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Let us continue to be united in our biblical faith, the Three Angels' message and mission with our dedicated leaders for the glory and honor of our Lord, the soon-coming Savior.

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## SALVATION AND THE ADVENTIST FAITH AND MISSION\*

By Mario Veloso

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Since I will speak about the Adventist understanding of salvation, faith, and mission, I will select eschatological texts in the books of Daniel and Revelation, where the church of the end is clearly referred to. Our subject will be reviewed under three headings: (1) Salvation in the time of the end. (2) Salvation and faith in the end time. And (3) Salvation and mission in the time of the end.

### Salvation in the Time of the End

The major texts for our study are Revelation 12 where salvation means victory over the dragon in the great satanic war against Christ and his followers; Revelation 7 where salvation means victory over the wind-war that blows over the earth after the sixth seal; and Revelation 19 where salvation means victory over the great harlot which the Lord our God will judge and condemn in the pre-advent judgment.

**Victory Over the Dragon.** In Revelation 12 we find the account of the great controversy between Michael and the dragon, between the Son of God and Satan. The war broke out in heaven,<sup>1</sup> then continued on earth<sup>2</sup> against the woman-church. Finally, the dragon makes war with the remnant.<sup>3</sup>

In the middle of the war, a loud voice from heaven says: "Now

the salvation . . . [has] come.”<sup>4</sup> The word “now” refers to the center of time. This is the present of salvation, the cross and the death of the Lamb. The word “salvation” here means victory. The victory over Satan and his war. The expression “has come” is also important. In the original language, the verb that conveys the concept that salvation is not only a hope for the future; but rather a reality already introduced in our present lives. Salvation has already come. It has arrived and is still here.

The victory of God and Christ over Satan on the cross has already arrived. The victory of the persecuted church has already come. The victory of the brethren, those who are accused day and night by Satan—should I also say that among them are those accused by magazines, by cassettes, by videotapes, by sermons, by who knows what and how—has already come. The victory of the remnant has already come and is a present reality.

What are the consequences of an already present salvation in the life of those who overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and who “[do] not love their life even to death?”<sup>5</sup> It is full assurance of salvation. It is joy, the great joy of victory. “For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them.”<sup>6</sup> “Those who dwell in heaven” (Rev 12:12) are the followers of Christ, the worshipers of God, those whose names are written in the Book of Life.<sup>7</sup> Opposed to them are those “who dwell on the earth,” the worshipers of the dragon and the beast.<sup>8</sup>

The followers of the dragon are great fighters, but there will be no victory and no joy for them. “Woe to the earth and the sea; because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”<sup>9</sup> He has a short time because this is the time of the end. The time of our victory by the blood of the Lamb.

**Victory Over Tribulation.** In Revelation 7, salvation means victory over the wind-war held by the four angels. It blows over the earth before the seventh seal.<sup>10</sup> Satanic ruin and destruction, satanic malignity, malicious designs, and “the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife”<sup>11</sup> will be let loose against humanity, but the people of God will be saved.

The means of their victory is the seal of the living God,<sup>12</sup> and the blood of the Lamb.<sup>13</sup> Sealed with the Sabbath of God, the

144,000 and a great multitude, clothed in white robes and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, stand before God’s throne and before the Lamb. They have palms of victory in their hands and cry out with a loud voice: “Our God, who sits upon the throne, has the power to save his people, and so does the Lamb.”<sup>14</sup>

Those saints came through the great tribulation<sup>15</sup> with tears in their eyes.”<sup>16</sup> Persecution, criticism, and destruction of their prestige, character, reputation, and bodies did not prevent them from washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

Now is the time for all of us to wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb, because the victory over the wind-war of satanic and human passions and persecution has already come.

**Victory Over the Great Harlot.** In Revelation 19 salvation means victory over the great harlot. The saved multitude in heaven, shouts: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God!”<sup>17</sup> Why? Because “He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her.”<sup>18</sup>

This judgment comes after the message of the angel with a loud voice in Revelation 18<sup>19</sup> and before the second coming of the King of Kings on a white horse.<sup>20</sup> The “great harlot” is a picture of the “united apostate religions at the close of time.”<sup>21</sup> They call themselves believers, but they are not. They are fighting against the true Christians, the remnant, trying to make them participants in their apostasy. But they will not succeed. The same judgment that decrees condemnation for the great harlot proclaims salvation for those who are under the power of God,<sup>22</sup> because the victory has already come. “And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne, saying, ‘Amen! Hallelujah!’”<sup>23</sup>

In the last days of the great controversy we have to face the Devil himself, the wind-war of Satanic malignity and human aggressive passions, and the war of doctrinal immorality championed by the great harlot. All the forces of apostasy, from within and from without, will be, and they already are at work against the Remnant of the church. But we, Seventh-day Adventists, should be united, in Christ and His remnant church.

“Are you saved?” is the battle word of today’s war. The answer



is clear: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."<sup>24</sup> Why am I saved? Because "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us,"<sup>25</sup> and because the victory has already come.

How are we saved? Through the death of Jesus Christ. For God appointed us "to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us."<sup>26</sup> We did not die for our sins. Paul writes to the Romans: "It is Christ that died."<sup>27</sup> Jesus did not die for his own sins; He had no sin. Jesus died in our place, a vicarious death. He was a "ransom" for us<sup>28</sup> and "gave Himself a ransom for all."<sup>29</sup>

In the worst fighting of this war we must be sure of our salvation. We must press together in genuine love, in true faith, in pure doctrine, in Christ and in His remnant church. Sometimes it seems that Satan is overcoming us as individuals. But never forget: the victory has already come. Sometimes it seems that Satan is overcoming the church and is about to destroy her; but never forget: The victory has already come. Not because of the good works we do, but because of the blood of the Lamb, the victory is assured.

What is the meaning of salvation in this context of war and end time? It means strength, power, and the coming of the kingdom of our God.<sup>30</sup> It means overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and by the missionary testimony. It means not loving one's own life, but loving the life of Christ and rejoicing for His victory in the cross.<sup>31</sup> It means not responding to Satan's furious attacks in his way of making war against the Remnant, but by keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus Christ.<sup>32</sup>

### Salvation and Faith in the End Time

Salvation and faith are so intimately bound together that they cannot be separated. To experience one of them without the other, is impossible. But today many Christians wrongly understand justification, obedience, mission, worship, salvation, as though each were independent from the others.

Many praise justification but downplay obedience. They exalt worship but neglect mission. And even worse, with regard to salvation they are more concerned about themselves than about God. They cannot understand the Christian experience of salvation

beyond the self. Of course, they would not call it selfish, but rather, self-esteem, or self-realization, or self-affirmation, or self-assurance.

I am not saying that the assurance of salvation, and spiritual affirmation, and the sense of realization and personal worth are wrong. On the contrary, in victory over Satan we have to experience all of them. What I am saying is that a self-centered understanding of salvation is wrong. It is wrong faith, wrong doctrine, wrong piety, and wrong mission. In a self-centered religion, faith is feeling, doctrine is humanism, piety is mysticism, and mission is fighting against the church, its leaders and mission. This fighting is not in line with God's salvation, but with Satan's war against the Remnant.

Salvation is not a matter of feelings, it is received by faith. But today faith is easily forged as feelings. Paul defines justification by faith as reconciliation with God,<sup>33</sup> but today it often means feeling "OK" about oneself. Obedience is fulfilling God's commandments, but today it means attaining personal fulfillment.

In Scripture, giving for mission or participating in mission-outreach is the result of one's dedication to God, but today for some it is the consequence of how one feels toward the church and especially toward some leaders of the church, on all levels of leadership. If I believe that some leaders are doing what I consider to be wrong, I then may conclude that I should refuse to participate in mission activities, and my money goes to somebody else, even my tithe which in reality is not mine but God's.

In Scripture, worship is what I bring of myself to God as a response for what He is and has done for me through creation and redemption. But today, it is understood as what I can get from the service and the pastor.

Salvation is what Christ obtained for me and in my place on the cross, but today some think that it came through my actual personal participation in His death. Paul says that "[O]ne died for all, therefore all died."<sup>34</sup> But Paul clarifies this in the next sentence "and He died for all"—not together with all—"that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."<sup>35</sup> Our death is not to pay for our sins but to enable us to live for Christ.

This is also the language of Romans 6 where Paul speaks about dying with Christ through baptism, not on the cross. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."<sup>36</sup> In baptism "our old man is crucified with him."<sup>37</sup> Then Paul's conclusion is "if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."<sup>38</sup>

The baptismal death is not *for* sin, because it was Christ who died *for* our sins, but *to* sin. Being dead to sin we are alive "to God," and sin will not "reign" in our bodies any more.<sup>39</sup> All this is possible only by faith in Jesus Christ.

Faith is not feeling. Faith is intimacy with God. This is why Paul defines justification by faith—the beginning of Christian experience—as "reconciliation."<sup>40</sup> Sin made human beings enemies of God. Because of Christ's sacrifice and by the work of the Holy Spirit we believe, and this faith is restored intimacy with God. It is not the mystic experience that seeks to find God in the intimacy of self. To the contrary, it is the close affection brought by God-achieved reconciliation.

Through faith we become intimate with God, and from this intimacy derives the whole Christian experience. Justification is by faith, obedience is by faith, mission is by faith, worship is by faith, salvation is by faith.

Nothing in our Christian experience is defined by whether we are the ones who do the works of salvation or whether it is God who does them. It is defined rather by whether we are prodigal sons and daughters having returned home in restored intimacy with the Father, or whether we are still alone fighting for our own feelings in a far away country, as the prodigal son, or even at the Father's home, like his brother.

### Salvation and Mission in the Time of the End

Our battle should not be to defend our feelings, but to fulfill the mission of the church. What is our mission? The natural tendency is to define the mission of the eschatological church with texts that describe the historical mission of the Christian Church,

Matthew 28:18-20 for example. But to be more specific, we should define it with eschatological texts such as Daniel 11 and 12, Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, Revelation 10 and 14. From these biblical passages we find that the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is at least three things.

**Our Mission: To Share Insights, Understanding, and Righteousness (Dan 11, 12).** In the time of the end—a time of trouble such as never was, a time of deliverance for God's people—the people of God are described as "Those. . . who are wise," (RSV) "those who turn" (RSV) people, and "those who shall make many understand."<sup>41</sup> They "shall shine like the brightness of the firmament" and "turn many to righteousness."<sup>42</sup>

The people of God are teachers ["they that be teachers," KJV, margin], converters ["they that turn many to righteousness"], and instructors ["shall instruct many"].<sup>43</sup> Every one of these words conveys the idea of sharing. The mission of the Adventist church is to share insights, understanding, and righteousness. *Righteousness by faith, insights of the future through the knowledge of prophecy, and understanding of revealed doctrines, in the context of the time of the end.*<sup>44</sup>

**Our Mission: To Prophecy Again (Rev 10).** In this chapter we find the origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The church would come into existence out of a particular experience related to the opening of the "little book," the book of Daniel certain of its aspects were to be closed "until the time of the end."<sup>45</sup> Its opening happened when the seventh angel was "about to sound" its trumpet<sup>46</sup> and the mystery of God was ready to be finished.

What is the mystery of God? It is a secret, unknown for humanity except as God reveals it through His prophets and messengers, particularly His plans for the time of the end and His plan of salvation, the gospel. Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar: "There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days."<sup>47</sup> And Paul declares: "I became a minister . . . to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest revealed to His saints . . . the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,"<sup>48</sup> and "the mystery of the gospel."<sup>49</sup>



Prophecy and gospel are blended together in the “mystery of God” referred to in Revelation 10:7. Prophecies would be fulfilled and the preaching of the gospel would be finished. This is why the mission of the church of the end time is defined by the verb “*to prophesy*.” “You must prophesy again.”

**Our Mission: To Preach the Gospel (Rev 14).** We must preach the gospel, of justification by faith with an insight into the final events. It includes particularly the present time of the judgment, the fall of Babylon, and God’s “indignation” with those who worship the beast and its image, and receive its mark.<sup>50</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was not called to fulfill its mission in the context of salvation by works (fourth century state Christianity), neither in the context of the sixteenth century Reformation, fighting against good works as the means to attain salvation. We cannot properly fulfill our mission unless we preach the entire gospel in the context of God’s pre-Advent judgment in progress, in the context of a Babylon already fallen and in the context of God’s “indignation” with those who worship the beast and its image, and receive its mark. In short, in the context of all three angels’ messages.

The end of the world is coming and our preaching must acknowledge its reality. Not in a negative, distressing way; but proclaiming this end of the world as the beginning of the Kingdom of God, because we preach the “gospel of the kingdom.”<sup>51</sup>

Even though the people of our time very much love soft words, soft music, soft drink, and soft soap, we cannot preach a soft gospel. We must preach “the everlasting gospel.”<sup>52</sup> This gospel produces a people with the patience of the saints, a people who keep the commandments of God, a people that have the faith of Jesus,<sup>53</sup> and a people that have the testimony of Jesus Christ.<sup>54</sup> It is a strong, powerful gospel. A gospel of living faith. This is the gospel we believe in, and preach about.

About this gospel Paul said: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’.”<sup>55</sup>

When we speak about preaching the gospel and its results, we

are talking about the power of God in action and about God’s righteousness in its most astonishing disclosure—that is, in the life of a just person who actually lives by faith. This is the way John the Revelator describes the end time people of God, the Remnant—a people of faith.

This faith is at the same time both subjective and objective. I feel it, but I feel something that is produced by Christ. It is “the faith of Jesus.” John says: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”<sup>56</sup>

It is not only a matter of feeling well. It is also a matter of keeping the faith. When we fulfill our mission, we have to go far beyond our own feelings; we have to include also the teachings of the gospel. That is why, in describing this kind of believer, John puts together the commandments and faith as a unit controlled by the same verb—“to keep.” We are called and empowered by the gospel to keep the commandments of God and to keep the faith of Jesus. The everlasting gospel never separates faith from commandments or teachings, doctrines, and beliefs. We have to keep them all. Our mission includes all of them.

What does “keeping” mean? The original text uses a word with several meanings. None of them is legalistic or self-centered. Let me explain only two nuances to clarify this point.

First, “keeping” means “to watch over” in a protective sense. Imagine a mother with two children, one four years old and the other six. She works very hard in her eight-hour-a-day job. Now she is at home. Resting? That would be what she deserves, but she is working in the kitchen, preparing supper for the family. Her husband is not home yet. She puts the children nearby so they can play. While she works, she also keeps an eye on them. If there is an unusual noise, she immediately checks on the children. If there is no noise at all, only a long, quiet silence, she goes immediately to see them.

Our mother is keeping her children—protectively watching over them. Is she doing it because somebody is forcing her to do it? Is she doing it to be considered a good mother? Certainly not. She is doing it because of her love for the children. We keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus with the love of a

concerned and dedicated mother. We fulfill our mission with the dedication and faithfulness of a loving mother. Let no one tell me that this is a legalistic teaching or has the intention of attaining salvation by works.

Second, "keeping" means "to hold in custody." See now another scenario. Let us recall former times when there were no banks to put one's valuables in safety. Everyone had to keep them at home. When a person needed to travel, he chose either to take his valuables with him or leave them in the custody of a friend. There were robbers on the roads. If he left them with a friend, the friend put the valuables together with his own goods. He might even incur some extra expense to increase their security.

When the traveler returned, he would visit his friend to take back his valuables. The friend kept everything safe and nothing was lost. Can you imagine such a friend telling the traveler, "Since I had a burdensome responsibility and incurred extra expense as a result of helping you, part of the worth of your treasure is mine? It is the product of my own work."

No, he would never say that! He would not even think that way! Instead he receives his traveler friend with joy, knowing that all his work to keep his friend's treasure safe would not increase by a penny his own personal worth. The only thing that really increased was his friendship with the returned traveler friend.

This is how we keep God's commandments and the faith of Jesus—His teachings and doctrines. And this is the way we fulfill our mission: with the love of a concerned mother, with the dedication of a loyal friend. We don't do it to be good or to earn anything. We do it purely out of faith. Not an only-feelings-faith, but a faith which forms a personal intimacy with God and Christ through the Holy Spirit, a faith which is feelings and doctrines, a faith that takes us to every nation, and to every tribe, and to every tongue, and to every people of the whole earth to fulfill our mission.

Our mission cannot be separated from the experience of salvation and the keeping of the faith. It is a mission that shares prophetic knowledge, doctrinal understandings, insights in righteousness, and the everlasting gospel in the context of the end time, the judgment, the falling of Babylon and God's rejection of those who worship the beast and the false prophet.

Our mission is the way we respond to the war that Satan is fighting against the Remnant. We fulfill our mission out of our intimacy of faith with God and Christ. We fulfill our mission with total assurance of salvation.

Yes, we must have the assurance of salvation, but not because we keep the commandments of God, which we should surely do. We must have the assurance of salvation, but not because we have the testimony of Jesus or the Spirit of Prophecy, which we have and should follow. We must have the assurance of salvation only because "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come."<sup>57</sup> We must have the assurance of salvation only, and let me repeat it, only because the victory through the blood of the Lamb has already come. It is out of this experience of salvation that we fulfill our mission to "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people."<sup>58</sup>

### Endnotes

\*This was Dr. Veloso's Keynote Address delivered on April 16, 1992, at the International Adventist Theological Society Convention, Loma Linda, California. This convention was dedicated to the theme of "Salvation." It was slightly revised for publication.

- 1 Revelation 12:7.
- 2 Revelation 12:6, 13.
- 3 Revelation 12:17.
- 4 Revelation 12:10, NASB.
- 5 Revelation 12:11, NASB.
- 6 Revelation 12:12, NASB.
- 7 Revelation 13:8.
- 8 Revelation 13:4, 8, 14; see also 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 17:2, 8.
- 9 Revelation 12:12, NASB.
- 10 Revelation 7:1.
- 11 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 614.
- 12 Revelation 7:2.
- 13 Revelation 7:14.
- 14 Revelation 7:10, author's free translation.
- 15 Revelation 7:14.
- 16 Revelation 7:17.
- 17 Revelation 19:1, NASB.
- 18 Revelation 19:2, NASB.
- 19 Revelation 18:1.
- 20 Revelation 19:11-16.
- 21 *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7 (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), p. 852.



- 22 Revelation 19:2.  
 23 Revelation 19:4, NASB.  
 24 1 Timothy 1:15, NASB.  
 25 Romans 5:8, NASB.  
 26 1 Thessalonians 5:9, 10, KJV.  
 27 Romans 8:34, KJV.  
 28 Greek, *lutron*, Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45.  
 29 Greek, *antlutron*, 1 Timothy 2:6, KJV.  
 30 Revelation 12:10.  
 31 Revelation 12:11, 12.  
 32 Revelation 12:17.  
 33 Romans 5:1, 10.  
 34 2 Corinthians 5:14, NASB.  
 35 2 Corinthians 5:15, NASB.  
 36 Romans 6:3, 4, RSV.  
 37 Romans 6:6, KJV.  
 38 Romans 6:8, NASB.  
 39 Romans 6:11, 12.  
 40 Romans 5:1, 10.  
 41 Daniel 11:33; 12:3, RSV.  
 42 Daniel 12:1-3, RSV.  
 43 Daniel 12:3; 11:33, KJV.  
 44 Daniel 12:4.  
 45 Daniel 12:4.  
 46 Revelation 10:7, NASB.  
 47 Daniel 2:28, NASB.  
 48 Colossians 1:25-27, RSV.  
 49 Ephesians 6:19, RSV.  
 50 Revelation 14:6-11.  
 51 Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10; Luke 21:31.  
 52 Revelation 14:6.  
 53 Revelation 14:12.  
 54 Revelation 12:17.  
 55 Romans 1:16, 17, NKJV.  
 56 Revelation 14:12, NKJV.  
 57 Revelation 12:10, NKJV.  
 58 Revelation 14:6, NKJV.

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## SALVATION IN SCRIPTURE\*

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### Introduction

The topic, "Salvation in Scripture," is extensive, covering nearly every page of the Word of God. It has far richer dimensions than we can imagine. Whenever we plumb the depths of this topic, we are renewed by the marvel of God's redeeming grace and His superabundant mercy.

I will not attempt to address the topic from existential, philosophical, or religious perspectives. That is outside the purview of this study. Scripture itself shall shine forth in its own beauty.

In Scripture the saving activity of God is manifested in known and specific places, from known and actual threats, at known and predicted times, and deriving from a known, loving and self-revealing God. He solves—in ways consistent with Himself and the plan devised in the triune Godhead—the known and real predicament of sin which originated with Satan and was entered into by mankind. Since space in a short essay is restricted, we make no attempt to be exhaustive. We present our topic under the headings: the "breadth of salvation," the "need of salvation" and the "way of salvation" as the Word of God highlights them.

We have to admit that from the biblical perspective it is impossible to define the breadth and depth and height of such a vast topic as salvation. Nevertheless, we need to make an attempt at defining the word "salvation."

The word "salvation" itself is derived from the Greek nouns *soteria* and *soterion*, both of which are rendered into English as