them? And if He had them, did He ever use them?

If Jesus had all these powers available, what is to prevent someone from concluding that Jesus must have secretly used His powers in order to overcome temptation? What is to prevent those who are beaten by sin to come to the conclusion that we can never overcome sin while we remain in the flesh? We are left with a gray area which Satan can and has used mightily to his advantage. Many Christians have come to the conclusion that victory over sin is impossible in this life and that the best we can do is to resist

the more gross sins. When Jesus is pointed to as an example of a person who overcame all sin, they reply, “but you see, Jesus was God!”

Back in the 1960s a man by the name of John Griffin wrote a book entitled *Black Like Me*. This man was a white man, but he injected himself with a chemical which changed the color of his skin so that he passed for a black man. For several weeks (maybe months) he lived in the southern part of the United States, in his assumed identity, and experienced first hand the bigotry, hate, segregation and prejudice which were an accepted fact of life for a black person in those days. At the end of his experience he had a much better understanding of the problems which faced the black race in America. No doubt he also experienced the bitterness, the feelings of resentment, which seethed in them constantly as they were treated as second class citizens.

In spite of his close empathy with the black man’s experience, however, John Griffin was never quite exactly in the same position as a black man. He did not have the same heritage; he had not spent half of his life growing up in the ghettos, having his character molded by deprivation, desperate circumstances and the heritage of hundreds of years of enslavement and oppression. Always, behind the mask of his black face, there was the internal security of knowing that he really was one of the privileged class, that this assumed personality was only a façade which he could shed at any moment. Even the negative treatment which he received was not really aimed at him, for that was not really who he was. It was only aimed at the person whom he represented.

Was this how it was with Jesus? Was He possessed of a self-identity in a divine alter-ego, different from the human being who walked this earth as Jesus Christ? Was He simply God wearing a human body, or did He *become* as the Bible says, a human being? Let us not miss the point. It is possible that Jesus could have possessed divine powers in Himself and never used them, but the very fact that He possessed them would have ruined the purpose for which He came.

A Valid Demonstration

The life of Jesus was intended to demonstrate what divinity was really like. It was to show to men and the universe that God is perfectly good by nature, and that no afflictions or adverse circumstances will ever make Him move from His principles of pure and perfect love. The devil tried to make out that He was an untrustworthy Person who was only interested in exalting Himself and keeping down His creatures.(Genesis 3:5) Jesus came to prove that these accusations were false.

In order for Jesus to show what God was really like it was necessary that He should be placed in situations where He was truly tempted to do wrong. He had to face circumstances where His life was threatened, where He would seem to have no option but to do something which was not based on selfless love. He had to be assaulted by temptations which He would not know beforehand how to deal with. In other words, He had to be put in situations where His true nature would be clearly revealed; situations where it would be plain for all to see what His true character was.

This demonstration could not have been valid if Jesus had possessed, in Himself, divine powers. The very idea behind a demonstration is that it must be foolproof. It must be carried out in such a way that there is no room for trickery or deception. It must be plain to those who observe, that the conditions are such that what they are watching can only be a genuine demonstration with all the factors clearly on the table.

We may say that He did not use these powers, but how can we prove this? How could we demonstrate that Jesus really never used His divine powers to help Him to overcome sin? How can we establish the fact that He did not call upon divine reserves when He was tempted, when He was in trouble? How can we prove that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ was not simply a great act?

Once when the disciples were in a boat on the sea in danger of sinking, Jesus rebuked His disciples for having little faith. This rebuke was quite in order if Jesus was in the same position as the disciples. All He would have to depend

upon was the good-will of His Father. His rebuke would be saying, “How could you doubt that your heavenly Father will take care of you?” However, if Jesus possessed divine power in Himself, which He could exercise at any moment, then His disciples might have been justified in saying, “It’s okay for you to talk. You have the ability to escape at any moment, but we don’t.”

Consider a group of men in a plane which is going down. Most of them are panic stricken, but one of them is calm and unafraid. He rebukes the others for their fear and tells them to trust. Yet, how much weight can his words have when it is discovered that he is the only one on board who has a parachute! His words would be so much more convincing if all of them are in the same dilemma, yet he encourages them to be unafraid and remains calmly serene.

The truth is that this concept that Jesus had the power in Himself, but never used it, is in keeping with the underlying principle of the antichrist’s teaching. It represents Christ as one who was, in Himself, possessed of powers which were not available to the normal human being. It opens the door for Satan’s accusation that Jesus’ victory over sin was not that of a human being who was truly tempted as we are, but that of a God who carried out an elaborate sham.

The Evidence of Divinity

The Bible and the writings of Ellen White insist on the full humanity of Jesus in the incarnation. In fact, the apostle John declares that those who suggest that He was more than human are possessed of the spirit of antichrist. The word of God never ever points to the miracles which Jesus performed as the evidence of His divinity, they are only pointed out as the evidence that the Father was at work in Him. (See John 14:10, 11)

Yet there is no question that Jesus was not exactly like us in every respect. Though He was fully human, yet, paradoxically, He was still absolutely divine. There was something about Him which set Him apart from every other human being, as the sun is set apart from the light of a firefly. (Isaiah 9:2) What was this difference if He was not possessed of almighty power?

It was the quality of His life. The Bible points to Christ's life of infinite purity as the evidence that He was the Son of God.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4)

Jesus did not lay aside the divine character and nature. This He had to retain if He was to truly demonstrate what God is really like. But certainly He laid aside His divine power.

Christ's Humanity

"The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain

that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man; he gave proof of his humility in becoming a man. Yet he was God in the flesh. When we approach this subject, we would do well to heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning bush, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' We should come to this study with the humility of a learner, with a contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, which will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth." (*Youth's Instructor*, October 13, 1898—emphasis supplied) ✍

(David Clayton, of Restoration Ministries, lives in Jamaica with his wife Jen. You may contact him by writing to: Restoration Ministries, P. O. Box 23, Knockpatrick, Manchester, Jamaica,

W.I. His phone number is: 876-904-7392. His e-mail address is: david@restorationministry.com.)



David and Jen Clayton

More on "The Passion"

A Reader Responds to Our Reporting of "The Passion" and our Reply

Dear Readers of *Old Paths* and Contributors, I was shocked with your attitude, as expressed in recent issues of *Old Paths*, towards a Christian man who is not an SDA but a Roman Catholic and that you would state and imply that viewing the trial and death of Christ as portrayed in the movie "The Passion" is being "Worldly." That is the most untrue statement that I've ever read in your publication!

How can anyone who has not personally viewed the production pass such a judgement??? On what do you base your judgements?[sic] Hear-say? Prejudices? Pre-conceived ideas? I can't help but wonder. I and my family have VIEWED IT AND MOST LIKELY WILL again.

Why? For what reasons? The answer is easy. It brings Christ's death into a more real aspect. It helps us to truly internalize the physical suffering that he went through to redeem us from our sins! It is a true depiction of what a Roman crucifixion [sic] was really like. It

definitely does not do as some churches [sic] do and portray Messiah going to the cross as though he were going to a church picnic or on an evening stroll. No folks! He had been so badly beaten that he was un-recognizable and nearly dead. Yes! He did it for **all mankind!** Yes! It was terrible and I'm sorry to think that is what Yahshua went through because of me and my filthy sins. When I saw the Passion that is what it brought out to me! It made me feel more gratitude for what Yahshua did for me. It made me want to share Yahshua with other people. Which is exactly what I did and will continue to do.

Ellen White said that we should think on Yahshua's crucifixion [sic] for at least an hour every day. . She also said that we should preach Christ and Him crucified. That's **EXACTLY** what this movie has helped me and others to do. I guarantee that no one in the SDA Church has ever portrayed the suffering of the Savior and what he went through as accurately. Someone might be offended!

He suffered more than any other man! He hurt because of you and me. He hurt because of the sins of the whole world. That can't be changed no matter what we do or don't do. It can't be changed no matter how offended you are by it! Yahshua went through that and more for you and me and every lost, hopeless sinner that ever lived.

According to Webster a critique must contain a "careful analysis of a artistic work." Since neither you nor your contributors has personally viewed the work I find your critique lacking in authority.

Without having viewed the film you state that "the focus of the film is off the mark" because it "is so graphic and explicit" with it's [sic] emphasis "on the physical sufferings of Christ." You also state that "The words of God in the **believer's** mind, with the working of the Holy Spirit, can portray a much clearer picture of Christ's passion to the **believer** than an uninspired motion

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2004 WV Camp Meeting

Preparations

Preparations for the camp meeting had been in progress for several months and the final physical preparations were greatly assisted by the willingness of several brothers and sisters who volunteered to come in early to help with camp setup. We are greatly indebted to those who came in early, as well as those who were such a help during the camp meeting.

As those who have been to the camp in earlier years know, my secretary, Ann Ford is one of the most busy and duty-filled people at the camp meeting. Besides her usual duties, her house is always open to several folks. However, very shortly before the camp meeting, Sister Ann fell and hurt her back, requiring rest. She was expressly forbidden to lift anything. This caused Ann great grief! However, God sent a house full of good sisters to help her with the duties of cooking, cleaning, etc.

Last year's camp meeting received a lot of rain and we were concerned that the wet spring we were having might carry over into camp meeting. It had rained more days than it had been dry several weeks before the camp meeting. The matter was given a lot of serious prayer. The ten-day forecast kept saying there was a chance of rain for every day of the camp meeting. And while we did, at times, receive a short shower or two, the rain did not cause any serious problems and everyone seemed to be able to stay dry.

The Spirit of the Camp

While this was not the largest camp meeting we have ever had, it certainly brought to us quite a diversity of people with different views on subjects ranging from theology and prophecy, to dress and diet reform. I am sure many wondered at times if Smyrna had lowered its standards. Let me say that the Christian is to have standards, and they are not set by Smyrna but, rather, by the Bible. The greatest standard we can have is the standard of genuinely loving people regardless of what they believe, eat, or

wear! While the teachings of the Bible have not changed, I hope that our love for, and acceptance of people has changed (grown).

The atmosphere at the camp meeting appeared to me to be one of acceptance and love for most. Sadly, there were a few exceptions, but, for the most part, all seemed to enjoy and appreciate the company of others regardless of the other person's beliefs or lifestyles.



Children Singing

I wish to personally confess that I struggled both physically and emotionally at the beginning of the camp meeting due to fatigue from getting everything ready. I was not sure that there would be a blessing in the camp meeting for me, or for anyone else. I even expressed some of my discouragement to Brother David Clayton. However, as the week went on, the Lord revived my spirit as I began to hear testimonies from several people who said this was the best camp meeting that they had ever attended! Soon I began to catch the spirit and I realized that camp meeting was going to be whatever we wanted to receive from it!

The Meetings

David Clayton was the main evening speaker and delivered some very powerful messages, mostly dealing with the importance of knowing God and the fruit that a proper relationship with God brings. The other speakers were, Ken Corklin, Stephen Burks, Dennis Robertson, Lynnford Beachy, Howard Williams, Willis Smith, Bob Habenicht, George McDaniel, and myself.

Most of the presentations were well received. On a few occasions someone would ask me if I had heard such and such a talk and if I knew of certain problems with some of the content. Sometimes I would have to explain that I had not heard the presentation due to other duties, such as having youth meetings, but that I would try to review the tape later and encouraged that, in the keeping of the spirit of the camp meeting, we give everyone the benefit of the doubt.

Perhaps our best meeting was the Friday morning communion service. Several noted that it had been months and years since being able to participate and that they were very thankful for the experience.

Most of the meetings included special selections in song, and all seemed to be greatly blessed by the hearts uplifted in song. In fact, my personal highlight of the camp meeting was during the early Sabbath morning meeting when my daughter, Heidi, and Verity Holt, who works for me in the summer as an assistant, gave a special selection.

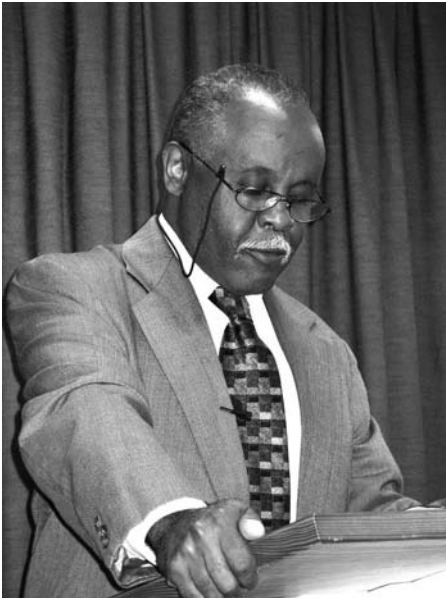


Dr. Burks helped with the Youth Choir

The last three nights of the camp meeting the youth had campfires and these appeared to be inviting enough for the adults to request that at least one large campfire could be held next year for everyone!

Sabbath

Sabbath morning included a message from Lynnford Beachy entitled, "The Real Passion of Christ." This excellent



Dennis Robertson Preaching

study was followed by a sermon I preached challenging the brothers and sisters to fully give their hearts to the Lord.

Our lunch consisted of a wonderful haystack dinner and I have never seen the sisters work with such an efficiency in getting everyone



Hans Stump checking out a Bible text

properly fed.

In the afternoon, after lunch, there was a baptismal service followed by a testimonial meeting. After the evening meeting by Brother Clayton there was another baptismal service.

Sunday

Sunday was a sad day for most as they had to pack up their tents and gear and prepare to go home. Some, with large distances to go, had left the night before, after Sabbath. So many look forward to camp meeting all year and the blessings it brings. However, when it is time to leave our brothers and sisters, it is very hard to say good bye.

Fortunately for a couple dozen, the time to say the final good bye got delayed for a little longer. Twenty-eight brothers and sisters went white-water rafting on the New River Sunday afternoon enjoying the beautiful view of the river and the New River Gorge. It was truly an exhilarating experience and a fun way to cap off a great week.

Final Comments

As I noted earlier, the camp meeting could not have happened without a lot of help from others. I really do not feel like we had a “Smyrna” camp meeting, but rather a “believers” camp meeting. It was such a blessing to see how so many felt at home and as if they were among family. For this I am grateful. To attempt to publically thank everyone who helped would necessitate listing the name of everyone that attended. However, I

would like to publically thank the Lord for Brother Brad Richard, for giving up his wife, Georgie, to come early and help with the meetings. I heard several people say, “What would we have done without Georgie?” God is so good to give us precious others like Georgie, and for this we are thankful.

We hope to start planning soon for next year’s camp meeting. If we can choose a date soon, then more people will have time to be able to make plans to attend. If you came this year, thanks for coming and please try to come back again next year. If you missed the blessing this year, try to plan to attend next



Heidi Stump and Verity Holt singing Sabbath morning

year, or at another camp meeting nearer to you. There are both video and audio recordings of all the main meetings. Please see page 9 for more information.

The 2004 West Virginia camp meeting is officially over now, but we pray that the blessings received by those who attended will continue. ✍

“More on the Passion” from page 6

picture.” Calling it “uninspired” is a value judgment that you have arbitrarily passed on Mr. Gibson’s heart and there for [sic] is of little value other than to express your own personal bias.

I believe that the film was right “on the mark” since the majority of people to view it are **not** “believers . . . with the workings of the Holy Spirit.” What better way to present the sufferings of Christ to a carnal mind than with a physical presentation and then be introduced to the great spiritual cost of sin?

Remember a carnal mind is only capable of understanding on a carnal level. Can a showing of physical suffering portray deeper spiritual/emotional suffering? Any parent who has detected inner emotional/spiritual suffering in a child by the look on his face will answer **YES!**

So before anyone gets on their high horse and gets an attitude of “I’m holier than thou!” we had all better check our motives and see where we stand.

Mr. Mel Gibson Gibson invested \$30 million of his own money to produce this movie because Holywood [sic] wasn’t

interested in it and said that it wouldn’t sell to the American public. He then spent more of his own finances to have it distributed. He put his money where his mouth/heart is. More **“Christians”** should be willing to do the same! And remember before anyone puts Mel Gibson down because he is a Roman Catholic that the Savior said that he had many sheep still in other folds. How many pastors that you know who would put **their** money where their mouth is? Quit slamming the man and his production until you have seen it for

Continued on page 11

2004 West Virginia Camp Meeting Tapes


Tape #	Speaker	Date	Subject
CM 2004-01	Allen Stump	June 15	God Saves a Terrorist
CM 2004-02	Ken Corklin	June 16	The Heart of Prayer
CM 2004-03*	Malcolm McCrillis	June 16	Godly Living
CM 2004-04	Lynnford Beachy	June 16	Love or Impotunity
CM 2004-05*	David Clayton	June 16	Who do you Worship?
CM 2004-06	Stephen Burks	June 17	The Mustard Seed
CM 2004-07*	Howard Williams	June 17	Proof of Discipleship?
CM 2004-08	Lynnford Beachy	June 17	Something More
CM 2004-09*	David Clayton	June 17	The Fruit of the Gospel
CM 2004-10	Dennis Robertson	June 18	If Anybody Should Ever Write Your Life Story
CM 2004-11*	Bob Habenicht	June 18	Ravening Wolves
CM 2004-12§	David Clayton	June 18	A People without a King
CM 2004-13	Dennis Robertson	June 19	Christ's Priestly Ministry
CM 2004-14*	Lynnford Beachy	June 19	The Real Passion of Christ
CM 2004-15	Allen Stump	June 19	99 44/100% is not Enough
CM 2004-16§	David Clayton	June 19	The Truth of the Gospel

* These tapes have a short health talk by George McDaniel R.N. on them. §These tapes have a short health talk by Dr. Stephen Burks on them.

Camp Meeting Recordings are Now Ready

We are thankful to announce that the video and audio recordings from the 2004 West Virginia camp meeting are ready. The suggested donation is \$7.00 U. S. per video tape plus actual postage, and \$2.00 per audio tape plus actual postage. Please request by tape number and specify if video or audio tapes are requested.

All of the camp meeting messages are available on one compact disc in mp3

format. Mp3 is a compressed storage format for audio recordings. You must have either a computer with an mp3 player program or a newer CD player with mp3 capabilities to be able to use the disc. These files are compressed between 70 to 80 Kbps to enable them to all fit on one disc. The suggested donation for the disc is \$8.00 plus actual postage. Ask for disc CM 2004 MP3. Some of the messages were too long to put on one CD in audio format, but if you are interested in audio format messages on CD, please contact us for further details. 

Help Me!

On the last evening of the camp meeting someone gave me a bag with gifts to give to the Beachy and Clayton families. This I did, but in the fatigue of the camp meeting, I forgot who gave me the bag! Whoever you are, please do not feel that these folks are not grateful. Please let me know who you are so that these families may express the thanks within their hearts. Also a cream-colored cap was left behind. the owner may call to claim it.

Allen Stump.

Youth's Corner - Christian Growth

I feel a deep anxiety that the youthful disciples of Christ may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. Progression is as much a law of spiritual as of physical life. The Scriptures speak of our growing up into Christ. Young converts are represented as babes, who need the tender care of those older in experience than themselves. They cannot by one great effort attain to the perfection of Christian growth. They are children, who must advance, little by little, until they reach the stature of men and women in Christ.

None should be satisfied with a mere profession of Christianity. We should be ever seeking to know more of the plan of salvation, and striving diligently to copy the Pattern set before us. Those whose eyes are just opened to see the love of Jesus, cannot at once fully comprehend his life, his character, or his requirements. All have daily lessons to learn in the school of Christ, and a daily experience to gain, that they may understand their duty as his children.

Many an honest, well-meaning person makes no advancement in the Christian life because he does not see the necessity of constantly learning more of Jesus. When first converted, he rejoices that he has taken his position on the Lord's side. A year later, he bears the same testimony. There is no evidence of spiritual growth; he is still weak as a child.

Much is lost to the Lord's cause because souls that have just entered the school of Christ are left to pick up their education as best they may. Young Christians are not properly instructed, and this is why there are in the church so few strong, active workers for God. The first experience of the new convert is happy and joyous; but trials come; the perplexities of life are to be met; sinful traits of character

that have not been controlled, strive for the mastery, and too frequently obtain it. Then come a loss of confidence and peace, neglect of prayer and the reading of the Scriptures. For want of the knowledge and experience which they should have, many are overcome by Satan. They do not know how to discern his temptations, or to resist them.

The young should ask counsel from those who are older in experience in the Christian life, and should be humble enough to receive instruction. And older Christians should have a watchful care for these young disciples, and be ready to encourage and instruct them. Here is an opening for missionary labor of the most important character. How necessary that there be in the church faithful members, who have a love for souls, and who will lead them into correct paths of religious experience. This is a work in which all Sabbath-school teachers should engage. They should know Christ and his saving power for themselves,—no others should be teachers in the Sabbath-school, —and then they should seek earnestly to lead their pupils to the Saviour. By reading the Scriptures and praying with them, they can direct them to Him who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Dear young friends, be careful to begin right in the Christian life. Have faith in Jesus as your helper. Remember that you are not to choose your own work, or follow your own ways, but to look to Jesus as your guide and pattern. Keep his example before you, and constantly ask what will be pleasing in his sight. Learn from him lessons of self-denial and self-sacrifice. Study how you can be like him, in thoughtfulness for others, in meekness and humility. Thus may you “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ;” you may reflect his image, and be accepted of him as his own, at his coming. (Ellen G. White – *Youth's Instructor*, December 5, 1883)

The Gecko

Did you know that the Gecko is able to walk on ceilings and glass without falling because it has 500 million suction cups attached to microscopic tufts of hair on its feet?

Did you know that these suction cups are about an 8 millionth of an inch in diameter? This suction is incredibly powerful. To avoid permanent attachment, the gecko curls its toes as it walks, breaking the suction!



“More on the Passion” from page 8

yourselves! Check out the message before you stone the messenger! Will you print this letter in *Old Paths* since it disagrees with your opinions?

Sincerely in Christ, Quite upset,
Carol J. Dittman,

P. S. Remember Yahweh Almighty can use Balaam’s donkey to bring forth wisdom. He can use a movie brought forth through Mel Gibson to reach many people and bring forth revival in these last days. CD

P. P. S. Unlike the unidentified person who put a letter in your paper without a name, you can publish mine?
(All emphasis is in the original letter and not supplied. Editor)

Our Response

Greetings in the Lord. I wanted to respond to your undated letter post-marked April 1, 2004, concerning the material printed on the movie, “The Passion of the Christ.”

Let me begin by stating that I appreciate your taking the time to write and express your thoughts on the matter. Your letter has caused me to reread and re-evaluate the articles printed. I believe that there are several misunderstandings that we can clear up.

You stated that you were shocked about my attitude towards Mel Gibson. Actually, I did not write negatively about Gibson. In fact, I tried to give him the benefit of the doubt stating: “We cannot judge Gibson’s heart or motives. While he is a devoted Catholic, so was Martin Luther at one time.” We are not “slamming the man.”

You asked me on what basis I can write about the movie having never seen it. I have seen several excerpts from the film, read several articles and reviews, and watched several interviews with Gibson, two in length. When I was younger, sadly I chose to drink alcohol. I know from experience that was a bad choice. I also used marijuana. I also know from experience that was a bad choice. Thankfully, I never became involved with drugs such as heroin, LSD, cocaine, or other such drugs. Do I need to try all of these drugs to be able to say that they are not good for a person? Hardly. I believe that my research on

Gibson’s movie was more than sufficient to address the matter. Neither do I have to commit murder to know it is wrong. God’s Word is the standard for all that is right or wrong.

You stated that I thought viewing the movie was “worldly.” I noticed that you used quotation marks. I did a careful reading and an electronic word check on both the first article and the follow-up article that you mentioned later in your letter. The word, “worldly” was not included in the text.

You wrote that the movie “helps us to truly internalize the physical suffering that he went through to redeem us from our sins!” By this statement you acknowledge that my main point about the film was correct; that the movie portrays the physical sufferings of Jesus as the payment for our sins.

I must say that I have to disagree with your statement, “I guarantee that no one in the SDA Church has ever portrayed the sufferings of the Savior and what he went through as accurately” as Gibson. I must disagree for two reasons. First, this is a very broad statement. None of us have ever heard or read all the things that all Adventists have written or said on the passion of Jesus. Second, I have read what I believe is an inspired account from the writings of Ellen White, and I believe it is in a class far greater than anything Gibson has done.

Gibson stated, Jesus “could have done it by pricking his finger and shedding a little blood. He didn’t; he wanted to go all the way.” (CNN.com January 22, 2004) This does not agree with the teachings of the Bible, but it does agree with popular Trinitarian teachings. The Bible states that “the wages of sin is death,” not sufferings and that the Messiah was to “pour out His soul unto death.” (See Romans 6:23 and Isaiah 53:10, 12.) However, since most Trinitarians do not believe that Jesus could or did die, Trinitarians, like Gibson, must believe that suffering is the penalty for our sins.

Carol, you wrote, “What better way to present the sufferings of Christ to a carnal mind than with a physical presentation and then be introduced to the great spiritual cost of sin? Remember a carnal mind is only capable of understanding on a carnal level.” You seem to


be implying that God works on a carnal level with carnal minds. If this is so, I must kindly disagree. God works with the carnal mind in a spiritual, heavenly manner to transform the mind from carnal to spiritual.

Whatever we have written that has given the appearance of being on a “high horse” or having a “holier than thou” attitude we apologize. We believe that the true passion of the Christ teaches humility and we certainly wish to follow our Saviour in all things. Of course, we all should examine our motives.

I know that Gibson invested a great deal of personal money to make the picture. With box office sales at a record rate, he will be able to recoup his investment. However, even if he could not recover a penny, according to 1 Corinthians 13, making sacrifices, of themselves, are not a sign of true Christianity. You ask, “How many pastors that you know would put their money where their mouth is?” Actually, I know of many who are laboring without fanfare sacrificing both body and means to help people. In fact, when you figure the amount of income and capital that a man like Gibson has to work with, I am sure that I know many who are giving, according to Jesus’ standard as recorded in Mark 12:42-44, at least as much as Gibson.

You stated in a hand-written post-script that, “Unlike the unidentified person who put a letter in your paper without a name you can publish mine.” I want you to know that I, as the editor, made the choice not to use the name of the writer. The writer did not request this.

You asked, “Will you print this letter in ‘Old Paths’ since it disagrees with your opinion?” Actually, Carol, my opinion does not count for anything. The only thing that matters is what God’s Word says. Even though I disagree with your main premise, as you disagree with mine, I will publish your letter along with this letter of response unless you notify me you wish otherwise.

I want to assure you and your family of our love even if we do not agree on all matters. If we can be of any spiritual help ever to you, please feel free to call upon us. 

SMYRNA GOSPEL MINISTRIES
HC 64 BOX 128 B
WELCH WV 24801-9606 U.S.A.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

I would like to inform you of some upcoming meetings that are being planned this summer. Lynnford Beachy will be speaking at the following locations.

Little Rock, Arkansas: On Friday evening, July 9, and all day Sabbath, July 10, 2004, we will be holding meetings at the conference room of the Ramada Limited & Suites, located at 8 Shackelford Drive in Little Rock, Arkansas, phone: (501) 221-7666. The Friday evening meetings will be held from 4:00-8:30 p.m., and the Sabbath meetings will take place from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., followed by a fellowship dinner and afternoon meetings from 2:30-8:30 p.m. For more information contact John Mark Brown at: (501) 681-8370.

Lobelville, Tennessee: On Tuesday evening, July 13, and all day Wednesday, July 14, 2004, we will be holding meetings in the Lobelville, Tennessee area. The Tuesday evening meetings will be held from 4:00-8:30 p.m., and the Wednesday meetings will take place from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., followed by a fellowship dinner and afternoon meetings from 2:30-8:30 p.m. For more information contact Melba Smith or Norma DeCamp at: (931) 593-3698.

Cañon City, Colorado Camp Meeting: Philadelphia Press in Colorado will be hosting a camp meeting from September 8-11, 2004. For more information contact Richard Stratton at: (719) 547-1932. There will be several speakers from across the country.

Windham, Maine Camp Meeting: Some brethren in Maine are hosting a camp meeting from September 1-4, 2004. For more information contact Mervin or Rose Marie Shoemaker at: (207) 892-2338. The camp meeting will focus on the Love of God and healthful living. There will be several speakers from across the country.

Southern Minnesota: On Wednesday evening, September 15, and all day Thursday, September 16, 2004, we will be holding meetings in Pipestone, Minnesota. For more information contact Laurie Lewis at: (507) 825-2310. There will also be meetings in Minneapolis Friday evening, September 17, and Sabbath, September 18. For more information contact Chris Walega at: (612) 374-4683. *Editor*

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

Editor Allen Stump—editor@smyrna.org
Associate Editor Lynnford Beachy—berean@smyrna.org