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The Siberian Jesus' Church of the Last Testament

By Freddy Davis

Are you familiar with the Siberian Jesus? He is also known as Vissarion, and is the founder of a new cult. Because they are relatively small, these kinds of cult groups are rarely well known outside of their immediate areas. However, they are all over the place and it would not necessarily be unusual for you to run into someone who was a member of one of them. If you did, would you know how to discern what they believe and be able to share Christ in a way that would be understandable to them? Using the categories below, you can tease this out and put yourself in a better position to understand them and to share your faith.

Background and History

So just who in the world is this "Siberian Jesus?" Well, he is a Russian, and his real name is Sergey Anatolyevitch Torop. He acquired the name "The Siberian Jesus" because of the way he looks with his long hair and beard, and his messianic claims.

Before he got into religious work, he was a traffic cop in the town of Minusinsk in southern Siberia. Seemingly, in 1989, he lost his job during the period when the Soviet Union was collapsing.

Following the loss of his job, Torop experienced some type of spiritual awakening. As a result of that experience, in 1991, he began proclaiming himself to be Vissarion, the reincarnation of Jesus Christ.

At that point, he founded his own religious movement and named it the Church of the Last Testament. He set up his main headquarters, called "The Abode of Dawn," in Krai, Siberia.

At its peak, the movement had thousands of followers. Originally most were in Russia, but the faith also spread to such places as the United States, Germany, Bulgaria, and the Baltic States.

Beginning around 2020, however, Russia began to severely repress this movement, and arrested Torop and some of his associates on charges of running a cult that psychologically and financially exploited its followers. To arrest him, the government sent in Russian special forces in a dramatic helicopter raid. Then, in June 2025, he was sentenced to 12 years in prison.

The early life of Vissarion, at first glance, looks like that of almost any ordinary man in the modern world. He was born near

the southern Russian town of Krasnodar on January 14th, 1961, the son of a construction worker. At the age of seven, his family moved to Siberia and settled in Minusinsk. Following high school, he entered military service in the engineering forces and mastered various professions.

In 1991, Vissarion received what his church refers to as the "Preannouncement" – a word from God about beginning his new religion. Later that same year, he gathered his first followers. Then, in 1992, they began to form the Community in Minusinsk. Since the summer of 1993, Vissarion's followers have begun settling mostly in the villages around the Kuragino and Minusinsk regions, and he designated that place as the Promised Land.

From that time, it began attracting people from all over Russia and from other countries. Then, in 1994, a group of Vissarion's followers set up an eco-settlement on Mount Sukhaya near Tiberkul Lake which, in 1998, acquired the official name Abode of Dawn. Most of his followers settled in various villages near the settlement.

Over half of the adults of the Community are people with higher education. Additionally, it has an unusually high birth rate. Currently there are over 4,000 people living in the villages of the Kuragino and Karatuz regions.

Their purpose for creating this community was based on creating true spiritual relationships in a clean living environment. It is their desire to exist close to the earth. Thus, it is a community in which most of life's necessities are handmade by the inhabitants. They desire to build a utopian land where future generations can grow up in a creative, non-aggressive environment.

Although Vissarion was arrested in 2020 and received a 12-year prison sentence in 2025, the settlement itself continues on. His arrest and sentencing have definitely impacted the leadership, but has not eliminated the community.

Authority Source

The authority source for the Church of the Last Testament is the teachings and writings of Vissarion himself. In the early 1990s, he began dictating his beliefs to a group of his followers, and the end result was named *The Last Testament*. It consists of Vissarion's own revelations that are intended to supplement and "complete" the Bible. In this religion, the Bible is

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respected but seen as incomplete. *The Last Testament* is viewed as the final, authoritative revelation from God for humanity.

Vissarion's chief aide and spokesperson is Vadim Redkin – formerly the drummer in a rock band. In the sect, he took on the role of biographer and chronicler of the church. He was arrested along with Vissarion and convicted in 2025 along with him.

The bulk of Vissarion's work were transcribed from recordings of his spoken teachings. These included both public sermons and private meetings, and were then compiled, edited, and organized into written volumes. *The Last Testament* is now considered authoritative and used by the community as scripture.

Vissarion claims that *The Last Testament* was given at a critical moment in the development of humanity in order to accomplish the Great and Holy Synthesis of all existing religions. It was given to lead people to salvation so that they may pass through the Gates of God's Kingdom.

Vissarion teaches that there have been three Testaments given by God throughout history: the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Last Testament. The three are considered to reveal the mysteries of Hope (Old Testament), Faith (New Testament), and Love (Last Testament).

The Church believes that obedience to God comes through Vissarion's words which are regarded as the direct expression of God's will for today, since he is believed to be the living embodiment of Christ.

The volumes of the Last Testament, as of this writing, include:

- The Word of Vissarion and Vadim's Chronicles of the meetings and trips of Teacher
- The important events in His life and in the life of the Community
- The newest chapters are published as separate parts. Recently volume XVI was published, which includes part 23 and 24 of Vadim's Chronicles.

Worldview Category

The Church of the Last Testament is a hybrid belief system that blends elements of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, New Age philosophy, Buddhism, and Vissarion's own revelations into a distinctive belief about God. They claim to believe in the Christian God, but reinterpret their beliefs about Him through Vissarion's teaching as the final and complete message of divine truth.

Worldview Beliefs

To get at the core worldview beliefs of any belief system, we need to answer three essential worldview questions:

1. What is the nature of ultimate reality? (Who is God?)
2. What is a human being? (What is man?)
3. What is the ultimate a person can get out of life? (What is salvation?)

Here is how the Church of the Last Testament answers those questions.

God

Part of the church's beliefs follow a Christian theistic point of view. They refer to God as the Eternal Father. This maintains the Christian idea of one supreme God who is the Creator of all things. They understand God's nature to be expressed as love and unity, and emphasize that the purpose of mankind is to live in harmony with God, each other, and nature.

When dealing with how mankind can understand God, they believe He has revealed Himself in three stages through three great revelations.

1. The first revelation was the Old Testament. Here, God revealed Himself as the Father through Moses and the prophets.
2. The second revelation was the New Testament. In this, God revealed Himself as the Son through the life of Jesus Christ.
3. The third and final revelation comes through the Last Testament. They see this as God's final revelation through Vissarion, who they believe to be the second coming of Christ.

Vissarion also incorporates an element of Pantheism into his religion to assert that God is present in all living things. He expresses this as God's spirit pervading nature and all of life.

Man

When it comes to the Church's view of man, we once again see a hybridized understanding incorporating both theistic and pantheistic concepts that contradict one another.

Vissarion teaches that the soul is a human being's true essence, and is the basis of human development. In his view, true spiritual growth comes from cultivating the soul rather than from the intellect or technology.

The Church holds to the pantheistic belief that a divine element resides within each person. This is so because human beings are composed of particles of the Nature of the Heavenly Father himself. Thus, a part of God is in each individual.

In Vissarion's view, humans are understood to evolve spiritually through multiple incarnations. He teaches that the soul reincarnates through many lifetimes, and in each incarnation a person accumulates "negative life experience." Through these

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experiences, people learn to restrain spiritual decline and facilitate growth. Thus, in each incarnation, a person has the opportunity to improve his soul and gain additional life experience.

Salvation

The Church of the Last Testament, teaches a form of salvation that centers around spiritual transformation, unity, and ecological harmony. The central idea is to guide humanity toward spiritual maturity and salvation by uniting all religions within a shared spiritual framework.

Thus, salvation is tied to a person's ability to "pass through the Gates of God's Kingdom." To do that, people must strive for unity, love, and spiritual warmth, as opposed to participation in formal rituals.

Over numerous lifetimes, it is believed that people can advance by spiritual evolution and achieve higher spiritual states. They do this by living according to voluntary ethical principles that are a part of daily practice and communal life.

More specifically, community life requires that people follow particular codes that involve veganism, abstinence from the use of money and technology, disciplined routines, and a rigid calendar that includes replacing Christian holidays with Vissarion's birthday and the date of his first sermon.

In a nutshell, salvation within the Church of the Last Testament is achieved through:

1. Spiritual awakening and alignment with "The Last Testament"

2. Living in unity and embracing inner warmth, creativity, and harmony with others and the Earth
3. Following a disciplined way of life, designed to foster spiritual maturity and communal purification.

Other Distinctive Beliefs and Practices

There are a number of beliefs and practices that characterize this religion. These distinctives help us have a better understanding of this non-biblical faith.

Vissarion as the Living Christ

Vissarion is considered to be the Living Christ. He is not thought of merely as a prophet, but as the actual second coming of Christ in human form.

The Last Testament

Vissarion's writing, *The Last Testament*, is considered a continuation of the revelation of God following the Old and New Testaments, and is a final and necessary revelation. The text is a combination of moral teachings, environmental instructions, and prophecies.

He claims to have dictated *The Last Testament* through spiritual inspiration from God, Himself. As such, it is considered by

the members of the church to be the highest revelation from God. What is taught in it both supercedes the Bible and completes it.

Hybrid Beliefs

The teachings of Vissarion are a set of hybrid beliefs that incorporate beliefs from Russian Orthodox Christianity (especially related to liturgical and biblical references), Buddhism (with its teachings about reincarnation and karma), and various New Age ideas (particularly its teachings about cosmic consciousness and planetary transformation).

In keeping with its religious hybridization, Vissarion teaches that all major religions contain partial truths, but it all comes together in *The Last Testament*.

Ecology

Particular beliefs about ecology are considered essential for salvation. As people are reincarnated in order to make spiritual progress in their quest to ultimately achieve heaven, they are required to live a life that is ecologically responsible. To help accomplish this outcome, they practice low-impact, self-sufficient living.

Moral Duty

A vegan lifestyle is considered a spiritual duty. Vegetarianism/veganism is mandatory, and meat, dairy, and most animal products are forbidden. In addition to that, alcohol, smoking, and drug use are also prohibited.

God's Kingdom on Earth

The church's settlement near Lake Tiberkul in Russia is understood to be the physical beginning of God's Kingdom on Earth. Many followers sell all their possessions and leave their former lives in order to move there. Their ultimate goal is to create a pure society that will survive coming global disasters.

Many of those who are unable to relocate to Lake Tiberkul live scattered across Russia and in other countries while maintaining their faith remotely.

Catastrophe for Mankind

Vissarion has predicted a coming ecological and spiritual catastrophe that will destroy much of humanity. They believe that only those living according to his teachings will survive. It will then be their duty to help rebuild a harmonious world. They consider that they are preparing for this event both spiritually and practically.

Family Practice

The Church has very strict moral and behavioral codes related to family. Marriage, sexual relations, and family life are strongly regulated according to the movement's teachings.

- Marriage is viewed as a sacred, divinely approved partnership that should serve the spiritual growth of both spouses. Families are admonished to live in harmony, support each other's moral purity, and raise children in accordance with Vissarion's teachings.
- Sexual activity is only acceptable within marriage. Adultery is strictly condemned, and divorce is strongly discouraged. Any form of sexual immorality, including lust outside marriage, is considered spiritually harmful.
- Traditional gender roles are emphasized: men as protectors/providers and women as nurturers/care givers. Wives are expected to support their husbands' leadership in the home, while husbands are called to be gentle, moral leaders.
- Marriages are ideally between believers who are committed to the community's lifestyle and values. Inter-marriage with non-followers is discouraged.
- Raising children to live by the group's moral and ecological principles is a core duty of married couples.
- Personal vanity (such as excessive makeup and jewelry) is discouraged.

Second Coming of Christ

Vissarion teaches that Jesus' first coming was incomplete because humanity was not ready for the fullness of truth. Vissarion's coming is seen as the completion of that mission and the beginning of a new spiritual era.

How to Effectively Share a Witness for Christ

There are a couple of major reasons the beliefs of the Church of the Last Testament fail and cannot be taken seriously. Both of these issues relate to the religion's authority source. Being aware of these problems and having the ability to articulate them can go a long way in creating an atmosphere where an effective witness can occur.

The first problem with this religion is that it was made up out of whole cloth by a person who has nothing to back it up. Vissarion's religious teachings came from personal visions, self-study, and his own interpretations. He claims that in May 1990, he experienced a spiritual awakening when God revealed to him that he was the second coming of Christ. From there, he claims to have received ongoing messages from God.

The second problem is that, as a hybrid belief system, the beliefs contain irreconcilable internal contradictions.

- From the Bible, Vissarion picked out certain moral and ethical teachings.
- From Far Eastern Pantheism, he incorporated such beliefs as reincarnation, cosmic energy, vegetarianism, and environmental harmony.

Thus, he has attempted to combine Biblical Theism and Far Eastern Pantheism, which are two completely different worldview systems. Since every worldview contradicts every other worldview at the most basic level, the belief system fall apart from the internal contradictions.

To effectively share the gospel, a believer in Vissarion's religion will first need to understand these problems. Once they clearly understand, it will then possible to share the gospel message and compare it to the beliefs of the Church of the Last Testament. This does not guarantee, of course, that the person will receive Christ, but at least it provides an individual the opportunity to understand the message and make a rational decision.

It is also important to realize that for many of Vissarion's followers, there is a very high commitment level indicated by the fact that they are even willing to move to the church compound in Russia to live. As a result, developing a personal relationship that provides an extended opportunity to talk about faith matters can be critical.

Conclusion

The Church of the Last Testament is a modern day cult that has garnered a decent following – primarily in Russia. But Russia is not the only place where cults like this form. They are actually all over the world and are continually emerging.

As Christians who understand worldview concepts, it is actually rather easy to analyze the beliefs of any non-biblical faith, grasp why their beliefs are not true, and share the truth of the gospel with those who believe them. Every Christian ought to take this to heart and get serious about understanding worldview concepts. In our current pluralistic world, it is a powerful key to expressing our Christian faith into the lives of people who don't know Christ.

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