

The Great Controversy Motivated by Hope

Lesson #7 for May 18, 2024

Scriptures: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 24:27,30-31; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Daniel 8:14; 9:20-27; Ezra 7:7-13,18; Isaiah 25:9.

1. In this study, we will examine the 70-week prophecy and the 2,300-day/year prophecy.

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] A crucial point in the great controversy was the coming of the Messiah. **During the 70-week prophetic period, the devil fought to destroy Israel's faith in the first coming of the Messiah as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises, prophecies, and types.** In the same way, **by the end of the 2,300-year prophetic time period, the forces of evil tried to obscure its fulfillment** in the pre-Advent judgment, occurring in the heavenly sanctuary, and to suppress the proclamation of the second coming of the Messiah.

By the end of the 70-week prophetic period, there were faithful people of God, such as Simeon, who waited for "the consolation of Israel" (*Luke 2:25, NASB*), or Anna and others "who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem" (*Luke 2:38, NASB*). These faithful few saw in Jesus the fulfillment of the promise of the first coming of the Messiah. In the same way, there were, by the end of the 2,300 years, believing people, such as William Miller, whose "present truth" message focused on the hope in the soon appearing of the Messiah. Miller did not discover this message through a philosophical methodology but through a literal reading of Scripture. This illustrates, once again, the essentiality of Scripture to the great controversy.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 93.†§

2. What is the hope that motivates us?

[BSG:] **The second coming of Jesus is one of the central themes of Scripture.** It is a **golden thread** that runs through the Bible's sacred pages. One scholar has estimated that there are 1,845 references to Christ's second coming in the Old Testament. In the 260 chapters of the New Testament, there are more than 300 references to the return of Christ. One in every 25 verses mentions it. Twenty-three of the 27 New Testament books refer to this great event.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, May 11.†‡

3. Revelation 12 suggests that when the "woman" (the church) fled to the wilderness, the dragon (Satan) tried to chase her and destroy her. However, God protected her. One way in which God protected His faithful people was by directing them to leave the areas of conflict and persecution and flee to the New World. See what happened to the woman in Revelation 17.
4. Starting with Joel, the Bible predicts that the end will be preceded by dark days, the moon turning to blood, and stars falling from heaven. It also predicts that there will be terrible earthquakes. (Joel 1:15; 2:10-11) On November 1, 1755, there was an enormous earthquake located off the coast of Portugal in which 60,000 people are estimated to have been killed. Much of the city of Lisbon was destroyed. About 25 years later, a dark day occurred in the

northeastern United States, followed by a night during which the moon looked like it was made of blood. People noticed these things and asked themselves: Do these things have anything to do with what is prophesied in the Bible? Eighteen years later, in 1798, the pope was taken captive by General Berthier of Napoleon's forces and taken to France where he died. It looked like the period of papal supremacy (538 A.D.-1798 A.D.) had come to an end.

[BSG:] The Protestant Reformers and the pilgrims who left from Holland for the New World longed for the coming of Jesus. For them the second coming of Christ was a joyous event that they eagerly anticipated. John Wycliffe looked forward to the coming of Christ as the hope of the church. **Calvin spoke for all the Reformers when he talked of the glorious return of Christ as “of all events most auspicious.”** For faithful men and women of God, the **second coming of Christ was something to be embraced**, not something to be feared.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, May 12.^{†‡}

5. Jesus Himself and the early apostles gave ringing promises that He would return.

John 14:1-3: ¹ “Do not be worried and upset,” Jesus told them. “Believe in God and believe also in me. ²There are many rooms in my Father’s house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. ³And after I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am.**”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., John 14:1-3). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18: ¹⁵ **What we are teaching you now is the Lord’s teaching:** we who are alive on the day the Lord comes will not go ahead of those who have died. ¹⁶There will be the shout of command, the archangel’s voice, the sound of God’s trumpet, and the Lord himself will come down from heaven. **Those who have died believing in Christ will rise to life first; ¹⁷then we who are living at that time will be gathered up along with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸So then, encourage one another with these words.—*Good News Bible.*†* [See also Titus 2:11-14.][‡]

[BSG:] It is easy to understand why a belief in the second coming of Christ has brought such hope and joy to Bible-believing Christians. It points forward to the end of sickness, suffering, and death. It ushers in the end of poverty, injustice, and oppression. It anticipates the end of strife, conflict, and war. It forecasts a future world of peace, happiness, and enduring fellowship with Christ and the redeemed of all ages forever.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, May 12.[‡]

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers. The Saviour’s parting promise upon Olivet, that He would come again, lighted up the future for His disciples, filling their hearts with joy and hope that sorrow could not quench nor trials dim. Amid suffering and persecution, the “appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” was the “blessed hope.” When the Thessalonian Christians were filled with grief as they buried their loved ones, who had hoped to live to witness

the coming of the Lord, Paul, their teacher, pointed them to the resurrection, to take place at the Saviour's advent. Then the dead in Christ should rise, and together with the living be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. "And so," he said, "shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 302.2.‡ [There is no hint in the Bible that people will go to heaven before the second coming of Christ.]‡

[BSG:] Why is the Second Coming so important to our faith? Especially because we know that the dead sleep (see lesson 10), why does this teaching take on such importance? Without it, why would we be, as Paul said, in an utterly hopeless situation (see 1 Cor. 15:15–18)?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, May 12.‡§

1 Corinthians 15:15-19: ¹⁵More than that [if Christ did not arise from the grave], we are shown to be lying about God, because we said that he raised Christ from death—but if it is true that the dead are not raised to life, then he did not raise Christ. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is a delusion and you are still lost in your sins. ¹⁸It would also mean that the believers in Christ who have died are lost. ¹⁹If our hope in Christ is good for this life only and no more, then we deserve more pity than anyone else in all the world.—*Good News Bible*.*‡

6. **What information do we have about the manner of Christ's second coming?**

Acts 1:9-11: ⁹After saying this, **he was taken up to heaven as they watched him**, and a cloud hid him from their sight. [That was a cloud of angels]

¹⁰ They still had their eyes fixed on the sky as he went away, when two men dressed in white suddenly stood beside them ¹¹and said, "Galileans, why are you standing there looking up at the sky? This Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, **will come back in the same way** that you saw him go to heaven."—*Good News Bible*.*‡‡

Revelation 1:7: Look, **he is coming on the clouds!** Everyone will see him, including those who pierced him. All peoples on earth will mourn over him. So shall it be!—*Good News Bible*.*†

Matthew 24:27-31: ²⁷ **"For the Son of Man will come like the lightning which flashes across the whole sky from the east to the west...."**

³⁰ "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky; and all the peoples of earth will weep as they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹The great trumpet will sound, and **he will send out his angels to the four corners of the earth**, and they will gather his chosen people from one end of the world to the other."—*Good News Bible*.*†

7. **There is one simple, clear way to distinguish between the coming of the true Christ and all the fakes that will precede Him. Just look up! When Jesus comes, the entire sky will be full of bright, shining angels; everyone will see Him in the sky.**

[BSG:] Although the Protestant Reformers believed in the literal, visible, audible, and glorious return of Christ, gradually the understanding of this biblical truth changed. **Popular nineteenth-century preachers taught that**

Christ would come to establish His kingdom on earth and usher in 1,000 years of peace. This led to spiritual lethargy and an apathetic commitment to spiritual values. [Why would that happen?]

Similarly, Christ's disciples misunderstood the nature of the Messiah's coming. They thought that He would come as a conquering general who would break the yoke of Roman bondage, not One who would deliver them from the condemnation and shackles of sin. Thus, they failed to understand the manner of His coming.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, May 13.†‡

8. We know that when Jesus came the first time as a baby boy, His coming was recognized by almost no one. However, that will not be true of His second coming.

[EGW:] One of the most solemn and yet most glorious truths revealed in the Bible is that of Christ's second coming to complete the great work of redemption. To God's pilgrim people, so long left to sojourn in "the region and shadow of death," a precious, joy-inspiring hope is given in the promise of His appearing, who is "the resurrection and the life," to "bring home again His banished." **The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures.** From the day when the first pair turned their sorrowing steps from Eden, the children of faith have waited the coming of the Promised One to break the destroyer's power and bring them again to the lost Paradise.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 299.1.†‡

[BSG:] An early Adventist leader, Luther Warren, used to tell young people, "The only way to be ready for the coming of Christ is to get ready and stay ready."—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, May 13.‡

9. ***Is it true that if Jesus does not plan to come back a second time, there was no reason for Him to come the first time?***

10. People began to search their Bibles to determine whether events happening could possibly be harbingers of the second coming. A farmer in upstate New York by the name of William Miller decided to determine for himself if this was true. He started with Genesis 1:1 and worked his way through the Bible, determining that he would not proceed beyond any verse that he could not understand. When there was any passage or word that William Miller did not understand, he would look up in a Bible concordance and find other passages in which that word was used and what it meant to help him understand each verse as he proceeded.

[BSG:] Just as God used the Protestant Reformers to rediscover the truth about justification by faith in Christ alone, **He used William Miller to rediscover the truth about the manner of Christ's second coming. As Miller studied Scripture, he discovered a Christ who loved him more than he could possibly imagine. With his Bible, a pen, and a notebook, he began reading starting with Genesis and read no faster than he could understand the passage at hand. By comparing scripture with scripture, he allowed the Bible to explain itself.**

Read Isaiah 28:9, 10; Proverbs 8:8, 9; John 16:13; and 2 Peter 1:19–21. What principles of Bible interpretation do you discover in these passages?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, May 14.†‡

John 16:13: “When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own authority, but he will speak of what he hears, and will tell you of things to come.”—*Good News Bible*.*

2 Peter 1:19-21: ¹⁹ So we are even more confident of the message proclaimed by the prophets. You will do well to pay attention to it, because it is like a lamp shining in a dark place until the Day dawns and the light of the morning star shines in your hearts. ²⁰Above all else, however, remember that **no one can explain by himself or herself a prophecy in the Scriptures.** ²¹**For no prophetic message ever came just from human will, but people were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

11. Men like William Miller depended upon the Holy Spirit to guide them in their study.
12. William Miller was a dedicated student of Scripture. He set aside a fair amount of time each day to study his Bible. And the Holy Spirit revealed to him the truths of Scripture. When reading the book of Daniel, comparing it with the book of Revelation, he was convinced that just as God revealed these great prophetic truths to Daniel and John, their fulfillment must be revealed to people living at the end of time.

Daniel 1:17: God gave the four young men knowledge and skill in literature and philosophy. In addition, he gave Daniel skill in interpreting visions and dreams.—*Good News Bible*.*

Daniel 2:45: [Daniel reminded King Nebuchadnezzar:] “You saw how a stone broke loose from a cliff without anyone touching it and how it struck the statue made of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. **The great God is telling Your Majesty what will happen in the future.** I have told you exactly what you dreamt, and have given you its true meaning.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

Revelation 1:1-3: ¹ This book is the record of the events that Jesus Christ revealed. God gave him this revelation in order to show his servants what must happen very soon. Christ made these things known to his servant John by sending his angel to him, ²and John has told all that he has seen. This is his report concerning the message from God and the truth revealed by Jesus Christ. ³Happy is the one who reads this book, and happy are those who listen [very few people could read in those days] to the words of this prophetic message and obey what is written in this book! For the time is near when all these things will happen.—*Good News Bible*.*†

[BSG:] The symbols in the prophetic books are not locked in mystery. A loving God has given us His prophetic Word to prepare us for the climactic events soon to unfold in this world. William Miller clearly understood that prophecy was its own best interpreter. The symbols of prophecy are made clear by the Bible itself. **Beasts represent kings or kingdoms** (*Dan. 7:17, 23*). **Wind represents destruction** (*Jer. 49:36*). **Water represents peoples or nations** (*Rev. 17:15*). **A woman represents the church** (*Jer. 6:2, Eph. 5:22–32*). **The time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation also are given in symbolic language, with one prophetic day representing one literal year** (*Num.*

14:34, Ezek. 4:6). As William Miller applied these principles of biblical interpretation, he was startled at what he discovered regarding what he believed to be the timing of Christ's return.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, May 14.^{†§}

Daniel 7:17,23: ¹⁷He said, "These four huge beasts are four empires which will arise on earth...."

²³ This is the explanation I was given: "The fourth beast is a fourth empire that will be on the earth and will be different from all other empires. It will crush the whole earth and trample it down."—*Good News Bible.**

Jeremiah 49:36: "I will make winds blow against Elam from all directions, and I will scatter her people everywhere, until there is no country where her refugees have not gone."—*Good News Bible.**

Jeremiah 6:2: "I have likened the daughter of Zion
To a lovely and delicate woman."—*New King James Version.**

13. **Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6** make it clear that **in prophetic presentations, the term *one day* represents one calendar year.** This is an essential understanding for interpreting prophetic symbolism.

[BSG:] William Miller observed that events predicted by the prophets were precisely fulfilled: the 400 years of the sojourn of Abraham's descendants, Israel's 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the 70 years of Israel's captivity, and Daniel's 70 weeks allotted to Israel (*Gen. 15:13, Num. 14:34, Jer. 25:11, and Dan. 9:24*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, May 15.^{†§}

14. There is a very interesting and somewhat amusing anecdote that played a very important part in the story of William Miller. He thought that his Bible study would be for his personal benefit only. He proceeded with that idea for several years. But, he started to tell his family members what he was learning. When carefully studying the book of Daniel, he believed that it predicted the time of the second coming. Some of his family members thought he should start telling other people and do some preaching; but, he refused. One Sunday morning he was studying about 6 o'clock and he essentially prayed: "Lord, if in the next half hour, you send someone to my door with the message that they want me to come and preach to them at church, I will go." And lo and behold, his nephew showed up a short time later and asked him to come and preach at their church. He was upset and angry, but he went; and soon, he had invitations to preach at many places all over the northeastern United States.
15. He struggled with Daniel 8:14. He wondered what was supposed to happen at the end of the 2,300-day prophecy. What did it mean to say, "The sanctuary shall be cleansed"?

[BSG:] William Miller accepted the popular view that the "cleansing of the sanctuary" was the purification of the earth by fire. He diligently studied the Scriptures to understand an event of such stupendous importance. He discovered the linkage between Daniel 8 and Daniel 9. In Daniel 8, the angel was instructed to "make this man understand the vision" (*Dan. 8:16*). By the end of the chapter, the only portion of the entire vision of Daniel 8 left unexplained (see *Dan. 8:27*) was the part about the 2,300 days. Later the angel

returned to Daniel and declared, “ ‘I have now come forth to give you skill to understand’ ” (*Dan. 9:22, NKJV*; see also *Dan. 9:23, 25–27*). **This was to help him understand about the 2,300 days.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, May 15.†§

Daniel 8:16: I heard a voice call out over the River Ulai, “Gabriel, explain to him the meaning of what he saw.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Daniel 8:27: I was depressed and ill for several days. Then I got up and went back to the work that the king had assigned to me, but I was puzzled by the vision and could not understand it.—*Good News Bible*.*

16. The best dating for Daniel 8 and Daniel 9 suggests that there were several years between the giving of those two messages. Apparently, Daniel was given some time to try to figure out what was meant in Daniel 8!

Daniel 9:22-27: ²² He explained, “Daniel, I have come here to help you understand the prophecy. ²³When you began to plead with God, he answered you. He loves you, and so I have come to tell you the answer. Now pay attention while I explain the vision....

²⁵ “Note this and understand it: from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem, until God’s chosen leader comes, seven times seven years will pass. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and strong defences [*sic-Br*], and will stand for seven times 62 years, but this will be a time of troubles. ²⁶And at the end of that time God’s chosen leader will be killed unjustly. The city and the Temple will be destroyed by the invading army of a powerful ruler. The end will come like a flood, bringing the war and destruction which God has prepared. ²⁷That ruler will have a firm agreement with many people for seven years, and when half this time is past, he will put an end to sacrifices and offerings. The Awful Horror will be placed on the highest point of the Temple and will remain there until the one who put it there meets the end which God has prepared for him.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

[BSG:] [In Daniel’s encounter with the angel in Daniel 9] after bidding Daniel to “ ‘consider the matter, and understand the vision’ ” (*Dan. 9:23, NKJV*), the first words of the angel were: “ ‘Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city’ ” (*Dan. 9:24, NKJV*). The word translated “determined” literally means “cut off.” Seventy weeks, 490 years, are to be cut off. But from what? The vision of the 2,300 days, obviously—the only part of Daniel 8 that Daniel did not understand, and that the angel now came to explain.

And since the starting point of the 70 weeks was “ ‘from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem’ ” (*Dan. 9:25, NKJV*), Miller knew that if he had that date, he could know the beginning of the 70 weeks and the 2,300-day prophecy.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, May 15.†§

17. However, in order to determine when this 2300-day/year prophecy would come to an end, William Miller had to find out when it would start. He carefully studied the book of Ezra.

Ezra 7:6-18: ⁶⁻⁷ **In the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes, Ezra set out from Babylonia for Jerusalem with a group of Israelites which included priests,**

Levites, temple musicians, temple guards, and workmen. ⁸⁻⁹They left Babylonia on the first day of the first month, and with God's help they arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month....

¹¹ Artaxerxes gave the following document to Ezra...:

¹² "From Artaxerxes the emperor to Ezra the priest, scholar in the Law of the God of Heaven.

¹³ "I command that throughout my empire all the Israelite people, priests, and Levites that so desire be permitted to go with you to Jerusalem....

¹⁷ "You are to spend this money carefully and buy bulls, rams, lambs, corn, and wine and offer them on the altar of the Temple in Jerusalem. [Ask your God to bless me and my son.] ¹⁸**You may use the silver and gold that is left over for whatever you and your people desire, in accordance with the will of your God.**"—*Good News Bible*. *†‡ [This was the first time that money was designated for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and not just for the temple.]‡

[BSG:] The decree was issued by Artaxerxes, king of Persia, in **457 B.C.** This decree was the last of three decrees to allow the Jews to return to rebuild Jerusalem and restore temple worship services. **This third decree was the most complete and marks the beginning of the 2,300-day prophecy.**

Read Daniel 9:25, 26. [See Item #16 above.] When would this entire prophetic period begin? What major events do these verses predict?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, May 16.†‡

[BSG:] In this remarkable prophecy, Daniel predicted that from the "going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" to the Messiah would be 69 prophetic weeks, or 483 prophetic days, or literal years. Since the decree went forth in the fall of 457 B.C., 483 years extend to the fall of A.D. 27 [skipping the non-existent year 0]. The word "Messiah" signifies "the Anointed One." In the autumn of A.D. 27, Christ was baptized and received the anointing of the Spirit (*Acts 10:38*). After His baptism, Jesus went into Galilee, "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled' " (*Mark 1:14, 15, NKJV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, May 16.‡§

18. William Miller compared the prophecies of Daniel with the words of Jesus.

Matthew 24:15-27: ¹⁵ "You will see 'The Awful Horror' [a pagan statue in the temple in Jerusalem] of which the prophet Daniel spoke. It will be standing in the holy place." (Note to the reader: be sure to understand what this means!) ¹⁶ **"Then those who are in Judea must run away to the hills.** ¹⁷Someone who is on the roof of his house must not take the time to go down and get his belongings from the house. ¹⁸Someone who is in the field must not go back to get his cloak. ¹⁹How terrible it will be in those days for women who are pregnant and for mothers with little babies! ²⁰Pray to God that you will not have to run away during the winter or on a Sabbath!...

²³ "Then, if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or 'There he is!'—

do not believe it. ²⁴For false Messiahs and false prophets will appear; they will perform great miracles and wonders in order to deceive even God's chosen people, if possible. ²⁵Listen! I have told you this before the time comes.

²⁶ "Or, if people should tell you, 'Look, he is out in the desert!'—don't go there; or if they say, 'Look, he is hiding here!'—don't believe it. ²⁷**For the Son of Man will come like the lightning which flashes across the whole sky from the east to the west.**"—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

19. Jesus Himself had said that they should be careful to study and understand the prophecies of Daniel. In every possible way, Jesus fulfilled the predictions from Daniel.

[BSG:] In the spring of A.D. 31, in the middle of this last prophetic week, three and a half years after His baptism, Jesus was crucified. The system of offerings that pointed forward to the Lamb of God ended with Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. Type had met antitype, and eventually all the sacrifices and offerings of the ceremonial system ceased.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, May 16.‡

20. Review **Daniel 9:27**. (See Item #16 above.)
21. The 70 weeks, or 490 years, especially allotted to the Jews ended in A.D. 34 with the rejection by the Sanhedrin of the gospel message. (See Acts 6:8-7:60.)
22. Does this help us to understand how the 70-week prophecy especially allotted to the Jewish people would end? That event happened in A.D. 34 when Stephen was arrested for preaching about Jesus and he gave that marvelous speech before the Sanhedrin and then was stoned to death while Saul/Paul held the coats of those throwing the stones.

Acts 8:1: And Saul [later named Paul] approved of his [Stephen's] murder.

That very day the church in Jerusalem began to suffer cruel persecution. All the believers, except the apostles, were scattered throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria.—*Good News Bible*.*†

[BSG:] Subtracting 490 years from the 2,300-year prophecy leaves 1,810 years for the completion of the prophecy. This leads us to A.D. 1844. William Miller and the early Adventists believed that the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 was the earth, and they assumed that Christ would come to purify the earth by fire in 1844.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, May 16.‡

[BSG:] Look at the following chart for the prophecies of the 70 weeks and the 2,300 days. The prophecies start in 457 B.C. and foretell the events surrounding "Messiah the Prince," upon whom the 70-week prophecy is grounded. With that solid foundation, the 2,300-day prophecy ends in 1844.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, May 17.‡

2,300 days (2,300 years)

70 weeks (490 years)

1,810 years

457 B.C.

A.D. 34

A.D. 1844

[EGW:] **Like the first disciples, William Miller and his associates did not, themselves, fully comprehend the import of the message which they bore. Errors that had been long established in the church prevented them from arriving at a correct interpretation** of an important point in the prophecy.

Therefore, though they proclaimed the message which God had committed to them to be given to the world, yet through a misapprehension of its meaning they suffered disappointment....

Yet God accomplished His own beneficent purpose in permitting the warning of the judgment to be given just as it was. The great day was at hand, and in His providence the people were brought to the test of a definite time, in order to reveal to them what was in their hearts. The message was designed for the testing and purification of the church. They were to be led to see whether their affections were set upon this world or upon Christ and heaven. They professed to love the Saviour; now they were to prove their love. Were they ready to renounce their worldly hopes and ambitions, and welcome with joy the advent of their Lord? The message was designed to enable them to discern their true spiritual state; it was sent in mercy to arouse them to seek the Lord with repentance and humiliation.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 351.2-353.1.†‡

23. Consider these questions raised in the Bible study guide:

1. [BSG:] What lessons can we learn from William Miller's experience? Does God at times overrule our mistaken understanding?
2. Why is an understanding of Daniel 9:24–27 so significant in establishing the integrity of the Bible and the divinity of Christ?
3. What role does understanding prophecy play in the plan of salvation? Why is prophecy so significant in the plan of God?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, May 17.‡

24. You can be sure that the Devil correctly understood the prophecies of Daniel. **He did everything he possibly could do to prevent the arrival, the life, and an understanding of the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ.** However, prophecy was precisely fulfilled.

25. Protestant Christianity was clearly the religion of the early Pilgrims and Puritans who fled from religious persecution, traveling to what later became the United States of America.

[BSG:] Hope and optimism filled the atmosphere of the nineteenth-century United States, the new nation born out of the unique American Revolution. The century brought social, economic, political, as well as technological changes and inventions, promising the dawn of a new world.... [They began to think that this world would get better and better and that Jesus would come not at the beginning of the 1000 years, but rather at the end of the 1000 years.]

But what is postmillennialism? Millennialism comes from the word “millennium,” which refers to the 1,000 years of Christ's reign with the saints as described in Revelation 20:1–6. While most Christians accept this biblical teaching about the millennium, not all agree on how to relate the millennium to the Second Coming and to the last judgment.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 93-94.‡ [Which will be first: The millennium? Or, the second coming?]‡

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