

What is the Age of the planet earth?

What is the meaning of Ellen G White's statement about 6000 years in relation to earth's age?

Answer: In researching about the 6000 year question; researchers “have located a total of forty-two 6,000-year statements published by” Ellen G White (EGW) “in primary sources before her death in 1915. Of course, these do not include any compilations or reprints of her works made after 1915. In addition, we have forty-one 4,000-year statements and four 2,500-year statements all of which are pertinent to the question of determining what was Ellen White's view on the age of the earth.

For us to come up with a plausible answer; we need to revisit our understanding on inspiration. The basic understanding is that “the whole body of Ellen White's works is inspired because they are the production of an inspired person.” We however need to appreciate that “not all of her chronological statements have equal authority in today's world of advanced knowledge in archaeology, ancient history, and Biblical exegesis.

For us to understand the meaning of EGW's statements on the age of the earth; we need to consider “the hermeneutic principle that “time and place must be considered” in regard to the E. G. White writings. <sup>9</sup> This principles for example “recognizes that her statements on the use of milk or on race relations are tempered by the conditions existing at the time those statements were recorded. <sup>10</sup> To advocate that these should be binding for all time in all parts of the world would be a misuse of inspired writings. And it is “so with her statements on chronology.

The function of the 6000 year statement is literary, not chronological. “First, they serve as a means of literary linkage; that is, they link together two Biblical person ages or events that have something in common. The following is an example of how she compares the first Adam with the second Adam, using the 4,000 years as a literary thread to bind the two together: “What a contrast to this perfect being [the first Adam] did the second Adam present. . . . For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in size and physical strength.” <sup>12</sup> The second function is that of *literary emphasis*. She uses chronological statements to reinforce what she wishes to convey by emphasizing temporal duration and extent just as one would use superlatives for emphasis. It's a literary device. A typical example is this: “Six thousand years has this archenemy been warring against the government of God.”

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The function is not to establish a date for Creation, but to show the extent and intensity of the great controversy between good and evil, between the government of God and the rebel government of Satan. Most of the 4,000-year statements fall under the category of *literary linkage*, and most of the 6,000-year statements are examples of *literary emphasis*. Additional evidence that their function is not primarily chronological is that one could insert the words “for thousands of years” in place of the 6,000- and 4,000-year figures without changing the overall intent or thrust of the statements in the least.

Actually, even with her 6,000-year statements we find two sets of mutually exclusive statements. Between the years 1868 and 1913 she published ten statements advocating less than 6,000 years for human history, but between 1886 and 1890 she

published three statements advocating a period of more than 6,000 years. <sup>15</sup> One very good evidence of her final position is the way in which she revised one 6,000-year statement. In 1890 she wrote: "The continual transgression of man for over six thousand years has brought sickness, pain, and death as its fruit." <sup>16</sup> Then in 1913 she wrote: "The continual transgression of man for nearly six thousand years has brought sickness, pain, and death as its fruit." <sup>17</sup> These statements are identical except for the substitution of the word "nearly" in place of the word "over." Others in attempting to solve this discrepancy have suggested that in the nineteenth century the word nearly meant "near to," thus it could be interpreted as meaning "slightly beyond." But Ellen White did not use it in this way. The laser-disc concordance lists 1,400 occurrences of the word nearly in her writings, and not once did she use it in the sense of "more than."

EGW White used available literature to establish some of the statements that she uttered. "In matters not essential to salvation the prophet sometimes had to choose the best of what was available, even though the best may have contained inaccuracies. Many New Testament writers quoted from Greek translations of the Old Testament that are definitely inferior to the original Hebrew. God did not give them a vision telling what the correct translation ought to be.

So it was with Ellen White; it was not necessary for her to have a vision every time she wanted to find a particular Scripture text, because a Bible concordance was available to her. She did not have a vision when she wanted to discover how far Hebron was from Jerusalem, or the Appii Forum was from Rome, because a Bible dictionary or atlas was at her disposal. <sup>22</sup> In matters of chronology she need not have a vision whenever she needed to ascertain a particular time relationship, because the margins of most nineteenth-century Bibles provided dates for all Biblical events. We can give a clear-cut example of this. Once she wrote, "Solomon, at the age of eighteen years, commenced his reign upon the throne of his father, David." <sup>23</sup> Nowhere does Scripture itself record information that would provide the exact age of Solomon then. Ellen White could have conveniently obtained such information by looking at the marginal dates for Solomon's birth (1033 B.C.) and his coronation (1015 B.C.) as provided by Ussher's chronology. The difference between the two is exactly eighteen years!

Kindly access <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1984/04/ellen-g.-white-and-biblical-chronology> accessed 5 October 2020 for further study

We should not be dogmatic when it comes to the 6000 year statements. We need to read and understand them in their context. If we get confused about the 6000 year statements, we do well to go back to the Bible and study more about what will prepare us for Christ's second coming rather than fall for speculative interpretation of scripture and EGW's writings. The use of the 6000 year statements by EGW to establish the year for Christ's second advent is not in harmony with biblical teaching. Date setting or any statements that can possibly lead to perceived setting of dates for the Second Coming of Christ should be avoided. This way we will remain in harmony with the special guidance from the Lord.