

Stones of
meaning

150

1863 - 2013



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST® CHURCH

United for Mission

We have nothing to fear...

- 150 years since the Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially established (1863)
- 169 years since “the Great Disappointment” (October 1844)
- **“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 White, *Life Sketches*, 196)
- But we do “forget”, since we tend to pay very little attention “to our past history”

Seventh-day Adventists and History

- **Is history relevant for Seventh-day Adventists,** given that our entire reason for existence revolves around looking forward to the imminent end of history?
- **Is reflection on the past necessary, or even appropriate, for a community of adventists,** who believe that Christ's second coming is imminent and whose purpose is to bring it closer by preaching the word throughout the world?

History can help us fulfill our purpose and our mission:

- To “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19)
- To preach Christ and Him crucified “to the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8)
- To proclaim, with the Three Angels, “the everlasting gospel ... to [all] those who live on the earth” (Rev. 13:6)

Israel crosses into Canaan

- “Listen to the words of the Lord your God. This is how you will know that the living God is among you ... the Ark of the Covenant ... will go into the Jordan ahead of you. ... And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the Lord—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand in a heap.” (Jos. 3:9-13 NIV)
- The Jordan was “at flood stage” (Jos. 3:15 NIV)

The Jordan in flood...



The Jordan as it normally is...



Demonstrating divine power

- The crossing of the Jordan will prove that Joshua is God's chosen successor to Moses (Jos. 3:7)
- Under Moses, the Children of Israel had crossed the "Sea of Reeds" (the correct translation of the Hebrew words normally translated as "Red Sea") (Exod. 14)
- Israel's escape from Pharaoh's army celebrated in the song led by Moses and Miriam (Exod. 15:1-22)

Stones of meaning

- “When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you’.” (Jos. 4:1-3 NIV)
- Each stone is “to serve as a sign among you in the future....These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.” (Jos. 4:6-7.)

The monument at Gilgal

- “And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones” [...]
- “In the future, when your descendants ask their fathers ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you [...He] did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea [...] He did this so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty and that you may reverence and fear the Lord your God forever.” (Jos. 4:20-24 NIV, Amplified.)
- **“These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”** (Jos. 4:7 NIV)

Revival and victory at Mizpah

- Samuel urges the Israelites to “rid yourselves of...foreign Gods” and to “commit yourselves to the Lord and serve Him only,” and then He “will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines.” (1 Sam. 7:3 NIV)
- The twelve tribes gathered at Mizpah to recommit themselves to God (v. 6).
- But “the rulers of the Philistines [...] came up to attack them” (v. 7 NIV).
- Samuel “cried out to the Lord on Israel’s behalf,” and “the Lord thundered ... against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed” (v. 10 NIV).

The monument at Mizpah

- Samuel hoped that “the occasion might never be forgotten” (White, *Patriarchs & Prophets*, p. 591).
- And so Samuel “took up a stone and set it up [near] Mizpah” and “named it Ebenezer” which means “stone of help”, for “Thus far has the Lord helped us” (1 Sam. 7:12 NIV).
- For the rest of Samuel’s time as Judge, remembrance of the victory helped keep the Philistines and Amorites at peace with Israel, and keep the Israelites true to God (1 Sam. 7:13-14, White, *Patriarchs & Prophets*, p. 591)

God values history and wants His people to value it too (i)

- Moses commanded the Israelites to “*be careful* and watch yourselves so that you do not *forget* the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart”; to be “*careful* not to *forget* the covenant of the Lord”; and to be “*careful* that you do not *forget* the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt” (Deut. 4:9, 23, 6:12, NIV)
- “Teach [these stories] to your children and to their children after them.” (Deut. 4:9.)
- Remembrance requires care and effort! And it must be transmitted to the next generation.

God values history and wants His people to value it too (ii)

- The prophet of Gideon's day: call to the Israelites to *repent* and *return* to God begins with a *reminder* of their history (Judges 6:8-10)
- In the schools of the prophets, established "to serve as a barrier against ... wide-spread corruption", among "the chief subjects of study" were "the records of sacred history" (*Patriarchs & Prophets*, pp. 594-95)

God values history and wants His people to value it too (iii)

- David bade the Israelites not only to “give thanks to the Lord [and] Glory in His holy name” and to “Seek the Lord and His strength”, but also to “Remember His marvellous works which He has done, His wonders and the judgments of His mouth” (1 Chron. 16:8-12 NIV)
- Nehemiah recounts to the returned exiles the entire history of Israel from the time God chose Abraham; and rebuked them because they, like their forefathers, “refused to listen and *failed to remember*” what God had done for them in the past (Neh. 9:17 NIV)

God values history and wants His people to value it too (iv)

- Stephen is charged with “speaking against [the Temple] and against the law” by his constant preaching about Jesus (Acts 6:13 NIV),
- He began his defence by a summary recitation of all Israel’s history (Acts chaps. 6–7)
- Jesus’s mission could only be understood in the context of the long history of divine interaction with Israel and of the history of their rejection of the prophets, even those who foretold the coming of the Messiah! (Acts 7:52)

Luke, Paul and Church history

- Acts is the continuation of the Gospel of Luke and had similar purpose and method (cf. Acts 1:1-3)
- In his introduction to it, Luke declares that he writes because “it seemed good ... to write an orderly account for you ..., so that you may *know the certainty* of the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:3-4 NIV)
- He compiled it from various pre-existing narratives and eyewitness accounts (v.2)
- Paul to the church at Thessalonica; “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.” (1 Th. 2:15 NASB)

Hebrews, History and Faith

- Believers should “recall the former days” of their own journey in faith (10:32 NKJV) and the experiences of past generations
- The history of the faithful—sketched out in chapter 11
- Even Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah “did not receive the promise” and so, in faith, they died (11:13)
- The faithful have “through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, [...] shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; [their] weakness was turned to strength” (11:33-34 NIV)

Hebrews, History and Faith

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Christ, the author and finisher of our faith”

(Heb. 12:1-2, NKJV)

Ellen White in 1899 (aged 69)



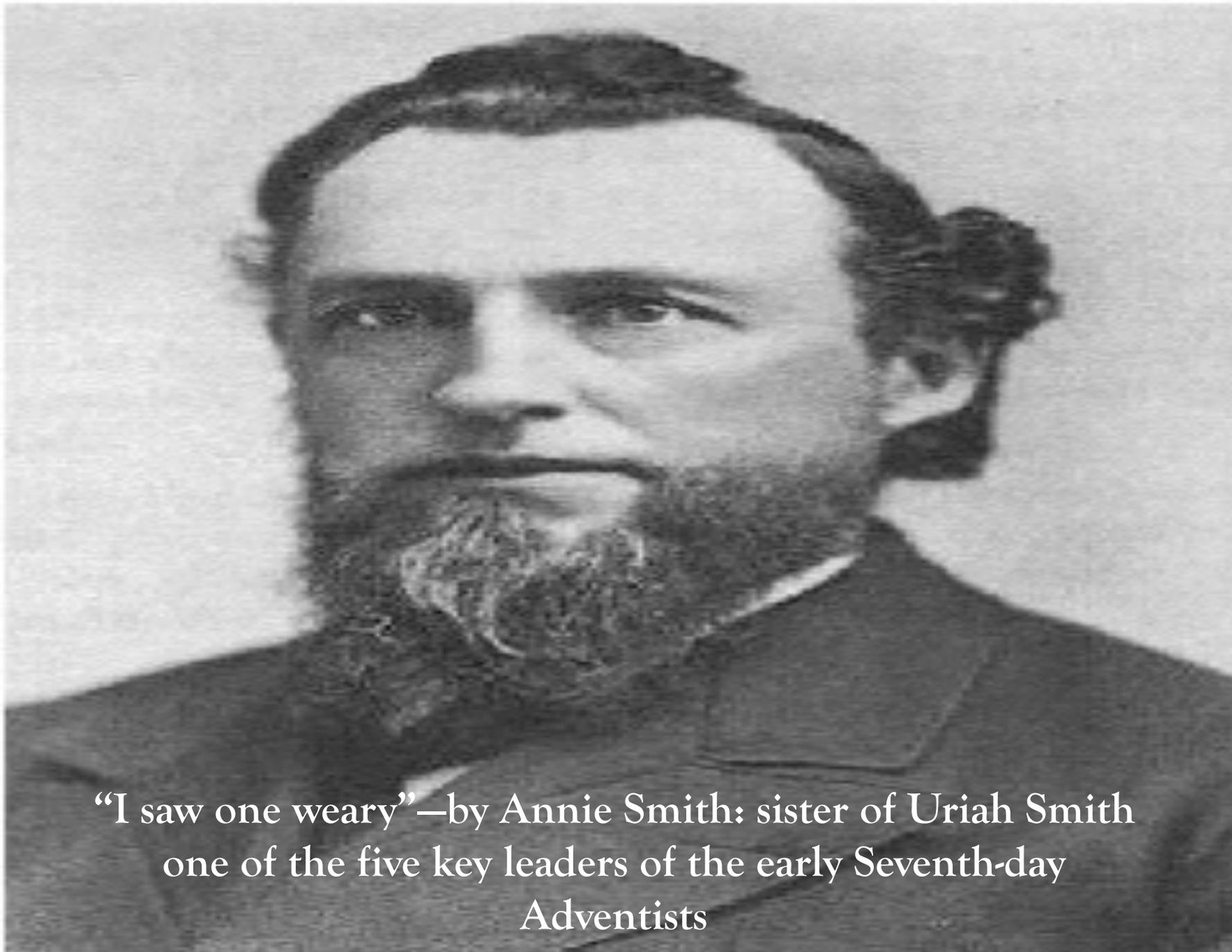
Ellen White on history

- “One of the best evidences of the authenticity of the Scriptures [is] that the truth is not glossed over nor the sins of its chief characters suppressed”
- “Here only can we find a history...unsullied by human prejudice or human pride.”
- “How many biographies have been written of faultless Christians, who, in their ordinary home life and church relations, shone as examples of immaculate piety....Had the pen of inspiration written their histories, how different would they have appeared”.

Ellen White on history

- Biblical narratives “record the struggles, the defeats, and...victories of the greatest men this world has ever known”, but with “all their faults and follies”.
- “Seeing where they struggled and fell, where they took heart again and conquered through the grace of God, we are encouraged”.

(*Testimonies*, iv. 9, 10, 12; *Patriarchs & Prophets*, p.596)



“I saw one weary”—by Annie Smith: sister of Uriah Smith
one of the five key leaders of the early Seventh-day
Adventists



James
and
Ellen
White

“I saw one weary ...” – v. 1

The one who was “weary, sad and torn”, and had “many a line of grief and care” furrowed on his brow, but whose spirits were buoyed up by “the blessed hope” ... this was

Joseph Bates

who concluded every letter he wrote: “Yours in the blessed hope”



“I saw one weary ...” –v. 2

The one “Who boldly braved the world’s cold frown ... Though worn with toil and oppressed by foes” ... this was

James White

the husband of Ellen White, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for ten of its first 17 years, founder of Adventist publishing work.



“I saw one weary ...” –v. 3

And the 3rd, who “left behind
the cherished friends of early
years, And honor, pleasure
wealth resigned, To tread the
path bedewed with tears”?

Annie Smith

(seen right, in a self-portrait): A
gifted artist and writer, who,
because she was a woman, did
not feel it appropriate to refer
to herself openly.



John N. Andrews



The first Seventh-day Adventist missionary, who went to Europe in 1874, and died nine years later, in effect of malnutrition—he used almost all the money sent to him for the work, rather than for his own needs.

A few Adventist heroes...

how many do you know?

- Ellen White
- James White
- Joseph Bates
- Uriah Smith
- Annie Smith
- J. N. Andrews
- J. N. Loughborough
- A. G. Daniells
- W. W. Prescott
- W. A. Spicer
- Charles Kinney
- G. D. Keough
- C. H. Watson
- W. H. Branson
- F. D. Nichol
- L. E. Froom
- Ferdinand Stahl
- Ana Stahl
- Arthur Spaulding
- Arthur Maxwell

Our history as a whole, like the monument at Gilgal, is there “that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty”—and to remind us to “reverence and fear the Lord our God forever and ever.”