

An Open Letter to the Seventh-day Adventist Church — President Erton Köhler, conference leaders, pastors, teachers, elders, members, seekers, and friends:

A Wake-Up Call

Time is short. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is at a crossroads, and the decisions we make right now will determine whether we stand as God's remnant people — or whether we forfeit that calling by rejecting the precious light He is freely giving to those who seek with all of their hearts.

This is not the time for silence. It is not the time for defending traditions simply because they are comfortable. This is the time to test **everything** by the Word of God and return to the foundation laid by our pioneers and the Reformers: **"The Bible, and the Bible only."**

The Visible Challenges

We've all seen the headlines and felt the tension within our church. Prominent leaders have stepped away from the church and even from major evangelism ministries like Amazing Facts and 3ABN. Congregations are dividing. Members are leaving.

In some regions, fellowship has been fractured over disputes about the church's public positions on controversial issues — from women's ordination to vaccination disputes to Adventist hospitals performing abortions.

Everywhere you look, people are talking about these controversies — debating them endlessly, pointing fingers, and casting dispersions on one another.

But these aren't the root problems. They are only **symptoms**.

The Deeper Issue

The real issue we must face is this: **as a church, we are resisting and rejecting truth.**

God has been shining light on our path — calling us to deeper obedience, fuller understanding, and complete faithfulness to His Word. Yet too often, that light is resisted, dismissed, or ignored.

Instead of openly wrestling with Scripture, too many of our questions are answered with, "That's not what the church teaches," or "Ellen White says..." — even when the Bible itself speaks directly to the matter. When investigation is discouraged, spiritual growth stops.

Truth has nothing to fear, it will stand alone if we will not stand with it. Truth **thrives** under examination. If our doctrines are solid, they will stand the test of investigation of the Scriptures. If they are not, we must have the humility to change.

A Call to Courage

Our pioneers understood this. They were willing to follow wherever the Scriptures led, even when it cost them position, friendships, reputations, and security. They were united by one principle: **“Thus saith the Lord.”**

We are in danger today of doing the opposite — clinging to traditions simply because they are familiar, because we assume that our interpretations cannot possibly be mistaken. That is the very trap that ancient Israel fell into... and it caused them to miss the Messiah Himself.

We cannot afford to repeat that mistake.

An Invitation

This letter is not written to tear down the church but to build it up. It is a plea — a loving but urgent call — for every leader, every pastor, every elder, and every member to return to the unshakable foundation of God’s Word.

The shaking has begun. The mark of the beast is coming. The time of trouble is coming. And only a people fully aligned with God’s purposes will be able to stand.

What follows comes from years of study, prayer, and wrestling with Scripture. You may not agree with every point, but I invite you to test **everything** — not against tradition, not against denominational policy, but against the living Word of God.

Let us allow the Spirit of Truth to guide us into **all truth**... no matter where it leads.

Is the Reformation Complete? Have We Received Sufficient Light for the Darkness that is Coming?

Adventism has always claimed the value of education, inquiry and moving forward in truth. Our universities and colleges have produced scholars, theologians, scientists, as well as many other professions. Ultimately, all should be taught to be thinkers for themselves and not just reflectors of other men’s thoughts.

However, this quest for truth has not filtered down through the ranks. Some members struggle with doubts and questions, yet many times, those who inquire with their questions to conference workers, pastors, elders or teachers are rejected without acceptable Biblical reasons. They are met with, “That is not what the church teaches”, or “Ellen White says...” even when the question has Biblical foundation. It is held by many that some of the doctrines that we hold may have more to do with tradition than a “thus saith the Lord.”

Many who do not receive suitable explanations for their inquiries end up leaving the church, even though they do not have a better place to go. When people leave the church, often the leaders, pastors, and members will resort to saying that the individual that has left was looking for an excuse to leave because of some sin in their lives. While this may be true in some cases, it surely is not in all cases. It has been my experience, when talking with many of those with challenges to the traditional doctrines of the SDA church, that, if their questions or concerns were

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addressed with openness and a willingness to hear and answer Scripturally, many would stay in the church rather than leave.

We, as a church, should be a place where honest questions are not only welcomed, but encouraged, then answered with reasoning based on Scripture. We want to settle people into the truth, not shake them out of it. If our doctrines are Scripturally sound, let's answer with Scripture. Many of those who leave will listen to Scripture. If our doctrines are indeed true, they will not suffer from investigation. We must remember our past. We, as the pioneers of this movement were, all need to be open to learning and growing in our understanding of Bible truth. They followed the principle and creed of the Reformation—"Sola Scriptura".

As a church, we must get back on the trail that the pioneers blazed. Truth has been unfolding since the onset of the Reformation and will continue to unfold until the end.

"But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support." *The Great Controversy* p. 595

The Remnant Will be the Final Product of the Reformation

We pride ourselves in declaring that we are "spiritual Israel"¹, the remnant of Bible prophecy and at the same time, the Laodicean church. We do not find the words "spiritual" and "Israel" together in all of Scripture. Israel, according to Scripture, are those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are obedient to the laws of His kingdom. Paul tells us in Romans that the unbelieving (in Jesus) Israelites were cut out of the tree and the believing Gentiles were grafted into the house of Israel. "For they are not all Israel who are Israel" Romans 9:6. And again he says, "...all Israel will be saved..." Romans 11:26. God has only one group of people on this planet who will unite to represent Him in the end and they, according to both Paul and Ellen White, are the Israel of God.

Ephesians 2:11-14 "Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,"

We must seriously consider the reality in the following question, "Who is the remnant—the Israel of God—of Bible prophecy?" Can we confidently claim to be that remnant? If so, on what basis? Based on claiming to be the Laodicean church? This cannot be. For the Laodicean church to claim to be the remnant and the Israel of God is a complete contradiction based on the counsel to the Laodicean church. The remnant—the Israel of God—is everything God desires and the Laodicean church is not.

Revelation 3:14-19 "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, 'I am rich [in truth], have become

¹ [Thursday: Spiritual Israel | Sabbath School Net](#) May 5, 2021
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wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich [in truth]; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve [of the Spirit], that you may see [the truth]. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”

If upon investigation of what we have received as truth, we find that the Reformation is not yet complete, then we must receive the counsel to the Laodicean Church and move forward in truth to become the Remnant. The remnant is a finished product, the Laodicean church is not. We must “be zealous and repent”. We cannot claim to be in need of nothing. When this truth is understood it will require an adjustment in our thinking which will lead to an adjustment in our doctrine as well.

I call on leaders to lead with humility, courage, and love. I call on all members to engage actively, to ask and listen to difficult questions and seek answers with fearlessness and honesty no matter where they lead. Let us support one another in faith and service, especially with our difficult questions.

Declaring ourselves to be the remnant does not make us the remnant. God will declare us to be the remnant only when we are fulfilling His word and will according to the whole of Scripture. If we as a church reject the light He is shedding on our path, we disqualify ourselves from being His remnant. God will have a church to stand solely on His word, and they will be His Israel. Will you strive to be among them?

I call on church leaders, pastors, elders, deacons and members to diligently search the Scriptures as never before. If the Lord has special truths for the last generation that were kept sealed in times past, He will reveal them in His word to shield us from deception.

“Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 625 (1911).

This should not have to be pointed out, but it seems necessary; she says, “diligent students of the Scriptures”. The Oxford dictionary, which would have been available at the time of her writing, defines diligent as “constant and earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken. Persistent application but also toil and pain.” Can we all honestly say that we practice this kind of dedication in our search for knowing and understanding His Scriptures?

Symptoms of Two Great Problems: 1) The Law

As we look across the Seventh-day Adventist world we see many challenges and problems. I propose that the reason for these faults in the church is because we, as a church, have not advanced in light as the Lord has shed it on our path. It has been for 30 plus years that there have been voices in the church, including mine, who have been calling the leadership and the members to higher ground as far as God’s law is concerned. We claim to keep the Ten Commandments; we say that this is what God requires. Evangelical Christians claim there are only two commandments, the Jews tell us there are 613 commandments in His law. What does the Master Teacher tell us?

Matthew 22:34-40 “But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’ 37 Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

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We must take note of what He says, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”. The questions beg to be asked, “Who defines what ‘all the law’ embodies and what ‘the prophets’ taught? Is the law He cites two commandments only, ten commandments only, or is it more than that?” Our Example, Jesus, was obedient to every commandment that He gave to Moses on the Mount (with no record of Him making an animal sacrifice). The law, according to most of the evangelical world, contains just two commandments. In fact, many shrink it down to only one, “love one another”, without defining what that means. It takes the complete torah to give us a thorough definition. To Seventh-day Adventists, it is the Ten Commandments, with a few others such as distinguishing between clean and unclean meats, and of course tithing. However, what does the Word of God say?

When Jesus was asked, “What is the greatest commandment in the law?” He responded with the two greatest, neither of which can be found in the Ten Commandments. They are directly out of the torah:

Deuteronomy 6:5 “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

Leviticus 19:18 “...you shall love your neighbor as yourself...”

His answer perfectly defined His understanding of the scope of the law. For Him, it was the complete torah. “On these two commandments hang all the law [torah] and the prophets.” Obviously, at the time of His dialogue with the Pharisee, the temple sacrificial system would have been included. After His death on the cross as “the Lamb of God” Paul clearly taught in the book of Hebrews that the animal sacrificial service ended at His sacrifice, when type met antitype. Laws regarding our love and devotion to God, such as worship and their set times of worship according to Scripture, did not end at the cross.

The Sabbath is obvious for us, but what about God’s other appointed holy convocations? In the book of Acts, Paul, at Philippi, 20 plus years after Jesus’ death, is found keeping the Passover. Passover includes the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which Paul kept with the Philippian converts for the full eight days as specified in the torah. “...We sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread...” Acts 20:6. This text is not exactly clear as far as him *keeping* the feast, but the lessor light gives us the details. Ellen White comments on this for clarity and understanding:

“At Philippi Paul tarried to keep the Passover. Only Luke remained with him, the other members of the company passing on to Troas to await him there. The Philippians were the most loving and truehearted of the apostle’s converts, and during the eight days of the feast he enjoyed peaceful and happy communion with them.” *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 390-391

Wow! She gave no condemnation for Paul doing this. She simply clarified that Paul was indeed keeping the full eight days of the feast with Gentile converts to the faith. She did not say that Paul was only keeping and enjoying the blessing of the feast to then tell them, “God’s appointments with His people are all done away with, except the weekly Sabbath”.

She has an entire chapter in *Patriarchs and Prophets* called “The Annual Feasts”, which is dedicated to the blessing of His feasts for the Israel of God. I encourage all to read this chapter and then ask the question, “Would God’s purposes in the feasts benefit His Israel of today?” Ellen White declares:

“At these yearly assemblies the hearts of old and young would be encouraged in the service of God, while the association of the people from the different quarters of the land would strengthen the ties that bound them to God and to one another. Well would it be for the people of God at the present time to have a Feast of Tabernacles—a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to them. As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God had wrought for their fathers, and His miraculous preservation of them during their journeyings from Egypt, so should we gratefully call to mind the various ways He has devised for

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bringing us out from the world, and from the darkness of error, into the precious light of His grace and truth". *Patriarchs and Prophets* pp. 540-541.

For anyone to suggest that our summer camp meetings can somehow replace the appointed holy days of God is to declare that what He gave Israel in His calendar of meetings was not the very best and we can improve on it! Why would we settle for anything less than what God offers us? God's purposes do not change. They are appointed dates He has given to His people Israel, for the divine purpose of blessings.

The animal sacrificial system came to an end but His appointments with His people did not. We acknowledge this every Sabbath. We do this both by keeping Sabbath, and by keeping it without any animal sacrifices. It should be noted that there were special sacrifices required on the Sabbath in addition to the morning and evening daily. God's appointments, according to Scripture, will be celebrated after the Second Coming "in the kingdom of God". We have the words of Jesus to prove it:

Luke 22:15 "Then He said to them, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it [the Passover] until it [the Passover] is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' "

All that the Passover encompasses has not been fulfilled yet. His sacrifice? Yes! However, there are many aspects yet to be fulfilled regarding the Passover and all the other appointed times, therefore, there is purpose in them for us today. They can teach us much! Paul, in keeping the Passover, complete with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, was merely following the instruction of Jesus, we are not.

Blessings of the feasts include, but are not limited to, getting to know Him better, understanding His plan of salvation more fully, and to continually develop our relationship with Him and His people. Love to God and our fellow brothers and sisters is at the heart of the Sabbath and all the appointed times He gave to His people Israel.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Matthew 28:19-20

It is our task to not only observe, but to teach, all the nations all that He has commanded. His promise to be with us "even to the end of the world" hangs on fulfilling His great commission.

The appointed times are God's statutory holidays. Much like man's appointed national holidays commemorate significant events in a country's history, each of God's holy days commemorate significant historical events. However, God's holy days are much greater in that they are also prophetic in nature. They point to remaining significant events in the plan of salvation beyond the Second Coming and into eternity. This is why Paul carried them forward by celebrating them wherever he went. They are, in reality, the Gospel—past, present, and future!

God's work of reformation in His church is not yet complete, not only regarding His festivals, but it goes deeper into "all truth" and the promised work of His Spirit. We are indeed the Laodicean church, and therefore, we are in need! We are counselled to anoint our eyes with the eye salve of the Holy Spirit to clearly see what He wants to show us today. Jesus, through His word, declared the promise and work of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come [prophecy]."

Ezekiel 36:26-28 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My

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statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. 28 Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and [then] I will be your God."

The work of the Spirit of God has been the same from the beginning, to show us truth and cause us to be obedient to all of His law, including His statutes. If the Spirit of God has given us a new heart it will be evidenced by our obedience to His statutes and judgments, and, as the text reads, it will be then that we shall be His people.

Other such statutes contained in the torah, such as not eating blood and unclean meats, quarantine regulations, and tithing are obviously obligatory today. There are more laws contained in the torah that we, as God's people, who claim to be the Israel of God, are forgetting. We like to tell others that when God says "remember", as in the Sabbath commandment, it is because something has been forgotten, and therefore, left undone. When one examines His word deeper there is another "remember". It is for this reason that God, just before "the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD", is giving us a call to remember something else that has been forgotten.

Malachi 4:1-6 "For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,' Says the LORD of hosts, 'That will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves. 3 You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do this,' Says the LORD of hosts. 4 **'Remember the Law [torah] of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments.** 5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. 6 And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

This is truly the Elijah message of which we claim to be giving. It, according to Scripture, is a call to remember the Law [torah] of Moses, *with* the statutes and judgments of God.

God is still reforming His church. A refusal to remember will result in suffering the wrath of His curse at the Second Coming of Jesus. The final outcome of this rejection of His call to remember has been made clear in Isaiah's revelation of the Second Coming of our Lord:

Isaiah 24:1-6 "Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty and makes it waste, Distorts its surface And scatters abroad its inhabitants. 2 And it shall be: As with the people, so with the priest; As with the servant, so with his master; As with the maid, so with her mistress; As with the buyer, so with the seller; As with the lender, so with the borrower; As with the creditor, so with the debtor. 3 The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, For the LORD has spoken this word. 4 The earth mourns and fades away, The world languishes and fades away; The haughty people of the earth languish. 5 The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, Because they have transgressed the laws [torah], Changed the ordinance, Broken the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, And those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, And few men are left [the remnant]."

Every commandment in the torah can be connected to one of the Ten Commandments, all of which hang on the two great commandments. This was Jesus' point with the Pharisee. We need to take the next step forward in the process of the reformation of "all things". The set times for worship hang on at least two of the Ten Commandments. "You shall have no other Gods before Me" and the Sabbath commandment. Inherent in the fourth commandment are the other set times of worship He has given to us, which includes why, when and how to worship. They are all, including the weekly Sabbath, called "holy convocations" and "the feasts of the LORD" for a reason.

There are other examples of the torah hanging on the two great commandments. Tithing: this commandment hangs on the first and eighth commandment, "You shall have no other gods before Me", and "You shall not steal". The

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sexual sins listed in Leviticus 18: these fall under the first commandment of having no other Gods and the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery”. Similarly the entire torah can be boiled down to just two commandments, Love to God and love to your fellow man.

The torah defines the meaning of the two great commandments in great detail. That is why we are not only told to study the torah but to teach it also (Deuteronomy 6:1-9).

“For those who thus lay hold of the divine assurances of God’s Word, there are wonderful possibilities. Before them lie vast fields of truth, vast resources of power. Glorious things are to be revealed. Privileges and duties which they do not even suspect to be in the Bible will be made manifest. All who walk in the path of humble obedience, fulfilling His purpose, will know more and more of the oracles of God.” *Ministry of Healing*, p. 465.

To Jesus, the commandments and the torah, as found in the writings of Moses, are synonymous. As far as Jesus’ reference in His statement regarding “**the law and the prophets**” we must carefully consider the following truth: there is not one prophet in all of Scripture who ever declared or would ever declare that the torah, complete with Jesus’ appointed times for assembly, were nailed to the cross. Furthermore, Yeshua was an expert in the law/torah because He was the One who gave it to Moses on Sinai.

Colossians 1:16 “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”

Jesus created the Sabbath, this is why He could say that He was the “Lord of the Sabbath”.

Mark 2:27-28 “And He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.’”

If this is true, which it is, then He is also Lord of the Feasts as well.

Leviticus 23:1-2 “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.’”

The Sabbath, with all the appointed times, are part of His creation, this is why they are called His feasts, not the Jews, not ours, but His feasts. Jesus brought into existence the torah, which includes the appointed times. He asked His followers to demonstrate their love for Him by keeping His commandments/law/torah.

John 14:15-16 “If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—

Keeping His commandments is directly connected to giving us His Spirit. We must be sure of which commandments He spoke about. By His own definition, it is the entire torah without the temple sacrificial services. He is calling us to higher ground. The entire great controversy between Christ and Satan is a war between two governments and their laws. We, as the followers of Jesus, have been asked to demonstrate our allegiance to fallen and unfallen beings alike. How is this done? By being subject to the laws of our King. His law, as revealed in the torah, has been given to us for our good always.

Problem Two: The Prophets

Our failure to remember and accept the torah is just one of two very grave challenges that are facing the church regarding “**the law and the prophets**”. There are prophetic warnings in the books of Daniel and Revelation regarding

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the “time of the end” that we are completely disregarding. It is time to diligently reassess the prophecies. We need to seriously consider Ellen White’s statement about the Jewish leaders’ failure to fulfill God’s purpose for His chosen nation.

“They would not admit even the possibility that they themselves did not rightly understand the word, or that they had misinterpreted or misapplied the Scriptures. They acted like men who had lost their reason. What right have these teachers, they said, some of them mere fishermen, to present ideas contrary to the doctrines that we have taught the people?” *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 78-79

“Sharp, clear perceptions of truth will never be the reward of indolence (Oxford: avoidance of activity or exertion; laziness). Investigation of every point that has been received as truth will richly repay the searcher; he will find precious gems. And in closely investigating every jot and tittle which we think is established truth, in comparing Scripture with Scripture, we may discover errors in our interpretation of Scripture. Christ would have the searcher of His Word sink the shaft deeper into the mines of truth. If the search is properly conducted, jewels of inestimable value will be found. The Word of God is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ.” *Review and Herald*, July 12, 1898

If we took to heart these statements it would create a duty to make sure we are standing on solid ground. The best efforts nearly 200 years ago to understand the time of the end was just that—best efforts. But the best efforts must never stop. It will take nothing less than our best efforts now to understand a book sealed until the actual time of the end, the time in which we live.

Prophetic Interpretation Built on a False Premise

It was Protestants who first believed in the imminent return of Jesus. With good reasons they believed that the Catholic Church was the anti-Christ of Bible prophecy, first of which was that the Catholic church had been responsible for the death of many millions of true Christians during the Dark Ages. The persecution had come to an end in the late 18th century. They interpreted this as the “fulfillment” of Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:21 “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened... 29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

In the late 18th century Napoleon was on the march on the European continent. In the year 1798 AD, Napoleon had the pope imprisoned which greatly diminished the Papal power but did not end it. The Reformers, including William Miller and his associates, saw this as a fulfillment of Jesus’ words that the great tribulation was now behind them and they were now looking for the few remaining signs before the Second Coming. This led them to conclude that “the time of the end” had come, and therefore the prophecies of both Daniel and Revelation could now be understood.

Daniel 12:4 “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

In their zealotry to prove the Second Coming was indeed imminent, they would need to demonstrate that “all” the prophecies leading up to the Second Coming were either fulfilled or quickly fulfilling. This was their Achilles’

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heel. They searched the history books in order to match the events recorded with the events portrayed in the prophecies. This led them to make erroneous conclusions regarding the events as recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, Daniel and Revelation as well as other prophetic writings.

A careful reading of both Daniel and Revelation does not support the conclusions of William Miller, his associates, and those who followed on their heels, even to this day. The sooner we address these issues the better.

“Every position of truth taken by our people will bear the criticism of the greatest minds; the highest of the world's great men will be brought in contact with truth, and therefore **every position we take should be critically examined and tested by the Scriptures**. Now we seem to be unnoticed, but this will not always be. Movements are at work to bring us to the front, and **if our theories of truth can be picked to pieces by historians or the world's greatest men, it will be done.**” Evangelism 69

I will give you a few examples, although I could name several more.

1. The pioneers claimed historical events for the fulfillment of Matthew 24:29-30 and Revelation 6:12-13

Matthew 24:29-30 **“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**

Revelation 6:12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was **a great earthquake**; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and **the moon became like blood**. 13 **And the stars of heaven fell to the earth**, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is **shaken by a mighty wind**. 14 **Then the sky receded as a scroll** [Second Coming] when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

- a. The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 was deemed a fulfillment of this verse even though 20/20 hindsight demonstrates that there have been many earthquakes since then, that were much more devastating in both the environment and loss of life.
- b. The dark day of 1780 only impacted a small portion of northeastern United States and southeastern Canada. It also fell short of the description of the sun becoming “black as sackcloth” and “the moon became as blood”.
- c. The annual Leonid meteor shower of 1833, although spectacular, is part of an annual event associated with the earth passing through the debris trail of Comet Tempel-Tuttle. The annual shower is especially vivid every 33 years corresponding with the recurrent cycle of the comet’s path. Other meteor showers since then have matched or exceeded the 1833 shower.

This is problematic for obvious reasons. These three events, collectively, could not possibly be direct fulfillments of these passages. Scripture tells us that these signs would be **“immediately after the tribulation of those days”**. First, if Napoleon’s capture of the pope in 1798 brought an end to the persecution, why is it that we include two events that predate what was supposed to happen “immediately after” 1798 (the end of the great tribulation)? Technically the great earthquake and the dark day should have happened **“immediately after”** the pope was imprisoned.

Furthermore, these apparent fulfillments (which were actually to be signs of the imminent return of Jesus to immediately follow the great tribulation), happened over a span of 78 years. How is it that these signs, spanning nearly eight decades, were to demonstrate the imminent coming of Jesus, and now, nearly 20 decades after these signs (two and a half times the duration of the three apparent signs) we have not yet seen His coming?

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The events of Matthew 24:29-30 and Revelation 6:12-13 are supernatural in nature, and therefore should be compared with other supernatural acts of God, such as the crossing of the Red Sea, Joshua's long day, Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction, Hezekiah's sun dial reversal, and darkness for three hours at the crucifixion. The pioneers made **application** of prophecy, however they did not see the fulfillment of prophecy. Those living to see Jesus come will see these events. The great tribulation, I am sorry to say, is still yet future; therefore the fulfillment of the signs of the sun, moon and stars in Matthew 24:29-30 are as well.

2. One glaringly obvious omission in the pioneers' reckoning of the events leading up to the Second Coming was the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast happens during the "great tribulation such as has not been" which they believed ended in 1798. According to Revelation 13 the mark of the beast is enforced during the 42 month time period (time, times, and a half a time) of the reign of the little horn ("mouth speaking great things"). Furthermore, the mark of the beast must happen before the three events in the sun, moon, and the stars, because those signs immediately follow the great tribulation. The mark of the beast is humanity's greatest test, and therefore, called "the time of trouble such as has never been".

The pioneers, rather than defining the mark of the beast, showing the death toll, or otherwise explaining what it was and the major impact it carried, omitted this most important event entirely. I would suggest that we, as a church, do not yet know the complete meaning of the "mark of the beast" and how it will be enforced until the unrolling of the scroll. We are getting glimpses as to a fuller meaning of the mark of the beast, however, it seems, as a church, it is not understood because an unwillingness to move forward in the light that is shining on our path.

3. Daniel 7 is clear, the "investigative judgment" occurs during the "time, times and a half a time" (1260 days). This is the time frame in which the little horn was "speaking great things". Therefore, this judgment must happen within the time period that the same horn is "speaking" and "making war against the saints, and prevailing against them", not 46 years later in 1844. This is further demonstrated in the interpretation of the vision.

Daniel 7:26 "But the court shall be seated, And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy *it* forever."

The taking away of his kingdom is the direct result of the judgment. The church's position is that the little horn's kingdom is taken down in 1798, but the judgment began in 1844.

Furthermore, the meaning of "speaking great things" is revealed in Daniel 7:25:

"He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times [H2166] and law."

We have, in the past, defined the "times" as the Sabbath, but a careful look at this ancient Chaldean word tells us that it involves much more than just the Sabbath, it includes all of God's appointed times of worship.

Strongs/BDB "Times" H2166 (Chaldee); from H2165; the same as H2165: - season, time. H2165; an appointed occasion.

The changing of times involves all of God's appointed times. The Catholic church has championed this change in counterfeiting not only the Sabbath but all of God's appointed times with His people. For the Catholic church, the Easter festival is an eight day feast which begins on Palm Sunday and ends on Easter Sunday. This counterfeits the eight day feast of Unleavened Bread which begins on Passover.

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They have their Christmas feast which is also runs eight days. It begins on December 25 and ends on January 1 on their Feast of Circumcision (of Jesus). This counterfeits the eight day Feast of Tabernacles through to the Eighth Great Day.

These changes in the appointed times would also necessitate a change in the law. This is why Daniel 7:25 states changing “times and law”.

The reason this point is crucial is because the mark of the beast involves the instituting of a counterfeit religious system that includes counterfeit holy days, hence the little horn “thinks to change times and law.” The wording is interesting, “thinks to change”. The reason for this is you can only think to change something that cannot be changed.

4. Daniel 8:9-14 is also clear that the 2300 evenings and mornings relate only to actions of the little horn. This is consistent with point three in which the judgment also known as the “cleansing of the sanctuary” must fit within the 1260 day period of the little horn’s reign.

These four points are just four examples of many that show confusion on our currently held interpretations. We would do ourselves a great service to carefully examine every position we hold before “historians or the world’s greatest men” do, so we do not find ourselves in a position where we “can give no satisfactory reason” for the beliefs we hold.

“Every position of truth taken by our people will bear the criticism of the greatest minds; the highest of the world’s great men will be brought in contact with truth, and therefore every position we take should be critically examined and tested by the Scriptures. Now we seem to be unnoticed, but this will not always be. Movements are at work to bring us to the front, and if our theories of truth can be picked to pieces by historians or the world’s greatest men, it will be done.” Evangelism 69

“When the time of trial shall come, there are men now preaching to others who will find, upon examining the positions they hold, that there are many things for which they can give no satisfactory reason. Until thus tested they knew not their great ignorance. ... When separated from those of like faith and compelled to stand singly and alone to explain their belief, they will be surprised to see how confused are their ideas of what they had accepted as truth.” 5 Testimonies, p. 707.

Many learned Adventists have sounded an alarm on this for at least a half a century, only to be rejected and vilified by the church leaders time and time again. This question must be answered: “Why is the Seventh-day Adventist Church the only organization that teaches these things?” We will look at three possibilities:

- 1) The church is truly the remnant and therefore can easily and Biblically answer concerns such as the four posed above,
- 2) Other Biblical scholars across all denominations see the error in these interpretations,
- 3) We are wrongfully holding to traditional interpretations instead of a “thus saith the LORD”.

We must not repeat the error of the Jews in the time of Christ. We must be willing to admit the possibility that we have not rightly understood the word, and that we have misinterpreted or misapplied the Scriptures. Today, with 20/20 hindsight we can clearly see that the pioneers of this grand movement did not see clearly into the sealed books of Daniel and Revelation. They did the best they could with the information given to them in their day. They did not receive all the light that was yet to shine forth on the path of the remnant. It is time to investigate every position we hold with an openness to change our understanding if necessary. We must dig deeper. If we do this, out of necessity, we will “prophecy again”.

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The fact that God allowed His 19th Century prophet to believe an error in timing is no different than how He allowed the greatest prophet—John the Baptist—to believe that the events tied to the Second Coming and close of millennium were all going to happen in his day (Matthew 3:11-12). In both instances, as well as others, it fit God's purposes to put his hand over the true timing so that His church could multiply quickly.

The way Ellen White is used as the final authority on all matters of truth and doctrine is not safe. God help us if He did not reveal all the truth to her that we need to get us through to the end. She was clear in saying that they had only the glimmerings of more light to come, and that much new light was yet to shine forth from the law of God.

Said my guide, "There is much light yet to shine forth from the law of God and the gospel of righteousness. This message, understood in its true character, and proclaimed in the Spirit, will lighten the earth with its glory". *1888 Materials*, Volume 1, p. 166.1 (Letter 56, 1895, to O. A. Olsen).

Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.

The official Seventh-day Adventist church needs to rightly honor God's prophetic festival calendar. The entire festival calendar holds the key to understanding prophecy. Why? Because the entire festival calendar, and not only the Day of Atonement, is prophetic, right up until the end of the plan of salvation (end of Millennium). If His calendar was embraced, there would arise yet another reason that we need to "prophesy again". Any church that has endeavored to interpret the great lines of prophecy without all of God's prophetic calendar will come up short of "all truth"!

Dealing With Challenges

The church has faced challenges in the past but it seems they are intensifying. Challenges come upon us for different reasons. We must address the legitimate challenges such as those brought forth in this letter. We have no hope of resolving challenges if we continue to disregard the light God, through His Spirit, is shedding on our path.

Recognizing and correcting errors are the only path to restoring God's favor, blessings, and intentions for His remnant church.

The "law (torah) and the prophets" are intrinsically linked and cannot be separated. There is no question, our pioneers received light through the gift of prophecy because they were obedient to God's revealing of light in their day. Why do I say we need obedience to all the torah and not just portions of it? It is simpler than one may think, and it is something that we already know and understand. We are still in the process of the Reformation. Light is still, to this day, shining on the path before us, lighting the way into all truth.

Our pioneers did not reject the light God shed on their path; can we say the same? This is what makes all the difference. This rejection of new light for us today has stagnated our progress in moving forward in truth, and therefore, unity. The pioneers' vision in establishing this movement is in jeopardy of being lost.

We are told in Acts chapter two that the gift of prophecy will be restored in the last days, not just one prophet, but many! Why do we not see this today?

Acts 2:17-18 "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. 18 and on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy."

This is just one more example of God allowing a prophet to apply a prophecy to his or her day when in fact, the fulfillment was yet future. Why are we not seeing this prophetic revelation all around us today? Could it be because we are not willing to move forward in truth regarding what all of His law/torah includes? The law and prophetic revelation go hand in hand.

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KJV Proverbs 29:18 “Where there is no [prophetic] vision, the people perish but happy is He who keeps the law [H8451, torah].”

NKJV Proverbs 29:18 “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law [torah].”

Malachi 2:9 “Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base Before all the people, Because you have not kept My ways But have shown partiality in the law [torah].”

Psalms 19:7 “The law/torah of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.”

We as a people cite Revelation 12:17 to prove we are the remnant—the Israel of God.

Revelation 12:17 “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Question, Do we define the commandments of God as the Author of them does? Is it two, ten, ten plus, or all of torah? The torah contains all of the commandments of God! Those who give the Elijah message will give a call to restore “all things” that God is calling us to restore. Remember, when Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment in the law, He cited two from the torah, not even one from the Ten Commandments. He is the author of the book of Revelation; He said His remnant keep His commandments, which by His own definition is the torah. If God’s people, in the time of the end, are going to be blessed with the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of Prophecy, we must be obedient to all He is calling us to remember and restore.

Conclusion of the Matter

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

We must search His word diligently to see if these things are so. We need to do so with confidence—not in ourselves, but in the One who calls, equips, sustains and causes us “to walk in His statutes” and “keep His judgments and do *them*” Ezekiel 36:27. May our witness be marked by diligent study of His word, which brings deep conviction and an unwavering commitment to do all that He asks, to do justice, and to love mercy. May we be known again as *the people of the Book*.

Any call to reach for true unity that is not based solely on His word will continue to slip through our fingers like sand. Let us journey together, trusting that the God who has led His church in the past will continue to guide us into the future. May the Seventh-day Adventist Church shine as a beacon of light, hope, healing, and unity in a world that needs all that God commands—both in the “law and the prophets”.

Isaiah 8:20 “To the law [torah] and the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

Jude 1-3 “...Those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”.

With respect, hope, and abiding love in unity,

Tom Stapleton

Open Letter to the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Tom Stapleton

P.S. If anyone would like to investigate further into these concepts, I would be happy to give you a free download of any or all of the following books:

1. *The Wise Shall Understand—Daniel and Revelation* <https://www.endtimesprophecy.com/store/wise-shall-understand-daniel-revelation-e-book/>
2. *Restoration of God's Festivals—An End Times Shadow Fulfillment* <https://www.endtimesprophecy.com/store/restoration-gods-festivals-e-book/>
3. *Re-Examining 1844—A Better Understanding* <https://www.endtimesprophecy.com/store/re-examining-1844-e-book/>