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THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

What Christians Should Do Before and After Casting Their Ballot – Biblical Perspectives

By Chad Stuart

(This article is adapted from a sermon Chad Stuart preached at the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church on November 5, 2016, three days before the United States presidential election. Even though this particular election has passed the general principles delineated in this article are still valid and applicable. The complete sermon can be accessed at <https://vimeo.com/190463303>).

Ellen G. White counsels, “Keep your voting to yourself. Do not feel it your duty to urge everyone to do as you do.”¹ But Adventists today, like many Americans entering the ballot box on November 8, are very much engaged with the political process. Both sides have predicted great calamity if the other side wins. And privately there is also great concern of great calamity even if your candidate is elected as well.

We, as a nation, may be in for some challenging times. We have people like Eddie Gaude Jr., the chair of the Center for African-American Studies at Princeton University, a devout Democrat, saying he will not vote for Donald Trump—yet he refuses to vote in good conscience for Hillary Clinton. Then we have John Kasich, the Republican Governor of the State of Ohio, who has already submitted his ballot with the write-in-name of John McCain for president, thus bringing back the Republican candidate from 2008. It is truly a presidential election like no other I have seen in my lifetime and, from my understanding, like few others in history.

God is Still in Control

Many people have expressed concern over this election—even true anxiety beyond the typical dislike of candidates that always exists. However, there are biblical principles that can alleviate some of the anxiety we feel when it comes to political decisions:

First and foremost, let us remember 1 Chronicles 29:10–12:

*Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all.*²

Those who have had moments of great concern for our nation should remember this truth: all that is in the heavens and in the earth is God's. This earth does not belong to the Democrats, the Republicans,

Will God find it difficult being God if either is president? Will God be perplexed at the outcome of this election? No, God is still great, all-powerful, and our ultimate leader!

the Libertarians, or the Green Party. The earth belongs to God. God is exalted as head above all. This is the truth we need to hold in our hearts before we cast our votes and it is the truth in which we should find comfort afterwards. No matter which candidate wins the election, God is still God. Does God find it more difficult to be God should one become president over the other? Is God perplexed at the outcome of elections? God is God no matter who is president. As Christians we must maintain perspective: God is still great! God is still all-powerful! God is still our ultimate leader!

No Vote is Truly Righteous

Another truth to remember—which may be harder to accept—is that none of us cast a truly righteous vote. None of the candidates are righteous per se. It does not matter if one seems to have sinned less than the other, or if one's failings are more apparent than the other. Sin is sin to God!

Of course we desire for our political leaders and candidates to seek God and His will. But let us not consider our votes or these candidates to be spiritually right or wrong; we are spiritual people voting for a *secular* office. The Bible reminds us that there is “no one righteous—no not one” (Rom 3:10). This includes the person voting in the booth, so let us remember not to denigrate those who may cast their ballot in a different direction. The candidates running for office and the individuals in the ballot box are all great sinners in need of a great Savior. There is no one righteous—no, not one!

Pray for Kings and All in High Positions

Scripture instructs us on our moral responsibility toward political leaders after they have been appointed: no matter who wins, we are to pray for their success and well-being.

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim 2:1–4, emphasis supplied)

Regardless of who wins an election, our responsibility as Christians is to pray for them. We must remember

that our moral commitment to Christ is higher than our allegiance to any human being, and we are to follow God's counsel to pray for all men and for all leaders!

God wants us to pray for our leaders so that we may have peace, and because God desires the salvation of all. Jesus loves Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, Gary Johnson, and Jill Stein every bit as much as He loves you! His death on the cross was for them just as much as it was for you. The sins of Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton are no more responsible for hanging Jesus on the cross than your sin or mine.

Nebuchadnezzar was an immoral narcissist who built a giant gold statue of himself. His nickname was “The Hammer” (cf. Jer 50:23) because of all the people he killed. Yet God allowed Daniel to be put in Nebuchadnezzar's presence so that He could bring salvation to Nebuchadnezzar. Studies of Daniel may focus on the prophecies and what they mean for us in the here and now, but do not forget there was a man in the Babylonian kingdom that God wanted to save. At each junction Nebuchadnezzar was urged to acknowledge God as his God, but it wasn't until the very end that he declared, “*Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down*” (Dan 4:37).

Daniel's mission was not only to lead us into an understanding of 1844. His first mission was to help lead the heart of a wicked despot into a saving relationship with the God of the universe. So we are to pray for whomever is elected, remembering that God loves that person. Pray that God will send someone to be in their midst and help them grow in their relationship with God. Remember that elected individuals are loved by God just as we are—they are not simply caricatures to be mocked and ridiculed. Jesus died for them too and wants them in the kingdom of heaven.

Finally, remember our vote should not compromise our positive influence and mission. Our mission as Christians does not change—and should not change—because of elections.

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

We have the right and privilege to vote. But our vote should not hamper our mission. When elections are over, we should not have done or said anything that would have caused our witness for Christ to be compromised. Pledge to do as Ellen G. White counsels: “keep your voting to yourself,”³ so that our witness can be for everyone.

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¹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 337.

² All biblical quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982), unless otherwise indicated.

³ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958) 336, she adds: “My brethren, will you not remember that none of you have any burden laid upon you by the Lord to publish your political preferences in our papers, or to speak of them in the congregation, when the people assemble to hear the Word of the Lord.”

“The Creator Loves This Place: God’s Care for His Creation and Our Responsibility”

By JoAnn Davidson

(This message was presented at the Faith and Science Council at Andrews University on October 20, 2016. A more scholarly exposition of the subject by JoAnn Davidson can be found in “Creator, Creation, and the Church: Restoring Ecology to Theology” in AUSS, vol. 45/1 (2007): 101–122)

Seventh-day Adventists have referred in our name to two critical events in which we believe, both involving the entire planet: one that has happened, and one that will happen in the future. We have expressed our understanding of these two events in our fundamental beliefs—doctrines that we believe are especially crucial for this world in its last days.

God’s Love for His Creation and the Animals

Yet, sometimes, it seems the far-reaching parameters and implications of these two doctrines escape us. For example, we believe that the seventh-day Sabbath established by the great Creator during the first week of this world underscores that He is the God of both time *and* space. And this *is* a vital issue! Yet many Adventists seem to overlook the Creator’s heart and how much He loves what His own hands have made. From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture reminds us that the Creator has never lessened His concern about this world, no matter how much humans have abused it. Here are a few examples of His caring attention:

1. On the fifth day of the creation week the Creator blessed the newly created birds and sea creatures. The

tions He gave to humans and land animals the next day, whereupon He pronounced *everything* “very good”!

2. In Noah’s ark, animals were saved along with humans—in fact, many *more* animals than humans. Then, after the Flood, the divine covenant given to Noah specifically included animals, repeating several times:

Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: “And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you *and* with your descendants after you, *and* with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. . . .” And God said: “This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, *and* every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth (Gen 9:8–13, emphasis supplied).

The Creator does not hesitate to include animals within His covenant!

3. The Sabbath commandment in the Decalogue includes both humans and animals in its blessing. Further divine Sabbath counsel in Exodus elaborates on this: “on the seventh day you shall rest, that *your ox* and *your donkey* may rest, and the son of your female

servant and the stranger may be refreshed” (Exod 23:12, emphasis supplied). The blessed time of rest is granted to all humans and animals. Even the land itself

We often seem to overlook the Creator’s heart and how much He loves what His own hands have made.

text reads, “God spoke to *them* saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply’” (Gen 1:22).¹ With no humans around yet, to whom was He speaking! These are the same instruc-

was given a seventh-year “sabbatical” (Exod 23:10–11; Lev 25:1–7).

4. After Balaam beat his donkey three times, God released her tongue (Num 22:28) and she cried

The biblical evidence of the Creator’s caring attention for this world is sweeping.

out, asking Balaam why he had been beating her, reminding him that she had faithfully served him for a long time. She obviously already had intelligence. The text merely states that God “loosed her tongue” and she cried out to Balaam in a language he couldn’t avoid.

5. Note the psalmist’s testimony: “Your righteousness is like the great mountains; Your judgments are a great deep; O Lord, You preserve man and beast” (Ps 36:6). This was already demonstrated in the Flood narrative where the same word for salvation is used of both humans and animals. The modern mindset has subtly degraded the value of animals. Bible writers, on the other hand, emphasize how the Creator treasures all life!

6. When people try to imagine heaven, ideas are often restricted to golden streets and harps. But when God describes His future restoration of a perfect world, He includes the animals:

The *wolf* also shall dwell with the *lamb*, The *leopard* shall lie down with the *young goat*, The *calf* and the *young lion* and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. The *cow* and the *bear* shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the *lion* shall eat straw like the *ox*.

The nursing child shall play by the *cobra’s* hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the *viper’s* den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,

For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea. “And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And *His resting place shall be glorious.*” (Isa 11:6–10, emphasis supplied).

7. Scripture climaxes with a great chorus singing praise to the Creator. Note all the different voices in that choir:

“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice:

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and

blessing! *And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them*, I heard saying: Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!” (Rev 5:11–13, emphasis supplied).

This great worship scene reflects the same perspective already found in the Old Testament. Notice the voices in the great praise chorus of Psalm 148 (emphasis supplied):

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! ... all His angels ... all His hosts ... sun and moon ... all you *stars* of light ... Praise the Lord from the earth, You *great sea creatures* and all the depths; Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word; Mountains and all hills; Fruitful trees and all cedars; *Beasts and all cattle; Creeping things and flying fowl*; Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth; Both young men and maidens; old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven.

The familiar Christian doxology—“Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise Him all creatures here below . . .”—captures this grand biblical theme. But few people, when singing these words, realize the

We must not let the evolutionary mindset overshadow the grand truth of Scripture that God loves this world and all the creatures He made.

implication of all the different voices of praise. We may be slow in understanding this, but the communication of animals is now being widely studied and reported.² Much praise is wending to the Creator that we are apparently not aware of!

We must not let the evolutionary mindset of modern thinking overshadow the grand truth of Scripture that God loves this world and all the creatures He made. Moreover, animals are not dumb. Ellen G. White noted this a century ago:

The *intelligence* displayed by many animals approaches so closely to human intelligence that it is a mystery. The animals see and hear and love and fear and suffer. They use their organs far more faithfully than many human beings use theirs. They manifest sympathy and tenderness toward their companions in suffering. Many animals show an affection

for those who have charge of them, far superior to the affection shown by some of the human race. They form attachments for man which are not broken without great suffering to them. . . . What man with a human heart, who has ever cared for domestic animals, could look into their eyes, so full of confidence and affection, and willingly give them over to the butcher's knife? How could he devour their flesh as a sweet morsel?³

Strikingly, White wrote on the cruelty involved in eating meat long before the dreadfully cruel modern practice of “confined animal feeding operations.” And as my nutrition teacher in university said, after describing some of these practices, “If you’re not outraged, you’re not paying attention.”

At least two issues come to mind: (1) Belief in a caring Creator suggests that our concern should include all living creatures and even a special stewardship for the land God gave to human beings. After all, God even gave the land a “sabbatical” every seven years. (2) Intelligent and sensitive care for all life includes refraining from eating the dead flesh of animals, realizing that the vegetarian diet itself is meant to be a blessing.

The Heart of the Matter

Why are Adventists not known for stewardship of the earth? We call attention to the Creator and His created world in our very name, yet are slow to realize and proclaim the importance of beneficial creation care practices. We reduce and limit stewardship to tithing (as important as tithe is). And why are Adventists not part of the burgeoning contemporary movement to eliminate meats from the diet—for health reasons *and* for concern over God's creatures?

Informing and improving these attitudes could bring real blessings to others as well as ourselves. It would do us well to recall that God has always called His people to be a blessing to the world. Even Abraham was told, “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and *you shall be a blessing . . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*” (Gen 12:2–3, emphasis supplied).

Adventists have also been called to be a blessing by sharing the good news of the gospel. Yet this gospel is sometimes twisted to be a system of works that we need to do in order to attain perfection so that Jesus can come. Even the counsels of White are used as a hammer by some while others simply ignore her. But when it comes to the violence-free, plant-based diet she recommends, rather than being thought of as an advanced blessing God wishes His human family to have, too many still say, “I don’t have to be a vegetarian to be saved.”

But that is not the point! God gave us health counsels through Ellen White so that we could be blessed and share this blessing to a dying world. And since the three angels’ messages are a deep theological truth with complex implications that take careful thinking to understand, clearing one’s mind by eliminating harmful foods enhances the reception of this blessing. As Ellen White instructs regarding ancient Israel:

The Lord plainly told His people that *every blessing* would come to them if they would keep His commandments, and be a peculiar people. He warned them through Moses in the wilderness, specifying that health would be the reward of obedience. The state of the mind has largely to do with the health of the body, and especially with the health of the digestive organs. As a general thing, the Lord did not provide His people with flesh meat in the desert, because He knew that the use of this diet would create disease and insubordination. In order to modify the disposition, and bring the higher powers of the mind into active exercise, He removed from them the flesh of dead animals. He gave them angels’ food, manna from heaven.⁴

And pointedly, note how the Lord started the miracle manna meals before He presented the Decalogue on Mount Sinai.

In recent years more and more studies have been

In recent years more and more studies have been published about the horrifying cruelty involved in modern animal husbandry—and the resulting harm and diseases it causes in both animals and humans.

published about the horrifying cruelty occurring in modern animal husbandry—and the resulting harm and diseases it causes in both animals and humans. Long before these modern trends, Ellen White noted the cruelty to animals in the context of flesh foods. She emphasizes the issue by reminding us of the close connection between physical and spiritual health:

The moral evils of a flesh diet are not less marked than are the physical ills. Flesh food is injurious to health, and whatever affects the body has a corresponding effect on the mind and the soul. Think of the cruelty to animals that meat eating involves, and its effect on those who inflict and those who behold it. How it destroys the tenderness with which we should regard these creatures of God!⁵

And elsewhere she states:

The liability to take disease is increased tenfold by meat eating. The intellectual, the moral, and the physical powers are depreciated by the habitual use of flesh meats. Meat eating deranges the system, beclouds the intellect, and blunts the moral sensibilities. . . . Your safest course is to let meat alone.⁶

There are major national conferences and even cruises on vegetarianism, featuring prominent health educators, but Seventh-day Adventist lecturers are hardly ever included. Yet we have had in our tradition a long history of knowing the benefits and blessings of a violence-free, plant-based diet. Have we hidden our light “under a bushel” and deprived people of this great blessing God intended to give through us? While we have produced several studies on the benefits of a healthful lifestyle we could have been developing more scientific studies for the last one hundred years to undergird Ellen White’s advanced counsels—ideas that are only now being discovered in modern science. We could have been what God yearns His followers to be: “the light of the world” (Matt 5:14). He wants His people—whether in the Old Testament, the New Testament, or presently—to be a light and blessing amid the confusing ideas of this dying world:

And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them (Deut 28:13, emphasis supplied).

However, through the years Ellen White’s advanced counsels have often been ignored, taught as a way to obtain salvation, or considered outdated. What might have happened if Adventist scientists and educators had taken Ellen White’s materials seriously and studied them rather than dismissing or ignoring them—for truth can stand the closest investigation⁷—and found ways to scientifically present them as an advanced blessing?

Our name can’t help but draw attention to the created world, both through the seventh-day Sabbath blessing and because God has promised to come again to renew His beloved world and destroy the damage sin has caused. Therefore, we return to the question:

Why have we have been so slow in proclaiming the blessings of a violence-free, plant-based diet first given in Eden to both humans and animals (Gen 1:29–31)? That diet will be restored when Jesus returns: “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes;

there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be *no more pain*, for the former things have passed away” (Rev 21:4, emphasis supplied). And why is it that we have been so slow to be good stewards of this earth, having restricted our understanding of stewardship often to money? Since we believe in the literal creation of our world, why haven’t we been known for our joyous care of it? Jesus’ own example should inspire us, for He even notices when a sparrow falls (Luke 12:6). He also admires the lilies His hands have designed and created: “Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these” (Luke 12:27).

Just because Adventists believe in the literal second coming of Jesus doesn’t mean that we should

Just because Adventists believe in the literal second coming of Jesus does not mean that we should be careless of this world.

be careless of or harmful to this world. Jesus wasn’t. Although He knew one day this world would be cleansed and made new, He didn’t just leave it as it was when He lived on earth: He healed the sick, raised the dead (though He knew they would die again before His second coming), and revealed a caring attitude toward animals.⁸ This is how Ellen White describes Jesus:

Jesus was the fountain of healing mercy for the world; and through all those secluded years at Nazareth, His life flowed out in currents of sympathy and tenderness. The aged, the sorrowing, and the sin-burdened, the children at play in their innocent joy, the little creatures of the groves, the patient beasts of burden,— all were happier for His presence. He whose word of power upheld the worlds would stoop to relieve a wounded bird. There was nothing beneath His notice, nothing to which He disdained to minister. Thus as He grew in wisdom and stature, Jesus increased in favor with God and man. He drew the sympathy of all hearts by showing Himself capable of sympathizing with all. The atmosphere of hope and courage that surrounded Him made Him a blessing in every home.⁹

Elsewhere she says,

Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father’s notice. Satan’s hatred against God leads him to delight in destroying even the dumb creatures. It is only through God’s protecting care that the birds are preserved to gladden us with their songs of joy. But He does not forget even the sparrows.¹⁰

Having an inclusive, compassionate attitude is not to impress God with our good deeds. What should motivate us is the desire to be a blessing to this dark world—being the “light on the hill” that God spoke of.

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¹ All biblical quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982), unless otherwise indicated.

² For example, Monty Roberts, *The Man Who Listens to Horses* (New York: Ballentine, 2009); Candace Savage, *Encounters with the Wise Guys of the Avian World* (Vancouver: Graystone, 2015).

³ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 315–316.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1938), 375 (emphasis supplied).

⁵ White, *Ministry of Healing*, 315.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1948), 2:63–64.

⁷ “The subjects which we present to the world must be to us a living reality. It is important that in defending the doctrines which we consider fundamental articles of faith, we should never allow ourselves to employ arguments that are not wholly sound. These may avail to silence an opposer, but they do not honor the truth.

We should present sound arguments, that will not only silence our opponents, but will bear the closest and most searching scrutiny” (Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915], 299).

“The parables of Jesus were designed to arouse a spirit of inquiry which would result in a clearer exposition of the truth. As he was thus instructing his disciples in the meaning of his words, the people again gathered about to listen, and his teachings were received and cherished in the minds of many who heard them. These discourses of Jesus were not merely to a class of inferior minds; but there were intelligent and cultivated persons present who were capable of the closest criticism. Scribes, Pharisees, doctors, rulers, lawyers, and the representatives of all nations, were there to hear; yet there were none to gainsay his words in all that vast assembly” (Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* [Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1870], 2:241–42).

⁸ “The passionate belaboring of animals or the disposition to show he is master is often exhibited toward God’s creatures in the streets. This is venting their own anger or impatience upon helpless objects which show they are superior to their masters. They bear all without retaliation. Children, be kind to dumb animals. Never cause them pain unnecessarily. Educate yourselves to habits of kindness. Then it will become habitual. I will send you a clipping from a paper and you can decide if some dumb beasts are not superior to some men who have allowed themselves to become brutish by their cruel course of action to dumb animals”. (Letter 26, 1868, 2–3 [To Edson and Willie White, Dec. 16, 1868] in 3MR, 49.1).

⁹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1940), 74.

¹⁰ White, *Testimonies*, 8:272.

SCRIPTURE APPLIED

Lessons from Daniel 10

By Ekkehardt Mueller

Humans may notice what is visible to them, at least to some extent. Insiders take notice of what is happening behind the scenes. This is so in the world of business and politics as well as in many other areas. In contrast to the insiders, most people can only guess at what is really happening.

However, when it comes to the supernatural world all of us are outsiders. We can guess, but we do not know what is going on. We are caught in our three-dimensional world and have no access to knowledge beyond our sphere—that is, unless God reveals it to us and we care to listen.

Daniel 10 is a unique chapter in Scripture. It not only introduces Daniel’s last vision but also draws the curtain aside so we can understand that there is another dimension to our struggles on earth.

I. Structure of the Vision of Daniel 10–12

The broad outline below comprises Daniel 10–12, although for now we will concentrate on chapter 10 only. It consists of three major parts and helps us see the contours of the entire last vision of the book of Daniel.

- Prologue to the last vision of Daniel (10:1–11:1)
- The vision of the kingdoms (11:2–12:4)
- Epilogue to the last vision and to the entire book (12:5–13)

In the beginning of chapter 10 Daniel mourns (10:2–3). At the end of the vision he is told that he would rest and experience the resurrection (12:13). The man in linen clothes, who appears in Daniel 10:4–9, reappears in Daniel 12:6–7(13). He may be present during the entire vision. Michael is found in Daniel 10:13, 21 and Daniel 12:1. This shows that the intro-

duction and the conclusion of the vision correspond in an important way. There is Daniel, the prophet of God, who sees what the people of God will experience. There are heavenly beings and a divine being who control events on earth and sustain the people of God. In the end, there will be the resurrection. There is hope.

For now, we will concentrate on chapter 10 but the outline helps us to see the larger issue more clearly. Chapter 10 can be structured in the following way:

- *Historical Setting (10:1)*
- *Daniel Mourns (10:2–3)*
- *The Man in Linen Clothes and Daniel (10:4–9)*
 - Description of the Man in Linen Clothes (10:4–6)
 - Daniel's Reaction to the Vision (10:7–9)
- *The Angel and Daniel (10:20–11:1)*
 - The Angel's Actions and Speech (10:10–16a)
 - Daniel's Response (10:16b–17)
 - The Angels Action and Speech (10:18–19a)
 - Daniel's Response (10:19b)
 - The Angel's Speech (10:20–11:1)

II. Survey of Chapter 10

1. Time Frame

Daniel received his vision during 536/535 BC, the third year of the Persian king Cyrus. Having been deported from Jerusalem in 605 BC, he was an old man in his late eighties. The vision of chapter 11 begins in Persian times and extends to the end of time.

2. Distinctive Features of Daniel 10

While the chapter is cast in a narrative framework and contains insights into the practical life of a believer—namely how to relate to God—it also contains one of the most fascinating biblical revelations. A number of persons appear, although it is not completely clear how many. In any case, there are Daniel, the man in linen clothes, probably an interpreting angel, Michael, and the princes of Persia and Greece.

In this chapter two visions are mentioned: the vision of the man clothed in linen and the vision about the kingdoms and the people of God, which will be developed in chapters 11 and 12a.

Remarkable are also the phenomena describing a prophet in a vision.

III. The Discussion of the Chapter

1. The Historical Setting

10:1 While the revelations of chapters 7 and 8 are given during the first and third year of a Babylonian king, those of Daniel 9 and 10 occur during the first and third year of Persian kings. When Daniel experienced what is described in chapter 12, he was at the Tigris river (Dan 12:4). The vision deals with a part of the great controversy. Daniel understood what was shown him in the next verses, but we know from the book that certain parts of what he had

seen he did not understand. They were sealed “until the time of the end” (Dan 12:4).

2. Daniel Mourns

10:2–3

No reason is provided for Daniel's mourning. However, the historical context may indicate that he was afraid that Cyrus' decree, which allowed the Jews to return to Palestine, might not be completed due to the resistance on the part of the Samaritans. In his distress, Daniel sought God's presence through prayer (Dan 10:12) and partial fasting.

3. The Man in Linen Clothes

10:4–6

The first vision is one of the man in linen clothes. It is distinct from the vision of the kingdoms in Daniel 11, which is described with a different Hebrew term. A similar vision was seen by John in Revelation 1:12–16. *What are the similarities between what Daniel saw and what John saw?*

- Both supernatural beings are described as men.
- They wear long, priestly garments.
- They have a golden sash or belt, which may point to royalty.
- Their eyes are like flames of fire.
- Their feet and legs are like burnished bronze.
- Their faces were like lightning, or the sun shining at full strength.
- They both have a mighty voice.

In Revelation it is very clear that this person is Jesus, and that Jesus is God. Some of the characteristics of Jesus in Revelation 1 are those of the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9; Rev 1:14). In Daniel we also have to assume that this person is Jesus. Daniel 10:4–6 reminds us of the heavenly Son of Man (Dan 7:13–14). So Daniel encounters the pre-incarnate Jesus in His glory.

4. Daniel's Reaction to the Vision

10:7

The fact that while only Daniel saw the vision, the people with him, while they did not see the vision, trembled and fled, indicates that they somehow felt the divine presence. It reminds us of Paul's Damascus experience and the effects on his companions in Acts 9:7.

10:8–10,
16–19

It is very rare in Scripture that we hear about the prophets' physical reactions when they received a vision. This is due to the fact that the emphasis is not on how prophets were affected but on the message they had to deliver. Nevertheless, in the case of Daniel we are informed that

no strength was left in him. He fell on his face, was helpless, and fainted. That he was without breath could mean that he ceased breathing. Therefore, he needed to be strengthened in order to stand upright (Dan 10:11). The call, “Fear not” seems to indicate that he was afraid.

The physical and emotional phenomena are reminiscent of Ellen G. White’s experience when she was in a vision.

In Daniel 10 we do not have a lot of “message”; rather we see the majestic Jesus and some actions. *What could be some reasons for these phenomena to be recorded here?*

- Daniel sees a theophany, an appearance of God. While the appearance of angels, such as Gabriel, evokes fear in humans (Dan 8:16–17; 9:21; Luke 1:11–19, 26–29), this can hardly be compared to Daniel’s strong reaction in chapter 10.
- To see God, even in a veiled form, is almost too much for humans—even believers. God is the sovereign Lord and not just a good friend. Therefore, awe, respect, and love go hand in hand. We cannot play games with God.
- It is this majesty of heaven, the Almighty, that is able to settle all things and keep the power of human beings, but also of evil supernatural beings, in check (the princes of Persia and Greece). God is able to solve the problems of His people. While this message of God’s might and sovereignty is sometimes presented in words, it is occasionally also presented without words, by a direct appearance of God.
- Daniel and all followers of Jesus need encouragement when the future looks bleak. The Lord does not run out of possibilities to intervene and bring to a conclusion the plan of salvation.
- Daniel and Christ’s disciples need to have a personal relationship with the Lord and recognize their personal responsibilities.

5. The Angel

10:10,
16, 18

Three times Daniel is touched. Physical touch is important to most humans; they are encouraged and comforted by the presence of other beings who draw close and show care. Here Daniel is being touched by a being.

Is it the man in linen or is it an angel?

There is a correspondence in terminology and concepts between Gabriel’s appearance to Daniel in chapter 9 and the person who touches Daniel in chapter 10 (e.g., the heavenly being coming to

Daniel in 9:22 and 10:20; Daniel as being loved in 9:23 and 10:19; to give understanding in 9:22 and 10:14). Therefore, it is often assumed that here we have presented Gabriel as interpreting angel, as he also appears elsewhere in Scripture.

6. The Dialogue between the Angel and Daniel

10:10–11:1

In the ensuing dialogue the angel speaks three times; Daniel speaks just twice.

- Daniel is being encouraged. Twice he is told that God loves him greatly (Dan 10:11, 19). Who would not like to hear that from fellow humans—and all the more from God? Twice Daniel is also told not to fear (Dan 10:12, 19). Peace will be with him.
- While being strengthened, he is also affirmed that his intercessory prayer for his people is heard and that it has made and will make a difference (Dan 10:12). It was heard right away and was not put on a waiting list. Therefore, he now can be strong and of good courage (Dan 10:19).
- His understanding will be enlarged (Dan 10:13, 20). He has not only seen the pre-incarnate Jesus but will also know that behind the scenes a great battle is going on that will be won by the supreme Lord. It is not only the Samaritans who cause problems to the Jews returning from exile; there are evil angels engaged in warfare against God and His people.
- So the present issues behind the scenes as well as the future of God’s people are revealed to Daniel. Verse 14 is crucial. The kingdoms described in chapter 11 do not reflect all major powers in the history of this earth or even the major political players that still may appear. The focus is not so much on these kingdoms, but rather on the people of God, especially “in the latter days.”

10:16–17,
19

Daniel seems to contribute little to the conversation with Gabriel. *Why is it important anyway?*

- He acknowledges his weakness and his respect for the heavenly being. But this makes all the difference.
- Daniel knows that he is not in charge; God is.
- What is really important is that Daniel wants to listen to the message from God.

7. Michael

10:13, 21

Twice the angel informs Daniel about Mi-

chael. *What do we know about Michael?*

- Michael came to the help of Gabriel, who was involved in a spiritual battle against the prince of Persia—obviously a fallen angel, if not Satan himself. Michael is involved in a spiritual battle against evil powers in favor of his people. The battle extends also to the heart of the pagan king. Michael is one of the chief princes (Dan 10:13).
- Michael is “your prince” (Dan 10:21), the prince of God’s people, who intervenes with the Persian and Greek overlords and by implication with all hostile overlords.
- Daniel 12:1 again calls Michael the great prince of “your people.” He will rescue all those “written in the book.” There will be a future resurrection (Dan 12:2).
- Michael has fought the dragon, Satan, and gained the victory (Rev 12:7–8; Jude 1:9)
- He is the only one to be called archangel in Scripture (Jude 1:9).
- His name means “Who is like God?”
- Jesus will return with the voice of the archangel (1 Thess 4:16).
- Obviously Jesus is the archangel Michael, as He is the Chief Shepherd (literally “arch-shepherd,” 1 Pet 5:4).

If this conclusion is correct, then Daniel encounters the pre-incarnate Christ as the Man Clothed in Linen, but he also hears about His involvement as Michael in the spiritual battle against evil powers.

Result

As other chapters in Daniel have a strong emphasis on the (at this time) still future Messiah, and as Daniel 9 even indicates the time of His public appearance as a human being on earth, so Daniel 10 is all about Jesus.

IV. Application

There are a few lessons for us to learn from Daniel 10:

- Our spiritual life is important. It is dangerous to neglect one’s spiritual life. A day without prayer can easily become a lost day. We also need to

recover fasting, even if it is a partial fasting.

Fasting may go beyond abstaining from food. We may need to abstain, for instance, from excessive work, the preoccupation with material things, the Internet and the constant occupation with mobile phones and other devices, or from the obsession to be reachable at any time and to reach others at any time. We should live our lives in the presence of God instead of being chained to our devices.

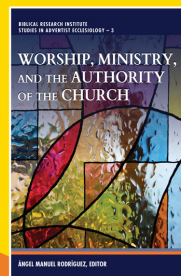
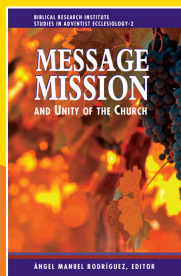
- Our dedication to God and the welfare of His people are important. Life is not only about ourselves; it is also about others, including the community of faith. When things go wrong in the church, people today tend to withdraw. Daniel, while suffering, held on and interceded for his people. He did not cut himself off from the fellowship of believers. God heard his prayer, encouraged him, and granted him inner peace.
- While God considers us His beloved children, we also need to love him. A formal religion, a mere adherence to biblical beliefs, and even a strict observance of God’s commandments are in sufficient if we do not love God and each other.
- Battles behind the scenes continue today. We do not recognize and understand all of them, and full understanding may not even be necessary. But there is someone who knows all things. He cannot be deceived, and His plan cannot be thwarted. Daniel was not able to fight all the battles; he had to leave them to the Lord. It is best for us to leave the battle in Jesus’ hand, while we follow Him faithfully with all our heart, soul, and mind. He has already gained the victory, and this victory will fully be realized at His second coming and after the Millennium.
- Therefore, we are not alone when evil powers assault us (Eph 6:10–18). In all temptations, suffering, and persecutions Jesus will be with us as He has promised (Matt 28:20)—even to the end of the world. Those who belong to Michael will also be victorious.

Conclusion

Daniel 10—and we have to repeat this—is all about Jesus, the Man Clothed in Linen and Michael, our Prince. It is all about Him, who has saved us and will save us completely.

We are to remember that human beings are fallible and erring, and that He who has all power is our strong tower of defense. In every emergency we are to feel that the battle is His. His resources are limitless, and apparent impossibilities will make the victory all the greater. Ellen Gould White, *Conflict and Courage* (Review and Herald, 1970), 217.

NEW PUBLICATIONS



ECCLESIOLOGY THREE-VOLUME SET

US\$42.00 plus S+H

The Biblical Research Institute (BRI) is happy to announce the completion of its three-volume set on ecclesiology. Edited by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, retired director of the BRI, all three volumes include biblical, theological, historical, and eschatological perspectives on the topics they examine. Volume 1 considers Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology in connection with the biblical concept of the remnant. Volume 2 examines the concept of the church and its mission throughout Scripture and explores the fundamental bases for unity. Volume 3, just released, deals with issues that have challenged the unity of the church through the centuries: worship, ministry, and authority. This set will be especially valuable for pastors, teachers, and other church leaders.

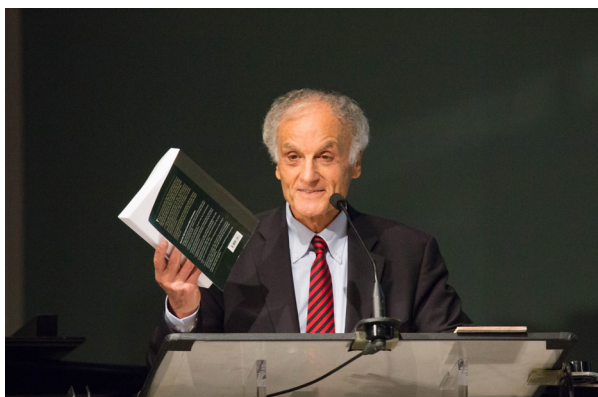
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The First Volume of the New Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary on the Book of Genesis Released

On October 9, 2016 the first volume of the new *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary* on the book of Genesis was solemnly released to the public during a special ceremony at the Annual Fall Council at the General Conference in Silver Spring, MD, USA. Jacques B. Doukhan, who is the general editor of the new *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary* Project is also the author of the first volume on Genesis. A copy of the first commentary was given to all delegates at the Annual Council. Because the classic Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary was produced nearly seventy years ago the need to prepare a new commentary has become increasingly

urgent. New findings that illuminate and enrich our understanding of Scripture are taken into consider-

ation, thus increasing and improving our understanding of the Bible. The new *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary* is written by an international team of distinguished Seventh-day Adventist theologians and Bible scholars from around the globe. It seeks to provide Adventist church members, pastors, administrators, and scholars with a solid exegetical and



Jacques B. Doukhan introducing the first volume of the Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary at the Annual Fall Council at the General Conference in Silver Spring, MD, USA.

theological tool in support of the specific and unique truths that the Seventh-day Adventist Church stands for. May God bless this massive project so that the next volumes will be available soon.

Fourth International Bible Conference

We are pleased to announce the **Fourth International Bible Conference for Bible Teachers and Theologians in Rome, Italy, June 11–21, 2018**. This conference—sponsored by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the Biblical Research Institute, and the North American Division—has as its general theme, “Biblical Eschatology from an Adventist Perspective.”

Its purpose is to promote biblical and theological studies from an Adventist perspective and to foster theological unity and fellowship among Bible teachers, theologians, and administrators from around the world. There will be up to twenty special plenary sessions dealing with topics such as the ‘delay’ of the second coming, final events, the role of Israel in Last Day Events, Ellen White and Eschatology, Hermeneutical Foundations and Eschatology, Theistic Evolution and its Implications for Eschatology, Historicism and Prophetic Interpretation and Eschatology, Current Trends

in Evangelical Eschatology, Missions and Eschatology, and challenges facing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in some issues dealing with our understanding of eschatology. Besides the plenary presentations there will be more than forty papers in eight parallel sessions and a guided tour of major biblical and early Christian sites in Rome and its environs. The goal of the International Bible Conference is to encourage deeper study of the biblical understanding of eschatology and the challenges we face from contemporary cultures, philosophies, and religions; examine ways to reaffirm our faith commitment in the biblical understanding of last-day events; and explore strategies of sharing this biblical view with world religions.

Due to space and logistical constraints, the conference is limited to 370 participants (sorry, no spouses). Divisions and General Conference institutions are responsible for appointing the participants, and the list must be finalized by January 31, 2017.

A BIG THANK YOU to Elias Brasil de Souza!



We would like to express a *big thank you* to the previous editor and present director of the Biblical Research Institute: Elias Brasil de Souza. Elias Brasil de Souza is an outstanding Old Testament scholar and has contributed various insightful articles to *Reflections*. What is particularly noteworthy

is the fact that he continued this demanding task as editor of *Reflections* for one more year, even after he was elected as new director of the Biblical Research Institute in October 2016. Despite his full-time work

at the BRI, numerous administrative and new leadership responsibilities, as well as speaking appointments and other commitments as an author and scholar he was still able to make *Reflections* available four times a year. This is an enormous accomplishment for which we are particularly grateful. It was also Elias Brasil de Souza who was instrumental in giving *Reflections* a more modern and appealing new design. In all this Elias Brasil de Souza has been and continues to be an exemplarily kind and courteous leader who displays a rare virtue in theological learning: a humble spirit that graces his scholarship with authenticity and authority. We are looking forward to seeing more articles from him in future issues of *Reflections* and wish him all the best and God’s blessing in his important work for the world church.

From the New Editor of *Reflections*, Frank M. Hasel



As the new editor of *Reflections* I would like to express my gratitude to you for your interest in current issues from a biblical perspective.

What many readers do not know is that all the articles and content of previous issues of biblical *Reflections* are easily acces-

sible and researchable through a powerful index on the BRI website [<https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/Index%20to%20Reflections%201-3-17.pdf>]. The index can be searched by author name, title, subject, or keyword, providing a powerful theological resource and reference point.

Future issues of biblical *Reflections* will be thematic, emphasizing different issues. It will also address specific questions in areas of faith and science. All articles will continue to be peer-reviewed by members of the BRI and published only with their approval.

There are plans underway to make previous issues available on the BRI website in other languages such as Spanish and Portuguese, so that they can be read by a wider audience. If you have an interest in translating biblical *Reflections* into other languages, please contact the editor. [brnewsletter@gc.adventist.org]

Some churches advertise *Reflections* in their church bulletin so that interested church members can

profit and gain a blessing from it. Feel free to share *Reflections* with whomever you think may benefit from it, and tell them how to sign up for a free subscription on the BRI homepage [<https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/content/newsletter>]. May it become a theological resource and blessing to many pastors, theology teachers, and interested church members in our world church.

INDEX

Index to *Reflections*

The first issue of *Reflections* was published in January 2003. Since then, we've published many articles.

While it's possible to use Acrobat to simultaneously search all past issues of *Reflections* for one word or phrase, some readers have asked for a formal index. From now on, you will find a pdf index at the end of each newsletter that you can download.

If you wish to search simultaneously all past issues of the newsletter for one word or phrase in

Acrobat, you must download from the BRI website <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/newsletters> all of the *Reflections* issues PDF's to one folder.

Open any issue in Acrobat, and then press Shift+Command+F (Shift+Ctrl+F on Windows). In the Search window that appears, be sure that you click the radio button that says "All PDF Documents in," and in the dropdown menu below that, choose the folder in which you placed your *Reflections* issues.

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Reflections seeks to share information concerning doctrinal and theological developments among Adventists and to foster doctrinal and theological unity in the world church. Its intended audience is church administrators, church leaders, pastors and teachers.

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Articles important for Adventist theology are written at the invitation of BRI and should be sent by email attachment to the editor at brnewsletter@gc.adventist.org

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