



## Grace and Glory

This is in response to the letter from Abimael Acosta in the summer 2005 issue, which states: “If both Paul and John saw Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father, how could he have first entered the most holy place in 1844?”

This issue is best understood in relation to the “kingdom of grace” and the “kingdom of glory” (see Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 347). The kingdom of grace was promised beforehand but not inaugurated until Christ’s blood was shed (Heb. 9:11–28). We come boldly before the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16), where we see Jesus seated at the right hand of the Father. Jesus speaks about the kingdom of glory in Matthew 25:31, 32, in reference to the final judgment and his second coming.

It appears that Jesus does not sit on his throne until later. For now, he sits at the right hand of the Father. Daniel 7 pictures him coming before the Father to receive the kingdom. This is the kingdom of glory, and the judgment pictured is the transition from the kingdom of grace to the kingdom of glory. The figures of the holy place and the most holy place have more to do with the work accomplished in reference to them than in how he is positioned (Stephen sees him “standing at the right hand of the Father” rather than seated, as in Acts 7:56).

Using the sanctuary model, at

Jesus’ ascension the first function of his blood would have been to inaugurate the whole sanctuary (see Heb. 9:19–23) to establish the kingdom of grace. Then his blood would make effective his intercession on our behalf under the kingdom of grace, where our sins are covered (Heb. 7:25). Finally, the blood he shed once for all would make the final transition to the kingdom of glory possible, where our sins are blotted out (Heb. 9:28).

*Dennis Blomberg  
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## Leaving, but Still Loving

Monte Sahlin’s article on Seventh-day Adventist dropouts (summer 2005) quoted six reasons Mark Finley has given for people leaving the Church. My own reason for leaving is not included in that list. I left at age forty-five after a lifetime of faithful membership and love for Jesus. I had no problems with the pastor or any member.

I left because I no longer agreed with many of the fundamental Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. In particular, I came to believe that the Bible is the only authoritative source of truth. Yet according to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I am an apostate—one who has left the faith—even though my love for Jesus and my devotion to his church, which is much larger than Adventism, is as strong as ever.

In my new church, I don’t always agree with long-held denominational views, but no one feels compelled to change my way of thinking. Diverse views encourage deeper Bible study. Jesus wants his church to be united—but that doesn’t mean everyone has to think and worship the same way.

We should respect and love each other and avoid labeling Christian believers as apostates when their views differ from our own.

*Name withheld by request*

## Bearing Witness

I appreciated Lawrence Geraty’s article, “Seventh-day Adventist Church Gets New Fundamental Belief: The First in a Quarter Century” (summer 2005).

I thought his quotation by John Loughborough was telling. It read, “The first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what to believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth is to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And fifth to commence persecution against such.”

As it has turned out, that is exactly how the Fundamental Beliefs have been used. Desmond Ford and I can bear witness to that.

*Rick Kuykendall  
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# Why Should Our Kids Be Adventist?

**N**ot long ago, I heard my son say at a memorial service that his grandmother had once offended her Adventist teachers by showing up with her hair cut...*short!*

Perhaps only octogenarians know why this was ever an issue. No one today, surely, would say that God frets over how short we wear our hair, or how long. Short, long, shaved off—what does it matter?

So...when I meet my Maker, what is the quiz going to be about? If my “look” isn’t the big thing, what is? And does being Adventist even matter?

These questions ask whether it’s important to hit the bull’s eye—get things right—when it comes to living life and living it well. Educated people, including you and me, aren’t as sure about the answers as in the past. With today’s diversity and today’s uncertainty about what human beings can know for sure, many despair of even finding the bull’s eye, let alone hitting it. A final truth for how to live just seems elusive. And so Adventists themselves sometimes wonder why their own children, or even they themselves, should remain Adventist.

Sabbath and the Second Coming are still, I believe, two good reasons. But the parable of Judgment Day in Matthew 25 offers perspective no one should miss. Here Jesus says that “just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” By the time his Judgment picture is complete, it’s clear that how I treat others determines my eternal destiny.

It seems, then, that the last quiz question is about compassion—about whether you’ve helped people, especially underdogs, to flourish. And just as the last quiz question is not about hair, it’s not about what you eat or how you dress or whether you comprehend the enigmas of prophecy and doctrine. It’s just: Were you kind? Did you, or did you not, make life better for others?

Compassion—loving others; helping them flourish—is the bull’s eye.

In a skeptical age some would demur and give reasons. Many would go on scheming for advantage over others without either thought or empathy. Despite all this doubt and indifference, however, I expect that if you’re reading this magazine you think Jesus had it right. He knew the final truth for how to live.

But if compassion is the point, and the subject of the last quiz question, how does being Adventist make a difference? Well, let me throw out a conversation starter.

Consider the Sabbath. It came in long before Sunday, but went out (for most Christians) as the Servant Church was turning, ignominiously, into the Imperial Church—the church embarrassed by its Jewish roots and enthralled with Roman power.

In recovering the Sabbath, Adventists connect with Jesus’ own Sabbath-keeping  
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experience, and so stay in touch not only with both versions (Exod. 20, Deut. 5) of the Fourth Commandment, but also with the Genesis creation story. We thus receive regular reminders both of the *goodness* of earth and flesh, and also of the divine-human *partnership* for their care and keeping.

When we absorb these reminders, we know our job is to make *life on earth* a joy for all: *everyone* should flourish. So when you take in the Sabbath's meaning, you can't obsess about escaping to the next life, or forget the calling that sets you apart—and asks you to collude with Christ instead of Caesar. In this light, Sunday, with its imperial bloodline and lack of a rich biblical significance, seems a meager substitute.

So how does the Second Coming make a difference?

A Second Coming frame of mind is the conviction that Jesus is the world's final leader. And that's not only a basis for hope but also a stimulant to creative energy. If I think the world is headed somewhere good, I can get off my duff. What is more, if I believe Jesus is the world's final leader, I have a defense against the blandishments of those who would displace

him and give another account of how to live. If the commercial interests, political authorities, and entertainment moguls tell whopping lies, I'll know it if Jesus is on my mind. And if they try to steal my loyalty, I'll resist.

I won't have these advantages, of course, if I think Jesus' Coming is a pipe dream, or I assign it to a future so distant I feel no need to be ready.

Compassion—loving others; helping them flourish—is the final truth, and the subject of the last quiz question. We may be distracted from it, as when a young girl gets in trouble for her hair. But distractions happen when we haven't been Adventist *enough*.

If we see and embrace their deep meaning, the Sabbath and the Second Coming are, like fire against the cold, a huge advantage. They point us—and point our children—right to the thing that matters most.

Charles Scriven

AAF Board Chairman

## HOW TO START AN AAF CHAPTER

Members of the Association of Adventist Forums are invited to form local chapters by following three steps:

1. Convene at least five AAF members and plan some activities. These may be as simple as meeting now and then in homes to discuss a thought-provoking video, article, or book, and they may be as complex as organizing major conferences.
2. Forward to the *Spectrum* office in Roseville, California, the chapter's constitution. Model constitutions for local chapters are available upon request.
3. Forward to the *Spectrum* office in Roseville, California, contact information for the chapter's leaders that can be listed in the association's journal and posted on its Web site.

The purpose of local chapters, each of which is financially and administratively independent, is the same as the AAF and *Spectrum*: "To encourage Seventh-day Adventist participation in the discussion of contemporary issues from a Christian viewpoint." AAF officers are able and willing to assist local chapters.