

An Appeal to the 5th Generation of SDAs

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Brian Schwartz

Adventists have been proclaiming the soon coming of Christ since the early Millerite movement started with Miller preaching his views based on his interpretation of Daniel 8:14, on the first Sunday of August 1831. The Adventists were severely disappointed in 1844, but soon realized that the time prophecy pointed to the time of the investigative judgment that begins the final era leading up to Christ's return. Thus despite great disappointment the early Adventist persevered and soon founded the SDA church in Battle Creek, Michigan, on May 21, 1863.

Seventh Day Adventist have seen themselves as a Prophetic movement called to proclaim the 3 Angels messages around the world and thus prepare the world for final Judgment and soon return of Christ.

Beyond every expectation it has now been over 184 years since the initial interest in an eminent second coming of Christ. Every prior generation of SDAs have looked with anticipation that they might be that final group who live without seeing death. But the question arises? How soon is Soon? Recently in Adventism we are seeing a shift in the millennial generation from belief in a soon return. (Valugenesis 2). We seem to be loosing this core anticipation within a large subset of our Youth. Topics such as 1844 and an Investigative Judgment are no longer considered essential. Can we continue to hold out hope of a soon coming of Christ after nearly 200 years of proclaiming His return?

There are multiple explanations discussed in church circles.

1. One popular belief is that God has His own timetable and will return when He sees fit. After all "a Day is as a year with the Lord." And "no one knows the day or the Hour." We must tarry till He comes and there is nothing we can do to change it.
2. He will come when the cup of Iniquity is full.
3. A recent view held by a few progressive Adventists is that we have been mistaken in anticipating a literal second coming and instead should work to establish His kingdom on earth by advancing His principles. This view has risen from the postmodern Emerging church movement that is gaining inroads in Adventism. It embraces a social gospel, which works toward improving our world through kingdom principles.
4. He will come when the gospel is preached around the world. This view is popular with some leaders and evangelists based on Matt 24. If we can just reach all the unreached people groups then Christ will return.
5. Christ has desired to come since the first generation of Adventists however He has been delayed in His coming because of unbelief on the part of His

remnant church. This implies that SDA's are in some degree responsible for His delay.

The remainder of this paper will discuss predominantly the last two views. History does seem to repeat itself and we may be able to learn from the experience of our biblical forefathers. Is it possible that we have repeated the history of the Jews to an even greater extent?

The children of Israel who were led out of Egypt looked forward to a promised land, but the first generation could not enter in due to unbelief (Hebrews 3:19) and rebellion. It was not God's purpose that there should be a delay.

The people of Israel had been ready to ascribe their troubles to Moses; but now their suspicions that he was controlled by pride, ambition, or selfishness, were removed, and they listened with confidence to his words. Moses faithfully set before them their errors and the transgressions of their fathers. They had often felt impatient and rebellious because of their long wandering in the wilderness; but the Lord had not been chargeable with this delay in possessing Canaan; He was more grieved than they because He could not bring them into immediate possession of the Promised Land, and thus display before all nations His mighty power in the deliverance of His people. With their distrust of God, with their pride and unbelief, they had not been prepared to enter Canaan. They would in no way represent that people whose God is the Lord; for they did not bear His character of purity, goodness, and benevolence. Had their fathers yielded in faith to the direction of God, being governed by His judgments and walking in His ordinances, they would long before have been settled in Canaan, a prosperous, holy, happy people. Their delay to enter the goodly land dishonored God and detracted from His glory in the sight of surrounding nations. {PP 464.2}

Ellen White makes a direct comparison between their experience and that of the early Adventists who had come through the great disappointment. She seems to give credence to a combination of the fourth and fifth reasons above.

No Failure of God's Promises.--The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. Thus it has always been presented to me. It is true that time has continued longer than we expected in the early days of this message. Our Saviour did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the Word of the Lord failed? Never! It should be remembered that the promises and the threatenings of God are alike conditional.

God had committed to His people a work to be accomplished on earth. The third angel's message was to be given, the minds of believers were to be directed to the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ had entered to make atonement for His people. The Sabbath reform was to be carried forward. The breach in the law of God must be made up. The message must be proclaimed with a loud voice, that all the inhabitants of earth might receive the warning. The people of God must purify their souls through

obedience to the truth, and be prepared to stand without fault before Him at His coming.

Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward. But in the period of doubt and uncertainty that followed the disappointment, many of the advent believers yielded their faith. . . . Thus the work was hindered, and the world was left in darkness. Had the whole Adventist body united upon the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, how widely different would have been our history!

It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed. God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. But those to whom it was first preached, went not in "because of unbelief." Their hearts were filled with murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and He could not fulfill His covenant with them. {Ev 695-6} Written 1883

Based on the reading of this passage clearly EGW links the giving of the 3rd angels message to be given to the world and the appropriate obedience and Faith of God's people to the coming of Christ in their lifetime. In a passage many years before she already recognizes that there was a delay.

Deferred in Mercy.--The long night of gloom is trying, but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready. God's unwillingness to have His people perish, has been the reason of so long delay.--Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 194. (1868)

Because of their unbelief Adventism endured hardships such as the Civil war that made spreading the gospel around the world nearly impossible, and the rise of Darwinism and popular doubt of all things religious, but a generation later the prophet again makes the comparison with Israel of old and begins the process of preparing God's people.

For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.--Manuscript 4, 1883.

Just as the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years it seems that the early Adventists repeated the same history. The Israelites came to the point of crossing the Jordan, but because of their unbelief they could not successfully cross over. That whole generation died in the wilderness, save Joshua and Caleb. Is it a coincidence that approximately 40 years after the message to the world in the 1840s, given by

the early Adventists, now 40 years later EGW is bringing the next generation over the same ground and preparing them for the message to come, she described as most precious and fulfilling the same 3rd Angels message that the Lord commanded to be given to the world? At the same time the world seemed ripe to receive the message the Lord had prepared.¹

The Lord in his great mercy sent a most precious message to his people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to his divine person, his merits, and his changeless love for the human family. All power is given into his hands, that he may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of his own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of his Spirit in a large measure. {PH154 35.2}

We May Hasten the Day.--By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord's return.--The Desire of Ages, p. 633. (1898)

Sadly this second appeal to Adventist was not met with the same response as the second generation Israelites who then proceeded to cross over, but instead this appeal to God's people was met with a resistance to a large degree. Any doubt regarding the failure of acceptance of this message should be dissipated based on the self-evident fact that we still remain here. Thus it is here in the years following 1888 that the Israelite and Adventist histories part as the former entered in by Faith.

In the years following 1888 EGW recognizes that the second generation would also die out.

The Work Might Have Been Done.--Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God.--Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 450. (1900)

Charge It Not to God.--We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel; but for Christ's sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action.--Letter 184, 1901.

When the Message Is Finished.--It [the coming of the Lord] will not tarry past the time that the message is borne to all nations, tongues, and peoples. Shall we who claim to be

¹ There was relative peace in the world and an economic boom. There was talk of National Sunday law.

students of prophecy forget that God's forbearance to the wicked is a part of the vast and merciful plan by which He is seeking to compass the salvation of souls?--Review and Herald, June 18, 1901.

Clearly it was not the Lords intent that there be a delay. The full responsibility lay with the failure on the part of God's people to embrace the message to be given to the world and do their part to give it to the world. They like the first generation Israelites could not enter in because of unbelief.

I know that if the people of God had preserved a living connection with Him, if they had obeyed His Word, they would today be in the heavenly Canaan. --General Conference Bulletin, March 30, (1903)

It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.--Testimonies, vol. 8, pp. 22, 23. (1904)

Directly related to the resistance to the most precious message, EGW would be sent to Australia and Adventists would experience an apostasy (EGW referred to the Omega) that would result in the loss of the Battle Creek Sanitarium and to a large degree the established health work, the loss of the Review and Herald Publishing house and the departure of many key leaders. Soon the nation would be engaged in a first world war, and communism would spread through Russia resulting in the Soviet Union. Suddenly the suffering in the world increased and the ability to give the gospel to the world became magnitudes harder for God's people.

Satan Has Stolen a March on Us.--If every watchman on the walls of Zion had given the trumpet a certain sound, the world might ere this have heard the message of warning. But the work is years behind. While men have slept, Satan has stolen a march upon us.--Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 29. (1909)

After a few years the prophets voice was silenced, but one cannot but wonder if the repeating history of Israel has not continued in the history of Adventism. After the First World War things seemed to settle down. Again much of the world was open, the nation saw prosperity known as the roaring 20s and approximately 40 years from the prior most precious message there seemed to be revival within the Church. AG Daniels published his book *Christ and His righteousness* that stirred renewed interest in the message of Righteousness by Faith, Taylor G Bunch pastor of the Battle Creek Tabernacle gave a series of sermons later released in manuscript entitled the *Exodus And Advent Movement In Type And Antitype* in which he showed the parallels between the Israelite movement and the Advent Movement. It was clearly a call to repentance lest we repeat the history of the first generation Israelites.

Sadly this revival was met with resistance. Again there were apostasies with Conradi and Bellanger and likewise the situation in the world took a turn for the worse. A great depression made the worldwide work difficult, and soon there would be another World War and communism in China. It seems another generation would die in the wilderness before yet again another revival would develop in the Church.

This concludes the 3rd generation of Adventism the fourth would be called in the 1950-60s with a call to Corporate Repentance sparked by a manuscript entitled 1888 re-examined by Wieland and Short and once again recovery of that most precious message. Sadly this too was short lived as this time the church battled the heresy of Brimsmead and Desmond Ford with his New Theology.

The world would experience the Cultural Revolution with its overthrow of the establishment. It seemed for a time that all things religious would be disdained as modern thinking people embraced science and postmodernism. Again making it seemingly difficult for the Three Angels Messages to advance around the world.

Alas here we are in our day, the fifth generation since our forefathers embraced the Advent movement. On the verge of losing the very foundation pillars of our faith. Many questioning the very core doctrines including the significance of 1844, the cleansing of the sanctuary and even the 3 Angels messages as still being relevant. Most surprising of all some are even questioning if Christ will soon return. Adventism has been rocked and battered; yet God's providence has not failed to preserve a remnant and to guide this movement forward despite unprecedented delay.

The prophet no longer speaks directly to our time but history seems to echo in unmistakable force that makes her statements as forceful today as they were then.

A flood of light is shining from the word of God, and there must be an awakening to neglected opportunities. When all are faithful in giving back to God His own in tithes and offerings, the way will be opened for the world to hear the message for this time. If the hearts of God's people were filled with love for Christ, if every church member were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of self-sacrifice, if all manifested thorough earnestness, there would be no lack of funds for home or foreign missions. Our resources would be multiplied; a thousand doors of usefulness would be opened, and we should be invited to enter. Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God. {6T 449}

If the delay is not attributed to God Himself but instead to the response of His people then this fact has grave implications for us today. Put another way it also presents to us today the greatest opportunity that any generation on earth has ever had. The privilege and opportunity to be the final generation that ushers in the very end of this world and the actual, literal, second coming of Christ. Unless we learn from history we are indeed destined to repeat it. Four generations before us have proven

this to be true; we are here because of their unbelief. Their failure to enter into His Rest. Must we repeat this history? Why not break the cycle of unbelief. Lets stop sitting by passively waiting for Gods' timetable and realize that as Adventists we have a divine calling. A mandate to give the Gospel message embodied in the 3 Angels messages to the world. Why not do all in our power to recover the most precious message given by Waggoner and Jones that carried with it the very beginning showers of the latter rain power. What keeps us back? Alas unbelief runs deep. There is only one cure. The Gospel story of Christ and His Righteousness, One antidote for our unbelief, The Faith of Jesus that will produce obedience to his commandments. Rev 14:12.

Perhaps we should recount our history and repent, as did the second generation Israelites who prepared to cross over to the Promised Land. Just as the second generation Israelites led out of slavery, stood on this side of the Jordan contemplating if they indeed could cross over. Moses as recorded in Duet. 1 onward began to explain the Law, and the Promises of God. Remarkably in Duet 9 he also reminds them of their failings in the prior generation. Vs. 6-29 KJV

Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.

Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord. Also in Horeb ye provoked the Lord to wrath, so that the Lord was angry with you to have destroyed you. And the Lord said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence; for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image. Furthermore the Lord spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they. So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands. And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the Lord your God, and had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the Lord had commanded you. Likewise when the Lord sent you from Kadeshbarnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then ye rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice. Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you. Thus I fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, as I fell down at the first; because the Lord had said he would destroy you. I prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin: Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness. Yet they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm.

Apparently this recounting of their corporate history was accepted with the spirit of corporate repentance. Other than Moses, Caleb and Joshua not one of those now standing here before Moses was of an accountable age when these sins of unbelief were manifest. Yet Moses speaks to them in the first person as if they were personally responsible. He prays on their behalf and admonishes them to be faithful.

Apparently they repented of their sin of unbelief as they entered and crossed over to the Promised Land. They entered in by Faith.

Do we as Seventh Day Adventists have a corporate history of unbelief? The evidence is undeniable. The prophet speaks to the first 2 generations that we are no different then the Jews. The fact that we are still here 5 generations later testifies against us as a people that we have also been slow to believe.

But the message first recognized as applying to us as a people in 1852 applies all the more today from Rev 3 KJV

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches

There is no 8th church, this is it, the incredible thing is that even after 5 generations of unbelief, when the race is at its weakest point morally, physically and spiritually, after 6000 years of sin and hereditary degeneration, even then the Lord calls this last church to repentance. He promises to have a people who will be clothed with the Righteousness of Christ, who have the pure gold of the Faith of Jesus, and who have the eye salve of the Holy Spirit. These gifts are the rich blessings that come from experiencing repentance.

The concept of corporate repentance should not be feared. By embracing a deeper repentance the pride of man is laid in the dust. In experiencing repentance we lose our self-dependence and become open to the filling of the Holy Spirit.

God will have a last day people who follow the Lamb, a people who keep His commandments and have the Faith of Jesus Rev 14.

We have the opportunity to be that special generation. It is not some mystical timetable. It is fully in our grasp.

It will be a literal coming and the world has never been more accessible, or open then it is right now. The greatest of all deceptions is already upon us as a church with the emerging church movement with its thrust to remove doctrine and replace it with a mystical experience. We may not survive another generation? Why must this go on any longer?

Why not recount our history?

Why not search the message of Christ and His Righteousness endorsed by EGW?

Why not embrace the experience of Repentance?

Why not us? Why not now?