

Balogun, Isaiah Ajibola (1882–1947)

DAVID O. BABALOLA

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Isaiah Ajibola Balogun was an evangelist, pastor, and pioneer Adventist worker in southwestern Nigeria.

Early Life and Conversion

While the exact date of his birth is unknown, Isaiah Ajibola Balogun was probably born in 1882 at Ipoti-Ekiti, in southwestern Nigeria. He became a member of the Anglican Church in 1906. As he demonstrated strong leadership skills in the church, he was made a leader or “Balogun” (captain of the faithful). Afterwards he used this title as his permanent surname.¹

Balogun visited Erunmu to speak with David C. Babcock, the first Adventist missionary in Nigeria. Here the Sabbath message and other Bible doctrines were first introduced to him. Balogun embraced the new faith and returned to his hometown to spread the good news. His townsfolk accepted the new message and invited Babcock to visit them. It should be noted that until that time, the majority of the people at Ipoti-Ekiti were Anglicans.

David C. Babcock wrote a letter of introduction about Balogun which states: There is a young man whose name is Isaiah Balogun; Balogun is a Yoruba word which means captain. He wanted to know who we are. Someone told him we are people keeping the seventh day as the Sabbath. Finally, with joy he heard the message and without any outward demonstration, spread the gospel news among his countrymen many miles away and, as a result, a large number of people accepted the message.²

Balogun became a Seventh-day Adventist in 1916. He was immediately made the district pastor or superintendent of the churches at Odo-Owa, Iloro, and Oke-Ila until 1922. Under his leadership, many of the Anglicans defected to the Adventist church. Today, up to 70 percent of the Ipoti people are members of the SDA Church. Through the efforts of Balogun, bigger churches were constructed at Ipoti-Ekiti which David C. Babcock dedicated to the glory of God and service to humanity.³

Ministerial Service

Balogun also made his mark at Otun-Ekiti where he was sent to minister in 1922. He was able to win many converts from the traditional worship of idols and their ancestors to the Adventist faith. In 1923, W. G. Till, a

Caucasian, was sent to assist him in this increasingly large task.⁴

Balogun's efforts extended as far as Jebba and other areas in Kwara state. Other places he worked included Ikosu, Osi, Omu-Aran, Isaoye, Aiyetoro, Iloro, Offa, Oke-Ode, and Ajase-Ipo, to mention a few. Following his ordination in 1930, he was posted to Ibadan in 1933. He also worked at Abeokuta beginning in 1938. Abeokuta proved to be a difficult ground for the spread of the Adventist message and he was eventually transferred to Ile-Ife. Some of the places he worked developed primary schools for the benefit of many.

Pastor Balogun was a giant in the field of evangelism. He gave Bible studies to people at home and even met them on their farms where he presented them with heavenly messages of love. He believed earnestly that "the plan of holding Bible readings was a heaven-born idea" for sharing the good news. Balogun accepted the fact that every Christian should be a soul winner. He demonstrated that by setting a good example of being a Bible teacher to all.⁵

Balogun worked hard and distinguished himself as one of the best ministers of the gospel and a champion soul-winner. The missionaries were impressed with his soul-winning activities and his sterling qualities as a leader. They felt that he was called by the Lord to His gospel ministry and they recommended him for ordination. He was ordained on February 16, 1930, at Otun as a gospel minister in the presence of his members. He thus became the first Nigerian Seventh-day Adventist pastor to be ordained.⁶

Pastor Balogun had his own share of challenges and persecutions. Some of the Anglican church members in Ipoti were not happy with him for preaching the good news and the Sabbath doctrine in their town. They saw him as one who came to scatter their members. He also faced a challenge of lack of funds and inadequate facilities. The majority of Seventh-day Adventists lived in rural areas as peasant farmers. The low economic status of these members adversely affected the capacity of the Church to execute her programs and projects. This had a negative impact on the ministry of Balogun.

Last Days

Balogun died on July 27, 1947, at the age of 65. He left behind a wife, children, and grandchildren. His greatest legacy was his pioneering effort in church planting throughout southwestern Nigeria.⁷

This pastor will be remembered for his vision and foresightedness. Balogun has ceased from his labor, but as the book of Revelation says, "his work will follow him." The great pioneer played a good role in the ministry.⁸

SOURCES

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NOTES

1. David O. Babalola, *Sweet Memories of Our Pioneers* (Somolu, Lagos: Emaphine Reprograohics, 2001), 115.
2. David C. Babcock, "Erunmu, Southern Nigeria" *ARH*, June 8, 1916, 12.
3. Babalola, 115.
4. Abiodun Ayodeji Adesegun, "Balogun, Isaiah Aina," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 2007, accessed May 10, 2019, <https://dacb.org/stories/nigeria/balogun-isaiah/>.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 123.
7. Adesegun, "Balogun, Isaiah Aina."
8. Babalola, 124.

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