

Unsound: A Brief Review of P. G. Temple's, *Understanding Daniel and the Revelation*

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Recently, a non-Seventh-day Adventist book has been distributed presenting some very colorful doctrines, including:

- The Bible contains a time prophecy that is 2520 years long
- The church has no authority
- Since 1852 God is especially working to win individuals—not churches
- The third woe of Revelation 11:14 began Sept. 11, 2001

These teachings are unbiblical and unsound. Some, having an awareness of current issues, will in the above recognize the aberrant teachings of lay-person Jeff Pippenger who has been banned from speaking in Arkansas-Louisiana and other conferences. The remainder of this document briefly discusses some of the particulars of Temple's unfortunate book.

The book in question runs some 368 pages and is titled, *Understanding Daniel and the Revelation* (henceforth UDATR), by P. G. Temple. It is published by a handful of individuals calling themselves “The Foundations and Pillars Ministry.” The person publishing this material (2011) was dropped from membership in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 2004. The author is a woman who, to the best of our knowledge, has not attended the Seventh-day Adventist Church for years.

Hyper-Individualism and Church Authority

We will discuss the “2520.” But first, consider a perhaps more troubling teaching in the book; one which stands directly opposite the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded in 1861. Included in its current official belief statement is

the following: “The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word” (*Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 18th ed., p. 160). But here is what Temple teaches:

Laodicea 1852 – End. . . . This is our time, starting approximately 1852, and it is important that we understand this message Jesus is outside the hearts of the people in this 'church'. He warns them that He may have to reject them, but He is trying so very hard to get individuals to open up their hearts and let Him in, so He can re-create and save them [Revelation 3:20 quoted] There is something important to notice here. Jesus is talking to individuals. All the man-made churches of this day have rejected Jesus as leader; and now Jesus is saying 'any man', anyone at all, who wants His company, He will come in and live with that person (UDATR, pp. 187, 189).

And

This Fall [of churches referring to Revelation 14:8] has kept on going[sic]. . . it includes all churches, and this is why the 144,000 will not be found obeying any of those man-made organizations that are showing by their lives that they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Instead, they will 'come out' by following the Word faithfully (*Ibid.*, p. 264).

And

It is time to heed the voice and come out of all organizations that despise or ignore the plain Bible truths. . . (*Ibid.*, p. 292).

Among the plain Bible truths, according to Temple, is the “2520” year prophecy. But Temple's most telling material is her “Understanding Hierarchy” chart in UDATR, p. 248:

Left side:

“Only authority Christ and His Word

God

Authority

Individual believers (all ye are brethren)

Pastors, teachers, preachers (all are servants)

God's plan: Each individual has equal, unalienable rights and is accountable only to God, he is free to study and decide for himself what is his duty to God. Ministers serve the believers. Only God's word has authority.”

Right side:

“Authority from God presumed turned over to the church

Pope

Absolute infallible authority

Levels of rank and authority

Priests

Individuals have no rights, must obey and serve their superiors! Satan's plan: Individuals have no rights at all, except what the higher levels see fit to grant them. Each level is answerable to the one above it. Satan only needs to control the top—and he has it all!”

Two approaches only are given. One is that the church itself has no authority—“Each individual is accountable only to God.” The actual fact stands between the two all-or-nothing positions offered by Temple. The church does have authority. But believers belong to the church organization on a voluntary basis. In belonging, they all, pastors and members both, work within a God-given arrangement of mutual accountability:

The Word of God does not give license for one man to set up his judgment in opposition to the judgment of the church, neither is he allowed to urge his opinions against the opinions of the church (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 428).

By ignoring the authority of the church they [unruly members] show contempt for God, who gave to the church its authority (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 243).

Nor are these quotations speaking only in some very general way about the church. The church as frequently spoken of by Mrs. White is a very specific entity:

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 into new fields, for protecting both the churches and the ministry from unworthy members, for holding church property, for the publication of truth through the press, and for many other objects, organization was indispensable (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 26).

But in Temple's book, there is no mention in positive light of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; it is never excluded from the general condemnation.

As for Temple's theory that since the time of the Laodicean era of the church (which she identifies as beginning about 1852), Jesus has turned from working with groups to working with individuals, she is wrong again. Revelation chapters two and three show that the counsel of the True Witness comes to the churches in each case through the messenger to each of the churches. Each lampstand represents one of the seven churches—each one a collective group of believers (Revelation 1:4, 20). The Spirit is speaking to the churches (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) through the messengers to the churches (Revelation 1:20).

Although He speaks through the messengers of the churches, His message is for each church. He speaks to each church as if to an individual—and not just to the Laodicean church—in this manner! In Revelation 2:5 He warns the Ephesian church not that He will remove the messenger but that failure to change course will result in the removal of that church. The messenger to each of the churches is the Holy Spirit working through those to whom He has given gifts of leadership. Christ is the Head of the church and the rest of us are members of the body. But within that body some are especially charged to

lead (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24). Temple, denying that the church has authority, is denying these are to lead. This fundamental teaching of UDATR is especially destructive.

The 2520 Day/Year Prophecy Theory

Temple's 368 page book mentions the (so-called) "2520" year prophecy and seemingly every possibility for coming up with the number 2520 on numerous pages, specifically, pp. 54, 63, 101 (x2), 102, 107, 108, 149, 161, 350, 351, 352 (x3), 353, 354, 355 (x2).

The theory offered is that when the Jews were unfaithful to God, they fell under a prophetic curse. The ten northern tribes were under this judgment from 723 BC to 1798 AD and the two southern tribes from 677 BC to 1844 AD. During these time periods God scattered the Jews "among the heathen."

In some vague way, this supposed prophecy is supposed to be important to God's people today. Unfortunately, apart from the urgent exhortations offered in the book, exactly how those who accept it as true are to respond remains quite vague. It is thus very difficult to see the importance or the utility of this teaching.

Nevertheless, the foundational texts offered in the book as in support of the 2520 prophecy are found in Leviticus 26 and Daniel 4.

In the Leviticus example, 26:18, 21, 24, 28 promise that God will punish Israel sevenfold for her covenant-breaking. Bible versions such as KJV translate this as "seven times" but the Hebrew itself here actually only says "seven." In the Bible where the Old Testament Bible writers want to speak specifically of a period of seven years or seven times, they use a combination of two Hebrew/Aramaic words. But this is not what we see in either Leviticus 26.

But, assuming one does not know this, and following the premise that (a) some actual prophetic period is here in view and (b) that seven years are meant and that (c) a prophetic year is equal to 360 days, the seven times are understood to be seven years of 360 days each. The number 2520 is arrived at by multiplying 360 by 7 making 2520 days and then applying the day for a year principle to make this 2520 years.

The first problem then is the theory that some actual, particular prophetic period must be referred to. The passage in Leviticus 26 are general, outlining what happens when Israel obeys or disobeys. No particular, specific prophetic time period is here alluded to.

The second problem is that the passage offers no suggestion that the seven referred to has to do with years. Rather, it is a promise of divine retribution offered in perfect fullness. "Sevenfold" is the more correct translation, as virtually all recent Bible versions treat the passage.

At the third step, making a prophetic year equal 360 days where there is no particular prophetic period in sight, offers no basis for converting each seven into 360 days.

Perhaps the most important argument is that all of the other recognized longer time prophecies (490, 1260, 1290, 1335, 2300) occur only in apocalyptic (Daniel and Revelation). Leviticus 26 is a law and covenant passage. To make Leviticus 26 an apocalyptic prophecy is an obvious genre mismatch.

This leaves us with one other main chapter: Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32. King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream and Daniel interprets it for him. God will humble Nebuchadnezzar's pride. Nebuchadnezzar improves his behavior for awhile but eventually fails. God take away his reason for a period of seven times. At the end of this, his kingdom is restored and he acknowledges God's supreme sovereignty.

In Daniel, visions and prophecies are usually datable (Daniel 2:1; 7:1; 8:1; 9:1; 10:1). But no date is given for the chopped-down tree in Daniel four. Were this matter important (dating the start of a 2520 year prophecy), one would expect such a date by which to anchor the beginning of the period of prophetic fulfillment. Interestingly, Ellen G. White in some 100,000 pages and 71 years of writing never once teaches the "2520" day/year prophecy.

And here is a serious problem: exactly how would, let us say seven years of madness for Nebuchadnezzar, apply in any way to 2520 years of divine retribution for Israel or Judah? Yes, we are in apocalyptic, but Daniel chapter four itself offers no suggestion or hint of linkage to divine judgment upon Judah. If these are seven actual years out of Nebuchadnezzar's life, then how could they stand for 2520 actual years of scattering among the heathen for Judah? There is no indication either in Daniel or elsewhere in Scripture that Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel chapter four has more than one fulfillment. What happened to him *is* the fulfillment (Daniel 4:28).

In short, Temple's interpretation of the primary passages offered in support of the supposed 2520 year prophecy fail abysmally to be convincing.

Other Issues

In this short paper I have chosen not to address Temple's Pippengerite teachings involving Sept. 11, 2001, and other recent events mentioned in UDATR, including pp. 151-153, 240, 257-258, nor various other issues involving historical fact.

Temple's book introduces and condemns a wide variety of practices and beliefs including the medical use of drugs, surgery (p. 16), “our whole worldly system of education” (p. 84), modern Bible versions (pp. 201, 202), “the plans which the UN has drawn up for the 'New World Order'” (p. 285), Christmas, Easter, Valentine's [Day], Halloween, birthdays, unhealthy food, sugary treats (p. 288). Many of these are wrong or problematic. However, it seems unwise to introduce so many topics only to summarily dismiss them in a line or two. This Temple does over and over again in only some 360 pages. In contrast, Ellen White's *The Great Controversy* is nearly twice as long, deals carefully with history and prophetic topics, and does not even mention Seventh-day Adventist health teachings. Temple's approach is opposite that of White.

Temple also seems unaware of where the “facts” end and her “compiling” begins. She writes, “Even as a child, this compiler often wished that everything written in books and libraries that was not true and honest, would just disappear. If that happened many libraries would be nearly empty. And textbooks that students have to study from would be nearly empty too (UDATR, p. 300).”

Temple betrays a black-and-white view of reality, a penchant for judging, and a dislike for facts that are sometimes complicated. She wants to simplify her world—and the world of others. Her religion in the book comes across as stark and cold and lonely; it is her and a few to join in her condemnations against the world. Nowhere does the book offer a discussion of Jesus and the cross lasting for more than a few lines. In contrast, consider Ellen White's hundreds and hundreds of pages of Scripture-soaked material all about Jesus in *The Desire of Ages*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, and *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*.

Some argue that to reject 2520 is to reject the pioneers. But neither did these “pioneers” then teach the existence of a heavenly sanctuary; they taught a smorgasbord of things we today reject. William Miller opposed the Sabbath and died believing there was a hell and that man has an immortal soul. Many “pioneers” never taught the 2520; nor has it ever been a formal part of Seventh-day Adventist teaching.

But it is true that a few individuals did mention the 2520. Hear Eugene Prewitt from his book, *Deeper: Investigating the Integrity of Our Prophetic Foundations* (2009), p. 143:

The only Sabbath-keeping Adventist pioneers who ever wrote about the 2520 directly were Bates, Edson, Smith, and perhaps James White (if he penned the 1864 editorial [the 1864 editorial directly repudiated the idea that Leviticus 26 had reference to time]). The first used the 2520 as evidence that probation had closed. The second suggested a changing of the dates on the chart to terminate in 1798. Both the third and the fourth argued that the 2520 was not an actual time prophecy at all.

It becomes apparent that with the 2520, we are dealing with something alien to the Third Angel's Message and to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Summary

The book, *Understanding Daniel and the Revelation*, by P. G. Temple is an independently produced missionary volume amalgamating the teaching of certain truths in Daniel and Revelation with the presentation of non-truths such as the imagined “2520” year prophecy and a destructive view of church authority. It is designed to promote a variant kind of experience that amounts to an Adventism without the church. Those who distribute this book are promoting an altogether different teaching about the church along with a false prophetic message.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has much to do in a short space of time. We are stewards over God-given resources including our time and the time of those who lead. Distractions such as the materials above addressed do not draw us closer to a finished work. They prevent us from sharing the sound prophetic message that we know has been given for this hour and from sharing Jesus who died on the cross to save.

Perhaps the most urgent resource besides God's love, is the credibility of God's Church. Acquiring credibility takes time and carefulness. It may be quickly destroyed. It is counter-productive to distribute materials that teach speculative novelties and doctrines which exactly contradict the Bible teachings presented by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We are asking people to *join* the Seventh-day Adventist Church; what kind of thinking would lead us to use for outreach materials those that tell them *not to join*?

The prophetic topics taught in Daniel and Revelation are very important. My counsel is to discard immediately P. G. Temple's problematic book. If, besides using the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White, one wishes to help others with carefully researched material on Daniel or Revelation, such works as Uriah Smith, *Daniel and Revelation*, and C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, volumes one and two, would be more helpful.