

Time Setting, or How to Disqualify Yourself from Giving the Third Angel's Message

Compiled by Elder Jamal Sankey

2SM 108.1 "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). **This message announces the end of the prophetic periods***. The disappointment of those who expected to see our Lord in 1844 was indeed bitter to those who had so ardently looked for His appearing. It was in the Lord's order that this disappointment should come, and that hearts should be revealed."

*See "Exposition of Miller's Chart of the Chronology of the World, and of the Prophetic Periods"

7BC 971.7 "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."

DEFINITE, a.

1. Having certain limits; bounded with precision; determinate; as a definite extent of land; definite dimensions; definite measure.
2. Having certain limits in signification; determinate; certain; precise; as a definite word, term or expression.
3. **Fixed; determinate; exact; precise; as a definite time or period.**
4. Defining; limiting; determining the extent; as a definite word.

4T 307.1-308.1 "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." **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.**

"Those who so presumptuously preach definite time, in so doing gratify the adversary of souls; for they are advancing infidelity rather than Christianity. They produce Scripture and by false interpretation show a chain of argument which apparently proves their position. But their failures show that they are false prophets, that they do not rightly interpret the language of inspiration. The word of God is truth and verity, but men have perverted its meaning. These errors have brought the truth of God for these last days into disrepute. Adventists are derided by ministers of all denominations, yet God's servants must not hold their peace. The signs foretold in prophecy are fast fulfilling around us. This should arouse every true follower of Christ to zealous action.

“Those who think they must preach definite time in order to make an impression upon the people do not work from the right standpoint. The feelings of the people may be stirred and their fears aroused, but they do not move from principle. An excitement is created; but when the time passes, as it has done repeatedly, those who moved out upon time fall back into coldness, darkness, and sin, and it is almost impossible to arouse their consciences without some great excitement.”

2SM 73.2-73.3 “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; and that I knew that this message, which four or five were engaged in advocating with great zeal, was heresy.”

TM 54.2-56.2 “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. But Satan is a vigilant, unsleeping foe, ever at work upon human minds, seeking a soil in which he can sow his tares. If he finds any whom he can press into his service, he will suggest ideas and false theories, and make them zealous in advocating error. The truth not only converts, but works the purification of its receiver. Jesus has warned us to beware of false teachers. From the beginning of our work, men have arisen from time to time, advocating theories that were new and startling. But if those who claim to believe the truth would go to those who have had experience, would go to the word of God in a teachable, humble spirit, and examine their theories in the light of truth and with the aid of the brethren who have been diligent Bible students, and at the same time make supplication unto God, asking, Is this the way of the Lord, or is it a false path in which Satan would lead me? they would receive light, and would escape out of the net of the fowler.

“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. “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.” False teachers may appear to be very zealous for the work of God, and may expend means to bring their theories before the world and the church; but as they mingle error with truth, their message is one of deception, and will lead souls into false paths. They are to be met and opposed, not because they are bad men, but because they are teachers of falsehood and are endeavoring to put upon falsehood the stamp of truth.

“What a pity it is that men will go to such pains to discover some theory of error when there is a whole storehouse of precious gems of truth by which the people might be enriched in the most holy faith. Instead of teaching truth they let their imagination dwell upon that which is new and strange, and throw themselves out of harmony with those whom God is using to bring the people up upon the platform of truth. They cast aside all that has been said in regard to unity of sentiment and feeling, and trample upon the prayer of Christ as though the unity for which He prayed were unessential, and there were no necessity for His followers to be one, even as He is one with the Father. They go off on a tangent, and, Jehulike, call to their brethren to follow their example of zeal for the Lord.

“If their zeal led them to work in the same lines in which their brethren who have carried the heat and burden of the day are working, if they were as persevering to overcome discouragements and obstacles as their brethren have been, they might well be imitated, and God would accept them. But men are to be condemned who start out with a proclamation of wonderful light, and yet draw away from the agents whom God is leading. This was the way in which Korah, Dathan, and Abiram did, and their action is recorded as a warning to all others. We are not to do as they have done—accuse and condemn those upon whom God has laid the burden of the work.

“Those who have proclaimed the Seventh-day Adventist Church as Babylon, have made use of the Testimonies in giving their position a seeming support; but why is it that they did not present that which for years has been the burden of my message—the unity of the church? Why did they not quote the words

of the angel, “Press together, press together, press together”? Why did they not repeat the admonition and state the principle, that “in union there is strength, in division there is weakness”? It is such messages as these men have borne that divide the church, and put us to shame before the enemies of truth; and in such messages is plainly revealed the specious working of the great deceiver, who would hinder the church from attaining unto perfection in unity. These teachers follow the sparks of their own kindling, move according to their own independent judgment, and cumber the truth with false notions and theories. They refuse the counsel of their brethren, and press on in their own way until they become just what Satan would desire to have them—unbalanced in mind.

“I warn my brethren to guard against the working of Satan in every form. The great adversary of God and man is exulting today that he has succeeded in deceiving souls, and in diverting their means and ability into harmful channels. Their money might have been used to advance present truth, but instead of this it has been expended in presenting notions that have no foundation in truth.”

1SM 185.1-189.2 “He shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:3-7).

“The disciples were anxious to know the exact time for the revelation of the kingdom of God; but Jesus tells them that they may not know the times and the seasons; for the Father has not revealed them. To understand when the kingdom of God should be restored, was not the thing of most importance for them to know. They were to be found following the Master, praying, waiting, watching, and working. They were to be representatives to the world of the character of Christ. That which was essential for a successful Christian experience in the days of the disciples, is essential in our day. “And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” And after the Holy Ghost was come upon them, what were they to do? “And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:7, 8).

“This is the work in which we also are to be engaged. Instead of living in expectation of some special season of excitement, we are wisely to improve present opportunities, doing that which must be done in order that souls may be saved. Instead of exhausting the powers of our mind in speculations in regard to the times and seasons which the Lord has placed in His own power, and withheld from men, we are to yield ourselves to the control of the Holy Spirit, to do present duties, to give the bread of life, unadulterated with human opinions, to souls who are perishing for the truth.

“Satan is ever ready to fill the mind with theories and calculations that will divert men from the present truth, and disqualify them for the giving of the third angel’s message to the world. It has ever been thus; for our Saviour often had to speak reprovably to those who indulged in speculations and were ever inquiring into those things which the Lord had not revealed. Jesus had come to earth to impart important truth to men, and He wished to impress their minds with the necessity of receiving and obeying His precepts and instructions, of doing their present duty, and His communications were of an order that imparted knowledge for their immediate and daily use.

“Jesus said: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). All that was done and said had this one object in view—to rivet truth in their minds that they might attain unto everlasting life. Jesus did not come to astonish men with some great announcement of some special time when some great event would occur, but He came to instruct and save the lost. He did not come to arouse and gratify curiosity; for He knew that this would but increase

the appetite for the curious and the marvelous. It was His aim to impart knowledge whereby men might increase in spiritual strength, and advance in the way of obedience and true holiness. He gave only such instruction as could be appropriated to the needs of their daily life, only such truth as could be given to others for the same appropriation.

“He did not make new revelations to men, but opened to their understanding truths that had long been obscured or misplaced through the false teaching of the priests and teachers. Jesus replaced the gems of divine truth in their proper setting, in the order in which they had been given to patriarchs and prophets. And after giving them this precious instruction, He promised to give them the Holy Spirit whereby all things that He had said unto them should be brought to their remembrance.

“We are in continual danger of getting above the simplicity of the gospel. There is an intense desire on the part of many to startle the world with something original, that shall lift the people into a state of spiritual ecstasy, and change the present order of experience. There is certainly great need of a change in the present order of experience; for the sacredness of present truth is not realized as it should be, but the change we need is a change of heart, and can only be obtained by seeking God individually for His blessing, by pleading with Him for His power, by fervently praying that His grace may come upon us, and that our characters may be transformed. This is the change we need today, and for the attainment of this experience we should exercise persevering energy and manifest heartfelt earnestness. We should ask with true sincerity, “What shall I do to be saved?” We should know just what steps we are taking heavenward.

“Christ gave to His disciples truths whose breadth and depth and value they little appreciated, or even comprehended, and the same condition exists among the people of God today. We too have failed to take in the greatness, to perceive the beauty of the truth which God has entrusted to us today. Should we advance in spiritual knowledge, we would see the truth developing and expanding in lines of which we have little dreamed, but it will never develop in any line that will lead us to imagine that we may know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power. Again and again have I been warned in regard to time setting. There will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time. We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ.

“I was searching through my writings, before coming to this meeting, to see what I should take with me to Australia, and I found an envelope on which was written, “Testimony given in regard to time setting, June 21, 1851. Preserve carefully.” I opened it, and this is what I found. It reads:

“A copy of a vision the Lord gave Sister White, June 21, 1851, at Camden, N.Y. The Lord showed me that the message must go, and that it must not be hung on time; for time will never be a test again. I saw that some were getting a false excitement, arising from preaching time, that the third angel’s message can stand on its own foundation, and that it needs not time to strengthen it, and that it will go with mighty power, and do its work, and will be cut short in righteousness.

“I saw some were making everything bend to this next fall; that is, making their calculations, and disposing of their property in reference to that time. I saw that this was wrong for this reason: instead of going to God daily, and earnestly desiring to know their present duty, they looked ahead, and made their calculations as though they knew that the work would end this fall, without inquiring their duty of God daily.

E. G. White.

“Copied at Milton, June 29, 1851, A. A. G.”

“This was the document I came upon last Monday in searching over my writings, and here is another which was written in regard to a man who was setting time in 1884, and sending broadcast his arguments to prove his theories. The report of what he was doing was brought to me at the Jackson [Michigan] camp meeting, and I told the people they need not take heed to this man’s theory; for the event he predicted would not take place. The times and the seasons God has put in His own power. And

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. We are not to be engrossed with speculations in regard to the times and the seasons which God has not revealed. Jesus has told His disciples to “watch,” but not for a definite time. His followers are to be in the position of those who are listening for the orders of their Captain; they are to watch, wait, pray, and work, as they approach the time for the coming of the Lord; but no one will be able to predict just when that time will come; for “of that day and hour knoweth no man.” 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.”

1SM 191.1-191.2 “God has not revealed to us the time when this message [The Third Angel’s Message] will close, or when probation will have an end. Those things that are revealed we shall accept for ourselves and for our children; but let us not seek to know that which has been kept secret in the councils of the Almighty. It is our duty to watch and work and wait, to labor every moment for the souls of men that are ready to perish. We are to keep walking continually in the footsteps of Jesus, working in His lines, dispensing His gifts as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Satan will be ready to give to anyone who is not learning every day of Jesus, a special message of his own creating, in order to make of no effect the wonderful truth for this time.

“Letters have come to me asking me if I have any special light as to the time when probation will close; and I answer that I have only this message to bear, that it is now time to work while the day lasts, for the night cometh in which no man can work. Now, just now, it is time for us to be watching, working, and waiting. The Word of the Lord reveals the fact that the end of all things is at hand, and its testimony is most decided that it is necessary for every soul to have the truth planted in the heart so that it will control the life and sanctify the character. The Spirit of the Lord is working to take the truth of the inspired Word and stamp it upon the soul so that professed followers of Christ will have a holy, sacred joy that they will be able to impart to others. The opportune time for us to work is now, just now, while the day lasts. But there is no command for anyone to search the Scripture in order to ascertain, if possible, when probation will close. God has no such message for any mortal lips. He would have no mortal tongue declare that which He has hidden in His secret councils.”

1T 73.1 “The First-day Adventists have set time after time, and notwithstanding the repeated failures, they have gathered courage to set new times. God has not led them in this. Many of them have rejected the true prophetic time, and ignored the fulfillment of prophecy, because the time passed in 1844, and did not bring the expected event. They rejected the truth, and the enemy has had power to bring strong delusions upon them that they should believe a lie. The great test on time was in 1843 and 1844; and all who have set time since then have been deceiving themselves and deceiving others.”

FE 335.1 “We [Seventh-Day Adventists] 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. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever.” Notwithstanding the fact that there are false prophets, there are also those who are preaching the truth as pointed out in the Scriptures. With deep earnestness, with honest faith, prompted by the Holy Spirit, they are stirring minds and hearts by showing them that we are living near the second coming of Christ, but the day and hour of His appearing are beyond the ken of man; for “of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”

GC 456.1-457.1 “The majority of Adventists rejected the truths concerning the sanctuary and the law of God, and many also renounced their faith in the advent movement and adopted unsound and conflicting views of the prophecies which applied to that work. Some were led into the error of repeatedly fixing upon a definite time for the coming of Christ. The light which was now shining on the subject of the sanctuary should have shown them that no prophetic period extends to the second advent; that the exact time of this advent is not foretold. But, turning from the light, they continued to set time after time for the Lord to come, and as often they were disappointed.

“When the Thessalonian church received erroneous views concerning the coming of Christ, the apostle Paul counseled them to test their hopes and anticipations carefully by the word of God. He cited them to prophecies revealing the events to take place before Christ should come, and showed that they had no ground to expect Him in their day. “Let no man deceive you by any means” (2 Thessalonians 2:3), are his words of warning. Should they indulge expectations that were not sanctioned by the Scriptures, they would be led to a mistaken course of action; disappointment would expose them to the derision of unbelievers, and they would be in danger of yielding to discouragement and would be tempted to doubt the truths essential for their salvation. The apostle’s admonition to the Thessalonians contains an important lesson for those who live in the last days. Many Adventists have felt that unless they could fix their faith upon a definite time for the Lord’s coming, they could not be zealous and diligent in the work of preparation. But as their hopes are again and again excited, only to be destroyed, their faith receives such a shock that it becomes well-nigh impossible for them to be impressed by the great truths of prophecy.

“The preaching of a definite time for the judgment, in the giving of the first message, was ordered by God. The computation of the prophetic periods on which that message was based, placing the close of the 2300 days in the autumn of 1844, stands without impeachment. The repeated efforts to find new dates for the beginning and close of the prophetic periods, and the unsound reasoning necessary to sustain these positions, not only lead minds away from the present truth, but throw contempt upon all efforts to explain the prophecies. The more frequently a definite time is set for the second advent, and the more widely it is taught, the better it suits the purposes of Satan. After the time has passed, he excites ridicule and contempt of its advocates, and thus casts reproach upon the great advent movement of 1843 and 1844. Those who persist in this error will at last fix upon a date too far in the future for the coming of Christ. Thus they will be led to rest in a false security, and many will not be undeceived until it is too late.”

2SM 84.3 “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.”