

March 22, 1892

“It Is Not for You to Know the Times and the Seasons”

[Sermon at Lansing, Mich., September 5, 1891.]

EGW

“He showed 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.**”

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 Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.”

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.”** 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 heart-felt 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 intrusted 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, Mich., 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 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.

It is the duty of the people of God to have their lamps trimmed and burning, to be as men that wait for the Bridegroom, when he shall return from the wedding. You have not a moment to lose in neglect of the great salvation that has been provided for you. **The time of the probation of souls is coming to an end.** From day to day the **destiny of men is being sealed,** and even from this congregation we know not how soon many shall close their eyes in death and be habited for the tomb. We should now consider that our life is swiftly passing away, that we are not safe one moment unless our life is hid with Christ in God. **Our duty is not to be looking forward to some special time for some special work to be done for us, but to go forward in our work of warning the world; for we are to be witnesses of Christ to the uttermost parts of the world.** All around us are the young, the impenitent, the unconverted, and what are we doing for them? Parents, in the ardor of your first love, are you seeking for the conversion of your children, **or are you engrossed with the things of this life to such an extent that you are not making earnest efforts to be laborers together with God?** Do you have an appreciation of the work and mission of the Holy Spirit? Do you realize that the Holy Spirit is the agency whereby we are to reach the souls of those around us? When this meeting shall close, will you go from here and forget the earnest appeals that have been made to you? will the messages of warning be left unheeded, and the truth you have heard leak out of your heart as water leaks out of a broken vessel?

The apostle says, **“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.** For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”

The third angel's message is swelling into a loud cry, and you must not feel at liberty to neglect the present duty, and still entertain the idea **that at some future time** you will be the recipients of great blessing, when without any effort on your part a wonderful revival will take place. **Today** you are to give yourselves to God, that he may make of you vessels unto honor, and meet for his service. **Today** you are to give yourself to God, that you may be emptied of self, emptied of envy, jealousy, evil-surmising, strife, everything that shall be dishonoring to God. **Today** you are to have your vessel purified that it may be ready for the heavenly dew, ready for the showers of the latter rain; for the latter rain will come, and the blessing of God will fill every soul that is **purified from every defilement.** It is our work today to yield our souls to Christ, that we may be fitted for the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—fitted for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

(To be continued.)