

Answers to Dale Ratzlaff's Fourteen Questions  
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My answers to these questions are far from exhaustive. Some of the issues will be dealt with in more detail elsewhere on this website. Pastor Ratzlaff's questions impress me more as statements or claims about Ellen White and Seventh-day Adventist teaching rather than questions. Nevertheless, answering these questions will provide an opportunity to clarify several misunderstood areas in Ellen White's writings.

Anyone familiar with Pastor Ratzlaff's books, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* (hereafter CDSA) and *Sabbath in Crisis*,<sup>1</sup> will recognize them as the background to these questions. Consequently, it is important to set forth the important role of presuppositions in this discussion. This is the basis of our disagreement. Two of his most obvious presuppositions are: 1) the SDA doctrine of the 1844 judgment is not a biblical doctrine; and 2) the SDA doctrine of the 1844 judgment originates with Ellen White (as reflected in the "as Ellen White taught" clauses) and without her it cannot stand. My two major presuppositions are directly opposite to his: 1) the SDA doctrine of the 1844 judgment is a biblical doctrine; and 2) while Ellen White provides important insights into the 1844 judgment, it originates from Scripture, and Ellen White's writings are not necessary for proving this doctrine. These major presuppositions obviously affect how we answer these questions.<sup>2</sup>

- 1. Do you believe, as Ellen White taught, that an angel from God guided William Miller in his study of the prophecies?**
- 2. Do you believe, as Ellen White taught, that William Miller discovered a "perfect chain of truth"?**

These two questions are best answered together because they deal with the same issue. For Pastor Ratzlaff, this issue is the problematic "[15 proofs](#)"<sup>3</sup> that William Miller used as evidence that Christ would come in 1843. In CDSA, Pastor Ratzlaff goes to great lengths to show the erroneous nature of Miller's "15 proofs" in light of Ellen White's strong endorsement of him (angels guided him and he found a perfect chain of truth). Thus, the apparent dilemma for

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<sup>1</sup> *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* (Glendale, AZ: Life Assurance Ministries, 1996); hereafter CDSA; *Sabbath in Christ* (Glendale, AZ: Life Assurance Ministries, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> I have chosen to answer the original set of questions in the [web version of Ratzlaff's "Open Letter"](#), rather than the edited version in [Proclamation! \(November-December 2006\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> This link will take you to one of the anti-Ellen White websites where you can read Miller's 15 proofs. For a helpful and objective analysis of Miller's 15 proofs, see Kai Arasola, *The End of Historicism: Millerite Hermeneutic of Time Prophecies in the Old Testament* (Sigtuna, Sweden: Datem Publishing, 1990).

SDAs: “If Miller was right, so was Ellen G. White. If Miller was wrong, so was EGW.”<sup>4</sup> Hence, the background for these two questions.

Any Adventist affirming that William Miller was guided by angels in his study will obviously be presented with the problematic 15 proofs and a question such as: Who in their right theological mind would endorse these proofs as a “perfect chain of truth”? A careful study of Ellen White’s statements regarding William Miller, however, reveals she had something else in mind when she spoke of angelic guidance and a “perfect chain of truth.”<sup>5</sup>

Her depiction of William Miller’s experience is found in *Spiritual Gifts, Volume 1*, pages 128-132 (also in *Early Writings*, 229-232), and later expanded in the 1884, 1888, and 1911 editions of *The Great Controversy*. In each instance she spoke of angels guiding William Miller in his study and the “chain of truth” he found in the Bible. Thus, while her depiction of Miller grew and expanded over the years, she never moved away from the idea that he received special help from heaven.

In Mrs. White’s discussion of William Miller’s early experience, her focus was on his two-year intensive study of the Bible from 1816 to 1818, described by Miller himself in a written account. This account was first published in his *Apology and Defense* (1845), and later republished in the nineteenth-century biography of Miller by Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller* (1853).<sup>6</sup> **A careful reading of Mrs. White’s 1858 depiction of this period in Miller’s life (1SG, 128-132) reveals a dependance on Miller’s personal narrative published in Bliss’s *Memoirs*. By the 1911 edition of *The Great Controversy*, Mrs. White is citing this narrative.**<sup>7</sup>

Thus, to understand what she meant by “perfect chain of truth,” **we must turn to Miller’s narrative as edited in Bliss.**<sup>8</sup> What did Miller discover in his study of Scripture during 1816-1818? Significantly, one will find only a few of the 15 proofs. The following is a list I have extracted from Miller’s narrative of his conclusions:

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<sup>4</sup> CDSDA, 44; Clifford Goldstein, editor of the *Seventh-day Adventist Adult Bible Study Guide*, has responded effectively to this argument in *Graffiti In the Holy of Holies: An Impassioned Response to Recent Attacks on the Sanctuary and Ellen White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2003), 152-158.

<sup>5</sup> I have completed a more detailed discussion of Ellen White and Miller’s 15 proofs ([click here to read it](#)).

<sup>6</sup> Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller, Generally Known as a Lecturer on the Prophecies, and the Second Coming of Christ* (Boston: J.V. Himes, 1853). This classic 1853 edition is republished with a critical introduction by Merlin D. Burt (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2005); Appendix B contains Miller’s *Apology and Defense* as originally published in 1845.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen White’s use of Bliss’s *Memoirs* over the years is a classic example of literary borrowing, not plagiarism. See [Plagiarism](#).

<sup>8</sup> Bliss and his colleagues, Joshua Himes and Apollos Hale, edited Miller’s original account in *Apologies for Memoirs*. That James and Ellen White highly regarded this biography is shown in the volume [Sketches of The Christian Life and Public Labors of William Miller, Gathered from His Memoir by the Late Sylvester Bliss, and from Other Sources](#), published by Elder James White (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1875).

- The Bible is a revelation from God.
- Jesus Christ is the redeemer of mankind and a personal Savior and Friend to the believer.
- Jesus Christ is coming back to the earth.
- His coming is personal and pre-millennial.
- His coming must be a continuously-expected event.
- He is coming in the clouds of heaven, in all the glory of His Father.
- At the Second Coming, the righteous dead will be raised and all the righteous living will be translated, and they will all be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air and reign with Him forever in the regenerated earth.
- Also, at the Second Coming the wicked will be destroyed and reserved in prison until their resurrection and damnation.<sup>9</sup>
- The earth made new will be the home of the saints.
- The only millennium taught in Scripture is the thousand years of Revelation 20:
  - It begins with the first resurrection.
  - It ends with the second resurrection.
  - It comes after the Second Coming, not before it.
  - The new earth comes after the thousand years.
- The little horn of Daniel 7 is the papacy, which wars against the saints until the end of time, and will be destroyed at the Second Coming.
- There will be no conversion of the world before the Advent.
- The vision of Daniel 2 reveals four universal monarchies—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome—which extend to the end of time when the stone smites the image at the feet and destroys all the kingdoms of this world.
- In Bible prophecy a year equals a day.
- The 2300 days are 2300 prophetic years.
- The 70 weeks to the Messiah are 490 prophetic years.
- The 2300 days commence with the 70 weeks in 457 B.C. and ends in the mid-1840s.
- The 1260 years are prophetic years of the papal supremacy (538A.D. to 1798A.D.)<sup>10</sup>

Based on Ellen White's use of Miller's narrative in Bliss's *Memoirs*, the above list is most likely what she had in mind when she said of Miller:

Link after link of the chain of truth rewarded his efforts as step by step he traced down the great lines of prophecy. Angels of heaven were guiding his mind and opening the

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<sup>9</sup> In his narrative, Miller said that the "spirits" of the wicked will be "reserved in prison," showing his belief in immortality of the soul, a doctrine Ellen White rejected. This shows her selective endorsement of Miller's conclusions. In *Sketches of the Life and Public Labors of William Miller*, James White put a note on this statement: "It will be seen that Wm. Miller held the doctrine of consciousness in death, which most of the Adventists have renounced."

<sup>10</sup> Summarized from Bliss, 67-77; Miller, *Apology*, 6-12.

Scriptures to his understanding (GC 321).<sup>11</sup>

Thus, Ellen White's focus was on what she believed William Miller got right, not what he got wrong. It must be remembered that as she wrote about Miller, she was looking back on the Millerite movement. From this vantage point she was aware that Miller's 15 proofs presented in 1843 were mistaken. As Clifford Goldstein observed in his response to CDSDA, guidance from God and His angels does not mean theological infallibility.<sup>12</sup> **In spite of the fact that Miller got some things wrong, God led him to some powerful theological truths, as the above list shows.**

**3. Do you believe, as Ellen White stated, that Miller's 1843 chart which had his 15 lines of prophecy pointing to 1843, was directed by God's hand, and no part of it should be altered because the figures were just as God wanted them?**

First of all, the "15 lines" or "proofs" of "prophecy pointing to 1843" are not **all** on the "1843 Chart," as Pastor Ratzlaff himself acknowledged in CDSDA.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, the chart itself was not composed by William Miller but by Charles Fitch and Apollos Hale, two key Millerite expositors.

My answer continues with the next question:

**4. Do you believe, as Ellen White was shown in vision, that God held His hand over the mistake in Miller's chart and the errors in his time reckoning?**

The statement Pastor Ratzlaff uses for these two questions comes from *Early Writings*, page 74:

I have seen that the 1843 chart was directed by the hand of the Lord, and that it should not be altered; that the figures were as He wanted them; that His hand was over and hid a mistake in some of the figures, so that none could see it, until His hand was removed.

This statement fits precisely with the history of the Millerite movement in its transition from 1843 to 1844. They did, in fact, discover their error (the mistake in some of the figures) and corrected their error (His hand was removed). If one believes the pre-Advent Judgment is biblical and began on October 22, 1844, then it is not hard to see how the 1843 chart, in spite of its flaws,

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<sup>11</sup> This note updated (August 2008): After the 1858 statement (1SG 128-129; EW 229), Ellen White dropped the "perfect" of "perfect chain of truth" in the later versions of *The Great Controversy* (1884, 1888, 1911), indicating, in my view, her later emphasis on the idea of Miller's finding links in the "chain of truth." In the original wording of 1SG 128-129, the literary context indicates that Miller saw the entire Bible as "a perfect chain of truth." [See my expanded discussion on Miller and Ellen White where I analyze the phrase, "perfect chain of truth" in its grammatical context.](#)

<sup>12</sup> Goldstein, 154.

<sup>13</sup> CDSDA, 93, note 18.

prepared the way for the 1844 movement.

**Question 4 continued: Right here do you see the cognitive dissonance? In one statement Ellen White says Miller's chart is exactly as God wanted it and it should never be changed, then in the next she says it contained error and blames God for the deception.**

Clifford Goldstein provides a thoughtful response to this issue:

To begin, we're dealing with a metaphor here (God's hand covering mistakes in Miller's chart), and metaphors are just that, metaphors, and thus not to be taken literally. I see two possible approaches here:

1. God supernaturally hid the truth from Miller and his followers, much as Jesus did with the men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-16).
2. God didn't reveal more truth to Miller at that time, despite some errors in his thinking, just as He didn't reveal more truth to the disciples who asked just before Jesus returned to heaven, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6.)

I opt for the second approach—that the Lord simply took Miller and his followers as far as they were able to go at that time, a principle seen in various places in the Bible as well (1Corinthians 3:2; John 16:12). One of the clearest examples is with the woman at the well in John 4. Why did Jesus tell her, a non-Jew, that He was the Messiah, when with the Jews He wasn't so candid? It's because the Lord knew just how far people could be led, how far their minds could be stretched with truths that they didn't fully understand.

And this, I believe, explains what's happening here. The Lord took Miller and others as far as they were able to go *at that time*. That's why Ellen White could write that the figures were just as God wanted them, *at that time*, and that nothing was to be altered, *at that time*. (Remember, she was writing this after it was clear that the 1843 figure was wrong.) Then, when the time was right, the Lord removed His hand, that is, He gave His people more light, and they could see their mistakes.<sup>14</sup>

Goldstein goes on to say:

It's also important to know that Ellen White wrote what she did about the 1843 date in the context of those who were setting other, later, dates. Trying to get them away from date setting, she affirmed the basic calculations of Miller, which

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<sup>14</sup> Goldstein, 156-157.

despite some errors, were essentially right.<sup>15</sup>

This comment regarding the context of Ellen White's statement is especially important. In the context of the above statement (*EW 74*) she wrote: "Time has not been a test since 1844, and it will never again be a test (*EW 75*)." **Thus, for Ellen White, an important lesson from the 1843 chart is that time calculations such as this will never be a part of His leading again.**

**5. Do you believe, as Ellen White taught, that the pastors of Christian churches who rejected Miller's date-setting message "had the blood of souls on them" and Jesus "turned his face from" those churches? These pastors, as Ellen White admitted, had no problem with the preaching of the Second Coming of Christ but rejected Miller's date setting. They rejected Miller's date setting in harmony with the teachings of Jesus. Who, then, is right, Jesus who said no man knows the day nor the hour, or Ellen White who said that Jesus turned his face away from those who refused to do date setting?**

In what sense was the "blood of souls" on the pastors of the Christian churches who rejected Miller's message? Was it because they faithfully followed Jesus' words, "no man knows the day or hour" (Matt. 24:36, 42)? The wording of this question certainly pits Ellen White and William Miller against Jesus' words. Let us briefly examine the context of the passage under consideration:

*The preaching of definite time* called forth great opposition from all classes, from the minister in the pulpit down to the most reckless, heaven-daring sinner. "No man knoweth the day nor the hour," was heard from the hypocritical minister and the bold scoffer. Neither would be instructed and corrected by those who were pointing to the year when they believed the prophetic periods would run out, and to the signs which showed Christ near, even at the doors. *Many shepherds of the flock, who professed to love Jesus, said that they had no opposition to the preaching of Christ's coming, but they objected to the definite time. . . .*

Ministers who would not accept this *saving message* themselves hindered those who would have received it. *The blood of souls is upon them.* Preachers and people joined to oppose this *message from heaven* and to persecute William Miller and those who united with him in the work (*Early Writings*, 233-234; italics mine).

This is the passage from which Pastor Ratzlaff derives his question. Please note the following points:

1. The "preaching of a definite time" was not a specific date in this context. William Miller himself never set a particular day for Christ to come. In this passage Ellen White is referring to the 1843 movement, in which William Miller published his belief that Christ would come sometime between March 21, 1843, and March 21 1844 (referred to in Adventist history as the "spring disappointment"). So the historical setting of this

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<sup>15</sup> Idem. 157.

statement has nothing to do with a specific day. It was not until August of 1844 that Samuel Snow presented a specific date and launched the “seventh-month movement.”<sup>16</sup>

2. It is true that the pastors of the churches Ellen White refers to opposed the preaching of a definite time, not the preaching of Christ’s Second Coming. But it must be noted that most of these pastors were postmillennialists who believed Christ was coming after the millennium. This was the “conventional wisdom of the day.” Eminent divines such as Timothy Dwight, Lyman Beecher, and Charles G. Finny taught this view of the millennium. They were in harmony with Miller on the nearness of the millennium, but differed with him on its meaning and the events needed to bring it about. In *Millennial Fever And the End of the World*, Adventist historian George Knight explains:

For them [postmillennialists] the soon-coming millennium would be a thousand years of earthly peace and plenty brought about through social reform, national progress, and personal perfection. It was that vision that fueled the multiplicity of social and personal reforms characterizing much of the nineteenth century. One of the century’s most powerful ideas was that the millennial kingdom could be brought about by human effort.<sup>17</sup>

As such, William Miller’s premillennialism militated against the popular postmillennialism of the day.<sup>18</sup> Knight explains:

It was that positive millennial vision and hope that Millerism challenged. It was a challenge to the core belief of mainline America that the golden age could be brought about through human effort. Thus what Ruth Alden Doan has called the “Miller Heresy” was not in Adventism’s doctrines but in its “radical supernaturalism.”

At Millerism’s very foundation was a pessimism that human society would not achieve its grandiose schemes. Instead, the solution to the human problem would come through God’s breaking into history at the second advent. That alternative solution set forth in God’s Word would have at least two effects: (1) It would make the Adventist solution immensely popular with those sectors of the population that were also becoming disillusioned with human programs in the late 1830s and early 1840s, and (2) it would eventually lead to a showdown in the churches between the optimistic believers in human effort and the pessimistic

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<sup>16</sup> For details on the spring disappointment and the seventh-month movement, see George Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 125-216

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> For more background on millennial thought in antebellum America, see Masao Yamagata, “Ellen G. White and American Premillennialism” (Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1983), 19-54.

Adventists as the “year of the end” approached.<sup>19</sup>

3. This “showdown” Knight describes is precisely what Ellen White addressed from a spiritual perspective in *Early Writings*. Read carefully the following paragraph, **which I purposely omitted from the above citation in EW 233-234. This paragraph is often ignored when its surrounding paragraphs receive the attention.**<sup>20</sup>

God’s all-seeing eye read their hearts. They did not love Jesus near. They knew that their unchristian lives would not stand the test, for they were not walking in the humble path marked out by Him. These false shepherds stood in the way of the work of God. The truth spoken in its convincing power aroused the people, and like the jailer, they began to inquire, “What must I do to be saved?” But these shepherds stepped in between the truth and the people, and preached smooth things to lead them from the truth. They united with Satan and his angels, crying, “Peace, peace,” when there was no peace. Those who loved their ease and were content with their distance from God would not be aroused from their carnal security. I saw that angels of God marked it all; the garments of those unconsecrated shepherds were covered with the blood of souls.<sup>21</sup>

Please note the focus of the paragraph is not on date setting. Mrs. White’s focus is on these pastors fight against Millerism’s “radical spirituality,” its call to embrace Christ, and His imminent coming without any reservations. This was her emphasis, not date setting only, as Pastor Ratzlaff argues. **Thus, those pastors who “loved their ease and were content with their distance from God,” who “would not be aroused from their carnal security,” and who “stepped in between the truth and the people,” were the ones “covered with the blood of souls.”**

It should also be pointed out that Ellen White is writing about those who not only rejected Miller’s teaching, but persecuted him and his followers. This excludes many Christians of the day who respectfully disagreed with Miller’s teaching but did not fight him. Ellen White was not at war with the entire Christian community of her day as Pastor Ratzlaff intimates. This is a point that will receive more attention in the future as I explore the context of Ellen White’s earlier writings on this website.

## **6. Do you believe, as Ellen White taught, that Miller’s 1843 message was a “saving message”?**

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>20</sup> For example, in *Proclamation!* (May/June 2007): 5, Pastor Ratzlaff cites from these pages (233-234) in *EW* emphasizing the “date setting of Miller.” The citation is presented in such a way that one unfamiliar with the context would never know this paragraph existed. Yet, this disregarded paragraph is essential for correctly interpreting Ellen White’s meaning.

<sup>21</sup> EW 234.

All one needs to do is read Ellen White in context to see what she meant by “saving message.” Read the above passage (EW 233-234), along with the following one found in the same chapter about the 1843 proclamation:

Ministers laid aside their sectarian views and feelings and united in proclaiming the coming of Jesus. Wherever the message was given, it moved the people. *Sinners repented, wept, and prayed for forgiveness, and those whose lives had been marked with dishonesty were anxious to make restitution. Parents felt the deepest solicitude for their children. Those who received the message labored with their unconverted friends and relatives, and with their souls bowed with the weight of the solemn message, warned and entreated them to prepare for the coming of the Son of man. Those cases were most hardened that would not yield to such a weight of evidence set home by heartfelt warnings. This soul-purifying work led the affections away from worldly things to a consecration never before experienced.*

*Thousands were led to embrace the truth preached by William Miller, and servants of God were raised up in the spirit and power of Elijah to proclaim the message. Like John, the forerunner of Jesus, those who preached this solemn message felt compelled to lay the ax at the root of the tree, and call upon men to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Their testimony was calculated to arouse and powerfully affect the churches and manifest their real character. And as the solemn warning to flee from the wrath to come was sounded, many who were united with the churches received the healing message; they saw their backslidings, and with bitter tears of repentance and deep agony of soul, humbled themselves before God. And as the Spirit of God rested upon them, they helped to sound the cry, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come (EW 232-233; italics mine).*

A very important source *outside* of Ellen White’s writings is Bliss’s *Memoirs of William Miller*. This is a must-read for anyone who wants to investigate the Millerite movement in a fair-minded way. Based on original source documents, this book provides evidence that Miller’s message was “saving” for many.

For example, in Miller’s 1822 statement of faith (which contained 20 articles), articles 6-12 address the salvation Christians have in Jesus Christ and his redemptive works.<sup>22</sup> Those who heard him preach and lecture over the years say he never changed these views regarding salvation in Christ. In his *Apology and Defense*, written in 1845, Miller’s appeal to unconverted friends provides insight into his preaching from 1831 to 1844:

What shall I say to my unconverted friends? *I have faithfully exhorted you these many years to believe in Christ; you have excused yourselves. What can I say more? Will not all the considerations that are presented in the Scriptures of truth move your hearts to lay down the weapons of your rebellion? You have no lease of your lives, and if the Lord should not come, your eyes may be soon closed in death. Why will you not improve the*

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<sup>22</sup> See Bliss, 78-79.

present moment, and flee from the wrath to come? Go to Christ, I beseech you; *lay hold on the promise of God, trust in his grace, and he will cleanse you by his blood.*<sup>23</sup>

This is Miller's own testimony and example of how he preached salvation in Christ before the "great disappointment" and afterward. Here are two excerpts from eyewitnesses of Miller's preaching found in Bliss's biography:

The audiences were very large, notwithstanding it was a time of great excitement, and our place of worship was as still as death. His lectures were delivered in the most kind and affectionate manner, convincing every mind that he believed the sentiments he uttered. He made the most powerful exhortations that I ever heard fall from the lips of any one. A deep solemnity pervaded the minds of the community. Young men and maidens, amid the pleasures of early years; men in the meridian of life, hurrying on with locomotive speed in pursuit of the treasures of earth; gray-haired sires, and matrons whose hoary locks gave evidence that many winters had passed over them, all paused and pondered on the things heard, inquiring, "Am I ready?" *Many came to the conclusion that they were unprepared to meet their Savior, repented of their sins, and, through the merits of Jesus, obtained pardon full and free.* For two years after this, there was a constant state of revival in that place; and many were the souls that *dated their convictions of sin at that time*, when the faithful old man warned them of the world's approaching doom.<sup>24</sup>

Another eyewitness wrote:

Among those who have since united with our church, many have mentioned Mr. Miller's lectures as the means, under God, of *bringing them to repentance*. They have generally stated that, for months or years, they had thought more or less on the subject; but that, on hearing him, they felt it was time to take a stand. The things of eternity assumed to them an unwonted reality. *Heaven was brought near, and they felt themselves guilty before God. It was not so much the belief that Christ might come in 1843 as it was the certainty of that event, with the conviction that they were not prepared to hail his coming with joy. Many, however, who listened to his whole course of lectures with a heart unmoved, have since been melted into contrition, and become the hopeful subjects of grace.*<sup>25</sup>

Thus, in light of *this* context, I have no hesitation in saying William Miller's message during the years 1831-1844 was a "saving message."

- 7. Do you believe, as Ellen White taught and as she was shown in her first vision, that those who had accepted Miller's message and then after 1844 rejected it, were "left...in perfect darkness," and it was "impossible" for them to get back on the**

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<sup>23</sup> Miller, *Apology and Defense*, 36; italics mine.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 152; italics mine.

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*, 146; italics mine.

## path toward heaven?

The statement Pastor Ratzlaff refers to here has been greatly misunderstood and deserves a detailed explanation. I will write and publish that explanation elsewhere on this website and put a link here when it is completed. For now, helpful information on Ellen White's first vision can be found at the [Shut Door](#) on this website.

### 8. Do you believe, as Ellen White taught, that the prayers of Christians who rejected the 1844 sanctuary message were “useless”?

In the context of this statement in *Spiritual Gifts, Volume 1*, pages 171-172 (*Early Writings*, 260-261), Ellen White describes these professed Christians, whose prayers were “useless,” as those whom Satan has deceived through spiritualism and other means. It is not hard to imagine that the prayers of those professed Christians who engaged in spiritualism were “useless” prayers. In the same context, however, she writes about God's “honest children” in the other churches who rejected the 1844 sanctuary message. While she doesn't elaborate on it, the obvious implication is that God would not consider the prayers of his “honest children” as “useless.”

### 9. Do you accept the following clear statement from Ellen White that condemns the very thing that the early Adventists, including Ellen White herself, and Miller supported and taught: “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.” To me this cements my conclusion that Ellen White, by her own statement, not only admits but proclaims that she is a false prophet!

In the context of this statement (4T 307), Ellen White is addressing the many individuals who endeavored to set a date for Christ's Second Coming. She was very consistent in rebuking time setting for the Second Coming over the seventy years of her prophetic ministry. For a helpful study on this issue, go to this study by Dr. Roger Coon on [Ellen White and Date Setting](#). She did, however, believe that what happened on October 22, 1844, was unique. For example, she wrote in 1851:

Time has not been a test since 1844, and it will never again be a test. The Lord has shown me that the message of the third angel must go, . . . but it must not be hung on time. I saw that some were getting a false excitement, arising from preaching time; but the third angel's message is stronger than time can be. (EW 75)

Her consistency in this matter cements my conclusion that she had the genuine prophetic gift.

### 10. Do you believe, as Ellen White taught, that “no sanctified tongue” will say, “I am saved”? I noted in your presentation that you stated you were saved. Does this mean

**you are now fully sanctified? Has your name already come up in the Investigative Judgment? Have you proven you can endure test and trial and shown that you can overcome temptation?**

Pastor Ratzlaff shows by his wording here his belief that the Investigative Judgement robs the Christian of assurance and has at its core the teaching of perfectionism. For a biblical understanding of this Adventist doctrine, see [this biblical study on the Sanctuary judgment and its relation to salvation](#) by Dr. Frank Holbrook. Note especially Part VII, “The Sanctuary and Salvation.”

As to the “I am saved” statement, the context (RH, June 17, 1890) clarifies Ellen White’s meaning. She is talking about the dangers of the false teaching, “once-saved-always-saved-no-matter-how-much-you-sin.” Thus, she writes:

We are never to rest in a satisfied condition, and cease to make advancement, saying, “I am saved.” When this idea is entertained, the motives for watchfulness, for prayer, for earnest endeavor to press onward to higher attainments, cease to exist. No sanctified tongue will be found uttering these words till Christ shall come, and we enter in through the gates into the city of God (RH, June 17, 1890).

Does this mean that for Ellen White the Christian can never have assurance? No, she clearly taught assurance of salvation. Notice, for example, the following excerpts:

1. She said of herself: “*Jesus has saved me*, though I had nothing to present to Him” (RH, July 14, 1891).
2. “It is *essential* to believe *you are saved*” (RH, Nov. 1, 1892).
3. “The perishing sinner may say: . . . ‘I need not remain a moment longer unsaved’” (1SM 392.1).
4. Repentant sinners should “claim the blessing of God *even now*” (3SM 150).
5. The believer “*need not stand* where you say, ‘*I do not know whether I am saved*’” (GCB April 10, 1901, par. 14). This was addressed to Holy Flesh crisis (the teaching that one could become perfect in the flesh) at the 1901 General Conference, where many believed perfection/full sanctification precedes or conditions assurance. See also *ST*, April 4, 1892.
6. The one who clings constantly to Christ with present active faith can be “*as safe as though inside the city of God*” (10MR 175:1).

For more on this issue, see the following two studies by Adventist theologians: [“What Ellen White Taught about Assurance,” by Dr. Jerry Moon](#) and [“Justification by Faith and Judgment According to Works” by Dr. Ivan T. Blazen](#).

**11. Do you believe, as Ellen White taught, that the death of Christ on the cross did not completely vindicate God’s character of love and justice before the universe?**

Based on the way this question is articulated, my answer is no. I do not believe Ellen

White articulated the issue this way, either. The cross was central in her thought. Notice the following important statements (italics added):

*The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster.* In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption,—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. *This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers.*—*Gospel Workers*, p. 315.

It [*the cross*] is the central pillar on which hangs the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which is for those who accept that cross. Under and around the *cross of Christ, that immortal pillar*, sin shall never revive, nor error obtain control.—Letter 124, 1900.

The cross of Calvary challenges, and will finally vanquish every earthly and hellish power. *In the cross all influence centers, and from it all influence goes forth. It is the great center of attraction;* for on it Christ gave up His life for the human race. This sacrifice was offered for the purpose of restoring man to his original perfection; yea, more. It was offered to give him an entire transformation of character, making him more than a conqueror....

If the cross does not find an influence in its favor, it creates an influence. Through generation succeeding generation, the truth for this time is revealed as present truth. *Christ on the cross was the medium whereby mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other. This is the means that is to move the world.*—Manuscript 56, 1899.

He [Christ] planted the cross between Heaven and earth, and when the Father beheld the sacrifice of His Son, He bowed before it in recognition of its perfection. “It is enough,” He said. “The Atonement is complete” (RH Sept. 24, 1901).

*The cross* must occupy the central place because *it is the means of man's atonement* and because of the influence it exerts on every part of the divine government.—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 236.

*The atonement* of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; *it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression* and the restoration of spiritual health. *It is the heaven-ordained means* by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us, but in our hearts and characters.—Letter 406, 1906.

Without shedding of blood there is no remission for sin. *He must suffer the agony of a public death on the cross*, that witness of it might be borne without the shadow of a doubt.—Manuscript 101, 1897.

Adam listened to the words of the tempter, and yielding to his insinuations, fell into sin. *Why was not the death penalty at once enforced in his case?—Because a ransom was found.*

God's only begotten Son volunteered to take the sin of man upon Himself, and to make an atonement for the fallen race. *There could have been no pardon for sin had this atonement not been made.* Had God pardoned Adam's sin without an atonement, sin would have been immortalized, and would have been perpetuated with a boldness that would have been without restraint.—*The Review and Herald*, April 23, 1901.

In the councils of heaven *the cross was ordained as the means of atonement.* This was to be *God's means of winning men to Him.* Christ came to this earth to show that in humanity He could keep the holy law of God.—Manuscript 165, 1899.

*Christ gave Himself an atoning sacrifice for the saving of a lost world.*—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 208.

As to the vindication of the character of God, Ellen White saw this in the larger framework of the plan of redemption. In her thought, the death of Christ on the cross was the major victory for God's character that will be realized ultimately at the completion of the plan of redemption:

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this [that Satan and his angels will be destroyed because of their rebellion]. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe.

But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable. Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law.

Well, then, might the angels rejoice as they looked upon the Saviour's cross; for though they did not then understand all, they knew that the destruction of sin and Satan was forever made certain, that the redemption of man was assured, and that the universe was made eternally secure. Christ Himself fully comprehended the results of the sacrifice made upon Calvary. To all these He looked forward when upon the cross He cried out, "It is finished" (*Desire of Ages*, 764).

Much more could be said on this important issue, but the above will have to suffice for answering this question.

**12. Do you believe, as Ellen White taught, that Sabbath observance "was of sufficient importance to draw a line between the people of God and unbelievers"?**

It is well known where the SDA church stands on [Sabbath observance](#). The line quoted here comes from *Early Writings*, page 85, which is an explanation of earlier comments made in the book. The context of this statement is not characterizing every non-Sabbath keeper as an unbeliever, as this question seems to imply. To the contrary, on the same page Mrs. White clearly states: “I saw that God had children who do not see and keep the Sabbath.” Notice that those who do not “see and keep the Sabbath” are still considered God’s “children.” Furthermore, the most dramatic period when the Sabbath becomes “a line between the people of God and unbelievers” is during the “time of trouble” at the very end of earth’s history when the world will be divided into two classes: those who are loyal to God and those who are loyal to Satan. See *Early Writings*, pages 32-35, 85-86.

**13. Do you believe, as Ellen White taught, that “the mark of the beast is the opposite [of Sabbath observance]—the observance of the first day of the week?”**

The “mark of the beast” as enforced Sunday observance opposed to Sabbath observance is not listed as one of the [28 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists](#). It is, however, a [conviction held by most Seventh-day Adventists](#), including myself. But Adventist belief on this matter has never condemned other Christians who observe Sunday. Notice the following explanation from the classic [Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine](#):

*Do Seventh-day Adventists teach in their authorized literature that those who worship on Sunday and repudiate in its entirety the Seventh-day Adventist teaching as a consequence have the mark of apostasy, or "the mark of the beast"? Does not Mrs. White teach that those who now keep Sunday already have the mark of the beast?*

Our doctrinal positions are based upon the Bible, not upon Mrs. White's writings. But since her name has been introduced into the question, an explicit statement from her pen should set the record straight. The following was penned by her in 1899:

No one has yet received the mark of the beast. The testing time has not yet come. There are true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion. *None are condemned until they have had the light and have seen the obligation of the fourth commandment.* But when the decree shall go forth enforcing the counterfeit sabbath, and the loud cry of the third angel shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image, the line will be clearly drawn between the false and the true. Then those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast.—*Evangelism*, pp. 234, 235 (italics supplied).

This has been her uniform teaching throughout the years—excerpts twisted out of their setting by detractors notwithstanding. This position is sustained by the same writer in *The Great Controversy*:

But Christians of past generations observed the Sunday, supposing that in so doing

they were keeping the Bible Sabbath; and there are now true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion, who honestly believe that Sunday is the Sabbath of divine appointment. God accepts their sincerity of purpose and their integrity before Him. But *when Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. . . .* As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be the sign of His authority, and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome—"the mark of the beast." And it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive "the mark of the beast."—Page 449 (italics supplied).

Sunday-keeping is not yet the mark of the beast, and will not be until the decree goes forth causing men to worship this idol sabbath. The time will come when this day will be the test, but that time has not come yet.—Ellen G. White Manuscript 118, 1899.

To your inquiry, then, as to whether Mrs. White maintained that all those who do not see and observe the seventh day as the Sabbath now have the "mark of apostasy," the answer is definitely No.

We hold the firm conviction that millions of devout Christians of all faiths throughout all past centuries, as well as those today who are sincerely trusting in Christ their Saviour for salvation and are following Him according to their best light, are unquestionably saved. Thousands of such went to the stake as martyrs for Christ and for their faith. Moreover, untold numbers of godly Roman Catholics will surely be included. God reads the heart and deals with the intent and the understanding. These are among His "other sheep" (John 10:16). He makes no mistake. The Biblical principle is clear: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Seventh-day Adventists interpret the prophecies relating to the beast, and the reception of his work, as something that will come into sharp focus just before the return of our Lord in glory. It is our understanding that this issue will then become a worldwide test (183-185).

**14. Do you believe that the writings of Ellen White should continue as an "authoritative source of truth"?**

I do, but only in the context of the affirmations and denials as articulated below by the [Seventh-day Adventist church](#):

**AFFIRMATIONS**

1. We believe that Scripture is the divinely revealed word of God and is inspired by the

Holy Spirit.

2. We believe that the canon of Scripture is composed only of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.
3. We believe that Scripture is the foundation of faith and the final authority in all matters of doctrine and practice.
4. We believe that Scripture is the Word of God in human language.
5. We believe that Scripture teaches that the gift of prophecy will be manifest in the Christian church after New Testament times.
6. We believe that the ministry and writings of Ellen White were a manifestation of the gift of prophecy.
7. We believe that Ellen White was inspired by the Holy Spirit and that her writings, the product of that inspiration, are applicable and authoritative, especially to Seventh-day Adventists.
8. We believe that the purposes of the Ellen White writings include guidance in understanding the teaching of Scripture and application of these teachings, with prophetic urgency, to the spiritual and moral life.
9. We believe that the acceptance of the prophetic gift of Ellen White is important to the nurture and unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
10. We believe that Ellen White's use of literary sources and assistants finds parallels in some of the writings of the Bible.

#### **DENIALS**

1. We do not believe that the quality or degree of inspiration in the writings of Ellen White is different from that of Scripture.
2. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are an addition to the canon of Sacred Scripture.
3. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White function as the foundation and final authority of Christian faith as does Scripture.
4. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White may be used as the basis of doctrine.
5. We do not believe that the study of the writings of Ellen White may be used to replace the study of Scripture.
6. We do not believe that Scripture can be understood only through the writings of Ellen White.
7. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White exhaust the meaning of Scripture.
8. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are essential for the proclamation of the truths of Scripture to society at large.
9. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are the product of mere Christian piety.
10. We do not believe that Ellen White's use of literary sources and assistants negates the

inspiration of her writings.

We conclude, therefore, that a correct understanding of the inspiration and authority of the writings of Ellen White will avoid two extremes: (1) regarding these writings as functioning on a canonical level identical with Scripture, or (2) considering them as ordinary Christian literature.

For a recent statement by the world Seventh-day Adventist church on the prophetic ministry of Ellen White, [see here](#).