11. Last Day Events (2Q 2016—Matthew)

**Biblical material:** Exod. 19:5, 6; Matthew 23; John 12:20–26; Matthew 24; John 14:1–4; 1 Thess. 4:16.

**Quotes**
- Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts. *Albert Einstein*
- We talk of the Second Coming; half the world has never heard of the first. *Oswald J. Smith*
- God in his very being is the future of the world. *Wolfhart Pannenberg*
- The Christian hope is not a matter for tickling our minds but for changing our loves and for influencing society. *Stephen Travis*
- God leads us forward, not back. The Christian life means looking forward to the coming of Christ, like a runner straining for the finishing tape. *Stephen Travis*
- Faith in Jesus Christ without the expectation of His Parousia (Second Coming) is a voucher that is never redeemed, a promise that is not seriously meant. A Christian faith without expectation of the Parousia is like a ladder which ends in the void. *Emil Brunner*
- Just as the resurrection faith is hope’s foundation, so Christ’s second coming defines hope’s horizon. Without the expectation of Christ’s second coming there is no Christian hope. *Juergen Moltmann*
- The future belongs to those who belong to God. This is hope. *W.T. Purkiser*

**Questions**
What is important to understand regarding last day events? What is the essential aspect of Jesus’ view of what is to come? How can we share this message without seeming to be doomsday crackpots? Why is the return of Jesus not central in our perspective of the future? How does this fit into the Great Controversy?

**Bible summary**
God’s intent was that his people were to be a holy nation (Exod. 19:5, 6). In Matthew 23 Jesus gives more warnings about the hypocritical religious leaders, and the coming disaster for Jerusalem. This is continued in Jesus’ combined answer to his disciples’ question about the end—which in their minds was the same as the destruction of Jerusalem. It’s important to separate out the two strands in Matthew 24 and understand what part refers to the two different events in view. Jesus predicts his soon-coming death in John 12:20–26, but promises to return (John 14:1–4), also referred to in 1 Thess. 4:16.

**Comment**
Matthew 24 points us forward to the great and glorious day of completion at the second coming of Jesus. This is truly the blessed hope. But even here we need to make sure that we do not use this to evoke fear…
To his disciples, representing us, what could Jesus say that would help them through the terrible times ahead? Two things—that he would be with them, and that he would come again and take them home with him. Without his return, his mission is
incomplete. This blessed hope is the future focus of the New Testament, occupying more space than any other belief.

Throughout Scripture the emphasis is on hope—which while concerned with the future, is what happens in the present. Without hope we are only half alive, and God—the God of hope—promises us a plan and a future for each of us. Without this future hope the present dims in meaning, but with God’s promises reassuring us that this life is not the end, we have hope for eternal life with our loving Lord. God leads us onward, challenging and encouraging us, to his incredible future…

Why then has the second coming of Jesus been so often forgotten or ignored? How did this belief seem to die away in the Church and to lose its position as the “blessed hope” of the individual Christian? History shows the workings of men’s minds, and their reaction to varying situations. The history of the Christian church is much the same, and it is in the human mind with its attitudes, philosophies and expectations that the reason for the decline in Advent hope is found.

Yet the Bible is full of this promise. It is the hope that we look forward to, in confidence that he is faithful that promised. This is no low-key event! You can’t miss this one. Jesus doesn’t come quietly or secretly so that only a few notice. It is an earth-shattering event that no one will miss! Jesus’ return will be like the lightning shining from the east to the west, every eye shall see him, and if anyone tells you he’s come secretly—Jesus himself says don’t believe it! In fact you will be absolutely blinded by the light of his return, and it will be loud enough to wake the dead, literally.

Nor will Jesus come in some vague transcendental way—it is intensely personal and very real: as Jesus’ disciples were told, “This same Jesus… shall come in the same way as you have seen him go into heaven.” Jesus left as a physical and very real person, and when he returns he will be just the same. Above all Jesus is the person who we should know as our best and closest friend.

For while we may have the end-time message, if we are not presenting God in a winsome way that attracts rather than compels through fear, then who would want to look forward to his return and spending eternity with him? At the heart of the Christian hope is the one we called Blessed, for this is the Blessed Hope.

**Ellen White Comments**

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). {10MR 388}

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. We are not half awake to the perils and dangers that we must be prepared to meet. Waiting, watching, working, praying, warning the world--this is our work. {Ev 219}

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