

11. Living the Advent Hope (3Q 2019—The Least of These)

Biblical material: Luke 18:1–8; Matthew 24–25; 1 Cor. 15:12–19; 15:58; Eccles. 8:14; 12:13, 14; Rev. 21:1–5; 22:1–5.

Quotes

- To reject hope is to mutilate the New Testament message of salvation in which every element is essential to the whole. *Oscar Cullmann*
- The Christian hope is not a matter for tickling our minds but for changing our lives and for influencing society. *Stephen Travis*
- Hope is faith in the future tense. *Peter Anderson*
- Hoping is disciplined waiting. *E. Hoffmann*
- Our readiness must not depend on the imminence of Christ’s return but on its reality in our own experience. *Sakae Kubo*
- The future belongs to those who belong to God. This is hope. *W.T. Purkiser*

Questions

Can we hope too much? Can we hope too little? What is the basis for the Christian hope? How can we put this hope into practice in our daily lives? What difference does this hope make to our experience in the present? How can we keep the flame of hope alive? How does this hope fit into the great controversy perspective?

Bible summary

In Luke 18:1–8 Jesus tells the story of the unjust judge, and concludes by asking whether when the Son of man will find faith on the earth when he comes. Matthew 24–25 explains about the coming of the Son of man at the end of the world, and parables associated with it. Jesus’ resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12–19). Eccles. 8:14 comments in the unfairness of this world, but the book concludes with the assurance that God will judge in the end (Eccles. 12,13, 14). In Rev. 21:1–5; 22:1–5, God promises to live with us forever.

Comment

The basis for the Christian hope is not vague or insubstantial. Jesus, the Son of God, is the promise-maker and the promise-keeper: “Don’t let your minds be anxious,” Jesus told his disciples. “Trust in God, trust in me as well. In my Father’s house there are many rooms. If this wasn’t so I would have told you. I’m going to prepare a place for you. Once I’ve gone and prepared a place for you, I will come again and take you with me, so that you can be there with me too.” John 14:1-3 FBV.

These exciting words thrill the heart! “For God who promised is trustworthy.” (Heb. 10:23 FBV.) This is the true foundation of hope, the assurance of the God who not only knows the future but invites us to be there with Him. That is why “our hope is in the living God. He is the Savior of all people, especially of those who trust in him.” (1 Timothy 4:10 FBV).

Sometimes the days seem dark and dreary, and it is easy to fall into depression and despair and ask the question, “Is there any hope?” That’s when God comes close once again as we search for meaning and purpose, and reminds us of the implications of

our hope. Hope is everything to us. It is the source of our being, our destiny, our very lives. To live without hope is not to live at all. In fact it denies our very system of belief, for “Where there is no hope, there is no faith.” (William Gouge.)

It is God who always intervenes to bring hope. For us even to exist, we must believe in a future, whatever we may think that future may bring. It *has* to be there, as a part of our inner life. And in answer to the question above, it is the God of hope who brings hope. Our hope is based on God, and on God alone. Our hope has no confidence in anything or anyone else. Our hope is a divine hope, based on the assurance of God Himself. In the words of Adoniram Judson, “My future is as bright as the promises of God.”

This is the only hope that is truly meaningful. We may hope in many things, extend our hopes in many directions, and have many vain hopes. But the Only Hope is God Himself, for there is no future without Him. That is why we “we look for the wonderful hope of the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:13 FBV). Ultimately, “we shall meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever! So encourage one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17, 18 FBV).

What do we hope for? To be with Jesus. To be home with God. To begin an eternal life in the presence of our loving Lord.

Is that really what we are hoping for? The true goal of hope is not in feelings of hopefulness or even in the second advent as an event itself. The meaning of the second advent is that God comes for His friends to take them to be with Him for all eternity. Now if we are not really looking forward to such a time, then our reaction to the Advent hope may be less than positive. Much depends on our understanding of who God is—for do we want to spend all eternity in the presence of One we do not love, trust and admire? What is our own personal hope, really and truly? Who are we hoping for?

Ellen White Comments

The shortness of time is frequently urged as an incentive for seeking righteousness and making Christ our friend. This should not be the great motive with us; for it savors of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God should be held before us, that we may be compelled to right action through fear? It ought not to be so. {LHU 98}

Living power must attend the message of Christ’s second coming in the clouds of heaven.... The message for this time is positive, simple, and of the deepest importance. We must act like men and women who believe.... Waiting, watching, working, praying, warning the world—this is our work.” Ellen White, Letter 150, 1902, 2-3. {MS release 844}

The doctrine of the second advent is the very key-note of the Sacred Scripture. (GC 299)

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