

The Wonder of Jesus ***His Return as King and Friend***

Lesson #13 for June 28, 2008

Scriptures: Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24; 25:1-13; Luke 21:25-31; John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 9:28; 2 Peter 3:9-12; Revelation 7:1-3.

1. This lesson is about the second coming of Jesus. The second coming will be a manifestation of great power and majesty. In some ways it is the kind of coming the Jews were hoping for at the first coming! He is coming now “not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” (Hebrews 9:28, RSV)
2. Seventh-day Adventists have focused on the second coming, even including it in our name. Have we stopped talking about it because of the long delay? Are we embarrassed that God has not come back as we had hoped? Do people think we are just crying, “Wolf! Wolf!”?
3. What are your emotions as you think about the second coming? Are you fearful? Eager? Cheerful? In dread? Excited? Some combination of those factors?
4. Many of the details of the second coming are spelled out in Scripture. The one big question which remains a mystery is, **when**? Are we waiting for God? Or is God waiting for us? (2 Peter 3:9-12; Revelation 7:1-3)
5. Based on the symbolism of the Old Testament sanctuary system, we are living “in” the Day of Atonement. This period of time, sometimes referred to as the “investigative judgment” or more correctly as the “pre-advent judgment,” began in 1844. Ellen White once suggested that there was already “long delay” in 1868! (*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 194. (1868); *Evangelism* 694) What should we be saying about the delay 140 years later—164 years after 1844?
6. The “great disappointment” was indeed a terrible disappointment for those who were looking eagerly for the return of Jesus. They wept and wept when Jesus did not show up by the end of the day on October 22, 1844. By contrast, are many church members today hoping Christ will delay His coming even further?
7. Make a list in your own mind of the most important reasons why you believe the second coming could be soon and why it is delayed. Consider some of the following points.
 - 1) Scriptures set forth certain conditions and specific events which must take place before the second coming as well as certain events that will immediately precede the second coming itself. When we study those predictions carefully, we see that we are beyond all the predicted events except the immediate events of the second coming itself!
 - 2) Through the use of “time prophecies,” God predicted numerous events which have taken place exactly on queue in the past. His prophecies have been 100% reliable. Do we have any honest reason for thinking the prophecies about the second coming will be any different?
 - 3) If the second coming does not happen very soon, it looks like we, as human beings, will destroy ourselves and Planet Earth! God cannot wait until after that happens!
 - 4) Ellen White identified 1798 as the close of the 1260-year prophecy and the beginning of “the time of the end.” Earthquakes as well as signs in the sun, moon, and stars—which have been associated with the “Day of the Lord”—date from 1755 to 1833. That was a long time ago!
 - 5) Is there just one thing—God’s people getting themselves ready—remaining before the second coming takes place?
8. Do you see events taking place in the church and in the world that suggest to you that the second coming is near?
9. Some evangelists in past years have tried to frighten people into preparing for the second coming. While it is true that a time of judgment—with eternal consequences—precedes the second coming and all people’s fates will be sealed at that time, it is quite clear from Scripture that fear is not to be the

main motivating factor. Ellen White concludes:

The shortness of time is urged as an incentive for us to seek righteousness and to make Christ our friend. This is not the great motive. It savors of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God be held before us to compel us through fear to right action? This ought not to be. *Review and Herald* Aug. 2, 1881; *1RH* 273:1:6; *That I May Know Him* 320; *Lift Him Up* 98; *The Signs of the Times*, March 17, 1887; *The Bible Echoes* June 25, 1894

10. Can you put together a fairly detailed timeline of the events that precede the second coming? Have you given serious thought to these issues any time recently?
11. A survey of Christians took place not long ago, and people were asked in that survey when they thought Jesus would come. Interestingly enough, many thought that Jesus would come “about five years” after their own death. Are we collectively—as a human race—trying to put off the second coming?
12. Atheists and evolutionists have tried to convince the world that there is no coming judgment. The purpose of their arguments is to try to completely leave one thing out of the picture—a sovereign God who might one day judge them!
13. Are we worried about the “dark side” of the second coming? Does the idea of a “shaking” and a “pre-advent judgment” scare you?
14. Are you honestly hoping to be one of the members of the 144,000? (Revelation 7:4)
15. If you were asked to estimate how long it would take for Jesus to come if God’s people really did what they were supposed to do, what would you say? Ellen White’s words were:

You will not be able to say that He will come in one, two, or five years, neither are you to put off His coming by stating that it may not be for ten or twenty years. . . . We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ.— *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1892. {*Ev* 221.1; *1SM* 189; *LDE* 33.2; *Mar* 136.1}

Whether we have one year before us, or five, or ten, we are to be faithful to our trust today. We are to perform each day’s duties as faithfully as though that day were to be our last. {*RH*, October 25, 1881 par. 4}

16. In light of those quotations, how quickly do you think the final events could take place?
17. So, what is the role that the church should be playing in the preparation for the final coming? How do you understand and interpret: “And this Good News about the Kingdom will be preached through all the world for a witness to all nations; and then the end will come”? (Matthew 24:14, *GNB*)
18. Do you think God has gone to considerable length to hide the date for the second coming? What would happen if we knew an actual date?
19. Would you still be a Christian if you honestly believed there would never be a second coming?
20. We can say with certainty that the promised first coming happened exactly as predicted. We should be just as certain that the promised second coming will take place at the right time. Furthermore, the first coming was only a preparation for the second coming. Why would God have wasted all His effort and time doing what He did during His time on earth during the first coming if He had never planned to come back again?
21. Why then has there been so much “delay”?

Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God.-- *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 450. (1900) {*Ev*694.3}

I know that if the people of God had preserved a living connection with Him, if they had obeyed His Word, they would today be in the heavenly Canaan. --*General*

Conference Bulletin, March 30, 1903. {Ev694.4}

No Failure of God's Promises.--The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. Thus it has always been presented to me. It is true that time has continued longer than we expected in the early days of this message. Our Saviour did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the Word of the Lord failed? Never! **It should be remembered that the promises and the threatenings of God are alike conditional.**

God had committed to His people a work to be accomplished on earth. The third angel's message was to be given, the minds of believers were to be directed to the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ had entered to make atonement for His people. The Sabbath reform was to be carried forward. The breach in the law of God must be made up. The message must be proclaimed with a loud voice, that all the inhabitants of earth might receive the warning. The people of God must purify their souls through obedience to the truth, and be prepared to stand without fault before Him at His coming. {Ev695.2}

Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward. But in the period of doubt and uncertainty that followed the disappointment, many of the advent believers yielded their faith. . . . Thus the work was hindered, and the world was left in darkness. Had the whole Adventist body united upon the commandments of [696] God and the faith of Jesus, how widely different would have been our history!

It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed. God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. But those to whom it was first preached, went not in "because of unbelief." Their hearts were filled with murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and He could not fulfill His covenant with them. {Ev696.1}

For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.--*Manuscript 4*, 1883. {Ev696.2}

22. What is left to be "done" in the great controversy? Are there more great revelations to be made? Or is God "just waiting" for us? Are we personally hastening His coming? Or delaying His coming?

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