

PROPHETIC GUIDANCE IN THE ADVENT MOVEMENT

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY VISION

Test Questions - Lesson 6

1. Supply the required information

Close tovisions were given to Mrs. White through her long life. The first was given in the year.....the last in the year.....

2. Fill in the blanks below:

The basic vision of the great controversy of the ages was given to Mrs. White at a..... service in the Lovett's Grove schoolhouse in March of.....

3. Complete this statement:

As the conflict story unfolded before her, Mrs. White first witnessed the fall of Succeeding scenes spanned the ages, and closed with a view of the

4. Answer these Questions:

1. How did Satan seek to prevent Mrs. White's writing of the great controversy story?

5. Is the following statement correct?

An illustrated subscription edition of the 1884 Great Controversy was widely sold by S.D. A. colporteurs to non-Adventists.....

6. Fill in the missing words:

Concerning the reillustrated 1911 edition. Ellen White wrote: "The book 'Great Controversy' I appreciate above..... orand I Desire that it shall come before the people."

7. Supply the information called for:

1. In 1890 the rewritten and amplified account of early Bible history was published under the title

.....

.....

2. As the foreword of this book, a well-written statement prepared bythen editor of the Review and Herald, introduced the gift of As manifested in Mrs. White's literary productions.

8. Answer these questions:

1. In what country was Mrs. White living when material was prepared for Desire of Ages?

2. What other books present materials which could not be included in Desire of Ages?

9. Complete this statement:

The last two books of the Conflict Series to be published carry the titles of.....

....., and.....

THINK OF THESE THINGS (No written answers)

Does the fact that Mrs. White rewrote and amplified the great controversy story into its final five large volumes, in any way discount the inspiration of the original four small volumes of The Spirit of Prophecy?

Could we rightly apply here the Master's statement to His disciples that "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"?

The Great Controversy Vision and the Conflict Books

6



PROPHETIC GUIDANCE

GUIDING TEXT: Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealed his secret unto his servants the prophets. – Amos 3:7.

How and When were Mrs. White's Early Books Were Issued

Through her seventy years of ministry Mrs. White was favored with close to two thousand divine revelations, beginning in December 1844 and continuing to early1915. Her first written delineations of these visions were in letters addressed to individuals, and a few of these were published by the recipients. During the years 1849 and 1850, James White published seven articles from her pen in the *Present Truth*.

In the summer of 1851 a 64-page pamphlet was printed under the title, “**A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen White.**” This first booklet contained not only her articles that had already appeared in print, but also a few chapters presenting other matters revealed to her which had not been previously published.

In 1854 a 48-page **supplement** to “Experience and Views” was issued, which included several later revelations. In 1882 these two pamphlets were incorporated in *Early Writings* as the first two sections thereof. The next major work from her pen was the little 219-page first edition of The Great Controversy.The vision of ***the great controversy*** which was given to Mrs. White in 1858 may perhaps be reckoned the most important of her many revelations.

Circumstances Under Which the Basic Vision of the Controversy Was Given

During the weekend of March 13 and 14, 1858, Elder and Mrs. James White attended meetings at Lovett’s Grove, near Bowling Green, Ohio. Sunday afternoon, the fourteenth, James White conducted a funeral service in the schoolhouse where the Sabbath meetings had been held. Following her husband’s discourse, Mrs. White arose and began to speak words of comfort to the mourners, and then she paused. The people looked up to catch her next words. They were a bit startled to hear the exclamation from her lips of “Glory to God!” repeated three times, with increasing emphasis. Ellen White was in vision.

Elder White told the people about the visions, explaining that she had been receiving visions since she was a young woman of seventeen. James told them that though her eyes were open and she seemed to be intensely watching something in the distance she was absolutely unconscious of her surroundings and knew nothing of what was going on about her. He referred to Numbers 24:4, 16 which mentioned one “which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open.”

He explained to the people that Mrs. White did not breathe while in vision, and turned to the Bible and read Daniel’s description of his experience while in vision, - “there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.” Daniel 10:17. Then Elder White invited those who cared to do so, to come forward and examine Mrs. White while she was in vision.

As the people pressed close, they could see that Mrs. White did not breathe, yet her heart continued to beat normally and the color of her cheeks was natural. A mirror was brought and held before her face, but no moisture gathered on the mirror. Then someone brought a lightened candle and held it close to her nose and mouth, but the flame stood erect, without a flicker. The people knew that she did not breathe. She walked about the room, moving about gracefully as she spoke in short exclamations of what was being revealed to her. Like Daniel, there had been a loss of natural strength, and then supernatural strength was imparted to her. See Daniel 10:7, 8, 18, 19.

For two hours Mrs. White was in vision. For two hours she did not breathe once. Then as the vision came to a close, she took a deep inhalation, paused for about a minute and then breathed again, and soon was breathing naturally. At the same time she began to recognized her surroundings, becoming conscious of what was going on about her. The funeral service was then resumed.

Comprehensive Scenes Presented in This Vision

In the vision it seemed to Ellen White that she was in heaven, where se witnessed the sin and fall of Lucifer. Then she witnessed the creation of the world, and saw our first parents in their Eden home. She saw them yield to the temptation of the serpent, whereupon they were driven from the garden home.

In quick succession the events of Bible history passed before her. She saw the experience of patriarchs and prophets, and of the people of Israel. Then she witnessed the life and death of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Following this she saw the disciples go forth to spread the gospel messages to the ends of the earth, followed quickly by the apostasy and the Dark Ages.

Then in vision she saw the Reformation, wherein noble men, at the risk of their lives, stood for truth. She was brought down to our day, and then was taken on into the future to see the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven. She witnessed the scene of the millennium, and then she saw the earth made new and given to the saints as their eternal home. It was indeed a comprehensive vision.

Satan Attempted to Prevent Mrs. White’s Writing the Great Controversy Story

A little later Mrs. White wrote concerning this important vision:

In the vision at Lovett’s Grove, most of the matter which I had seen ten years before concerning the great controversy of the ages between Christ and Satan was repeated, and I was instructed to write it out. I was shown that while I should have to contend with the powers of darkness, for Satan would make strong efforts to hinder me, yet I must put my trust in God, and angels would not leave me in the conflict. – *Life Sketches*, p. 162.

The day following the vision, James and Ellen White began their homeward journey. On the train they reviewed their recent experiences and discussed plans for writing out the vision, and for publishing that portion relating to the great controversy. This, it was decided, should be Mrs. White’s first work after reaching home.

Little did they realize Satan’s anger because of this revelation of his character and wiles, or the intensity of his determination to defeat the plans for writing and publishing the proposed book.

Arriving at Jackson, Michigan, enroute to Battle Creek, they visited friends at the home of Daniel R. Palmer. At this time Mrs. White was in usual health, and following the experience, as given in her own words, came as a complete surprise:

As I was conversing with Sister Palmer, my tong refused to utter what I wished to say, and seemed large and numb. As strange, cold sensation struck my heart, passed over my head and down my right side. For a time I was insensible, but was aroused by the voice of earnest prayer. I tried to use my left limbs, but they were perfectly useless. – *Ibid*.

Realizing that this was the third shock of paralysis she had experience, for a time Mrs. White lost hope of recovery; but in response to continued earnest prayers of the brethren, her strength was partially restored and she was able to continue the journey home. While suffering intensely from the effects of this stroke, she began to delineate the scenes of the great controversy as they had been revealed to her. Of this she wrote:

At first I could write but one page a day, and then rest three days; but as I progressed, my strength increased. The numbness of my head did not seem to becloud my mind, and before I closed that work (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1) the effect of the shock had entirely left me. – *Ibid.*, p. 163.

When completing her work on the manuscript for the book, in June 1858, Mrs. White received light on the strange experience at the home of Brother Palmer:

I was shown in vision that in the sudden attack at Jackson, Satan intended to take my life, in order to hinder the work I was about to write; but angels of God were sent to my rescue. – *Ibid*.

Publishing the Great Controversy Story for the Church

In September of that same year, announcement was made that Spiritual Gifts- *The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels* was ready for distribution. Its 219 pages only briefly touched the high points of the conflict story. This first “digest form” of the great controversy story is available to all, in facsimile form in *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1; and also in the third section of the book, *Early Writings*.

In the years following, the number of believers rapidly increased, and there was need for more books. The brethren called for republication of the little *Spiritual Gifts* volume, which they had learned to love; but Mrs. White felt that she could not consent to this. Since its publication, she had been favored with further revelations, in which the views had been repeated in more detail; so she pleaded for time and opportunity to present the subject more completely. Definite plans were laid for a series of four volumes, of about 400 pages each, to present a fuller account of the great conflict, from its inception to its close. The series was given the general title of *The Spirit of Prophecy*, and the books were published at intervals between 1870 and 1884. These were the forerunners of the present five-volume Conflict of the Ages Series.

The last and fourth volume of *The Spirit of Prophecy* carries also the title of *Great Controversy*. In world history this is the period of the “Christian Era,” from the close of the Bible record to the new earth. The burden of fully presenting this important subject rested heavily on Mrs. White, of which she wrote a letter to Elder Uriah Smith on February 19, 1884:

I write from fifteen to twenty pages each day. It is now eleven o’clock and I have written fourteen pages of manuscript for Volume IV As I write upon my book, I feel intensely moved. I want to get it out as soon as possible, for our people need it so much. I shall complete it next month if the Lord gives me health as He has done. I have been unable to sleep nights, for thinking of the important things to take place. Three hours and sometime five is the most sleep I get. My mind is stirred so deeply I cannot rest. Write, write, write, I feel that I must, and not delay. Great things are before us, and we want to call the people from their indifference to get ready. Things that are eternal crowd upon my vision day and night. The things that are temporal

fade from my sight. – *Letter* 11, 1884. Quoted in *Messenger*, p. 57.

In the fall of 1884 the book was ready for distribution. The price was set at \$1.00, thus harmonizing with the first three books of the series. The distribution of the Seventh-day Adventist books to the world through colporteurs had began only three years earlier, and it was soon discovered that *Great Controversy* could be sold to those not of our faith. So the publishers took the plates and printed and illustrated subscription edition to sell as \$1.50. during the first four years of publication, ten editions of this book, totaling not less than 50,000 copies, were printed and sold.

Mrs. White’s Visit to Europe and the Great Controversy Story

From 1885 to 1886 Mrs. White was in Europe. Her contacts with European people and her visits to some of the historic places, brought vividly to her mind many scenes previously shown to her in vision – some of them two or three times, others many times. Many of the historic places she clearly recognized as having been shown to her in vision, and she was familiar with the events that had transpired there. Thus when plans were discussed for publishing *The Great Controversy* in the principle languages of Europe, she decided to enlarge the book. She was then able, in preparing the manuscript for the larger book and for translation, to write more fully and graphically regarding some important events.

While engaged in the work of preparing the larger book for the world as well as for the church, there developed in Mrs. White’s mind and in the mind of those associated with her the plan for five large Conflict of the Ages books, spanning the controversy story from its inception to its close. These would be books suitable for door-to-door sale to the general public by our colporteurs. Mrs. White never lost sight of this objective, though the work took much longer than she had anticipated. The new enlarged *Great Controversy* came from our presses in 1888, and was enthusiastically received. Many printings were made, and hundreds of thousands of copies were sold.

Because the printing plates for the book had become badly worn, it was necessary in 1911 to reset *The Great Controversy*. When this was done, it was re-illustrated, references to historical quotations were inserted, and in a few instances clearer historical citations were substituted, with the express approval of the author. On July 25, 1911, soon after receiving copies of this new edition of the book, Mrs. White wrote of her satisfaction regarding it:

I regard this new edition with great satisfaction The book “Great Controversy” I appreciate above silver or gold, and I greatly desire that it shall come before the people. While writing the manuscript of “The Great Controversy” I was often conscious of the presence of the angels of God. And many time the scenes about which I was writing were presented to me anew in visions of the night, so that they were fresh and vivid in my mind. – *Letter* 56, 1911. Quoted in *Messenger*, p. 58.

The Great Controversy which came from the press in 1911 is the book which is so well known today, whether in the standard red binding, the missionary edition, or in the well-illustrated edition for colporteur sale, either under the title *Great Controversy* or *The Triumph of God’s Love*.

Background of Patriarchs and Prophets, First Volume of the Conflict Series

After the *closing scene* of the great conflict had been more fully presented in 1888, for the use of both Seventh-day Adventists and the world at large, Mrs. White’s mind turned back to the beginning of the conflict; and the story of the *early ages* was rewritten and published in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, making a companion book for *The Great Controversy*. Mrs. White’s work on this volume, which appeared in 1890, was done in her home in Healdsburg, California. At Mrs. White’s request, Elder Uriah Smith, then editor of the *Review and Herald*, wrote the foreword to this first volume of what was to become five-volume series. There he presented a well-written introduction to the gift of prophecy as manifested in Mrs. E. G. White’ literary productions.

Circumstances of Mrs. White’s Work on the Life of Christ

All through the years it was Mrs. White’s desire to deal fully with the life of Christ, His teachings, and His sacrifice for us. That which she had written during the 1870’s on this phase of the conflict, and which was published in volume 1 and 2 of The Spirit of Prophecy and in a number of pamphlets, later seemed to her to be inadequate. Therefore when her work on Patriarchs and Prophets was finished, her thought turned to the preparation of a more comprehensive treatise on the life of our Lord. For this work she carried a great burden, and in her letters are many references to her hope of being able soon to get the book under way.

When se went to Australia in the autumn of 1891, it was her expectation that the long-hoped-for Life of Christ could soon be prepared; and during the years 1892 to 1898 she spent much time in writing chapters for this book. A glimpse of the intensity under which she worked while preparing copy for The Desire of Ages is given in a letter written in 1892to Elder O. A. Olsen, then president of the General Conference:

I walked with trembling before God. I know not how to speak or trace with pen the large subjects of the atoning sacrifice. I know not how to present subjects in the living power in which they stand before me. I tremble with fear that I shall belittle the great plan of salvation by cheap words. I bow my soul in awe and reverence before God, and say, “Who is sufficient for these things?” – Letter 10, 1892. Quoted in Messenger, p. 59.

It is well known that many of the world’s masterpieces of literature-poetry and gospel hymns – have been fashioned on the anvil of pain; and so it was with parts of Mrs. White’s writing of the life and ministry of Jesus. Some of the choicest passages in The Desire of Ages came from her pen during the eleven months she was confined to her room, suffering constant pain from inflammatory rheumatism. Some have marveled at the extraordinary beauty of language in The Desire of Ages. Perhaps the secret is that “in the pulpit and in private, by voice and pen, . . . the life of Christ” was her favorite theme. – Letter 41, 1895. Quoted in Messenger, p. 59.

In preparation of copy for The Desire of Ages – as for other later publications, - Mrs. White did not write the book straight through, chapter by chapter, in the order in which they finally appeared in printed form. This was not necessary, for during the preceding thirty-five years she had written many hundreds of pages on this theme, much of which had already been published in one form or another. She instructed those who were employed as her helpers to gather out from her published books, articles, letters, and manuscripts whatever they could find on the subject. With this backlog of material in hand she wrote many additional articles as the experiences of Christ’s life were opened anew to her. When these newly-written passages, together with what she had written in former years, were grouped in their natural order, she again studied the story in its sequence, and sometimes added connecting events.

Her writings on the life and teachings of our Saviour were found to be so voluminous that they could not all be contained in one book. Therefore some materials which could not be included in *The Desire of Ages* were used in *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, and a portion of *Ministry of Healing*.

The Five – Book Conflict of the Ages Serles Completed

Though outstanding features of the great conflict were covered in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *The Desire of Ages*, and *The Great Controversy*, two wide gaps still remained in the portrayal of the conflict between good and evil from the fall to the final restoration. One of these periods reached from the death of King David to the birth of Christ, the other covered the first century of the Christian church. When other labors permitted, Mrs. White send her literary assistants enthusiastically undertook the task of gathering and preparing matter for two more volumes to complete the series. As in the case of *The Desire of Ages*, hundreds of pages were already in print in earlier books and periodical articles, covering portions of these periods. Also, many chapters and portions of chapters could be drawn from the files of unpublished manuscripts. Then much new material was written by Mrs. White, specifically for the work in preparation.

In 1911 *The Acts of the Apostles* came from the press and was heartily welcomed. *Prophets and Kings* followed soon after Mrs. White’s death.

As we review Mrs. White’s experience while writing the scenes that she had been shown in many visions, we are impressed by the certain evidence of God’s guiding hand. Surely the five books of the Conflict Series contain the most precious light that has yet shone upon this large generation of men, outside of the Bible.

In Lesson 7 we shall answer the following questions:

- (1) By what rule are the claims of a prophet to be measured?**
- (2) What was Mrs. White’s attitude towards the Bible prophets?**