

# Lest We Forget

We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history. LS 196.

Vol. 1

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No. 2

## William Miller's Dream

In the book *Early Writings* (page 48) in the section titled "To the Little Flock", Ellen G. White referred to William Miller's dream:

"Dear Brethren: The Lord gave me a view, January 26, 1850, which I will relate. I saw that some of the people of God are stupid and dormant and but half awake; they do not realize the time we are now living in, and that the man with the 'dirt brush'[see below] has entered, and that some are in danger of being swept away. I begged of Jesus to save them, to spare them a little longer, and let them see their awful danger, that they might get ready before it should be forever too late. The angel said, 'Destruction is coming like a mighty whirlwind.' I begged of the angel to pity and to save those who loved this world, who were attached to their possessions and were not willing to cut loose from them and sacrifice to speed the messengers on their way to feed the hungry sheep who were perishing for want of spiritual food."

This is William Miller's dream as recorded on page 81 of *Early Writings*:

"I dreamed that God, by an unseen hand, sent me a curiously wrought casket about ten inches long by six square, made of ebony and pearls curiously inlaid. To the casket there was a key attached. I immediately took the key and opened the casket, when, to my wonder and surprise, I found it filled with all sorts and sizes of jewels, diamonds, precious stones, and gold and

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## Mrs. William Miller The Forgotten Pioneer

Lucy Smith and her family lived in Poultney, Vermont, about 6 miles from the Miller home in Low Hampton, New York. There is little found in William Miller's diary with regards to Lucy and her influence in his life, but on January 2, 1803, at age 20, he wrote, "Be it remembered that on this day, it being a Sunday in the afternoon of the aforesaid day, I did bind myself and was bound to be, the partner of Miss Lucy Smith, of Poultney. And by these presents do agree to be hers and only hers till death shall part us (provided she is of the same mind). Whereunto I here set my hand and seal." Evidently being "of the same mind", they were married on Wednesday, June 29, 1803, and continued together until his death in 1849. They had 10 children, 8 of whom lived to adulthood.

Sylvester Bliss, in his memoirs of Miller, stated, "As Mrs. Lucy Miller is now living, all that might be said to her praise may not be said here. It is sufficient to state, that she was remarkably endowed, by nature and by her industrial and economical habits, to make domestic life highly agreeable, and to favor Mr. Miller's promotion and success...".

FF •

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## Miller's Dream *from Page 1*

silver coin of every dimension and value, beautifully arranged in their several places in the casket; and thus arranged they reflected a light and glory equaled only to the sun. I thought it was not my duty to enjoy this wonderful sight alone, although my heart was overjoyed at the brilliancy, beauty, and value of its contents. I therefore placed it on a center table in my room and gave out word that all who had a desire might come and see the most glorious and brilliant sight ever seen by man in this life.

"The people began to come in, at first few in number, but increasing to a crowd. When they first looked into the casket, they would wonder and shout for joy. But when the spectators increased, everyone would begin to trouble the jewels, taking them out of the casket and scattering them on the table. I began to think that the owner would require the casket and the jewels again at my hand; and if I suffered them to be scattered, I could never place them in their places in the casket again as before; and felt I should never be able to meet the accountability, for it would be immense. I then began to plead with the people not to handle them, nor to take them out of the casket; but the more I pleaded, the more they scattered; and now they seemed to scatter them all over the room, on the floor and on every piece of furniture in the room.

"I then saw that among the genuine jewels and coin they had scattered an innumerable quantity of spurious jewels and counterfeit coin. I was highly incensed at their base conduct and ingratitude, and reprovved and reproached them for it; but the more I reprovved, the more they scattered the spurious jewels and false coin among the genuine.

"I then became vexed in my physical soul and began to use physical force to push them out of the room; but while I

was pushing out one, three more would enter and bring in dirt and shavings and sand and all manner of rubbish, until they covered every one of the true jewels, diamonds, and coins, which were all excluded from sight. They also tore in pieces my casket and scattered it among the rubbish. I thought no man regarded my sorrow or my anger. I became wholly discouraged and disheartened, and sat down and wept.

"While I was thus weeping and mourning for my great loss and accountability, I remembered God, and earnestly prayed that He would send me help.

"Immediately the door opened, and a man entered the room, when the people all left it; and he, having a dirt brush in his hand, opened the windows, and began to brush the dirt and rubbish from the room.

"I cried to him to forbear, for there were some precious jewels scattered among the rubbish. He told me to

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*In This Issue the life and work of William Miller are highlighted. Miller is best known for the Advent Movement which came to bear his name, "Millerism". God also revived Bible study - especially of the prophecies - through this New England farmer. Part of Ellen White's testimony concerning Miller is also reproduced here.*

Vol. 1

No. 2

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Arthur Corbett, Gary Foster, Ray & Frances Foster.

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## William Miller's Rules of Bible Interpretation

In studying the Bible, I have found the following rules to be of great service to myself, and now give them to the public by special request. *Every rule should be well studied, in connection with the Scripture references, if the Bible student would be at all benefitted by them.*

### RULES

1. Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible. Matt. 5:18
2. All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by diligent application and study. 2 Tim. 3:15,16,17
3. Nothing revealed in the Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering. Deut. 29:29; Matt. 10:26,27; 1 Cor. 2:10; Phil. 3:15; Isa. 14:11; Matt. 21:22; John 14:13,14; 15:7; James 1:5,6; 1 John 5:13,14,15
4. To understand doctrine, bring all the Scriptures together on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence, and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in an error. Isa. 28:7-29; 35:8; Prov. 19:27; Luke 24:27,44,45; Rom. 16:26; James 5:19; 2 Pet. 1:19,20
5. Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound it to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his *guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom* is my rule, not the Bible. Ps. 19:7-11; 119:97-105; Matt. 23:8-10; 1 Cor 2:12-16; Eze. 34:18,19; Luke 11:52; Mal. 2:7,8
6. God has revealed things to come, by visions, in figures and parables, and in

this way the same things are oftentimes revealed again and again, by different visions, or in different figures and parables. If you wish to understand them, you must combine them all in one. Ps. 89:19; Hos. 12:10; Hab. 2:2; Acts 2:17; 1 Cor. 10:6; Heb. 9:9,24; Ps. 78:2; Matt. 8:13, 34; Gen. 41:1-32; Dan. 2; 7; 8; Acts 10:9-16

7. Visions are always mentioned as such. 2 Cor. 12:1
8. Figures always have a figurative meaning, and are used much in prophecy to represent future things, times and events; such as *mountains*, meaning *governments*; *beasts*, meaning *kingdoms*, *waters*, meaning *people*, *lamps*, meaning *Word of God*, *day*, meaning *year*. Dan. 2:35,44; 7:8,17; Rev. 17:1,15; Ps. 119:105; Ezek. 4:6
9. Parables are used as comparison to illustrate subjects, and must be explained in the same way as figures, by the subject and Bible. See explanation of the ten virgins, Miller's Lectures, No. 16. Mark 4:13
10. Figures sometimes have two or more different significations; as day is used in a figurative sense to represent three different periods of time.
  1. Indefinite.
  2. Definite, a day for a year.
  3. Day for a thousand years.If you put on the right construction it will harmonize with the Bible and make good sense, otherwise it will not. Eccles. 7:14; Ezek. 4:6; 2 Pet. 3:8
11. How to know when a word is used figuratively: If it makes good sense as it stands, and does no violence to the simple laws of nature, then it must be understood literally; if not, figuratively. Rev. 12:1,2; 17:3-7

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BIRTH  
1782

Years of Age



Marriage  
1803

21

Army Conversion  
1812 1816

30 34

## Bible Study, Prophetic Interpretation and the Second Coming - The Story of William Miller

Three mighty truths were rediscovered and popularized in the United States in the middle 1800s. These truths were:

1. Bible Study - the Bible can be read and understood by ordinary people.
2. Prophetic Interpretation - Bible prophecies can be understood using the day-for-a-year principle.
3. Second Advent Message.

As always when the joy and power of Bible study was rediscovered, a mighty spiritual revival took place.

William Miller, as a young man, was a deist. He believed that the Bible was a collection of mystical fables and contradictions. However during his service in the war of 1812, he realized that God intervened and saved his life and he was converted in 1816. He then became a serious Bible student.

William Miller, the Christian, wrote: "I was constrained to admit that the Scriptures must be a revelation from God. They became my delight; and in Jesus I found a friend. The Saviour became to me the chiefest among ten thousand; and the Scriptures, which before were dark and contradictory, now became the lamp to my feet and light to my path. My mind became settled and satisfied. I found the Lord God to be a Rock in the midst of the ocean of life. The Bible now became my chief study, and I can truly say, I searched it with great delight. I found the half was never told me."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sylvester Bliss *Memoirs of William Miller* p.67

When challenged by his deist friends to prove that the Bible was the Word of God, Miller decided on two criteria:

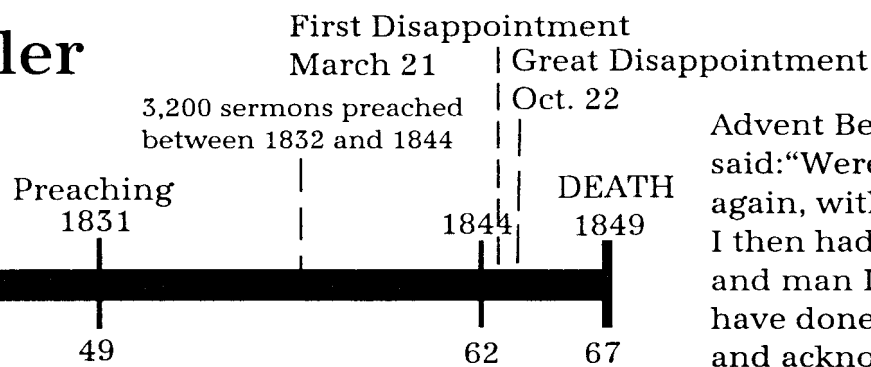
1. If the Bible was the Word of God, it must be understandable from the obvious meaning of the language used.
2. If the Bible were the Word of God, it had to be consistent within itself. For two years Miller studied to satisfy himself concerning these two points.

After those two years of intensive Bible study, with no aids but his Cruden's concordance, comparing Scripture with Scripture, he was perfectly satisfied that he could understand Scripture, that the Bible said what it meant, and meant what it said, and that the Bible was consistent with itself. In this process Miller became convinced from the study of the prophecies that Jesus would come to earth at the close of the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14 sometime in 1843 or 1844.

From 1816 - 1831 Miller farmed to support his family and continued studying. At age 49 he felt wholly unqualified for public speaking. He had a great struggle responding to God's direct call to preach. Had it not been for the urging of the Holy Spirit, and his brethren, and the indications of unmistakable providences, he would never have entered a pulpit. But at last William Miller became a revivalist Adventist preacher.

From the first, his words were blessed in a remarkable manner to the salvation of souls. His first message was followed by a religious awakening. It was recognized that Miller could reach a class of minds not influenced by other men. In nearly every town in which he preached, scores, and in some, hundreds, were

# Miller



converted. Protestant churches of nearly all denominations were thrown open to him. The invitation to speak usually came from the ministers of the congregations. Miller had determined not to speak except by invitation. Before long, there were so many invitations, that he could not fill half of them.

In 1833, Miller was licensed to preach by his local Baptist church. Miller travelled and preached extensively in the New England and middle states. Initially he financed his ministry from his own purse. Later, he received some financial help, but it was never enough to meet travel expenses. Miller, his farm and his family, suffered financially during this period of his life.

In 1840, a group of ministers headed by William Miller signed their names to a call for a general conference on the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to be held October 13th at Boston. Typhoid fever prevented Miller from attending. Among those who did attend were Joshua V. Himes (the church pastor where the conference was held), Henry Dana Ward, Henry Jones, Josiah Litch, and Joseph Bates.

Miller expected the Lord's appearing sometime in the Jewish year of 1843, between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. Interest and expectation of the Lord's return continued up until the day of March 21st, 1844. But that day came and went with no visible return of Jesus. On May 2nd, six weeks after the fateful March 21st, Miller felt that the time had come to make a frank statement that there was an error in his preaching. He addressed a communication "To Second

Advent Believers," in which he said: "Were I to live my life over again, with the same evidence that I then had, to be honest with God and man I should have to do as I have done. ... I confess my error, and acknowledge my disappoint-

ment; yet I still believe that the day of the Lord is near, even at the door; and I exhort you, my brethren, to be watchful, and not let the day come upon you un-awares."<sup>2</sup>

Miller's diary closes in 1844 with these words: "Now I have given, since 1832, three thousand two hundred lectures."<sup>3</sup> While laboring in Philadelphia in 1844, a friend gave the following description of Miller's personal appearance: "There is a kindness of soul, simplicity, and power, peculiarly original, combined in his manner; and he is affable and attentive to all, without any affectation of superiority. He is of about medium stature, a little corpulent, and, in temperament, a mixture of sanguine and nervous. His intellectual developments are unusually full, and we see in his head great benevolence and firmness, united with a lack of self-esteem."<sup>4</sup>

Miller accepted the "seventh-month" date of October 22, 1844 only two or three weeks prior to the date, being persuaded by the evidence of the working of God's spirit in that movement. Though disappointed that day too, nevertheless he continued to hold fast his faith in the eminent second coming until his death.

The last five years of Miller's life were spent preaching and writing of the expected Advent. Travel and speaking became more difficult due to illness. The last six months of life he was confined to bed; yet he died with hope undaunted. Miller did not accept the sanctuary truth. God in His great mercy and perfect knowledge saw that Miller's rejection of this advanced light was not rebellion. Miller died in the hope of the Advent.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 256 <sup>3</sup> Ibid p. 254 <sup>4</sup> Ibid p. 249 RF •

## Miller's Bible Study Rules *from Page 3*

12. To learn the true meaning of figures, trace your figurative word through your Bible, and where you find it explained, put it on your figure, and if it makes good sense you need look no further; if not, look again.

13. To know whether we have the true historical event for the fulfillment of a prophecy: If you find every word of the prophecy (after the figures are understood) is literally fulfilled, then you may know that your history is the true event. But if one word lacks a fulfillment, then you must look for another event, or wait its future development. For God takes care that history and prophecy doth agree, so that the true, believing children of God may never be ashamed. Ps. 21:5; Isa. 14:17-19; 1 Pet. 2:6; Rev. 17:17; Acts 3:18

14. The most important rule of all is, that you must have *faith*. It must be a faith that requires a sacrifice, and, if tried, would give up the dearest object on earth, the world and all its desires, character, living, occupation, friends, home, comforts and worldly honors. If any of these should hinder our believing any part of God's word, it would show our faith to be vain. Nor can we ever believe so long as one of these motives lies lurking in our hearts. We must believe that God will never forfeit His word. And we can have confidence that He that takes notice of the sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our head, will guard the translation of His own word, and throw a barrier around it, and prevent those who sincerely trust in God, and put implicit confidence in His word, from erring far from the truth, though they may not understand Hebrew or Greek.

These are some of the most important rules which I find the word of God warrants me to adopt and follow, in order for system and regularity. And if I am not greatly deceived, in so doing, I have

found the Bible, as a whole, one of the most simple, plain, and intelligible books ever written, containing proof in itself of its Divine origin, and full of all knowledge that our hearts could wish to know or enjoy. I have found it a treasure which the world cannot purchase. It gives a calm peace in believing, and a firm hope in the future. It sustains the mind in adversity, and teaches us to be humble in prosperity. It prepares us to love and do good to others, and to realize the value of the soul. It makes us bold and valiant for the truth, and nerves the arm to oppose error. It gives us a powerful weapon to break down infidelity, and makes known the only antidote for sin. It instructs us how death will be conquered, and how the bonds of the tomb must be broken. It tells us of future events, and shows the preparation necessary to meet them. It gives us an opportunity to hold conversation with the King of kings, and reveals the best code of laws ever enacted.

This is but a faint view of its value; yet how many perishing souls treat it with neglect, or, what is equally as bad, treat it as a hidden mystery which cannot be known. Oh, my dear reader, make it your chief study. Try it well, and you will find it to be all I have said. Yes, like the Queen of Sheba, you will say the half was not told you.

The divinity taught in our schools is always founded on some sectarian creed. It may do to take a blank mind and impress it with this kind, but it will always end in bigotry. A free mind will never be satisfied with the views of others. Were I a teacher of youth in divinity, I would first learn their capacity and mind. If these were good, I would make them study the Bible for themselves, and send them out free to do the world good. But if they had no mind, I would stamp them with another's mind, write bigot on their forehead, and send them out as *slaves!*

pp. 20-24 Miller's Works. Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology. Edited by Joshua Himes 1842

## Ellen White on William Miller

Ellen Harmon in her teens, heard William Miller deliver two sets of lectures in Portland, Maine, in the years 1840 and 1842. In the book *Early Writings*, pages 229-230, she writes:

“God sent His angel to move upon the heart of a farmer who had not believed the Bible, to lead him to search the prophecies. Angels of God repeatedly visited that chosen one, to guide his mind and open to his understanding prophecies which had ever been dark to God’s people. The commencement of the chain of truth was given to him, and he was led on to search for link after link, until he looked with wonder and admiration upon the Word of God. He saw there a perfect chain of truth. That Word which he had regarded as uninspired now opened before his vision in its beauty and glory. He saw that one portion of Scripture explains another, and when one passage was closed to his understanding, he found in another part of the Word that which explained it. He regarded the sacred Word of God with joy and with the deepest respect and awe.

“As he followed down the prophecies, he saw that the inhabitants of the earth were living in the closing scenes of this world’s history, yet they knew it not. He looked at the churches and saw that they were corrupt; they had taken their affections from Jesus and placed them on the world; they were seeking for worldly honor, instead of that honor which cometh from above; grasping for worldly riches, instead of laying up their treasure in heaven. He could see hypocrisy, darkness, and death everywhere. His spirit was stirred within him. God called him to leave his farm, as He called Elisha to leave his oxen and the field of his labor to follow Elijah. With trembling, Wil-

liam Miller began to unfold to the people the mysteries of the kingdom of God, carrying his hearers down through the prophecies to the second advent of Christ. With every effort he gained strength. As John the Baptist heralded the first advent of Jesus and prepared the way for His coming, so William Miller and those who joined with him proclaimed the second advent of the Son of God.

“I was carried back to the days of the disciples and was shown that God had a special work for the beloved John to accomplish. Satan was determined to hinder this work, and he led on his servants to destroy John. But God sent His angel and wonderfully preserved him. All who witnessed the great power of God manifested in the deliverance of John were astonished, and many were convinced that God was with him, and that the testimony which he bore concerning Jesus was correct. Those who sought to destroy him were afraid to attempt again to take his life, and he was permitted to suffer on for Jesus. He was falsely accused by his enemies and was shortly banished to a lonely island, where the Lord sent His angel to reveal to him events which were to take place upon the earth and the state of the church down to the end—her backslidings and the position which she should occupy if she would please God and finally overcome.” On page 258 of the same book she writes:

“Moses erred as he was about to enter the Promised Land. So also, I saw that William Miller erred as he was soon to enter the heavenly Canaan, in suffering his influence to go against the truth. Others led him to this; others must account for it. But angels watch the precious dust of this servant of God, and he will come forth at the sound of the last trumpet.”

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Could you tell me more clearly how the Pioneer Compact Disc Committee is of service to the church. B. C. H.

Taiwan, R.O.C.

Dear Bruce,

Thank you for asking. The SDA Pioneers had a vital, personal love experience with Jesus Christ. They had a heart-felt gratitude for His giving them victory over sin in this life. The blessed hope they told about, wrote about, and lived for, was of seeing Him come in the clouds of glory on October 22, 1844. They were bitterly disappointed not to see Jesus that day. However their faith and hope in the Lord was strengthened as they understood that Jesus had come to the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary on October 22, and that He had begun the final phase of the plan of salvation that would culminate in His personal appearance in the clouds of heaven to receive a people who had been purified by Jesus "making a man more precious than gold", and making the whole church "glorious without spot or wrinkle". They believed this would result from Jesus' ministration in the Most Holy combined with their intelligent response of faith to "enter into the marriage of the Lamb". To renew in us the vision and experience of the SDA Pioneers, this Compact Disc is being prepared. The advantage of having their now out-of-print writings on CD is the ability to find with speed and completeness specific subjects, statements or words used by the Pioneers in their writings, thus making them more available to the church. RF •

Seekers of His Glory. Who are the Pioneers Part II (continued from last issue) is planned for the next issue, due to space limitations in this issue.

## Miller's Dream *from page 2*

'fear not,' for he would 'take care of them'.

"Then, while he brushed the dirt and rubbish, false jewels and counterfeit coin, all rose and went out of the window like a cloud, and the wind carried them away. In the bustle I closed my eyes for a moment; when I opened them, the rubbish was all gone. The precious jewels, the diamonds, the gold and silver coins, lay scattered in profusion all over the room.

"He then placed on the table a casket, much larger and more beautiful than the former, and gathered up the jewels, the diamonds, the coins, by the handful, and cast them into the casket, till not one was left, although some of the diamonds were not bigger than the point of a pin.

"He then called upon me to 'come and see.'

"I looked into the casket, but my eyes were dazzled with the sight. They shone with ten times their former glory. I thought they had been scoured in the sand by the feet of those wicked persons who had scattered and trod them in the dust. They were arranged in beautiful order in the casket, every one in its place, without any visible pains of the man who cast them in. I shouted with very joy, and that shout awoke me." •

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