Adventist World November 18 WOP SUNDAY

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FLAG: Sunday

HEAD: Why Scripture Is the Supreme Authority

SUBHEAD: Inspired counsel as relevant today as when it was written

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In 606 B.C. Israel was about to face one of the worst crises in its history. Within a few years, in 586 B.C., the kingdom of Judah would be destroyed. King Jehoiakim (reigned 609-598 B.C.) had submitted to the dominion of Egypt, paying high tributes (2 Kings 23:35). The next year (605 B.C.), in the battle of Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar II defeated Pharaoh Necho II and the Egyptian army, changing the political landscape of the region. Jehoiakim was now forced to switch his allegiance and covenant loyalty from Egypt to Babylon (2 Kings 24:1).

Sadly, the young Jehoiakim turned out to be a pathetic leader at a crucial moment for God’s people. He thought only about amassing wealth that led to corruption, injustice, and other abuses (Jer. 22).

**A Message From Heaven**

Around 605 B.C., the Lord sent King Jehoiakim an important message through the Prophet Jeremiah: “Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now. Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, they will each turn from their wicked ways; then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin” (Jer. 36:2, 3, NIV).

Jeremiah obeyed and dictated to Baruch the words the Lord inspired. Baruch read the scroll before the people (verses 9, 10).

When the people heard the message, they were alarmed and said, “We must report all these words to the king” (verse 16, NIV). They did so, but not before asking Baruch and Jeremiah to go hide.

**A King With a Postmodern Attitude**

The King of Judah responded with particular boldness. Jeremiah relays, “It was the ninth month and the king was sitting in the winter apartment, with a fire burning in the firepot in front of him. Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe’s knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire” (verses 22, 23, NIV). Jehoiakim reveals a rather Postmodern attitude:

He was not interested in the Word of God.

He thought that its content was completely irrelevant.

He believed that God’s Word had no authority.

He thought he could live without divine counsel.

He went beyond indifference and had no problem destroying Scripture.

He didn’t understand that he was rejecting his last opportunity to avoid the crisis.

Throughout history, Satan has instigated various actions against the Bible and its authority:

1. **In the premodern Age**, destruction and persecution.

2. **In the modern age**, ideological attacks.

3. **In the postmodern age**, an indifferent and disdainful attitude.

**The Present-Day Challenge Regarding the Bible**

Today we also live in a time of crises: existential, economic, environmental. In our families we face crises related to food, health, and security. Where can we search for answers to these issues? The Bible says: “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jer. 33:3, NIV). Yes, the Word of God has effective solutions for the challenges of daily life.

But what does postmodern society do? It shows indifference to the Scriptures, and rejects them because it feels as though the Bible does not have any authority; there are even attempts to literally destroy copies of the Bible.

Are these responses helpful? No, because people still have real spiritual needs. In the secular world people search for spirituality from false sources, but in the church we experience another consequence: biblical illiteracy.

What are the results of biblical illiteracy? The rise of biblical mysticism and the increase of spiritual legends; the search for a spectacular and oversentimental worship experience; the appearance of Christian “superstars,” whose declarations and interpretations are followed by their admirers; and the building of a church that is vulnerable to all kinds of deceptions and absurdities preached in the name of God.

**Countering the Rejection of Scripture**

The Word of God cannot be destroyed: “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever” (Isa. 40:8, NIV). Although King Jehoiakim destroyed the scroll, God ordered Jeremiah to write a new scroll *adding even more points* (Jer. 36:28-31). Nobody can stop the advance of the gospel. God’s Word does not depend on capricious human hearts (Luke 19:14).

Egypt was the great hope of King Jehoiakim. As a result, in 598 B.C., encouraged by Pharaoh, he rebelled openly against Nebuchadnezzar. The king of Judah convinced his people that if they fought against Babylon the Egyptians would help them. Instead, the rebellion provoked a new invasion by the powerful Chaldean army. The truth is that Egypt had never intended to help Judah; they were just buying time to fulfill their own interests.

God sent King Jehoiakim a message of hope to save his people, but he rejected it because he put his trust in a false hope.

As messengers of the Word of God, we cannot assume that biblical preaching will be welcomed. Today many just want to hear a word approving their iniquities. Ellen White wrote: “Many refuse to heed repeated warnings, preferring rather to listen to false teachers who flatter their vanity and overlook their evil-doing. In the day of trouble such will have no sure refuge, no help from heaven. God’s chosen servants should meet with courage and patience the trials and sufferings that befall them through reproach, neglect, and misrepresentation. They should continue to discharge faithfully the work God has given them to do, ever remembering that the prophets of old and the Savior of mankind and His apostles also endured abuse and persecution for the Word’s sake.”\*

**Conclusions About Scriptural Authority**

1. God is the only one who knows the future. He is the Source of all the information that appears in the Bible (Isa. 46:10; 2 Tim. 3:16).

2. We must not expect people to easily accept biblical messages (John 15:18, 19).

3. Postmodern society tends to reject the Word of God through indifference and disdain, preferring to trust in false concepts and philosophies (Rev. 3:17).

4. Biblical illiteracy promotes an uncertain religious experience based in personal interests (Matt. 7:21-23).

5. God’s message will remain despite people’s rejection (and sometimes destruction) of Scripture (Matt. 24:35).

6. The Bible holds supreme authority. We must, therefore, pay attention to its message (Ps. 119:160).

*\*Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), p. 437.*

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**Suggestions for Prayer:**

Pray that the Lord will help us understand how we can respect and obey His Word.

Pray for the Lord to help His church remain faithful to His Word as we share His end-time message.

Pray for those in your family and friendship circle who have yet to understand and accept the authority of Scripture.