

WE ARE NOT TO SET TIME

By earnest prayer and careful study of the book of Daniel, a sincere, God-fearing New England farmer, William Miller, was guided by God to crack the code of Daniel 8 and 9,—and discover that a major event was predicted to occur near the half-way mark of the nineteenth century.

This date (later corrected to the autumn of 1844) was, indeed, the right one: Something very important was to occur on October 22, 1844 (*Great Controversy*, 456-457).

And it did.

A major new work began within the Sanctuary in heaven, a work of investigative judgment which you are acquainted with (*Great Controversy*, 409-432, 479-491). That event was one of the most important in all human history.

But another event also occurred on October 22, 1844, an event we rarely take notice of. It is unfortunate that we give it so little attention.

It is an event predicted in the book of Revelation:

“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven. And swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.”—*Revelation 10:5-6*.

We have here, in *Revelation 10:6*, a second prediction which began to take effect on October 22, 1844.

What is that prediction, and how can we be certain that it is so?

The phrase, “*that there should be time no longer*” could have several interpretations, and, of ourselves, we would not be able to know which of them to apply. Only Scripture can give us correct interpretations. Fortunately, we are told exactly what it means in a Spirit of Prophecy comment on *Revelation 10*. It is printed in *7 Bible Commentary 971*, where we are told that it was Christ Himself who spoke the words given in that chapter. He is the angel of *Revelation 10*.

Here is the explanation of *Revelation 10:6*:

“This time, which the angel declares with a solemn oath, is not the end of this world’s history, neither of probationary time, **but of prophetic time**, which should precede the advent of our Lord. That is, the people will not have another message upon definite time. After this period of time, reaching from 1842 to 1844, **there can be no definite tracing of the prophetic time**. The longest reckoning reaches to the autumn of 1844.”—*7 Bible Commentary*, 971 [emphasis ours].

WHEN GOD SPEAKS WE SHOULD OBEY

The Bible says, “I am the Lord; I change not.” (*Malachi 3:6*). When the Lord says something, it is so—and no man can change it.

And, we might add, no man should try to change it.

In accordance with this light, **Ellen White repeatedly wrote that there would be no correct time prophecies, no accurate time settings, no worthwhile time calculations, and no usable time-span calculations after 1844. None would be given to mankind by the Lord,**

and none would correctly be deduced by anyone on earth.

One thing you can be certain of: **When the Lord says something, Satan will try to counterwork it. He will cause men to ignore it, reject it, ridicule it, or explain it away.** That is the way Satan works, and we need to be aware of it. Surely, we do not want to be found on Satan’s side of the controversy, defending and promoting his arguments and devices.

In the Garden of Eden, God said not to eat of a certain tree. So Satan tempted Eve to specially eat of that one. To all mankind, God said to keep the seventh day holy, so Satan invented substitute holy days on the first and sixth days of the week. An immense portion of mankind today keeps one or the other of those false sabbaths holy.

First, we need to know what God says. Second, we should obey it. Third, we should be aware of the fact that Satan will try to get us to do something different, and thus disobey the commandment of the Lord.

When God says to do something, we should do it. When He says not to do something, we should not do it! This may sound simplistic, but it is a life or death issue.

NOT TO LIVE ON TIME EXCITEMENT

If you are tempted to set time, or believe the theories of those who are doing so, read this:

“We are not to live upon TIME EXCITEMENT. We are not to be engrossed with speculations in regard

to the times and the seasons which God has not revealed.”—*1 Selected Messages, 189.*

“I saw that some were getting a false EXCITEMENT, arising from preaching time; but the Third Angel’s Message is stronger than time can be.”—*Early Writings, 75.*

THE REBELLION IN THE WILDERNESS

The people were weary with the traveling, and they had finally come to the banks of the Jordan. Moses sent twelve spies across the river to spy out the land. They returned with grapes—and a false report.

God had said it was time to enter the Promised Land. The spies said it was not time. The people believed the spies. So the Lord said they would perish in the wilderness because of it. He had set the time for them to enter the goodly land, and they refused to accept it.

Then, the next day, they decided to “obey” the Lord by setting a different time for the fulfillment of His Word, a different time to enter the Promised Land. But the Lord had told them there would be no more time for that—until 40 years had passed. **He had given them a time prophecy, and they determined to break it.** You know the result (*Numbers 13-14*).

The people tried to set a time during a period of time when the Lord said not to. They perished in the wilderness as a result.

God has told us, “Do not set time after 1844.” The words are clear, and repeated many times in the Spirit of Prophecy.

“Jesus has told His disciples to watch,—but not for definite time.”—*Evangelism, 221.*

PROPHETIC TIME

Now, someone will say, “Oh, but we are not setting prophetic time, but only literal time.” Seriously, now, that is a lame excuse! **The Lord, through Ellen White, did not tell us, “Do not set prophetic time, but you can set literal time.” No, we were re-**

peatedly told, in the Spirit of Prophecy writings, “DO NOT SET TIME!”

“Prophetic time” is predicted time; as simple as that. It is not a special kind of predicted time, it is all predicted time. To say it differently, “prophetic time” is prophesied time. When we say that Scripture predicts a certain time span, year, or actual date, this is a prophetic time statement. It is prophetic time, or prophesied (predicted), time that we are dealing with.

“Prophetic time” includes all time setting, whether it be about events which have not yet occurred, or which have already occurred.

DEFINITE AND LITERAL TIME

We were told not to set “definite time” after 1844 (*Great Controversy, 456-457*). **What is “definite time”? It is an actual date; year, month, or day.** What does the phrase “definite time” mean to you? How can it be interpreted to mean “prophetic” time, and not also “literal” time?

The Spirit of Prophecy never differentiates between “literal” and “prophetic” time setting, and definitely not in the sense that modern time setters do. It is all time setting.

They claim that it is all right for them to set time, since they only do it with day-for-day interpretations (1260 days, instead of 1260 years, etc.)

It is true that **Bible time prophecies include both day-for-day and year-for-day time sequences. But both are time prophecies; both are prophetic time settings.**

Indeed, is not all time setting literal? It is the Jehovah’s Witnesses who have non-literal time; they say a day equals a thousand years, and therefore they do not need to keep the Bible Sabbath.

COMMANDS GIVEN TO US

We are told not to “set dates” (*Life Sketches, 89; Early Writings, 22*). Then why are we doing it?

We are told that “time will

never again be a test,” and that our message to the people—any people—must “not be hung on time” (*Early Writings, 75*). Is not that clear enough?

We are told that **“the influence of time setting will destroy the faith of God’s people”** (*1 Testimonies, 72-73*). Are you or I guilty of trying to destroy the faith of God’s people? (Compare *1 Testimonies, 409*.)

We are told that **there should be “no definite time” set after 1844,** and that those who do so are teaching “heresy.” That is strong language (*2 Selected Messages, 73*).

We are told that **setting time leads precious souls into “strange paths”** (*2 Selected Messages, 113*). You and I dare not do that, or support it by our words or influence.

We are told to **“beware of anyone who would set a time for the Lord to fulfill His Word in regard to His coming, or in regard to any other promise He has made of special significance”** (*Testimonies to Ministers, 55*). **How much more all-inclusive can a sentence get? What must the Lord do to us, before we will stop setting time? Must He send us back into the wilderness for another forty years, as He did to the Israelites when they tried to confound His time statement?**

We are told that **not even the angels know the dates we are trying to search out, and that souls are going down to ruin because of all this uncalled for time setting:**

“Because the times repeatedly set have passed, the world is in a more decided state of unbelief than before in regard to the near advent of Christ. They look upon the failures of the time setters with disgust; and because men have been so deceived, they turn from the truth substantiated by the Word of God that the end of all things is at hand.”—*4 Testimonies, 307.*

We are told of those who are “very earnest in mapping out the future” and the dates for coming events (*Desire of Ages, 632-633*),—are doing that which we should not do.

We are told that we are to take up the yoke of preaching Christ, and not take up the yoke of time setting (*Testimonies to Ministers*, 60-61).

We are told that **when we “preach definite time,” we only hurt the people**, and, “when the time passes,” they “fall back into coldness, darkness, and sin,” and it is almost impossible to later arouse them again (*4 Testimonies*, 308).

It is presumption to do that which God specifically said not to do. **We are told that those who “presumptuously preach definite time,” please the devil** and only show they are false prophets (*4 Testimonies*, 307).

A key aspect here is the delay factor. In the very last chapter of the Bible, we are told more than once to expect Christ’s return very soon! But **the message of these time setters is that we have a few years delay before the end will come.**

“No one has a true message fixing the time when Christ is to come or not to come. Be assured that God gives no one authority to say that Christ delays His coming five years, ten years or twenty years. ‘Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.’ (*Matthew 24:44*).”—*2 Selected Messages*, 113-114.

“Oh, someone will say, “we are not dating the Second Advent, but only some other—some different—unfulfilled prophecy.”

Read this:

“There will always be false and fanatical movements made by persons in the church who claim to be led of God—those who will run before they are sent, and will give day and date for the occurrence of unfulfilled prophecy. The enemy is pleased to have them do this.”—*2 Selected Messages*, 84.

“Oh,” but someone will say, “but we are only dating a promise yet to be fulfilled before the Second Advent.”

The counsel is clear:

“Let all our brethren and sisters beware of anyone who would set a

time for the Lord to fulfill His Word in regard to His coming, or in regard to any other promise He has made of special significance.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 55.

“But,” you will say, “the man who presents these time settings surely seems inspired by God.” According to *2 Selected Messages*, 65, such men are, indeed, inspired—but by Satan.

The problem is that **men and women desire to pry open secrets, not revealed by God in His Word.** But it is wrong to try to do that. Read *7 Bible Commentary*, 989 (more complete in *1 Selected Messages*, 191). Here is part of it:

“God has not revealed to us the time when this message will close, or when probation will have an end . . . Let us not seek to know that which has been kept secret in the councils of the Almighty.”—*7 Bible Commentary*, 989; *1 Selected Messages*, 191.

Probation will end suddenly and unexpectedly—when we least expect it. That is the message of God to mankind (*7 Bible Commentary*, 989). Yet men and women today are giving us a variety of dates for the close of probation. They presume to be able to date in advance an event, which the God of heaven says no one will be able to do.

FROM THE SKIES WILL COME THE FINAL TIME MESSAGE

It is clear that, repeatedly, Ellen White reiterated the message declared by Christ, the angel of *Revelation 10*. In verse 6, **He declared, with finality, that there would be no more time prophecies after 1844. After that date, never again would an earthly prophet, or any other individual, be shown a time prophecy by the God of heaven, or be able to correctly deduce one.** Instead, the Creator will Himself declare, from the heavens, the day and hour of the Second Advent. Because it will be proclaimed from the skies, there can be no doubt that it comes for God. Also keep in mind that it will not be given till some time after

the close of human probation.

“The voice of God is heard from heaven, declaring the day and hour of Jesus’ coming, and delivering the everlasting covenant to His people. Like peals of loudest thunder His words roll through the earth.”—*Great Controversy*, 640.

That statement cannot be counterfeited, cannot be misjudged, cannot be questioned. It is, doubtless, God Himself who is speaking.

Listen not to the time-setting preachers and their date-setting pamphlets. From October 22, 1844, onward, only God Himself will date future events, and He will declare it as thunder from the skies.

THE SOLEMN PLEDGE

But there is another aspect to that *Revelation 10:5-6* passage which we need to consider. It is important, and it is worthy of our careful attention:

“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven. And sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.”—*Revelation 10:5-6*.

Consider thoughtfully what you have just read! **We have here a most solemn promise, or pledge, by Christ Himself. It is given as a sworn statement, based on the fact that His Father exists! How much more serious and meaningful a statement can be given to us!**

What kind of sin is it—to turn from that statement and, by our time setting, seek to counterwork and deny it?

Whoever does it, must be a brave person. For **to do so is to declare that Christ is wrong, and the Father does not exist!**

In view of *Revelation 10:5-6*, as explained by *7 Bible Commentary*, 971 (and all the other supporting Spirit of Prophecy statements), it

must be a type of blasphemy to set time—when Christ has said not to do it!

How brave are you? Brave enough to flaunt the authority of God and set time, accept time settings, and encourage others to accept them?

Why were you and I placed here? **Why were we brought into the Advent Message? merely to focus our attention on time messages, which God has not given us,**—or were we placed here to share the great truth about obedience to the law of God through faith in Jesus Christ?

Will God be pleased if you switch your message from that, which He has given you, to one which He solemnly adjured you to have nothing to do with?

Thank it over. Probationary time is short. What kind of answer will you give Him in the judgment? If you have been involved in this, you would do well to repent while you have an opportunity. Put the terrible thing from you, and live a changed life. God will forgive, but do not wait.

TIME SETTING PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

People have been setting time for a long time. Did you know that, just before the end of the first millennium, there was a time-setting group that predicted that Christ would return about the year A.D. 1000? They had applied *Revelation 20* to the Second Advent.

But our own people have been especially active in this line. God knew this would happen, and so He forewarned us not to do it. But we have done it anyway.

Here are several time settings which have occurred in our past history:

1851—In 1850, Joseph Bates predicted that the Second Advent would occur in 1851, because he speculated that the seven drops of blood on the mercy seat (*Leviticus 16:14*) represented seven

years (*1 E.G. White Biography, 207-210*, by A. White).

1854—This time setting was keyed to the fact that it was ten years since 1844. (See *1 Testimonies, 409* for an Inspired comment.)

1884—This time setting was based on the fact that it was 40 years since 1844, and likened to the 40 years delay in the wilderness, before entrance into the promised land. (She mentions this time setting in *2 Selected Messages, 73*.)

1894—A 50-year anniversary was the basis of this time setting. (See *2 Selected Messages, 113* for an Inspired comment.)

1928—Taylor G. Bunch led out in this time excitement. He predicted that, since it was 40 years since 1888, Christ's Second Advent was about to occur.

1938—This time setting did not attract as much attention, and was based on a 50-year anniversary since 1888.

1955—This prediction was made by the Davidians, and was not for October 22, but April 22 of that year. Adventist leaders were to be slain by the angels just prior to that date, and several other events would occur. Details are given in our book, *The Davidians of Waco* (page 15). When nothing happened, the Davidian movement collapsed for several years.

1964—Many were interested in this one. I recall when it happened, and told my friends nothing would come of it. This was the 120th year since 1844 ("As it was in the days of Noah"—and he preached 120 years).

1967—William Grotheer says that the probation of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination ended this year, because the Jews won the Six Day War against the Arabs. After that date, it is no longer necessary to evangelize.

1987—This was a supposed jubilee cycle terminal date for the end of time.

1994—This was another supposed jubilee cycle date for the end. Several different folk have focused their attention on 1994 as the key year when final events will begin. One of these is Larry Wilson. He believes four major lines of evidence converge on March 19, 1994 as the key closing-events date. Yet, even after the date passed uneventfully, he continues to claim

it is very important. Some time setters are doing that now: claiming that something must have happened on the predicted date—when actually nothing happened!

And that brings us to a special time setter:

Before concluding, this collection of dates, we should give attention to one of the very boldest time setters in Adventist history: Jeanine Sautron, a woman who lives in France. She dares to set times many years in advance, all the while knowing the Spirit of Prophecy prohibitions against doing so. A rather complete refutation of her theories will be found in our booklet, *Jeanine Sautron*.

Here, very briefly, are some of her time settings. In spite of the fact that NOT ONE of them has been fulfilled to date, she still claims that all of them are inspired of God—and the events predicted actually occurred! Quoted material is from her publications):

1988—"The Judgment of the Living begins with the Seventh-day Adventists."—That means that, if true, the individual probation of nearly all of us has already closed.

1991—"The official organized Seventh-day Adventist Church was spewed out and rejected" by God.

1992—After a year without a people, in this year God is said to have given Sautron's group—which, in her broken English (she is French), she calls "the Remnants"—the "candlestick" of religious authority.

1993—The Remnants were commanded to begin evangelizing the world, as of March 6.

1994—One of her most astounding claims: The sealing ended in March 1994! That means all individual probations are closed! Yet the National Sunday Law crisis has not begun yet! Sautron's theology is totally mixed up.

1994—"March 23, 1994: The four winds of Revelation 7 were unleashed!" Well, when did that happen? We never noticed it. Also predicted to occur soon after that date: "The Sunday Law will soon be here!"

1995—"March 7, 1995: worldwide disasters and economic collapse!" I assure you: nothing eventful will occur on that date.

2005—"March 7, 2005: Probation closes for man!" That would be the universal close of probation. Yet Sautron places the end of the sealing eleven years earlier!

For much more information, you will want to read the following:

It's No Time for TIME EXCITEMENT [PG-21]—An outstanding collection of Spirit of Prophecy quotations,

with hardly any comment.

Can We Date the Second Advent from it? THE JUBILEE WM-564]—All you wanted to know about this method of time setting.