

### 31.03.2012 THE PROMISE OF HIS RETURN

***“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”  
Revelation 22:12, 13***

How fitting that this quarter’s lessons should finish with the study of the culmination of salvation history – the coming of Christ in glory. This is the sure and certain hope of the Christian based on the promise of Christ Himself: ‘I will come again’ John 14:3. We know where Christ has gone and we know the way to our heavenly home, for Christ Himself is the Way (John 14:4-6).

To the Seventh Day Adventist Christian, this is nothing new, for he lives life in the context of the ‘comings’ or ‘advents’ of God. God has come to this earth as Creator, as Redeemer and He is coming again as King. His resurrection is the guarantee that all who are found in Him will live eternally.

He is the Alpha and Omega; in Him is found our beginning and when we give our lives to Him, He will be the author and finisher of our faith; our eternal destiny is secure in His hands.

*For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22*

*“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed (past historic tense) from death into life.” John 5:24*

*For you died (past historic tense), and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Colossians 3:3, 4*

*...but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. Hebrews 9:26-28*

**The Second Coming of Christ is the culmination of God’s purpose for Mankind.** God’s desire when He created mankind was that man should reflect God’s likeness i.e. that man’s will should be united to God’s will and all his actions flow from following the will of God. Despite the Fall, God’s desire for mankind has not changed. He sent His only Son, Christ Jesus, so that by His incarnation, life, death, resurrection and High Priestly ministry, He would bring many sons and daughters to glory. We, who were alienated from God by sin are now brought near by the blood of Christ (Col 1:20-23, Romans 5:6-10, Eph 2:13) and are being purified by the in-dwelling Spirit as we offer our lives daily to Him as a living sacrifice.

*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Hebrews 2:9-11*

## **'The Delay?'**

God's time is always right. With Him there is no haste or delay; He does everything in the fullness of time. So we are not like the scoffers who say, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' Rather, we must follow the example of the great heroes of faith. This is the Biblical record of them:

***These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland...but now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. Hebrews 11:13-16***

God wants us also to be partakers of that glory; to also receive His promises.

*And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Hebrews 11:39, 40*

We know as a people (from our history) that we cannot and should not set dates for the coming of Christ.

*"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only"*  
*Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32*

## **How should we order our lives in the light of the second coming of Christ?**

1. We must rejoice in the knowledge that He will surely come.
2. We do not know the date of His coming; but there are signs that reveal to the discerning and Spirit-led Christian that the time is near in terms of His coming again in glory.
3. Above all, as individuals we must always remember and always be ready. For we may not be alive to witness the 'Day of the Lord'; it is essential therefore that we are always ready, whether we die before He comes in glory or we are alive to see His coming. The eternal destiny of all mankind is sealed by the decision they have taken in life – whether to follow or reject the Son of God. For we will all have to stand before the judgement seat of God to receive His verdict. If we have accepted Christ, there will be no condemnation and the verdict will be given in our favour (Daniel 7:22, Romans 8:1, John 5:24). If we reject Him, God, who gives all men free-will, has no option but to leave us to the consequences of our rejection of Him.

*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. Acts 3:19-21*

*And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. Acts 3:23*

*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:17, 18*

Our primary task, while we wait for Christ's coming is not to be focussed on the signs of His coming. In Matthew 24 and 25, Christ makes it clear that when He comes, He expects His people to be engaged in doing His will; allowing the Spirit to fill them abundantly, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God in the power of the Spirit, using their God-given gifts for the edification of the church and for the benefit of mankind; revealing the Spirit of Christ in their labour and kindness to their fellow-men.

We will be a people who seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; a people who are not preoccupied with worldliness *'what shall we eat, what shall we drink, where shall we invest our money?'* We know that the Kingdom of this world is under the sentence of death; so though we have to live in this world, we are not of this world. Our preoccupation is with God, the Lover of our souls. *'Never give your heart to anything which will end when your life ends'*. This is a particular temptation for Christians. Satan knows that his time is short and makes every effort to take our hearts away from God; he is too cunning to tempt us into gross sinful acts. Instead, he subtly fills our lives with things (our books, the TV, the computer, the smart-phones, the video games, working all hours to get the money to purchase our desires) that leave no quality time for communication with God.

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. 1 John 2:15-17*

We will be a people who fear God, who demonstrate the faith of Jesus by allowing His Spirit to live out His life within us and in thus doing so, fulfil the commandments of God.

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Titus 2:11-14*

**'It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...'**

Are you afraid of the Judgement? Then you have not understood that your assurance of salvation, your assurance of 'no condemnation' in the judgement, lies not in yourself, but in the blood and righteousness of Christ Jesus.

What worries most Christians are the verses that tell us that God will judge us according to our works. **This should not cause us a moment's fear or worry, for if we are found in Christ, and Christ is dwelling in our hearts by faith, the works that we do will be the works of God. Not only will these works be accepted in the judgement, they will be rewarded.**

*Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." John 6:28, 29*

***For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10***

*Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; **but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.** John 14:10*

**You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.** Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing... By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. John 15:3-5, 8

From Me is your fruit found. Hosea 14:8

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 1 John 4:17, 18

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. Romans 6:22

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Revelation 12:10, 11

The blood of Christ satisfies God, clears our hearts of a guilty conscience and shuts the mouth of Satan. This is the basis of our confidence and assurance.

**Is there any cause for concern in the judgement?**

"But who can endure the day of His coming? and who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the LORD. Malachi 3:2-4

**We must not bring our own works of righteousness to the judgment. God considers these filthy rags and they will not be acceptable to Him as a substitute for the works that the Holy Spirit produces in the life of the Christian. The parable of the wedding garment in Matthew 22 is an illustration of this.**

We need to examine our hearts whether we are in the faith, abiding in Christ and offering our lives to Him daily that our works are the works of God and not the product of our own ideas and thinking (no matter how good they may appear). In the judgement, many wonderful works will be condemned by God as 'works of iniquity', because they were not the works of God.

Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' **And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work iniquity!'** Matthew 7:22, 23

Even more sobering is God's message to His church Laodicea:

These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are

wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Revelation 3:14-19

Live always as Christ did on this earth; in the certainty that you of yourself can do nothing that is pleasing or acceptable to God (John 8:28). God Himself must speak and work through you (John 6:38).

### **Our Confidence in God and His Promises**

*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. **And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.**"* John 6:37-40

*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. **And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.**"* John 10:27-30

**"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."** Luke 12:32

*Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. **And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life... and now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.*** 1 John 2:24, 25, 28

*And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. Revelation 22:3-5*

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*Of His people God says, "They shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land. For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" Zechariah 9:16, 17. The exaltation of the redeemed will be an eternal testimony to God's mercy. "In the ages to come," He will "show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." "To the intent that . . . unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known . . . the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ephesians 2:7; 3:10, 11, R. V.*

*By love's self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union.*

*The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God's grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honoured above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in*

*humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, "and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,—Immanuel, "God with us." Desire of Ages. Ch 1. p.26*

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