

Great Controversy Series

Sermon 33 Fulfilled Prophecies

William Miller and his associates announced the time of Jesus' second coming according to Daniel 8:14:

Daniel 8:14 And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."

In Miller's time as a popular concept it was thought that the sanctuary represented the earth. Accordingly the cleansing of the sanctuary was when "the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" at Christ's second coming. 2 Peter 3:10. Thus because Miller and his associates calculated the 2300 year period closing in 1844 they were expecting Jesus' coming to this world at that date.

At first Miller and his associates expected Jesus' coming in the spring of 1844. When Jesus did not come, unbelievers ridiculed those who waited for Jesus. The believers were in doubt and perplexity but they understood that the spiritual blessings the movement created in people was from God. The believers did not abandon their faith; they turned to the Scriptures to find their error.

In the Bible, they found verses describing their own situation.

Habakkuk 2:1-4 I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected.² Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it."³ For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.⁴ "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.

Two years earlier, that is in 1842, Charles Fitch made a chart which explained the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. We have a copy of Charles Fitch's chart here. When he published this chart many people believed it was the fulfillment of the prophecy, "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets." But they were not aware that there is a delay mentioned in those same verses. After the disappointment in the summer of 1844, when they read about this delay their hopes were once again very high.

The Adventists, those waiting for Jesus, saw their own experience in a parable in Matthew 25. In Matthew 24 Jesus had foretold signs regarding His second coming. Matthew 25 begins with these words:

Matthew 25:1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

The words, “**Then** the kingdom of heaven shall be likened...” indicate this parable being valid for those waiting for Jesus’ second coming.

Matthew 25:1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.² "Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.³ "Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,⁴ "but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.⁵ "But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.⁶ "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'

It was understood that Jesus’ second coming was represented by the coming of the bridegroom. The preaching of Miller and others of the soon coming of Jesus resulted in a spiritual revival. This revival was compared to the virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom. In this parable there are two classes of virgins. All took their lamps to go out to meet the bridegroom. One group of virgins took oil in their lamps and the other group of virgins did not take oil.

The ones that had oil with them received the Holy Spirit who makes the word of God a light unto their feet and a lamp unto their path (Psalm 119:105). They studied the Bible to learn the truth and they tried to apply its principles in their lives. Disappointment and delay could not destroy their faith.

The ones who did not take oil with them only moved from impulse. The message of Jesus’ soon return frightened them. They did not have a deep relationship and experience with the Lord, their faith was dependent on the faith of others. They wanted a quick reward but when disappointment and delay occurred they were not prepared.

Matthew 25:5 "But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

Jesus’ return was expected in the spring of 1844. The delay of the bridegroom represents Jesus’ delay in coming. Everyone experienced disappointment and dismay. One group wavered, they began to forsake their efforts and abandon their faith. The other group’s zeal waned somewhat but they waited for direction. Those whose faith was weak could not rely on the faith of others. Everyone would stay afoot or fall according to his own faith.

At this time Satan sent fanatics to confuse the Lord’s work. As in Paul’s time and Luther’s time, in 1844 people appeared who rejected the Bible as a standard and followed their own emotions, impressions and imaginations. Their fanatic ideas and behavior tainted the Advent movement. But the message itself did not create this fanaticism. The fanaticism appeared in the summer of 1844 while the Adventists were perplexed. The first angel’s message of Revelation 14 and the midnight cry of Matthew 25 had squelched fanatical behavior.

Matthew 25:5 "But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.⁶ "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'⁷ "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.

In the summer of 1844 new information came out. Formerly, the decree of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem” was thought to begin at the beginning of the year. But

it was learned that the decree came out in the autumn of the year. Along with this, as it was commanded in the Old Testament, every year the high priest performed the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement in the fall of the year. But this information the believers called to the world in the fall of 1844 with renewed vigor, "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!"

The Advent movement spread like a large wave everywhere. The message went from city to city. Fanaticism ceased. To meet their Lord, deep character evaluations and confessions were made. People checked their hearts and abandoned worldly lifestyles. People studied their Bibles to learn their duties and responsibilities before God. People gathered together in groups for prayer.

But they were disappointed once again. Jesus Christ did not come to this world.

At first when Jesus did not come at the time expected, unbelievers did not make fun of the believers. But in a short time when God's wrath was not seen, they despised the believers and made sport of them. Many believers abandoned their faith. Those whose faith had relied on the faith of others or on something other than the Bible changed their minds more quickly. They joined the ranks of unbelievers.

Those who had a more solid faith experienced a great disappointment. They had announced Jesus' second coming in front of everyone but Jesus did not come. They expected to be quickly taken up into the presence of Jesus and His angels and go to heaven. Now to take up the common responsibilities of life and to suffer people's mocking and accusations was a difficult trial for the believers.

The true believer's disappointment was great but not as great as the disappointment experienced by Jesus' disciples. Jesus' disciples expected Jesus to take the throne as Israel's king and defeat the Romans. When Jesus entered Jerusalem

Luke 19:35 Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him.³⁶ And as He went, many spread their clothes on the road.³⁷ Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen,³⁸ saying: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!" Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"³⁹ And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."⁴⁰ But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."

But prophecy must be fulfilled. Five hundred years before Christ the prophet Zechariah had written:

Zechariah 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.

Had Christ's disciples known that He was going to the cross they could not have fulfilled this prophecy. They would have mourned and could not have greeted Him with exuberance.

In a similar way, Miller and his associates gave the message that God wanted. They announced the first and second angel's messages of Revelation 14:6-8. Prophecy was fulfilled, the world was warned. They announced the close of the 2300 years at the correct time. But if they had known that Jesus would not come to this world but begin the Day of Atonement in the heavenly sanctuary they would not have been able to announce this with the same rush and excitement.

The world expected the Adventists to abandon their faith. Although many did abandon their faith, many remained in their place. The fruit of the Advent movement testified that it was of God. Sinners repented and were converted. People became humble and reformed their lives. They left off their worldly lifestyles and entertainments. The influence of the Holy Spirit was clear and to deny this would be to deny God. They could not find an error in their calculation of the time prophecies and their enemies could not find a mistake either.

The expected event did not occur but they did not give up their trust in the Bible. They were sure they had been led of God. At least, if Jesus had come, it was clear which side everyone would have been on. People's hearts were seen. The believers asked, "Where was the mistake?" They didn't know but while people were saying to them, "You were deceived! Give up your faith!" this promise supported them:

Hebrews 10:35-39 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:³⁷ "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry."³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."³⁹ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

The Lord would soon give a great explanation concerning the situation to these faithful servants who were suffering difficulty. He was about to wipe away their tears and give them happiness and joy.

Perhaps in your life you suffered a great disappointment. This does not mean it is the end. Don't draw back! Live by faith! The Lord will do great things for you. You will see!