

# ‘Build God’s Church — Jesus is Coming!’

Transcript of president Ted N.C. Wilson’s sermon at the ASI Convention.

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*The following is a transcript of the Sabbath sermon that Adventist Church leader Ted N.C. Wilson gave at the ASI Convention in Spokane, Washington, on Aug. 8, 2015.*

What a privilege to be with you in Spokane for the 2015 ASI Convention. It is always a thrilling experience to attend ASI and see how God is moving in the daily lives of young and old as we come to the final days of earth’s history.

My dear ASI friends, I believe with all my heart that we are now just at the tips of the toes of the statue of Daniel 2. Events around us point to the final proclamation of the three angels’ messages sharing Christ’s love, His righteousness, His warnings, and His soon second coming. It is imperative that we “Lift Him Up,” as your theme proclaims.

God is calling on us to lift Him up like never before and to build His church in preparation for Christ’s return. He asks us to tell someone else about our relationship with Him. This is what ASI is all about. It is the keystone of your existence. It was established from the very beginning of ASI in 1947 when Seventh-day Adventist self-supporting institutions combined to form the Association of Self-supporting Institutions — ASI — and it is the bedrock of today’s ASI, Adventist-Laymen’s Services and Industries.

Earlier this year, I had the great opportunity to visit Juba, South Sudan, to encourage our church members in that war-torn and newest country of the globe. God is enormously blessing His church there. The East-Central Africa Division, of which South Sudan is a part, is doing a marvelous job in helping integrate our members into the evangelistic activities of that dynamic division. God’s Spirit is moving on that country and our church is developing so quickly.

While we were there, we dedicated a lovely new guesthouse facility and new offices for the local mission and future union. We participated in the groundbreaking of a new media center and a large, 4,000-seat church and auditorium. It may be that Maranatha Volunteers International, a stalwart ASI member, will assist them with those or other projects as they discuss the opportunities.

However, the church is growing and developing so fast that you now already have an ASI chapter in Juba, South Sudan, whether you knew that or not! Some of us had the opportunity to meet with many of them one evening at a hotel for a special meal and review of special projects that they have in mind for the development of the church.

"We are 'living stones' in Jesus Christ. Let's build God's church and His Advent movement!" Wilson said in his sermon. (Jay Wintermeyer / UCC)

### 3 New Meanings for 'ASI'

ASI is everywhere, and it is building God's church. In my remarks to the Juba ASI group, I mentioned some other meanings of the ASI acronym and I present them to you as well since your job is to build up God's church.

ASI — "Always Stay Involved." Stay involved with your local church and pastor, stay involved with the local conference and its evangelistic plans, stay involved with the national and international evangelistic outreach. Always Stay Involved! Don't be tempted to drift into your own world of activity. Always stay involved with the church and its mission!

ASI — "A Spiritual Identity." ASI is first and foremost a spiritual organization that allows the Holy Spirit to guide and direct activities and decisions. ASI is a soul-winning organization that makes the sharing of Christ the central focus of its spiritual mission to others. "A Spiritual Identity."

ASI — "Aggressive Scriptural Interest." One of the greatest attacks against God's prophetic truth and His Advent movement is the devil's attack on the Word of God. He is attempting to neutralize the plainest words of the Bible. The simple wording of Scripture is twisted and turned by many to say the opposite of what it actually says. May ASI always have an Aggressive Scriptural Interest as you lift up Christ and His Holy Word!

This is all part of ASI lifting Him up and building God's church. Your very ethos of "Jesus in the Marketplace" challenges all of us to explain to our loved ones, neighbors, and friends what Jesus has done in our lives and what He can do in their lives to become changed people through His blood and the power of the Holy Spirit. Build His church and "Lift Him Up"! Tell the marketplace of Christ's righteousness — His justifying power to cover our sins with His robe of righteousness, and His sanctifying power to help you grow on a daily basis to become more and more like Him through the Holy Spirit's power.

By our personal commitment to Christ, we have accepted the fulfillment of God's promise in John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."

## How to Build God's Church

Build God's church! He has called ASI and all church members to help our growing global church of 18.5 million fellow brothers and sisters to lift Him up and build up the church of God in anticipation of the glorious second coming of Jesus.

At this critical stage in the overall biblical and prophetic timetable, listen to God's instruction about building His church in Ephesians 2:19-22: "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

How exciting that we are no longer strangers to God but we are part of the household of God and the beautiful church that He is building. We are part of a worldwide, heaven-born movement that is building up God's church. Never forget that you are building on the foundations laid by others in the past and that the cornerstone is Jesus Christ Himself. In response to Christ's question to the disciples asking who they thought He was and Peter's response saying that He was the Son of the Living God, Jesus replied in Matthew 16:18, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Unfortunately, some have mistaken this text to mean that Peter was the rock on which the church would be built. That is not correct. Jesus was simply addressing Peter, as a small stone, and telling him that the "rock" that would be the foundation or cornerstone of the church was none other than Jesus Christ Himself. Christ is the Rock, and you are asked to build God's church on the Rock, Jesus Christ. He is the Cornerstone and True Foundation. Lift Him Up!

In 1 Peter 2:4, Peter himself explains that Christ is the "living stone, rejected indeed by men but chosen by God and precious." In verse 5, Peter includes you and me in this wonderful building up of God's church by saying, "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

## We Are Living Stones

My dear ASI friends, we are "living stones" in Jesus Christ. Let's build God's church and His Advent movement!

We praise God for His precious biblical message of truth for this end-time setting. From a prophetic perspective, the world will get worse before it gets better. But when it does get better, it will be the best since we recognize that the second advent of Christ is approaching! Jesus is coming soon! Lift Him Up!

Observing world events, we immediately realize that Matthew 24 and Revelation 13 are being fulfilled. So many things that are happening point to a rapid fulfillment of prophetic messages indicating the final days of earth's history. The end of time is upon us. The world is in disarray. No one can solve the insurmountable problems facing countries and people groups. Every week we can see the horrible results of unrest, killing, butchery, and treachery. We better understand Luke 21:26 when it recounts "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things, which are coming on the earth."

Signs of uncertainty are all around us. Social trends continue to defy biblical truth and heavenly principles. Economic instability is everywhere. Ecumenical trends are pointing to the fulfillment of Revelation 13:3 which says that "all the world wondered after the beast."

ASI, God calls you to build His church. Be in connection and communion with Him every day, being revived and reformed in Him. Build up God's church as we point people to Christ, to His Holy Word, to His church, to His prophetic movement, to His biblical plan for the family, to His sanctuary message, to public and personal witnessing for Him, to belief in and use of the Spirit of Prophecy, to the proclamation of His three angels' messages, to Christian stewardship, to living the Christian life, to Christian humanitarian service and to sharing the promise of Christ's soon return. Build God's church!

## Follow Nehemiah's Example

One of the most important biblical examples of faithful building is Nehemiah, who served in the Persian palace. Nehemiah 1:4 records that when he heard about the broken-down wall of Jerusalem he "sat down and wept." He then turned his pleading heart to the Lord in prayer.

As you face daily challenges, be constant in prayer asking the Lord for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit so that we can figuratively repair God's wall today. In Nehemiah 1:11, he prays, "O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant." As you build God's church, pray like you have never prayed before to receive power from on high for the mission before us. Pray for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. God has promised the latter rain, and it will come.

Nehemiah received permission from the king of Persia to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall. Three days after arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah challenged the Jewish nation, saying in chapter 2:17, "Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach."

Friends, don't ever let your work or your attitude be a reproach to God. Don't let your church be a reproach to God. Don't ever be ashamed of your church or who you are. When someone asks you what church you belong to, don't say, "Well, it's a small church and you probably have never heard of it." Then you tell them the name of our church in a muffled voice so they can't really hear it.

No, look them straight in the eye with a smile on your face and tell them, "I am a Seventh-day Adventist and let me tell you about it!" Don't be a reproach to your God or your church.

The positive response of those in Jerusalem found in verse 18 was, "Let us rise up and build." But, beware of those who want to tear down the wall and be a negative influence on you represented by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem who laughed at and despised Nehemiah. Take courage from the God of Nehemiah in your challenges and join with him in saying in verse 20, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build." The construction began and came up to half the height of the intended wall because "the people had a mind to work" (4:6).

However, when Sanballat, Tobiah and the enemies of God heard of the progress, they made plans to attack. Nehemiah pled with the Lord through prayer and then positioned the people saying in chapter 4:14, "Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

They divided the task of defense and construction so that all participated in building and defending. In fact, chapter 4:17 says, "Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon."

As you build God's church, with one hand do the work of God and in the other hand hold the Word of God, your weapon of heavenly authority. Lean completely on the Lord in your faithful service saying, along with those who worked on the wall of Jerusalem recorded in verse 20, "Our God will fight for us."



Ted N.C. Wilson, center, working with other church leaders to build a church in the Dominican Republic on Jan. 14, 2015. "What a privilege and joy it was for the world leadership to build God's church in Villa Caoba," Wilson said in his sermon on Aug. 8, 2015. (Libna Stevens / IAD)

## Wall-Builders Stayed Dressed

Nehemiah and his colleagues were so persistent and faithful in building God's wall that they did not even take off their clothes except to wash them. Work with that same spirit of dedication to build God's church and proclaim the three angels' messages with Holy Spirit power. *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, page 19, tells us how important that is indicating, "In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. ... They have been given a work of the most solemn import — the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention."

But Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem did not give up. Beware of those who will try to dissuade you of your great task as Seventh-day Adventists "on the wall" just before Christ's coming. The enemies of Nehemiah sent a message asking him to meet them in order to distract him from his work of building. Nehemiah sent back a powerful message in 6:3 saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."

When the Sanballats, Tobiahs, and Geshems of this world tempt you to distraction, tell them, "We are building God's church and we will not come down!" Nehemiah prayed in verse 9, "O God, strengthen my hands." Ask God to strengthen your hands to build up God's church.

God will reward your faithfulness as He did Nehemiah's. Verses 15 and 16 of chapter 6 record: "So the wall was finished and it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes;

for they perceived that this work was done by our God.” When God shows His mighty hand in your work for Him, give Him all the glory and people will see that He is working through you as you lift Him up.

*Prophets and Kings*, page 645, says: “Like Nehemiah, God’s people are neither to fear nor to despise their enemies. Putting their trust in God, they are to go steadily forward, doing His work with unselfishness, and committing to His providence the cause for which they stand.”

ASI members, I challenge you as we face the last days of earth’s history to build God’s church through the power of the Holy Spirit and your daily walk with Jesus in Bible study, prayer, and witnessing. Accept God’s plea in Revelation 2:10, “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Take Christ’s words seriously in Revelation 3:11: “Behold I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.” Realize that you are the inheritors of God’s great commission to proclaim the truth to the final generation and build God’s church. As Revelation 17: 14 says, “The Lamb will overcome them, for He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”



Church leaders raising a Sabbath school classroom near a "One-day Church" in the Dominican Republic on Jan. 14, 2015. (Libna Stevens / IAD)

## ASI and Dominican Republic

You are chosen to build up God’s church and, by God’s grace, testify to His goodness. Stand firm for God’s truth, lift Him up, proclaim His Word, and build up God’s church wherever you live!

Last January, it was a privilege for the top leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist world church to be in La Romana, the Dominican Republic, conducting administrative meetings and planning for the future of building God's church. We took time to study God's Word in the morning, with Pastor Mark Finley focusing on the Holy Spirit and the latter rain, and engaging in the worldwide "10 Days of Prayer" through our prayer session in the morning as well as an evening prayer session with our leaders and spouses. It was a great blessing to pray together. We had division presidents from almost every corner of this globe as well as senior leadership of the General Conference headquarters.

However, on the Wednesday of that week, together we took time out from administrative discussions for almost the entire day to literally build God's church. It was a wonderful experience as we worked with Maranatha Volunteers International. Maranatha, as you well know, is led by Don Noble, Kenneth Weiss, and other dedicated leaders. As an ASI member, it is a dynamic supporting ministry of the church that works all over the world using volunteers, and it has built many churches in the Dominican Republic.

We were assigned to help construct the new "One-day Church" and "One-day Sabbath School Building" in the town of Villa Hermosa in its smaller section called Villa Caoba in the province of La Romana. Our world church leaders came with their work clothes, gloves, and hats. They painted, shoveled gravel, poured cement, erected a structure, roofed two structures, and built a wall. Garwin, you would have been proud of us building a "One-day Church."

God protected us in our work as we built His church. A new water well on the church property was dedicated that will provide abundant fresh water to that portion of the town and the church will provide Jesus Christ, the Living Water, to the people of the town.

What a privilege and joy it was for the world leadership to build God's church in Villa Caoba. We know that this church will be the foundation of more churches that will be built since the missionary zeal of God's people in the Dominican Republic is contagious. My friends, God is calling us to build God's church in every possible way.

## Jesus Is Coming Soon!

We see the results of faithful builders of God's church all around us. You have seen the results right here this week at the ASI Convention. This is the result of God's faithful people witnessing in such a positive way to facilitate the building up the church of God wherever truth is shared. God is calling you to join in the final proclamation of the wonderful news that Jesus is offering His salvation to all who receive Him, that He is coming soon, and that He wants us to tell others about this good news helping to build up His church.

Let's believe God's Word, believe His prophets, believe the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation. Jesus is coming soon! What a day that will be! Saved through the justifying and sanctifying power of Jesus Christ and Him alone, saved through His righteousness. What a privilege to share this prophetic message and humbly ask God for revival and reformation through the power of the Holy Spirit. Are we willing to renew our commitment to sharing the distinctive, prophetic messages of Daniel and Revelation, following in Christ's steps of sharing His love, warning the world and building His church?

One of these days very soon, we will look up and see a small, dark cloud about half the size of a man's hand. It will get larger and larger and brighter and brighter, all of heaven poured out for this climactic event, all of the millions of angels making up that marvelous cloud with a brilliant rainbow above and lightning beneath. Right in the middle of that incredible cloud will be the One we have waited for, the One who is altogether lovely, our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, coming as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

We will look up and say, "This is the God we have waited for." And Christ will look down and say, "Well done, good and faithful servants of ASI, enter into the joy of your Lord."

We will rise up to meet Him in the air after those who have died in Christ will have risen at His call and we will go to heaven to be with Him forever. What a day that will be! I want to be there that day by the grace and righteousness of Christ.

If you want to humbly submit to Christ and His robe of righteousness, and you want to go with the Lord to heaven, asking Him to use you in helping to build His church by sharing His love and prophetic messages in this end-time hour of earth's history, would you join me in standing right now in commitment to Christ and building up His wonderful Advent movement?