

5 The Seven-fold Purifying Messages of Revelation 14, V

1. The “**faith of Jesus**” is part of a chain of truth that God’s messengers are urged to focus on as part of present truth:

But such subjects as the sanctuary, in connection with the 2300 days, the commandments of God and **the faith of Jesus**, are perfectly calculated to explain the past Advent movement and show what our present position is, establish the faith of the doubting, and give certainty to the glorious future. These, I have frequently seen, were the principal subjects on which the messengers should dwell. **EW 63.**

- a. “The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” is a reference to the third angel’s message
2. The next statement says that there are two problems with regards to the subject of “the faith of Jesus:”

The third angel’s message is the proclamation of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. The commandments of God have been proclaimed, **but the faith of Jesus Christ has not been proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists as of equal importance**, the law and the gospel going hand in hand. I cannot find language to express this subject in its fullness.

“**The faith of Jesus.**” It is talked of, but not understood. What constitutes the faith of Jesus, that belongs to the third angel’s message? Jesus becoming our sin-bearer that he might become our sin-pardoning Saviour. He was treated as we deserve to be treated. He came to our world and took our sins that we might take his righteousness. And faith in the ability of Christ to save us **amply and fully and entirely** is the faith of Jesus. **3SM 172.**

The soul-saving message, the third angel’s message, is the message to be given to the world. **The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus are both important, immensely important, and must be given with equal force and power. The first part of the message has been dwelt upon mostly, the last part casually. The faith of Jesus is not comprehended.** We must talk it, we must live it, we must pray it, and educate the people to bring this part of the message into their home life. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). **3SM 184.**

- a. **PROBLEM #1:** The commandments of God have been proclaimed, but the faith of Jesus Christ has not been proclaimed by Seventh-Day Adventists as of equal importance:
- b. **PROBLEM #2:** The faith of Jesus is talked of, but not understood
3. **The question is, why is the “faith of Jesus” not understood?** It is obvious to see that the reason why the faith of Jesus has not been proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists as of equal importance is because it has not been understood! We cannot proclaim something that we do not understand!
 - a. **It was not understood by Seventh-day Adventists during the 1888 era**--Our pioneers, while contending with the antinomianism of their day, swung the pendulum too much to the right, and ended up overemphasizing obedience to the commandments and marginalizing the exercise of faith (subtle form of **Galatianism**); the 1888 message of righteousness by faith was sent by God through Elders Waggoner and Jones to correct this and properly place the balance of between faith and works

- b. **It is not understood by many Seventh-day Adventists today**—the idea is held by many Adventists today that believers will not totally overcome sin in their lives, and will, in fact, continue sinning until Jesus comes again; the gospel being proclaimed today makes believers **PERFECT IN CHRIST** only, but not **PERFECT LIKE CHRIST!**
 - i. NOTE: if this belief is true, then Ellen White’s statement in **EW 71** that believers must reflect the image of Jesus fully or they will not be protected in the time of trouble, makes no more sense. . . ; all her calls for character perfection are nothing but products of an overzealous mind, and grasping for something that can never be achieved;
4. **IMPORTANT:** Not to believe that Jesus can put an end to sin in our lives is not to understand the faith of Jesus and shows lack of faith in Christ’s ability to save **amply, fully and entirely from sin**; it is not to have the faith of Jesus; it is to reject the third angel’s message!!

Christology and the Faith of Jesus

- 5. What is the basis for the belief by many in Adventism today that character perfection as was demonstrated in the life of Jesus, is an utter impossibility? That belief is rooted in the understanding that Christ did not come in the same sinful, fallen human nature that the children of Adam possess today! Therefore, His sinless life in the flesh no one can possibly imitate!
- 6. The **pre-lapsarian view** of the nature of Christ (sinless nature before the Fall) totally destroys the completeness of Christ’s humanity and the completeness of the salvation Jesus wrought for the human race—it destroys the entire fabric of the third angel’s message!
- 7. **Therefore, a correct understanding of the doctrine of the nature of Christ is needed in order to properly understand the “faith of Jesus”**

Historic Adventist Christology

- 8. In line with what the Bible teaches regarding the humanity Jesus, Seventh-day Adventists have always taught that Jesus, at His incarnation, took the same identical dilapidated, degenerate human flesh common to all descendants of Adam, with all its physical, moral liabilities and weaknesses:
 - a. **Phil 2:5-8**—Jesus made in the **likeness** of men. . .
 - b. **Rom 1:3**—**made of the seed of David according to the flesh**
 - c. **Rom 8:3**--God sent His Son in the **likeness** of sinful flesh. . .
 - d. **Gal 4:4**—Jesus made of woman. Made **under the Law**. . .
 - e. **Heb 2:14-15**—Jesus Himself likewise **took part of the same flesh and blood**--Jesus Himself likewise took part of the same flesh and blood that He might experience death to destroy him that had power over death, that is, the Devil; **sinless humanity cannot experience death (Heb 2:9)**;
 - f. **Heb 2:17**—in all things, Jesus **made like unto His brethren**; In all things, Jesus made like unto His brethren that He might understand the trials associated with having fallen, sinful flesh and be able to exercise compassion as he is also compassed with infirmity; sinless angels who are not counted as being “among men” (**Heb 5:1-2**) cannot possibly sympathize with fallen humanity because they do not know by experience what it is like to have a fallen sinful, weak degenerate flesh; **Jesus took not on Him the nature angels but took on Him the nature of Abraham, a fallen human being for this reason**;
 - g. **Heb 2:18**—He "**suffered**" being tempted; if He had come in an unfallen, sinless nature, obedience to the Law of God would have been the easiest thing to do and the most natural, for that nature is in perfect harmony with the Law of God; in that unfallen nature,

temptation would not have involved suffering; **Jesus could not have suffered being tempted if he had come in unfallen flesh;**

Christ's Obedience Involved Suffering

". . .The human will of Christ would not have led him to the wilderness of temptation, to fast, and to be tempted of the devil. It would not have led him to endure humiliation, scorn, reproach, suffering, and death. His human nature shrank from all these things as decidedly as ours shrinks from them. He endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. The contrast between the life and character of Christ and our life and character is painful to contemplate. What did Christ live to do? It was the will of his heavenly Father. Christ left us an example, that we should follow in his steps. Are we doing it?" -**ST Oct. 29, 1894.**

9. The historic Adventist position on the nature of Christ is expressed in the following words from the Bible reading for the Home Circle of 1915:

In His humanity Christ partook of our sinful, fallen nature. If not, then He was not "made like unto His brethren," was not "in all points tempted like as we are," did not overcome as we have to overcome, and is not, therefore, the complete and perfect Saviour man needs and must have to be saved. The idea that Christ was born of an immaculate or sinless mother, inherited no tendencies to sin, and for this reason did not sin, removes Him from the realm of a fallen world, and from the very place where help is needed. On His human side, Christ inherited just what every child of Adam inherits,- a sinful nature. On the divine side, from His very conception He was begotten and born of the Spirit. And all this was done to place mankind on vantage-ground, and to demonstrate that *in the same way* every one who is "born of the Spirit" may gain like victories over sin in his own sinful flesh. Thus each one is to overcome *as Christ overcame*. Rev. 3:21. Without this birth there can be no victory over temptation, and no salvation from sin. John 3:3-7. --**The Bible readings for the Home Circle, 1915 edition, Chapter 39, "A Sinless Life"** ¹

Ellen White on the Nature of Christ

10. It is said that there are about 600 EGW statements that teach that Jesus took Adam's fallen nature in harmony with what the Bible teaches:

"He took upon His sinless nature **our sinful nature**, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted." **MM 181**

"Christ did in reality unite **the offending nature of man** with his own sinless nature." **RH July 17, 1900.**

". . .Notwithstanding that the sins of a guilty world were laid upon Christ, notwithstanding the humiliation of **taking upon Himself our fallen nature**, the voice from heaven declared Him to be the Son of the Eternal." **DA 112**

What a sight was this for Heaven to look upon! Christ, who knew not the least taint of sin or defilement, **took our nature in its deteriorated condition**. This was humiliation greater than finite man can comprehend. **1SM 253.**

"Though he had no taint of sin upon his character, yet he condescended to connect **our fallen human nature** with his divinity." **3SM 134**

¹ This was expunged from the book in 1949 to make the Adventist position more in line with that of the Evangelicals on the Nature of Christ; in the words of R. A. Anderson himself: "Many years ago a statement appeared in Bible Readings for the Home Circle (1915 edition) which declared that Christ came in 'sinful flesh'. . . It has been quoted many times by critics, and all around the world, as being typical of Adventist Christology. But when that book was revised in 1949, this expression was eliminated, since it was recognized as being out of harmony with our true position." --**Roy A. Anderson, "Human, Not Carnal," Ministry magazine, Sept. 14, 1956.**"

11. Unfortunately, EGW's writings are used (or **misused** and **abused**) and taken out of context to give the impression that she endorses the **pre-lapsarian view** of the nature of Christ; the most notorious example of this practice is perhaps the misuse of a portion of her letter to an elder in the church named Baker:

Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the **propensities of sin**. He is the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin upon him; he was in the image of God. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. Because of sin his posterity was born with **inherent propensities** of disobedience. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an **evil propensity**. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden. . . Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption. **5BC 1128**, (EGW letter to an Elder Baker)

- a. This statement above is quoted to suggest that EGW teaches (contrary to an overwhelming large number of statements from her that teach otherwise) that Christ had **no propensities to sin** and therefore took the sinless nature of Adam before the Fall:

“Propensities of sin”

12. **ANALYSIS:** We are not left guessing as to what “**propensities of sin**” mean in the statement because she clearly explains what she meant by it--- she defines it as either being “**inherent propensities**” or “**evil propensities;**” with clear-cut differences;

Inherent propensities

- a. According to her own definition in the statement, it is the tendency, leaning or inclination to disobey God and to do wrong in the posterity of Adam received as an inheritance from birth; this kind of propensity therefore, belongs to the realm of the **physical nature** and primarily deals with its **cravings** and **desires** which are unnatural and sinful as a result of the Fall and have their origin or seat in the body (**AH 127**);
- b. Jesus must have taken this physical liability upon Himself by merely being born into the human family and made subject to the law of heredity (**DA 49**); this is the basis for Paul's claim that Jesus was “made like unto His brethren” (**Heb 2:17**), “made in the likeness of sinful flesh” (**Rom 8:3**), “took part of the same flesh and blood” (**Heb 2:14**) and “made in the likeness of men” (**Phil 2:7**); nowhere is it taught in Scriptures that Jesus was "exempt" from this liability!

Evil propensities

- a. Based on her own definition in the statement, this propensity has nothing to do with inheritance by birth, but is the tendency, leaning or inclination to disobey God as a result yielding to temptation by choice or exercise of the will; **evil propensities** therefore belong to the realm of exercising the will, the power of choice, in response to the inherently sinful cravings of a fallen physical nature; **evil propensities** has to do with the development of a defective character or spiritual nature as result of indulging in sinful practices; in other words, the sinfulness of **human character** which is developed and cultivated as a result of exercising the will and the power of choice on the side of evil;
- c. Jesus is said to not have **evil propensities** because He never fell for one moment by yielding to the temptation to sin although He could have fallen if He chose to;

The Dual Nature of "Propensities to Sin" Explained in Romans 7

13. Paul's treatise on the sinfulness of fallen humanity in the book of Romans is in perfect harmony with Ellen White's teaching about the dual nature of "**propensities of sin**":
- a. "**Sin dwelling in me**" (**Rom 7:14-20**)--refers to the carnal man's sinful **spiritual nature**; identical to the defective character which is in slavery to the flesh; also identified as the "heart which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (**Jer 17:9**); out of which emerges a host of sinful actions like thefts, adulteries, murders, lasciviousness, fornications (**Mark 7:22-23**) when the circumstances are right; not passed on to children by inheritance but is cultivated;
 - b. "**The law of sin in my members**" (**Rom 7:23-25, 18**)--the ruined **physical nature** which serves as the source of fallen man's perverted taste and cravings; other characteristics include:
 - i. nothing good dwells in flesh (**verse 18**)
 - ii. "wars against the law of my mind" or the divine nature and brings it into captivity to the law of sin in my members (**verse 23**)
 - iii. the carnal man serves the law of sin in the flesh (**verse 25**)
14. Paul's argument in Romans 7 is that human sinfulness is a hopeless situation apart from Christ since both the **spiritual** and **physical** natures are corrupt and given over to sin; this is true before and after conversion;
15. Notice how Paul definition of the sinfulness of man in Romans 7 fits perfectly Ellen White's hamartology (study of the sinfulness of man) as she explained it in the Baker letter (**5 BC 1128**):

Ellen G. White	Paul
"inherent propensities"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "law of sin in my members" or in the flesh (Rom 7:14-20) • "body of death" (Rom 7:24) • "sin in the flesh" (Rom 8:3)
"evil propensities"	"sin dwelling in me" (Rom 8:17, 20)

16. Amazingly, both Paul and Ellen White's Christology are in perfect alignment
- a. It is very interesting to note that Paul says that Jesus condemned sin "in the flesh" but says nothing about Jesus condemning "sin dwelling in me" in **Rom 8:3** ; this is because Jesus never contended with "sin dwelling in me;" Jesus NEVER developed "sin dwelling in me" because He never once yielded to the sinful promptings of His inherited flesh; this lines up with what Ellen White said about Jesus not having "evil propensities;"
 - b. Ellen White was correct then in saying that Jesus had "**no evil propensities**" ("sin dwelling in me") although He had to contend with "**sin in the flesh**" (**inherited propensities**) all His life gaining victory over it moment by moment; the only way Jesus would have contended with "sin dwelling in me" is if He had yielded to sin once and developed a defective character;

Be Extremely Careful in Presenting the Nature of Christ

17. How can Jesus become our example of struggling with sin when He never contended with "sin dwelling in me? Why did not Jesus end up going over the man of Romans 7 experience? Jesus did not go through the man of **Romans 7** experience of... "**the good I want to do I can't do and the evil I don't want to do that I end up doing**" for the simple reason that He never yielded to temptation and cultivated "**sin dwelling in me**" or evil propensities;

18. **IMPORTANT:** Just like Ellen White said, we need to be "extremely careful on how we dwell on the nature of Christ."

- a. In our effort to dwell on the **likeness** of Christ's human nature with our fallen sinful human nature, we must not present Him as having taken our "sinfulness of character" ("Sin dwelling in me" or "evil propensities;")

"He [Christ] was to take His position at the head of humanity by taking the nature but not the **sinfulness of man.**" **7BC 925.**

n taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in **the least participate in its sin.** He was subject to the infirmities and weaknesses by which man is encompassed, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." . . . We should have no misgivings in regard to the **perfect sinlessness of the human nature** of Christ. **1SM 256**

- b. When we say that Jesus completely identified with our fallen humanity and was made exactly like us in His human nature, we must not give the impression that Jesus was like us who go through the man of Romans 7 experience, struggling to do the good we want to do, but ending up doing the evil we do not want to do;
- c. Jesus is not our Example in the man of Romans 7 experience; He is our Example of living above propensities of sin in all its aspects; He is our Example of a victorious Spirit-filled life!

It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and **to give us the example of a sinless life.** **DA 48.**

19. In other words, Jesus was like us in all things in His **physical nature**, but He was unlike us in His **spiritual nature** which was immaculate and sinless;

Victory Over Propensities of Sin Possible Even Now

20. There is no excuse therefore, for not gaining the victory over propensities of sin, whether inherited or cultivated. (**Heb 4:16; Phil 4:13**); victory over sinful propensities is a benefit that can be obtained from the Daily service ministration in the heavenly sanctuary;

We need not retain one sinful propensity. . . . [Ephesians 2:1-6 quoted.] . . . As we partake of the divine nature, **hereditary** and **cultivated** tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. **7BC 943 on 2 Pet 1:4**

21. Sin is an attitude and act of the will. We do not sin because of the flesh, but because our wills assent to the flesh; we are more prone to sin because of our sinful flesh, but having sinful flesh does not automatically result in sinful character! The power of choice needs to be exercised for sinfulness of character to develop!

Attempts to Compromise on the Nature of Christ

22. And so, the question is, how did Adventism ever become so divided over the nature of Christ?

23. Sadly but truly, there have been numerous attempts in the past on the part of our leaders to compromise on the vital issue of the human nature of Christ; these attempts are admittedly well-meaning because no church administrator likes to have the denomination stigmatized and being labeled as a cult by the more influential Evangelical churches over the nature of Christ;
- a. **First official attempt to compromise on Adventist Christology**--In 1949, Roy A. Anderson with the help of L. E. Froom revised the popular Adventist publication called **Bible Readings for the Home Circle**, 1915 edition, and removed the statement that said Jesus took sinful fallen human nature; This official action was made to appease Dr. Schuyler English, a prominent evangelical scholar in those days who discovered the "offending" statement in **Bible Readings** and started accusing Adventists of denigrating Christ for teaching that he took a sinful fallen nature;
 - b. **Second official attempt to compromise on Adventist Christology**--During the evangelical conferences of March, 1955 to August, 1957, R. A. Anderson along with L. E. Froom and joined later on by W. E. Read, made a second official attempt to change the historic Adventist position on the nature of Christ in the publication called **Questions on Doctrine (QOD)**

"Although born in the flesh, He was nevertheless God, and **was exempt from the inherited passions and pollutions** that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam. He was without sin, not only in His outward conduct, but in His very nature." **QOD, 383**

Conclusion

24. **POINT 1:** If we are to be the people who God can point to and say, "Here are they that have the faith of Jesus, we need to get back on track with our historic teaching on the nature of Christ;
25. **POINT 2:** The subjects of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment must also be clearly understood, otherwise, we shall not have the faith that is essential at this time and occupy the position God wants us to fill. . ." (**GC 488**)
- a. The faith that is essential at this time, is. . .the faith of Jesus!
26. **POINT 3:** To adhere to the historic Adventist position on the nature of Christ is to run the risk of being labeled a "cult" by mainstream evangelicals; are we ready to suffer reproach for truth's sake?
27. **POINT 4:** The idea that God will save believers in sin is not the faith of Jesus, is not even faith at all but **presumption**

The Lord requires perfection from His redeemed family. He expects from us the perfection which Christ revealed in His humanity. **CG 477.**

28. **POINT 5:** Consider the three temptations of Jesus in the wilderness and notice how these were designed to tempt Jesus to reject the third angel's message:
- i. Turn the stones into bread (**Matt 4:3**)---the Physical Law (health message)
 - ii. Cast thyself down. . .(**Matt 4:6**)—presumption vs. the faith (the faith of Jesus)
 - iii. If thou wilt fall down and worship me (**Matt 4:9**)—transgress the Moral Law