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Jesus Christ, The Freedom of God: The Lord and Coming Savior

In the Judeo-Christian scriptures, the Apostle James specified that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17). This statement is relevant when it comes to the gift of freedom. It resonates with the famous claim Jesus made about the freedom he offers: “If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” (John 8:36). Real freedom is connected to Jesus Christ, the savior.

In the gospels it is reported that no one spoke like Jesus. His teachings were unique. There was complete harmony between his words and his person. In him, there was no discrepancy between the ideal and the real. Core the ministry of Jesus is the work of liberation. His discourse in the synagogue of Nazareth at the beginning of

The Christian good news or gospel is inseparably connected to freedom. This appears in the very name “Jesus” which means “Yahweh saves.” Jesus is Lord and savior. Only a lord can be a savior. The lord of space, time and life is the only one qualified to be a savior. Only the One who is totally free can ultimately be a liberator.

The content of the Christian message is essentially the proclamation of the person of Jesus, the embodiment of God’s self-revelation and the freedom He offers. The God of freedom is committed to liberate human beings so that the covenant God proposes may be possible. Love cannot be forced. For this reason, among others, God created freedom.

Why focus on the person of Jesus Christ? One of the founders of the Adventist movement expressed the following:

“Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel’s message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in this message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out.”¹

In essence, the message Christians are called to share with the world is a person: Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the perfect model of what it means to be human and at the same time the supreme revelation of God, revealing God’s character, will and purposes.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 156.

Of Jesus, God, the Father declared: "in him, Jesus, I am well pleased." Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, the word made flesh, the way the truth, the life, according to the gospel of John.

Uplifting Jesus

Jesus, the New Adam

Jesus is called the second Adam (1 Cor 15:20-27; 44-50).

He succeeded where Adam and Eve failed.

He has come to create a new humanity. The restoration of the genuine image of God in human beings. A new start.

This is the reason why we are baptized, dead to old humanity, and ushered into being in Christ, our new deepest identity.

Jesus, the New Moses

SIGNIFICANT PARALLELS

1. Moses was about to be murdered. Egypt sheltered him. Jesus was about to be murdered Egypt sheltered him.
2. At the command of God, Moses changed the water into blood. Jesus changed the water into wine.
3. Moses and the Israelites walked on a parted sea. Jesus walked on water.
4. Moses and all the prophets said:" Thus, said the Lord." Jesus said "Amen, I tell you." He is the Lord.
5. In Exodus 24:8 Moses took the blood and springled it on the people and said: "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words."

In Matthew 26:28, Jesus said: "This is my blood of the new Covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

6. Moses went up on the mountain (Exod. 19:1-23:33). Jesus went up on the Mountain (Matt 5:1)

7. Moses received the Torah. Jesus explained the meaning of the Torah (Matt 5-7).

8. Moses came down from the Mountain, his face shining with the glory of God (Exod. 34:29-35). Jesus went up on the mount of transfiguration, His face shone like the sun (Matt 17:2).

9. Moses and the prophets did wonders, miraculous deeds. Jesus did more than all of them combined: Wherever He passed by, all cries cease, all morning stopped.

Wherever Jesus passed by, darkness receded, the blind could see, because Jesus is the light of the world.

Wherever He passed by, death got intimidated, the dead resurrect because Jesus is life.

10. Jesus is the New Covenant in person. All the promises of God are yes in Him.

11. Jesus is the new temple, greater than the temple (Matthew 12:6).

This was scandalous.

The temple was not only the center of the Jewish world but the whole world.

No wonder, the indictment brought against Jesus to murder him was that he said he would destroy the temple.

Wherever and whenever, Jesus met people, they were all clear about the will, character and heart of God because Jesus is the visible face of God, the way to God, and the embodiment of the purposes of God.

The gospels are autobiographies of God. Jesus being God's self-revelation

Jesus, The New Torah from God: Insights from the gospel of Matthew

The gospel of Matthew places significant emphasis upon Jesus words. No wonder this gospel is considered a manual for discipleship.

Matthew: A Manuel for Discipleship as shown in the Structure of the first gospel

Five sermons followed by accounts of the deeds of Jesus which serve as illustrations.¹⁴

Introduction: birth, baptism, temptation

Word Ch. 5-7 Deed Ch. 8-9 Word Ch. 10 Deed Ch. 11-12 Word Ch. 13 Deed Ch. 14-17
Word Ch. 18 Deed Ch. 19-23

Five (5) discourses or speeches or teachings of Jesus are each preceded and followed by stories or narratives.

Every discourse ends with a similar sentence:

“When Jesus finished...”

Chapters 1-4 Narrative Chapters 5-7 Discourse #1

“When Jesus finished these words...” (7:28) Chapters 8-9 Narrative
Chapter 10 Discourse #2

‘When Jesus finished giving these commands... (11:1) Chapters 11-12 Narrative
Chapter 13 Discourse #3

“When Jesus finished these parables...” (13:53) Chapters 14-17 Narrative
Chapter 18 Discourse #4

“When Jesus finished these words (19:1) Chapters 19-22 Narrative Chapters 23-25
Discourse #5

“When Jesus finished all these words (26:1) Chapters 26-28 Narrative.

The key idea in the gospel of Matthew is “fulfillment.” Jesus came to fulfill God’s purpose for the whole of creation for God’s covenant people Israel and for the all the world of peoples, nations and tongues.

Jesus, The New Israel

Significant Parallels

1. Israel went to Egypt. Jesus went to Egypt
2. God called Israel out of Egypt. God called his Son Jesus out of Egypt
3. There were twelve tribes in Israel. Jesus chose twelve disciples
4. There were 70 elders who accompanied Moses. Jesus sent 70 people to preach and to heal
5. Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness. Jesus spent 40 days in the desert.
6. Israel was tempted. Jesus was tempted.
7. Jesus succeeded where Israel succumbed to temptations.

8. Moses and the Israelites walk on a parted sea. Jesus walked on water. Jesus's baptism also has a connection to Israel passing through the red sea (1 Cor. 10:1)
9. Jesus, the fulfillment of Israelites' institutions
10. Jesus is the Torah in person. He is the word of God in person.
11. Jesus is also the Temple of God in person, the manifestation of God, Immanuel.
12. He is the fulfillment of Israelites' festivals. He is our Passover.

In the context of the gospel of Matthew another parallel is worth noting:

13. He is the consolation of Israel. He is the One who can stop Rachel's weeping. He brings hope.

"Rama was a scene of national grief as the captives of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered in chains to be sent to exile to Babylon (Jeremiah 40:1)...Israel did return from exile, but the oppression of the enemy continued unabated. Therefore, Matthew, like Jeremiah, hears Rachel still weeping over the loss of her children: In Herod's slaughter of the infants the oppression and destruction of Israel still continues. The hope promised to Rachel had not yet been fully realized.

Matthew quotes Jeremiah 31:15 not only to establish the continuity of Israel's grief but also to signal the fulfillment of Israel's hope contained in its context. Jesus escapes the slaughter, and therein lies the fulfillment of Israel's hope. Since Jesus is now Israel, Abraham's true seed and God's true Son, God's promise to Rachel of a restored family is now on its way to fulfillment."²

14. The recognition of Jesus as God's Son echoes the servant song in Isaiah 42:1, 44:1, and 52:13. In this setting, Isaiah 49:5 clearly designates the servant as an individual figure. Isaiah 49:5 reads: "And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, And My God is My strength)."

15. The forty days and forty nights spent in the wilderness (Matt. 4:2)

The temptations parallel the story of Israel narrated in the book of Deuteronomy

16. Jesus is the New Moses (The reference to the law, on the mountain)

17. He deliberately chose twelve apostles reminiscent of the twelve tribes of historic biblical Israel.

² Holwerda, *opcit*, 41-42

18. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew (Matt 5:1) echoes Moses' giving of the law on Mount Sinai
19. Jesus is the New authority from God who can declare: "Amen, I say to you" (Matt 5:18) or "you have heard . . . but I tell you" (Matt. 5:22).
20. Jesus' significant acts during the communion service that He held with His disciples as he referred to the blood of the covenant (Matt 26:27-28) reenact what Moses did with the children of Israel at Sinai (Ex. 24:8). However, there is something more, for Jesus is the covenant. We move from "the blood of the covenant to "my blood of the covenant" (Matt. 26:28).
21. The language of atonement applied to Jesus (Rom 3:25; 1 Jn 2:2; 1 Jn 4:10, and also Heb 2:17)
22. Jesus is repeatedly designated as the High Priest (Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:5, 10; 6:29; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11. See also Jn. 17).
23. Christ is the One who gives God's people rest, unlike Joshua (Heb. 4:8)
24. Jesus is designated as the bread of life compared to the manna which did not guarantee eternal life (Jn. 6:31 ff)
25. Jesus is the sanctuary of God among human beings (Jn. 1:14).
26. Jesus is the Restorer of the destiny of the world. He is the Goel (Rev 5)

What went wrong with Israel as a people is corrected by the life of the Messiah. What went wrong with the world is fixed by Jesus. He is the Righteous Servant who fulfils the law. Jesus satisfies the hope of Israel, even though He transcends the local or national expectations. Instead of being merely the Savior of Israel, He is the Savior of the world. Instead of just being the priest who blesses Israel, He is the One who blesses all the nations of the world, according to the gospel God preached to Abraham.

"Jesus is all the promises of God, he is the absolute yes of divine philanthropy and of the plan of God's salvation for the whole world." [1] He purchased for God people from all tribes, nations tongues and peoples.

He is the one who snatches the universe from despair. He stops the weeping. He restores our sense of wonder. He brings everlasting celebration, songs of gratitude and joy. The whole created and redeemed order can finally worship in unison."³

What was to come with Jesus surpasses by far what was expected. Christ is revealed through OT prophecies and stories, yet His portrait is not the sum of the various prophecies. His revelation surpasses what could have been draw

³ [1] Yves Congar, *Jesus Christ: notre médiateur, notre Seigneur* (Paris: Le Cerf, 1995), 105-106.

from the various predictions or types of the Old Testament. As God cannot be confined to definitions likewise Jesus cannot be limited to definitions –even prophecies. The hope and destiny of Israel converge in Him, yet what we find in Him is better, “more excellent,” to use a terminology from Hebrews. “Jesus exceeds the limits of the OT knowledge of God; . . . The early church proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, well aware that no figure like him can be found in the OT. He is the Messiah and is recognized as such not because he can be identified with any particular prediction or with a number of predictions taken together, but because He unifies in His person all the ideas that are called messianic. The unification transforms some of those ideas profoundly.”⁴

The good news is even better than what was anticipated. Moreover, with Jesus Christ, the promises God made to the patriarchs resume, and are taken to all their intended beneficiaries, that is, all the families of the earth. Using the patriarchal names is indeed an indication that pointed to fulfillment, also understood as the goal, paroxysm or climax.⁵

Jesus’ Life and teachings are about the Righteousness Jesus taught, the Kingdom he preached and the Love He shared.

Instead of restoring the kingdom of Israel, as the disciples were legitimately still expecting after Christ’s resurrection, Jesus aims at restoring and expanding God’s kingdom to the whole world. However, the nature of this kingdom can properly be understood in the light of the Old Testament background.

Jesus: The New Covenant: The Freedom from God

The New Covenant is a covenant of freedom.

Freedom to have access to God. No need for mediation of holy places holy objects or holy personnel

⁴ 1] *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, eds. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Rolland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice hall, 1990), 1315.

⁵] Michel Quesnel, *Jésus Christ selon saint Matthieu: Synthèse théologique* (Paris: Desclée, 1998), 127. “It is not indifferent that Jesus used the verb “to fulfill” plèroun, to hurl the Pharisees, in the text usually translated by “fill up then, the measure of your fathers.” (Matt:23:32). Matthew stresses the continuity between the fathers and the Pharisees.

The freedom to have direct access to God is the reason why the disciples of Jesus Christ are associated with the functions Jesus had assumed. all are incorporate as priests and temples of God.

This is what distinguishes us as Seventh-day Adventists.

Jesus Christ is our only leader, our only mediator, our only savior, Our Lord.

That is the foundation of our theology built on the revelation of God, God's self-revelation in Christ Jesus. God's revelation as Father Son and Holy Spirit.

In Jesus all he promises of God are yes says the Apostle Paul: In 2 Corinthians 1:20-22, The Apostle wrote.

“For as many as are the promises of God, In Him they are yes; therefore; also, through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. Now He who establishes with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.:

The Ultimate Archegos, arch leader of a New Exodus

More subtly, Jesus' preaching about the kingdom of God presupposes the end of the exile. It is therefore an interpretation of Israel's history. In this perspective, the ministry of John: the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus, points to the approaching end of the exile and the dawn of a new exodus.

Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'make ready the way of the lord, make his paths straight!" (Matt. 3:1-3)

The original setting of the quotation in Isaiah 40:1-5 was purposed to comfort God's people, to announce the end of the exile.

5. **The Fame:** Jesus possesses all authority (Matt 28:18).

Jesus has all authority:

- a. in His teaching
- b. Over the natural world

- c. Over the supernatural realm
- d. Over the domain of sickness
- e. Over death, the last enemy
- f. To forgive
- g. To give everlasting life

6. The Sufficient Gift of God.

Jesus is the supreme Gift of God,

In Him all the blessings of God are embodied (2 Co 1:20).

He is the One sent to bless us (Acts 3:24)

In Him all the promises of God are yes (2 Co 1:20)

He is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Co 1:30)

In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3).

7. The Savior

A major theme which outlines the current purpose of God is "Salvation." Given its importance it is worth expanding a little.

1. Salvation is liberation, from all evil. It is ultimately an exodus from death and all its symptoms.
2. It is the gift of an incredible surprise of being graciously led by God to the discovery of who God is.
3. It is a response to God's generous invitation and hospitality to align the whole of one's life to the revelation of God's character, sovereignty, lordship, and leadership.
4. It is a restoration of a relationship with the living God.
5. It is an invitation to an everlasting fellowship.

Salvation is liberation from all alienations to oneness with God

1. From Separation to fellowship with God

2. From misrepresentations of God to vindication and clearing of His name.
3. From meaninglessness to a purpose-driven life
4. from death to eternal life
5. from the penalty of sin to a life of gratitude of being acquitted
6. from power of sin to a life of holiness
7. from walking according to the flesh to walking according to the Spirit
8. from Satan to Christ lordship
9. from self to service
10. from self-sufficiency to Christ-sufficiency
11. from chaos to God's kingdom and world order
12. from addiction to freedom
13. from guilt to acceptance of forgiveness
14. from exile to a homecoming
15. from the presence of evil to an environment purged of all evil.
16. From a trouble heart to peace
17. From fear to confidence
18. from despair to hope
19. from exclusion to inclusion
20. from doubt to faith
21. from character defects to the fruit of the spirit
22. from being defiled to sanctification
23. From hatred to love
24. From division to reconciliation
25. From a fragmented world to unity under the lordship and leadership of Christ.

Recapitulation: Titles and Claims of Jesus Christ

1. The Name above all name, (Yahweh saves, Ultimate prophet, priest, king)
2. The Word (That brings freedom, joy, and peace) He reestablishes the communication with God.
3. The way, the truth, and the life
4. The Redeemer (Goel)
5. The reconciliation of God
6. The New Adam
7. The New Moses
8. The Son of David
9. The Son of Abraham
10. The Son of God
- 11 The King of kings and Lord of lords
12. The Beloved

