

Jonas Wendell

Elder Jonas Wendell (Dec. 15, 1815 - August 14, 1873) of Edenboro, Pennsylvania, was a zealous Adventist preacher following in the spirit of William Miller. Following the "Great Disappointment" Wendell experienced periods of weak faith, as did many Adventists. He eventually recovered his faith after renewing his study of Bible chronology (historic and prophetic) and began to preach extensively throughout Ohio, Pennsylvania, the Virginias, and New England. By the late 1860s he had been studying the chronology of the Bible, and was encouraged by conclusions showing Christ's return would occur in either 1868 or 1873/4. In 1870 Wendell published his views in the booklet entitled *The Present Truth, or Meat in Due Season* concluding that the Second Advent was sure to occur in 1873. He is best known for being the individual who, unbeknownst to him, restored Charles Taze Russell's faith in the Bible as the true word of God. From this, Russell began a ministry that was to affect the entire religious and secular world.

The magazine *The World's Crisis* in the September 10, 1873 issue offered the following obituary written by fellow Adventist and personal friend, George W. Stetson: (all spelling is as appears in the article)

"In Memory of Elder Jonas Wendell

He was born December 25th, 1815, and fell asleep August 14th, 1873. Age fifty seven years, seven months, and fourteen days. He experienced remission of sins in Syracuse, N.Y., about 1843, and united with the M.E. church. About 1845 he came into the truth of life and immortality in Christ only, of his soon coming, and reign with the saints on earth renewed, and the everlasting destruction of the finally impenitent wicked. He began preaching these views at Syracuse, in 1847, and was instrumental in bringing Bro. C.B. Turner into the faith. He was committed to what has since been called, "the 1854 movement," and was very sanguine in the correctness of the chronological data given, as reaching to "the end of the days," and the time of the promised blessing. The time passing without a realization of the expected event, his "faith failed him," as a result of overwhelming confidence in human computations of time, and human misapplication of data divinely given; and he turned aside from "the word," and got out of "the way," and for several years "went astray."

Bro. Turner becoming acquainted with these facts in his life, moved with true Christian philanthropy, came to Edenboro in the winter of 1864-1865, and proved instrumental in Bro. Wendell's recovery and restoration. He resumed "preaching the word," and his labors were owned and greatly blessed in Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, and New England, from 1865 to 1871; since when he has been in failing health. I had particularly noticed that, for the last year especially, his powers of life, and memory seemed to be failing him rapidly; but during the same time his faith, love, purity of life, and spiritual mindedness, were as markedly and correspondingly increasing. He had settled on 1873 as the year in which "the hope of seeing Jesus and being made like him" should be realized by a waiting and expectant church, and set forth the reasons for his hope in a little work entitled, "Present truth," or "Meat in Due Season," to which Bro. E. Wolcott (of Keysport, N. J.), has added an essay on "The End." (I have a supply of these, for free distribution. Send stamps with orders for mailing.)

From June 15 to July 5th, Bro. Wendell was with the N. W. Pennsylvania mission tent, conjointly with Bro. Sweet and Ongley, and thence to July 10 at the "Time Conference," in Rochester, N.Y. From there he came home to adjust some pecuniary matters preparatory to his return to the Mission Tent. On Aug. 7th, he called to see Bro. Goodwin at the pump factory in E., and as he was about to pass from the upper to the lower story, made a misstep at the head, and was precipitated headlong to the bottom of the stairs, by which he received severe internal injuries, from which he never fully recovered, and which probably, hastened his dissolution. But on Wednesday evening, Aug. 13, by request, in absence of the pastor, he led the prayer and conference meeting, and much edified all present by his unusual fervency in prayer, exhortation, and singing. "What a friend we have in Jesus" was the last hymn he ever sung with us. On Thursday the 14th, he went to the Sabbath School picnic in most excellent spirits, and seemed to be very happy in the Lord. When time for adjournment arrived, he got out his horse to return home, but seeing a lad in trouble from a fickly horse, he went to his assistance, where he overtaxed his physical strength, and returned to his own buggy quite exhausted. But he got in and took the lines from his niece, to start home, but immediately loosened his hold, dropped them, and fell over backward in his seat, dead. He gave but two slight gasps for breath, and all was over. "He had shed his last tear, and fought his last battle, his warfare was over, and life's agonies ended.

On Saturday, Aug. 16th, at 2 P.M. his funeral was numerously attended at our chapel, when all the clergy of our village came to observe his obsequies, sympathize with his bereaved family, and participate in the services of the occasion. The writer endeavored to impart instruction to eager listeners, and comfort for mourners by discoursing from Psalm 27:13-14. Medical opinion is divided between apoplexy and heart disease as cause of death."

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