

Hope in the Second Coming



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 7

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Zechariah 1:12; Matthew 24; Matthew 25, 1 Corinthians 15:12–19; Ecclesiastes 8:14; Revelation 21:1–5.

MEMORY VERSE: “My dear brothers and sisters, remain [stay] strong in the faith. Don't [do not] let anything move you [change your mind]. Always give yourselves completely [fully] to the work of the Lord. Because you belong to the Lord, you know that your work is not worthless [has no value]” (1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV).



Jesus wants us to give to other people the way He freely gives to us.

JESUS said that the kingdom of God is real. We can be part of it today. He sent His followers to make this same announcement to everyone on earth. Jesus ordered His followers to preach the Good News. He told them to serve other people. He wanted them to give to other people the way He freely gave to them (read Matthew 10:5–8).

But Jesus also said that His kingdom was different. It did “not belong to this world [the ways of life on this earth]” (John 18:36, ERV). Jesus also looked forward to a time when His kingdom will replace all the kingdoms on this earth. Then God's kingdom will be complete.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we wait for this kingdom to come. We are people of hope. Our hope is not only about a future kingdom and a new earth. But our hope also changes our lives right now. With such hope, we live now as we expect to live in the future. We work now to make a difference here in this life in ways that show what we hope the next life will be.

“ ‘O LORD OF ALL, HOW LONG?’ ” (Zechariah 1:12, NLV)

Again and again, the Bible shows God’s people crying out to Him. They cry out to Him to save them from slavery, danger, or from being poor. They cry out to Him to save them from people who are not fair. The Hebrew slaves in Egypt cried out to God to see and hear their suffering. So did the Israelites in Babylon. They asked God to make things right. The Bible shows us many examples of God saving His people from danger. God fights our enemies too.

The Bible writers tell us about a time when God will put an end to all evil. He will lift up His children who have been hurt and put down by other people. At the same time, these Bible writers continue to ask, O Lord, how long? They want to know how long God’s people must wait before God helps them out of their troubles now. We read one example of this question in the book of Zechariah. The Lord’s angel asks, “ ‘LORD All-Powerful, how long before you comfort Jerusalem and the cities of Judah?’ ” (Zechariah 1:12, ERV).

The Psalms are full of sad songs. These songs are about how evil people have a lot of money. But good people are poor. Evil people hurt the poor and use them. Many writers of the Psalms ask God again and again to do something to make things better. These writers believe that things on this earth are not fair or the way God planned. So, they cry out to God to show mercy (read Psalm 94:3–7).

It can be hard to believe God is fair when we see so many people who are not fair. We want evil to end. When we do not see God doing anything to stop the evil right away, we get upset. Many Bible writers felt the same way. That is why Habakkuk says, “ ‘O Lord, how long must I call [ask] for help before You will hear? I cry out to You, ‘We are being hurt!’ But You do not save us’ ” (Habakkuk 1:2, NLV).

Many New Testament writers feel the same way. In Romans 8:19–22, we read that nature cries out to God to save the earth and make things new. In Revelation 6:10, we read about the people who were killed for their faith. They cry out to God to put a stop to the attacks against His people.

Read Luke 18:1–8. In these verses, Jesus explains that His followers should always pray and never lose hope. God will answer the cries and prayers of His people. What hope does that promise give you? At the same time, why do we need faith as we wait?



God will lift up His children who have been hurt and put down by other people.

A SPECIAL HOPE (Matthew 24 and Matthew 25)

Some people blame religion for making Christians useless in this life. They say it causes believers to care more about the future life than life here and now. These believers use religion to escape from the awful things that happen in life. Some Christians are guilty of acting this way. They do nothing to help anyone around them. They use religion as an excuse to not help other people.

We also have leaders telling people to not do anything about the bad things happening around them. When Jesus comes back, He will make everything right.

Yes, this earth is full of sin. So, of course, we want God to make things right. God will stop pain and sorrow. He will make everything fair and right. He will set up His kingdom. This promise gives us hope. Without it, we really have no hope at all.

Jesus preached a sermon about the end of the earth (read Matthew 24 and 25). Jesus spent the first part of the sermon warning His people to escape from the bad things that will happen in the future. Then He says, “ ‘If that time were not made short, then no one would [will] go on living’ ” (Matthew 24:22, ICB). Yes, Jesus talks about escape. We must not think that this subject was the most important idea in His sermon. He also talks about other things. As Christians, our hope for the future is not simply about escaping the troubles in this life.

Read Matthew 24 and 25. What are the most important ideas that you see in Jesus’ sermon? How does Jesus want us to live while we wait for Him to come back?

What we believe about the future changes the way we live now. We must trust in God’s promises. These promises will help us make a difference in other people’s lives.

How should your hope in Jesus’ second coming change your life now? Does your hope in that promise cause you to want to help people in need? If yes, in what ways?



We must trust in God’s promises. These promises will help us make a difference in other people’s lives.

OUR HOPE THAT GOD WILL WAKE THE DEAD (1 Corinthians 15:12–19)

As Christians, we wait for Jesus' second coming. Our hope is not just about our wanting a better future. For the New Testament Christians, Jesus' waking up from the dead was a promise. He came back from the dead. So, that means He will come back again. Then He will remove sin forever. He will make the earth new again (read 1 Corinthians 15:22, 23).

Paul felt that Jesus' waking up from the dead was very important to Christian beliefs. He said, "And if Christ [Jesus] has not been raised [woken up] from death, then your faith is for nothing [has no worth]; you are still [continue to be] guilty of your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17, ERV). Think about Paul's words here. How important to our beliefs is Jesus' waking up from the dead? Very important. It is the reason for all our hopes.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12–19. As shown in these verses, why is the truth about the dead waking up again so important to the hope we have as Christians? What if someone asks you to explain why this belief is so important to you as a Christian? What will you say?

Jesus sent His followers out to announce the kingdom of God (read Matthew 10:5–8). But Jesus' death destroyed all their hopes and courage. Then Jesus came back to life. When Jesus' followers saw Him, they were changed forever. After He came back to life, Jesus told His followers what He wanted them to do (Matthew 28:18–20). The Holy Spirit gave them power (read Acts 2:1–4). Then Jesus' followers went out to change the lives of many people. Jesus' kingdom controlled their hearts.

Then Jesus' followers were not afraid of death's power anymore. They shared everything they had with each other. They lived with courage in the name of Jesus (read 1 Corinthians 15:30, 31). Evil things cause death to happen. This same evil also causes people to use and hurt other people. It is the reason for slavery and why people are not fair. Jesus won the war against death. So, all of earth's evil will end in the future. "The last enemy to be destroyed will be death" (1 Corinthians 15:26).



Jesus will come back again. Then He will remove sin forever. He will make the earth new.

GOD, OUR JUDGE (Ecclesiastes 8:14)



Sin has made an awful mess. Only God can clean it up.

Read Ecclesiastes 8:14. What powerful truth does this verse show us?

It is bad enough that awful things happen to us. What makes it worse is when no one knows about it. It makes our pain feel as if it has no meaning. What if we lived on an earth without the promise that God will make everything right? That is an awful thought, right? That is exactly what Solomon is complaining about in Ecclesiastes 8:14. He says that life is not fair.

But we can be thankful that Solomon did not stop there. Yes, life is not fair. But God is going to judge everything. So, we can be patient. Now everything and everyone has a reason for being here.

Read Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14. What do these verses tell us about how everything we do in life is important?

As Christians, we believe God is our Judge. This belief gives us hope. The Bible teaches us that we live on an earth that God made. He loves us. But sin has made an awful mess. Only God can clean it up. Jesus is part of God's plan to clean things up and make things new. God's work as our Judge is part of that plan too. That is why God's work as our Judge is wonderful news. It is a promise that God will make things right again.

What does it mean to you to know that God will make things right again? What hope does this promise give you?

NO MORE TEARS OR PAIN (Revelation 21:1–5)

Read Revelation 21:1–5 and Revelation 22:1–5. These verses talk about the future life after Jesus comes back. No more sin, death, pain, or tears! Try to make a picture in your mind of that life. It is hard to do, right? Why do you think it is hard to make that picture in your mind?

The Bible shows life after sin ends. These are wonderful pictures! The Bible tells us what will be there. But do you see how the Bible talks about what will not be there too? This life is all we know. So, it can be hard to make a picture in our minds about a life without pain, suffering, fear, or death. No one will be poor anymore. Everyone and everything will be fair.

God also promises to do something else: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 21:4, ERV). Not only does God stop His people’s suffering. But He also wipes away their tears with His own hands.

The book of Revelation promises us that God will heal everyone who is hurt by sin. God will use leaves from the tree of life to heal us. John explains that “the leaves of the tree are for healing the nations [all people]” (Revelation 22:2, ERV). This gift shows us God’s love for humans. He cares about what we feel and suffer. His plan for a new earth includes healing us and making us new.

Until then, we should want Jesus to make us the best we can be. We must do our part to help people around us who need what we can give them. What do we have to give? Maybe it is kind words. Or a warm meal. Or medical help. Or maybe we can give clothing or a helping hand. Or wise advice. Whatever we can do, we should do it with the same love that Jesus showed when He was here.

Of course, life on this earth will only get worse and worse. Jesus knew that. But that did not stop Him from helping other people. It should not stop us either.



God wipes away our tears with His own hands.



“They sold their souls to the devil for riches and entertainment.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Ellen G. White, “Called to Reach a Higher Standard,” pages 309–322, in *The Acts of the Apostles*; “Desolation of the Earth,” pages 653–661, in *The Great Controversy*.

“God will act in favor of His people. He will free them. At that time, many people who lost everlasting life will understand what they lost. As long as there was a chance for them to be saved, they believed Satan’s lies. They made excuses for their sins. Rich people trusted in their riches. They felt they were better than people who did not have as much money as they did. But these rich people got rich by breaking God’s law. They did not feed the hungry. They did not give clothes to people who had nothing to wear. They were not fair. They did not love mercy. They sold their souls to the devil for riches and for entertainment. They did not care about the only riches God respects. Their lives are failures. Everything they lived for and all their treasures are useless.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great [worldwide] Controversy [war between God and Satan]*, page 654, adapted.

“The worldwide war between God and Satan is over. Sin and sinners are gone. Heaven and earth are clean. Peace and joy are everywhere. Life, light, and joy flow from God to deepest space and to the smallest atom, or part of a living thing. Everything is beautiful. In perfect joy, everything God made says that God is love.”—Page 678, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Think about the things we studied about this week. How do they show that life, here and now, is important? Some people believe that we do not need to worry about making things better in this life. God will come and destroy this earth. Then He will start again. Yes, God will make everything right. But why must we be careful not to use this promise of a new earth as an excuse not to help people in need?
- ② As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe the Bible teaches that evil, trouble, and suffering will get worse before Jesus comes back. Matthew 24 shows us that these things will happen. What hope does Matthew 25 give us in these dark times?