

R H M Testimonials

Thank you for your insights on prayer. They are right on! I noticed a lot of people believe that God has a master plan for everyone and He allows tragedy and pain for some reason that only God knows. That is not Biblical in some of these terrible events and distorts the character of God I believe. Your insights on prayer certain play into that whole theme. – CS

Just finished showing your Redwood Series of messages. All of us saw and experienced Jesus Christ in a more intimate way, Thank you! – DU

Words cannot begin to express the gratitude I have for the privilege of being able to sit and listen to your message this

past Sabbath in _____. Though I’ve been a member of the SDA church for almost 30 years, I have been struggling for years with the picture of God presented by the church. I even stopped attending regularly over a year ago, partly because (even though I love my church family at _____, and I’ve never felt threatened at all by any of them) I couldn’t reconcile the picture of the Loving God I know with the picture presented by many in our churches. I’m so glad I came this weekend. I feel both lighter and more firmly planted. May God richly bless you in your ministry, and protect you and your beautiful family from the wrath you are certainly rousing in our enemy. – Anon.

Sermon of the Month



One of the most subtle demonic deceptions in our current cultural age is that God is not beautiful enough to win the human heart, that threatening and judgment must be added too in order to move us to follow Him. But Jesus IS beautiful. I am becoming more and more convinced that if all the ugliness of Christianity could be gotten out of the way, and people could see what Jesus and the kingdom is truly all about instead, many would flock to him (just as they did when He was here) because they too would sense the resonance inside of them saying “YES! This is what I’ve been looking for!” Subtle misunderstandings of the Gospel have prevented

us from seeing the true beauty of God. Experience Him afresh this month with “Message of Mercy, part 1” by Herb Montgomery, a presentation given last summer at the Arizona Camp Meeting. Yours free, as our gift to you!

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Schedule

MAY 20-21, 2011 Charleston SDA Church Charleston WV 304-346-7771	MAY 29 - JUNE 4, 2011 Lake Junaluska Campmeeting Lake Junaluska, NC 704.596.3200
MAY 27-29, 2011 Vancouver Island Campmeeting NanOOSE Bay Pentecostal Camp in British Columbia 250.468.5574	JUNE 17-25, 2011 Mountain View Campmeeting Elkins, WV 304.636.0811
	JULY 8-16, 2011 Wheeling SDA Church Wheeling, WV 304.242.6559

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Awakenings

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Traditional Views of Hell vs. Jesus’ Age to Come

by Herb Montgomery



“When Jesus heard this, he said to him, ‘You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’” Luke 18:22

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, contrary to modern Christianity, we do not find Jesus endeavoring to motivate those around Him to do something so that they can go to heaven when they die. Rather, over and over, Jesus calls those around Him to embrace a way of life in this age, that they may be in harmony with the way life is lived in the age to come.

I’ll give you a moment to recover from that last sentence. I do not mean those words in any “meritorious” sense at all. I’m NOT saying that how we live in this life “merits” a “right” to the age to come. However, Jesus was quite clear (see the parable of the rich man and Lazarus) that the philosophies we embrace and choose to live by in this life dramatically determine whether the age that is to come is the paradise He intended for us to experience, or whether it is a place of torment and torture instead. No, I’m not teaching eternal torment either. Let me explain.

First, Jesus’ primary focus was NEVER (again, contrary to modern Christianity) making sure people go to heaven when they die. This idea is foreign to the teachings and focus of the Jesus we find in the four gospels. Rather, Jesus emphasized two eras or ages: the one now, and the other one which is soon to come. Note carefully the following statements by Jesus:

“Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” Matthew 12:32

“...the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels...the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age...This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous.” Matthew 13:39, 40, 49

“As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’” Matthew 24:3

“...Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:20

“...will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age... and in the age to come eternal life.” Mark 10:30

“...will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.” Luke 18:30

“Jesus replied, ‘The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage.’” Luke 20:34-35 (Don’t get side-tracked here on the debate of whether there will be marriage in the age to come. Don’t.

Stop. The only point I’d like for you to take from this is that Jesus lived in the paradigm of the age on this earth now versus the age on this earth to come. He did not live in the paradigm of life on this earth now versus life in heaven when we die.)

Now, with this paradigm in place, I want us to stop and ponder for a minute exactly what the “age to come” will look like. I want to point out simply one aspect, one description of the age to come that has become meaningful to me as of late. It is by no means an exhaustive description of the age to come, but it is one aspect of what life in the age to come will look like that will help me illustrate why, I believe, Jesus taught that how the philosophies we embrace in this life determines not whether we will “obtain” life in the age to come, but rather what we will EXPERIENCE that life to be in the age to come. (The age to come is a guaranteed gift from God, by virtue of His love, to everyone! As in Adam all die, in Christ ALL will be made alive. All are given entrance into the age to come as a gratuitous gift by grace, but not all will EXPERIENCE it the same way. Some, Jesus said, are resurrected to LIFE, while others, Jesus said, will be resurrected to condemnation. See John 5.)

Okay, back to that description of the age to come. This one is from the Apostle John:

“After this, I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.” Revelation 7:9

What I want you to notice about this description is the multi-ethnicity of the age to come.

The age to come is an extraordinarily complex, interconnected, and diverse reality in which individual identities are not lost or repressed, but are embraced and celebrated—an age that is an expansive unity that goes beyond, and yet fully embraces, staggering levels of diversity.

continued on page 2

MINISTRY UPDATE

Sylvan Lake SDA Church and Red Deer SDA Church
Sylvan Lake and Red Deer, AB Canada
March 13-26, 2011

Fourteen days. Thirty-two presentations. I think that's a personal record!

Man, am I SHOT!!!! I'm on a plane today, headed back home after being out of the country for a little over two weeks. But, oh my, was it worth it!

These past two weeks were spent endeavoring, in keeping with the ministry of Jesus Himself, to help others see a more beautiful and accurate picture of the character of our Heavenly Father.

The first seven days were spent at the Sylvan Lake Adventist Church and the second seven were spent at the Red Deer Adventist Church. Each night, we sought not to simply follow Jesus' teaching but to catch a glimpse of Jesus' own conception of the character of our Heavenly Father and, through allowing Jesus to change the way we see God, experience a radical change in every area of our lives from the inside out. This was a series aimed at the community around this church, so we not only looked at how believing in God as a being defined by the teachings of Jesus changes our spiritual lives but also how it heals our deepest emotional wounds, setting in motion changes in every area of our lives, physically, mentally, financially (which is the largest area of interest in most folks' lives today), and restoring us to the love that we were made for. As paradoxical as this sounds, the way up is really down. The secret to experiencing purpose, meaning, and fulfillment in our lives comes not in embracing our current American (or Canadian) cultural values but, rather, in embracing Jesus' radically different picture of God and following His teachings of radical, self-sacrificial, other-centered love.

"For if you want to save your own life, you will lose it; but if you lose your life for my sake, you will find it" (Jesus, Matthew 16.25).

Jesus came not to establish another "religion" but to establish a very different kingdom in the hearts and lives of people. And, as overused as

this phrase is in our modern-day lives, Jesus, nonetheless, came to start a subversive revolution, and He invites us to join Him. Jesus called for a complete revolution in our understandings of God and how we allow that picture to be lived out in our lives, especially, if not solely, in our relationship to others.

Testimony after testimony was given over the last two weeks as those who attended, in sometimes very emotional ways, expressed how these two weeks had changed their lives! Between the two churches, we had over two hundred in attendance, with over fifty of those being from the surrounding communities. As a public speaker who has done his share of evangelistic meetings, I have to confess that, sometimes, you simply preach. But, other times, you truly feel that you are a conduit of something so much larger. It's almost as if you are simply a witness to a connection being made between what you are saying and the hearts of those who are listening that leaves you standing in awe of just how powerful the truth of our heavenly Father really is. As these churches keep in touch with these precious souls from the communities of Sylvan Lake and Red Deer and as relationships continue to be fostered as these churches seek to continue the work of grace and love that was begun during these past two weeks, I cannot wait to see how God's kingdom will be enlarged as a result of these meetings.

Thank you, Red Deer and Sylvan Lake. And to each of you reading this today,

still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy." Luke 18:18-23

The one commandment Jesus leaves out is, "Thou shalt not covet." The philosophy that this young man was subscribing to in this age was predisposing him to an experience in the next one. Jesus sums up the other-centered philosophy of God's kingdom in His statements immediately following His interaction with this young ruler:

"Truly I tell you,' Jesus said to them, 'no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.'" Luke 18:29-30

The age to come will be one of radical self-sacrificial, other-centered love. It will be an age of extravagance, loving to give, not to get. Every other person will be considered of greater importance than oneself (according to Paul). I want to be clear. The philosophies we subscribe to in this life do not merit or disqualify us for the age to come. God loves all, Jesus came to save all, and all are given a resurrection. But not everyone feels that what they are being resurrected to is paradise. Some feel as if "heaven" is, for them, really hell. The philosophies of life

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Heavenly Valley SDA Church and Central SDA Church
South Lake Tahoe, CA and Albuquerque, NM
April 1-2 and 15-16, 2011

I want to start out by saying to all of you who were praying for each one of these events, that I witnessed enormous transformations and deep relational paradigm shifts in the hearts of many who attended both of these weekends as open listeners encountered the message of who God is and what's in His heart for them.

I have never been more convinced that Jesus (and the way He understood the Character of the Father) is the lens through which we desperately need, as Christians (those who claim to be following Jesus), to reassess all of our interpretations of what the Scriptures are teaching. The God that Jesus reveals is so radically different from what many have assumed God to be.

When I arrived at South Lake Tahoe, my first impression was that this was simply going to be another weekend series. Many of those who attended had heard me before or had read my book, so, at the very minimum, I was excited to be able to build on information I had shared before and to offer some new thoughts that have been churning in my head and heart in regard to the Gospel.

But, as I was sitting at the Fellowship Dinner after the morning church service, I met a dear sister who had quite a story. Her son had left, not simply the church, but had left a faith in Jesus entirely. This mother had read my book *Finding the Father*, and felt a strong need to share the book with her adult son. (You could see the emotion in this mother's heart as she shared this story with me.) Her son read the book and encountered a God he had never imagined existed. His heart came into contact with a love he had never believed was there and was able to understand that the love in God's heart had been reaching out to him every moment of his life. He felt that God's love surrounded him as genuinely as the air he breathed. What else could he do but breathe it in?

we choose to live by in this age determine whether the age to come is a place in which we find joy and happiness or torment and torture. The spirit of unselfish love that reigns there—every heart responding to the central Divine heart of Infinite Love—will touch no answering chord in the hearts of some. Their thoughts, their interests, their motives, will be alien to that age. They will be a discordant note in the melody of the age to come. The age to come will be to them a place of torture; and at the center of it all, they would long to be hidden from Him who is its light, the Other-centered Center of that age's joy. It is no arbitrary decree on the part of God that excludes them from the age to come; they are shut out by their own unfitness for and dissonance with the other-centeredness of the age to come. The other-centered love of God would be to them a consuming fire (see Song of Solomon 8). They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the "face" of Him who died to redeem them (see Revelation 6).

How, then, do we ensure that the gift we have been given by the extravagant love of God through the medium of the cross of Calvary is to us the gift of heaven rather than the gift of hell? I thank God that His other-centered love for me is powerful enough to awaken that same love in me—that faith in His love for me actually has a transforming power itself to restore me into the same image of that love once again.

This mother was simply visiting the church there in South Lake Tahoe. Her family was vacationing there, and they had no idea that the "author of this book" was at the local Adventist church that they were planning on visiting. She walked in during the first presentation that morning and, when she realized who was speaking, her mouth hit the floor.

I was so humbled to hear her story of how the God her son found in the pages of *Finding The Father* had turned his heart back to Himself and infused it with a newfound passion to become a follower of Jesus in all that that genuinely means.

Praise God for His Extravagant Love.

This last weekend I was in Albuquerque, New Mexico. (I'm sitting in the Atlanta airport as I write this, still recovering from the dehydration and elevation of this weekend. Wow, it's been a long time since I felt this dry! And I don't mean my humor.)

But, what a blessing I received this weekend and what a blessing that so many people came up to me and proclaimed that they had received blessings this weekend too. I had met one of the small groups of this church at the Arizona church last weekend, and there was an immediate connection. There are times in my travels when I stumble into intense pockets of God's grace at work. This was one of them. This little group was largely made up of retirees, but they are anything but "old"! I have to confess that, at first, I was astounded at the progressive openness of their thinking and the level of acceptance and love that I witnessed in terms of their feelings for one another. I immediately recognized what I was seeing in their interactions with each other as those of Jesus incarnate again.

They also immediately felt an affinity to the words and ideas that they heard me presenting each evening at that camp meeting, and a friendship, a kinship was established and something very special was set in motion.

This last weekend was just a step along that journey, and, although I encountered so many blessings and miracles this last weekend, it was just the beginning. I will be returning to this church in the fall of 2012 to help its members take the message of God's extravagant, radically self-sacrificial, other-centered love to the community around them.

I am HIS workmanship. I am HIS creation. And as long as I believe in His undying love for me, He, and His love for me, will finish the work He has begun in me. WHEN He puts those finishing touches on me, and HOW He does it, is up to Him. My only concern is to BELIEVE in His love, and submit to (rather than resist) the work that His love for me is doing in my heart toward others.

I'm quite sure that this week's message will produce many questions. Many have abused some of the things I've shared. Balance is much needed. My prayer is that we will ultimately see that if any are lost, it will not be some arbitrary decision made by God based on a life that, quite honestly, none of us ever chose to born into in the first place. If the racist is not there, if the abusers of women and children are not there, if those who take advantage of the poor are not there, if those who cherish power "over" rather than power "under" are not there, it will not be God's decision, but theirs.

Something to consider.

Keep building the Kingdom of His other-centered love until this age becomes the next.

In love,

Herb

continued from page 1

Now, stop for a moment and consider this: I grew up in the South, where racism, much to my concern, is still rife. For the sake of making the point painfully clear, bear with me here open-mindedly. What would be the experience of a racist in the age to come? How would a Klan member feel sitting next to one of my best African American friends? The age to come for a racist is not going to feel like a gift at all, but rather, like torture. (Maybe this was the point of Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus—not that when you die, you go to a place of eternal torment [a teaching that I personally abhor], but rather that the philosophy of life we embrace in this age determines whether our EXPERIENCE in the age to come is one of paradise or torment, heaven or hell.) This is the point I believe Jesus was making for the rich young ruler as well.

"A certain ruler asked him, 'Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: "You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'" 'All these I have kept since I was a boy,' he said. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, 'You