

“Who concerning the Truth Have Misaimed” — 2 Timothy 2:18

Misaiming concerning the Meaning and Function of Life

Misaiming: “Then, at the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4, 5), the resurrection of the just (Acts 24:15), the righteous come forth immortalized, at the call of Christ the Life-giver. And they then enter into life everlasting, in their eternal home in the kingdom of glory. Such is our understanding” (*Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, p. 520).

Truth: Several key terms are confused above, including, *immortalized*, *Life-giver*, *life everlasting*, and *eternal*. This passage interprets them almost synonymously, and concludes that Christ will impart His eternal life into His believers only at the time of the first resurrection. The passage also implies that the object of Christ’s life-giving is to grant us immortality, life everlasting, and an eternal home at some point in the future.

The term *immortalized* refers specifically to the immortal, incorruptible new body, or tabernacle, that believers will receive from Christ at His coming (1 Cor. 15:52-53). The term *Life-giver* could be used to convey a better emphasis—that of life dispensing. When a person repents and believes, Christ immediately dispenses Himself as the eternal life into that new believer (John 10:28; 1 Tim. 6:12; 1 John 5:11-13). Throughout the believer’s life, Christ is constantly seeking to give life to his entire tripartite being—spirit, soul, and body (Rom. 8:10, 6, 11). Day by day Christ desires to impart the divine eternal life to His receiving believers. The term *life everlasting* is not carefully distinguished from the fourth term *eternal*. *Life everlasting* typically conveys the notion of living the human life forever, whereas *eternal life* in the Bible refers to God’s own life. Only God’s life is eternal and uncreated in nature; thus, when God enters man, eternal life also comes in. Redeemed and regenerated believers will have life everlasting only because they possess the eternal life, God Himself, who has no beginning and no end.

This passage seriously errs in failing to accurately distinguish these terms, incorrectly using them to support an unbiblical notion that believers must wait until the day of resurrection to gain eternal life. Such a teaching defrauds believers of their present enjoyment of the “things which relate to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3),

which come from the eternal life, who is Christ living in them (Col. 3:4).

Misaiming concerning the Nature of Man

Misaiming: “The Scriptures teach that the soul of man represents the whole man, and not a particular part independent of the other component parts of man’s nature” (*Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, p. 515).

Truth: The clear testimony of Scripture declares that man is tripartite: spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23). Contrary to the notion presented above, the three parts of man, while certainly interdependent and interrelated, also have independent functions (Heb. 4:12). During one’s earthly pilgrimage, this body serves as the temporary tabernacle of one’s inner being (2 Cor. 5:1), comprising both the human spirit and human soul. Thus, when the inner man is separated from the outer man, the body, physical death occurs. The body goes to the grave, but in the case of believers, the soul and spirit go to Paradise (Luke 23:43). This is why the New Testament records that the martyred saints are in Paradise. Their soul and spirit are in Paradise, where the Lord assured the repentant thief at Calvary that he would be. That thief left his physical body in the grave, but his soul and spirit went to Paradise. When the Lord returns, even our fallen, corrupted bodies will be transfigured into ones freed from the element of mortality.

Contrary to the notion that the soul sleeps in the grave with the body (the doctrine of “soul sleep”), the Scriptures make it evident that the believer departs to “be with Christ” and waits in Paradise for the day of resurrection (Phil. 1:23). At that time, the spirit and soul will be reunited with a new body, an immortal one.

Misaiming concerning Christian Weakness

Misaiming: “A grim fact that faces us today is the impotence of the Christian community....They should still dominating the culture when in fact they are marginal. Their false eschatologies place them on the sidelines of history” (R. J. Rushdoony, *God’s Plan for Victory: The Meaning of Postmillennialism*, Chalcedon Monograph Series, No. 1, 1997, p. 4).

Truth: This passage is an attempt to diagnose the spiritual impotence evident among many believers. It blames this impotence on doctrinal error—specifically, the doctrine concerning the Lord’s return. It is certain that our understanding of truth affects, and even effects, our spiritual experience, but it is absurd to ascribe such a major problem to an eschatological misinterpretation. Church history is replete with the testimony of Christian individuals and communities who were far from marginal and impotent, despite their differing beliefs about the timing of the Lord’s return and the inauguration of His kingdom’s manifestation. Many believers and Christian groups have strongly impacted their generation, even though some were pre-millennialist, post-millennialist, or amillennialist, while others were seemingly unconcerned with eschatology at all. This is not to say that we should not endeavor to ascertain correct scriptural teaching concerning the end times. Nevertheless, it is unreasonable to assume that an inadequate understanding of these doctrinal matters alone is the cause of rampant marginality.

The solution does not lie in proper eschatology. Rather, Christians are always and only potent in the person of Christ. Paul affirmed that he had no confidence in the flesh, but that he could do all things in the empowering Christ (Phil. 3:3; 4:13). Our power, impact, and potency are uniquely Christ Himself. In Him we are vital, not marginal, members of His Body. The Lord Jesus Himself said, “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5), referring to Himself as the vine and to us as living branches. Apart from a personal experience of Christ and a vital corporate church life, it is difficult if not impossible for believers to escape the marginality that comes from spiritual impotence. Christ Himself is the unique solution to this lack. If Christians are sidelined, marginal, and impotent, it is due to a shortage of vital and direct experiences of Christ.

Misaiming concerning Mixing Culture with Worship

Misaiming: “What Determines the Worship Model? I think we should let culture determine the worship style....So, if you’re in California, you should have a

California culture church. If you’re in Ohio, you have an Ohio culture church. If you’re in Mississippi, you should have a Mississippi culture church” (Rick Warren, “Let Culture Determine Your Style of Worship,” *Pulpit Helps*, June 2001, pp. 1-2).

Truth: The quotation above misdirects the believers with the erroneous notion that worship should be determined by contemporary regional culture. This thought leavens the possibility for true worship with culture in order to make worship more accessible. This notion contains a major error. The New Testament strongly declares that human culture with all of its inherent ordinances and enmity has been completely annulled on the cross of Christ. All the cultural differences between Jews and Gentiles—representing all humankind—were done away with on the cross, and as a result, both peoples have been fully reconciled to God in one Body (Eph. 2:16). Whereas the cross has expunged culture, this article welcomes culture back into the worship of the church. It promises that culture will build up the church; conversely, however, the New Testament warns us that culture divides the church. Paul proclaims that in the church “there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:11). According to the divine revelation of Scripture, there cannot be California, Ohio, or any other kind of culture in the church life. Rather, all cultures of the old adamic race have been replaced with the divine attributes and human virtues of the wonderful person of Jesus Christ. Here, in His Body the church, He alone is all in all. But if we heed the advice of this author, we could have a Yankee church in Connecticut, a beach church in Florida, and a cowboy church in Texas. In other words, we would introduce even more divisions into the Body of Christ than there already are. We should not be bound to any form of culture. Instead, we should be bound uniquely to Christ, and all worship should simply be an expression of Christ within His members.

by Gary Evans

Footnotes from the Recovery Version of the New Testament on the New Man

“And have put on the **new** man, which is being **renewed** unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Col. 3:10).

new: The Greek word here means new in relation to time...Since Christ is the constituent of the new man, we, who are the new man, are one with Christ. This is the most basic and crucial point in this book.

renewed: Because the new man was created with us, who belong to the old creation (Eph. 2:15), as his constituents, he needs to be renewed. This renewing takes place mainly in our mind, as indicated by the phrase *unto full knowledge*. The new man was created in our spirit and is being renewed in our mind unto full knowledge according to the image of Christ. (Recovery Version, v. 10, notes 2 and 3)