

13. The Promise of His Return (1Q 2012—Glimpses of Our God)

Biblical material: 2 Pet. 3:1–10, 13; John 14:2, 3; Dan. 2:44; Hebrews 9:28; 11; Rev. 6:9–11; Luke 12:42–48; Rev. 22:12.

Quotes

- Having given us the package, do you think God will deny us the ribbon? *Oswald C. Hoffman*
- As Christians, we should not be exitists, looking for our going, but Adventists, looking for his coming. *William Freel*
- The fact that Jesus Christ is to come again is not a reason for star-gazing, but for working in the power of the Holy Ghost. *C.H. Spurgeon*
- The Christian hope is not a matter for tickling our minds, but for changing our minds and influencing society. *Stephen Travis*
- The last day is hidden so that every day may be regarded. *Augustine*
- Our readiness must not depend on the imminence of Christ's return but on its reality in our own experience. *Sakae Kubo*

Questions

While we Adventists still claim to be committed to the Advent, how is this true in our daily experience? In what ways do we “deny the promise of his coming”? What about the issue of dates? What is at the heart of the Second Advent belief? How does this express God's nature and character, and what is its relevance to the great controversy?

Bible summary

2 Pet. 3:1-10, 13 is a reminder to believers in the second coming not to give up. The expectation is based on the explicit promise of Jesus (John 14:2, 3). God will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44). Just as Jesus died to save us, he will return to take us home (Hebrews 9:28) Like the saints under the altar, we also ask “How long?” (Rev. 6:9-11). Our current role is to do the work the Master has given us (Luke 12:42-48). Jesus promises he is coming soon, and his reward is with him (Rev. 22:12).

Comment

The focus of our hope is the second coming of Jesus... Just imagine for a moment. You have a very close friend with whom you spend many hours. You meet often. You enjoy one another's company. Then one day you part, and never make any arrangements to see each other again.

Some strange friendship! If that happened we'd think something had gone very wrong with the relationship ... And that is the same with our relationship with God. Can you imagine God doing all he has, and then leaving the future undecided? NEVER! He makes an appointment to meet us again. For like true friends we wait and hope for this meeting. Unless we are no longer friends... But what does the Bible tell us about this blessed hope? Let's remind ourselves.

1 Thess 4:13-18 “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven ... and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” That is the hope. A friend returning to take his loved ones home with

him. This is the glorious climax to all of God's saving work. This is what he has been trying to accomplish all through history. That we might be with him again.

Matt 24:30,31 "The Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." What a spectacle that will be! What a difference to Christ's first coming in humility, in the form of a suffering servant! The King of Kings comes to earth, to claim his own. *This* is the hope; all others are counterfeits.

Jn 14:1-4 "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The hope of the Christian is the same as the hope of God—to be together again, forever. To have the barrier of sin removed completely. To see Jesus face to face in all his glory. That's what the blessed hope accomplishes.

This is the focus of hope. This is the point to which our eyes are directed—looking up, for our redemption draws near. This is the centre of Adventist preaching—that this same Jesus who died for your sins and mine, will return to take us home. This is the heart of our message.

Why then are we so feeble in proclaiming this truth? Why doesn't it seem to affect us anymore? Have we heard it so often that it makes no difference anymore? Do we fail to take any notice—like day-dreaming in the classroom where the words go in one ear and out the other?

- Is it just a "comfortable doctrine" that assures you of future happiness? OR is it a message that makes you sit up and get moving, that makes you so happy that you want to tell others automatically?
- Is it an idea that scares you and you pray that it doesn't happen, OR is it the joy of your heart, the day long awaited, that you pray will be soon?
- Is it a belief that you hold in your mind that doesn't affect the way you live, OR is it the motivating principle of your life, that affects everything you do?

We need to *personalize* the blessed hope! It must *mean* something to all of us. This is the challenge of the Advent hope -- the message given to us by Jesus that keeps us on track. For really this hope is not about the future at all.

It's about how we live here and now! The present is all the time we have. We don't live in the past, we don't live in the future. We don't think in the past, we don't think in the future. *Now* is the only time we have. During the present is where we make our decisions—and all our decisions must be made in the light of the second coming.

This doesn't mean to say that you should say "The Lord is coming in three years, so I don't have time to go to college, get married, have a family." Nothing like this that dates the coming. What I am saying is that our hope needs to influence everything in our lives—that we are to be ready *whenever!* This is the message of Jesus: "Watch and pray," be ready.

Comment 2

The importance of the second Advent doctrine to Seventh-day Adventists cannot be overemphasized. It is in very truth a life-or-death matter to our movement.

Seventh-day Adventists are irrevocably committed to belief in, and proclamation of, the imminent second coming of Christ. Should we for any reason whatever repudiate this truth, or cease to proclaim it with sincerity, we would destroy ourselves. Openly or secretly to deny the nearness of our Lord's return would be to invite the disintegration of our cause.

The great second Advent movement was founded upon the conviction, resolutely and uncompromisingly held by our pioneers, that the long-anticipated return of Christ was near at hand. Without this conviction there would have been no Seventh-day Adventists or any Seventh-day Adventist movement.

In other words, we were Adventists before we had any organization. We were Adventists before we owned any property. We were Adventists before we adopted the tithing system. We were Adventists before we had anything to do with food reform, or dress reform, or any other reform.

Belief in the imminent second coming of Christ is the reason for, and basis of, our existence... If we do not believe that Christ's second coming is nigh at hand, we do not belong to the Advent movement. Furthermore, if we no longer hold this belief we have no business here today.

Arthur S. Maxwell, "The Imminence of Christ's Second Coming" in Our Firm Foundation (a record of a Bible Conference); Washington: Review and Herald, 1953, pp.186-7.

Ellen White Comments

The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures. {GC 299}

We are looking for the second coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are not only to believe that the end of all things is at hand. We are to be filled with the advent spirit that when the Lord comes He may find us ready to meet Him, whether we are working in the field, or building a house, or preaching the Word; ready to say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us" (Isaiah 25:9).--Letter 25, 1902. {10MR 388}

The Lord is soon to come, and we must be prepared to meet Him in peace... We are not to be sad, but cheerful, and we are to keep the Lord Jesus ever before us. He is soon coming, and we must be ready and waiting for His appearing. {8T 253}

"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly." Jesus says: "Behold, I come quickly." We should keep these words ever in mind, and act as though we do indeed believe that the coming of the Lord is nigh, and that we are pilgrims and strangers upon the earth. {5T 266}

Living power must attend the message of Christ's second appearing... In the days of the apostles the message that they bore wrought a real work, turning souls from idols to serve the living God. The work to be done today is just as real, and the truth is just as much truth; only we are to give the message with as much more earnestness as the coming of the Lord is nearer. The message for this time is positive, simple, and of the deepest importance. We must act like men and women who believe it. Waiting, watching, working, praying, warning the world—this is our work. . . . {Ev 219}

The blessed hope of the second appearing of Christ, with its solemn realities, needs to be often presented to the people. Looking for the soon appearing of our Lord will lead us to regard earthly things as emptiness and nothingness. {6T 406}

Oh, I long for Jesus to come. I long for that home in the kingdom of glory where there will be no sickness, no sorrow, no pain, no death. {10MR 383}

The Lord is soon coming. Talk it, pray it, believe it. Make it a part of the life. {7T 237}