



2 Cor. 3:18

Open Face

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The Truth of The Gospel

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:

- a) God’s love for us was revealed in the gift of Christ. (John 3:16)
- b) Christ revealed God by the life which He lived. (John 1:18; 1 John 5:20)

c) Christ passed through our experiences so that He could represent us. (Heb. 2:16, 17)

d) Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins. (Rom. 6:8; 1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 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 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 passersby,

“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.” (Mat 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

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Open Face
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Open Face is dedicated to the promotion of the truths committed to the Advent movement, as believed and taught by the early Adventist pioneers. In particular to the restoration of those truths which have been cast down to the ground and trampled underfoot by the papacy, and adopted by her daughters.

Our purpose is to motivate our readers to commit themselves wholly to the task of personal preparation for the coming of the Lord, and to the taking of the final warning message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

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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 benefiting 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 their 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 (a) an eschatological figure (appearing at the end of time)? (b) a destroyer of Christians by persecution?

Evidently, there is another, more fundamental identifying characteristic of the antichrist. So fundamental is this

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The Fruit of The Gospel



And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, 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. (Rev 18:1-4)

The coming of this mighty angel has long been expected by Christians and particularly those who have some connection with Seventh-day Adventism. Here is a promise that at some point the work of God is to receive great power to enable the truth to be spread mightily. At the moment the work of God languishes and the population of planet earth is growing at a far greater pace than is the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What is the reason why God delays in sending this angel? Is it that there is no need for such power in His work, or is there some other reason?

At first, in reading this passage in Revelation I misunderstood it, as I am sure many others have. I thought that the glory which was to lighten the earth was the message of the angel, which said, "Babylon is fallen come out

of her my people." And I must confess that I bent all my energies at one point in seeking to give that message, hoping that the power of God would eventually be added to my efforts. I eventually came to see that I had missed a most important factor in the message.

Notice that it says that the earth was lightened with the glory of this angel, then he cried with a loud voice in calling God's people out of Babylon. It does not say that the message which he gives is the glory which lightens the earth. Rather, the suggestion is that it is only when the light of this glory floods the earth that the angel is able to give the message to come out of Babylon. It is only then that Babylon will be plainly identified in the light of that glory.

What is the significance of "glory" in the Bible, and particularly in the New Testament? It refers to the character of God! When Moses asked God to show him His glory, the Lord replied, "I will make all my goodness pass before you ..." (Exodus 33:18,19). This, and many other passages emphasises the truth that the glory of God is found in His character.

So what we see here is a different perspective of Revelation 18. The delay in the coming of the angel, the tardiness in the finishing of the work, the lack of power attending the truth, is not a result of God wishing to prolong the agony. It is simply due to the fact that God's people have been more interested in the power, than the character of God. The great question before us today is not how to get more power, but the greatest, and indeed the only question is, "how may we obtain the character of God?"

The word of God gives us an answer to this question. It shows us a way. In spite of the fact that we have been sidetracked and have gone far from the mark, it is possible for us to find the true focus. It is possible - in fact it is

certain that it will happen - that some of us will finally fix our eyes on the right place and so God will be able to give us the power necessary to finish the work, because finally we will have the character to go with the power.

God is not short of power. Power was never, and will never be an issue in the finishing of the work. But God has not been able to find Christians anywhere who were fit vessels, so surrendered to Him, so much like Him that He was able to entrust them with His power.

The challenge before us, brothers and sisters, is to faithfully follow the method outlined in the word of God which will lead us to develop the character of God. This method is clearly outlined in the Bible and as sure as God lives, when we are ready to be used by Him, then the power will come to finish the work, whether it be only one, or a thousand who are ready.

A Critical Truth

Some have suggested that the truth about God not being a Trinity is a minor distracting point. They say we should focus on the fundamentals such as, the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the 2300 days, the Mark of the beast, Health reform, etc. and not place so much emphasis on this question which (they say) is so hard to understand. Those who take this position manifest a lack of understanding which is pitiful. The above-mentioned doctrines are surely important but they are definitely secondary and subordinate to the truth about God. True love is the ultimate fruit of the gospel. As Ellen White said,

"Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." {COL 69}

Yet the only way that we can develop

true love is by the holy spirit reproducing it in our hearts as we behold the love of God. The problem is, we cannot understand or appreciate the enormity of this love until we realize that God is not a Trinity, but rather, that Jesus Christ is truly His only begotten Son.

The truths of the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the sanctuary etc. must be presented in the context of, and by people who have experienced the wonder of God's love. Without this, all we are doing is presenting dry, empty legalism and propagating a system which can do no more than produce Sabbath-keeping candidates for hell.

True Sonship and True Love

John emphasizes the preeminence of love over and over. He also repeatedly points to the sonship of Jesus as the key truth which we need to recognize. We cannot miss the connection between both things? Let us look at the two following statements of John:

*1 John 4:12: "...if we love one another, **God dwelleth in us** and His love is perfected in us."*

*1 John 4:15: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, **God dwelleth in him** and he in God."*

Notice that both verses mention a certain condition which, if fulfilled, is an indicator that God is dwelling in us. These conditions seem to be different, but in fact, they are inseparably united. Where we find one, we can guarantee that the other also exists. What are these two conditions?

(1) If we love one another.

(2) If we confess (believe) that Jesus is the Son of God.

This is the main point of what the apostle John is teaching in this letter. It comes up over and over again. His main burden is that we should love one another, but he plainly points out that it is not possible for us to love one another unless we first appreciate how much God loves us, and it is not possible for us to appreciate how much

God loves us unless we first appreciate the value of the gift which was given and what it cost God to give, and, we cannot understand what it cost God unless we recognize that it was His own dear Son, His only begotten whom God gave. Then and only then will we recognize the value and the worth of a human soul. Then and only then may we have some understanding of the pain which comes to the heart of our Father when a single soul is lost. Then will we be motivated to treat others in accordance with the love which He has poured out upon us and upon them and only then will we be ready to give the call to come out of Babylon.

The Revelation of Love

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. (1 John 4:9)

God's love was manifested: It was revealed, it was displayed, it was opened up to the view of the world. This love was always there, but now it was manifested or made known. In other words this was God's statement to mankind – His way of unveiling the true sentiment and attitude of His heart.

Toward us: This display of love was directional. It was aimed especially at humanity. The effort of God to unveil His love was with the chief purpose of making it known to mankind

Because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world. Or, for this reason. This is how we come to see God's love, this is the way in which it was manifested.

Who sent and who was sent

Who was it that sent, and what does it mean to say that He sent?

God sent. It was the Father who sent Jesus (John 5:23; John 5:30; John 6:44; John 12:49; Mark 12:6). Here, and in every other place where it says that God sent His Son, there can be absolutely no question that the person who "sent" is God the Father. Therefore,

the emphasis here is on God the Father. We are being directed to Him as our supreme Lord and as the object of our supreme affection, desire and attention.

When it says that "God sent," several ideas follow. Firstly, God permitted His Son to come. It was His decision to make. He had the authority and the right to permit or to forbid. This emphasizes the fact that He, the Father is the supreme Being in heaven and the one who sits at the ultimate pinnacle of all authority. Secondly, God sent or determined that it should be so. It was His purpose, or His plan (formulated in council with Christ). It was devised by them because of their great love for the human race.

His only begotten Son: It was His only begotten Son that God sent. The one whom He directed to go, the one whose loss He contemplated and accepted was His only begotten Son. This was His identity at the time when He was sent. When the Father contemplated the plan of salvation, when He put humanity in the scales and weighed them in the balance, it was His Son that He placed in the other side. He looked at Jesus with the eyes of a Father, not an associate.

"Theologians" argue about the meaning of the term, "only begotten." They accept any meaning except the obvious one, that it means, "only born." Their preconceived misconceptions will not permit them to accept such an idea. But if Jesus was not God's true, begotten Son, then who was He? What other options present themselves? Was He God Himself? Was He a created angel?

If Jesus was God Himself, we face the question, how then did it become the right and the prerogative of the Father to send Him into the world? By what means did one Person in a three-part godhead receive such authority over the other that He could command Him to go or to remain? And what about the third Person? How is it that He had absolutely no say in the matter? At least, if He did, the Bible writers ap-

pear to have known nothing about it.

Jesus was sent into the world. God sent His Son into the world. How incredible is the suggestion that Jesus never became the Son of God until He was born in Bethlehem! The question is, “when was Jesus sent?” Was it after He arrived on this earth or was it before He left heaven? If language means anything at all, Jesus had to have been sent before He left heaven. The word, “sent,” includes the giving of the instruction to go, as well as the imparting of the means by which to go. While Jesus was still in heaven He was directed by His Father to go. He was sent. In obedience to His Father’s directive He arrived on earth.

The implications of Fatherhood

It is the instinct and duty of a Father to protect His Son. No matter how mature and capable a son may become, a father can never forget the joy and satisfaction he has experienced as he watched his son develop. For a good father, his son represents his ultimate achievement – his truest and most enduring legacy. Love, as much as duty creates an instinct to protect and to preserve one’s child at all costs.

The father watches his life, his development from the first moment of his existence and carefully guides and guards him at every step of the way. It is only natural that a son should be the best-loved and most cherished possession of a good father.

Some months ago I went swimming with my youngest child, my daughter Annelie who is 17 years old. We had gone swimming at that spot several times before, but this morning the sea was particularly rough and there was a strong current which we failed to notice. I first became alarmed when I noticed that the depth of the water was up to our necks and I was having difficulty moving towards the shore. We had gradually drifted out without noticing it. I called to Annelie that we should head towards shore and I

watched with a growing sense of horror as I realized that she was being pulled irresistibly outwards by a current which was much stronger than she was. I moved across to where she was and tried to help, but the outward pull of the current was stronger than we were, and in addition we were being buffeted by large waves.

Several things about that experience will live in my mind forever. Firstly, my daughter had followed me so far out into the water because she had confidence in me. I am a fair swimmer, but while she can swim she is not a strong swimmer. Now here she was in trouble because of me, because of trusting in me and I was absolutely helpless to help her. It was a feeling I cannot describe and one I never wish to experience again. At one point a huge wave washed over her and she cried out. I felt as if a knife had been thrust into my heart.

I think I could have saved my life, but I had no doubt that we were both going to die and that I would die first. There was no thinking or considering. I knew that it was impossible that I should get back to shore alive without Annelie. I would tread water as best as I could and hold her up as long as I could, but I would never let her go. We would both live, or I would die first. My instinct as a father told me this.

But of course I called upon God. Twice I cried out, “Lord, help us!” The second time my foot hit against a high place on the sea floor. When we scrambled up on it, the water was only waist high. From there we were able to make our way back to shore.

That experience helped me to realize what God suffered when His Son died. I think God allowed me to have that experience just so that I could understand. His Son trusted in Him. In full confidence He entered the deep waters, but when He got into difficulty and cried out to His father, God had to turn away from that cry with a breaking heart. As Jesus cried out in bewilderment, “my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” the Father could not

answer. He could offer no help. I know how God felt at that moment! He must leave His Son to suffer, to die alone, to be overwhelmed by the deep waters, bewildered, abandoned by the One in whom He had trusted. He had to do it in order that I could be saved. This is what we are asked to contemplate when we are told that God loved us so much that He gave His Son.

The point is, it was a great sacrifice for God. It cost Him greatly in pain, suffering and tears to give His Son. What else can be the suggestion intended by pointing to the gift of God’s Son as the greatest manifestation of the Father’s love?

This is in contrast to the concept of an associate, a fellow God, one who was a dear friend, but not one who was a personal responsibility. Not one whose decision whether to go or to stay, depended on the approval of the Father.

God’s Feelings

God cannot be affected on the *physical* level. No contrary force in the universe may ever dream of opposing the omnipotence which is God, in a physical way. The only way in which God can be affected by others in a positive or negative way is in His feelings. Think about it. There is absolutely no other way. Since God’s feelings are the only level on which He may be affected, and since the sufferings of a son is the most terrible pain which can come to a father, we can understand that the almighty God has been stirred to the utmost degree by His feelings for us and has paid a price in pain and suffering which could not possibly have been greater for Him.

This was for humanity. People who believe in God as an almighty, unfeeling force cannot accept His mercy or His grace. For them, this plays no part in a relationship with Him. This is why relating to God is such a challenge for the heathen; an experience which must be sought with such extreme and meaningless exercises, because, for them, they must get in touch with a force, rather than a thinking, feeling,

loving, sympathetic person.

The best for the worst

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

The apostle John reinforces the point: In this is love – here we can see love, or this is what love is all about. The contrast is made between what He did and what we did not do. On the one hand, here we were, the most unworthy and undeserving. We did not love God – we had no affection for Him. But He loved us. Loved us how? To what degree? He sent His Son. By making this contrast John intends that we should see how great is the gap between what we were and the love God had for us. He emphasizes our poverty, our unworthiness, our wretchedness – the lowest of the low. In contrast he highlights the love of God towards us – a wondrous, improbable thing, as high as the heavens are above the earth. How can we know and believe in that love? How may we perceive the magnitude of it? It is by appreciating, by recognizing the value of the gift which He gave for us. He, the Father paid a price, He made a sacrifice in proportion, not to our unworthiness, but in proportion to His love. That price is the measure of God’s love to us. What was that price? It was His only begotten Son. That is the measure of God’s love. That is the price He paid. Only as we believe and accept this truth may we truly appreciate the kind of love which God has for us. If we suggest that Jesus was anybody other than God’s only begotten Son, we mar the truth and obscure God’s revelation of His love.

THE REASON FOR our LOVE

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God . . . (1 John 4:7)

There is a reason for true love. There is a cause and a motivation for the care, concern and attitude of good-will which Christians manifest towards

each other (or ought to manifest). What is this reason? The reason is . . . love is of God. Since we are the property of God and live our lives in Him, then what could be more natural, reasonable and to be expected, than that we should love one another?

. . . and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (1 John 4:7,8)

Though John gives us a command to love one another, he here shows us that there has to be an underlying cause before this command can be obeyed. It is only those who are born of God who can love. It is only those who know Him who are able to obey this command to love one another. On the other hand, nothing can be more natural than that those who know God should love one another, because, “God is love.” It is the very essence of His nature, the foundation of His being. Those who encounter Him cannot help being encompassed and infused with this love. Therefore, he that knoweth God will love his brother, and he who does not love his brother reveals by this lack that he does not know God.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. (1 John 4:11)

Love is **imparted** through contact with God. More than that, however, love is **demand**ed by the recognition of God’s love for us. If God did, we ought to. This is the argument which John proposes. In other words, the root, the foundation, the rationale for the love which binds God’s people together and which is the very mark which identifies us as God’s people, is the fact that God “so loved us.” The fact that God loved us to such a degree. What was this degree?

God so I loved

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. (1 John 4:11)

Here is the foundational argument for

Christian behaviour. Paul expressed it when He said, “the love of Christ constraineth us.” He emphasized the love of Christ but John emphasizes the love of the Father. His statement is, “if God so loved us.” The emphasis here is on the degree and the quality of that love. It was not simply that He loved us, but that He **SO** loved us. Again, reference is being made to the gift which God gave, to the sacrifice which He made.

Let us consider for a moment: Love is not merely an abstract principle, standardized and turned on or off at will. No. Love is an active, living attitude which affects every aspect of a person’s being. It masters the emotions and produces joy, ecstasy, grief, pain – tremendous internal upheaval. Love can evoke many responses, but it is never unfeeling or unmoved.

It is very important that we should see the significance of this. You see, there is only one way in which it is possible to grasp the enormity of God’s love and in doing this to be changed by it (1 Cor. 3:18). It is by first of all understanding what God’s love for us impelled Him to do for us. **Love is only relevant if it acts.** Love which is merely a feeling is a meaningless frustrating thing. But when love acts, it can be seen, it may be measured. How can we measure the love of God? What action of His makes that love evident? It is in the action of God in sending His Son that we can see the display of a wonderful, selfless love, which changes us as we keep on looking at it.

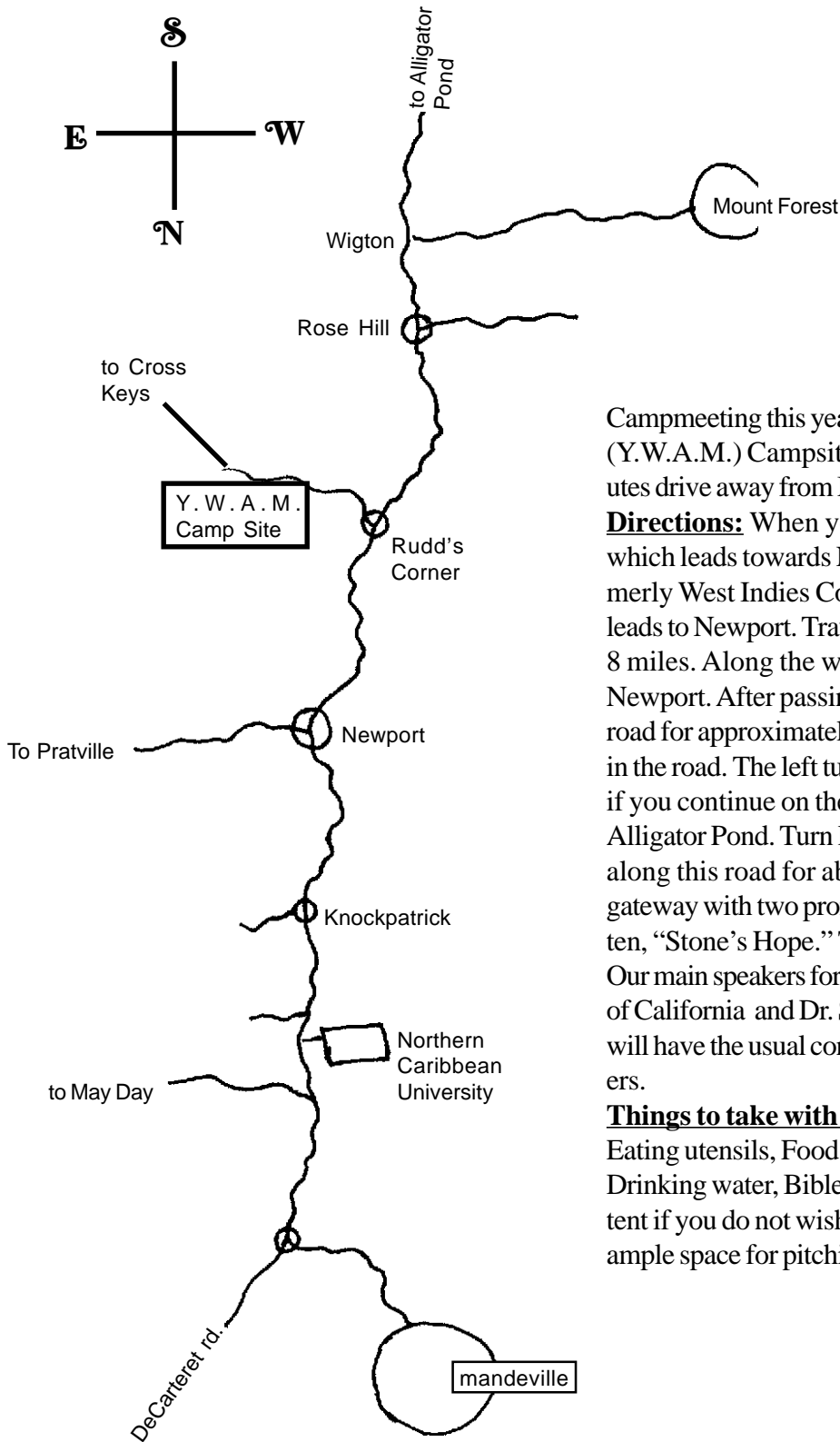
As He Loves

“If God so loved us . . .” What then is the most logical response than that we who are the objects of such a love should also love the others who are fellow recipients of that same love. (1 John 5:1). If God loves you, then that is my reason for loving you, because by His love He has given me the right and the duty to be an extension of Himself, to reveal Him and to propagate

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Jamaica Campmeeting, 2004

Thursday, April 8 - Monday, April 12



Campmeeting this year will be at the Youth With a Mission (Y.W.A.M.) Campsite in Manchester, just about 20 minutes drive away from Mandeville.

Directions: When you get to Mandeville, take the road which leads towards Northern Caribbean University (formerly West Indies College). This is the same road which leads to Newport. Travel along this road for approximately 8 miles. Along the way you will pass Knockpatrick and Newport. After passing Newport continue along the main road for approximately 2 - 3 miles until you come to a fork in the road. The left turn will take you to Cross Keys while if you continue on the right you will be on the road to the Alligator Pond. Turn left on the Cross Keys road and drive along this road for about a half mile until you come to a gateway with two prominent stone pillars on which is written, "Stone's Hope." This is the entrance to the campsite. Our main speakers for the campmeeting will be David Sims of California and Dr. Steven Burks of Ohio. In addition we will have the usual contributions from our Jamaican speakers.

Things to take with you

Eating utensils, Food to take care of your meals, Bedding, Drinking water, Bible, notebook, pen. You may also take a tent if you do not wish to sleep in the dormitories. There is ample space for pitching tents.

Call or Write:
Restoration Ministries, P.O. Box 23,
Knockpatrick P.O., Manchester,
Jamaica W.I.
ph. (876) 625-2785

The Truth of The Gospel

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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 was referring to the heathen who deny this. It would also be simple to comprehend if he was 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 Thess. 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 the messiahship of Jesus!!

Second Lie

His second lie is that he denies the Father and the Son. How does he do

this? Does he deny (a) the reality of their existence (B) 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 Rom. 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 Pet 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 Pet 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 Messiah 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 colour 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 was 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 moulded 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 di-

vine 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 **BE-COME** 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.(Gen. 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 Jesus rebuked His disciples for having little faith when they were on the sea and the boat was in danger of sinking. 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 o.k. 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! How much more convincing would be his words 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. (John 14:11; John 14:10)

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 (Isa. 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 the life of infinite purity which He lived, 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 Cor 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. {YI, October 13, 1898 par. 6}



The Fruit of The Gospel

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His nature in all the world.

A further implication of this is that we who have received of His love and partaken of His spirit should love as He loves (John 4:12,16). We should “so” love as He “so” loved. Our love should be His love extended through us, therefore it should be (a) unconditional (b) unchangeable (c) self-sacrificing (d) giving (e) willing to suffer supreme pain and loss for the well-being of others (f) willing always to put others before ourselves.

Love is the ultimate purpose of the gospel. When a person reproduces the love of God, then the gospel has nothing more to do for him. The Bible has fulfilled its purpose for Him.

“Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His

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The Fruit of The Gospel

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parting words are fulfilled, "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts. {DA 641}

This truth, that love is the ultimate, and in fact the only legitimate fruit of the gospel needs to be repeated over and over again until we fully grasp the reality of it. Many of us see love as one of the peripheral doctrines of the Bible and really feel that we need to concentrate more on the "real issues," such as The Sabbath, The Mark of The Beast etc. Perhaps this attitude is strengthened by the fact that the word "love," is so abused and misused today by all and sundry that even the abominable practice of homosexuality is justified in the name of "love." Popular Christian leaders and televangelists

like to use the word and have so distorted its meaning that almost anything is accepted in the name of "love."

However, these abuses are no reason for God's people to neglect this focus. The Bible makes it very clear, over and over again that love is everything.

"The fruit of the spirit is love..." (Gal. 5:22)

"The greatest of these is love..." (1 Cor. 13:13)

"Above all these things put on love which is the bond of perfectness. (Col 3:14)

Assurance in the judgment

Let us conclude by examining one final point which especially for Seventh-day Adventists, is highly significant. It is found in verses 16 and 17:

"God is love and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of

judgment: because as He is, so are we in the world." (1 John 4:16,17)

This is a truth on which to meditate. Here is cause to pause for deep reflection. Here we see a reason to reorient our entire lives. What is it that gives us boldness in the judgment? Where does our confidence lie? What is it that gives us the assurance that we are able to face the scrutiny of the last great tribunal? Yes, it is what God has done for me through Christ. This is true. However, the evidence that I have accepted the gift of God is the fact that, "as he is, so are we in this world." It is the fact that we "dwell in God," by dwelling in love – that is, by living our lives wholly and completely for the purpose of loving others – and in this way, perfecting love. When the day of judgment comes we will have no fear (John 4:18). We know that we have His character and are ready for heaven because we love as He does.



Open Face

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