



General Conference Executive Committee Newsletter

An informative publication for members of the General Conference Executive Committee as a service through the office of the Chair

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Our assignment as

Seventh-day Adventists is to present Christ as the center of all our Fundamental Beliefs. Christ is the center of the Sabbath, our Creator and Sustainer, our Judge, Mediator, and Savior. He is our soon coming King.

The 28 Fundamental Beliefs can be seen as 28 different colors. Of course, one can paint the portrait of Christ in just one or two colors, but then it would not do justice to the beautiful portrait of Christ we are invited to present to the world. If, however, we use 28 different colors, His portrait will be much closer to the actual reality, to His actual beauty.

In our world today many try to present Christ as separate from His own teachings as recorded in the Word of God. However, if one tries to separate Christ from His teachings, then we are in the business of creating Christ based on our own image and understanding. In this case everyone will have a different Christ, a private Christ. Separating Jesus from His teachings presented in the Holy Scriptures leaves us with our own imagination, creating a divinity according to our own desires, our own image. Our task is to present Christ as

He is revealed in the Word of God.

There is no Christ outside of Truth, and there is no Truth outside of Christ.

ARTUR A. STELE,
GC GENERAL VICE
PRESIDENT

EDITORIAL



THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S TRUTH: HARMONY AND INTERDEPENDENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST BELIEFS

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*O*ur 28 Fundamental Beliefs do not exhaust, replace, or complement the Bible. They are rather summary statements through which the worldwide body of believers recognizes some core biblical teachings as an expression of our unity in Christ.¹

The relativism and anti-authority bias of the post-modern world make it popular to caricature doctrinal statements as passé or simply a misunderstanding of the gospel. But far from it, such a body of core beliefs gives content and direction to the mission. Thus, the importance of our 28 Fundamental Beliefs cannot be overemphasized. Such beliefs express our understanding of

core biblical teachings, provide the foundation for our experience, and guide the church and its mission. It is essential for us to find ways to show the coherence and relevance of our beliefs to our community and personal life, keeping in mind that "Doctrine to the Christian and the church is what the bones are to the body. It gives unity and stability."²

This article reflects on how our Seventh-day Adventist belief system stands together as a unified and integrated whole. As we reflect on the harmony and interdependence of this system, three significant aspects deserve consideration.

First, we recognize that our



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No ancient collection provides a coherent and integrated view of history and reality as the Bible does.

belief system rests on the authority and inspiration of the Bible. Second, the doctrines and beliefs accepted by the church reveal an internal coherence in that every part of the system works together to reinforce and explain the other beliefs, forming a consistent and integrated whole. Third, every individual teaching contributes to the entire system, which shows the depth of God’s love as revealed in Jesus Christ. We will now consider each of these three aspects in more detail.

THE BIBLE AS THE FOUNDATION OF DOCTRINE

Our system of beliefs stands or falls on the inspiration and authority of Scripture. Scripture provides the bedrock foundation for every doctrine or teaching embraced by the church. As much as one

may appreciate humankind’s long chain of literary works and traditions, nothing compares to Scripture as the foundation for understanding and coping with reality. It is important to note that this conviction does not come from any source of authority outside of Scripture but emerges from the self-testimony of the Scripture itself. As stated in the foundational text on the doctrine of inspiration: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:15–16).³

So, unlike other systems that depend on reason, experience, or tradition, the Seventh-day Adventist system of beliefs rests on the foundation of

Scripture. As Peter expressed, the gospel message does not come from “cunningly devised fables” (2 Peter 1:16) but from the testimony of “holy men of God” who “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). Clearly, the concept of divine revelation and authority underlies the Bible’s own claim and thus our understanding of it.

THE GRAND OVERARCHING STORY

The internal coherence of the grand, overarching story of the Bible—which spans from creation to new creation against the backdrop of the great controversy—gives authority, coherence, and credibility to our doctrinal system. Although brought together as a collection of sixty-six books composed by various authors in different times and places, the Bible yields a coherent grand narrative recounting the acts of God in creation and His plan to redeem those who believe in Jesus from the power of sin and death. No other sets of books produced by ancient civilizations get even close to the Bible’s unity, integration, and coherence. Ancient civilizations such as those in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Anatolia, and Greece have passed down many literary works studied and admired by scholars throughout the centuries. It must be noted, however, that such works reflect a fragmented view of reality in which numerous deities haunt human beings without offering any concrete hope to overcome the frustrations and burdens of life beyond temporary relief. Consequently, no ancient collection provides a coherent and integrated view of history and reality as the Bible does.

The grand story of the Bible unfolds in a linear timeline, beginning with creation, followed by the fall and the promise of redemption that will ultimately usher in a new creation. This unity and integration of the various biblical aspects of reality give coherence to the biblical doctrinal

system. Therefore, when we speak of the harmony and interdependence of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, we must remember that the system must be coherent since it flows from a coherent source of revelation. Given the Bible’s overarching unity and internal coherence, a doctrinal system that is faithfully based on it must show the same consistency and unity. The following section samples Seventh-day Adventist beliefs to show their connection and interdependence. Given space limitations, only a few aspects are discussed to illustrate how the entire system works.

THE INTERNAL LOGIC AND COHERENCE OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST BELIEF SYSTEM

Our 28 Fundamental Beliefs are under six central doctrines: God, Humanity, Salvation, Church, Christian Life, and the Last Things.⁴ Although these headings and the beliefs under them are organized topically according to major categories of theological reflection, the list of beliefs builds on one another in a chain of interdependence and reinforcement. The first heading, the doctrine of God, embraces the teaching about the “word of God” and matters related to the person of God. By beginning with the Bible revealing the teachings on the person of God, the system establishes the foundation for what follows. It would be impossible to understand what follows without a clear understanding of the Bible and the person and nature of God who inspired and revealed Himself in and through it.

Next, the doctrine of humanity covers creation and the nature of humanity. These two beliefs build on the previous ones and only make sense in view of them. Moreover, they are crucial for the following ones. For example, without the biblical teaching on creation, the nature and purpose of humanity would become unclear. Likewise, the doctrine of salvation with the teachings on the great controversy,

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Our system of beliefs stands or falls on the inspiration and authority of Scripture.

the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the experience of salvation, and growing in Christ would make very little sense apart from the biblical teaching on creation, the fall, and redemption, which unfolds within the framework of the great controversy between good and evil.⁵ The reality of creation gives meaning to the concept of sin, evil, and the promise of redemption through the atoning work of Christ.

Furthermore, without a clear understanding of the preceding teachings, the doctrine of the church, which embraces the remnant and its mission, the unity in the Body of Christ, baptism, the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, and the gift of prophecy, would lack a solid foundation and logical coherence. After all, the church's existence rests on the biblical understanding of God, humanity, and salvation. Such doctrines provide the rationale for the church as an institution to be directed by the word of God and dedicated to fulfilling the mission God entrusted to it.

BIBLE DOCTRINES FIT TOGETHER

As must be clear at this point, the doctrine of the Christian life, focusing on the law of God, the Sabbath, stewardship, Christian behavior, marriage, and the family, flows naturally from the above-mentioned doctrines. The law of God and the Sabbath can be fully understood only taking into account creation and the seven-day week that culminates in the seventh day. The entire system of biblical teachings rests on the nature of God and the fact that He created humanity in His image and likeness. At the core of biblical ethics and the Christian life lies the idea that we have been called to imitate God. From this perspective, stewardship and Christian behavior become profoundly significant in the experience of God's children. In addition, the biblical understanding of marriage and the family stems from creation, and the very constitution of marriage as a union between male and female can be understood given what the Creator established since the beginning (Matt 19:4–7).

From the above, it has become apparent that the doctrine of the last things, which deals with Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, the second coming of Christ, death and resurrection, the Millennium and

the end of sin, and the new earth unfold from the other biblical doctrines and teachings. The doctrine of the last things can only make sense when considering a doctrine of "first things." Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary presupposes His atoning work on the cross to redeem sinners from the power of sin. Conversely, Christ's second

coming presupposes His first coming as announced by the Old Testament and realized in the New Testament. Likewise, the victory over death and the resurrection that will usher in the end of sin and a new earth conceives of death as an intruder that eventually will be obliterated by God's power, already demonstrated in the resurrection of His Son.

In sum, the Seventh-day Adventist doctrines and the 28 Fundamental Beliefs are so intertwined that separating or isolating them is impossible. To be meaningful and consistent, they must be embraced as a whole. However, our belief system should not be embraced only because of its logical or internal coherence and intellectual power. Instead, what brings meaning and beauty to our beliefs is that they provide a beautiful picture of God, whom we serve and worship.

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST BELIEF SYSTEM AS A PORTRAIT OF GOD'S LOVING CHARACTER

One of the most consequential aspects of the harmony and interdependence of the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs lies in the system's ultimate foundation in the person and character of God, whom it portrays according to Scripture. As such, our beliefs are not a mere set of intellectual propositions to be accepted by the believer. Much more than this, our beliefs are windows into the beauty of God's character and, taken together, offer a multi-perspective glimpse of God's infinite love and grace.

Our belief system emphasizes, presupposes, and reflects a God personally involved with creation and lovingly undertaking the mission of rescuing and saving the lost. This personal dimension of God, who communicates Himself with His creatures and reveals His will through His word, underlies every single one of our 28 Fundamental Beliefs. Second, God reveals Himself in Scripture as a tri-personal God from whom flows the

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eternality of His love. Because God exists as three Persons eternally, love is always present in God's relationships within the Trinity. Therefore, love has always been and will ever be.

GOD'S LOVE IS PERVASIVE

Here are a few examples of how God's love is pervasive as a unifying aspect of our Fundamental Beliefs. First, creation itself and all the provisions to restore creation after the fall are examples of God's infinite love for us. At the core of the plan of salvation lies the cross, where God's Son surrendered His life as an atoning sacrifice for humanity. Apart from the biblical one, no other religion or belief system portrays a God who suffers such humiliation. Religions not based on the Bible usually portray their gods as capricious, cruel, and often victorious over the trials of life. Only the biblical God goes to the cross and dies to achieve the final victory. So, to speak about God, humanity, salvation, church, Christian life, and the last things is to speak of God who is engaged in redeeming sinners.

Second, God's love manifests itself in the unfolding of the great controversy, a pervasive theme that not only counts as an individual belief but also lies at the backdrop to other beliefs. God could have put an immediate end to Lucifer's rebellion in Heaven or could have prevented his access to the first couple in the garden. God, however, allowed evil to follow its course because He did not want forced worship; instead, He longed for a loving relationship with free creatures. God Himself suffered the ultimate consequences of sin when the Son was crucified. In the sacrificial and priestly work of Jesus, the universe beholds God's loving character, which dispels the lies of Satan.

THE DEPTHS OF GOD'S LOVE

Third, some less obvious aspects of our Fundamental Beliefs that could be understood to revoke God's love are those related to judgment and the final destruction of sin and sinners. However, upon further reflection, even such doctrinal points reveal the depths of God's love. A God who condones sin and evil and refrains from eventually eliminating them could not be taken as a loving God. With all its implications and phases, God's judgment functions as another window into God's infinite love in that it vindicates the righteous and destroys the wicked.

As Ellen White stated: "The feet of the wicked will never desecrate the earth made new. Fire will come down from God out of heaven and devour them—burn them



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up root and branch. Satan is the root, and his children are the branches. The same fire that will devour the wicked will purify the earth.”⁶

Through this ultimate act of judgment and purification, God prepares the earth to be the eternal dwelling of the redeemed. This is described beautifully by Ellen White: “The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”⁷

THE BEAUTIFUL TRUTHS OF SCRIPTURE

The harmony and interdependence of the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs rest on three foundational and interrelated concepts. First, they rest on the inspiration and authority of the Bible, which provides

unity and coherence to our belief system. Second, our Fundamental Beliefs display an internal logic and coherence in that every individual belief finds its rationale and coherence in light of the whole. Third, every belief functions as a window into God’s character of love and mercy, which also plays a role in unifying and integrating our system of biblical doctrines. Indeed, even the biblical message of judgment, which is also integrated into our belief system, tells of God’s infinite love since God will eventually obliterate everything that stands in the way of his loving purposes in the redemption of sinners and the restoration of this planet.

Speaking about the beautiful truths conveyed by Scripture, Ellen G. White penned some words that can be applied to the harmony and interdependence of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs: “When thus searched out and brought together, they will be found to be perfectly fitted to one another. Each Gospel is a supplement to the others, every prophecy an explanation of another, every truth a development

of some other truth. The types of the Jewish economy are made plain by the gospel. Every principle in the word of God has its place, every fact its bearing. And the complete structure, in design and execution, bears testimony to its Author. Such a structure no mind but that of the Infinite could conceive or fashion.”⁸

¹ See: <https://www.adventist.org/fileadmin/adventist.org/files/articles/official-statements/28Beliefs-Web.pdf>

² Timothy George, “The Priesthood of All Believers and the Quest for Theological Integrity,” *The Founders Journal* 3 (1990–1991): 12.

³ All biblical quotations follow the NKJV.

⁴ Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine*. (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2018).

⁵ On the great controversy as the backdrop of the biblical system, see Alberto Ronald Timm, “The Sanctuary and the Three Angels’ Messages 1844–1863 Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University Theological Seminary), 1995.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Review and Herald, 1882), 51–52.

⁷ White, *The Great Controversy*, 1888), 678.

⁸ White, *Education* (Pacific Press, 1903), 123–124.



THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

By Ellen G. White

The Bible is our rule of faith and doctrine. There is nothing more calculated to energize the mind and strengthen the intellect than the study of the word of God. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts or give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. . .

Paul wrote to Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." [2 Timothy 3:16, 17.]

The life of God, which gives life to the world, is in His word. It was by His word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons. By His word He stilled the sea and raised the dead; and the people bore witness that His word was with power. He spoke the word of God as He had spoken it to all the Old Testament writers. The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ. It is our only source of power.

This word does not repress activity. It

opens before the conscientious searcher channels for activity. It does not leave men in uncertainty, without an object, but places before them the highest of all aims,—the winning of souls to Christ. It puts in the hand a lamp that lights the way to heaven. . .

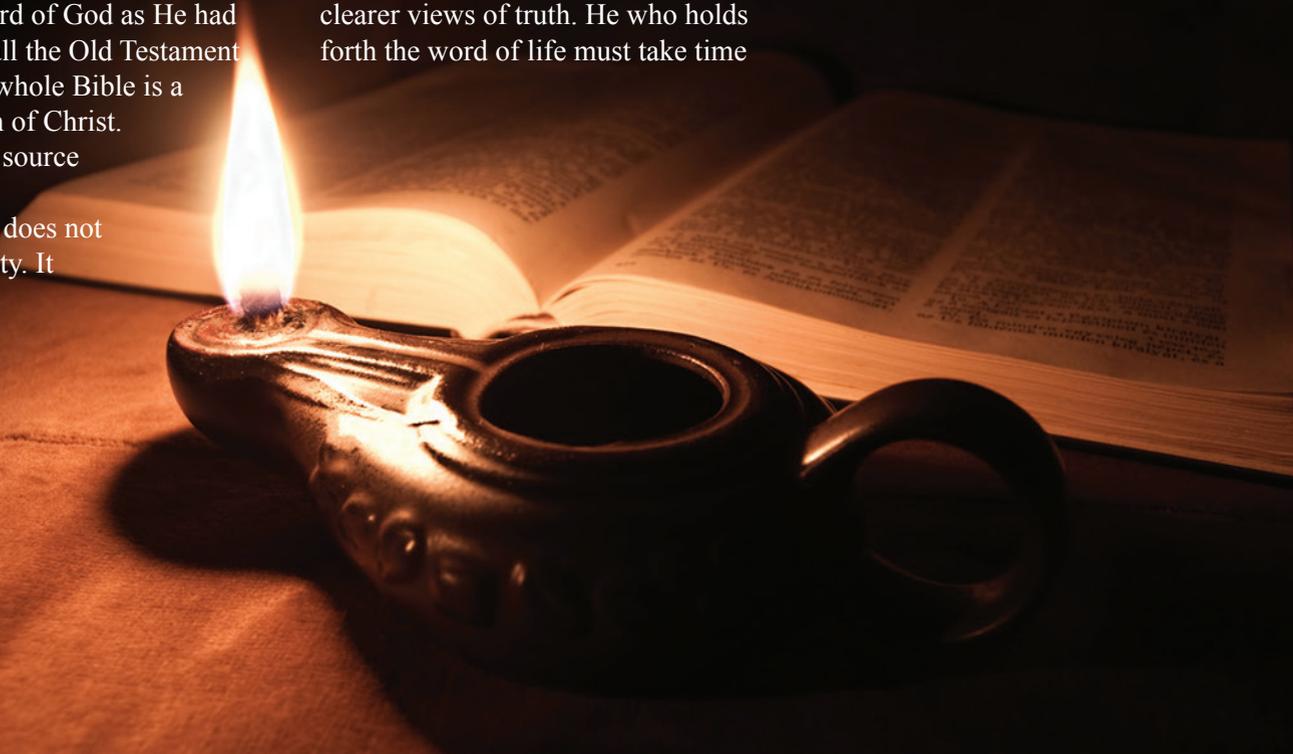
The word of God is the standard of character. In giving us this word, God has put us in possession of every truth essential to salvation. Thousands have drawn water from these wells of life, yet there is no diminishing of the supply. Thousands have set the Lord before them, and by beholding have become changed into the same image. . .

We talk about the first angel's message and the second angel's message, and we think we have some understanding of the third angel's message. But as long as we are content with a limited knowledge, we shall be disqualified to obtain clearer views of truth. He who holds forth the word of life must take time

to study the Bible and to search his own heart. Neglecting this, he will not know how to minister to needy souls. The diligent, humble student, seeking by earnest prayer and study for the truth as it is in Jesus, will most assuredly be rewarded. He seeks for help, not from ideas of human writers, but from the Fountain of wisdom and knowledge; and under the guidance of holy intelligences he gains a clear understanding of truth. . .

The heart that receives the word of God is not as a pool that evaporates, nor like a broken cistern that loses its treasure. It is like the mountain stream fed by unending springs, whose cool, sparkling waters leap from rock to rock, refreshing the weary, the thirsty, the heavy-laden.

—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 249-252





LEADERSHIP FOCUS ON SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST IDENTITY



Committed to our Identity: Message, Mission, Unity,” was the focus of a special three-day event held for General Conference and Division Officers (GCDO) from September 30 to October 2, 2023, at the Church’s world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

“It is a unique privilege to see the senior leadership of the world church assembled at this meeting to strongly plant our feet on the Word of God,” said Ted N.C. Wilson, GC president, at the opening gathering on Sabbath. Noting that in many places the Bible is “being denigrated, depreciated, ignored, and reinterpreted,” Wilson highlighted the important focus of the event—“These three days are about uplifting God’s Word, and, as Ellen White indicates, the plain reading of His Word. I know God is going to bless our time together.”

Erton Kohler, GC Executive Secretary, noted the event was “an invitation for reflection and evaluation, and an opportunity for leadership development and personal growth. It is also a special reminder that we are God’s remnant church, chosen for mission.”

The Sabbath morning worship hour speaker was John Bradshaw, Speaker/Director of *It Is Written*, who gave an engaging presentation on “God’s Message for Us Today.”

During meetings on Sabbath afternoon and Sunday, key doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were featured by some of the church’s leading scholars, who brought out the beauty and biblical basis of our beliefs.

Artur Stele, a GC Vice President, spoke on “The Heart of the Seventh-day Adventist Message.” He was followed by Elias Brasil de Souza, director of the Biblical Research Institute (BRI), who affirmed the “Harmony and Interdependence of the Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs.”

Further presentations focused on specific Fundamental Beliefs, including the Bible, by Frank Hasel (BRI); Spirit of Prophecy by Merlin Burt (White Estate); Creation by Ronny Nalin (Geoscience Research Institute Director); the Sabbath by Felix Cortez (Andrews University); Marriage by Alberto Timm (BRI); State of the Dead by Clinton Wahlen (BRI); the Sanctuary by Elias Brasil de Souza (BRI); Salvation by John Peckham (*Adventist Review*); and the Second Coming by Daniel Bediako (BRI).

A forthcoming book, carrying the event's title, will feature each of these presentations and will soon be available for wide distribution.

During a second set of presentations given on Sunday, each scholar highlighted current issues and challenges related to the specific doctrine they had presented earlier. Discussion with the entire GCDO group followed, with suggestions and recommendations as to how to meet those challenges.

A writing committee, chaired by Mike Ryan, special assistant to the president, was formed to receive the suggestions and produce a report offering some resolutions, which was presented on Monday, October 2. In addition to Ryan, the committee included Artur Stele, Elias Brasil de Souza, Maurice Valentine, Audrey Andersson, Merlin Burt, Magdiel Perez Schulz, and Gina Wahlen as recording secretary.

In part, the report stated:

“Seventh-day Adventist identity is centered in Jesus and founded in Scripture. That identity is portrayed in the 28 Fundamental Beliefs.

“Research carried out among members, pastors, institutional employees, and administrators, has highlighted the need of revitalizing special emphasis on the Seventh-day Adventist distinctive beliefs. These truths must be communicated directly to the Church and made central to the experience and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

“Following two days of study and reflection the General Conference and Division Officers (GCDO) recognize the need of addressing this necessity.

“TO PROVIDE A BEGINNING, this can be done in at least three ways:

- Bible conferences
- Content development and communication cooperation
- Theological education

“Each level of the church has a role to play and as plans are developed the responsibility of each level will be identified. Following brainstorming under each of these headings, three working groups will be set up by GC Administration to continue to develop action plans, which will be shared periodically with GCDO for input, and presented at the 2024 Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee.”

Following lunch on Monday afternoon the three GC Executive Officers shared some concluding thoughts. Ted N.C. Wilson and Erton Kohler spoke on “United in Message: How we move from here?” with GC Treasurer Paul Douglas following up with “Harmoniously Moving Forward.”

The event ended with a time for personal commitment and testimonies from GCDO members, followed by a special communion service.



STAY ON THE PATH

A CALL TO FIDELITY

By John Bradshaw, Speaker/Director, It is Written

Editor's Note: This article is abridged from a sermon given in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 1, 2023. Elements of the oral style have been retained. The full sermon will appear in the forthcoming book from the "Committed to Our Identity" conference.

God long ago raised up a church that was not just another church. This would be a movement to whom He would commit a certain task, one He had never before in the history of the cosmos committed to any other group of people. And we find ourselves in that place right now.

Almost two millennia before the Seventh-day Adventist Church came into existence, God spoke to us about staying on the path. He knew far ahead of time that we would tend to wander. And by the time the New Testament was written, we had demonstrated clearly to God that we had a strong predilection to wander.

There were only 10 generations from Adam to the Flood. Israel went from Saul to David to Solomon. All of them had their issues. And after

Solomon, Israel was divided. At the time of the fourth king, the nation could no longer hold it together.

Things can spiral out of control quickly, ladies and gentlemen. It is important that we stay on the path.

A DIVINE COMMUNIQUE

We have been instructed to stay on the path. Seeing ahead of time the challenges a small group of believers would go through, God spoke to John 2,000 years ago. We read that divine communique in Revelation 10:8 where God says, “Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.”¹ You know as well as I do, that the little book being spoken of there is the book of Daniel. “So, I went to the angel and I said to him, ‘Give me the little book.’ He said to me, ‘Take and eat it and it will make your stomach bitter but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.’ Then I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it my stomach became bitter. He said to me, ‘You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues and kings’” (Rev. 10:8-11).

God told us we must prophesy again. You can say, of course, that was initially handed to those people coming out of the disappointment—those Millerites who stuck with the job and stayed with the task. But you know as well as I do that this mandate is a mandate that lasts. It wasn’t just for post-1844 immediately. It is for us down here in the end of time. That was God’s message for us 1,800 years before we existed. That’s our pathway as given to us by God. God says your role in 2023, your role in any or every one of the 13 world divisions is to prophesy again.

CALLED BY GOD TO DELIVER A MESSAGE

We have been called by God to deliver a message. God makes that so. He says, “what you say is important.” We have been asked to speak on behalf of God Himself. That is, if Jesus were here again, what would He say to the teeming multitudes who are languishing and longing for something better and more meaningful?

We don’t have to subject that question to a plebiscite. We can understand what Christ would say because he says it himself in Revelation 14 starting in verse 6: “Then I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth—to every nation and kindred and tongue and people”

A STUNNING MESSAGE

My brothers and sisters, when God depicts a message as being proclaimed by messengers from heaven, He’s telling us something about its importance. Anybody with the ability to reason is required by heaven to hear what is being said. It’s a stunning message, and I understand that somebody might say it’s old hat. I understand that somebody might struggle to see how it relates to where we are today. I mean, if I try, I might understand. But the fact of the matter is that was a message crafted by God for today, not for when it was communicated back there when John wrote the book of Revelation. It wasn’t crafted merely for them. It wasn’t merely crafted for the people that came out of the great disappointment.

God said, there is one message that will reach them all. If my people will go to the Bible for wisdom to share the message, this is the message that must be proclaimed in the world before Jesus returns.

Friends of God, it’s a stunning message and we live in this stunning time. It is no form of exaggeration to suggest we are living in a time of unparalleled crisis. You know your corner of the world far better than I do. And wherever we are, we are living in a time of crisis.

THE MOTHER OF ALL WAKE-UP CALLS

But spiritually, what a time to be a leader. Matthew 25 gives some encouragement. There are five wise virgins, and five foolish virgins. But while you are enjoying the repose of knowing that five are wise, Jesus hits you where it hurts by saying all 10 were asleep. In Revelation chapter 3, we hear the mother of all wake-up calls to a church that thinks it is rich and increased with goods and has need of nothing. And what’s stunning about this is that God says the church, Laodicea—you know to whom He is speaking—doesn’t know that it is wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

The servant of the Lord told us, “A storm is coming, relentless in its fury. Are we prepared to meet it?” she asked. “We need not say the perils of the last days are soon to come upon us. Already they have come.”²

We need now the sword of the Lord to cut to the very soul and marrow of fleshly lusts, appetites, and passions. Notice what she said—“a storm is coming.” Stormy days are on us. What do we need? We need the Word of God. We must have the sword of the Spirit unsheathed, sharpened, doing its offensive and perhaps its defensive work.



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THE BEST NEWS EVER SHARED

So, the angel speaks with a loud voice arresting the attention of the world and says, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of his judgment is come” (Rev. 14:7). Now, we are familiar with these words, of course. But God is calling us to live in such a way that our lives are His, that our hearts belong to Him, that Jesus is completing the work in our lives that He has done.

Since 1844 we have been living in the time of the investigative judgment, which, friend of God, is wonderful news! Can you think of better news—the cross, the resurrection? After that, perhaps the best news that’s ever been shared with the world, is the Second Coming

of Christ. But right up there in that collection of good news beliefs is our understanding that we live in the time of the investigative judgment.

WORSHIP HIM

Then the angel says, “worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev. 14:7)—a clarion call to worship the Creator, a call to Sabbath observance, a call to embrace what we know and teach to be the seal of the living God. This is what we’ve been called to proclaim.

And of course, there is more. “And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath

of her fornication” (Rev. 14:8). And we understand we are marinating even today in a world that is confused—spiritually confused, socially confused—Babel, which means confusion. And God said, “I’m giving you a message to take to the world to unconfuse the world.”

The third angel followed. We know it well: “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink also of the wine of the wrath of God” (Rev. 14:9, 10a).

CALLED TO FIDELITY

We have been called to fidelity to this message. Fidelity to this message is fidelity to Christ, the One

who gave the message. And we have been called to proclaim this message because, as the three angels’ message conclude, this is the message that will produce God’s group of saved believers waiting to meet Jesus when He returns—the 144,000.

“Here is the patience of the saints. Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12).

Friend of God, it is important to stay the path. It is important to keep heading in the right direction.

¹ All Scriptural references are from the King James Version.

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 315.



CHECKUP HEALTHY BONES

Bones are a marvel of engineering and physiology. We tend to think of bones as solid structures, but since they are living tissues, they undergo continuous breakdown and renewal, which allows bones to grow and fractures to heal. The entire skeleton is replaced every seven to 10 years through a process known as bone remodeling. What are some ways to improve your bone health? Here are some suggestions from *Vibrant Life*.*

LIFESTYLE PRACTICES

EXERCISE

The Bone Health and Osteoporosis Foundation recommends two types of exercise to build and maintain bone density: weight-bearing (such as walking and climbing stairs) and muscle-strengthening (such as lifting hand weights). Whenever possible, exercise outdoors so you get the benefit of sunshine, vitamin D, and fresh air at the same time.

SLEEP

New evidence suggests that adequate sleep contributes to optimal bone health, so be sure to go to bed early enough to get the rest your body—and bones—need.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Your mental health impacts your bones. The stress hormone cortisol inhibits the bone-building cells. There is wisdom in the Biblical proverb: “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones” (Pr. 17:22, NKJV).

EAT CALCIUM-RICH FOODS

Here are some of the best plant sources of calcium.

- Soy foods, including tofu, edamame, soy milk, and tempeh
- Dark leafy greens, including collards, spinach, turnip greens, kale, bok choy, dandelion greens
- Beans, peas, and lentils
- Certain nuts and seeds, especially chia seeds, almonds (and almond butter), Brazil nuts, and sesame seeds (and tahini)
- Certain grains, especially teff and amaranth
- Some fruits and sweeteners, including blackstrap molasses, oranges, figs, kiwi, and blackberries



FACTORS THAT ENHANCE CALCIUM ABSORPTION

To ensure the body makes the most of the calcium you give it, consider the following factors that increase your body’s ability to absorb calcium:

- Foods high in vitamin C eaten at the same time as the calcium
- Adequate vitamin D levels
- Adequate stomach acid
- Foods high in lysine, including beans, lentils, quinoa, tempeh, soy milk, pumpkin seeds, and pistachios
- Adequate intake of vitamin K
- Adequate intake of omega-3 fatty acids (found in foods such as walnuts, flaxseed, chia seeds, and hemp seeds)
- Doses less than 500 milligrams of calcium at a time

*From “Stronger Than Steel: How to Strengthen Your Bones,” Heather Reseck, RDN, in *Vibrant Life*, September/October 2022, pp. 34, 37-38.

REMEMBERING HEATHER-DAWN SMALL

By Gina Wahlen

Heather-Dawn Small, beloved leader of the Women’s Ministries (WM) department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, passed away on January 2, 2024, following a brief illness. She was 66. Heather-Dawn left a legacy of faith and an indelible mark on the hearts and lives of those she touched. In planning with the family, a memorial service was held at the Church’s world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, on Sunday, February 18, 2024.

“It would be unthinkable for us not to have a memorial service at the General Conference (GC) for Heather-Dawn Small after having served in Women’s Ministries at the GC level for at least 22 years. Thank you for being here,” said Ted N.C. Wilson, president of the world church, in his opening remarks. “Heather-Dawn was a vivacious person, very focused on helping women around the world to truly be the best for the Lord. She lived her life full of love and service with complete reliance upon the Lord. Heather-Dawn was full of Christian love for family, friends, church members, women around the world, and anyone with whom she came in contact.”

MEMORIAL SERVICE TRIBUTES

Many leaders shared tributes to Heather-Dawn during the in-person and live-streamed service.

“Heather-Dawn was a woman who spent her life helping other women grow and thrive and blossom in difficult times and places,” said Audrey Andersson, a GC vice-president. “She had a vision for women and her life was like a light which helped show the way, which reflected the realities of her love for her beautiful Savior. She brought light and joy into every life she touched.”

Ella Simmons, a retired GC vice-president, declared, “We all know that Heather-Dawn was the epitome of that Proverbs 31 woman. . . . Heather-Dawn taught joy, preached joy, but best of all lived, exuded, joy in the Lord!”

Ardis Stenbakken, previous Women’s Ministries director, recalled first meeting Heather-Dawn at a women’s retreat where they roomed together. Although there were many challenges at the retreat, “where everything that could go wrong did go wrong,” Stenbakken remarked how she appreciated Heather-Dawn’s calm and professional demeanor. “So, when there was a vacancy in the WM department here at the GC, I knew Heather-Dawn and I could work together and that she would be a blessing.”



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TRIBUTES FROM WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Members of the GC Women’s Ministries department paid special tribute as they read some of Heather-Dawn’s own words. Galina Stele, WM associate director, read a text Heather-Dawn had sent to a WM prayer group from her hospital bed: “The peace God has given me I don’t think I could get anywhere else in the world. I want healing, but even more, I want God’s will in my life.”

Rebecca Turner, longtime editorial assistant in Women’s Ministries, read one of the final entries from Heather-Dawn’s cancer journal: “Thank you, Lord, for the honor of being able to suffer for You so that all may see the peace, joy, and strength you give at times of great trial. We can survive the trials, the pain, the valley of the shadow of death if we surrender all to You.”

“As our hearts ache with sorrow,” said Premila Pedapudi, administrative assistant for WM, we bid farewell to our inspiring leader whose vibrant spirit will forever guide us.”

Edith Ruiz, WM Director for the Inter-American Division, remarked, “We have lost a wonderful woman—strong, important for many women around the world. But her passion, her commitment, her vision, and her messages, will remain forever in our hearts.”

“ONE DAY, DEATH WILL DIE”

In his eulogy, Clyde P. Dottin, field secretary for the Caribbean Union Conference, reminded the family that “One day, death will die. Heather-Dawn loved truth, but apart from that, she possessed the innovative spirit of Miriam, the resilience of Esther. . . and the missionary spirit of the little captive maid in Naaman’s house.” He continued, “She loved the world, and today the world is loving her back.”

Nearing the end of the service, Pastor Joe Small shared, “Heather-Dawn touched the lives of all of us. We’re going to miss her. . . . May we champion the cause of Christ because Heather-Dawn laid down her life for that.”

Echoing the thoughts of many, Kern Tobias, president of the

Caribbean Union Conference stated, “We are very happy that we can celebrate her life that has been so well lived. . . and we know her service has been recorded in heaven and one day God will say, ‘Well done.’”

“Heather-Dawn will no longer be with us physically,” said Erton Kohler, GC Executive Secretary, “but her works, influence, mentorship, friendship, kindness, love, her big smile, her dreams, will remain very alive in our hearts.”

During the memorial service, music was provided by well-known pastor and recording artist, Wintley Phipps, as well as the musical group, CLAY. Additionally, a family life sketch was provided through a video tribute featuring Pastor Joe Small, daughter Dalonne Small and son, Jerard Small.

HONORED POSTHUMOUSLY

At the time of her death, Heather-Dawn was pursuing a doctoral degree in Intercultural Studies

from Western Seminary, located in Portland, Oregon. Speaking via video, Chuck Conniry, president of Western Seminary, stated, “Heather-Dawn centered her entire life around the hope of the gospel. That’s what motivated her to pursue and complete a Master of Arts in Ministry and Leadership at Western Seminary. It’s what motivated her to pursue her doctorate in intercultural studies. It’s what ignited her passion to engage in ministry all around the world and it’s what gave her joy when she saw others come to faith in Jesus.” Following the video message, the degree of Doctor of Intercultural Studies was awarded posthumously to Heather-Dawn Small and was presented to her family. She is survived by her loving husband, Pastor Joseph Small, their children Dalonne and Jerard, and the countless lives she touched.

The live-streamed memorial service for Heather-Dawn Small may be viewed at: <https://bit.ly/HeatherDawnMemorialService>

Read Heather-Dawn Small’s obituary at: bit.ly/HeatherDawnObituary





THE BACK PAGE

Directions: For more information on an item, click on the corresponding number on the map.

1 The biennial Lake Union Youth Evangelism Congress was held February 16-18 in **Northbrook, Illinois**. Through the years, the Lake Union Conference has witnessed remarkable evangelistic outcomes, with young adult leaders using a total of US\$515,872 from a collaborative evangelism fund established by the union, local conferences, and local churches to initiate various evangelism projects. The aim of these initiatives has consistently been to spread the message of the gospel throughout their local communities.

2 The **North Peru Union** recently hosted a Pathfinder Discipleship Camporee. Its main objective was to consolidate the decision for baptism of more than 260 teenagers and leaders who participate in the Pathfinder Club. During the baptism of more than 100, two young people shared how two other Pathfinders gave them Bible studies, encouraging them to make their decision for Christ. Their biggest challenge is

to share the Bible with their parents, who are not Adventists. Their parents were present at their baptisms and have agreed to continue to learn more about God's Word.

3 The new South England Conference leadership hit the ground running on January 9, at their annual Evangelism Expo held at Newbold College in **Bracknell, Berkshire, U.K.** Since taking office, the leaders, alongside department heads, engaged in extensive deliberations, prayers, and consultations to chart the conference's new course: "*Christ in our hearts. Christ in our homes. Christ in our churches. Christ on the streets.*" The Expo grappled with cultural paradigm shifts, emphasizing how to reach people for Christ in today's world.

4 The seventh annual Deaf Camp Meeting was held in **Agona, Ghana**, December 26-31, 2023. The camp meetings, which began in 2014, have become a beacon of hope within the

Ashanti Region. Focusing on the theme, "Love Begetting Love," this year's camp meeting brought together 93 representatives from six deaf churches across the region. The camp meeting's impact was underscored by the baptism of 14 individuals, including 11 non-Adventist deaf participants.

5 The first Orphans and Vulnerable Children's Ministries Global Congress was held in **Siem Reap, Cambodia**, from February 21 to 26. With the theme, "Learn, Seek, Defend, & Disciple," the congress united global church leaders, frontline ministries dedicated to serving at-risk children, advocates, and humanitarian groups under the General Conference's umbrella through its Children's Ministries and Adventist Possibility Ministries departments to explore ways of providing care for orphans and vulnerable children.

6 Hope Channel Central Philippines marked a significant milestone in

its broadcasting history on February 7, as it celebrated the digital switchover ceremony of Hope Channel TV 25 at the transmitter site in **Cebu City, Philippines**. Hope Channel's digital transmission in the Central Philippines holds the promise of extending its outreach to communities throughout the greater Cebu area.

7 The South Pacific Division (SPD) recently introduced Hope VA, a virtual assistant that offers Bible studies and health information. The assistant was launched across the 10 nations of the Trans Pacific Union Mission (TPUM) during pastors' meetings, held February 12-17 at Fulton Adventist University College, **Nadi, Fiji**. Hope VA delivers free Bible studies and health lessons in a conversational format to contacts who message her on the WhatsApp messaging platform. Her lessons have been carefully scripted by Adventist pastors at the SPD to deliver simple and friendly Bible studies.