

## ***Preparation for the End Time*** ***The Return of Our Lord Jesus***

Lesson #13 for June 30, 2018

Scriptures: Isaiah 13:6,9; Matthew 24:27,30-31; Daniel 2:34-35; 2 Timothy 4:6-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

1. We should rejoice because we know that the great controversy—the greatest war of all time—had a beginning and because it will have an end. Our name *Seventh-day Adventist* reflects that. We celebrate by worshiping on the seventh day because it is a memorial of creation, the beginning of things in this world. Our name *Adventist* points forward to the second coming of Christ which will be the end of wickedness on this earth. These two are, in effect, bookends to the great controversy, although, in fact, the great controversy began in heaven. The God who created us in the beginning will suddenly come back at the end. Our salvation will depend on whose side we are on when that happens.
2. Biblical prophets have been talking about the coming of Jesus for many centuries. Even before Jesus came the first time, there were hints of His second coming. Of course, the Old Testament writers and believers thought that those events would happen in connection with His first coming. But, read Isaiah 13:6,9; Zechariah 14:9; and Daniel 12:1. Clearly, as we now know, these verses are talking about events connected with the second coming.
3. We know that “the day of the Lord” will be a day of destruction, turmoil, sadness, and loss for many people. But, in contrast, it will be a day of deliverance for God’s true followers. God’s true followers are those whose names will have already been written in His book. (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8) While the Lord’s fierce anger will fall on some, to His faithful followers it will be a time of protection and safety. See Zephaniah 2:1-3 and **Isaiah 33:10-16**. What is the difference between the righteous and the wicked that makes this happen?
4. Read Matthew 24:30-31. The two sides will distinguish themselves before Jesus actually appears. Some will move further and further away from Him; others will come closer. So, how can we make sure that we are on the right side? Every day we must choose to follow God’s guidance for our lives. Jesus is the Way to the Truth that gives Life.
5. It is clear from what we read in the New Testament that the Jews in Jesus’s day were hoping that the Messiah would come and help them defeat the Romans. They were sure that Israel would be the most powerful nation in the world under the Messiah. But, we now know that the coming of Jesus, neither in His first coming nor His second coming, will accomplish that. In fact, God has a much better plan for those who follow Him.
6. So, how different will things be when God comes again? Read Daniel 2:34-35,44-45. Do you remember the four great world empires: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome? Rome itself finally broke up into the nations of modern Europe. But, as we read about the dream of Nebuchadnezzar which was interpreted by Daniel, we discover that things end in a remarkable and spectacular way. The old heavens and the old earth will be completely replaced by a new heaven and a new earth under the control of God and Christ. In fact, in Luke 20:17-18, Jesus identified Himself with the stone which will crush to powder all that is left of this world.
7. Furthermore, reading on in Daniel 2, the four nations that had been so powerful at one time will become “like the dust on a threshing place in summer. The wind carried it all away,

leaving not a trace.” (Daniel 2:35, *GNB*\*) In other words, the old world order and the ways in which nations have conquered other nations will become a thing of the past.

8. But, the new nation that will suddenly appear on the scene under the control of God and Christ will become a great mountain and fill the whole earth.
9. So, let us carefully evaluate the situation. Remember that there are only two sides in this controversy. Ultimately, each of us will be totally committed to one side or the other. We can live forever with Jesus, with the Father, and with the Holy Spirit. Or, we will die and perish eternally.
10. Read Titus 2:12-13. What is the one major event which Christians have been looking forward to for about 2000 years? What is the Christian’s blessed hope?
11. An evolutionary lecturer was once explaining that about 13 billion years ago, “an infinitely dense tiny mass popped out of nothing, and that mass exploded, and from that explosion our universe came into existence.”—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Tuesday, June 26]. Of course, he did not explain how that “infinitely dense tiny mass” could just pop out of nothing! He assumed that we were going to accept his word “on faith.”
12. By contrast, the biblical concept of how we got started and the story of our first parents is much easier to understand. In light of what we read in the Bible, our future hope is so much brighter.
13. Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8. What was Paul talking about? To what did he have to look forward?  
**2 Timothy 4:6-8:** <sup>6</sup> As for me, the hour has come for me to be sacrificed; the time is here for me to leave this life. <sup>7</sup> I have done my best in the race, I have run the full distance, and I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> And now there is waiting for me the victory prize of being put right with God, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that Day—and not only to me, but to all those who wait with love for him to appear.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*\* (2nd ed., 2 Timothy 4:6-8). New York: American Bible Society.
14. Even though Paul was in prison in Rome and knew that he was about to be executed, he could still write those encouraging words because he knew that it was not the end of his story no matter what the Romans did to him. He knew that a crown of righteousness was waiting for him. So, supported by his faith, Paul awaited his death.
15. Is it possible for us to have that same confidence? Christians, especially Seventh-day Adventist Christians, have been clearly instructed on the importance and overarching truths of the great controversy. The truth about God, His character, and His government are what give meaning to everything for us.
16. So, are there consistent beliefs about the second coming among all Christian groups? No, there are not! Some Christian groups believe that the second coming will occur when the Holy Spirit is made manifest in the church on earth. That is, they believe that Christ’s second coming will be accomplished when the moral principles of Christianity are revealed in His people.
17. Does it seem clear to you that the true traits of Christianity are spreading in our world? Is the world becoming a better and safer place in which to live? Read Matthew 24:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Matthew 26:64; Revelation 1:7; and 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10. These

verses make it very clear that the second coming of Jesus will be visible all over the world; everyone will see Him.

18. Ellen White explains the second coming as follows:

The firmament appears to open and shut. The glory from the throne of God seems flashing through. The mountains shake like a reed in the wind, and ragged rocks are scattered on every side. There is a roar as of a coming tempest. The sea is lashed into fury. There is heard the shriek of a hurricane like the voice of demons upon a mission of destruction. The whole earth heaves and swells like the waves of the sea. Its surface is breaking up. Its very foundations seem to be giving way. Mountain chains are sinking. Inhabited islands disappear. The seaports that have become like Sodom for wickedness are swallowed up by the angry waters. Babylon the great has come in remembrance before God, "to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." [Revelation 16:19]—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 637.0. [Text in brackets is added.]

19. When the second coming takes place, will anything else really matter? How can we be sure that we are on the right side when that happens? Could it happen in our lifetimes?

20. Read John 11:25,39. As we know, Jesus had been warned that Lazarus was sick. But, Jesus was working on the other side of the Jordan; He delayed returning to Bethany. Several days later when He did arrive, He found that Lazarus had already been dead four days. To confirm that he was really dead, his sister said, "There will be a bad smell." (John 11:39, *GNB*\*) But, Jesus assured her that He Himself was and is the resurrection and the life. Even when people die, that is not the end of their lives. Everyone who has ever lived will be raised to life again at the second or third coming. (John 5:28-29) But, the fact that Jesus died and rose again in His own power is our guarantee that we can live again.

21. So, what will happen to the righteous dead when Christ returns? Romans 6:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44,53-55.

22. But, what about those who are still alive when that great final event happens? Read Philippians 3:21 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Our weak mortal bodies will be changed and turned into glorious, immortal bodies. And we will be taken to heaven for one thousand years. After that, we will return to this earth to live with God forever.

The living righteous are changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." At the voice of God they were glorified; now they are made immortal and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air. Angels "gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Little children are borne by holy angels to their mothers' arms. Friends long separated by death are united, nevermore to part, and with songs of gladness ascend together to the City of God.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 645.1.

23. Can you think of anything else that will be as important, ultimately, as the second coming of Jesus?

24. It is marvelous to note that the second coming is not an epilogue or an appendix or just an afterthought; instead, it is a grand climax, the great hope of the Christian's faith. The Christian story has a marvelous ending.

25. Seventh-day Adventists believe that we have two great books to teach us about God. One is the book of nature; the other, of course, is the Bible. But, the book of nature does not tell us anything about our ultimate fate or the second coming of Jesus Christ. How important is it to know that Christ is coming again to take His faithful children home to live with Him forever? Do the ideas of evolution just seem silly? Why would people choose to believe that we came essentially out of nothing, that we initially came from “primordial soup” which came from rocks, and that we will, ultimately, deteriorate and burn up or else we will freeze as the sun exhausts its energy supply? Are we living as if nothing else is as important as our relationship with Jesus Christ, especially when He comes a second time?
26. Are you looking forward to seeing Jesus Christ face-to-face? What percentage of Seventh-day Adventists are really excited about seeing Him come? We know that there will be many difficult times between now and that moment. But, we can still live with that blessed hope.
27. Read 2 Peter 3:10-13 and Daniel 2:34-35. If the second coming is going to result in a fire so hot that it melts the very elements and if the heavenly kingdom when it appears is to replace completely the old heavens and the old earth, then it should be clear that there is no relationship between the old and the new. Or, is there? As we watch our world deteriorate around us and evil becomes more and more popular, isn't it becoming increasingly clear that the second coming and the replacement of all the evil on this earth with good is what we need? Remember that there was no reason for Jesus to have come the first time if He does not intend to come back!
28. How do you feel when you think about the second coming? Many of us have had close relatives or friends pass away. Does our blessed hope make it easier to deal with such sad events?
29. But, the most fundamental and important truth that should encourage all Christians is the truth about God, His character, and His government. When He comes again, we do not need to be afraid. The kind of God He is means that anyone who is in any possible way savable will be saved. Those people will be looking forward to the second coming.
30. There have been a lot of discussions among Seventh-day Adventists about the fact that we know that Satan will try to come before Jesus comes back and pretend to be Jesus. Is there a way to know for sure whether someone claiming to be Christ really is Christ?
31. Notice these very significant quotations.

The wise men had seen a mysterious light in the heavens upon that night when the glory of God flooded the hills of Bethlehem. As the light faded, a luminous star appeared, and lingered in the sky. **It was not a fixed star nor a planet, and the phenomenon excited the keenest interest. That star was a distant company of shining angels, but of this the wise men were ignorant.** Yet they were impressed that the star was of special import to them.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*\* 60.1.

**He is coming with His own glory and with the glory of the Father. He is coming with all the holy angels with Him.** While all the world is plunged in darkness, there will be light in every dwelling of the saints. They will catch the first light of His second appearing... While the wicked flee from His presence, Christ's followers will rejoice.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*\* 420.3-421.0.

Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a

man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it [641] draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. Not now a "Man of Sorrows," to drink the bitter cup of shame and woe, He comes, victor in heaven and earth, to judge the living and the dead. "Faithful and True," "in righteousness He doth judge and make war." **And "the armies which were in heaven" (Revelation 19:11, 14) follow Him. With anthems of celestial melody the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng, attend Him on His way. The firmament seems filled with radiant forms—"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands."** No human pen can portray the scene; no mortal mind is adequate to conceive its splendor. —Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 640.3; *DD*\* 49.4; *FLB*\* 349.3; *AG*\* 356.3; *Hvn*\* 32.2; *LDE*\* 274.2; *Mar*\* 288.3. [Bold type is added.]

32. So, asking again, when we know that Satan will come first claiming to be Christ, how can we be certain that it is the right Christ that we are seeing? Satan will never be able to duplicate this "manner" of Christ's coming. In other words, if the entire sky is full of bright, shining angels surrounding the throne with Jesus seated on it, we can know for sure that it is the real Jesus.

33. Our church has a rather unusual name. What is the significance of being called *Seventh-day Adventists*?

"Our name is made of two opposite entities. . . . While the phrase 'seventh day' connects us with earthly existence and human history the word 'Adventist' takes us to the future of history, what comes after human history and belongs to the prophetic domain, pointing to the heavenly order. While the phrase 'seventh day' confronts us with the present reality of the earthly city and makes us breathe with the rhythm of time 'under heaven' (*Eccl. 3:1*), the word 'Adventist' takes us away from here and makes us dream and pray and hope for the coming of the kingdom of heaven, and strengthens in our heart the sense of 'eternity' (*Eccl. 3:11*)."—Excerpted from Jacques Doukhan, "The Tension of Seventh-day Adventist Identity: An Existential & Eschatological Perspective," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Jan. 26, 2015, pp. 29, 30.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 172].

34. Is there an important connection between the events of creation and the second coming? The Bible begins with the story of creation and, of course, ends in Revelation with the new heavens and a new earth in the kingdom of God. What connection is there between those two events? Are there other things in Scripture which show a similar scope? What about the three angels' messages? This is the story of the great controversy.

35. Some of our Christian friends believe that the second coming of Christ will not be a literal, factual event, but rather, an enhanced personal relationship with Him with their ethical lives and their faith improving over time. Do we see this happening among Christian believers?

36. One Christian lecturer mocked those naïve Christians who believe in the literal second coming of Jesus from heaven: "Do you think that Jesus will come in a parachute?" The fact

that people laughed indicates that the lecturer had made his point. True Christians are not dissuaded by such thinking. They know that God will cause a tremendous break in history, and an entirely new heavens and new earth will come. The prophecies of Daniel make it very clear that this final kingdom which will last forever is of a very different nature than the previous kingdoms of this world. Furthermore, Daniel 2:35 suggests that no trace of the former kingdoms will be found. And it is important to notice also that human beings will have nothing to do with the establishment of the final kingdom. (Daniel 2:45) It is the God of heaven who sets up that kingdom. (Daniel 2:44)

37. So, where does that leave us?

No scheme of business or plan of life can be sound or complete that embraces only the brief years of this present life and makes no provision for the unending future. Let the youth be taught to take eternity into their reckoning.—*Education*\* 145.2; *CS*\* 346.4; *BLJ*\* 191.5.

38. In light of what we have studied, everything will change when God finally reenters our world and sets up His own kingdom. How quickly will those changes come? Instantly!

39. How quickly will that change come? We know that there is a millennium between the second coming and the third coming. But, the second coming will occur like the coming of a thief. See 1 Thessalonians 5:4; Revelation 3:3; 16:15. We are not dependent upon poor, physical human ideas for our hope. Our hope is firmly grounded on the God of the universe. He will come again with the clouds of heaven. (Daniel 7:13; Matthew 24:30; Revelation 14:14) We cannot save ourselves. We had nothing to do with our births, and we have nothing to do with earning our salvation.

40. It is interesting to note that the word *end* in biblical Hebrew is *qets*. It is derived from the Hebrew verb *qatsats* which means “cut off.” (Deuteronomy 25:12) This implies an abrupt end. Furthermore, this implies that God is coming to rescue His children from the hands of an enemy. (See Matthew 13:28; compare Job 1:11-12.) The second coming will be just as radical a change as when God rescued His children from Egypt or when He cast out demons from the demon-possessed.

41. Are we all going to be surprised when the second coming happens? Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6. God’s faithful people should not be surprised.

42. So, what does God plan for us? See Isaiah 65:17-25. God has marvelous things in mind for us. He is not going to just try to improve our old world; He is going to give us a brand-new one. There will be no death, no disease, no fear, no crying; there will be nothing to disturb the peace or harmony of heaven.

43. What God has in mind for us is beyond our wildest imaginations. (1 Corinthians 2:7-9) This is not to suggest that there is no way for us to even have any idea about heaven. Heaven is a real place.

44. There are a lot of strange beliefs about what will happen in the final events of this world’s history. While some people believe that things will gradually improve and Jesus will come to rule over this earth from Jerusalem, our views are very different. We believe that the day of the Lord will bring the total collapse and destruction of this world as we know it. But, we can look forward with great hope to what we know is coming. Are you ready?

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