

## What Are “Testing Truths”?

Jerry A. Stevens

May 14, 2012

Testing truths are “plain, soul-testing [Biblical] truths which require self-denial and renunciation of the world” (GW 464.2), and thus are “necessary to salvation” (RH Oct. 8, 1867, para. 16). Once understood, these Biblical teachings challenge individuals to make significant changes in their personal beliefs and/or lifestyle. My research has discovered the following seven testing truths that are confirmed as such in the writings of Ellen G. White:

1. The third angel’s message. This is “the testing message of the third angel” (Ltr 29, March 22, 1895, in VSS 329.2): “If any man worship the Beast and his image, and receive his mark on his forehead, or on his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the Beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name” (Rev. 14:9–11); cf. “the testing truths of the third angel’s message” (Ltr 140, July 5, 1903, in RH July 28, 1903, para. 1).
2. “The testing truths of the seventh-day Sabbath question” (Ltr 220, Oct. 14, 1903, in 4MR 376.1); “the seventh-day Sabbath” ((Ltr 14, June 18, 1887, in Ev 248.2–3). See Ex. 20:8–11; Mt. 12:8; Rev. 1:10.
3. “The nonimmortality of the soul” (ibid.). See Eccles. 12:7; Ezek. 18:4; cf. 1 Tim. 6:13, 16. Methodist minister George Storrs convinced Harriet Harmon of the unconscious sleep in death, or what he termed “soul-sleep,” and her teenaged daughter Ellen (later married to James White) gradually endorsed this “beautiful faith” (see 1T 39.1–40.2). Closely related to this topic is the doctrine of the millennium, or that 1,000-year period bounded by the first and second resurrections (Rev. 20), since conditional immortality is the portion divinely given to the first group, but everlasting destruction is the destiny of the wicked second group and the ultimate proof of a soul’s natural/inherent nonimmortality.
4. “The personal coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven to our earth in a short time” (ibid.); cf. “the near coming of Christ” (GW 313.0). See Titus 2:12; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Mt. 24; Rev. 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20.
5. “The work of redemption” (ibid.). See Gal. 3:13; 4:4, 5; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:9.
6. “The commandments of God” (ibid.) as listed in Ex. 20:3–17. “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14:15); cf. Jas. 2:10.
7. “The testing truth that caused so many of His disciples to turn back”—to “eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood” (Jn. 6:53–66)—signifying “to receive Him as a personal Saviour, believing that He forgives our sins, and that we are complete in Him” (DA 394.2, 389.3).

A strong case might be made that the list of items in the Seventh-day Adventist baptismal affirmation of the church’s fundamental beliefs, since the list comprises a test of fellowship/discipleship, and thus essentially could be considered a list of testing truths.

The list as printed on pages 46–49 of the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (rev. 2010) consists of a public recitation of a 13-part doctrinal vow followed by a public commitment to believe and accept the entire list.

The baptismal candidate's commitment reads as follows:

1. I believe there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons.
2. I accept the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary as the atoning sacrifice for my sins and believe that by God's grace through faith in His shed blood I am saved from sin and its penalty.
3. I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and personal Savior and believe that God, in Christ, has forgiven my sins and given me a new heart, and I renounce the sinful ways of the world.
4. I accept by faith the righteousness of Christ, my Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary, and accept His promise of transforming grace and power to live a loving, Christ-centered life in my home and before the world.
5. I believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word, the only rule of faith and practice for the Christian. I covenant to spend time regularly in prayer and Bible study.
6. I accept the Ten Commandments as a transcript of the character of God and a revelation of His will. It is my purpose by the power of the indwelling Christ to keep this law, including the fourth commandment, which requires the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord and the memorial of Creation.
7. I look forward to the soon coming of Jesus and the blessed hope, when "this mortal shall . . . put on immortality" [1 Cor. 15:54, KJV]. As I prepare to meet the Lord, I will witness to His loving salvation by using my talents in personal soul-winning endeavor to help others to be ready for His glorious appearing.
8. I accept the Biblical teaching of spiritual gifts and believe that the gift of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church.
9. I believe in church organization. It is my purpose to worship God and to support the church through my tithes and offerings and by my personal effort and influence.
10. I believe that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; and I will honor God by caring for it, avoiding the use of that which is harmful, and abstaining from all unclean foods; from the use, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages; from the use, manufacture, or sale of tobacco in any of its forms for human consumption; and from the misuse of or trafficking in narcotics or other drugs.
11. I know and understand the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I purpose, by the grace of God, to fulfill His will by ordering my life in harmony with these principles.
12. I accept the New Testament teaching of baptism by immersion and desire to be so baptized as a public expression of faith in Christ and His forgiveness of my sins.
13. I accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy and that people of every nation, race, and language are invited and accepted into its fellowship. I desire to be a member of this local congregation of the world Church.

Space is provided for the candidate, officiating minister, and church clerk to sign a baptismal certificate. Witnessing signatories lend additional solemnity to the occasion, as

vow, commitment, and baptism are doubtless ratified in Heaven. When my wife and I were baptized on February 19, 1977, we were given a Certificate of Baptism prepared by the General Conference. The front page included signature blanks for the officiating minister and church clerk. Following the 27-point Summary of Doctrinal Beliefs (a 28<sup>th</sup> fundamental belief was added in 2005) was a back page of the thirteen Baptismal Vows, with blanks provided for personal signature and address. Acceptance into the fellowship of the church, as is customary, occurred between the taking of the vows and the baptism itself.

The above-described practice is fully supported in the writings of Ellen White:

The test of discipleship is not brought to bear as closely as it should be upon those who present themselves for baptism. It should be understood whether they are simply taking the name of Seventh-day Adventists, or whether they are taking their stand on the Lord's side, to come out from the world and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Before baptism there should be a thorough inquiry as to the experience of the candidates. Let this inquiry be made, not in a cold and distant way, but kindly, tenderly, pointing the new converts to the Lamb of God That taketh away the sin of the world. Bring the requirements of the Gospel to bear upon the candidates for baptism.—6T 95.2–96.0.