

LEATHER AND CROWN:

The Love story of James and Ellen White



LEGACY





In regard to marriage, I would say, read the word of God. Even in this time, the last days of this world's history, marriages take place among Seventh-day Adventists....We have, as a people, never forbidden marriage, except in cases where there were obvious reasons that marriage would be misery to both parties. And even then, we have only advised and counseled.

— Letter 60, 1900. 1MCP 219.6





In unique culture of the Victorian era, the opposing dynamics of Puritanism and Mormonism, and a rapidly-changing world, was the love story of James and Ellen white. Though fraught with many challenges, the union of these young revolutionaries gives tremendous insight into the lessons of God. In addition, the records provide details of the humanity of the early church pioneers and their examples of genuine, biblical love.



♥ Ellen White Status: SINGLE

EGW was evangelizing before she was called to the prophetic ministry

- At age 15, gained an assurance of her Salvation.
- Immediately began leading other teens and young marrieds to Christ

Call to Prophetic Ministry

- 16 at Great Disappointment, Oct. 22, 1844
- 17th birthday, Nov. 26, 1844
- 17 at first vision, late December 1844/January 1845
- She saw her primary identity as a disciple and lover of Jesus.
- She saw her primary work as bringing others to love and serve Him too





James White Status: **SINGLE**

- Born Aug. 4, 1821 and middle child of nine
- At 7, he was physically feeble with poor eyesight.
"His eyes would cross when he tried to read." (Thiele, 34).
- Instead of attending school, he worked on the farm.
- Became six feet tall and exceptionally strong.
- About age, 18, vision became normal.
- At 19, entered first grade and in 12 weeks earned a certificate to teach elementary school.
(Virgil Robinson, James White, 16-17).
- Fall of 1840, became teacher of a country school.



Commonalities Between James And Ellen

- Both he and Ellen were born in small towns in Maine
- both their fathers were early engaged in farming and later moved into manufacturing
- both had fathers who were devout lay leaders in their respective churches, and were noted for their personal spirituality.



Commonalities Between James And Ellen

- Both came from large families. Both had parents who were deeply pessimistic about their children's prospects.
- Both had early health problems that interfered with formal schooling and limited their prospects for success in life. Ellen had an accident at age nine that interrupted her schooling. James had an illness before age three that left him with crossed eyes, so that formal schooling was impractical. He worked on his father's farm until age 19, when he spent 12 weeks in grade school and earned the equivalent of an eighth grade diploma. He later spend 29 weeks in high school.
- Ellen's parents were told she was "ruined" by her accident. James's illness had "cut off" his parents "hopes" for his life.



Commonalities Between James And Ellen

- Both James and Ellen had a high regard for education, and both were largely self-educated.
- Ellen recalled "It was the hardest struggle of my young life to yield to my feebleness, and decide that I must leave my studies, and give up the hope of gaining an education." James struggled for months between his love for education and his convictions of a call to preach, before he "finally gave up all for Christ and his gospel, and found peace and freedom."
- Both James and Ellen were acquainted with depression on account of their personal trials. After her accident destroyed her physical attractiveness, Ellen felt "the idea of carrying my misfortune through life was insupportable." Before James's eyesight cleared up, restoring his potential "to become a man," he confessed that he had viewed himself as "nearly worthless in the world," and "regretted" his "existence."







During 1845, Ellen Harmon was invited to share her early visions with Adventist groups in Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. James White, six years older than Ellen, became convinced that her visions were genuine and that her message of encouragement was needed. And so James White entered young Ellen's life, but not with romantic thoughts—at first.





In 1845, there was a lot of prejudice and sometimes even mob violence against Millerites. She was accompanied by Sarah Jordan, but what could Sarah do against a mob? So James White offered his horse and sleigh for transportation, and also volunteered to arrange and organize her meetings. For three months they traveled, holding meetings "almost everyday." Thus they "visited most of the Advent bands in Maine and eastern New Hampshire"

(1 Bio 74-75)





"As for marriage, we
never thought of it,
because we thought the
Lord would come very
soon." 1 Bio 84



James White wrote in 1845 of two Adventists who had... "...denied their faith, in being published for marriage. We all look on it as a wile of the Devil. The firm brethren in Maine who are waiting for Christ to come have no fellowship with such a move."

James White letter to Brother Jacobs,
Day Star, October 11, 1845.





Factors that Changed their Attitude Toward Marriage

- Despite their carefulness to never travel alone, rumors began to circulate.
- Ellen, 5'2", 80 pounds, tuberculosis, frequently fainting, needed a strong escort and "legal protector."
- They shared a commitment to shepherding the scattered Adventists.
- Ellen had received a vision assuring her she could trust James White. (1 Bio 83-84)
- In individual prayer, they each became convinced they could serve God more effectively married than single. (1 Bio 110-111)





L. H. Christian, long-time church leader, recalled a conversation with a woman who, in her early youth, had played together with young Ellen and remembered her sad accident. When Christian asked her what she remembered about Ellen as a young woman, she responded with a smile, "Well, that is an interesting story which I delight to tell. James was older than Ellen by about six years. We were young people there together. Their friendship was a model and an inspiration to us all, and their marriage a most beautiful and happy event."

<https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/656.652#657>



The public saw Ellen as the revivalist and James as the organizer. "As man and wife they were a unique and strong gospel team. Their method and division of the work were perfect. Adventists have never had their equal."

<https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/656.652#657>







At one time when because of the demands of the work in which she and her husband were engaged a half a continent separated them, she confided in a letter to James: We feel every day a most earnest desire for a more sacred nearness to God. This is my prayer when I lie down, when I awake in the night, and when I arise in the morning, Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee. I sleep alone.

This seems to be Mary's preference as well as mine. I can have a better opportunity for reflection and prayer. I prize my [being] all to myself unless graced with your presence. I want to share my bed only with you.

— [Letter 6, 1876](#)

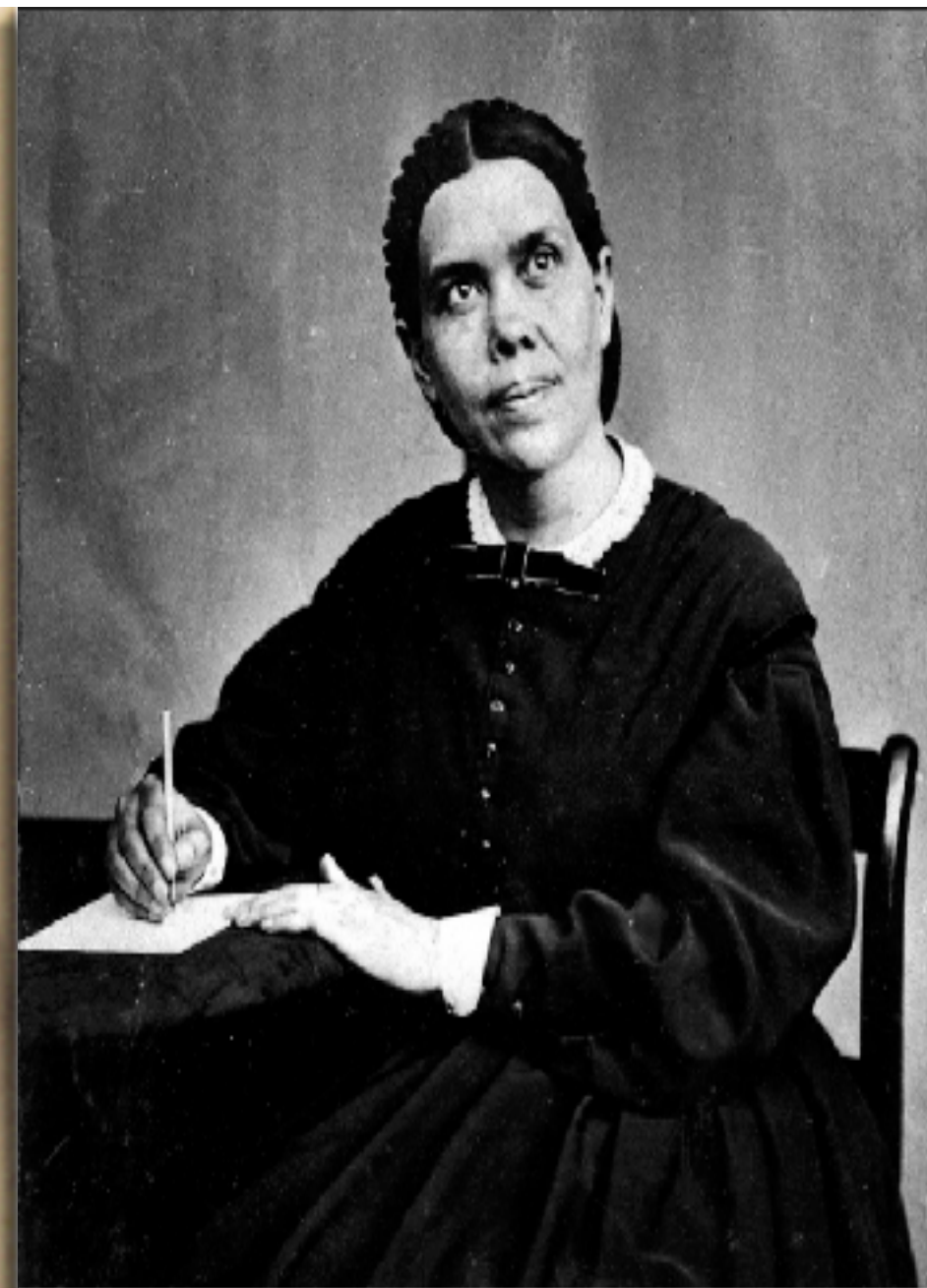






James White was a talented and capable executive, missionary leader, and powerful public evangelist. Not only did he participate with William Miller, Joseph Bates, and scores of other preachers in announcing the advent of our Lord near in the 1840's, but he outlived the Millerite movement to become the first great apostle of the Seventh-day Adventist cause. James White died August 6, 1881, when he was only sixty. He literally worked himself to death. The brethren leaned on him so heavily that his towering figure fell. His sixty years of life were spent unselfishly and sacrificially. No other Seventh-day Adventist minister did more than he to build high principle and efficiency into the life of our churches and institutions





A new love for Ellen?

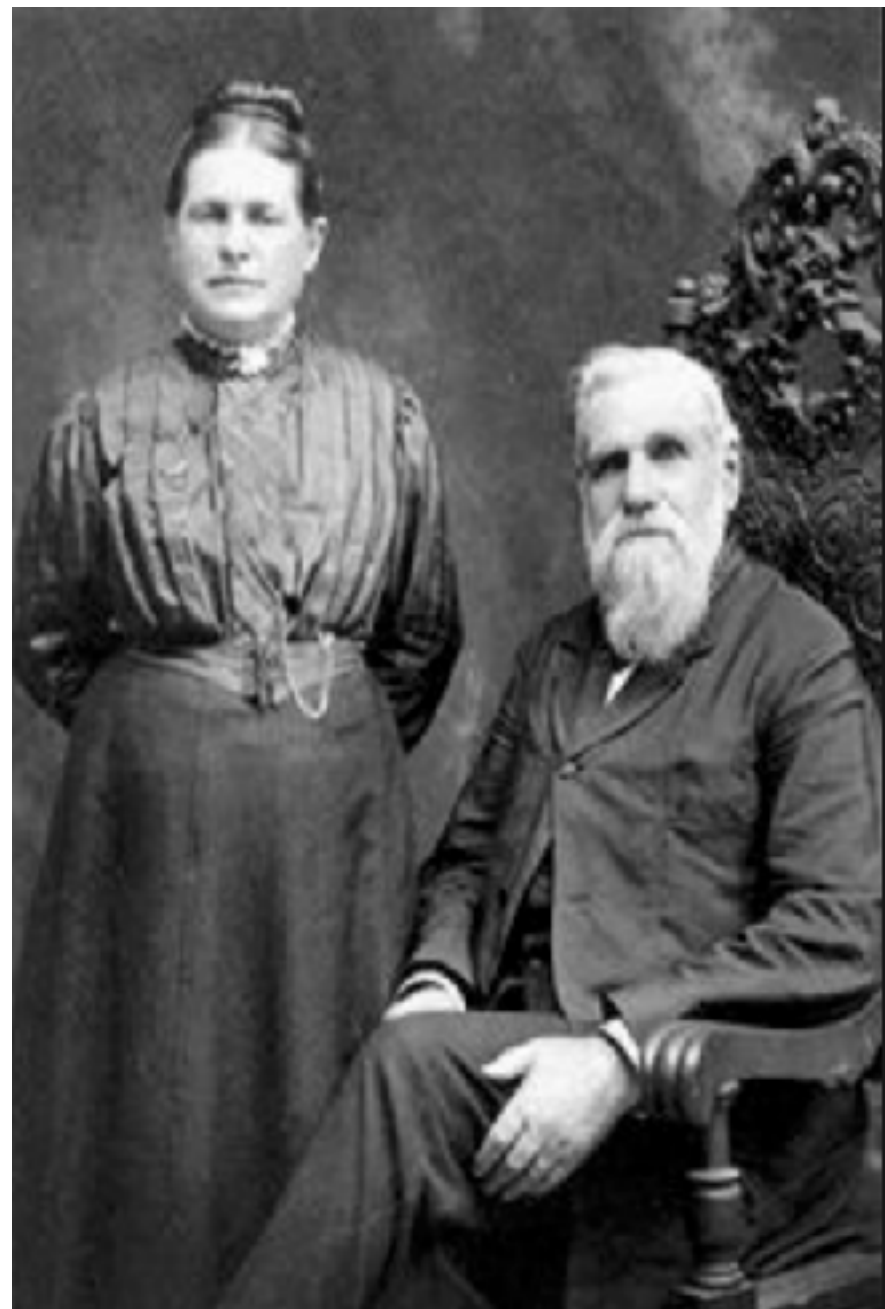
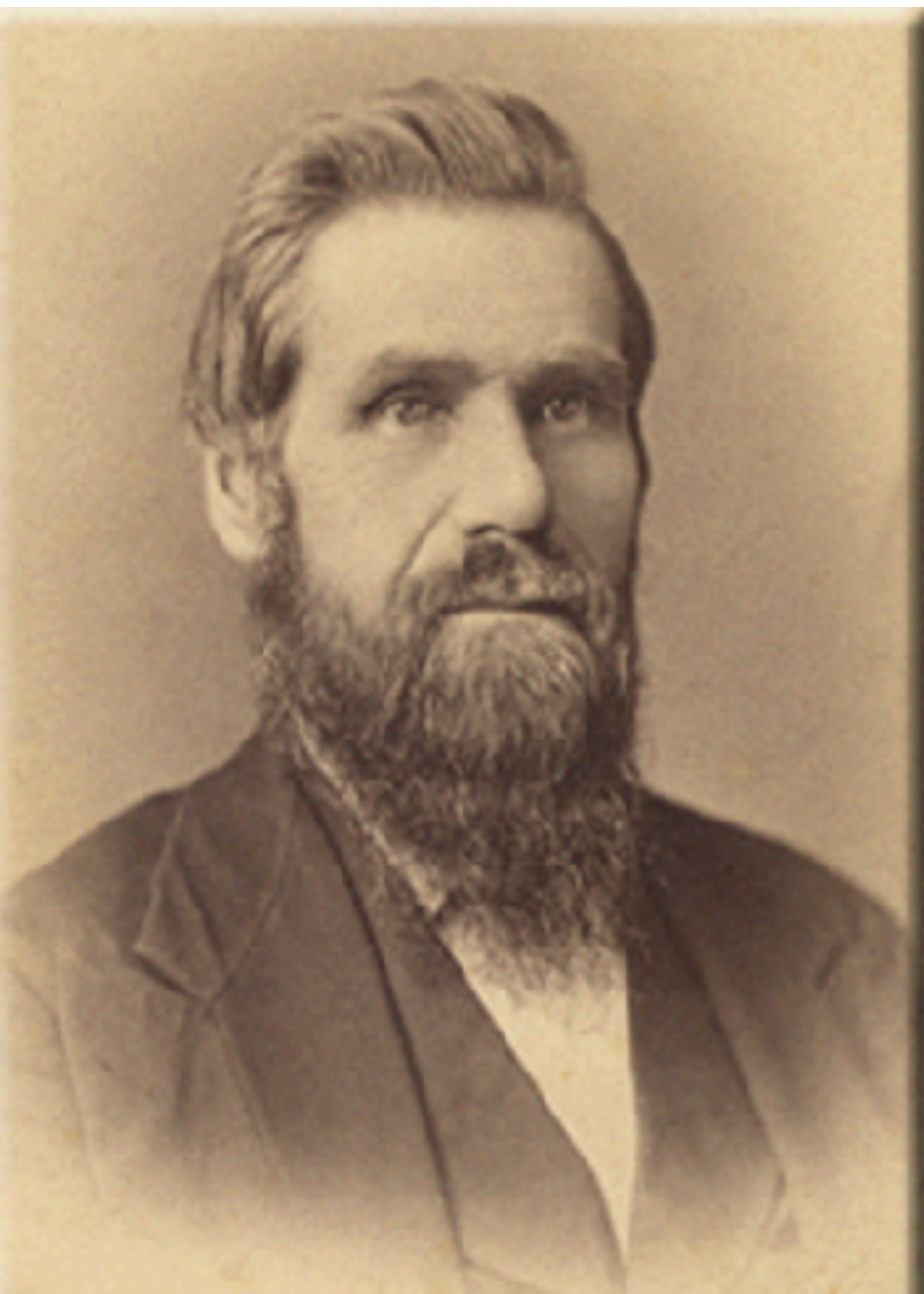
In 1896 shortly after her son's marriage, Ellen White found herself also having to make a difficult decision about whether to give priority to love or to her sense of duty when it came to marriage and her work. That year, her long-time friend and colleague Stephen Haskell who had lost his wife two year earlier made so bold as to approach the widowed Ellen with a proposal of marriage. It was a very appealing proposal. In many ways the two were compatible. They shared together a deep love for the church and its mission and it is clear from her many, many letters to Haskell that Ellen felt a tenderness for him. Author and researcher, Jerry Moon notes, the correspondence with Haskell is the most prolific of any that she had outside that with her own family. In mid-1896 she arranged things with the brethren and pressed an invitation to Haskell to come and share in the work in Australia. Haskell arrived and joined Ellen White in ministering at the camp meeting. Haskell stayed with Ellen White for about six weeks before going to New Zealand. He apparently chose this time to press his suit.

In many ways it was an attractive proposal for Ellen White and she wrestled with it. The loneliness of 15 years of widowhood and the tenderness, affection and admiration she felt for Haskell were a strong pull on her emotions. The natural affinity they had for each other was apparently noticed by a member of the extended family, Herbert Lacey, who reports that the two “were very frequently together.” Something about the chemistry between the pair prompted Lacey to ask Ellen White about the possibility of a marriage to Haskell. Duty and a sense of the importance of her larger responsibilities, however, persuaded Ellen White that accepting Haskell’s proposal would not be the best way forward, although deep down she might long for the affection and the companionship. As she explained to Lacey, changing her name to Haskell would create insurmountable problems for her publishers and for her identity as a writer. The consolation she found came from an assurance she said had been given in a dream. Her son W. C. White had been designated by the Lord to care for her until her work was done.

Ellen had earlier also invited a Miss Hetty Hurd, now working in South Africa to come and assist with the new college in Australia. Now Ellen persuaded the disappointed Haskell that he should think about marrying this younger woman of their mutual acquaintance. Haskell dutifully obeyed and wrote Hetty a letter of proposal. Hetty responded almost at once, booked passage to Australia and the couple were married on February 27, 1897. "We can sympathize and unite in the grand work that you and I love..." Ellen White wrote to Haskell later when congratulating him on his marriage to Hetty. "In everything which relates to this we are united in bonds of Christian fellowship." In the years that followed, the Haskell's often worked closely with Ellen White and the correspondence between them continued to be warm and steady. The episode of Ellen

White's forfeited opportunity for re-marriage would probably be unremarkable were it not for the existence of another photograph. Just how much Ellen White experienced the cost of turning down Haskell's proposal may be indicated by the fact that in her last years she kept a photograph of the handsome preacher on a shelf in her bedroom at her Elmshaven home. Haskell's photograph has joined the collection of photographs of the other men in her life, (her husband and her four sons). The opportunity for love passed by in submission to duty was quietly treasured by Ellen White it seems as a memory of what might have been.

- Deny Fortin and Jerry Moon, *The Ellen G White Encyclopedia*, (Washington D. C.: Review and Herald, 2013) p 404. There are 271 letters from Ellen and many more received from him.
- EGW to S. N. Haskell, June 1, 1896. The letter is to him as an individual and offers him a room in her house and the freedom of her home which he can make his "headquarters."
- Ronald D. Graybill, "The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founder of the Nineteenth Century," Dissertation submitted to John Hopkins University, 1983 pp 25-53. Graybill documents the conflict and the lengthy separations and reconciliations that characterized the last years of James and Ellen's relationship.
- H. Camden Lacey to A. W. Spalding, April 2, 1947. Lacey's letter is written to church historian Spalding in response to a request for information about the founding of Avondale College.
- Ibid.
- EGW to Brother and Sister Haskell March 1, 1897. EGW-DC
- The photograph was not of Hetty and Stephen - just of Stephen. Photographs of the room at the time of her death show the photograph on the nightstand.





Deep affection and consistent,
unconditional love to the end.

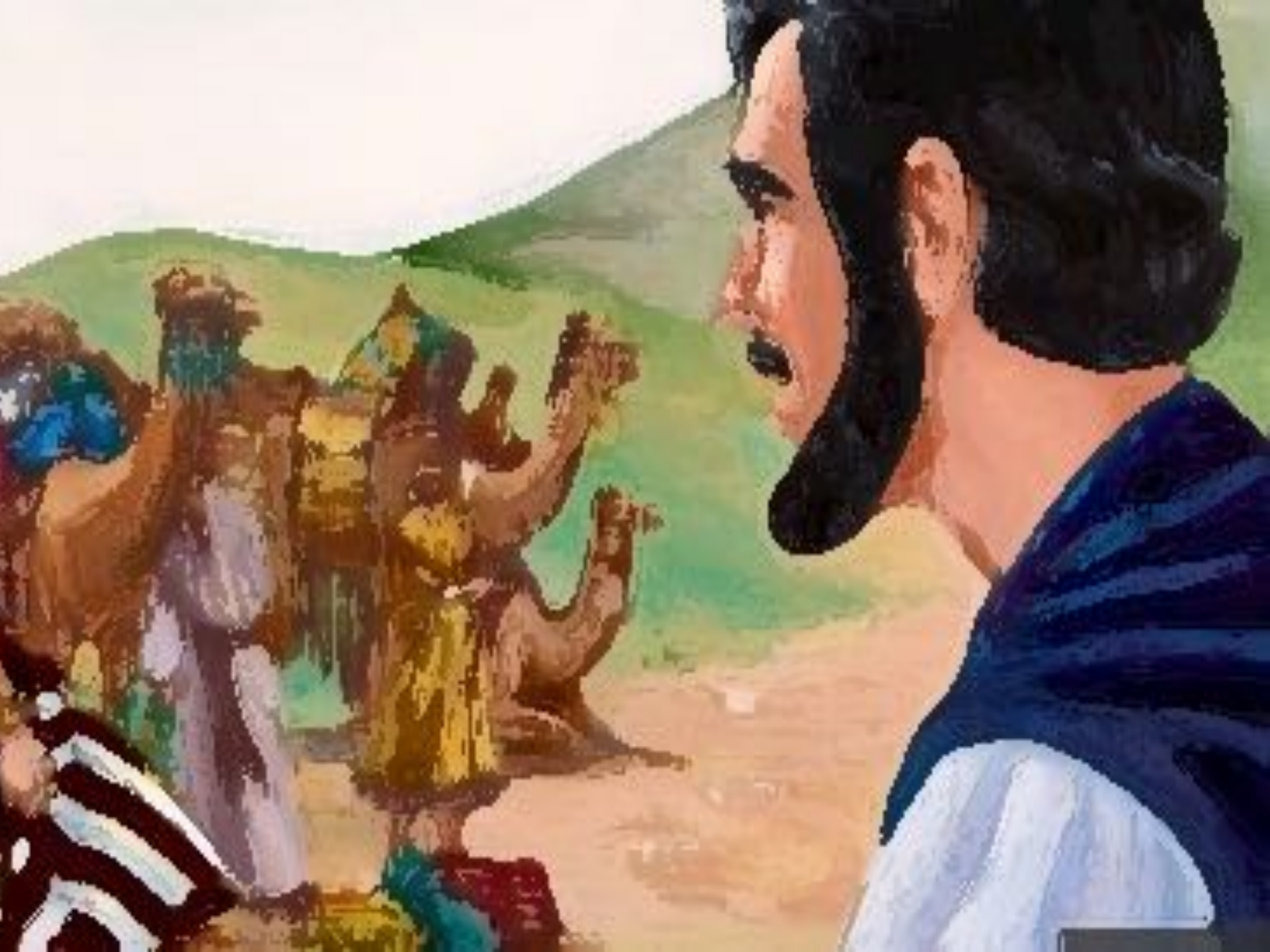
James: "We were married August 30,
1846, and from that hour to the present
[she has been my crown of rejoicing."

Life Sketches, 1880 edition, 126, 127. 1 Bio 112.

Ellen: "I feel that he is the best man that
ever trod shoe leather." 1 Bio 84









GENESIS 24:15

Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milkah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor. The woman was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever slept with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again...





- The truest Ministry comes at the most unexpected, and inconvenient moments. She was the only one there!
- Ministry done above and beyond expectation, has the most profound impact. (It was through ministry, Rebekah was qualified for Issac)
- Its often when we are in the service of God, His providence becomes most manifest...





With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come,--the end of suffering and sorrow and sin!

"Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and Students," p. 555





