

## ***Oneness in Christ***

### ***Final Restoration of Unity***

Lesson #13 for December 29, 2018

Scriptures: John 14:1-3; Isaiah 11:1-10; 35:4-10; Revelation 21:1-5; 22:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

1. It has been estimated that the single most common subject of discussion in the New Testament is the second coming of Jesus Christ. No doubt, those living in the days of the early disciples and apostles thought that Jesus would come again in their lifetime. Looking back from where we are, it is clear that there was no reason for Jesus to come the first time if He does not intend to come back again. And that promise brings with it incredible blessings: No wars, no famines, no diseases, no tragedies, or any other evils.
2. At the time of the second advent, Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, will All appear, accompanied by every angel from heaven. The entire sky will be full of angels. It will end all troubles on this earth. While the great controversy will not officially be finished until the end of the millennium, for all practical purposes, it will be over at that second coming.
3. Unless we believe Satan's lies that God is a liar, the second coming of Christ is an absolute certainty.

**John 14:1-3:** <sup>1</sup>"Do not be worried and upset," Jesus told them. "Believe in God and believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>There are many rooms in my Father's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. <sup>3</sup>And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation\** (2nd ed., John 14:1-3). New York: American Bible Society.

4. Try to imagine what it will be like to speak with God face-to-face. The privileges that Adam and Eve enjoyed will be ours. And there will be "no possibility" of trouble in the future.
5. Review the experiences of the disciples while Jesus was with them. Then, review the experiences of the disciples after Jesus ascended to heaven as they sought to spread the gospel around the world. In light of the contrast between those two situations, it is no wonder that Paul wrote in Titus 2:13: "As we wait for the blessed Day we hope for, when the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ will appear."—*Good News Bible.\**
6. As we look back over the prophecies and rearrange them based on when they were first given, we notice that Jude 14-15 talk about a prophecy that predates any other prophecy written in the Bible—unless you consider Genesis 3:15 a prophecy.

**Jude 14-15:** <sup>14</sup>It was Enoch, the seventh direct descendant from Adam, who long ago prophesied this about them: "The Lord will come with many thousands of his holy angels <sup>15</sup>to bring judgement on all, to condemn them all for the godless deeds they have performed and for all the terrible words that godless sinners have spoken against him!"—*Good News Bible.\**

7. It is important to know that even before the first coming of Jesus, the Jewish leaders applied these words to His first coming! They had no idea that there would be a second coming. There is no evidence that anyone in the Old Testament had any idea that there would be a second coming. In the same way, there is no evidence in the New Testament that anyone knew that there would be a third coming until after A.D. 90 when John received the vision we have recorded in Revelation 20. None of Paul, Peter, Matthew, Luke, or James (neither James) had any idea about the millennium or about the third coming.

8. Read Genesis 3:15; Micah 5:2; Isaiah 11:1; and Daniel 9:25-26. The first coming of Christ was clearly predicted in these verses. And it occurred just as predicted. The second coming is also clearly predicted in the New Testament. See Hebrews 9:26,28.

**Genesis 3:15:** “I will make you and the woman hate each other; her offspring and yours will always be enemies. Her offspring [singular] will crush your head, and you will bite her offspring’s heel.”—*Good News Bible*.\* [Content in brackets is added.]

9. Does the Devil have offspring? Or, was God talking about the serpent?

**Micah 5:2:** The LORD says, “Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah, but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel, whose family line goes back to ancient times.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

10. What does it mean to say “whose family line goes back to ancient times”?

11. A story is told about an elderly black preacher who was describing the encounter between Jesus at age 12 in the temple at Jerusalem and the Jewish leaders. (See Luke 2:46-47.) The pastor imagined himself hearing this question from one of the Jewish leaders: “Son, how old are you?” Jesus hesitated only briefly and then replied, “Well, on my mother’s side, I am twelve years old; but, on My Father’s side, I am older than time!”

12. In light of all that we are told about our future and the second coming, we recognize that the times will not be easy between now and then. But, we have the blessed hope that when Jesus arrives, the future for His faithful children will be beyond our wildest imaginations.

13. So, what do we know about the future home of the blessed? Read Isaiah 35:6-9.

14. The earliest accounts of man were of Adam and Eve living in harmony with angels and with God in the beautiful Garden of Eden. There was perfect harmony and trust among all present. But, unfortunately, the Devil demanded access to those new creatures. And so, in order to protect humans, God gave the Devil access to them *at only one tree*, allowing freedom of choice for Adam and Eve as well as freedom for the Devil to present his side. Unfortunately, Eve went there, was deceived by the serpent, ate the fruit, and offered it to Adam who also ate it. But, while the story of the fall recorded in Genesis 3 was a terrible disaster, the final chapters of the Bible—Revelation 21&22—teach us that this earth made new will be restored more beautifully even than the Garden of Eden.

15. It is very important for us to recognize that these new heavens and new earth are real places. We will know the people that we have known on this earth—those who are there. This will never be some kind of existence as is commonly portrayed in the popular press with people sitting on clouds and playing harps. There will be beautiful animals of all types living peacefully together. No animal will ever cause harm to any other animal, to any human being, or any angel. In fact, there will be no more crying and no more death.

**Revelation 21:1-4.** <sup>1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth disappeared, and the sea vanished. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared and ready, like a bride dressed to meet her husband. <sup>3</sup>I heard a loud voice speaking from the throne: “Now God’s home is with human beings! He will live with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. **There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared.**”—*Good News Bible*.\* [Bold type is added.]

16. Ellen White had some wonderful words to say about that future paradise.

As the years of eternity roll, they will bring richer and more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. **The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character.** As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed beat with a stronger devotion, and they sweep the harps of gold with a firmer hand: and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise.—Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*,\* Book 4, 492.1 (1884); *The Story of Redemption*\* 432.3-433.0; *GC*\* 678.2; *DD*\* 62.4; *AG*\* 368.6; *Hvn*\* 191.1; *LDE*\* 305.1; *Mar*\* 373.3; *ML*\* 362.3; *TA*\* 299.1. [Bold type is added.]

17. The best part of that future kingdom is the fact that we will be able to get to know the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Remember that the basic characteristic of each one of Them is love. We need to practice that kind of *agape* love here so we can be prepared for what is coming there. Can you imagine, for example, a choir of 100,000 angels!
18. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. This is a brief but fairly detailed description of the actual events of the second coming. The righteous dead will arise at the sound of the voice of the Archangel, Michael—another name for Jesus Christ (Compare the above passage with John 5:25.)—and the angels will gather His elect from the four winds. Together with those who are righteous and still living on the earth, all will rise to join Jesus in the clouds. (Matthew 24:31)
19. Further details about what will happen at that point are found in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.
 

**1 Corinthians 15:51-53:** <sup>51-52</sup> Listen to this secret truth: we shall not all die, but when the last trumpet sounds, we shall all be changed in an instant, as quickly as the blinking of an eye. For when the trumpet sounds, the **dead will be raised**, never to die again, and we shall all be changed. <sup>53</sup>For **what is mortal must be changed into what is immortal; what will die must be changed into what cannot die.**—*Good News Bible*.\* [Bold type is added.]
20. Imagine the wonderful experience of reuniting with those close friends and family who have passed on because of disease or age. When they arise, they will arise in a perfect, sinless condition.
 

Sin defaced and almost obliterated the divine image; but Christ came to restore that which had been lost. He will change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body. The mortal, corruptible form, devoid of comeliness, once polluted with sin, becomes perfect, beautiful, and immortal. All blemishes and deformities are left in the grave. **Restored to the tree of life in the long-lost Eden, the redeemed will “grow up” (Malachi 4:2) to the full stature of the race in its primeval glory.** The last lingering traces of the curse of sin will be removed, and Christ’s faithful ones will appear in “the beauty of the Lord our God,” in mind and soul and body reflecting the perfect image of their Lord. Oh, wonderful redemption! long talked of, long hoped for, contemplated with eager anticipation, but never fully understood.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 644.3; *Hvn*\* 135.2; *LDE*\* 289.3. [Bold type is added.]
21. And, of course, the question arises: What kind of bodies will we have? When Jesus returned to speak with the disciples on the evening of resurrection Sunday, He ate food. They were able to see Him and touch Him. He was real. (John 20:24-29) We will have bodies just like that when we are resurrected. But, these “spiritual bodies” will not be exactly like ours now.
22. Among nominal Christians and in the popular press, there have been great efforts to explain

away the miracles of the Bible as just natural events which happened to occur at key moments in time. But, the second coming of Christ is beyond any possibility of natural explanation; it will be supernatural in every respect—the resurrection of the dead and a sky full of shining angels.

23. Read Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21:1. There is no question about the fact that God is going to remake the heavens and the earth into forms which are beyond our wildest imagination.
24. Can we even imagine the city described in Revelation 21:2,9-27? Is the city a cube in shape? Or, is it just that the height of the city is in proportion to its length and width? Each one of us will apparently have a home within the city as well as another place outside the city where we can grow a garden or develop the property in whatever way we see fit.
25. Read Revelation 22:1-5. There is some kind of a river that flows out of the throne of God and down through the middle of the city street. On either side of that river is the trunk of a tree, and those two trunks unite together high in the air. The tree of life bears 12 kinds of fruit, one each month; and the fruit is for the healing of the nations.
26. Read Isaiah 66:23. Why do people come before the Lord once each month? Is it because the tree of life is about to bear a new kind of fruit? Is there only one tree of life? Or, are there multiple trees of life? Ezekiel seems to suggest that there are trees all along on each side of that river. (Ezekiel 47:7)
27. But, what is implied by *the healing of the nations*? There will be no sickness there; so, why do we need the leaves for healing?

“ ‘The healing of the nations’ refers figuratively to the removal of all national and linguistic barriers and separation. . . . The leaves of the tree of life heal the breaches between nations. The nations are no longer ‘gentiles’ but are united into one family as the true people of God (*[compare] Rev. 21:24-26*). What Micah anticipated centuries earlier is now being fulfilled: ‘Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war. Each of them will sit under his vine and under his fig tree, with no one to make them afraid’ (*Mic. 4:3-4; [compare] Isa. 2:4*). There on the banks of the river of life the redeemed will ‘invite his neighbor to sit’ (*Zech. [3:]10*) with him under the tree of life. The curing quality of the leaves of the tree will heal all wounds—racial, ethnic, tribal, or linguistic—that have torn and divided humanity for ages.”—Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, p. 593.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** for Wednesday, December 26, including all brackets and italic type].

28. Read Isaiah 35:4-10 and Isaiah 66:21-24. Can you imagine a place like what is pictured in these passages? See 1 Corinthians 2:9.
29. There are many new things described as being a part of that new kingdom. New things, a new song, a new name, even a new order of things. (Isaiah 42:9-10; 48:6; 43:19; 62:2; 65)
30. The curses that have rested upon on this earth as a result of sin—as described in Leviticus 26:14-17 and Deuteronomy 28:30—will be gone.

**There the redeemed shall know, even as also they are known. The loves and sympathies which God Himself has planted in the soul shall there find truest and sweetest exercise.** The pure communion with holy beings, the harmonious social life with the blessed angels and with the faithful ones of all ages who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, the sacred ties that bind together “the whole family in heaven and earth” (Ephesians 3:15)—these help to constitute the happiness of the redeemed.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy\** 677.1. [Bold type is

added.]

31. We live in a decaying world where everything is fleeting and temporary. Is it possible for us to even imagine a world where a flower—even though it is picked—will never fade?

**Revelation 14:13:** Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: happy are those who from now on die in the service of the Lord!”

“Yes indeed!” answers the Spirit. “They will enjoy rest from their hard work, because the results of their service go with them.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

32. Do these words puzzle you? This verse immediately follows the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12. So, who will die after the giving of the three angels’ messages? Are those of us who are living in the time of the giving of those three messages going to be treated in a special way in the future?

33. **The Special Resurrection:**

Graves are opened, and “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth... awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Daniel 12:2. **All who have died in the faith of the third angel’s message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God’s covenant of peace with those who have kept His law.** “They also which pierced Him” (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ’s dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient. —Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*\* 637.1; *DD*\* 47.1; *FLB*\* 182.4; *LDE*\* 271.2; *ML*\* 344.4. [Bold type is added.]

34. Seventh-day Adventists have chosen to include the word *adventist* in our name. Why did we do that? Is our understanding of the advent different in some way from that of other churches? People in some churches believe that we will be raptured. Others believe that there will be a millennium of peace with headquarters for Jesus in Jerusalem before the righteous are taken to heaven. Others believe that everyone will eventually turn to God and be saved. But, Seventh-day Adventists, accepting all that the Scripture says, believe that there will be seven final plagues and a time of terrible persecution before the second coming. At the second coming, the righteous will be taken to heaven, and the wicked will perish and be dead for one thousand years. Until the thousand years are over, Satan will be left to live on this earth with his angels to contemplate what they have accomplished.

35. Are you looking forward to the second coming? Why? Or, why not? See 2 Peter 3:10-13.

36. Have any of God’s previous promises ever failed? While we recognize that some of His words were given in a conditional format and were not fulfilled because we or prior generations did not meet the conditions, God’s promises about the second coming will never fail. God has nothing but the best possible plans for His faithful children.

**Isaiah 64:4:** No one has ever seen or heard of a God like you, who does such deeds for those who put their hope in him.—*Good News Bible*.\*

**1 Corinthians 2:9:** However, as the scripture says:

“What no one ever saw or heard,

what no one ever thought could happen,

is the very thing God prepared for those who love him.”—*Good News Bible*.\*

37. Have you ever tried to describe heaven in the best way you can? What do you like most about your understanding of heaven? Do you look forward to meeting the prophets of the Old

Testament? Or, the disciples of the New Testament as well as Jesus and the Father? Do you look forward to the animals which will be there? And the people? And the peace and harmony? And the wonderful fruit? No matter what happens, we can trust God to take care of us.

38. Try to imagine yourself among the followers of William Miller on October 22, 1844. They were ready to sell property to support the cause and to give away things of value because they were certain that they would see Jesus on that day. How do you think you would have reacted? We know that Miller, despite his careful Bible study, had misinterpreted the prophecy of the 2300 days described in Daniel 8:14, assuming that it would terminate with the second coming of Christ. Instead, it terminated when Christ took up His new role in heaven, beginning the pre-advent judgment. (Daniel 7:9-14) If you knew for sure when Jesus was coming back again, how would it impact you? Shouldn't you do those things which you would do if you knew the date, even if you do not know the date? What are you doing to help your neighbors and friends and associates at work to prepare for that day? Are we living a life that correctly represents Jesus to those around us by living in the hope of the new earth?
39. While we have very little description of the Garden of Eden, it is probably the closest thing we have at this point in time to give us a hint of what things will be like in the new heavens and the new earth. We are told that Adam and Eve and their children came back to the gates of the garden to worship God periodically. Could they speak to the angels there? What would that experience be like? The Garden of Eden was apparently taken to heaven at the time of the flood. Did those people who scoffed at Noah ever visit the gates of the Garden of Eden? If they did, what did they think? Were they able to talk to the angels who guarded the gates?
40. John's description of the new heavens and the new earth as recorded in Revelation 21 reflects what was said earlier by Isaiah (Isaiah 60 and 65) and Ezekiel, especially in chapters 40-48.
41. What does it mean to say there will be *no sea* there?

We also are told that there is no sea in the new earth. This statement might sound unusual to the casual reader; however, it is possible that the word "sea" is being used as a metaphor in this passage. In Jewish thinking the sea symbolically is linked to evil, oppression, and that which is frightening. (*Compare with Rev. 13:1.*) When John claims that there is no sea in the new earth, he is suggesting that there is no longer any reason to fear evil, because all traces of it have been removed. See Ranko Stefanovic. *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2002), pp. 575, 576.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide\** 173.

42. God came down to this earth and walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening. Will that kind of experience be possible in heaven? With thousand, perhaps even millions, of people crowding around to communicate with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, will it be difficult for us to have a personal relationship with Them? How is that going to work?
43. We will be able to travel to other worlds throughout the universe that are inhabited. What will those journeys be like?
44. Read Isaiah 11:6-10. How do you understand the words in verse 9 (GNB\*): "The land will be as full of knowledge of the LORD as the seas are full of water"? Does being full of knowledge of the Lord transform those of us who will be a part of that experience?
45. While it will be possible to have face-to-face communication and relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, how close can we come to that kind of relationship in our day?

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