

Glimpses of Our God
The Promise of His Return

Lesson #13 for March 31, 2012

Scriptures: 2 Peter 3:1-13; John 14:2,3; Daniel 2:44; Hebrews 9:28; Hebrews 11; Revelation 6:9-11; Luke 12:42-48.

1. This lesson focuses on the second coming of Christ. In our early history, Adventists were so focused on the second coming of Christ that it was made a part of our name.
2. So, what is God waiting for? What do we need to do to get ready? Are you waiting for something to happen before you get serious about His coming? How soon do you think He might actually return? Is God waiting for the world to become more sinful?
3. What if He came today? Would you be ready? (1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; Matthew 24:36-44) Are things today like they were in the times of Noah?
4. Would you be comfortable living in a world where only righteousness is practiced? Are we really ready to give up on all our favorite sins? Can we stop being selfish? Are we ready to do what God asks us to do all the time? What do you think it will take to get the masses of the world to make up their minds about God? (Matthew 22:11-14) In Bible times when a king had a wedding feast for his guests, he provided the wedding clothes for them. So, there was no excuse for someone to be without the wedding clothes.
5. Christians have been looking forward to the second coming of Christ since the time He left almost 2000 years ago. Events in the church and events in the world have often triggered speculation about Christ's return? Do we clearly understand why He has not come back? In 1868, Ellen White stated that already there had been long delay.

The long night of gloom is trying, but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready.

God's unwillingness to have His people perish has been the reason of so long delay.—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 194 (1868); *Evangelism* 694.2

6. In the great controversy, Satan has always claimed that everyone living on this world belongs to him. After all, we are all sinners. (Romans 3:9-23) But, God has promised that at the end of this world's history there will be a group—that group is called the 144,000—(COL 69.1; GC 48.1) so committed to God that no matter what the Devil does to them, he will not be able to get them to sin. (Compare Enoch, Daniel, Job) The Devil has mocked God down through the centuries because we have failed God so many times. But, God keeps promising that that special group will come together at the end. That is what He is waiting for. The reason for His delay is because we are not ready! (See 2 Peter 3:10-13) Are we doing our best to make His coming soon?

The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. Thus it has always been presented to me. [Joel 1:15; 2:1; 1 John 2:18] 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. [Do we know what Jesus is doing right now?] 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.

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. Dissensions and divisions came in. The majority opposed with voice and pen the few who, following in the providence of God, received the Sabbath reform and began to proclaim the third angel's message. Many who should have devoted their time and talents to the one purpose of sounding warning to the world, were absorbed in opposing the Sabbath truth, and in turn, the labor of its advocates was necessarily spent in answering these opponents and defending the truth. 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.

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; *Evangelism* 695.1-696.2; *Maranatha* 61.2-61.6; *1 Selected Messages* 67.8-69.1; compare *Christian Service* 86; *6T* 449,450; *LDE* 37,38; *DA* 633; 634; *1SM* 82.4; *9T* 29; *GCDB*, February 28, 1893 par. 5; *RH*, October 6, 1896 par. 7.

7. God's final group of people have been described as Laodicean. (Revelation 3:14-22) Christ Himself told us that He is coming back. (John 14:1-3) Furthermore, He said that He is "the

alpha and the *omega*,” the *beginning* and the *end*. (Revelation 1:8; 21:6; 22:13) What does that mean? Jesus was there at the beginning, and He will be there at the end. Peter told us that the wickedness at the end will be like it was in Noah’s day. People will question creation. They will question the flood. But, this will only demonstrate that they are part of the signs of the end. (2 Peter 3:1-13)

8. Why do you think some Christians are now suggesting that the second coming will only be a kind of change in the way things happen here on this earth? Is the second coming going to be a literal return of Jesus Christ, or will it be some kind of do-it-yourself transformation of human beings here on this earth? Can you think of a time when people tried to deal with events by doing something themselves? Isn’t that what the people at the tower of Babel were trying to work out?
9. The second coming is mentioned or hinted at many times in the New Testament. Even in the Old Testament, there are prophecies pointing all the way to the second coming of Christ. See Daniel 2:44.
10. Try to imagine a world without sin, sickness, death, fear, violence, hatred, poverty, crime, war, or suffering. Some of us would be out of a job! Why would anyone oppose such an idea? If your focus in life is me, myself, and I, things can get pretty boring. It is hard to look up and think about the second coming of Christ.
11. Our Christian friends who believe that people go to their reward in heaven or hell immediately upon death have a different view of what is implied by the second coming of Christ. But, for us who take the biblical approach and believe that the dead are sleeping (John 11:11-15) and awaiting a literal coming of Christ, it becomes a very pivotal event.
12. If God has no plans to come back again, what was the point of His coming the first time? He came and dealt with sin (Romans 8:3) and answered the questions in the great controversy. He arose from death. 1 Corinthians 15:20 suggests that His rising from the dead is our guarantee of the future life.
13. Matthew 20:28 says that He gave His life as a ransom for many. What are the implications of ransom? If someone pays a ransom to get something back, does it make any sense if they never come to claim their right of possession? In light of all this, the greatest promise that Christ will come back again is the fact that He came and did what He did the first time.
14. People have been waiting for the first coming and then the second coming right through biblical history. Hebrews 11 tells the story of many people who have waited: Abraham waited for his son; Israel waited for deliverance from Egypt; the prophets waited for Christ’s first coming; and the disciples waited for His second coming. So, why the delay? Do we have anywhere to look except to ourselves?
15. Christ repeatedly said that He would come back. In fact, He said, “Behold, I come quickly.” (Revelation 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20, *KJV*) What did He mean by that? Is that a statement to each of us individually about the length of our individual lives? Each one of us will experience a second coming immediately after his/her life on this earth terminates? But, for those of us who are still alive, the question of how long is a troubling one. (Revelation 6:9-11)
16. How should we respond to the delay? Read Luke 12:42-48. Surely, we do not want to do what the unfaithful servant did.
17. Are we becoming too comfortable here in this world? Are Adventists gradually becoming

more and more like the world around them? *Great Controversy* p. 555 says that we will gradually become like what we worship and admire and like that with which we fill our minds.

18. Evolutionists and scientists are predicting that our universe or solar system will eventually decay or collapse back on itself. As Christians, and especially as Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we know that that will not be the end of this world. So, if the evolutionists and scientists are so wrong about the future of our universe, why would we believe what they say about the origins of our universe?
19. If we doubt the return of Jesus Christ, in effect, we are calling Him a liar!
20. Could the second coming be nothing more than a scattering of raptures for those who are faithful to God, leaving the rest of us behind? How do we keep our focus on what is most important? Our lives are so full of the urgent that we often forget the important.
21. When Jesus died on the cross, His disciples were deeply depressed. They thought the world had, in effect, come to an end. But, when He arose from the dead and they realized the truth about who He was, they went out and applied their lives to the ministry. They were not even afraid of death. They dedicated all their time to spreading the gospel, and they turned the world upside down in one generation.
22. What about us? What percentage of our time do we spend witnessing about our beliefs? If Christ called you today to step out and witness for Him full-time, promising that He would care for you, would you be ready to go? Would you have a message to tell?
23. As your life is today, what things keep you from spending more time in Bible study, prayer, and witnessing? Do we actually need to be so engaged and consumed by jobs, mortgages, education, and retirement that we have no time to do God's work? If Jesus came back to our world today, would He find people ready to follow Him like His disciples did 2000 years ago?
24. Daniel 12:3 tells us that those who are saved and taken to heaven will take others with them. How many of us are ready for that kind of experience? Are we living like we really believe Jesus is coming soon? (Matthew 28:16-20)
25. Adventists have been proclaiming the soon coming of Christ since the days of William Miller. What lessons did we learn from the great disappointment of 1844? If someone asks you about 1844, can you give a cogent, intelligent, rational explanation?
26. Christians believe that the two most important events in the history of our world are His first coming and His second coming. What are we doing to make that belief a living reality in our own lives and the lives of those around us? Are we serious about this?

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Info@theox.org

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