

What is a True Adventist?

Presented by Andreas Dura, October 30, 2004

Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 188

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.

Here Ellen White speaks of a false excitement that arises from the preaching of time. She wrote this in the year 1851. In the autumn of that year, one man, an Adventist, preached that Christ would come that fall. He set a new time and Sister White warned of the excitement that arose as a result of this. She said that this was not necessary, because the message can stand on its own foundation. That message does not need a prophecy of time to strengthen it. In other words, it does not need this extra excitement. It can go in its own power and do its work and the work will be cut short in righteousness.

Now let's look at a very interesting experience that the disciples had. The book of *Acts* was written by Luke, (the same one who wrote the gospel) to his friend Theophilous. In those days, it was customary to send a letter, or a manuscript that you had written for public use, to a friend, to be looked through and critiqued. Luke entrusted this work to Theophilous. He sent him the gospel of Luke, and he also sent him the book of *Acts*, which we now have in the Bible.

In chapter 1, he describes the experience of the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus. This was shortly before He ascended to heaven.

In chapter 2, he describes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; of the Early Rain, or Pentecost, as we call it.

Chapter 1 deals with the events prior to this; it deals with the time when Christ was still with the disciples for a few moments before he ascended. And what happened? Let's read:

Acts 1

⁴ And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, which, He said, you have heard from Me;

⁵ For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

What a question! Isn't this disappointing? Hadn't He taught them long enough that He would not come to establish a kingdom of Israel, that this was not His work? Well, they definitely connected His second coming, or the falling of the Early Rain, (which He described here as the coming of the Holy Ghost) with the restoration of Israel as a kingdom; a powerful kingdom over the Romans and so forth. In other words, their concept was still that of a carnal kingdom, and that was disappointing.

How did Jesus answer this question? How did He help them? He was about to ascend to heaven, and He knew that with the few words He could still give them, He could not change that concept; He hadn't been successful in doing this for three and a half years. The events of the terrible disappointment could not change that wrong concept. So what could He say?

Times and Seasons

Acts 1

⁷ And He said to them, It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Let's analyze this message now, looking at the disciples af-

ter the resurrection of Christ. In the first six verses they still connected a carnal kingdom with the promises of Christ. Christ promised the Holy Spirit, and they connected a carnal kingdom with that.

So Jesus told them that it was not for them to know times and seasons which the Father had put in His own authority. He said,

“Don’t worry about this now. It’s not for you to know the times and seasons.”

But He said in verse eight,

“You will understand more when the Holy Spirit is given to you.”

He told them to wait for the Holy Spirit. It was not for them to know now anything about times and seasons then, but to wait for the Holy Spirit. In other words, before they received the Holy Spirit they did not even understand the spiritual nature of God’s kingdom, at least not to its full extent.

Their work meanwhile, as He said, was to be witnesses for Christ.

“You shall preach the gospel in Jerusalem and into the whole world.”

This was what they should concentrate upon. They should not concentrate upon the establishment of a carnal kingdom, or of an earthly kingdom of Jerusalem restored as a nation. They should concentrate now on the Holy Spirit. He would give them more understanding, and they should concentrate on being witnesses for Christ. That was their work.

Christ did not directly try to correct their wrong concept. Instead, He gave them a more general explanation on which they should fix their mind. Now let’s take a closer look at the verse:

Acts 1

⁷ It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

What does this mean, *times and seasons*? In Greek, “times” is *chronos*. This word signifies that it is prophetic time in which this thing will happen. In other words it’s a definite and specific point of time like 1844 or like 1798. So Jesus was telling them that it was not for them to know this prophetic time. They were to wait for the Holy Spirit and do their job.

“Seasons” comes from the Greek word *kairos*. It also means time, but in this context it means the precise manner in which something will happen. So, it was not for them to know the exact point of prophetic time, nor the precise manner in which it would happen.

So, what understanding did the disciples get at Pentecost? They were waiting, as Jesus said,

“Wait for the time of Pentecost, and then you shall understand, then you shall know what is happening.”

But first of all they saw the kingdom of God in a new light. They really saw “herein is love” (see *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 38). And they saw something of the spiritual nature of the kingdom which they did not see before. They saw that it was a spiritual kingdom. And this was helping them to look away from the earthly kingdom of the Jews to a more general kingdom of Christ, which would open the way for the Gentiles. This would come soon after.

Cornelius was the first one. God had to work a little bit more, but because of the Holy Spirit, it was soon clear. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon Cornelius as much as it was poured out on the Jews. They saw that the message was for the whole world and not only for Israel after the flesh. That is what the Early Rain did for them. It put their mind away from this wrong concept and it put it on a spiritual kingdom and on Israel as a spiritual nation, and not as a carnal nation any more.

Still, they did not know when the Latter Rain would come. They had received the Early Rain but they did not know when the Latter Rain would come. They did not know when proba-

tionary time would end and they did not know when Christ would come again. They expected Him very soon; they expected these events to come very soon. But they did not know precisely when, and it was not for them to know times and seasons. Paul warned them. He said,

“Be careful, because Christ will not come unless the man of sin is revealed first.”

So what should we understand today? What is the message for God’s people today? What message has He given us?

Knowledge Given When Needed

First of all, we understand the 1260 years, which they did not understand, and it was not for them to understand times and seasons yet. This would come in its order. Today we understand very clearly that shortly before the 1260 years ended, God gave the light on this prophecy to many Bible students all over the world. And they understood that in 1798 the prophetic Beast (of *Revelation* 13:1-10), or the Little Horn (of *Daniel* 7:8-27), would come to a temporary end. That is what many understood at that time, but not before. But in their day, the disciples did not understand this.

Today we understand what the character of the man of sin is. Paul had described him in *2 Thessalonians* 2:1-12. He said that the man of sin would come, he would sit on the throne of God and would profess that he is God and so forth.

John talked of the antichrist, but today we understand the character of the man of sin much better because we have seen these things happen in history. So we have a better understanding what the future will bring, don’t we?

Furthermore, we understand the character of antichrist as foretold, and we understand that judgment commenced after the 2300 year prophecy of *Daniel* 8:14, which the disciples also did not know at their time. And we wait for the Latter Rain, but we do not understand when and exactly how it will start. We do not understand the exact point in time or the precise

manner in which it will start.

What then is the message of *Acts* 1:7-8 for us? Let's read this again:

Acts 1

⁷ And He said to them, It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

The message is that we are not to know times and seasons of future events. We do not know the precise time or the precise manner in which these things will happen. This is in harmony with the following verse:

Revelation 10

⁵ And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

⁶ And swore by him that lives 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:

The word *time* used here is the same word as before: *chronos*. Ellen White made some comments on this:

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol 7, p. 971

The special light given to John which was expressed in the seven thunders was a delineation of events which would transpire under the first and second angels' messages. It was not best for the people to know these things, for their faith must necessarily be tested. In the order of God most wonderful and advanced truths would be proclaimed. The first and second angels' messages were to be proclaimed, but no further light was to be revealed before these messages had done their specific work. This is represented by the angel standing with one foot on the sea, proclaiming with a most solemn oath that time should be no longer.

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.

That is a clear message. It means there is no prophetic time after this any more. And this is the word *chronos*. In this context, *chronos* means prophetic time.

Readiness to Receive Knowledge

The next point is the reason why we are not told. It is because we are not ready to receive that knowledge. Jesus said to His disciples, "I have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them." We obviously cannot bear to know the exact time, and we cannot bear to know the exact circumstances. We will know when the time comes. If we knew now it wouldn't be good for us. We have to accept that.

Sometimes we are like impatient students. We would like to know more than we do, but our teacher says to wait. Wait; you will know when the time comes. We know enough to carry out the Lord's commission. We know enough so that we can do the work we have to do today.

A real problem I see is that many of us, especially the young people, always think of the future and overlook the duty that lies nearest. We overlook the present work that God has given to us, by constantly worrying what we will do tomorrow, and that's a real problem that we have to overcome. We know enough to carry out the Lord's commission today.

The next point is that God will guide us by the signs that He has foretold and by the Holy Spirit when the time comes.

Matthew 24

³² Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.

³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!

What things? It's *Matthew 24*, and what did Jesus say in *Matthew 24*? He told many things, many signs. He told about the darkening of the sun, and about the falling of the stars, and He talks of other signs.

Mind you, the disciples who were waiting for a certain sign to flee from Jerusalem knew exactly when the sign came. They did not know exactly what the sign looked like before it actually happened, but when they saw the Roman standards on the Holy precincts of the temple they knew that it was the sign that Jesus talked about. The abomination that makes desolate on holy ground of which Daniel had spoken—this is what Jesus told about. This was the sign; now they knew what to do next: go and flee. The opportunity was there when the Romans went away, and they immediately obeyed Christ. They understood the sign. And so, Jesus said,

“Keep your eyes opened—the signs will guide you. I have given you definite signs, and if you watch them, you will know when the time comes. And, not only shall you know by the signs, you shall also know by the Holy Spirit.”

Let's read this:

John 16

¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

“He shall show you things to come.” So the Holy Spirit will guide. Jesus has given us exactly the same message that He gave to the disciples before He ascended to heaven.

He says, “It is not for you to know now the exact point of time” when these things will happen, ie. the latter rain, the close of probation, the coming of Christ. But, watch for the signs and they will tell you in due season. Listen for the Holy Spirit, for He will guide you in all truth, and He will show you the things that will come. So, shortly before these things take place, the Lord will reveal it to His saints—this is what we can

know for sure from these texts.

The Danger of Undue Excitement

Ellen White comments on the text from *Acts* 1:3-7. And she says,

Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 185

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... (*Acts* 1:7, 8).

Then she talks about improving present opportunities.

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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.

You see, there are people who constantly hope for some future season of excitement. They may do this even in personal areas. They think,

“Oh! I hope one day I will reach this.”

And while they dream of these things, they overlook the very things that are to be done now. They do not improve present opportunities, doing that which must be done in order. They constantly want to know from God what will come.

“What will happen next, and when will this happen? How will this happen? Tell me, tell me, tell me!”

And God is quiet. He says nothing. He simply says,

“Do your duty now. Improve the present opportunities. Do these things, and don’t wait for a future excitement.”

Religious excitement is a dangerous thing. So there is a danger of undue religious excitement, and we must improve the present opportunities.

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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.

We are in continual danger of getting above the simplicity of the gospel, into a state of spiritual ecstasy. This is the danger of trying to set times. Then Ellen White talks about these things, and she says,

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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.

“We are not to be engrossed with speculations in regard to the times and the seasons which God has not revealed.”

Instead we shall watch and pray, and have our lamps trimmed and burning:

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It is the duty of the people of God to have their lamps trimmed and burning.

The message is not strengthened by excitement. We must have our lamps trimmed and burning. And again, the time of the end is not revealed:

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God has not revealed to us the time when this 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...

A True Adventist

What then is a true Adventist? It is a person who watches and prays; someone who improves his present opportunities. It is someone who does his duty today and at the same time is guided by the Holy Spirit, because He will guide us into all truth, and He will tell us of all the things to come in due time—when He sees fit. He will also give us signs, or interpret for us the signs that are happening all around us.

A Message on Definite Time

The question that automatically comes up now is,

“If time setting creates an undue excitement has it always been wrong?”

That's a question I ask myself, and probably you ask yourself too. The obvious answer is no. The first example I want to point out is Jonah, who definitely set a time:

Jonah 3

1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying,

2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.

3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent.

4 And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk.

Then he cried out and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!

That is a prophecy of time, isn't it? It's not a very long time. In this circumstance, the prophetic rule of "a day for a year" did not apply—Jonah meant 40 literal days. The prophecy, however, was not fulfilled. Why not? Not because of any shortcoming of the prophecy, but simply because the people repented of their sins, and therefore the conditions were changed. All the prophecies and promises are dependent on conditions.

Jonah preached a definite time, so it can't be wrong in itself. The message of October 22, 1844, was given a little bit more than forty days before it actually happened. They preached in August, and as far as I understand it, that would be about 50 days before—but not much more. They definitely spoke of the coming of Christ on the 22nd of October. This message was from God:

Christian Experience and Teachings, p. 54

We were firm in the belief that *the preaching of definite time was of God*. It was this that led men to search the Bible diligently, discovering truths they had not before perceived. Jonah was sent of God to proclaim in the streets of Nineveh that within forty days the city would be overthrown; but God accepted the humiliation of the Ninevites, and extended their period of probation. Yet the message that Jonah

brought was sent of God, and Nineveh was tested according to His will. The world looked upon our hope as a delusion, and our disappointment as its consequent failure; but though we were mistaken in the event that was to occur at that period, there was no failure in reality of the vision that seemed to tarry. (emphasis added)

Clearly, the message was from God, and it was God's purpose to give a message of definite time. It's only after 1844 that we are not to expect a message on time any more. The disappointment was designed by God for the purification of God's people. I recommend that you read the chapter "Light Through Darkness", in *The Great Controversy*. This chapter explains how God had a very specific purpose in leading them into this disappointment.

Some might raise the question,

"But didn't God try to prevent the disappointment by sending Foss and Foy?"

Well, perhaps, but God also foresaw that Foss and Foy would not do the job. And He used the very disappointment of the people of God to accomplish a work of purification. Now, the same is true of the disappointment of the disciples. Christ tried to prevent it in a way, by foretelling them exactly what would happen: that He would be crucified, and be resurrected, and so forth. He told them everything, and yet, when it happened, they didn't understand it and were terribly disappointed.

Disappointments work Purification

However, God had a design in this, and it is important to understand that. This design was purification; firstly, purification of the heart of the true believer, and secondly, purification of the movement. After the disappointment, it was evident who was a true believer and who was not. That means that we have to go through disappointments in these latter days also.

The message that God has given us has strength; it does

not need the excitement of time.

We always prepare when we know an exam is coming. But if we prepare only when we know exactly what day the examination will come, we are not good students. A good student will pay attention all the time, and he will be ready when an examination comes. The teacher doesn't need to say,

"I will make an examination next week."

He will come in one morning and say,

"We will have a test today!"

And no one will say,

"Ohhh! What?"

Everyone will say,

"Oh yes! Good! We are prepared!"

They have continually prepared themselves. That's the difference.

So the message has strength, and we must apply it today. It doesn't need the excitement of time.

We will receive more knowledge as the fulfillment is taking place. Or, to be more clear, shortly before the events actually happen, we will know by the signs that God gives and by the Holy Spirit, who tells us. And we will know the character of the kingdom, if we are spiritually minded. We understand some of it already, and have tasted of the power. So, should we be disappointed when the work doesn't go as we expect?

In the last events, we will experience severe disappointments. The intensity of the time of trouble cannot be foretold by any message, regardless of what message God gives us. It would only be words. To understand the time of trouble, it must be experienced. No one can really imagine what it will be like.

Understanding all this, let us remember that God fulfills His design even through these disappointments. This design is that we shall be purified, and shouldn't we gladly accept any-

thing that purifies us and makes us ready for the heavenly kingdom? In other words, let's not look upon these tests that will come upon us as though something strange comes. It is God's purpose and intent to do it in order to help His people. For this reason, we must be thankful and accept it.

So we will experience disappointment, but it is not because we are unaware of what is coming upon us, or because, like the disciples, we do not recognize the spiritual kingdom. Even the Adventists in 1844 did not have a full understanding of this spiritual kingdom, but we have a better understanding today. Yet, there will be disappointment.

However, the test will be too great if we still have a carnal understanding of the kingdom. The test will definitely be too great if we do not have a better understanding than the disciples had. If we are not prepared for the test, we will murmur and complain when the test comes, but if we are doing our present duties each day, we will be ready when the test comes. This is my wish and desire for all of us.