

Feed My Sheep: 1 & 2 Peter

The Day of the Lord

Lesson #12 for June 17, 2017

Scriptures: 2 Peter 3:1-18; John 21:15-17; Psalm 90:4; Matthew 24:42-51.

1. In this lesson we will discover what Peter said about changing attitudes at the end of this world's history. There was a day when virtually everyone believed in God and in a final judgment. But, those who do not want to think about a final judgment are now suggesting that God does not even exist! If one refuses to recognize God's existence, then one will not have to consider a final judgment.
2. But, fear is never the best motivator. It may work temporarily; but, the Old Testament shows repeatedly that it does not last. After the flood and after Sinai, people soon went back to their old ways. After the Babylonian captivity, people went back to the sins of their predecessors.

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. Jesus is attractive. He is full of love, mercy, and compassion. He proposes to be our friend, to walk with us through all the rough pathways of life.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* August 2, 1881, par. 6; *TMK** 320.3; *LHU** 98.3. [Bold type is added.]

You can't scare the "hell" out of people! It is interesting to note that James White died on August 6, 1881, just a few days after this article was published. Compare Jonathan Edwards's sermon entitled "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

3. Peter's warning recorded in 2 Peter 3 is very stark about the events that will happen at the end of this world's history. Imagine a time when the very elements will "melt with fervent heat"! (2 Peter 3:10, *KJV*) That will not be a time to be unprepared! Surely, every Christian wants to be ready for the second coming when it happens.
4. Read 2 Peter 3:1-2. Peter recognized that those who do not want to face the possibility of a final judgment must discredit the Word of God. They particularly want to discredit the first 11 chapters of Genesis and the prophetic portions of Daniel and Revelation. But, Peter said one must have respect for the Word spoken by the holy prophets of the Old Testament and also the teachings received from Jesus through the apostles.
5. We need to be aware that God knows everything, even about our personal futures. This is hard for people to accept. Should this cause us to be afraid of God? All of Scripture is of importance to each one of us and should be studied as the Word of God. Christian beliefs are solidly based on the teachings of Scripture. We must never allow popular opinion or false teachings to shake our faith in the revealed Word of God—both Old Testament and New Testament.
6. How often do we find ourselves being influenced away from the teachings of Scripture by what we regard as "reason," "our own judgment," or scientific "facts"? How many Christians have been led astray by some pet theory which does not stand up to the test of Scripture?
7. Read 2 Peter 3:3-4. Since we cannot see into the future as God can and all we have to look at is the past, it is easy for skeptics to bring up the argument that nothing has changed and nothing will change. Their claim that all things will continue as they always have is known as uniformitarianism. They do not believe in special creation as outlined in Genesis nor in the flood in the days of Noah; instead, they teach that all things can be explained as happening slowly over vast periods of time—millions, even billions, of years.
8. Read 2 Peter 2:10; 3:3. Notice that those who want to promote false liberty are walking

according to their “filthy bodily lust and despising God’s authority.” Later, he talked about those who despise the ideas of a second coming as “controlled by their own lusts.” It should be clear from these two references that those people who want to do what they want to do without respect to God’s directions or counsel are easily led into all sorts of strange ideas and behaviors. This is no coincidence!

9. The idea that things have not changed and, therefore, they will not change is a very dangerous heresy. Because we cannot see into the future and, thus, be able to point to facts that will occur in the future, it is easy for unbelievers to challenge our ideas which are based only on Scripture. But, we must remember that if Jesus is not planning to come back again, there was no reason for Him to have come the first time! It has been almost 173 years since the Great Disappointment in 1844, and it has been 1986 years since Jesus died in A.D. 31. Why has there been such a long delay? Is God the reason for the delay? Or, is it our fault?
10. Even as he walked with God, Enoch wondered what was going to happen in the future. Ellen White described his thoughts as he wondered if the righteous and the wicked “would go to the dust together, and that this would be their end.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets* 85.6) Enoch lived hundreds of years before the flood, and he was already concerned about the future of God’s friends. Thousands of years later as we approach what we know will be the final end of this world as we know it, shouldn’t we be even more concerned? As Adventists, we are pronouncing even by our name that we believe in a soon coming. Are you disappointed that God has delayed so long?
11. Read 2 Peter 3:8-10. Peter reminded us that in God’s eyes, 1000 years are no more than a day either in the past or the future. Was Peter thinking about Psalm 90:4 where the Psalmist said: “One thousand years to you are like one day; they are like yesterday, already gone, like a short hour in the night.” (*GNB*) Time is not the great issue with God as it is with us. He can see clearly into the future, and His memory of the past is perfect. He will take action at the best possible time.
12. Wicked people in our day do not want to admit that the ancient world was destroyed by a flood because of its wickedness. In fact, that flood caused great changes on the surface of our earth. Peter went on to say that next time, it will not be a flood but fire. (2 Peter 3:10) How much would you have to destroy to remove all traces of sin?
13. In the context of our brief lives on planet earth, even a short delay seems long. But, in God’s eternal perspective, there is no delay. Peter and others have said emphatically that God waits so He can save as many as possible. As God waits and as we grow weary of waiting, who looks good? Is it God? Or, us? What are we doing to warn the world?
14. But, we should not take the other extreme either, suggesting that God will wait forever. Matthew, Paul, and John all talked about the suddenness and finality of the second coming. (See Matthew 24-25; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 6.)
15. Peter’s understanding of the *elements* was very different from ours in this age of scientific discovery. The ancient Greeks believed that all things were made of earth, water, air, and fire. What and how much do you think will be destroyed at the second coming?
16. Given that we believe that the second coming will be soon, the question still arises what does that have to do with our lives right now? Read 2 Peter 3:11-13 and Matthew 24:42-51. Are we being affected by the attitudes of the world? In what ways are Seventh-day Adventists in our communities becoming more and more like the world and apparently less concerned about the nearness of the second coming?
17. Many of us as Seventh-day Adventists have dealt with those who would like to set specific times and have so-called prophetic calculations and charts to prove their points! But, a much greater danger among Seventh-day Adventists is the idea that nothing is changing very fast and that we should just go on living our lives as we are now. Realistically, how many sermons

have you heard recently about the nearness of the second coming? It is so easy to get caught up in our day-to-day activities and responsibilities and, thus, to push back in our minds against the idea of the total destruction of our world at the second coming.

18. Does this reflect the fact that we spend so much time concerning ourselves with our current responsibilities and goals instead of time with the Bible? How much time do we spend studying the Bible and sharing the gospel with others? Do we spend more time watching the news? Watching the latest movies? Following the latest fashions? Or, listening to popular music? What are the young people in our world doing?
19. Read 2 Peter 3:14-18. Peter reminded his listeners of the faithful teachings that they had received from himself and his friend Paul. And it is very interesting to notice that he regarded the writings of Paul—whether only some of them or all of them, we do not know—as being on an equal footing with the teachings of the Old Testament. Is it possible that Peter was in prison with Paul in the Mamertine Prison in Rome when he wrote this letter? We know that Peter had some interesting experiences with Paul in earlier times. (See Galatians 2:6-14.) But, at the time of writing this letter, he could speak of Paul as “our beloved brother Paul.” (2 Peter 3:15) Remember that Paul had also talked about what we need to do while waiting for the second coming of Jesus. (See Romans 2:4; Romans 12:18; Philippians 2:12.) Remember, Peter was to be the apostle to the Jews, Paul the apostle to the Gentiles.
20. Do you think most of the Christians in Peter’s and Paul’s day already held Paul’s writings in high regard? Or, was it just Peter and a few of the leaders who regarded them so highly?
21. Peter recognized that there were people even in his day twisting and misconstruing Paul’s writings. Any time one writes a significant amount of material, s/he will write some things that can be twisted or misconstrued. That had already happened to the Hebrew Bible. Paul’s support for the truths of the Bible was very firm, and there was no license for sin in his writings. (See Romans 3:21-22 and 6:1-14.)
22. Which is a greater problem in your church today? Is it twisting the Scriptures? Or, just ignoring them? What can you do as an individual church member to make sure you are not being led astray? At the same time, how can you help others within your church to get ready for the second coming? Shouldn’t we try to set a good example to other believers?
23. Read Matthew 24:45-51. Which of these two managers best represents your personal experience and the experiences of those around you?

Because we know not the exact time of His coming, we are commanded to watch. “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching.” Luke 12:37. Those who watch for the Lord’s coming are not waiting in idle expectancy. The expectation of Christ’s coming is to make men fear the Lord and fear His judgments upon transgression. It is to awaken them to the great sin of rejecting His offers of mercy. Those who are watching for the Lord are purifying their souls by obedience to the truth.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 634.2; *Maranatha** 36.3.

24. Ellen White had some very interesting things to say about the delay. Notice these very surprising comments.

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.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 2, 194 (1868); *Ev** 694.2. [“So long delay” already in 1868?]

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 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 [68] 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 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. [69]

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*;^{*} *Selected Messages*,^{*} Book 1, 67.8-69.1 [Most complete statement]; *Evangelism*^{*} 695.3-696.2; *LDE*^{*} 37.5; *Mar*^{*} 61.4. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

25. In light of all the information in this lesson, which is more important in your daily experience? Is it preparing for the second coming and eternal life with the Lord? Or, dealing with the challenges of living day by day? What teachings, beliefs, and practices do we as Seventh-day Adventists hold that are not consistent with our culture, our reasoning capacity, or tradition but are solely dependent upon our understanding of the Word of God? Would that be true of our keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath? Our understanding of and belief in what is taught

in Genesis 1-11? Our understanding of the nature of man? Our beliefs regarding the state of the dead?

26. As mentioned earlier, sinful passions and tendencies tend to lead to false teachings and beliefs. Why is that? It is very easy for those who are caught up in their favorite sins and worldly pleasures of our day to think of reasons to ignore or twist unpopular teachings from the Bible.
27. Albert Einstein shook the world by suggesting that, based on his mathematical calculations and his understanding of science, time is not always constant. He suggested that the speed of one's movement and one's position might impact how slow or how fast time moves. While very few of us understand all he was talking about, does it raise questions about God's understanding of time? Does God know more than we do?
28. No matter what we may believe about time or about the delay in the second coming, we must never question its reality. How should we deal with scoffers who doubt the reality of Christ's second coming and at the same time avoid, basically, by our practices doing what they are doing?
29. Why does God view time so differently from the way we view time? It is clear from numerous passages in Scripture that God is patient because He does not want any to perish. We should count God's patience as salvation. We should be thankful because if God had come earlier, we would not have been born. Along with Jesus and Paul, Peter appealed to us to live lives of watchful waiting and faithful action.
30. Is it really possible for us to hasten the second coming of Jesus Christ? (2 Peter 3:12) If God already knows when the second coming will happen, how can we work to hasten it? If we need to finish spreading the gospel before Jesus can come again, (Matthew 24:14) is He waiting for us to finish the work He has given us?

If those who claimed to have a living experience in the things of God had done their appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would have been warned ere this, and the Lord Jesus would have come in power and great glory. For God has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world. He tells us when that day shall come,—“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” [Matthew 24:14]—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* October 6, 1896, par. 7. [Bold type and text in brackets are added.]

31. Scripture teaches, and Bible-believing Christians assert, that God created all things in the beginning. We believe that a flood in the days of Noah basically destroyed and reconfigured our world. Based on these ideas and the statements by God in His Word, we believe there will be a second coming at which time the world will, once again, be destroyed but this time by fire. By contrast, scoffers claim that nothing has really changed and nothing will. What solid evidence could you provide for either of those positions?
32. In Romans 1:18-21, Paul suggested that there is plenty of evidence even in the natural world for believing in a Creator God. Evolutionists and other scoffers are trying desperately to find ways in which the creation of all things could have taken place through natural mechanisms. *A priori*, they throw out any action involving God in creation, the flood, or any future cataclysmic events. Thus, they really have no alternative explanation for the presence of our world or what we see in our world.
33. Read 2 Peter 3:1-7 and Jude 17-19. Peter and Jude, once again, referred to the ancient biblical records as proof of their claims. Both the Old Testament and what we would now call a portion of the New Testament are referenced. By our statements and our lives, do we

suggest that some of the claims of Scripture might not be true?

34. In our study for this week, Peter discussed delay. We have been told repeatedly that there would be delay. For example, see Matthew 24 and 25. Bible writers spoke about the final end of all things in different terms. John called it a lake or sea of fire. (Revelation 20:14) How much of the universe that we know about will be destroyed? Was Peter just talking about the sinful parts of the universe—that is, the surface of our earth and our atmosphere surrounding it? What about space junk and manmade objects on the moon and planets?
35. Read 2 Peter 3:11-12. What time was Peter talking about? Notice that in Peter's mind there was no separation between events that we now recognize as being a part of the second coming and the final dealing with sin that will take place at the third coming.
36. Apparently, the Old Testament writers were not aware that there would be more than one coming. Based on their interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies, they thought that when the Messiah arrived, He would eliminate all their enemies and usher in an eternal kingdom. In a similar manner, the New Testament writers apparently thought that there would only be a second coming. It was not until very late in the life of the last remaining apostle, John, that God revealed to him that there would be a millennium and a third coming. (Revelation 20) We do not know exactly why God chose not to reveal those details earlier.
37. It is good to remember that for us individually, the second coming is never further away than a moment after we die.
38. In summary, what can and should we do on a daily basis to make sure that we are watchful and ready for the second coming?
39. Why do you think Peter in his last few verses of this letter referred to Paul and his writings? He even apparently equated them with the writings of the holy prophets of the Old Testament. Does that surprise you? Do you think the writings of Paul were already held in high respect by Christians? There are those who would like to draw a contrast between Peter and Paul. We have noted that there are many similarities in their teachings.
40. What relevance do the teachings about creation and Noah's flood have to the final events of this world's history? To be honest, we must recognize that no human was there to observe the original seven-day creation. But, when the world became wicked and God felt it was necessary to destroy it by a flood, everyone but Noah's family scoffed at the idea. They felt that since nothing like a flood had ever happened, it could not happen in their day! But, God predicted it, and Noah preached about it for 120 years; and then, it happened. Thus, if God at one point destroyed the world with a flood, He can certainly do it again, this time with fire.
41. If we do not want to be destroyed with this world, we need to prepare ourselves for the second coming. And we need to remember that there was no reason for Jesus to come the first time if He is not coming back again. So, what about you? Do you look forward to the coming judgment with eager anticipation? Or, with fear of being consumed in the lake of fire?
42. Read Malachi 4:1-3. Honestly, where would you put yourself in that picture? Do you see the second coming as being like the sun's healing rays? Or, do you fear being trampled underfoot like the dust?
43. After discussing the issues of haste and delay in various places, Ellen White concluded that "God's purposes know no haste and no delay."—*The Desire of Ages** 32.1. For more information on the delay of Jesus's second coming, see the handout, "What Is the Reason for the Delay?," in the "General Topics" of the Teacher's Guides section of our website, www.Theox.org.

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