

Ellen G. White and Time Prophecies

A Gift to End-Time Students

Introduction

One of the great challenges that the Adventist Church faces is the misuse of Ellen G. White. This covers a vast cross-section of issues and messages. It is dangerous to use a single quotation without knowing its context and date. A second concern is failing to understand that she had advancing light – progressive revelation. Many of her writings changed over time.

A simple example relates to *time*:

“Only a few days more to be as pilgrims and strangers in this world, seeking for a better country, even an heavenly. Our home is in heaven. Then stay your soul in confidence upon God. Roll all your burdens upon Him.”¹

Only six years later she noted: “Because the people are disobedient, unthankful, unholy, as were ancient Israel, ***time is prolonged that all may hear the last message of mercy proclaimed with a loud voice.***”² Yet, she accepted the concept of the 6000-year salvation history.

- When her many “urgency” prophecies are put together, their overriding purpose is to stimulate *hope* and give the message: “Get ready quickly – don’t delay!”

Another example relates to *truth*:

“Our faith in reference to the messages of the first, second, and third angels was correct. The great waymarks we have passed are immovable. Although the hosts of hell may try to tear them from their foundation, and triumph in the thought that they have succeeded, yet they do not succeed. These pillars of truth stand firm as the eternal hills, unmoved by all the efforts of men combined with those of Satan and his host. We can learn much, and should be constantly searching the Scriptures to see if these things are so. God’s people are now to have their eyes fixed on the heavenly sanctuary, where the final ministration of our great High Priest in the work of the judgment is going forward,—where He is interceding for His people. – Review and Herald, Nov. 27, 1883.”³

¹ White, Ellen G.; *Selected Messages*, bk 2, p. 231, 1891. [For all references emphases are added.]

² White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, pp. 292-293, 1897).

³ White, Ellen G.; *Evangelism*, p. 223, 1883.

“Some have asked me if I thought there was any more light for the people of God. Our minds have become so narrow that we do not seem to understand that the Lord has a mighty work to do for us. Increasing light is to shine upon us.”⁴
(1889)

Our focus today will be to explore more deeply Mrs. White’s approach to prophetic messages in as balanced a way as possible.

When an Adventist is asked what they know about prophecy, there are several predictable answers:

1. Second Coming of Jesus (usually related to Matthew 24:27-31, Revelation 1:7, I Thessalonians 4:13-18, I Corinthians 15:51-58).
2. 2300-Year prophecy (Daniel 8:14)
3. 490-Year prophecy (Daniel 9)
4. Nebuchadnezzar’s image (Daniel 2)
5. Four odd beasts (Daniel 7)
6. Mark of the beast (Revelation 13).

Did you know:

- That the 2300-year prophecy has an end-time application beyond 1844?
- That the 490-year prophecy has an end-time application beyond 31 A.D.?
- That Nebuchadnezzar’s image has a very end-time application related to the **whole image?**
 - *“Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.”*
*“Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, **broken to pieces together**”* (Daniel 2:35, 36).
 - *“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.... it shall break in pieces and consume **all these kingdoms**, and it shall stand for ever”* (Daniel 2:44).
- That the four odd beasts are only an introduction to **end-time** Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Papal Rome?
- That the borrowed name *“Babylon”* mentioned several times in the book of Revelation relates to the end of time?
- That *“Medo-Persia”* is part of end-time prophecy?

⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, June 18, 1889.

All this means that most prophecy has a dual meaning! This is called the apotelesmatical principle.

E. G. White begins forward Views of Prophecy

In 1896 E. G. White noted:

“Prophecy has been fulfilling, line upon line. The more firmly we stand under the banner of the third angel’s message, the more clearly shall we understand the prophecy of **Daniel; for the Revelation is the supplement of Daniel** [meaning that we can understand Daniel better if we understand Revelation]. The more fully we accept the light presented by the Holy Spirit through the consecrated servants of God, the deeper and surer, even as the eternal throne, will appear the truths of ancient prophecy; we shall be assured that men of God spake as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost. Men must themselves be under the influence of the Holy Spirit in order to understand the Spirit’s utterances through the prophets. **These messages were given, not for those that uttered the prophecies, but for us who are living amid the scenes of their fulfillment.**”⁵ (1896) (cf. John 14:29)

1. Throughout the 1844–1890 window of time, our **pioneers** concluded that many of the prophecies had already been fulfilled.
2. Then in the 1887–1892 window, **Mrs. White** began to see that many of these actually apply to the future.
3. In 1896 she made the above statement that these prophecies were not given for Daniel or John (and the people living then – implied).
4. But – they were for those who would be living when they were about to be or were being fulfilled. Her orientation relates to our day onward.

In 1905 Mrs. White gave notice again that Revelation relates to the closing scenes of earth’s history.

“John was deprived of the companionship of his brethren, but no man could deprive him of the companionship of Christ. [on that Island of Patmos]...God and Christ and the heavenly host were John’s companions on the lonely island, and from them he received instruction of infinite importance. There he wrote out the visions and revelations he received of God, **telling of the things that would take place in the closing scenes of this earth’s history.** When his voice could no longer witness to the truth, the messages given him in Patmos were to go forth as a lamp that burneth.”⁶

There is often a *minor* historical application to many prophecies. That has been the focus of the Seventh-day Adventist Church over its history, making these minor

⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 17, p. 19, 1896.

⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Signs of the Times*, March 22, 1905.

applications the major focus. As Mrs. White approached the last 25 years of her life, she began to see that the **most important understanding** related to the period just before Jesus comes again!

Ellen G. White made a sensitive timing reference regarding the end:

“[Daniel 12:9, 4, 10, 13 quoted] **The time has come for Daniel to stand in his lot...** If those for whom the Lord has done so much will walk in the light, their knowledge of Christ and the prophecies relating to Him will be greatly increased **as they near the close of this earth’s history [future to 1899]** (Manuscript 176, 1899).”⁷

1. This means that there had been **incomplete understanding** of Daniel at the time of 1899 as it related to Christ. If we only use references before that time, truth as it is in Daniel will be compromised – partly grasped!
2. **Why?** Much of the prophecies that related to the last days were **sealed!**

Progressive Understanding

Progressive understanding seems difficult for Adventists to understand. We rely on many early quotes in the Spirit of Prophecy that are actually matured and expanded later. But the church has still kept the earlier, minor view.

“Each period of the fulfillment of prophetic history is a **preparation** for the **advanced light which will succeed each period**. As the prophecy comes to an end, there is to be a perfect whole.”⁸

1. Understanding prophecy moves forward step by step – and it is not fully understood **until the end**.
2. Each step forward brings an addition or better understanding to what was previously seen.
3. At the end, a **perfect view of all end-time prophecy** will be seen.

Here is an example of how this worked relative to Mrs. White:

“In his vision of the last days Daniel inquired, ‘O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.... Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days’ [Daniel 12:8-13]. **Daniel has been**

⁷ White, Elen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentaries*, vol. 4, p. 1174.

⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 13, p. 15.

standing in his lot since the seal was removed [for her that was 1798⁹] and the light of truth has been shining upon his visions. He stands in his lot, bearing the testimony which was to be understood at the end of the days.”¹⁰ (1893)

Later, as she began to understand what the end of time really means, she changed her view:

“A great work will be done in a short time. A message will soon be given by God’s appointment that will swell into a **loud cry. Then** Daniel will stand in his lot, to give his testimony.”¹¹ (1903)

1. The “loud cry” was to be future to 1903.
2. It would be “then” that Daniel would stand in his lot – not 1798.

There is an immense amount of prophetic interpretation that we have applied to the past. For instance;

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Daniel 122. Six of the seven churches3. Eating the unsealed book of Revelation 10 | } | Today, we see them mainly or exclusively as end-time. |
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Ellen White understood much of prophecy that way also – until 1883.

- That was 39 years after 1844!
- The Seventh-day Adventist Church had become a formal denomination in 1863.
- Many doctrines had been accepted, including the Sabbath, the Bible as the only rule of faith, the sanctuary doctrine, the three angels’ messages and our health message. The doctrines of the trinity and the nature of Christ were still being worked out.

Then in 1883 she had “new light” regarding Daniel 12:

“In the Scriptures are presented truths that relate especially to our own time. **To the period just prior to the appearing of the Son of man, the prophecies of Scripture point**, and here their warnings and threatenings pre-eminently apply. **The prophetic periods [plural] of Daniel, extending to the very eve of the great consummation, throw a flood of light upon events then to transpire.** The book of Revelation is also replete with warning and instruction for the **last generation.** The beloved John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, portrays the fearful and

⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 356.

¹⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, p. 225, 1893.

¹¹ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 437. *Letter 229*, 1903.

thrilling scenes connected with **the close of earth's history**, and presents the duties and dangers of God's people. None need remain in ignorance, none need be unprepared for the coming of the day of God."¹² (1883)

1. Looking into the future beyond Daniel 8:14, there is only one place where prophetic periods are alluded to in Daniel. It is in Daniel 12: "*time, times and half time*" (vs 7), 1290 days and 1335 days (vss 11 and 12).
2. Those prophecies go up to the consummation, or the Second Coming, of Jesus!
3. They relate to the "close of earth's history."

This was the **first published clue** that Mrs. White was beginning to see more of Daniel's prophecies as being in the eschatological future.

She goes on to say: "Let us read and study the **twelfth chapter of Daniel**. It is a **warning** that we **shall all** need to understand **before the time of the end**."¹³ (1903)

New Understanding – New Light – Going Deeper

*"There is no excuse for any one in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. **The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible.** Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair.... There are those who oppose everything that is not in accordance with their own ideas, and by so doing they endanger their eternal interest as verily as did the Jewish nation in their rejection of Christ."*¹⁴

1. This is a profound quotation – even the doctrines that were held up to 1892 were not to be seen as irrevocable (though the Sabbath, state of the dead, heavenly sanctuary, Second Coming and God's Word were fixed in her understanding).
2. We must have the attitude that more truth has been or will be revealed.

"We have **only the glimmerings** of the rays of the light that is yet to come to us." (1890).¹⁵

"The time for the **unfolding of special truth in relation to the closing scenes** of this earth's history **is during the last generations** that shall live upon the earth."¹⁶

¹² White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, September 25, 1883.

¹³ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, p. 228, 1903; *Last Day Events*, p. 15.

¹⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, December 20, 1892.

¹⁵ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, June 3, 1890.

¹⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 692-693 (1870–1871).

“Increased light will shine upon all the grand truths of prophecy, and they will be seen in freshness and brilliancy, because the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness will illuminate the whole.”¹⁷

“Still more wonderful representations will be made. We need to study the Scriptures with humble, contrite hearts. Those who will devote their powers to the study of God’s Word, and ***especially the prophecies referring to these last days, will be rewarded by the discovery of important truths.*** *Manuscript 75, pp. 4, 5 (Untitled Manuscript, May 11, 1899).*”¹⁸

“There is need of a much closer study of the word of God; ***especially should Daniel and the Revelation have attention as never before in the history of our work.***”¹⁹

1. As we approach the Second Coming of Jesus our study of the Bible, especially Daniel and Revelation, should deepen!
2. ***New light*** will come to God’s people.
3. Only a glimmer of light had been seen in the prophecies by 1890.

Timing Quotations Misused from E. G. White

“Time has not been a ***test*** since 1844, and it will ***never again*** be a ***test.***”²⁰ The key word is “test”!

- She is not saying that there won’t be timing prophecies after 1844, but “time” will not be a “test.”
- What does “test” mean? “God accomplished His own beneficent purpose in permitting the warning of the judgment to be given just as it was [Jesus coming in 1844]. The great day was at hand, and in His providence the people were brought ***to the test of a definite time,*** in order to reveal to them what was in their hearts. The message was designed for the testing and purification of the church.”²¹
- No dates for the coming of Christ will ever be a “test” again.

“Again and again I have been warned in regard to time-setting. There will never again [since 1844] be a message for the people of God that will be based on time.

¹⁷ White, Ellen G.; *Selected Messages*, bk 3, p. 390 (MS 18, 1888).

¹⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 195.

¹⁹ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 112.

²⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Early Writings*, p. 75.

²¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 353-354.

We are not to know the definite time either for the **outpouring of the Holy Spirit** or **for the coming of Christ.**”²²

- Notice her definition of **what type of time** she was referring to: “outpouring of the Holy Spirit” or “the coming of Christ.”
- **If we stopped with the second sentence (which many do), many prophecies of the Bible would have to be thrown out!**

“The people will not have another message upon definite time. After this period of time, reaching from 1843 to 1844, there can be **no definite tracing of the prophetic time.”²³**

- This quotation has been used by Adventists, all the way to the top leadership of the Adventist Church, claiming that there will be no further timing prophecy after 1844!
- But – that is not what she said.

We need to look at it carefully, in its context. It has an entirely different meaning.

“This time, which the angel declares with a solemn oath [Revelation 10:6], 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, [now she explains] the people will not have another message upon definite time.** After this period of time, reaching from 1843 to 1844, there can be **no definite tracing of the prophetic time.** The longest reckoning reaches to the autumn of 1844.”²⁴

1. What does she mean by “definite time?”
2. Her last two sentences explain what she has been alluding to previously.
3. There is to be **“no definite tracing,”** meaning no known prophetic ending that we can see in the future, like the 2300-year prophecy!

Were any of Mrs. White’s quotations “incorrect”?

This is a problem question if we fail to understand the purpose of her writings or what she said. They varied!

1. Many of her works are descriptive of visions she divinely received. We must be very careful in how they are used!
2. Many of her narratives were her personal opinions. We see that in:

²² White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, March 22, 1892.

²³ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, pp. 320-321.

²⁴ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, pp. 320-321, 1900.

- a. “Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith, and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and **Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward.**”²⁵
- b. “Vigilance and fidelity have been required of Christ’s followers in every age; but **now that we are standing upon the very verge of the eternal world,** holding the truths we do, having so great light, so important a work, we must double our diligence. Everyone is to do to the very utmost of his ability. My brother, you endanger your own salvation if you hold back now. God will call you to account if you fail in the work He has assigned you. Have you a knowledge of the truth? give it to others.”²⁶
- c. “**In mercy to the world, Jesus delays His coming,** that sinners may have an opportunity to hear the warning, and find in Him a shelter before the wrath of God shall be poured out.”²⁷
- d. “A great crisis awaits the people of God. A crisis awaits the world. The most momentous struggle of all the ages is just before us. **Events which for more than forty years we have upon the authority of the prophetic word declared to be impending are now taking place before our eyes.**”²⁸

Mrs. White had quotations like these through 1914.

3. Many of her writings were homiletic – pastoral – used as illustrations.
4. Many of her thoughts clearly were a progression at the Holy Spirit’s direction.

E. G. White and Powerful Timing Quotations

We’ve already seen that in 1883 she clearly said that the three periods of Daniel 12 will go right up to the Second Coming.²⁹

She reinforced that when she wrote of Daniel 12: “Twice Daniel inquired, How long shall it be to the **end of time?**”³⁰ Then she quoted those timing verses.

“The exact day and hour of Christ’s coming have not been revealed. The Saviour told his disciples that he himself could not make known the hour of his second appearing. But he mentioned certain events by which they might know when

²⁵ White, Ellen G.; *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 68.

²⁶ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, pp. 460-461.

²⁷ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 458 (1888).

²⁸ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 711 (1882–1889).

²⁹ White, Ellen G.; *The Review and Herald*, September 25, 1883.

³⁰ White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 114.

his coming was near. 'There shall be signs,' he said, 'in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.' 'The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall.' Upon the earth, he said, there shall be 'distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.'³¹

She has another interesting observation regarding the Second Coming:

"The slaying of the Passover lamb was a shadow of the death of Christ....

"These types were fulfilled, not only as to the event, ***but as to the time***. On the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, ***the very day and month*** on which for fifteen long centuries the Passover lamb had been slain, Christ, having eaten the Passover with His disciples, instituted that feast which was to commemorate His own death as 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' That same night He was taken by wicked hands to be crucified and slain.

"In like manner the types which relate to the second advent must be fulfilled at the time pointed out in the symbolic service."³²

- That is quite specific!
- That means that Jesus will be coming in the fall of the year!
- In fact, based on those fall feasts, He will arrive in the September/October window.

Lest you have any doubt, she has another amazing quotation:

"In the last days Satan will appear as an angel of light, with great power and heavenly glory, and claim to be the Lord of the whole earth. He will declare that the Sabbath has been changed from the seventh to the first day of the week; and as lord of the first day of the week he will present this spurious sabbath as a test of loyalty to him. ***Then will take place the final fulfillment*** of the Revelator's prophecy. *'And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.'*" (Revelation 13:4-5 – KJV. Then 13:6-18 is quoted.)³³

Do you see what Ellen G. White is saying?

- There is an end-time application to Revelation 13's 42 months!
- Before that time Satan will appear as an angel of light.

³¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Review of Herald*, November 22, 1906.

³² White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 399-400.

³³ White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 282.

- **Then** – at that time – verses 4 to 18 will have a final fulfillment.
- That includes a **42-month** timing period.

From Daniel 8 and 12 we now know that Satan will appear before the enforcement of the Sunday laws in the United States!

“As the message of Christ’s first advent announced the kingdom of His grace, so the message of His second advent announces the kingdom of His glory. And the second message, like the first, is based on the prophecies. The words of the angel to Daniel ***relating to the last days were to be understood in the time of the end. At that time***, ‘many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.’”³⁴

- We have reached that time.
- Most of the Hebrew part of Daniel and the Book of Revelation are now understood.

When we are careful in our study of E. G. White, there is an amazing, rich source of material that is distinctly for us today!

- However, it must be pointed out that nearly everything she says we can see in the Bible, including those timing prophecies.
- I pray that that will be a discovery each of you will have.
- Why? Because our final work will be finished by using God’s Holy Word.

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³⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 234.