

When Shall These Things Be?

The Disciples Ask Christ About His Return

Christ's words [Matthew 24:2] had been spoken in the hearing of a large number of people, but when He was alone, Peter, John, James, and Andrew came to Him as He sat upon the Mount of Olives. "Tell us," they said, "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" LDE 32.1

Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming. He mingled the description of these two events. Had He opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves.—The Desire of Ages, 628 (1898). LDE 32.2

Time of Christ's Return Not Known

Many who have called themselves Adventists have been time-setters. Time after time has been set for Christ to come, but repeated failures have been the result. The definite time of our Lord's coming is declared to be beyond the ken of mortals. Even the angels, who minister unto those who shall be heirs of salvation, know not the day nor the hour. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only."—Testimonies for the Church 4:307 (1879). LDE 32.3

We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ.... Why has not God given us this knowledge?—Because we would not make a right use of it if He did. A condition of things would result from this knowledge among our people that would greatly retard the work of God in preparing a people to stand in the great day that is to come. We are not to live upon time excitement.... LDE 33.1

You will not be able to say that He will come in one, two, or five years, neither are you to put off His coming by stating that it may not be for ten or twenty years.—The Review and Herald, March 22, 1892. LDE 33.2

We are nearing the great day of God. The signs are fulfilling. And yet we have no message to tell us of the day and hour of Christ's appearing. The Lord has wisely concealed this from us that we may always be in a state of expectancy and preparation for the second appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven.—Letter 28, 1897. LDE 33.3

The exact time of the second coming of the Son of man is God's mystery.—The Desire of Ages, 633 (1898). LDE 33.4

Ours Is Not a Time-setting Message

We are not of that class who define the exact period of time that shall elapse before the coming of Jesus the second time with power and great glory. Some have set a time, and when that has passed, their presumptuous spirits have not accepted rebuke, but they have set another and another time. But many successive failures have stamped them as false prophets.—Fundamentals of Christian Education, 335 (1895). LDE 34.1

God gives no man a message that it will be five years or ten years or twenty years before this earth's history shall close. He would not give any living being an excuse for delaying the preparation for His appearing. He would have no one say, as did the unfaithful servant, "My lord delayeth his coming," for this leads to reckless neglect of the opportunities and privileges given to prepare us for that great day.—The Review and Herald, November 27, 1900. LDE 34.2

Time-setting Leads to Unbelief

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*.—Testimonies for the Church 4:307 (1879). LDE 34.3

I understand that Brother [E. P.] Daniels has, as it were, set time, stating that the Lord will come within five years. Now I hope the impression will not go abroad that we are time-setters. Let no such remarks be made. They do no good. Seek not to obtain a revival upon any such grounds, but let due caution be used in every word uttered, that fanatical ones will not seize anything they can get to create an excitement and the Spirit of the Lord be grieved. LDE 34.4

We want not to move the people's passions to get up a stir, where feelings are moved and principle does not control. I feel that we need to be guarded on every side, because Satan is at work to do his uttermost to insinuate his arts and devices that shall be a power to do harm. Anything that will make a stir, create an excitement on a wrong basis, is to be dreaded, for the reaction will surely come.—Letter 34, 1887. LDE 35.1

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, for their successive failures and leading into false lines cause confusion and unbelief.—Selected Messages 2:84 (1897). LDE 35.2

No Time Prophecy Beyond 1844

I plainly stated at the Jackson camp meeting to these fanatical parties that they were doing the work of the adversary of souls; they were in darkness. They claimed to have great light that probation would close in October, 1884. I there stated in public that the Lord had been pleased to show me that there would be no definite time in the message given of God since 1844.—Selected Messages 2:73 (1885). LDE 35.3

Our position has been one of waiting and watching, with no time-proclamation to intervene between the close of the prophetic periods in 1844 and the time of our Lord's coming.—Manuscript Releases 10:270 (1888). LDE 36.1

The people will not have another message upon definite time. After this period of time [Revelation 10:4-6], reaching from 1842 to 1844, there can be no definite tracing of the prophetic time. The longest reckoning reaches to the autumn of 1844.—The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 7:971 (1900). LDE 36.2

Ellen White Expected Christ's Return in Her Day

I was shown the company present at the Conference. Said the angel: "Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus."—Testimonies For The Church 1:131, 132 (1856). LDE 36.3

Because time is short, we should work with diligence and double energy. Our children may never enter college.—Testimonies for the Church 3:159 (1872). LDE 36.4

It is really not wise to have children now. Time is short, the perils of the last days are upon us, and the little children will be largely swept off before this.—Letter 48, 1876. LDE 36.5

In this age of the world, as the scenes of earth's history are soon to close and we are about to enter upon the time of trouble such as never was, the fewer the marriages contracted the better for all, both men and women.—Testimonies for the Church 5:366 (1885). LDE 37.1

The hour will come; it is not far distant, and some of us who now believe will be alive upon the earth, and shall see the prediction verified, and hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God echo from mountain and plain and sea to the uttermost parts of the earth.—The Review and Herald, July 31, 1888. LDE 37.2

The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer.—Selected Messages 1:363 (1892). LDE 37.3

The Delay Explained

The long night of gloom is trying, but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come so many would be found unready.—Testimonies for the Church 2:194 (1868). LDE 37.4

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.... It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed.... LDE 37.5

For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.—Evangelism, 695, 696 (1883). LDE 38.1

Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory.—The Desire of Ages, 633, 634 (1898). LDE 38.2

God's Promises Are Conditional

The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. [See Romans 13:11, 12; 1 Corinthians 7:29; 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 17; Hebrews 10:25; James 5:8, 9; 1 Peter 4:7; Revelation 22:6, 7.] Thus it has always been presented to me. It is true that time has continued longer than we expected in the early days of this message. Our Saviour did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the Word of the Lord failed? Never! It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional. [See Jeremiah 18:7-10; Jonah 3:4-10.]... LDE 38.3

We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel, but for Christ's sake His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action.—Evangelism, 695, 696 (1901). LDE 39.1

What Christ Is Waiting For

Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. LDE 39.2

It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.—Christ's Object Lessons, 69 (1900). LDE 39.3

By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord's return. We are not only to look for but to hasten the coming of the day of God (2 Peter 3:12, margin).—The Desire of Ages, 633 (1898). LDE 39.4

He has put it in our power, through cooperation with Him, to bring this scene of misery to an end.—Education, 264 (1903). LDE 39.5

A Limit to God's Forbearance

With unerring accuracy the Infinite One still keeps an account with all nations. While His mercy is tendered with calls to repentance this account will remain open, but when the figures reach a certain amount, which God has fixed, the ministry of His wrath commences.—Testimonies for the Church 5:208 (1882). LDE 39.6

God keeps a record with the nations. The figures are swelling against them in the books of heaven, and when it shall have become a law that the transgression of the first day of the week shall be met with punishment, then their cup will be full.—The S.D.A. Bible Commentary 7:910 (1886). LDE 40.1

God keeps a reckoning with the nations.... When the time fully comes that iniquity shall have reached the stated boundary of God's mercy, His forbearance will cease. When the accumulated figures in heaven's record books shall mark the sum of transgression complete, wrath will come.—Testimonies for the Church 5:524 (1889). LDE 40.2

While God's mercy bears long with the transgressor, there is a limit beyond which men may not go on in sin. When that limit is reached, then the offers of mercy are withdrawn,

and the ministration of judgment begins.—Patriarchs and Prophets, 162, 165 (1890). LDE 40.3

The time is coming when in their fraud and insolence men will reach a point that the Lord will not permit them to pass and they will learn that there is a limit to the forbearance of Jehovah.—Testimonies for the Church 9:13 (1909). LDE 40.4

There is a limit beyond which the judgments of Jehovah can no longer be delayed.—Prophets and Kings, 417 (c. 1914). LDE 40.5

Transgression Has Almost Reached Its Limit

Time will last a little longer until the inhabitants of the earth have filled up the cup of their iniquity, and then the wrath of God, which has so long slumbered, will awake, and this land of light will drink the cup of His unmixed wrath.—Testimonies For The Church 1:363 (1863). LDE 41.1

The cup of iniquity is nearly filled, and the retributive justice of God is about to descend upon the guilty.—Testimonies for the Church 4:489 (1880). LDE 41.2

The wickedness of the inhabitants of the world has almost filled up the measure of their iniquity. This earth has almost reached the place where God will permit the destroyer to work his will upon it.—Testimonies for the Church 7:141 (1902). LDE 41.3

Transgression has almost reached its limit. Confusion fills the world, and a great terror is soon to come upon human beings. The end is very near. We who know the truth should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise.—Testimonies for the Church 8:28 (1904). LDE 41.4

We Should Keep the Great Day of God Before Our Minds

We must educate ourselves to be thinking and dwelling upon the great scenes of the judgment just before us and then, as we keep the scenes of the great day of God before us when everything will be revealed, it will have an effect upon our character. One brother said to me, "Sister White, do you think the Lord will come in ten years?" "What difference does it make to you whether He shall come in two, four, or ten years?" "Why," said he, "I think I would do differently in some things than I now do if I knew the Lord was to come in ten years." LDE 41.5

"What would you do?" said I. LDE 42.1

"Why," said he, "I would sell my property and begin to search the Word of God and try to warn the people and get them to prepare for His coming, and I would plead with God that I might be ready to meet Him." LDE 42.2

Then said I, "If you knew that the Lord was not coming for twenty years, you would live differently?" LDE 42.3

Said he, "I think I would."... LDE 42.4

How selfish was the expression that he would live a different life if he knew his Lord was to come in ten years! Why, Enoch walked with God 300 years. This is a lesson for us

that we shall walk with God every day, and we are not safe unless we are waiting and watching.—Manuscript 10, 1886. LDE 42.5

The Shortness of Time

May the Lord give no rest, day nor night, to those who are now careless and indolent in the cause and work of God. The end is near. This is that which Jesus would have us keep ever before us—the shortness of time.—Letter 97, 1886. LDE 42.6

When we shall stand with the redeemed upon the sea of glass with harps of gold and crowns of glory and before us the unmeasured eternity, we shall then see how short was the waiting period of probation.—Manuscript Releases 10:266 (1886). LDE 42.7