

9. Final Events (3Q 2012—1 and 2 Thessalonians)

Biblical material: 1 Thess. 5:1–11, Gen. 3:15–24, Isa. 13:6–9, Luke 21:34–36, Rom. 1:18.

Quotes

- He who loves the second coming of the Lord is not he who affirms it is far off, nor is it he who says it is near. It is he who, whether it be far or near, awaits it with sincere faith, steadfast hope and fervent love. *Augustine*
- I never begin my work in the morning without thinking that perhaps *he* may interrupt my work and begin his own. I am not looking for death, I am looking for *him*. *G. Campbell Morgan*
- The Christian hope is not a matter for tickling our minds, but for changing our minds and influencing society. *Stephen Travis*
- My future is as bright as the promises of God. *Adoniram Judson*
- Hope is one of the great themes of the Bible, based on the intervention and promises of the God who acts... The great unfinished aspect of Christ's return dominates the hope of the New Testament. *Michael Green*
- The importance in God's thought of the Second Coming of Christ is seen in the fact that this event is mentioned more times in the New Testament than there are chapters. It has been said by those who have taken the trouble to count that it is mentioned 318 times in the 260 chapters of the New Testament. And one who made a life-long study of the doctrine has said that it occupies one in every twenty-five verses from Matthew to Revelation. *R.A. Torrey*

Questions

How do we correlate aspects of “wrath and judgment” with “love and salvation”? How do relate to the prophetic “times and dates”? In what way do we show we are truly children of light and of the day? How do we share the good news of Jesus' second coming without turning it into bad news? What does the second coming mean in my life?

Bible summary

An analysis of 1 Thess. 5:1-11. v.1. I don't need to tell you, do I? Not about times and dates? We surely have plenty of those within this faith community... Our church is a prophetic church, in content and practice. *We know* about the *Signs of the Times*, about the coming future events on Planet Earth. What is it exactly...? And yet: is it enough just enough to know about times and dates?

v.2. The day of the Lord. The coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus. The hope that is sure and certain, the promise of Jesus himself, the return of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. A day that means so much to us that we call ourselves by its name: *Adventists*. I could tell you so much about what that belief means to me: in fact it was at the heart of my conversion. It means so much to me that I dedicated three years of my life and 517 pages of my PhD thesis to studying it. But that's another story...

v.3. “Peace and safety. How many are worrying about the future? And when the message of peace and safety comes, how happy they are! Many are looking forward to an

era of global peace and safety. But that's when the end comes! Thankfully the final movements will be rapid ones....

v.4. But we won't be caught napping, will we? No: for we're faithful Adventists, ready for the return of the Lord, right? We are the faithful servants, the wise virgins who are ready to greet the Bridegroom when he comes, isn't that right? I wonder. I wonder. Will some of us be caught off guard, so that we will be surprised? Are some of us still in the dark? We shouldn't be. For we are:

v.5. Children of the light, children of the day. We're not part of the Devil's darkness, the "gross darkness" that "covers the people" because they do not know God and have believed the Devil's lies about God's character. My question remains: Are we living according to the light we have? Are we children of the day? Or are we still nocturnal!

v.6. If we are, we're still like those who are fast asleep. Sleeping spiritually. Maybe you can hear the snores of sleeping saints! Have you had that experience when you just can't stay awake? Your head keeps on nodding. Is that where we are today? Life has become easy and comfortable, and we begin to doze. What God has to say he says with a shout: *Wake up. Be alert. Be self-controlled.*

v.7. For those who sleep show they belong to the night. They are drunk at night too: drinking in the Devil's lies about God and talking all manner of foolishness in their sleep. But that should not be us, my friends.

v.8. We belong to the day. Faith and love, and hope of salvation. That's what keeps us going! We must wake up to where we're going.

v.9, 10. What are we looking for? Not the destruction that faces the wicked as an outworking of their evil—the wage that *sin* pays is death (not paid by God, you notice—sin has its own automatic results). No: Jesus came to show us the Father, to demonstrate what God was like through dying on the cross, so that by accepting him we can live *together with him*. Together forever with God. What a promise!

v.11. This is our encouragement. This is the message we share. To wake up, and wake everybody else up to their situation before Jesus comes to take those who love him home forever.

Gen. 3:15–24 recounts the results of the Fall. This is Paradise Lost. We look forward to Paradise Restored. Isa. 13:6–9 describes the "great and terrible day of the Lord." How does this fit into the picture of the loving Jesus? Jesus emphasizes the unexpected timing of his return Luke 21:34–36, meaning we need to pay attention and watch for it. Finally, what exactly is the wrath that is revealed from heaven (Rom. 1:18)?

Comment

Truly and fundamentally, "The Lord Jesus Christ...is our hope." "On him we have set our hope." "We have put our hope in the living God, who is the savior of all men." (1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Timothy 4:10 NIV). How amazing and central this hope. Romans 8:24 even says that "We are saved by hope"! How definite and assured this hope is. Here we see the meaning of this hope which is centered in the Almighty God himself... If you do not have this hope, how can you face the future, how can you live in the present?

Only the hope that comes from God can give what we all need the most: confident security in the present, and the assurance of a wonderful future in God's presence. For "we have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19 NIV). What is the

result? “Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.” “We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” “Christ in you the hope of glory.” (2 Corinthians 3:12; Romans 5:2; Colossians 1:27).

Consequently those who hope are always looking upwards: looking for the realization of their hope, looking for the coming of their Lord, ever ready to say with tremendous happiness, “This is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us.” (Isaiah 25:9).

For the Christian hope must bring a response. A response of readiness. As Jesus told his waiting friends, “What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’” (Mark 13:37 NIV). This means not being satisfied with the present. This means eagerly looking for a better world. Most of all, this means looking for the return of our best Friend, and the fulfillment of his promise: “The hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.” (Titus 1:2 NIV).

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

The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures. From the day when the first pair turned their sorrowing steps from Eden, the children of faith have waited the coming of the Promised One to break the destroyer’s power and bring them again to the lost Paradise. Holy men of old looked forward to the advent of the Messiah in glory, as the consummation of their hope. {GC 299}

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. But it is ours to be faithful day by day in this life. I have been sick. Am still weak, but not a bit discouraged.—Letter 64a, 1889, p. 3. (To Mary Kelsey-White, from Battle Creek, Mich., March, 1889.) {10MR 383}

Truths connected with the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven will be talked of, written upon, more than now. There is to be closed every door that will lead to points of difference and debate among brethren. If the old man was purged from every heart, then there would be greater safety in discussion, but now the people need something of a different character. There is altogether too little of the love of Christ in the hearts of those who claim to believe the truth. While all their hopes are centered in Jesus Christ, while His Spirit pervades the soul, then there will be unity, although every idea may not be exactly the same on all points. {CW 81-2}

Like the rejected stone, Christ in His earthly mission had borne neglect and abuse. He was “despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: . . . He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” Isa. 53:3. But the time was near when He would be glorified. By the resurrection from the dead He would be declared “the Son of God with power.” Rom. 1:4. At His second coming He would be revealed as Lord of heaven and earth. Those who were now about to crucify Him would recognize His greatness. Before the universe the rejected stone would become the head of the corner. {DA 600}