

**Gems Present in Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs about Freedom:  
A Unique Voice in the Advocacy of Religious Liberty**

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## **Introduction**

During this religious liberty Sabbath, it is fitting to ask the following key questions: What kind of advocacy do Adventists' representatives promote? What is Seventh-day Adventism a voice for? If we say, "religious freedom," it would be accurate but incomplete. It would not be specific enough. There are hundreds of organizations that promote religious freedom.

Let us rephrase the question: What is the Seventh-day Adventist specific mandate? Adventist identity is connected at a deeper level to the issue of freedom, freedom of conscience, freedom of religion or belief, and the so-called fundamental freedoms. Human dignity is grounded on this unique revelation. Humans are made for God. God graces us with the access to Him and with becoming habitations of God.

Every person is therefore sacred. We are habitations of God the Holy Spirit: holy sanctuaries or temples, more valuable than any holy site. We believe in life, we work to promote life, which is the overarching platform for freedom and fellowship. Life the way God meant it is a life of love. This is because we were created in the image of the One who is love. The root cause of most human relational problems is a distraction from love. Adventists are convinced that what they share with the world at its core is a message of love.

This morning, I want to establish that the world's most important need is the acknowledgement of free will and the right use of it in the light of eternity. If we look at the great controversy and the story of mankind on earth, we could summarize it in this sentence: *the love of God doubted, and the love of God demonstrated.*

## **The everlasting gospel in Exodus and Revelation**

Love is the foundation of freedom: freedom in God, freedom that stems from the being of God and freedom for God to reciprocate God's love. This revelation of God's love is the most profound aspect of the gospel: the good news of God. Since love cannot be forced, God created freedom for human beings to have the choice to reciprocate God's love. We will look at this gospel of love in the context of two Bible books: Exodus and Revelation.

At the heart of the book of Revelation, stands what is called the everlasting gospel. Seventh-day Adventists understand the specific mandate entrusted to our care, the proclamation of the everlasting gospel. That is the good news of total freedom. The announcement of a final exodus from evil, sin, oppression, suffering and death.

In the Bible, *the language used in the book of Revelation is reminiscent of the book of Exodus with the revelation of the name of the God of freedom, of liberation and liberty. Redemption by the blood of the lamb.* You can see a relationship between these two Bible books in many ways. For example, the plagues are resources to defeat God's people's oppressors. Look at the exodus per se, the song of Moses, the song of the lamb, the celebration of the feast of tabernacles post-day of judgment, *Yom Ha Kippurim*. Consider the comforting of those who come from the great tribulation.

A Common denominator between the story of God's people in the book of Exodus and the book of Revelation is the reality of freedom, liberation. For instance, the plagues of the book of Exodus mirror the plagues of the book of Revelation, and both show how profoundly God honors free will.

### **Not without a time of grace**

The end of the world, as it was the case with the conquering of the land of Canaan, does not come without a time of grace, precisely to give humanity an opportunity to repent. The three angels' messages are in essence a call to repentance and a message of restoration and hope. Though twice in these messages the idea of lack of repentance is underlined, the warning aspects contained in the messages are ultimately driven by the love of God, who "wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2: 4). Despite the lack of repentance, God is still determined to send a last message to the whole world, the proclamation of the everlasting gospel.

In the first covenant, God created a people who experienced liberation from oppression. They were graced with the exodus, which for the children of Israel marked the existence of a new people of God, a people of priests. They sang the song of Moses. In the last proclamation of the everlasting good news, the redeemed are described standing upon the sea of glass mixed with fire. "They sang the song of Moses, the bond servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. 15: 3). We are invited to experience the final exodus. The everlasting good news of total freedom to have access to God's presence, in gratitude, worship, and eternal fellowship with God. That is the destiny of the new humanity in Christ.

The great news of the everlasting gospel is about new humanity, a new environment, and a new atmosphere where freedom, holiness, righteousness, peace, and joy will dwell forever. The Victory of the promised Savior is remarkably and dramatically described in Revelation 5 in the context of a cosmic crisis in need of a cosmic redeemer, a *Goel* (Redeemer) who saves his people.

The everlasting gospel to the world is none other than:

- The good news of complete future freedom from evil, sin, suffering, and death at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

- It follows the pattern of the liberation story of the Exodus in the Old Testament, where God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt. So, it is the news of a final, ultimate "exodus" for God's people.
- At its core, it is the good news of God's love demonstrated through setting people free from all that hinders flourishing, relationship, and intimacy with Him.
- This freedom is holistic - emotional, spiritual, physical - allowing unrestricted life in the presence of God.
- It fulfills the deepest longing of every human heart to reconnect with God, the source of life, and find full freedom in intimate relationship with Him.

In essence, it is the good news that Christ will defeat sin and all evil, human pain and suffering, and establish total freedom to live in joyful relationship with God forever when He returns.

### **The everlasting gospel and Revelation 5**

The Cosmic Crisis is about the need for salvation. Who can bring about salvation? And, what is salvation? The whole section of the seals in Revelation 5 shows that salvation involves the following:

1. Resolution of a cosmic crisis.
2. Reversal of despair.
3. Restoration of God's kingdom.
4. Restitution of priestly dignity and function.
5. Reinstatement of kings.
6. Reunion of the cosmic family. And,
7. Resumption of worship, praises, songs in celebration and in gratitude for the salvation fulfilled by the blood of the lamb.

The immediate context of the seven seals helps us broaden our understanding of the concept of salvation:

1. Salvation is the grace of being able to stand in the day of the Lord. The Day of Judgment and wrath (Rev 6: 17). If the Lamb were not standing, resurrected, no one would be able to stand.
2. Salvation incorporates the sealing of God's servants, the 144,000. "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond servants of our God on their foreheads" (Rev 7: 3).
3. Salvation is to come out victorious from the great tribulation.
4. Salvation includes washing one's robe and making it white in the blood of the Lamb.
5. Salvation is to be introduced in the presence of God
6. It is to be shepherded by the Lamb and be led by him to the springs of the waters of life.

7. Salvation is to be consoled, comforted, and having one's every tear wiped from our eyes.

Freedom is indeed the subject of Scripture. And Jesus is the Savior who will fulfill the freedom promised, He came to bring liberty at the first advent. He is coming to bring total freedom from evil, all evil, sin, suffering and death. This is the everlasting gospel of the good news of total freedom.

## Conclusion

In summary, as a church committed to freedom and religious liberty:

- Adventists have a unique perspective on freedom of conscience and religion grounded in their beliefs about human dignity, being made in God's image, and the purpose of life being fellowship with God. This freedom is seen as foundational.
- Adventists promote life, share life, and see freedom as allowing the flourishing of life unrestricted, in contrast to oppression and coercion. Their various ministries aim to improve lives.
- Love grounded in being created to reflect God's character is seen as the goal of freedom. Authentic relationships require engaging the whole person.
- The "everlasting gospel" Adventists see themselves called to proclaim involves the good news of total future freedom from evil, sin, suffering and death at Christ's second coming, patterned after the Exodus liberation story. It's ultimately about God's love demonstrated through setting people free.

I call the church this morning to raise its voice to proclaim the everlasting gospel, and to stand firm and commit to religious liberty, which is the foundation of this everlasting gospel.