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## Events & Schedules

**March 20-21, 2009 — The Good News Tour** (Dr. Greg Boyd, Dr. Brad Cole, Herb Montgomery, Pastor Manuel Silva, Marco Belmonte—with more to be announced): Vancouver Central Seventh-day Adventist Church in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, updates at [GoodNewsTour.com](http://GoodNewsTour.com). **Contact:** Dorothee Cole @ 888.250.4612

### Ongoing Weekly Events

**Thursday, 12-1 PM — Loma Linda University Medical Student Bible Study** (Dr. Brad Cole): See [GodsCharacter.com](http://GodsCharacter.com)

**Monday, 12-1 PM — Loma Linda University Allied and Public Health Bible Study** (Dr. Brad Cole): See [GodsCharacter.com](http://GodsCharacter.com)

# The Good News

A NEWSLETTER ENTIRELY ABOUT GOD : ISSUE TWENTY-ONE : DECEMBER, TWO-THOUSAND AND EIGHT

I'm amazed at all the lines drawn in the sand that separate people. We use walls, streets, and railroad tracks to partition us from others. The "haves" from the "have nots"! Sometimes the lines are shades of color or size or even hatred for those on the other side of the line because we don't have what they have and they aren't like us.

LINES, LINES, AND  
MORE LINES!

by Scott Bennett

Fences and gates keep "them" out (whoever "them" is) and protect us from "them". Imaginary lines in the dirt turn into fences, rolls of barb wire, and guarded borders to protect one nation from another and machine guns make sure only the right people cross. Even neighborhoods have their divisions. We use all sorts of fancy names to call others who don't fit or believe like we do.

Churches are divided by denominational walls that transcend national boundaries. The Right and the Left divide churches within the churches. We find so many reasons that we are different and use them as an excuse to insulate and protect us from "them" and keep "them" out. Many churches have become clubs who service the membership and keep people out by minutely defining their theological uniqueness. "You don't believe like I do so stay away from me!" "I know bible prophecy better than you do," "I'm right and you're wrong," "I'm better educated, smarter," "I have prophetic insight, more authority, more truth." More lines, lines, and more lines!

Again I'm amazed as I wonder if any of these lines are according to God's will. Jesus made it very plain that the one purpose for which He came to this earth was to tear down the walls that separated us from His Father and from each other. In fact He told us that the Good News about His Father's graciousness should cause us all to love and trust Him. He told us how to treat each other as a result of seeing His Father's love played out in His life. In Jesus' last prayer with His disciples on the same night that He gave Himself to the angry crowd, He told them:

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17: 20-23)

Jesus prayed for unity, a unity based on knowing the Father's love and glory that Jesus revealed. So, why is there so much disunity in Christ's church? I think there is a simple answer to this question and many others such as, "Where is the power given to the early church? Why is the church so divided over the gift of tongues? Why aren't we healing the sick, giving sight back to the blind, and raising the dead like Jesus did? Why is the gift of prophecy so rare in our modern churches while it was rampant in the early church?" We've lost a lot and I believe there is a simple way to regain it: Preach the gospel!

Not what many churches call "the gospel", but the Good News that Jesus taught and gave authority to His disciples to teach! The same Gospel that He commissioned us to teach clear to the end! The Good News about His Father's Love! He couldn't stop talking about the Father until one day Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." (John 14:8, NIV)

How many Christians do you think would say such a thing? Show us the Father and that will be enough for us? Most Christians are more than content to know Jesus and have Jesus stand between them and the Father as a power buffer. But what was Jesus'

a newsletter **entirely** about God

answer to Philip? "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9, NIV)

Just how good is God? The book of Hebrews says that, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being..." (Hebrews 1:3, NIV) So to know the Father we must look at Jesus!

But what does all of this have to do with the imaginary lines we draw to keep others on the outside and "the elite" on the inside? Jesus came to this earth as a helpless baby boy. He came into our human family at a time in Jewish history where societal lines were the way of life. He was of the tribe of Judah, the family of King David, the nation of Israel, a son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They wanted Him to be the pride of Israel, the future King who was supposed to free them from the Roman yoke of bondage; they wanted Him to draw new lines, and set them above their enemies as rulers for eternity. They thought He was coming to make Israel the elite among the kingdoms of this earth.

But how does Jesus rule? Does He rule with force and violence or with the towel with which He washed His disciple's feet? Did Jesus close doors or open doors? Did He erase the lines of power that encircled the Romans and redraw them around the Jews? No. Jesus made very clear the distinction between the kingdoms of this world which use their authority to rule with force and coercion, and the kingdom of God, where those in authority serve others with their very lives. Jesus rules through the principles of love and freedom. What greater power is there?

And when Jesus came to a people where societal lines separated men from women, Jews from Greek, slaves from free, rich from the poor, one nation from another, one race from another, one family from another – when He came into the family of Abraham, into the tribe of Judah, into the family of David, He invited the whole world to come with Him and reign with Him on David's throne. He invited us – the whole world – into Abraham's family and made provision for our adoption. The lines that humanity had drawn couldn't contain Him any more than a swimming pool can contain the ocean. God is not a member of any race, nation, or especially any denomination! Believe it or not, folks, Jesus is not a Baptist, a Catholic, a Mormon, a Methodist, or a Seventh-Day Adventist!

Jesus tore down the walls that separated us from God by revealing how much God loves us. And when we accept His love and forgiveness, we must tear down the walls that separate us from one another. I have a vision to look at every person through God's eyes. Not through prison bars, penthouse glass, or across the tracks, but with the new eyes that Jesus gave to us all. I want the kind of compassion that tears me apart when others are suffering. I'm tired of turning my back and walking past the victims of sin on the other side of the street. I know I can't do this on my own, but I know also that **the Gospel has the power to change me**. If only Jesus' church would preach the Gospel! The Good News about God! The Best News ever told!

# PEACE ON EARTH AND IN HEAVEN

by Dorothee Cole

The atonement is the process of reconciliation culminating in an intimate relationship between God and humanity. The God who fills the whole universe with His presence, who has been with us for the past 6000 years relentlessly trying to woo us back to Himself, did not hesitate to come down to us as a human baby. He grew up as a simple carpenter, demonstrated service and kindness to the outcasts of society, and died the death of a common criminal. Emmanuel: God with us, condescending and mingling with His people! He did not leave us in the depth of human misery alone. God in human form experienced the awful consequences of living in the realm of Satan, including God-forsakenness and death. The Creator of the universe identified with us, joining and collaborating with us amidst sin and destruction.

Satan's lies about God's character destroyed the trusting relationship between God and Adam and Eve. And so our first parents hid in the bushes for fear of God. Their concept of God was not of One who would spend nine months in a womb and then three days in a tomb. By coming to us as a gentle and humble Savior, God "created something new and different, as different as a woman protecting a man." (Jeremiah 31:22 GNB) The life and death of Jesus are God's crowning act of bringing us out of the bushes and into a love relationship with Him, again reconciled and at-one.

His primary intent in doing so was to reveal His character and principles of selfless, other-focused love to us and to all intelligent creatures who may have questioned his faithfulness and trustworthiness (Ephesians 3:10). Christ, who is the visible likeness of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15, GNB), assures us that his great plan of reconciliation for all of humanity does not consist of a mere satisfaction of an abstract law that demands the payment of a death penalty – be it by the victim or by an appropriate ransom such as the Son of God Himself. But exponentially higher in significance, Christ validates the ultimate Law of Love which is the very transcript of God's own character – the Law that says that we must love our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27). It is in this highest sense that He Himself did what the law required, for "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13, NLT)

God invites us to much more than a mere acquittal of our guilt and an adjustment of our legal status.

We are much more to Him than pardoned sinners, benefited servants or obedient slaves. The kind of relationship he invites us to experience is that of mutual and intimate friendship with Himself (John 15:15), in the order of unity only known to lovers ready to be married (Revelation 21:2). The only hope for our healing and the healing of humanity is a real and intimate knowledge of God. Jesus tells us that "eternal life means to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, whom you sent." (John 17:3, GNB) Christ's mission in coming into the world was to bring us the knowledge of God's character, because Christ is the portrait par excellence of God's own being (John

17:3,4; 2 Corinthians 4:6 GNB; Hebrews 1:3).

At-one-ment with God can only take place when we at last recognize our Creator with faces unveiled from the lies of the enemy. When Jesus was on the earth, he was Emmanuel – God with us. And when God's people begin to operate by the ways of God's kingdom exemplified by Christ's self-sacrificial life and death, we will experience God's secret truth – Christ in us, the spiritual resurrection of His body on earth (Ephesians 5:32; 4:16). This is at-one-ment in its highest sense: God's Spirit within His friends, revealing God's character to a power-dominated and hungry world through their lives of self-sacrificial Calvary-like service and love.

Our mistrust and hatred of God has caused us to mistrust and hate each other, and so atonement must also happen among the children of God. As

soon as the relationship between God and his children was damaged in Eden, human relationships suffered as well. Adam and Eve now accused each other (Gen 3:12), and the relationship between brother and brother was fractured leading to the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. The mission of Jesus was not only to unite us to God, but also to restore at-one-ment between brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers. Ultimately, a binding and close unity is to exist between us and our fellow humans. With the One Father, we are to be brothers and sisters of the same Parent, loving each other with self-sacrificial other-focused love. Full and complete atonement is not reached until we learn to view each other with the same eyes that God views us – in a non-judgmental tender-hearted Calvary-like love (John 13:34,35). Only then can there be truly Peace on Earth – only then can atonement be complete.

