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Critical studies on crucial events – from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy

The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Sunday Services: A Solution Or A Problem?

Introduction

Many questions and much speculation swirl around the Sunday Morning Worship Service taking place at our church in Huntsville Alabama.

Laying aside all secondhand accounts, let us hear the actual words of our ministerial colleague leading out as the senior pastor of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church:

"The service is being started for two purposes. **1. It is to be a point of first contact for those who are not SDA who would not normally attend service on Sabbath.** **2. The service is to be a spiritual kickstart for the week for our members.** An additional opportunity for spiritual growth. The service will actually be dedicated to preaching distinctive Adventist truths weekly. As opposed to evangelism that is done in events in 3–4 weeks stretches, we look to do it all year long in an organic way. Ellen White actually encourages us to utilize Sunday services as an evangelistic tool."
- **Pastor Debleaire Snell** on Facebook

The Eternal One declared, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted" (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2).

Is this an idea of dual (Sabbath and Sunday) worship services an idea whose time has come being inspired by wisdom from above? Or was this purposed under heaven and thereby instantly relegated to the category of things that are terminal and will be plucked up to die?

Winston Churchill once mused, "There is nothing wrong with change, if it is in the right direction."

Do the times and our mission require a change from the Laodicean status quo for us to fulfill our high calling? None but the most willfully ignorant would deny that change is needed in our work.

That God calls for a change was never in question or the question.

Our enemies have always known that "if they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about answers." — Thomas Pynchon



Some timely questions, as we see them, are:

1. Has this been tried before and what were the results?
2. Is this the best thing we could be doing now?
3. Is there a better way to achieve the desired end?

We should clarify something straight away. The testimony of Jesus references using **“Sunday evening services,”** doing missionary work on Sunday, holding cottage and tent meetings on Sunday as acceptable but never explicitly or implicitly speaks of using Sunday Morning Worship Service as acceptable outreach. This usage of Sunday **“is a child of the papacy, exalted by the Christian world above the sacred day of God's rest. In no case are God's people to pay it homage.” – 9T 235**

This decision to hold worship service on both Sabbath and Sunday morning has been called by some innovative, but hasn't this been tried before?

Wasn't the Preacher inspired when he declared, **"Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us" (Ecclesiastes 1:10).**

Is it possible that this idea seems novel because **"There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after" (Ecclesiastes 1:11 KJV).**

[See the following sections for both ancient and modern examples]

Why, are we, as fools so slow of heart to believe?

History has repeatedly shown us that whenever these two days are placed in a pageant where beauty is measured by the number of worshippers and the amount of public support - it was never long before the Sabbath service was labeled the ugly stepsister of the more carnally attractive and widely adored Sunday service.

When allowed to compare the Bible Sabbath with her spurious Sunday substitute, the heavily decked harlot of Rome seductively croons, "Do you want the truth or something beautiful?"

While posing a series of questions to which the answer was obvious Amos famously asks, **"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3**

When did Christ and the antichrist agree to help each other? Are they even on the same road and thus positioned to give each other a hand?

The answer is clearly, unequivocally, NO!

The vast majority of us know that these two days were never designed by their respective authors to complement or support the aims of the other.

Sunday morning worship service was established as a direct competitor to the Sabbath morning worship service of The Lord God as Creator and Redeemer of all men.



It is important to note that while the Sabbath begins at sundown Friday, Friday evening has never been widely coveted by Satan.

If what was being suggested was a cooking school, or community outreach classes or an evening Bible study there would be no problem because Sunday services in the evening don't really do it for Satan.

The Father of Lies craves worship that mimics the Most High's "high day." It is prime time, high noon worship that he lusts after.

And that is why a full-blown worship service held at primetime on Sunday in our church creates a stage opportunity where Satan would love to steal the show!

Listen to this not so subtle reminder from a former pope:

"It is necessary" "to hold Sunday in special high regard" in order to "remain united to Christ", as "it is the day dedicated to the Lord." - Message of Pope Benedict XVI to the participants in the 9th International Youth Forum, from the Vatican, March 28, 2007

This we cannot dispute. The question is which Lord?

The former of Pope had already given that answer: "The Lord Pope" "The sweet Christ" - Pope John Paul II, March 25, 1996

So how useful could Sunday morning worship service dedicated to the antichrist be to our Savior and Lord and his work in earth's final hours?

While "The United Nations is looking into claims that ISIS... may be harvesting organs from slain civilians and gaining financial benefits by trafficking the body parts", is now the time?

With the confusion being stirred up by the aggressive agenda provocateurs of the LGBT community, is now the time?

With Pope Francis set to address a joint session of Congress in September of this very year, is now the time?

Can we afford to adopt a methodology that could be easily misinterpreted as supporting the final moves of the "man of sin"?

Is there another message that will accomplish the desired aims of reaching the "unchurched" and "jump starting" our spiritually sick members? Yes there is! Listen:

"The tidings that Christ is our righteousness has brought relief to many, many souls, and God says to His people, 'Go Forward.'" (1SM. p. 357).

"When we seek to gain heaven through the merits of Christ, the soul makes progress" (Selected Messages, book 1, p. 364).



Furthermore...

“The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented Justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the Third Angel's message which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure” **(TM 91)**.

Again...

“The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth.” **(R.H. Nov. 22, 1892)**

And finally...

“Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God.” **(Australian Union Record, Oct. 15, 1898)**

This message that, in mercy, the Lord sent us will do all that my dear pastor is trying to accomplish from this ill-fated plan: reach the lost sheep scattered throughout Huntsville and grow his members into that wonder of Revelation 14 – those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus even while everyone and everything else is falling.

Let's embrace that message which the Lord has sent to finish His work and turn from mimicry, gimmicks and sorry substitutes.

Part 1

We would like to begin with this statement from one of Amazing Facts' websites, MaryTruth.com

The real secret of Constantine and the bishops of Rome is their cunning introduction of sun worship and paganism into Christianity. It was done so shrewdly that, incredibly, it has been veiled within the faith for centuries. Through Constantine, paganism and Christianity joined hands in the Roman Empire.

<http://www.marytruth.com/home/constantine-cover-up-and-sun-worship>



First, there was a move made to introduce the use of idols as a part of worship

To afford converts from heathenism a substitute for the worship of idols, and thus to promote their nominal acceptance of Christianity, the adoration of images and relics was gradually introduced into the Christian worship. The decree of a general council (see Appendix) finally established this system of idolatry. To complete the sacrilegious work, Rome presumed to expunge from the law of God the second commandment, forbidding image worship, and to divide the tenth commandment, in order to preserve the number. **{GC 51.4}**

But that was not all.

The spirit of concession to paganism opened the way for a still further disregard of Heaven's authority. Satan, working through unconsecrated leaders of the church, tampered with the fourth commandment also, and essayed to set aside the ancient Sabbath, the day which God had blessed and sanctified (Genesis 2:2, 3), and in its stead to exalt the festival observed by the heathen as "the venerable day of the sun." **{GC 52.1}**

Gets even more serious!

This change was not at first attempted openly. In the first centuries the true Sabbath had been kept by all Christians. They were jealous for the honor of God, and, believing that His law is immutable, they zealously guarded the sacredness of its precepts. But with great subtlety Satan worked through his agents to bring about his object. That the attention of the people might be called to the Sunday, it was made a festival in honor of the resurrection of Christ. Religious services were held upon it; yet it was regarded as a day of recreation, the Sabbath being still sacredly observed. **{GC 52.1}**

Ultimately, Constantine made the decree.

History readily records that Constantine made a decree. he declared, "On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed" (March 7, 321). -

<http://www.marytruth.com/home/constantine-cover-up-and-sun-worship>

Even though that decree was made during the time he was heathen he maintained it even after his 'conversion.'

Constantine, while still a heathen, issued a decree enjoining the general observance of Sunday as a public festival throughout the Roman Empire. After his conversion he remained a staunch advocate of Sunday, and his pagan edict was then enforced by him in the interests of his new faith. **But the honor shown this day was not as yet sufficient to prevent Christians from regarding the true Sabbath as the holy of the Lord. Another step must be taken; the false sabbath must be exalted to an equality with the true. A few years after the issue of Constantine's decree, the Bishop of Rome conferred on the Sunday the title of Lord's day. Thus the people were gradually led to regard it as possessing a degree of sacredness. Still the original Sabbath was kept. {The Story of Redemption 329.1}**



The approach used by satan has always been surreptitious.

Little by little, at first in stealth and silence, and then more openly as it increased in strength and gained control of the minds of men, the mystery of iniquity carried forward its deceptive and blasphemous work. Almost imperceptibly the customs of heathenism found their way into the Christian church. The spirit of compromise and conformity was restrained for a time by the fierce persecutions which the church endured under paganism. But as persecution ceased, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and his apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions. The nominal conversion of Constantine, in the early part of the fourth century, caused great rejoicing; and the world, cloaked with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of corruption rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ. {GC88 49.2}

There is an astounding statement found in Testimonies Volume 5, page 452.1

The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness. The leaders are concealing the true issue, and many who unite in the movement do not themselves see whither the undercurrent is tending. Its professions are mild and apparently Christian, but when it shall speak it will reveal the spirit of the dragon. {5T 452.1}

We must be so careful to give an accurate witness to the truth which we have been entrusted with.

In the warfare to be waged in the last days there will be united, in opposition to God's people, all the corrupt powers that have apostatized from allegiance to the law of Jehovah. In this warfare the Sabbath of the fourth commandment will be the great point at issue, for in the Sabbath commandment the great Lawgiver identifies Himself as the Creator of the heavens and the earth.--3SM 392 (1891). {LDE 124.1}

Satan has challenged God at every step along the way. What we do, how we treat God's Holy day is perhaps the strongest witness we can give to the world.

This Adventist church was formally established in Battle Creek, Michigan, on May 21, 1863, with a membership of 3,500.

On February 4, 1863 the National Reform Association (NRA) got its beginning during a conference in which eleven different denominations from seven different states convened in Xenia, Ohio, "seeking ways to appease an angry God.

The National Reform Convention, Sept. 1887: "Resolved that the Sabbath (Sunday) is a sign between God and man, and its reverent observance a mark of the nation whose God is Jehovah."



The foremost organizer of the drive for a national Sunday law in 1888 was the Reverend Wilbur F. Crafts, probably the most industrious of the era's Christian lobbyists. While pastor of a Presbyterian church in New York City, Crafts published *The Sabbath for Man* in 1884 and a year later began campaigning for a national Sunday law. **Gaines M. Foster, "Conservative Social Christianity, the Law, and Personal Morality: Wilbur F. Crafts in Washington," Church History 71 (Dec. 2002): 802, 803. On Schaff, see Handy, pp. 86, 87**

The Sunday law initiative found a welcome response in Congress from Senator Blair. Blair scheduled a hearing on the proposal for a national Sunday law before his Committee on Education and Labor in April 1888. After hearing speakers lined up by Crafts, Blair agreed to draft a bill. **Alonzo T. Jones, *The Two Republics or Rome and the United States of America* (Oakland: Pacific Press Publishing Co., 1891), pp. 830-832**

Here is the bill:

"50th CONGRESS, } S. 2983. 1st SESSION. }

"IN the Senate of the United States, May 21, 1888, Mr. Blair introduced the following bill, which was read twice, and referred to the Committee on Education and Labor:

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"A bill to secure to the people the enjoyment of the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord's day, as a day of rest, and to promote its observance as a day of religious worship.

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That no person, or corporation, or the agent, servant, or employee of any person or corporation, shall perform or authorize to be performed any secular work, labor, or business to the disturbance of others, works of necessity, mercy, and humanity excepted; nor shall any person engage in any play, game, or amusement, or recreation, to the disturbance of others, on the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord's day, or during any part thereof, in any territory, district, vessel, or place subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States; nor shall it be lawful for any person or corporation to receive pay for labor or service performed or rendered in violation of this section.

Listen to this description of "A separating line."

There is to be a mark placed upon God's people, and that mark is the keeping of His holy Sabbath. We are not to follow our own will and judgment and flatter ourselves that God will come to our terms. . . . **That which looks unimportant to you may be of the highest consequence in God's special plans for the preservation of your life or the salvation of your soul. {HP 150.4}**



The fact that the Blair National Sunday Law was defeated, did not cause the associations to go away. That same year, 1888 saw the birth of the 'Lord's Day Alliance. Below is a picture of the website.

Our Mission
The Lord's Day Alliance of the United States exists to encourage Christians to reclaim the Sabbath—the Lord's Day—as a day of spiritual and personal renewal, enabling them to impact their communities with the Gospel.

Our History
The Lord's Day Alliance of the United States (LDA) was founded in 1888. That year representatives of six major Protestant denominations met in Washington, D.C. to organize the American Sabbath Union; this name was later changed to The Lord's Day Alliance of the United States. The LDA has been the one national organization whose sole purpose is to maintain and cultivate the first day of the week for rest, worship, Christian education and spiritual renewal.

We must therefore be careful, as we understand the true determination of those who work in secret.

With regard to holding services on Sunday as a means of reaching those who need to be drawn to the truth, we have much counsel.

Let not your efforts be to follow the world's way but to follow God's way. Outward display will not do the work the Lord desires to have done to arouse the higher classes to a conviction that they have heard the truth. Do not divest the truth of its dignity and impressiveness by preliminaries that are more after the order of the world than after the order of heaven. Let your hearers understand that you do not hold Sunday evening meetings to charm their senses with music and other things, but to preach the truth in all its solemnity, that it may come to them as a warning, arousing them from their deathlike sleep of self-indulgence. It is the naked truth that, like a sharp, two-edged sword, cuts both ways. . . . {Ev 148.1}

There is therefore no doubt that the use of Sunday services represent a legitimate means of soul winning, if the entire truth is presented, and those who accept that truth are baptized into to remnant church.



However, let the warning given in Selected Messages Volume 1, page 204.2 be heeded.

1. The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and
2. that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result?
3. The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded.
4. Our religion would be changed.
5. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error.
6. A new organization would be established.
7. Books of a new order would be written.
8. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced.
9. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work.
10. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it.
11. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement.
12. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless.
13. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure. {1SM 204.2}

It is easy to present an argument that seems acceptable. Easy to give a reason that suggests a purity of motive. We cannot, and should not attempt to judge motives, but the fruit cannot be argued with. In these testing times we must be determined to follow the Word of God, understanding that even when our conscience is without guile, we can yet be deceived. **Christian Service, page 49.2 warns:**

In the last solemn work few great men will be engaged. They are self-sufficient, independent of God, and He cannot use them. The Lord has faithful servants, who in the shaking, testing time will be disclosed to view. There are precious ones now hidden who have not bowed the knee to Baal. They have not had the light which has been shining in a concentrated blaze upon you. But, it may be under a rough and uninviting exterior the pure brightness of a genuine Christian character will be revealed. In the daytime we look toward heaven, but do not see stars. They are there, fixed in the firmament, but the eye cannot distinguish them. In the night we behold their genuine luster. {ChS 49.2}

Surely the testing time is here.

The time is not far distant, when the test will come to every soul. . . . In this time, the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy, will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness.--**Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 80,81. {ChS 49.3}**



Part 2

Upon reading the article published in the Spectrum magazine, dated February 6, 2015, one cannot help but be truly troubled. The article was entitled, **“Huntsville First Seventh-day Adventist Church Offers Sunday Services, Starting This Weekend.”** Why was this title and the contents of the article so very troubling? It is because this is certainly another unfortunate step in the wrong direction that is now being taken by our church. **The article made it quite clear that the step this church in Alabama took was keeping regular Sunday services.** It also showed that this step was **fully endorsed by the South Central Conference leadership** after **“the purpose”** of the services was communicated to them.

First of all, one must be made aware that while it is okay for an SDA church to hold services on a Sunday if it is for the purpose of evangelism or missionary work, this should not be confused with worship services that are conducted on a “regular or continual” basis. In other words, Conferences or individuals who truly believe that the true Sabbath of the Lord our God should be upheld and promoted to all the inhabitants of the earth should **never** endorse regular weekly Sunday services, only Sunday missionary work or evangelistic campaigns which are temporary. The Word of God makes it plain that the Creator “blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it” (Gen. 2:3). As Seventh-day Adventists we know that such a blessing does not apply to any other day of the week and thus the seventh-day Sabbath is the only day that God wants His children to consider holy in His sight—not Sunday or any other day of the week. Says Inspiration, **“The first day of the week is not a day to be revered.” LDE 127.5**

This change on the part of one of our churches to start “regular” church services on Sunday is very dangerous. It sets a very bad example for other SDA churches that are inclined to follow custom and tradition instead of Bible principle. Therefore, for any Conference to endorse such an action is truly sad and unacceptable. This action comes unfortunately in train with the many other abominations that are presently plaguing our church. This compromise with the seventh-day Sabbath should be considered even more dangerous and unbecoming than the question of Women’s Ordination or Gay Inclusiveness, since this is a major tenet of our faith and for many years we have been forewarned of the eventual introduction of this terrible abomination into the church. The subject of the mark of the beast is no mystery to SDAs and thus the step that has now been taken by Huntsville First Seventh-day Adventist Church, **with the support or blessing of the South Central Conference**, is a very unwise move that is a horrible example that we can be sure many more of our churches will eventually follow.

In an article by an online Alabama newspaper (al.com), the reason that is given for the Huntsville First Seventh-day Adventist Church taking such a step is, **“The Sunday service is going to be a first point of contact for the unchurched in the community and for people who, for whatever reason – beliefs, work – can’t come on Saturday.”**

How could this be a good reason? Many SDAs who were breaking the Sabbath before they accepted the truth had to make sacrifices to obey the Lord’s command by leaving their former places of work, they were not catered to by being offered another day of worship. The message such an accommodation sends is that God does not mind what day we worship on as long as we choose a day to worship Him. With such an accommodation being offered by SDAs why should anyone believe that we have a correct understanding of what day is “the Lord’s day”? How could we expect anyone to change from Sunday worship to the Saturday worship if we, as Seventh-day Adventists, start making provision for them to worship on any other day of the week in opposition to our claims for many years that Sunday is a “wrong” day to worship and that Saturday work schedules need to be changed, even if it means finding a new job.



Note that E.G. White make is clear in the Spirit of Prophecy that Sundays can be used for temporary missionary work and not for continual worship services, especially when the Sunday law is passed:

“At another time when our brethren were threatened with persecution and were questioning in regard to what they should do, I gave the same advice that I had given in answer to the question concerning the use of Sunday for games. I said, ‘Employ Sunday in doing missionary work for God.’” (CT 551.1)

“The law for the observance of the first day of the week is the production of an apostate Christendom. Sunday is a child of the papacy, exalted by the Christian world above the sacred day of God's rest. In no case are God's people to pay it homage. But I wish them to understand that they are not doing God's will by braving opposition when He wishes them to avoid it. Thus they create prejudice so bitter that it is impossible for the truth to be proclaimed. Make no demonstration on Sunday in defiance of law. If this is done in one place, and you are humiliated, the same thing will be done in another place. We can use Sunday as a day on which to carry forward work that will tell on the side of Christ. We are to do our best, working with all meekness and lowliness.” (9T 235.1)

In closing, observe that the same article on the Huntsville First Seventh-day Adventist Church website, as well as the article printed by Spectrum, makes certain to mention that this church, led out by Pastor Debleaire Snell, “is one of the fastest-growing Adventist churches in the country.” Is this the reason why the South Central Conference turned its eyes away from this abomination and endorsed such a wrong? Some may say that the motive for an action is what determines whether or not the action is right or wrong. But while this is true in most cases it is never true when the action is “contrary” to God’s divine principles. Under such circumstances the motive, even if it is good, does not endorse the action. In other words, “the end does not justify the means.” Hence, holding regular Sunday services in order to win souls does not justify breaking the Sabbath day that God has blessed.

As a result, may God help the faithful members of His church to refrain from following our leaders blindly. Instead, let us hold fast to the truth, for we are cautioned: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa. 8:20.

Part 3

Sunday can be used for carrying forward various lines of work that will accomplish much for the Lord. On this day open-air meetings and cottage meetings can be held. House-to-house work can be done. Those who write can devote this day to writing their articles. Whenever it is possible, let religious services be held on Sunday. Make these meetings intensely interesting. Sing genuine revival hymns, and speak with power and assurance of the Saviour's love.
— 9T 232, 233 (1909).

This is the statement that we find in the Spirit of Prophecy pertaining to Sunday services. While the context is clearly referring to the time of the Sunday laws, there is no command that forbids having Sunday services. As previously stated, there is, in principle, no difference between having a Sunday service and having a Wednesday night prayer meeting, or having a Sunday evening service. Having a service on a day does not make the day holy nor does it indicate that we are keeping it holy.



The contention is the motive behind it. If indeed the rationale for the Sunday service is to accommodate those who cannot make it for Sabbath, that is totally, and completely wrong. We should make no accommodations for those who “cannot” keep the Sabbath. The other problem is this: many SDA churches claim to do certain things for the purpose of evangelism but they never evangelize. There are no results, there are no baptisms, there is no impact in the community, there is nothing. The question that needs to be asked is, just how much of an evangelistic tool will this be? How many will truly come to know the present truth for this time by this Sunday service? There are many other evangelistic methods that are proven to be effective that are not controversial as this method. Today it seems that many SDA churches are trying everything and anything for the sake of evangelism, when we have the blueprint for evangelism spelled out for us in books like **Evangelism, Gospel Workers, Christian Service**, and of course the book of **Acts** in the Word of God, along with other inspired sources. None of these sources, outside of this one statement quoted above, place any emphasis on using Sunday services as a way to evangelize. The statement above is in the context of Sunday laws. But again, there is nothing inherently wrong with having a Sunday service, providing that the motive is solely for evangelism, and not accommodation. But then again, why not do all of the things that the Spirit of Prophecy strongly endorses? Why not put into practice the things that are proven to have God’s blessings in evangelism? It would be preferable to do that then to try something that has the potential to cause confusion. This statement above is the only statement that encourages Sunday services, in time of Sunday laws, the other statements pertaining to Sunday services are clearly in the context of evangelistic meetings as part of a series, or Sunday services in opposition to the law of God. It would be interesting to know if the pastor has been reached and questioned as to what the rationale truly is for this Sunday service. In a day and age where the distinction between God’s remnant church and apostate Protestantism is continually being blurred, we should do nothing that will further erode the difference between us as God’s remnant church and apostate Protestantism. Until the church, be it the SDA church at large, or a local SDA congregation, does all that inspiration clearly and strongly endorses, using methods that have proven to be a blessing and that work, there is no need for questionable methods.

Part 4

There is an old saying “What you win them with is what you win them to.”

(GC, 591) But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.

ALL WORSHIP IS NOT EQUAL

(1BC, 1106) “All false worship is spiritual adultery.”

(Amos 5:21-23) I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.



A couple of things to take note from Amos 5:

1. Something is wrong with the worship
2. They thought they were worshipping God because vs. 22 says “**Though ye offer Me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them:**”

It says they actually “thought” everything was alright with their worship – they were sincere, but God still did not accept it. There is a correct way and a wrong way to worship God. God does not accept all forms of worship. God is the one who instructs us how to worship him and He sets the order of the service too:

(FLB, 189) From the sacredness which was attached to the earthly sanctuary, Christians may learn how they should regard the place where the Lord meets with His people. There has been a great change, not for the better, but for the worse, in the habits and customs of the people in reference to religious worship. The precious, the sacred, things which connect us with God are fast losing their hold upon our minds and hearts, and are being brought down to the level of common things. The reverence which the people had anciently for the sanctuary where they met with God in sacred service has largely passed away. Nevertheless, God Himself gave the order of His service, exalting it high above everything of a temporal nature.

Some thoughts on this quotation (FLB, 189) relating to SURGE CHURCH Sunday morning services, as the First SDA Church in Huntsville has termed its Sunday services:

1. God has never instructed us to hold Sunday church services as a means to reach the people.
2. SURGE CHURCH is suggesting and promoting intentional irreverence by stating “NO SUITS. NO TIES. JUST JESUS.” on their flyer/advertisements.
3. Furthermore, the phrase “JUST JESUS” implies that doctrine will be of lesser importance or no importance at all.

About point #3 --- There were preachers in Ellen White’s time that would not preach the Third Angels Message (doctrine) and said they would preach Christ only. Notice her reply to such:

(VSS, 325) The present truth, the special message given to our world, even the third angel’s message, comprehends a vast field, containing heavenly treasures. No one can be excusable who says, “I will no longer have anything to do with these special messages; I will preach Christ.” No one can preach Christ, and present the truth as it is in Jesus, unless he presents the truths that are to come before the people at the present time, when such important developments are taking place.— **Manuscript 33, 1897.**

Christ and His love cannot be preached while ignoring the doctrines Christ taught and gave through the prophets. The third angel’s message, as with all doctrine, is expressing the love of God.

Is doctrine important?

(Hos. 4:6) My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.



(Matt. 4:4) It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

(1 Tim. 4:16) Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

A BAD TREE CANNOT PRODUCE GOOD FRUIT

Here is a favorite “battle” text usually used to combat worldly music styles but can also apply to having Sunday church services as a means of reaching the people:

(Matt. 7:17-19) Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Jesus says a good tree brings forth good fruit and a bad tree brings bad fruit. But then he makes sure to let us know that a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. The question to ask would be: Did Sunday worship church services start out on a good tree or a bad tree? We know the answer is a bad tree and therefore it cannot, according to Jesus, bring forth good fruit. So no matter how promising and effective it may seem to be, Jesus’ words cannot be untrue.

NOT TO COPY OTHERS IN WORSHIP

Deuteronomy 12 is a very insightful chapter.

(Deut. 12:1-4) These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth. Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place. (4) Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God.

Even though we are King James Version Bible users, it is interesting how the NIV expresses vs. 4: “*You must not worship the Lord your God in their way.*” God is saying do not copy the way in which “they” worship their false gods and try and bring these practices into the camp. And the reason is, which we have already seen, God is the one who instructs us in these matters. He has given no counsel to hold Sunday church services at this time.

(Deut. 12:30, 31) Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. **Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God.**

The passage speaks for itself.



THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY: RELIGIOUS SERVICES ON SUNDAY?

A passage from Ellen White has been quoted by the promoters/supporters of SURGE CHURCH in justifying having Sunday morning church services. They say Ellen White is in agreement on this. Here is the quotation they have provided:

(9T, 233) Sunday can be used for carrying forward various lines of work that will accomplish much for the Lord. On this day open-air meetings and cottage meetings can be held. House-to-house work can be done. Those who write can devote this day to writing their articles. Whenever it is possible, let religious services be held on Sunday. Make these meetings intensely interesting. Sing genuine revival hymns, and speak with power and assurance of the Saviour's love. Speak on temperance and on true religious experience. You will thus learn much about how to work, and will reach many souls.

Again, this quote is used to justify church services on Sunday. But the statement is taken out of context and is not quoted in its *entirety*. And isn't this how Satan approached Christ in the wilderness? Yes, and he's still up to his old tricks. Here is the full context of the statement that starts on p. 232:

Dear Brother: **I will try to answer your question as to what you should do in the case of Sunday laws being enforced.**

The light given me by the Lord at a time when we were expecting just such a crisis as you seem to be approaching, was that when the people were moved by a power from beneath to enforce Sunday observance, Seventh-day Adventists were to show their wisdom by refraining from their ordinary work on that day, devoting it to missionary effort.

To defy the Sunday laws will but strengthen in their persecution the religious zealots who are seeking to enforce them. Give them no occasion to call you lawbreakers. If they are left to rein up men who fear neither God nor man, the reining up will soon lose its novelty for them, and they will see that it is not consistent nor convenient for them to be strict in regard to the observance of Sunday. Keep right on with your missionary work, with your Bibles in your hands, and the enemy will see that he has worsted his own cause. One does not receive the mark of the beast because he shows that he realizes the wisdom of keeping the peace by refraining from work that gives offense, doing at the same time a work of the highest importance.

When we devote Sunday to missionary work, the whip will be taken out of the hands of the arbitrary zealots who would be well pleased to humiliate Seventh-day Adventists.

When they see that we employ ourselves on Sunday in visiting the people and opening the Scriptures to them, they will know that it is useless for them to try to hinder our work by making Sunday laws.

And now she continues her reply with the statement that was provided by the promoters of SURGE CHURCH as to the question on what to do when the Sunday Law is *enforced*:

Sunday can be used for carrying forward various lines of work that will accomplish much for the Lord. On this day open-air meetings and cottage meetings can be held. House-to-house work can be done. Those who write can devote this day to writing their articles. Whenever it is possible, let religious services be held on Sunday. Make these meetings intensely interesting. Sing genuine revival hymns, and speak with power and assurance



of the Savior's love. Speak on temperance and on true religious experience. You will thus learn much about how to work, and will reach many souls. (9T, 232-233)

It is very clear that the *timing* as to when to hold these "Sunday religious meetings" is when the mark of the beast (the Sunday law) is *enforced*. Now is not the time.

GOD IS NOT POWERFUL ENOUGH????

The philosophy of SURGE CHURCH is nothing more than "desperation theology" --- meaning that because we have to resort to Sunday morning church services to draw the people in are we really saying the Holy Spirit isn't powerful enough to draw them in by the power of the Word of God without using Babylon's ways?

(EW, 124) If God has any new light to communicate, He will let His chosen and beloved understand it, without their going to have their minds enlightened by hearing those who are in darkness and error.

And The Great Controversy tells us who is in darkness:

The Protestant churches are in great darkness... (p. 565)

We do not have to rely on Babylon's ways as we are told "*Christ's way of presenting truth cannot be improved upon.*" (Ev, 56)

(Jer. 6:16) Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

But sadly Israel refused...

But they said, We will not walk therein.

(Jer. 2:13) For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

In other words they were looking elsewhere (besides to the Lord) for guidance and direction.

(2SM, 18) A new order of things has come into the ministry. There is a desire to pattern after other churches, and simplicity and humility are almost unknown. The young ministers seek to be original, and to introduce new ideas and new plans for labor. Some open revival meetings, and by this means call large numbers into the church. But when the excitement is over, where are the converted ones? Repentance and confession of sin are not seen. The sinner is entreated to believe in Christ and accept Him, without regard to his past life of sin and rebellion. The heart is not broken. There is no contrition of soul. The supposed converted ones have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.

The answer to converting more souls is to do good unto others and present the Word of God. God has promised success.

(Isa. 55:11) So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.



A MOST DANGEROUS PRECEDENT

A number of SDA churches in the past who have tried this same model (or similar) have seceded from the SDA church and have become full-fledged Sunday churches. This was even admitted in the ADVENTIST REVIEW - December 18, 1997 issue and article: "What to do with Willow Creek?"

From the article:

"Fact: America's most attended church, a non-charismatic nondenominational church in suburban Chicago, continues to shape not only its immediate community but, more notably, the 2,200 member churches from 70 denominations participating in the Willow Creek Association. WCA endeavors to "help the church turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ."

"Fact: Adventists, both pastors and laypeople, consistently make up one of the largest groups at Willow Creek's half-dozen annual seminars—including church leadership conferences in May and October and a leadership summit in August.

"Fact: **The three latest Adventist churches to divide or depart [separate from the denomination]—Oregon's Sunnyside, Maryland's Damascus, and Colorado's Christ Advent Fellowship—were clearly influenced by Willow Creek's ministry hallmarks (small groups, spiritual gifts discovery, friendship evangelism, contemporary worship), if not its congregational status.**"

Also from the same article:

"I've never exited the \$34.3 million [Willow Creek] complex without positive thoughts.

"From this perspective I offer these sentiments:

"Adventists should give Willow Creek a fair shake. As a people often prejudged, we should avoid prejudging others . . . Adventists should continue gleaning from Willow Creek . . . Willow Creek has its place in prophecy too. Granted, it's a different place. But we can learn from each other..."

Here we have church leaders promoting and giving the recommendation to intentionally dabble into the practices of Babylon, just as some leaders are giving the OK for the SURGE CHURCH Sunday morning church services. Again, we quote Early Writings, p. 124...

(EW, 124) **If God has any new light to communicate, He will let His chosen and beloved understand it, without their going to have their minds enlightened by hearing those who are in darkness and error.**

And The Great Controversy tells us who is in darkness:

The Protestant churches are in great darkness... (p. 565)

A dangerous precedent has already been established. By adopting non-Biblical practices that come from Babylon reveals what the fruits are: that one will leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church and become a Sunday-keeper.

Isn't this how Sunday worship came into prominence in the early church?

(GC, 52) **The spirit of concession to paganism opened the way for a still further disregard of Heaven's authority. Satan, working through unconsecrated leaders of the church, tampered with the fourth commandment also, and essayed to set aside the ancient**



Sabbath, the day which God had blessed and sanctified (Genesis 2:2, 3), and in its stead to exalt the festival observed by the heathen as "the venerable day of the sun." **This change was not at first attempted openly.** In the first centuries the true Sabbath had been kept by all Christians. They were jealous for the honor of God, and, believing that His law is immutable, they zealously guarded the sacredness of its precepts. **But with great subtlety** Satan worked through his agents to bring about his object. That the attention of the people might be called to the Sunday, it was made a festival in honor of the resurrection of Christ. **Religious services were held upon it; yet it was regarded as a day of recreation, the Sabbath being still sacredly observed.**

Eventually Sunday won out in the Christian church and the Lord's Sabbath was set aside. SURGE CHURCH may have the best of intentions and may be sincere – but we can conclude that one can be sincerely wrong too. Sunday is the mark of the beast, and while it is not being enforced right now, we are training our members and preparing them to receive the mark by “observing” Sunday.

ALEX BRYAN, SUNDAY & THE ONE PROJECT

This is a movement in the Adventist church that promotes the “Just Jesus” philosophy without doctrine, just as SURGE CHURCH seems to be promoting. One of the prominent figures in The One Project is Alex Bryan, who is current head pastor at Walla Walla University Church. There is some history about Alex Bryan that pertains to the current issue at the Huntsville, Al

Alex Bryan was a theology student at Southern Adventist University in the 1990s. The president of the college at the time was Gordon Bietz. Alex and George became close friends. By the time Alex graduated George went on to be the president of the Georgia Cumberland Conference. President Bietz appointed Alex pastor a new church he was starting. It was of those “experimental” plants where entertainment was used to draw people in. Attendees who went out of curiosity have said it was a hard-rocking Adventist church where people stood in the aisles waving their hands around in the air.

Not too long after starting this new type of church plant, Alex Bryan decided that, instead of holding his church worship services on Saturday he would also start Sunday morning worship services too. But, after this had continued for a time, Georgia Cumberland Conference officials suggested that he should just stick to Sabbath meetings. This went on for a number of months but Alex kept refusing to abandon Sunday morning church services and then actually resigned in 2002 from denominational employment *, and for the next five years pastored this independent Sunday church.

** Note: Some sources say Bryan was fired and some say he quit. Nonetheless the story is true.*

He knew it was coming to this and prepared his congregation for the event. The liberal Adventists in the Atlanta area had initially flocked to his church out of curiosity, but many had become enchanted by the high excitement and loud entertainment they experienced there. So Bryan carefully transferred their loyalties from the denomination to himself. He took all of his members with him. It's called The New Community Church of Roswell. <http://thenewcommunitychurch.com/>

At this point Alex, being five years out of the church and now an independent Sunday pastor of a Sunday church by his choice, gets a call from The Carolina Conference. They were looking for



speakers to entertain their young people at their camp meetings. For some reason they were not concerned about the events that had happened and his taking people out of the church. But they invited him anyway to give the young people in North and South Carolina guidance throughout the week at their annual camp meeting! Sam Leonor (from Loma Linda and also now a part of the One Project) was also invited to entertain the youth. The Sunday church Alex pastored was left with his brother David to oversee as pastor even to this day.

Alex rejoined the SDA church in 2007 and in March 2009 he obtained a Doctor of Ministry degree at George Fox University (evangelical Quaker) under the direction of a leading spiritual formation leader: Leonard Sweet—an urgent promoter of Buddhist/Hindu religious rites. Quickly hired by Southern Adventist University (SAU), Bryan had Sweet speak to the student body, and separately to the faculty. (Bryan said he did it “to indoctrinate them.”)

Bryan was hired by Walla Walla University to be church pastor, on October 2011, he openly promoted spiritual formation books, their authors, and their teachings. In April 2012, Bryan had a leading occult leader give the Sabbath sermon.

During his sermons, Bryan frequently quotes from—and recommends—promoters of Eastern occult rites, and openly ridicules living by historic Adventist beliefs. He plans to make WWU a center for penetration of spiritual formation into our denomination.

Note: Much of the above information on Alex Bryan was printed by Vance Ferrell in his Waymarks newsletter (July 2006)

From the opening page of Alex Bryan’s book, *The Green Cord Dream*, which is about 1844 and The Adventist Church’s beginnings – notice the words used by Alex Bryan in describing the beginnings of Seventh-day Adventism:

*"The Advent movement was born in failure rather than success, error rather than truth, darkness rather than light, and sorrow rather than joy." (Alex Bryan, *The Green Cord Dream*, chapter 1)*

Does this language of Alex Bryan, who is spearheading The One Project, sound like someone/something that looks favorably upon Adventism and its history? He says Adventism was founded in "darkness"? Satan is the prince of darkness. He says Adventism was founded on error? I guess Alex Bryan doesn't believe Rev. 10 where John was told to eat the little book again. Are we to conclude that he rejects that the Great Disappointment was actually a prophetic event?

What’s more interesting is that many segments of the Adventist Church are endorsing The One Project. The NAD, Loma Linda and NAD Ministerial being a few examples. For a full list go here: <https://the1project.org/about/partners>

*Note: This quote from the *Green Cord Dream* can be viewed at Amazon. Scroll to chapter 1 and read the fourth paragraph.*

http://www.amazon.com/Green-Cord-Dream-Alex-Bryan/dp/0816326878/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1424035357&sr=8-2&keywords=Alex+bryan#reader_B0081XJRXO



Anyhow, Alex Bryan's story/history shows, once again, that flirting with Sunday worship services leads to leaving the Seventh-day Adventist church and its doctrines. The SURGE CHURCH in Huntsville is on a dangerous path.

SUMMARY

We must heed the counsel given us by the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. We must also consider the past in how several Seventh-day Adventist churches have tampered with Babylonian practices, and adopted their worship styles. What was the result? They left the Adventist church and formed a Sunday church.

The Faithful and True Witness says Laodicea is "blind" (Rev. 3:17). We cannot afford to be blind. Paul compares the church to a body with the members and their gifts being represented as the various parts of that body (1 Cor. 12:14, 18, 27-28) all working together for the cause of Christ. Prophets would be the eyes of the church as they were once called "seers" (1 Sam. 9:9). Laodicea must be blind because we are either ignoring or rejecting the counsel of the prophets (including Ellen White).

Jesus said...

(Matt. 15:14) Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

What is this ditch that Jesus is referring to that Laodicea, if she insists on staying in her blind condition, will fall into?

(Prov. 23:27) For a whore is a deep ditch;

The spiritually blind will fall into the hands of the whore of Revelation 17 and receive the mark of the beast. Now is the time to **"anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."** (Rev. 3:18)

Part 6 – Final Comment

In response to the controversy concerning 1st SDA Church in Huntsville, AL, without needing to cite the various references by Ellen White as it relates to using Sunday for evangelistic work, her own testimony of having Sunday evangelistic services which according to Evangelism, 405 appears to have been in the morning into the afternoon, the issue more less lies in the wisdom of having a service on Sunday morning versus having the same meeting in the evening on the same day.

From hearing the controversy here in Huntsville along with the debates on social media etc., coupled with Elder C.D. Brooks response to this issue, it is very clear that the words of Paul ring true, "All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient." We believe that Pastor Snell's motives were sincere, but from looking at the backlash from SDA's and non-SDA's whom we have heard reports of them feeling that they can continue to stay in their churches without the need to change, it is clear that it was not expedient. Though the Sunday morning surge meetings is not reverencing the 1st day of the week, it has created more confusion than anything which gives clear cut wisdom to refrain from having Sunday morning services.



A Statement by Pastor Gomez

It is no secret that our beloved church – God's beloved church – is under attack from without and from within. We live in a time where every wind of doctrine is blowing, and many are trying to tear away at the distinctive truths that make us God's denominated people. Today, a knowledge of God's present truth for these last days, in the church, is at an all-time low, with many not knowing what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist. And, what is even more concerning, is that many believe that what they are hearing from their pulpits and in many of our classrooms is the Advent message when, in reality, it is nothing but a watered down – and even altered – Advent message that lacks power to change the life. And as a result, there is no growth, either spiritually or numerically in our churches. And, because the message is not there, the power is not there, the preaching and teaching of the straight Advent Message as it is found in the Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy is not there, many feel that the problem is the "outdated message" of the church and the "outdated evangelistic methods" of the church, and they are turning to more "relevant", "culturally sensitive" methods, contemporary services, and now even the practice of spiritual formation and emergent church practices for church growth and for spiritual growth.

When churches feel the need to do such things, it's a clear indicator that something has gone wrong. Perhaps it is time to return to that which has made us a distinct and unique people, perhaps it is time to go back and restudy and relearn and see what a solid foundation we have in the Word of God for who we are and what we believe. Instead of practicing questionable methods of evangelism, and bringing added controversy to the church, let us follow clear light given to us; let us evangelize in methods that have proven to be successful. Having a Sunday service will not aid in the proclamation of the three angels messages, (especially if it is to accommodate for those who can't make it to church on Sabbath). It will not give us a new platform from which to preach from, and it is an unnecessary thing to do. There are so many ways to effectively evangelize that will avoid the appearance of evil without the possibility of causing confusion for non Seventh-day Adventists, and controversy for Seventh-day Adventists. With so much controversy and compromise going on in the church today, the one area that should be free of all this is in the area of evangelism, but when we use questionable methods that are uncalled for, without us having put into practice all that we have been counseled by inspiration to do, then we are placing human wisdom above God's wisdom and that is always counterproductive and pleasing to the enemy. Let us follow the clear light that we have, trusting in the Lord for success.

May the Lord bless and lead us all in these closing moments of earth's history.