

## **2025 Spirit of Prophecy Day Sermon**

### **“Not Yet” and “Now”: Ellen White and the Reality of God’s Kingdom**

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Adventism was born out of a deep longing, a passionate expectation for the Second Coming of Jesus. Early Adventists yearned to live forever with Christ in the home He has prepared for them. After all, Jesus promised:

“Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am, you may be also” (John 14:1–3).

The story begins with a farmer named William Miller. After facing death on the battlefield during the War of 1812, Miller began to wrestle with life’s deepest questions. His search for meaning led him back to the Bible. Immersing himself in Scripture, his faith in God was rekindled. The Word of God has transforming power! It awakens and restores the human heart. Miller experienced just such a spiritual renewal. “In Jesus,” he wrote, “I found a Friend, and the Bible became my delight.”

Being a man of logic and reason, Miller embarked on a careful, systematic study of the Bible that spanned fifteen years, from 1816 to 1831. His goal was clear: To show that Scripture was both rational and divinely inspired. When he came to Daniel 8:14—“Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed”—Miller believed he had made a fascinating discovery. He concluded that this prophecy foretold the imminent return of Christ to purify the earth and establish His kingdom.

Though Miller never set a specific date, his followers urged him to narrow the timeframe, which led to the belief that Christ would return sometime between 1843 and 1844. Then, at a camp meeting in Exeter, New Hampshire, in August 1844, the Millerite preacher Samuel S.

Snow proposed a specific date—October 22, 1844—based on the typology of the Day of Atonement. Excitement spread quickly. Jesus was coming in just a few months!

One article from *The Midnight Cry* captured the electrifying sense of urgency:

“I take up my pen with feelings such as I never before experienced. Beyond a doubt, in my mind, the tenth day of the seventh month will witness the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven. We are then within a few days of that event. Awful moment to those who are unprepared—but glorious to those who are ready. I feel that I am making the last appeal that I shall ever make through the press” (George Storrs, *The Midnight Cry*, October 3, 1844).

Sometimes I wonder, have we lost that kind of passionate anticipation for the Second Coming? When we’re excited about something—a sport, a book, a hobby—it spills out effortlessly. It was the same with early Advent believers. Even the cautious William Miller wrote, just two weeks before October 22:

“Dear Bro. Himes: I see a glory in the seventh month which I never saw before. . . . I am almost home. Glory! Glory! Glory!!! . . . My soul is so full I cannot write. . . . My doubts, and fears, and darkness are all gone. . . . I will shout when the ‘King of kings comes’” (William Miller, *Midnight Cry*, October 12, 1844).

And then October 22, 1844 came. With hearts full of hope they waited, and waited, but there was no sign of Jesus. Noon passed then sunset. Midnight came, but Jesus did not appear. What followed was what historians now call *The Great Disappointment*. It was a devastating experience that affected people’s lives and spiritual destiny.

Hiram Edson later described the heartbreak:

“Our expectations were raised high. . . . The day had then passed, and our disappointment became a certainty. Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly

friends could have been no comparison. We wept and wept till the day dawned” (Hiram Edson, Unpublished MS, 1844).

Have you ever felt that kind of disappointment with God? I remember being expelled from school in the ninth grade, while living under a communist regime during the 1980s, for refusing to attend classes on the Sabbath. I prayed for a miracle and expected God to intervene. But He did not. I was heartbroken and angry with God.

Disappointments with God hurt. And for the Millerites, the pain wasn’t just about a mistaken date—it was about shattered trust. They were deeply wounded, and many lost not only their hope but also their faith in God. But God had not abandoned them. He never does.

Just two months later, in December 1844, God gave a vision to a young woman named Ellen Harmon—later known as Ellen G. White. This vision encouraged the disheartened believers and rekindled their hope in Christ’s return. But it also revealed something deeper: the Kingdom of God was not only a future event—it was a present experience. It was both the “Not Yet” and the “Now.”

Let us reflect on these two dimensions of God’s Kingdom and their significance for our spiritual journey of faith.

## **1. The “Not Yet” Kingdom**

In that first vision, Ellen White saw God’s people walking along a narrow path toward the heavenly city. A bright light shone behind them, which an angel identified as the “midnight cry.” This light illuminated the way so they would not stumble.

“They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the ‘midnight cry.’ This light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet, so that they might not stumble” (*Early Writings*, p. 14).

What is the “midnight cry,” and why is it compared to a “light”?

Do you remember the story in Matthew 25, the parable of the ten virgins? The bridegroom was delayed, and all the virgins fell asleep. But at midnight came the shout: “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him” (Matthew 25:6). This cry, God revealed in the vision, was still a valid prophetic reality, affirming the Biblical doctrine of the soon return of Christ. It was to be a light for the journey ahead.

Why a light? Because it is the greatest news ever told. It marks the end of sin and sorrow and the beginning of God’s eternal kingdom. Christ’s second coming will be the culmination of the human story. As John wrote in Revelation 21:4-5: “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. . . . Behold, I make all things new.”

Or as Paul described: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Ellen White repeatedly affirmed this blessed hope—the amazing **future reality** of God’s Second Coming. Listen to the following quotes from Ellen White:

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 (*The Great Controversy*, p. 299).

We have been looking with **joyful expectation** for the soon-coming of our Lord in the clouds of heaven. . . . Shall any one become weary now? . . . Give up our faith? Lose our confidence? Become impatient?—No; no. We will not think of such a thing. . . . **Well, may the children of God be filled with hope and courage** [emphasis supplied], with joy and rapture, as they contemplate the things which God has prepared for them that love him (“Cast Not Away Your Confidence,” *Review and Herald*, July 31, 1888).

The Lord is coming. **Lift up your heads and rejoice** [emphasis supplied]. Oh, we would think that those who hear the **joyful news**, who claim to love Jesus, would be filled with joy unutterable and full of glory. This is **the good, the joyful news which should electrify every soul**, which should be repeated in our homes, and told to those whom we meet on the street. What more joyful news can be communicated! (*Selected Messages*, Vol. 2, 381).

The blessed hope still shines brightly. Though delayed, the coming of Christ is certain. The vision confirmed that Adventists were on the right path, guided by the light of prophecy, sustained by the promise of Christ's soon return.

## 2. The “Now” Kingdom

Ellen White's vision also emphasized a present reality: God's kingdom can be experienced here and now. She saw that the travelers remained safe “If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city,” (*Early Writings*, pp. 14–15). This is powerful! When we live in relationship with Jesus, we begin to experience His kingdom in the present. The Second Coming is a glorious hope—but heaven can begin now.

Jesus revealed this same truth in a conversation with the Pharisees. When they asked Him when His kingdom would come, He responded by telling them that it was already present. Before speaking about the signs of His second coming, Jesus declared, “The kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:21). And Hebrews 11 describes the faithful as having seen the promises “from a distance.” They were already living as citizens of heaven.

Ellen White affirmed this truth repeatedly:

**“Heaven is to begin in this earth\*. . . . He who receives Christ by living faith has a living connection with God. . . . He carries with him the atmosphere of heaven, which is the grace of God, a treasure that the world cannot buy. If you would be a saint in heaven, you must first be a saint on earth”** (Letter 18b, 1891).

“[Our Savior] wants us to trust in Him, believing His words so fully that **we shall bring heaven into our lives here below**. We can make heaven in heart and home as we pass along if our lives are hid with Christ in God” (Manuscript 28, 1901).

“To His faithful followers, Christ has been a daily companion and familiar Friend. They have lived **in close contact, in constant communion with God**. Upon them the glory of the Lord has risen. In them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has been reflected. . . . They are prepared for the communion of heaven; for **they have heaven in their hearts**” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 421).

“If we would see heaven, **we must have heaven below**. We must **have a heaven to go to heaven in**. We must have **heaven in our families**, through Christ continually approaching unto God. Christ is the great center of attraction, and the child of God hid in Christ, meets with God and is lost in the divine being” (Ellen G. White, “Our Eternal Destiny Decided by Our Course Here,” *Signs of the Times*, July 31, 1893).

Heaven can begin here on earth when we invite Christ into our lives. As we grow in our relationship with Him, our lives are transformed and renewed, and we begin to experience the joy of salvation now. Even in times of disappointment and pain, we can feel His presence and peace, sense His forgiveness and mercy, and live with the hope of His soon return.

## Conclusion

Let me close with a story. A young man I know grew up in the church but had never cultivated a deep relationship with God. That changed about two years ago when he experienced a true conversion, after a terrifying encounter with the Devil. He is one of the very few people I know who have literally wrestled with an evil spirit.

In the past we used to talk about fast cars and high-paying jobs. He dreamed of freedom and comfort, but everything changed after that spiritual battle.

Just before Christmas, we spoke on the phone for nearly two hours. At one point, he laughed and said, “Pastor, can you believe it? We’ve been talking for two hours about God and

Ellen White!” (He had been reading *The Desire of Ages* and was deeply moved by what she had written). Then he added, “I don’t care what I have now. I have money. I have a comfortable home. But those things don’t matter to me anymore. God is my life.” As I listened to him, I realized that he was already living a taste of heaven—right here, right now—while waiting for Jesus to come.

Dear friend, what’s holding you back from experiencing God’s kingdom today?

While we wait for the “Not Yet,” may we fully live in the reality of the “Now.” Let us walk with Jesus each day, keeping our eyes fixed on Him. For when we do, heaven begins here and now while we look forward to His return to take us home. As Ellen White so beautifully put it:

“Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness, all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly, by abiding in Him, that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 69).

May this be our experience. AMEN!

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\*Emphasis supplied to bolded items by the writer.