

Why Isn't the SDA Church Following God's Plan for Organization?

Description

Why Isn't the SDA Church Following God's Plan for Organization?

A study related to the SDA
Sabbath School Lesson for 2021, 4rd Quarter
Present Truth In Deuteronomy
Week 2
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This week's lesson is entitled, "Moses' History Lesson," and discusses the book's recap of the history of God's chosen people who are at the border of the promised land.

Sunday's lesson says,

"Basically, just as the children of Israel are finally to enter Canaan, Moses gives them a history lesson, a theme that is repeated all through the Bible: remember what the Lord has done for you in the past. This admonition should mean something to us, we who are on the borders of a better Promised Land: 'In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, ... I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.'—Ellen G. White, Life Sketches, p. 196." Sabbath School Quarterly Lesson, Saturday, September 2, 2021

So today we thought we would look into this statement by Ellen a little closer.

Many times, this statement by Ellen is used to give a sense of security to Seventh-day Adventists – and it should – if the conditions for having nothing to fear for the future are met. But are they?

Ellen White said we have nothing to fear, **except...**

"Except" what? Well, – that "we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history." So, we should ask...how has the Lord led us?

This excerpt was taken from a letter from Ellen White to the General Conference, written on December 19, 1892. It was published in the General Conference Daily Bulletin, January 29, 1893. We should always read things in their larger context to really gain an understanding of what

someone is saying.

Ellen gives the reason for her correspondence in the first paragraph, which reads,

“I learn that it is proposed by some of our brethren to do away with the organization of some at least of the branches of our work. No doubt what has led them to propose this step is that in some of our organizations the machinery has been made so complicated as really to hinder the work. This, however, is not an argument against organization, but against the perversion of it.” Ellen White, GCDB January 29, 1893, par. 1

She then goes on to “recap” the history of the inspired organizational plan given to the SDA church by God. She quotes many, many testimonies given to her concerning the importance of organization. Tuesday’s lesson is entitled, “A Thousand Times More Numerous,” and also discusses the organizational structure that needed to be implemented by God’s spokesperson, Moses, in order to logistically secure a successful future for the growing nation.

This same issue – the rapid growth of the SDA church – faced Ellen White and the pioneers. In the letter to the General Conference in 1892, quoted from earlier, Ellen explained,

“Our numbers gradually increased. The seed that was sown was watered of God, and he gave the increase. ...As our numbers increased, it was evident that without some form of organization, there would be great confusion, and the work would not be carried forward successfully. To provide for the support of the ministry, for carrying the work in new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of the truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable. GCDB January 29, 1893, par. 5

“Yet there was strong feeling against it among our people. ... We sought the Lord with earnest prayer that we might understand his will, and light was given by his Spirit, that there must be order and thorough discipline in the church, that organization was essential. System and order are manifest in all the works of God throughout the universe. Order is the law of heaven, and it should be the law of God’s people on the earth.” GCDB January 29, 1893, par. 6

Ellen then brings up a time when God pointed her back to the experience of the Israelites. She continues,

“I was pointed back to the children of Israel. Very soon after leaving Egypt they were organized and most thoroughly disciplined. God had, in his special providence, qualified Moses to stand at the head of the armies of Israel. He had been a mighty warrior to lead the armies of the Egyptians, and in generalship he could not be surpassed by any man. The Lord did not leave his holy tabernacle to be borne indiscriminately by any tribe that might choose. He was so particular as to specify the order he would have observed in bearing the sacred ark, and to designate a special

family of the Levites to bear it. ...They were to receive directions from Moses, which they were to signify to the people speaking through the trumpets. The trumpets gave special sounds which the people understood, and they directed their movements accordingly. GCDB January 29, 1893, par. 19

“A special signal was first given by the trumpeters to call the attention of the people; then all were to be attentive, and obey the certain sound of the trumpets. There was no confusion of sound in the voices of the trumpets, therefore there was no excuse for confusion in movements. The head officers of each company gave definite directions in regard to the movements they were required to make, and none who gave attention were left in ignorance of what they were to do. If any failed to comply with the requirements given by the Lord to Moses, and by Moses to the people, they were punished with death. It would be no excuse to please that they knew not the nature of these requirements, for they would only prove themselves willingly ignorant, and would receive the just punishment for their transgression. If they did not know the will of God concerning them, it was their fault. They had the same opportunities to obtain the knowledge imparted as others of the people had, therefore their sin of not knowing, not understanding, was as great in the sight of God as if they had heard and then transgressed.” GCDB January 29, 1893, par. 20

Well, here we can clearly see how God orders His people on earth. First, there was Moses, God’s spokesperson, God’s chosen prophet. Moses would communicate God’s direction to the Levites, also chosen by God, who were to give their trumpets a certain, or definite, sound. She said there was no confusion of sound in the voices of the trumpets, therefore there was no excuse for confusion in movements.

Much could be extrapolated from these paragraphs, but let’s at least note that the head of God’s organization and movement was chosen by God himself. It was Moses, who, as Tuesday’s lesson says, was “a prophet, though, indeed, more than a prophet.” This of course echoes the description given to John the Baptist in Luke 7:26, but it also echoes Ellen’s own description of herself.

She said,

“Why have I not claimed to be a prophet?—Because in these days many who boldly claim that they are prophets are a reproach to the cause of Christ; and because my work includes much more than the word ‘prophet’ signifies.

When this work was first given me, I begged the Lord to lay the burden on someone else. The work was so large and broad and deep that I feared I could not do it. But by His Holy Spirit the Lord has enabled me to perform the work which He gave me to do.” Ellen White, Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 32

So, it is clear that Ellen was even more than a prophet, not unlike Moses or John the Baptist. And according to 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11, the only organizational position in God's movement that is more than a prophet is an apostle, which is someone commissioned or sent by God to bear his message, lead his people, and accomplish his work... And, according to these scriptures, we need an Apostle like Moses, John, or Ellen in our midst in order to be organized in harmony with God's design, according to the New Testament.

Let's read about this organizational hierarchy appointed by God as His means of running His church. 1 Corinthians 12:28 reads,

28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

And Ephesians 4:11 reads,

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers...

It is by this same organizational hierarchy that God has led us in our past history. Would the General Conference president say he is more than a prophet? Of course not. The General Conference was never intended to take the place of the apostle or prophet in the church. It was founded as a means to organize God's movement, but the "certain sounds" that direct the movement were always intended to come from God through His chosen spokesperson, the prophet.

We all know that the SDA church is in crisis today. Decisions in our denomination are determined by the voting results of the General Conference delegates. We cannot determine the certain trumpet sound based on a popular vote of what certain people think that sound should be. This is no way to determine the will of God, and it is not supported in scripture or in the writings of Ellen White. We have a clearly defined model to follow, and we are not following it.

Why are we not following God's organizational model when it is not only clearly stated in scripture, clearly exemplified in both the old and new testaments, and clearly stated and exemplified in the past history of the SDA movement? Do we actually think we can lead ourselves without God working as He always has – through His chosen spokesperson at the head of the movement?

Remember what Hosea taught,

"And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved." Hosea 12:13

We **do** have nothing to fear for the future, **except** we forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history. How has the Lord led us? How can we be sure that we are following Christ our leader? Is this something we can vote on? Does scripture support voting as a means to

determine God's will?

So, how has God always led His people? In an organized way, starting with someone who is more than a prophet at the top, serving as God's chosen spokesperson through whom He can communicate that certain, definite sound for all others in His ranks to trumpet, to hear, and to follow.

For more on this topic, we recommend for you to read the study ["The King of Crises in the Seventh-day Adventist Church"](#) by [Trent Wilde](#). It makes plain the way the Lord has led us in our past history and it shows the Lord's teachings regarding his own method of leading us.