

For God So Loved

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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It all starts with God's love, His amazing love. It has to; there's no other way. The story would have ended long ago if it hadn't been for God's indescribable and relentless love. The Lord created a perfect world and put a perfect pair, Adam and Eve into it. But then a kidnapper came, a being of unbelievable and malignant hatred who, with devilish and insane delight brought sadness into the picture.

On the evening of August 4, 1987, a lady masquerading as a nurse slipped into the Harlem Hospital in New York and snatched 19-day-old Carlina White, and then disappeared. New York City detectives were unable to track her down and years evaporated into mist. Joy and Carl lost hope of ever seeing their daughter again.

Meanwhile in Bridgeport, Connecticut, a lady by the name of Ann Pettway was raising Carlina and now calling her Nejdra Nance. By the time she reached her 16th birthday, Nejdra began to suspect that maybe Ann Pettway wasn't her birth mother and so she began to do a little detective work on her own. She began surfing the web for information and help and located a site called "The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children," who helped her put the pieces of the puzzle together and confirmed it all through DNA analysis.

Earlier this year in January, 2011, more than 23 years after being nabbed from her parents, and now a mother herself, Carlina arrived from Atlanta to be reunited with her birth parents. Joy White said that the DNA tests really weren't necessary. "As soon as I saw those pictures, I said, 'That's my daughter.' I saw myself in her."

As painful as that separation was, and as joyful and emotional as the reunion decades later, this story doesn't come close to the story of the kidnapping and rescue of Planet Earth. After all, Carlina initiated the reunion. It was her curiosity and efforts that led to the happy moment. Not so with Planet Earth! Wrenched from the Father's arms, mankind was in no condition physically or spiritually to effect a deliverance. Left to ourselves, it never would have happened.

But, praise God, He took the initiative. He did from the start. He sought out Adam and Eve in the Garden, where they had run to hide. He took the first step in declaring His promise of salvation that very day. He took the first step in putting the Plan into operation. In the fullness of time, "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman." Galatians 4:4. What a miraculous, courageous and

risky step that was! God put at risk, not just the future of Planet Earth, but His entire kingdom in sending Jesus to this world.

It would have been an incomprehensible step for Christ to have come to this planet in the form and physique of Adam. Adam! In his instantly-created maturity and adulthood! Perhaps God could have arranged it so that Jesus would have come as Adam and battled against Satan in the strength of a perfect physical constitution. That didn't happen. He didn't come as an adult. He didn't come with Adam's unfallen nature. He came into the world after 4,000 years had assaulted the human physique. He came into the world sinless, but with a nature that was challenged by temptation and trials in a way that Adam, before his sin, was not.

More than that, He came as a Baby, needing to learn all the basic functions of living as any child. Think of it! The One Who created the tongue, having to learn to talk! Think of it! The One Who had formed the ear having to learn to interpret sounds into meaningful words and sentences! What an undertaking! What jeopardy! What love!

But this love, like the perfume of Mary Magdalene's ointment, was wasted on a world that was too busy with its own routine; too caught up with its own round of activities to notice that the prophetic clock had struck and the greatest event to have happened so far was about to break forth on Planet Earth. It was to shepherds, not priests, that the angels sang. It was upon foreigners, not Israelites that the light of Bethlehem's star beamed.

And yet His love was not wasted. Though resisted, repulsed and rejected by many, the purpose of God in sending His Son was achieved. The goal was attained. God's love shone even brighter than ever before. The glory of His character was revealed in a way that never before could have been realized. This is not to say that sin is good—never! This is not to say that Adam did a beneficial thing by disobeying God and eating the forbidden fruit—perish the thought!

But just as a gifted artist can take the fragments of a broken flask and construct a beautiful mosaic, so God's love is revealed through the story of salvation in a way it couldn't have been known before. He took the shattered pieces and made a kaleidoscope. “For God so loved the world.” The word “world” in the Bible and especially the writings of John refers to the ungodly. The text doesn't say that “God so loved the saints (although He does!).” It says He loved the world. He loved the unlovely, the wretched, the poor, the blind and the naked. He loved you. He loved me. He came down to us and gave His life for us in our state of weakness and helplessness, our sinfulness. He rescued us from the kidnapper by His death on the cross.

One day soon the reunion will be complete. Unlike the parents of Carlina White, it's been much more than 23 years that God has waited and planned for this moment. It's been 6,000 years of separation, but it's going to end soon! Just as surely as Jesus was born, lived, died and rose again, He will come again. His promise cannot fail. Don't you love Him today? Don't you want to surrender your heart to Him and ask Him to be your Savior and Friend?