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Q  
2002

# HOPE

The Helium of the Soul



A Devotional Bible-Study Guide  
for Young Adults



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# Hope: The Helium of the Soul



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## Welcome to *CQ's* World



The following pages represent the creative energy of a truly international group of Adventist young adults. The map above indicates the locations of the writers who have participated in *CQ's* writing program for this quarter.

In producing this unique Sabbath School Bible study guide, four hundred individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond individually to the subject under study.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 65,000. It is published in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Indonesian, and Finnish.

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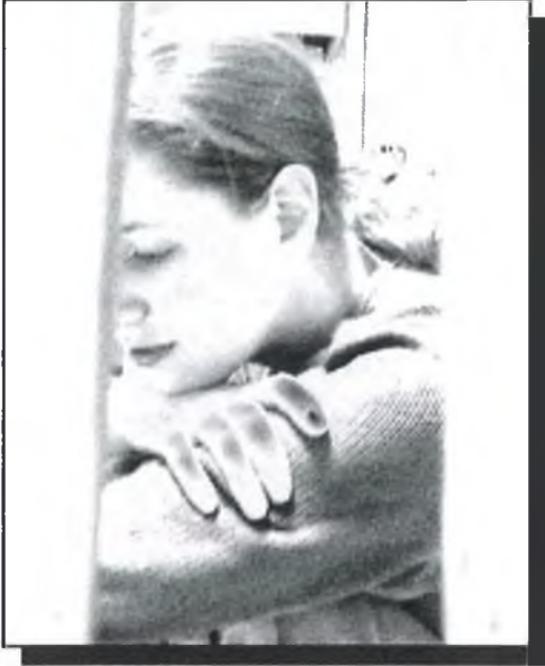


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## This Quarter's Illustrator



Sarah Lewis enjoys reading, writing, art, music, and racquetball. She met her husband, Daniel, while attending Walla Walla College and graduated with a degree in graphics in 2000. After Daniel's graduation in 2001, they moved to Boise, Idaho, where Sarah runs a one-woman web development firm.

# Getting the Most Out of *CQ*

## **FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW**

*CQ* is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the Adult Bible Study Guide find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

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Circulation of *CQ* is about 65,000.

## **POINTERS FOR STUDY**

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.
2. The Bible passages on which each week's lesson are based appear in bold type in the "Logos" portion of the lesson. Read these entire passages.
3. The Bible passages for the week are usually divided into sections on the "Logos" pages. When studying these sections, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the headings.
4. Read the other sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passages.
5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the Bible study guide:
  - "**Introduction**" is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.
  - "**Logos**" is a guide for direct study of the Bible passages for the week.
  - "**Testimony**" presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.
  - "**Evidence**" approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.
  - "**How-To**" discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.
  - "**Opinion**" is a personal viewpoint on the lesson meant to encourage further thought and discussion.
  - "**Exploration**" provides the reader with a variety of open-ended, creative ways to explore the topic of the week's lesson.

## **CQ AND THE CHURCH**

*CQ* is the General Conference-approved Bible study guide for the young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the Church.*

Lesson 1  
September 28–October 5

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# The Need for Hope



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“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel’ ” (Gen. 3:15, NKJV).

# Spiritually Challenged

## INTRODUCTION

2 Cor. 6:9

After seeing an animation about Jesus' miracles, one of my students, who is mentally challenged, asked me: "Teacher, when will Jesus make Aline walk like the rest of us?" She was talking about another student in the class who had cerebral palsy.

I explained to the class of six- to eight-year-olds that when Jesus returns we will all receive new life. There will be no suffering, sickness, or death. We will live forever with Jesus in a wonderful world. With tears in her eyes she went to the girl in the wheelchair, held her hands, and said: "Aline, when Jesus returns, we will run together!" And they both rejoiced in that hope, for they felt in their hearts the assurance that the condition of the world we know today is temporary.

Since Adam and Eve sinned, humans have been gradually losing their image and likeness of God. Compared to the first couple, we may all be considered challenged. We have lost so much of what God planned for us physically, intellectually, and spiritually. But it seems as if many of us have forgotten God's ideal and have become accustomed to our nature as it is today. We are "conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2, NKJV).

If we could fully see what Jesus is preparing for us, and how restored and happy we will be at His side, we would fervently long for His return and would be doing much more to tell others about our hope. It is sad that human pride and presumption lead us to deny God's very existence. We seem too self-sufficient to need the Creator and His wisdom. Thus, we distance ourselves from the superior knowledge and become greatly limited. On the other hand, the hope that drives the life of Christians magnifies their horizons of knowledge, once they have the privilege of being led by the Holy Spirit. God has much to reveal to us.

Christians are like the little girl with cerebral palsy, for she knows she will be transformed and will become physically perfect. But the other, mentally challenged child isn't even conscious of how she needs to be transformed in order to be perfect, for she already considers herself perfect. That is how people live who are proud of what they know.

We may, at first, suffer when we look at the feeble condition of humanity and realize how much we have lost. This suffering, however, is constructive and important for our spiritual growth. The Bible gives us the greatest comfort and hope that one could wish, by showing us that Jesus will soon return and transform us to His own image and likeness—according to His original plan. We may rejoice every day in this promise and proclaim it with all our strength.

**Christians are like the little girl with cerebral palsy.**

## LOGOS

Genesis 1-3; John 3:16; Phil. 2:6-8; Heb. 4:15

Ronaldo de Oliveira, a Brazilian Adventist missionary, was taken captive by a group of guerillas in the African savanna. As the group was on the march, they realized that they were in the path of a grass fire.

The leader ordered the group to remain calm. He lit a fire in a circular area spacious enough to contain the entire group. Then he extinguished the fire and told everyone to step into the burnt area. Within minutes the fire passed around them. This happened because the area where they were standing had already been burned.

In the Old Testament there were cities of refuge to where those who had committed an unintentional crime could flee for sanctuary (Num. 35:11). The cities of refuge and the burned-over circle in the African savanna illustrate Christ's work at Calvary—the ultimate expression of God's love. There, the Creator discharged the fire of His wrath against sin and was able to shelter all those who needed refuge and forgiveness.

To comprehend clearly the meaning of Christ's death (and, thus, of God's love), it is necessary to analyze the origin of the conflict between good and evil. When

**The word mercy means “to apply one’s heart to the misery of others.”**

Lucifer, the angel of light, rebelled against the Creator and was expelled from heaven to earth, he decided to involve the recently created humans in the rebellion. God had warned Adam and Eve about the snares of the

enemy, that he would tempt them to disobey. But Satan was able to persuade Eve to mistrust God's words, promising her that even though they disobey, the consequences announced by the Creator would never come upon them.

Eve gave in. And so did Adam. As they already knew, now their fate was death. But God had an alternative plan. He could not, in fact, go back on His word. After all, God does not lie. Someone had to die for the transgression. God, however, is all-merciful and loves unconditionally. Therefore, to spare His repentant children from eternal death, God offered His Son to die for the transgressors. In fact, the word mercy, *misericórdia* in Portuguese, means “to apply one's heart to the misery of others.” In this case, God applied His heart, His feelings to our miserable condition of sinners.

## Who is the Son of God?

God's love and sacrifice becomes even more meaningful when we understand exactly who the Son of God is. Through the centuries, Satan has been struggling to conceal the truth regarding the divinity of Christ, by creating heretical theories. That is why Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians that Jesus “is the image of the

---

invisible God, the firstborn [implying primacy] over all creation. For by him all things were created: . . . all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (1:15-17, NIV). Once *all things* were created by Jesus, being Himself before *all things*, He Himself cannot be a creature.

Further, "in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (2:9, NIV). Jesus is God (Rom. 9:5). He is the Word made flesh (John 1:1-3, 14, 18) to bring hope to the fallen race. Therefore, the incarnation of Christ is, truly, the greatest miracle, the greatest tangible manifestation of God's love, in fact, the greatest incident ever witnessed by the universe—the ultimate source of our hope.

Since God is the God of the impossible, what was infinite became "finite" in the person of Jesus. The ultimate and loving self-humiliation of God is expressed in Philippians 2:6-8: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (NIV).

The word "form," as it first appears in the above text, comes to us from the Greek *morphē*, and implies the divine and human nature of Christ. The second occurrence of the word "form," however, comes from the Greek *schēma*, meaning a transitory phase. While the period that Jesus lived as a servant and "Man of sorrows" (Isa. 53:3, NKJV) has been transitory, its results are eternal.

## God died!

If the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche would have uttered his legendary and outdated phrase "God is dead" at the foot of the cross, on that tragic passion Friday, he would have had a reason for it. Something really impressive had happened there: God the Son was dead!

In fact, all of Jesus' life on this earth was one of mortification. He lived a life of deprivation and struggles. He "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15, NKJV). God understands our feelings and needs, for He identified Himself with us in a very special way. What made Him follow through, despite the struggles, was the assurance that His death would redeem for God His precious children.

Thus, the earthly history of Christ is an irrefutable evidence of God's love, and it shows to what extent the Creator was willing to go for the redemption of the human race (John 3:16).

On the cross the fire of God's wrath against sin was totally discharged. An exchange was made: God the Son gave us His eternal life in exchange for our eternal death. Christ made Himself sin and suffered the consequences of it. God's justice is met and His children have an opportunity of salvation.

## REACT

1. What prevents us from seeing our real spiritual condition?
2. How may we open our eyes to such reality?

Monday  
September 30

## Hope and Sacrifice

### TESTIMONY

1 John 4:10

Using the Spirit of Prophecy CD-ROM, I typed two words: “hope” and “sacrifice.” Frequently, hope was connected to sacrifice. If today we have a hope for a better future, an immortal life, it is because Jesus gave it to us through His sacrifice.

“When all *hope* was excluded from Adam and Eve in consequence of transgression and sin, when justice demanded the death of the sinner, Christ gave Himself to be a *sacrifice* for the sin of the world. The world was under condemnation.

**Frequently hope was connected to sacrifice.**

Christ became substitute and surety for man. He would give His life for the world, which is represented as the one lost sheep that had strayed from the fold, whose guilt as well as

helplessness was charged against them and stood in the way, hindering their return. ‘Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins.’ 1 John 4:10.”<sup>1</sup>

“Christ died because there was no other *hope* for the transgressor. He might try to keep God’s law in the future; but the debt which he had incurred in the past remained, and the law must condemn him to death. Christ came to pay that debt for the sinner which it was impossible for him to pay for himself. Thus, through the atoning *sacrifice* of Christ, sinful man was granted another trial.”<sup>2</sup>

Considering Jesus’ sacrifice, what should our attitude be? What role do we play? “In genuine, saving faith, there is trust in God, through the belief in the great atoning *sacrifice* made by the Son of God on Calvary. In Christ, the justified believer beholds his only *hope* and deliverer. Belief may exist without trust, but confidence born of trust cannot exist without faith. Every sinner brought to a knowledge of the saving power of Christ, will make manifest this trust in greater degree as he advances in experience.”<sup>3</sup>

Ultimately, we should rest in Christ—the hope of glory—and lift Him up. “The perfect work of Christ was consummated in His death upon the cross. In His *sacrifice* and His intercession at the right hand of the Father, is our only *hope* of salvation. It should be our joy to exalt the character of God before men, and make His name a praise in the earth.”<sup>4</sup>

1. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 283, italics supplied.

2. *Faith and Works*, p. 30, italics supplied.

3. *Selected Messages*, Bk. 3, p. 192, italics supplied.

4. *Ibid.*, Bk. 2, p. 170, italics supplied.

# Don't Remove the Helmet Too Soon

## EVIDENCE

2 Cor. 4:18

The entire Bible focuses on hope. In the Old Testament, hope for the deliverance of Israel is the main focus. With the coming of the Messiah, the New Testament begins to focus on the renovation of all things. From the very moment sin established its kingdom of suffering, God promised to restore all creation to its original perfection. This promise makes the Christian religion project itself toward eternity.

To find some meaning in their lives today, humans need to believe in a future that will not be a reproduction of their present sufferings. The Ascension has been interpreted by some as a kind of escape from reality. But escape from the Christian hope to a world where humanity pretends to be God Himself has brought even more deception. Without God's promise, two alternatives of life remain: farce or tragedy.

Life as a farce occurs when one wants to create a paradise to be enjoyed here and now. The search for increasingly intense pleasure is the main characteristic of such a lifestyle. The overestimation of comfort and personal security is another demonstration. In fact, all of this is a way of anesthetizing one's mind to the end of existence.

There are some who are able to see the deception of anesthetizing themselves with earthly advantages yet they reject the promise of Christ. For them, what remains is only the painful consciousness of personal tragedy. The Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, claimed to belong to

**Without God's promise, two  
alternatives of life remain:  
farce or tragedy.**

a generation that inherited disbelief in the Christian faith. In describing such a generation, he wrote: "Without faith, we have no hope, and without hope we have no life. The energy to fight was born dead in us, for we were born without the enthusiasm to fight."\* A very sad confession from a life with no meaning.

Therefore, while we live surrounded by threats from a world overpowered by sin, we need to heed the apostle Paul's counsel. It is necessary to protect ourselves with the helmet that symbolizes the hope of salvation (1 Thess. 5:8). It's not wise to remove it too soon. But at the moment the expectation ceases with the glorious return of Christ, that hope will be replaced with the joy of redemption. And the helmet will give way to the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

\* Fernando Pessoa, *Livro do Desassossego [Book of Unrest]* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1999), p. 289.

Wednesday  
October 2

## Shining Christians

### HOW-TO

Prov. 4:18

Since the Fall in Eden, and the promise of restoration of this world, sometimes it seems as if the wicked have the advantage. Their success makes us wonder about the truthfulness of Proverbs 4:18. We see so many wicked people shining—receiving honor and recognition—while the righteous experience hardships.

Brazil is a country of great dimensions, and during our vacation time we travel by car trying to leave very early in the morning, when it's still dark, to make the most of the traveling day. After an hour or so on the road, we begin to see the first gleam of dawn, and from there on, daylight grows brighter and brighter till the full light of day. At first we have to use the headlights of the car, but when the sunlight comes, we see so much better.

At the end of the day, however, the sunlight weakens, and consequently, the earth grows darker, remaining, at last, only in darkness. Will the life of a Christian

end in darkness and sadness? After all, at the end of each day the sun sets and the world becomes dark. But just at that moment, when the sun sets and disappears, it shines elsewhere.

**Then it goes to a different place to begin anew.**

Its mission during that day is ended here, but it provides life, through its brightness, where other people need it to continue life.

That is how the life of a Christian is. Its shine that emerges gradually, like the first gleam of dawn, has a mission to fulfill for a given time and a given place. Then it goes to a different place, to begin anew, in another time and place.

And even so, the sun leaves its reflection. At night the beautiful moonlight we see is nothing less than the reflection of sunlight. Even when it is not present, the sun benefits us through another heavenly body, the moon, reflecting its brightness. The righteous person acts in the very same way. Even when one is not present, the reflections of his or her life are present in the lives of others.

### REACT

1. According to Proverbs 4:18, what is the "path of the righteous" (12:28, NIV)?
2. How do you interpret the following part of Proverbs 4:18: "shining ever brighter till the full light of day" (NIV)? How do the righteous shine brighter?
3. In what ways are influences of a Christian's life reflected in the lives of others?
4. What difference, if any, does the divinity of Christ make when one considers His sacrifice for the human race? Explain your answer.
5. What hope does the cross of Christ bring to you personally? Be specific.
6. How does the hope in the soon return of Christ helps us to face this troubled world?

# The Reason for Our Hope

## OPINION

1 Pet. 3:15

I have known many people, some of advanced age, who simply seem to have lost all hope. In my interviews for preparation of police news reports, I've heard many parents say, when talking about their children who had died in some brutal way: "My life has ended." At the moment they are telling their drama, it seems as if they actually do die in a way. Evidently, a great part of their hope in life rested in that child or adolescent.

On a certain occasion, however, I came across a very different situation. A farmer couple in a small town in Rio Grande do Sul mourned the death of their youngest child—only three years old. The boy was asphyxiated when playing inside the barn where they stored corn. When talking with the two very simple people, I thought that I would again see the picture of desolation and hopelessness. I was surprised when the couple—despite the tears in their eyes—assured me of their conviction of meeting their young son in heaven. No feeling of defeat or desire to die, but hope in Christ.

I am most certain that it is possible to have hope, even when surrounded by desperation. Troubles and suffering seem to be unbearable when I am alone, but with Christ reality is different. To rest our hope in the Son of God is not trusting in vain. When I expect a response from Christ, I do not feel frustrated. I am rather sure that He hears my voice and my cry and He understands. The assurance is that on the cross, He made clear that salvation is for all those who wait upon Him.

**A farmer couple mourned  
the death of their  
youngest child.**

What matters is that our hope is in Jesus and not in something that may suddenly disappear from our lives. Despite the love that I feel for my family, my fiancée, or my friends, I must not rest my hope upon them. Disillusionment may strike at any time and I will be disappointed. With Christ, this does not happen. Fortunately, even when death is close by my side, I can have hope in the One who lives forever.

## REACT

1. How would you comfort someone who has lost a loved one to death?
2. Why is it sometimes easier to put our hope and trust in people and things than in God's promises?
3. What does it really mean to put your hope in God? Be specific.

Friday  
October 5

# The Blessed Assurance

## EXPLORATION

Titus 1:2; 2:13

## CONCLUDE

Without hope in Christ everything in our life would be overshadowed with impending doom. We would be like a white mouse in a reptile cage at feeding time. No “maybe’s”, no “if’s”, no comfort—just the horror of spending the last few seconds of our life trembling in fear. But the Son of God loved us enough to risk everything He had to save us. The serpent is the defeated foe because our Savior would rather experience the pain of hell than to live in heaven without us. This kind of hope gives us peace for our tomorrows and freedom to enjoy today.

## CONSIDER

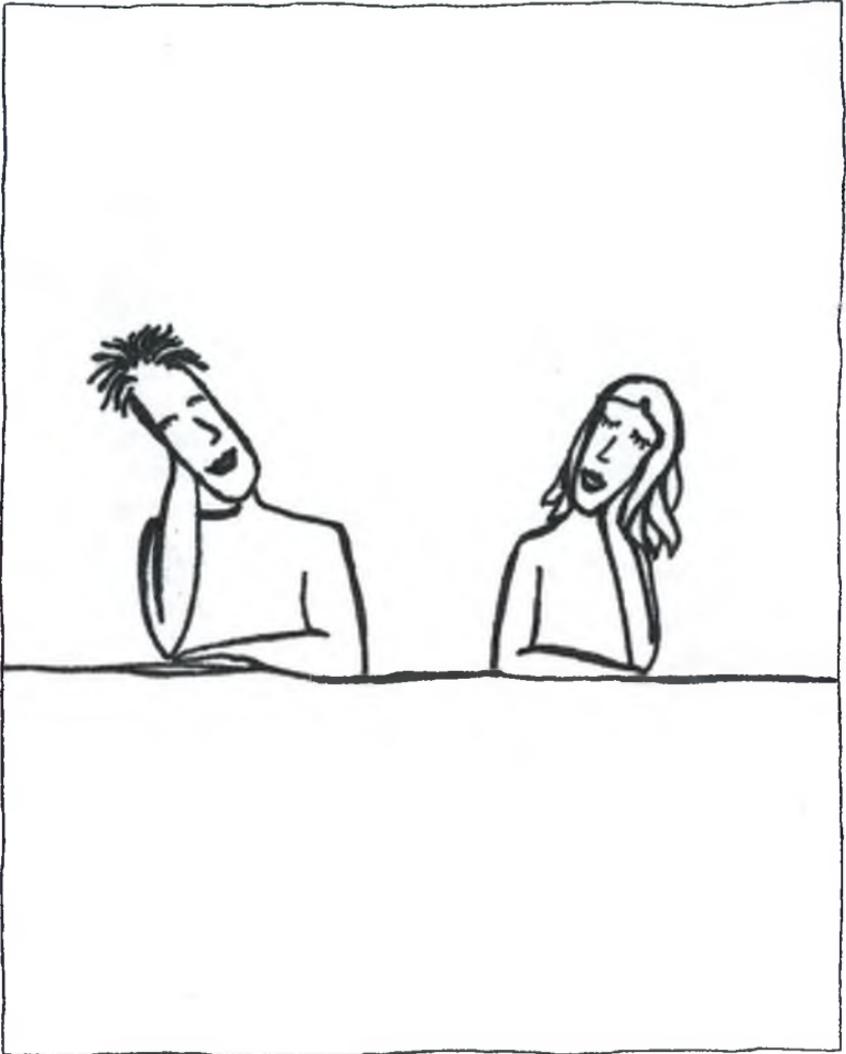
- Memorizing the song, “We Have This Hope,” *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 214.
- Keeping your eyes open for a person who is experiencing difficult circumstances and offering him or her enough help to encourage hope. Even a sandwich to a homeless person is offering hope.
- Using a concordance to look up all the Bible verses that use the word “hope.” Read a few of these and consider how they may apply specifically to some recent personal disappointments or discouragements in your life.
- Painting or drawing a picture—or finding one—that you could title “Hope.”
- Viewing the video *Hope and Glory* (1987). Think about how hope figures in the experience of the young boy living through the London air raids and bombings.
- Finding a home for an animal at the humane society that has only a short time left. Think about how your role in this activity is similar to and different from Jesus’ saving you.
- Writing a poem, story, or song that has a hopeful ending.

## CONNECT

*The Desire of Ages*, chaps. 77–80.

Keavin Hayden, *Saving Blood*; Clifford Goldstein, *By His Stripes*; Kim Allan Johnson, *The Gift*.

# Old Testament hope



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“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments”  
(Ps. 78:7, NKJV).

## INTRODUCTION

2 Cor. 1:20

It was on Monday when Lamoki saw her, as they were queuing in the college cafeteria to be served their meals, and his heart missed a beat for the second time in as many days. Yes, it was the same girl he had spotted in church the previous Sabbath when his heart had missed the first beat. He did not feel worthy of her love, yet he knew that she was the right person for him. If only he could muster sufficient courage! All he could do was *hope*.

Bosnyan, on her part, had somehow noticed Lamoki in church on several occasions and thought him nice, but she was afraid he was too good for her and all she could do was *hope* that somehow he would notice her.

When they finally got together in a relationship, the joy in their eyes was obvious. Today they are happily married, their *shared hope* bore fruit. Many young Christians have probably had similar experiences in which all they could do was simply hope. Many have been disappointed, however, because theirs was not a shared hope. Even when firm promises have been exchanged, disappointments still abound because these are promises made by human beings. Not so with hope based on God's promises.

The Old Testament generation based their hope of reclaiming their lost Edenic glory on God's promise in Genesis 3:15. Adam and the rest of the Old Testament

**His heart missed a beat  
for the second time.**

generation rested their hope for salvation and ultimate victory on the *seed* of the woman, that is Jesus Christ, our Savior. In the fullness of time the promised seed came to prove that "all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen" (2 Cor. 1:20, NKJV). Many in the Old Testament did not even know that His name is Jesus; they simply know Him as the One who is coming, the Messiah, and that gave them hope to live on.

Hope based on God's promises always ignites a strong faith relationship with God. We share in the same Old Testament hope. Blessed are we that live in the New Testament for not only are we treasured with the experiences of the Old Testament generation as our base, but also we can share the glory of the seed of victory in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Our hope should generate a loving relationship with God, make us faithful, and then bring obvious joy when He comes again (Isa. 25:9). Do you share in this hope?

# God's Relentless Hope for Us

## EVIDENCE

Genesis 15

If the Bible contained only the parts people normally read, it would be pretty short. Sometimes our Bible knowledge seems a bit like this:

God creates. Snake debates. Cain kills. Noah builds. Rain galore. Tower no more. Abe waits. Sodom bakes. Isaac's saved. Joseph slaves. Hebrews flee. Red Sea. Jericho. Dave and Go. Twenty-third psalm. Gilead balm. Fiery furnace. Prophets earnest. Lions' den. Wise men. Water wine. Thousands dine. Jesus wept. Lame leapt. Calvary's tree. Victory. Galatian's law. John saw. Come again. Amen.

**There's a whole lot more to  
Scripture than you've  
probably underlined.**

The truth, though, is there's a whole lot more to Scripture than you've probably underlined. In the sea of pages between Noah's ark and the beast's mark, we find the compelling picture of a God whose patience is beyond our understanding.

Judges, Kings, Jeremiah, Hosea—all show God's forbearance with people hellbent on living life their own way. Psalms shows God listening to the most desperate of prayers, even selfish ones. The gospels tell us that after everything we've put God through He still wants—yea, longs for—us.

In *What the Bible Says About the Endtime*,\* Jon Paulien outlines the Bible's varying scenarios of how the world will be restored to Eden. To Abraham, God gave a threefold promise: descendants, blessings, and land. At Sinai, God told the Israelites—the blessed descendants—that an angel would go ahead of them and drive their enemies from the Promised Land (Exod. 23:20-23). The Israelites failed God at Sinai, so in Deuteronomy 28 He presented a gradual and conditional eschatology. Disobedience would cause exile, but if they were obedient, God would gradually restore the world to Eden.

Still God's people went their own way. Ezekiel shows God's fresh plans for a people He's had to exile after centuries of wickedness, a plan marked by eschatological war. God would restore their hearts (36:26, 27), their land (verse 28), and their nation. God would defeat Gog's armies (chapters 38, 39). A glorious new temple was to be built and paradise restored (chapters 40-48).

Humanity has continued to falter, and we know paradise won't happen in this age, yet today, Revelation assures us that God will break in and change everything. Now He's just waiting, just hoping that you'll give your life to Him.

\*Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1994.

Monday  
October 7

## Hope—B.C.

### LOGOS

Genesis 6; 11; 12; Isa. 7:1-14

When we consider the topic of hope, I wonder how different the Old Testament believer's experience was from ours. From our vantage point we might be tempted to believe that hope came easier for those in the Old Testament. God's presence in their lives was more evident and more concrete. I believe that this is more perception than reality. The examples in this week's lesson reveal details and situations that would make maintaining hope very difficult. With the example of these Bible characters as our guide, it should be easier for us to keep hope alive!

### Genesis 6

How difficult was it for Noah to maintain his hope in God and His promises? During

**"They shook like trees in  
a windstorm."**

a time when God's creative signature was nearly erased from the earth (Gen. 6:6, 7), Noah had to hold on to the Edenic promise of restoration (3:15). He had to hope that if he followed the

instructions in building the ark (6:14-16) that he would survive. And, he had to hold on to the hope that God would not destroy the earth again with a flood (9:12-16).

I believe it is more difficult to keep hope alive when only a few people are trying to, and this certainly was the case with Noah.

What might be a modern day act of hope and faith equivalent to Noah's act of building the ark?

### Genesis 12

Like Noah, Abraham's hope is evidenced by his action. Abraham is the more complex character. On one hand he is willing to leave his home and country, then in his travels he twice turns to lying to save his skin (Gen. 12:14-20; 20:1-8). He believed the promise that he would be the father of a great nation, even though he had no heirs and the prospects of having a family looked grim! Then he waives in maintaining his hope for a son and turns to Hagar (Genesis 16). Overshadowing the shaky episodes is a life of perseverance. The crowning evidence of Abraham's confidence in the hope set before him was his willingness to put his promised son, Isaac, literally on the altar (Gen. 22:1-19).

Can you relate to Abraham's experience? What is your journey like?

### Isaiah 7:1-14

"King Ahaz and everyone in Judah were so terrified that they shook like trees in a windstorm" (Isa. 7: 2, CEV).

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King Ahaz has just received word that Syria and Israel are allied against him and plan to attack. Isaiah tells the king of the Lord's promise that Judah will be safe (verses 4-7). This counsel is easy to hear but hard to believe, so God offers Ahaz proof to boost his confidence and hope. Isaiah tells the king that a virgin will give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel (verse 14). Scholars are divided over the significance of this verse. Some believe that it has a dual reference to a child in Isaiah's time and to Christ; others say it is a reference only to Jesus. Some see significance in the fact that Isaiah does not use the word for virgin; instead he uses the word for young maid (in Isaiah's time the assumption would be that a young maid would be a virgin).\* No matter how you view the text, it is clear that the message of real hope is sustained by Immanuel—God with us.

Can you relate to verse 2? What are some things that have caused us to shake "like trees in a windstorm"?

## Genesis 11

The story of the Tower of Babel is a prime example of what happens when people misplace their hope. Without hope in God's rainbow promise, the people were left to place confidence in a tower of their own making. If they could just build it strong enough and high enough, they would be safe. The Lord caused them to speak different languages in order to make them separate. I wonder why God chose to confuse their languages. Why not send a prophet to turn them around and let them stay together?

Do you think there is a relationship between the size of a group and the amount of faith and hope individuals have?

## REACT

1. Are the characters in this week's study basically optimists? Can there be such a thing as a Christian pessimist?
2. Considering what Scripture says, was it easier for Old Testament people to have hope in the restoration than it is for us? Explain your answer.
3. What are some of the barriers to maintaining hope in your life? What do you find in the lives of Noah or Abraham that could help remove those barriers?
4. What is it about the truth of Immanuel that makes it such a potent energizer for hope?
5. The people at the Tower of Babel misplaced their hope in the tower. What are some common things people misplace their hope in today?
6. God gave a rainbow to Noah to give him assurance, peace, and hope. What made this sign so effective? Are there things in our lives today that are rainbowlike?
7. Find a Bible commentary and do further study on Isaiah 7:14 and the virgin versus young maid controversy. What are your conclusions?

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\**New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, The Book of Isaiah, chapters 1-39. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), pp. 209-213.

Tuesday  
October 8

# The Example of Enoch

## TESTIMONY

Gen. 5:22-24; Mark 11:24; Heb. 11:5, 6

“Enoch had been troubled in regard to the dead. It had seemed to him that the righteous and the wicked would go to the dust together, and that this would be their end. He could not see the life of the just beyond the grave. In prophetic vision he was instructed concerning the death of Christ, and was shown His coming in glory, attended by all the holy angels, to ransom His people from the grave.”<sup>1</sup>

“The men of that generation had mocked the folly of him who sought not to gather gold or silver or to build up possessions here. But Enoch’s heart was upon eternal treasures. He had looked upon the celestial city. He had seen the King in His glory in the midst of Zion. His mind, his heart, his conversation, were in heaven. The greater the existing iniquity, the more earnest was his longing for the home of God. While still on earth, he dwelt, by faith, in the realms of light.”<sup>2</sup>

“By the translation of Enoch the Lord designed to teach an important lesson. There was danger that men would yield to discouragement, because of the fearful results of Adam’s sin. Many were ready to exclaim, ‘What profit is it that we have

**“By the translation of Enoch  
the Lord designed to teach  
an important lesson.”**

feared the Lord and have kept His ordinances, since a heavy curse is resting upon the race, and death is the portion of us all?’ But the instructions which God gave to Adam, and which were repeated by Seth, and

exemplified by Enoch, swept away the gloom and darkness, and gave hope to man, that as through Adam came death, so through the promised Redeemer would come life and immortality. Satan was urging upon men the belief that there was no reward for the righteous or punishment for the wicked, and that it was impossible for men to obey the divine statutes. But in the case of Enoch, God declares ‘that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him’ (Hebrews 11:6). He shows what He will do for those who keep His commandments. Men were taught that it is possible to obey the law of God; that even while living in the midst of the sinful and corrupt, they were able, by the grace of God, to resist temptation, and become pure and holy. They saw in his example the blessedness of such a life; and his translation was an evidence of the truth of his prophecy concerning the hereafter, with its award of joy and glory and immortal life to the obedient, and of condemnation, woe, and death to the transgressor.”<sup>3</sup>

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 85.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

# Infinite Hope: Consider the Lilies

## HOW-TO

Matt. 6:28-31; John 16:33

At home I have a small white stone on a bookcase. My wife gave it to me before we were married. It's an ordinary little stone but it means a lot to me because of four letters carved into it. Those letters spell out the word "Hope."

What gives you hope? Many people have hope because they have goals: to finish school, get a degree, get married, have children, buy a house or fancy car, or to travel to Antarctica. Other people realize that having and reaching goals may be valuable but offers only temporary hope. Fulfilling most dreams does not lead to permanent happiness. If you base happiness on reaching goals, then you must endlessly set new goals to continue reaching them.

But another kind of hope exists: what we might call the "New Testament Hope." Noah's family had a rainbow to remind them of God's deliverance. The Israelites had

**Fulfilling most dreams does  
not lead to permanent  
happiness.**

their pillar of fire. Between its promises about the future, the Bible talks of another kind of hope, one that is so utterly trusting and confident that all earthly concern evaporates.

Matthew 6:28-31 tells us to

consider the lilies and how they grow. This hope expands on and fulfills Old Testament hope. It's more pervasive and deeper, a sort of hope that does not rely on goals or endlessly striving toward them. In the larger perspective of eternity, temporal goals fade to insignificance compared to the infinite trust and hope of the lilies.

Take a moment to identify what gives you hope:

1. List the goals and dreams you have in life that give you something to strive for. Prioritize these goals. Which goals are most important to you today?
2. List other sources of hope in your life—ones that are not associated with reaching goals (as with the lilies of the field). Prioritize these goals (if more than one).
3. Now compare your two lists. If you combined them, where would the items in the second list fit with the items in the first list? What does that tell you about yourself?
4. How can you put your hopes and promises into action in your life?

I have a personal symbol of hope in the white stone that my wife gave me. We may not all have symbols of hope like this or the way Noah or the Israelites did. But if we remember what Jesus said, "be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, KJV), we can have the utter confidence of lilies that never fret. Do you have this infinite hope?

Thursday  
October 10

## Hope in a Hopeless World

### OPINION

Josh. 2:8-13; Ruth 1:16, 17

Too often people imagine a schizophrenic God—full of wrath in the Old Testament, loving and kind in the New Testament. But God says, “‘I do not change’” (Mal. 3:6, NKJV), and, indeed; He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow (Heb. 13:8).

The same God that sacrificed His only Son for our sakes also kept His people until the appointed time of His Son's incarnation. The God of wrath, then, is the same God of love; they cannot be separated, for sin cannot persist in the light of perfect love.

Perhaps the greatest examples of hope evidenced in the Old Testament are not those born to one of the 12 tribes of Israel, but those with willing hearts, who stepped out in faith and heeded the voice of a foreign God:

**Ruth**, a Moabite widow, who chose to stay with her mother-in-law and serve the God of Israel in a foreign land rather than return to her own home and the gods of her land.

**Rahab**, the prostitute, who chose to trust in what she had heard of God's leading His people, betraying her own country for the hope of that which she had not yet seen for herself.

Isn't this what each of us is called to do, though? We are not eye witnesses to God's working in the Old Testament or through His Son in the New Testament. No matter our family, we are not born into any faith, but must come into our own saving knowledge of God.

But God has not left us without hope, for He has chosen to reveal Himself through the written and Living Word, as well as through the working of the Holy

Spirit. We have seen the promises of the Old Testament fulfilled—we even have reminders every time we see a rainbow (Gen. 9:13)! If God is the same yesterday, today, and

Too often people imagine  
a schizophrenic God.

tomorrow, then we have the blessed hope of His soon return but, like Rahab, we must forsake all else and hold on to His promises.

### REACT

1. How does the faith of Rahab parallel the faith required of Christians today?
2. Explain the significance of including Ruth and Rahab in the genealogy of Christ, given that women were not usually mentioned in such family histories.
3. What is our role in finding hope?

# Keep Hope Alive

## EXPLORATION

Gen. 3:15; Col. 1:27

## CONCLUDE

In the course of life there are moments that define one's existence. Because of the sinful world in which we live, we are challenged at school, at home, at work—on every side. Quite often these skirmishes with the devil leave us feeling hopeless, spent, perhaps despondent. In the Old Testament (Gen. 3:15) God provided a promise that if believed would give us an injection of hope that would render us immune to the fiery darts of the enemy. What is that hope? That hope is a person—Jesus.

## CONSIDER

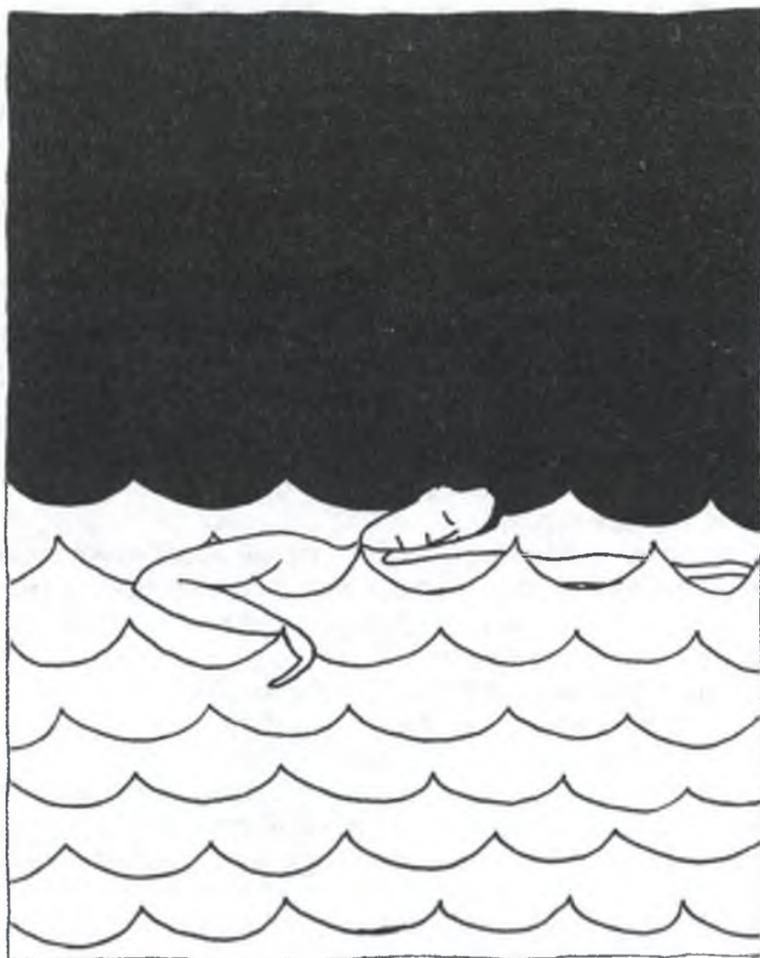
- Analyzing the story of the Babel builders of Genesis 11 and the story of Joseph found in Genesis 39–46. On whom did each depend for deliverance? What does this tell us about the relationship between fear and hope?
- Looking through several popular magazines for pictures of things people substitute for peace that comes only through hope in Jesus Christ. For example, many people believe that any hope of future security depends on having lots of money.
- Writing a paragraph explaining the meaning of the following phrase: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”
- Inviting some friends over for lunch or dinner, or something lighter. After the meal gather in a circle and ask each person to share the moment in their life that seemed the most hopeless and how they were able to get through that period in their life.
- Purchasing several greeting cards bearing hopeful messages. Visit a soup kitchen or homeless shelter, meet some of the people there, and share with each a word of hope and a card.
- Learning “We Have This Hope” in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 214. Ask your pastor to include this hymn during a church service.
- Cooking a special dish for someone who is feeling depressed or sad.

## CONNECT

*The Desire of Ages*, chaps. 74, 78.

Dave and Neta Jackson, *Hero Tales*, vol. 2, pp. 93–103.

# The **Jesus** hope: part one



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“ ‘This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven’ ” (Acts 1:11, NIV).

# Hoping Against All Hope

## INTRODUCTION

Rom. 4:18

Dr. Victor Frankl, Corrie ten Boom, Paul. If God had an honor roll of hope, these names would be at the top of the list. What is it about the human spirit that gives it the courage to endure insurmountable odds? The strength to overcome impossible situations? The answer is a four-letter word called "hope."

A number of years ago, researchers performed an experiment to study the effect hope has on those undergoing hardship. Two sets of laboratory rats were placed in separate tubs of water.

The researchers left one set in the water and found that within an hour they had all drowned. The other rats were periodically lifted out of the water and then returned. When that happened,

the second set of rats swam for over 24 hours! Why? Not because they were given a rest, but because they suddenly had hope! Those animals somehow hoped that if they could stay afloat just a little longer, someone would reach down and rescue them.

If hope can have that kind of effect on an animal that lives solely by instinct, what kind of effect can it have on you and me, whom God has gifted with intelligence?

We have need of hope. The signs tell us that the time of trouble is fast approaching when all human sources of hope will fail. Where shall your hope be? Is it on the sinking sands of life or are you anchored securely on Jesus?

Hope is an attitude, an expectant outlook on life. It is a gift that God has granted to every human being. No one can take it away from us. If we lose hope, it is because we have given it away. Never lose hope. Because if you do, you have lost everything.

If we will endure to the end, then we will receive the Blessed Hope, which is Christ Jesus. Let us then hold fast our hope, the Jesus hope.

**If we lose hope, it is  
because we have given  
it away.**

Sunday  
October 13

# We Have This Hope

## LOGOS

Matthew 24; John 14; Acts 1:1-11

For almost 2,000 years the church has talked about it, preached about it, prayed about it, sung about it, and even waited for it. Generation after generation of believers have died without seeing its fulfillment. Will it ever come? Or is it simply a superstitious religious speculation? Will our belief in Jesus' return just be a figment of the imagination? Will we, too, die in despair, never realizing our hope?

## Unfolding Events

Flashing back 2,000 years ago, Jesus is seated on the Mount of Olives. He engages His disciples in a discourse about future events and His imminent return. This is not for the purpose of putting fear into them, but to encourage them to be prepared and watchful.

Christ has given signs of His coming. He declares that we may know when He is near, even at the door. These signs have appeared. Now we know with assurance that the Lord's coming is at hand. "Heaven and earth will pass away," He says, "but my words will never pass away" (Matt.

**It is the privilege of every  
Christian to hasten the  
coming of Jesus.**

24:35, NIV). Take heed to watch and pray. It is good that we don't know exactly when Christ will return. If we knew the precise date, we might be tempted in our work for Christ. Worse yet, we might plan to keep sinning and then turn to God right at the end. Heaven is not our only goal; we have work to do here. And we must keep on doing it until death or until we see the unmistakable return of our Savior.

## Blessed Assurance

Jesus knows the time has now come to fulfill the mission to which He came. He looks pityingly at His disciples. He senses their fear, knows their need. His legacy to them before He enters the kingdom of darkness are words full of hope, "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1, NIV). He again reiterates His soon return and assures them that He will come again. But what exactly is He waiting for? Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come and claim His own. Sometimes people wish they knew the future so they could prepare for it. God has chosen not to give us this knowledge. He alone knows what will happen, but He tells us all we need to know to prepare for the future. When we live by His standards, He will not leave us but come to us, be within us and even reveal Himself to us. We need not fear. We may be full of

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hope in Jesus. We don't have to know the future to have faith in God; we have to have faith in God to be secure about the future.

It is therefore the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but also to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly, the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain.

## Watching and Waiting

Jesus taught His disciples, and they were changed drastically. Before they had argued with each other, deserted their Lord, even lied about knowing Jesus. Here in a series of meetings, with the living, resurrected Christ, the disciples had many questions answered. They became convinced about the resurrection, learned about the kingdom of God, and learned about their power source—the Holy Spirit. But then time had come for Christ to ascend to His Father's throne, not as a human but as a conqueror. It was important for the disciples to see Jesus ascend. Then they knew without a doubt that He was God and that His home was in heaven.

But how were they supposed to feel being left alone by someone they had been with for many years? Certainly disheartened. Then appeared two angels who proclaimed to the disciples that one day Jesus would return in the same way He went—bodily and visibly. This became the real hope and the disciples went back to Jerusalem rejoicing that Jesus would surely return.

They had a prayer meeting. Jesus had said they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days, so they waited and prayed. When you face a difficult task, an important decision, or a baffling dilemma, don't rush into the work and just hope it happens the way it should. Instead, your first step should be to pray for the Holy Spirit's power and guidance. What a privilege is ours today to join them in this glorious hope! What a joy it will be to join in the rapture of that thrilling moment when the heavens split wide open and Jesus rides down the azure skies in blazing splendor, to awake the sleeping saints and translate the living righteous and claim His faithful people from all nations.

## REACT

1. At what point do you think hope can become blind and lose its meaning?
2. If you could pick three things to know for certain about the future, what would they be—and why?
3. To what degree does hope require optimism?
4. What symbols do you have in your life for the Christian hope?
5. How would you explain the Second Coming to a nonbeliever who was curious as to why you do some of the things you do? How would you answer if the person asked, "Why don't you just be good and wait for Him to come? Why do you do all that extra stuff you talk about, like witnessing and having meetings?"

## Have You Given Up Hope?

### TESTIMONY

Matt. 24:30

After I arrived at the American University of Sharjah in United Arab Emirates, it was clear that I had to attend classes on Sabbath. Having considered all possible alternatives, the administration decided to send me back to Africa. I completely lost hope. But God had His own way for me. He saw me through.

When Jesus declared that the temple would be destroyed and not one stone would be left on top of another (Matt. 24:2), the disciples had no hope for life after the

I completely lost hope.

destruction of the temple. To them its destruction meant the end of the world, so they asked Him about the time of its happening. Having read their thoughts, Jesus seized the

opportunity to warn them of the long period of time that would elapse before the final scenes of history would take place. He warned them about the great deception of His name, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, depression, and persecution.

In His conclusion Jesus told them, "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27, NKJV). The heavens will part and Christ will come to the rescue. No wonder He added the cheering words: "When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (verse 28, NKJV).

This is what we have in store: Jesus, "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13, NIV) for without this hope there is no meaning in life. In fact he assured us, "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1, NKJV). Are you still hopeless?

### REACT

1. How can we show that we have hope in Jesus' coming even when others think it is an ancient story?

2. What experiences have you had that made you almost lose hope? What got you through those times?

3. How often have you been in the position of providing hope to another person? What parallels do your experiences have to the life of Jesus in imparting hope to His disciples and to us. What can you learn from it?

4. What are we to do, as Christians, when we see these things happening around us? Why do anything to help others and take care of our world when these are signs that the world will soon end?

5. Is mental hope different than emotional hope? If so, in what ways?

# Misguided Hope

## EVIDENCE

Mark 5:25-29

We are six thousand years away from Creation, in a century in which many people are misguided, deceived, and have even forgotten what the Creator can do for them. Many people believe in and base their hope on things they can touch, hear, feel, and see. Most are looking elsewhere for concrete evidence of hope in this life.

My in-laws grew up in a Christian family with loving and caring parents. They attended church regularly and were generally a happy family. At the age of 45, the mother was diagnosed with liver cancer and given three months to live. Nothing short of a miracle was going to save her. It was very frightening news. However, they did not lose hope. They sought second opinions from several doctors with the same results. They were told to go home and prepare for the inevitable.

Finally they heard from a friend that somewhere in Mt. Arayat, a province in Pampanga, Philippines, an old man living in a cave was performing miracles of healing. Their hopes were revived. They carried their sick mother up the mountain and waited for the old man to appear but to no avail.

An old man living in a cave  
was performing miracles  
of healing.

Two days passed with no old man. Disappointed they slowly made their way back home. Money, time, and effort had been wasted and hopes crushed.

Jesus is our last resort, our last hope. The Bible contains evidence and history proves that we can depend on Him. He is our best and only hope. Like the woman with an issue of blood, let us go to Him in faith and let Him perform a wonderful miracle in our lives.

## REACT

1. How can we redirect the hope of those who believe in faith healers to Christ?
2. How do we know that putting our hope in the Lord is not risky, as trusting fellow humans sometimes is? What makes the difference?
3. What distinguishes a naive superstition from a confident, absolute hope?
4. Do you agree with the phrase "Jesus is our last resort"? Why or why not? What does your answer say about how you should live your daily life—especially your prayer habits?
5. If it's not wrong to pay attention to the day-to-day things that concern us, then how can we find a balance between maintaining our ultimate faith in Jesus and His second coming (on one hand) and being stewards of this world and of our fellow people (on the other)?
6. What is the difference between hope in God and belief in God?

Wednesday  
October 16

## Keeping Hope Alive!

### HOW-TO

1 Kings 8:56

The world in which we live offers so many things, some of them good, but most, well . . . Society has contributed so much to the chaos and moral degradation of our generation. Newspaper headlines include reports of war, abuse, poverty, disease, and greed. There is little or no evidence of the virtues.

The Bible attributes this to the rise or increase of wickedness (Matt. 24:12). The future seems so bleak. If our hopes are for the morrow, how lost we are!

Life on this earth is full of false promises but Jesus' promise is: "I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3, NIV). But where is the fulfillment of that promise? It was given four thousand years ago.

**Jesus is online 24-7-365.**

Does your hope die as time flies? Is delay giving way to doubt and despair? Here is how we can build up our motivation:

**Pray.** Jesus is online 24-7-365. Strive to make prayer the breath of your soul. Prayer is the very essence of a faith relationship with the living God. He promised to fill our deepest needs. More than that, He says we should not worry about anything but pray about everything (Phil. 4:6).

**Read.** Focus on the Word of God. In our physical state we cannot see, feel, touch, or hear Him. But through the Bible we get a glimpse of what our God is really like. The Bible also contains the sacred words of the Almighty; its truth applies across generations, across cultures, across all life experiences. Not one word has failed of His wonderful promises (1 Kings 8:6).

**Meet.** As the saying goes, "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." Small group ministry encourages us through the daily struggles of life and lets us know we are not alone. Our hope burns as we fellowship and encourage one another (Heb. 10:25).

**Witness.** As we share, our hope is kept alive. We are the hope-givers to a world without hope, the ones who keep the light aflame and rekindle dying embers of a lost world, Christ's ambassadors to an unbelieving world. A straightforward telling of a personal encounter with Christ is the most powerful testimony we can give to inspire hope.

God has a mission, an objective, and a plan for all His creatures (Jer. 31:17). So, yes, there is hope for this hopeless generation and Jesus is that hope for today and forevermore.

# A Hope That Never Dies

## OPINION

Matthew 24; Acts 1:11

"If Jesus will not come by the year 2000, I'm quitting the church," said a member. He was 60 years old then and has been an Adventist for more than two-thirds of his life. The long years of waiting have taken its toll on this member's hope. His hope, based on time, is dying.

As a grade-school boy in doctrinal class, my interest was aroused by the signs of the times foretold in Matthew 24. I would listen attentively as our teacher would tell us when, where, and how these signs had been fulfilled exactly as prophesied. And I hoped then that Jesus would come in a few years' time. That was more than a score of years ago! I'm an adult now, have my own family, and it is my children's turn to be introduced to the signs.

Today, advances in science and technology are giving us "credible" explanations of occurrences of what we believe as signs of Jesus' soon coming. Scientists are

**It is my children's turn to be introduced to the signs.**

establishing "facts" that may downplay our beliefs. However, it is not the time, nor the signs of the times that would give validity and credibility to our hope, but "this same Jesus" (Acts 1:11,

KJV) who lived, died, and rose from the tomb and gave the promise to come again.

The devil and his agents will do their best to put out the flame of hope in our hearts. Years may come and go, signs may occur without our personal knowledge, and people of intelligence may scoff at us and at the message we are bringing. But the hope we have in Jesus will keep burning if we have an intimate relationship with Him.

During World War I, a boy in the Allied Army discovered when he came back to the lines that his dearest friend was missing. He asked permission to search in No-Man's-Land. His commanding officer advised against it but gave his approval.

The soldier found his friend badly hurt. He carried him back to safety, but there, the wounded soldier died. In a moment the rescuer himself was mortally wounded and was barely able to crawl back within the lines. As the officer leaned over the brave lad he said, "I told you you would risk your life. Was it worthwhile?"

"Yes, sir," replied the dying soldier, "He said he knew I would come."\*

Because of sin we are also dying. But praise God we have a Blessed Hope. Jesus promised, "I will come again" (John 14:3, KJV). And I know He will surely come.

## REACT

What does the phrase "this same Jesus" mean to you?

\*Henry R. Fayerabend, "Slices of Life," *Elder's Digest*, April/June 2000, p. 29.

# A Candle in the Wind

## EXPLORATION

Acts 1:11

### CONCLUDE

Hope is as fragile as a candle in the wind. Yet it is essential to the survival of all human beings. In a world that offers false hopes and broken promises, the Christian can rely on the words of Jesus—the One who never fails. He has said “I will return.” While we wait, we can keep the flame of hope alive through prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and witnessing. One day our hopes will be confirmed when Jesus does come back to take us to the place He has prepared.

### CONSIDER

- Viewing a painting, picture, or sculpture (“The King Is Coming” by Victor Issa located in the lobby of the General Conference world headquarters is an excellent one) that depicts Jesus’ return. Try to visualize yourself in the picture and let your heart fill with hope.
- Researching as far back as possible to find out who was/is the earliest Adventist in your family. Calculate how many years the blessed hope has been in your family. Isn’t it nice to know that we are that many years closer to the fulfillment of the promise?
- Memorizing (if you haven’t already) John 14:1-3. Put your name in it. It is Jesus’ personal promise to you.
- Looking in the topical index of the hymnal for hymns of hope. Sing those that you know and learn at least one that you don’t know. Think of others that may not be included in the hymnal.
- Having some friends over to act out the story of the ten women waiting for the bridegroom. Discuss what it means to keep oil in your lamps.
- Reviewing the goals you have set for yourself for the next five or ten years. Do any of them conflict with your focus on the soon return of Christ? What can you do to keep that objective in all your accomplishments?
- Spending some time in nature and observing as many things as possible that have a connection with the hope of Jesus’ coming (e.g., the sun was darkened, one of the signs in Matthew 24 that predict Jesus’ coming).

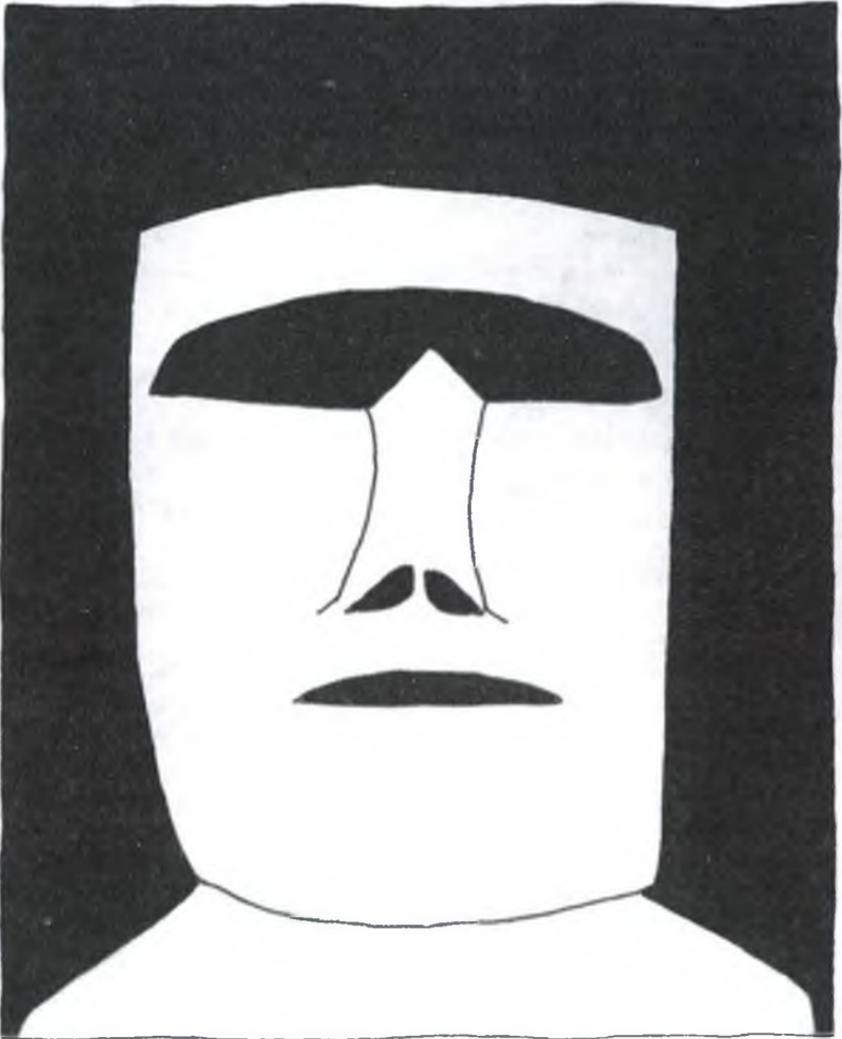
### CONNECT

Matthew 25:1-13.

*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 325.

Herbert E. Douglas, *How to Survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, chap.12.

# The **Jesus** hope: part two



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“Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13, NKJV).

## “Why Stand Ye Gazing Up?”

### INTRODUCTION

John 14:1-3

In the middle of the southern Pacific Ocean sits Easter Island; a lonely small triangle of land 2,000 miles from the nearest continent, nearly bereft of trees, animals, or inhabitants. The most prominent feature of the island is the rows of giant stone statues called *moai*. These smoothly carved figures all sit in the same stance; gazing upward and away toward the sky. They stand there as silent witnesses to their makers' futility of purpose.

According to archeologists, the native people, called Rapa Nui, created the *moai* as a response to a legendary visit of the gods. It is theorized that the *moai* represented the people's desire for the return of their gods, and their never-ceasing vigilance in watching for them.

In the 1,000 or so years of the Rapa Nui civilization, the priority of building *moai* exceeded the ecological needs of the island. The population thrived and

**The priority of building *moai*  
exceeded the ecological  
needs of the island.**

*moai* building increased. In some cases, farming was neglected. In others, the land was over-cultivated until the ground would no longer yield any crops. Starvation by the masses soon bred cannibalism

among the Rapa Nui. Their leaders warred among themselves in bloody conflicts to gain control of the island. Through it all, the building of the *moai*, and the vain hope of the gods' return continued. Eventually, the civilization collapsed. The gods had not come, and the people could no longer survive. They cut down every available tree on the island to make boats and sailed away from their failed hopes.

In A.D. 34 the disciples stood in the same stance as the *moai*, eyes looking up and outward as they followed Jesus rising into the clouds of heaven. God sent an angel to assure them that Jesus would return again to earth from the clouds to receive His people. Christians ever afterward still look up to the heavens waiting on Jesus' return. This hope in Jesus' return is the foundation of our faith. Isn't it a wonderful blessing to know that our faith in the return of Jesus is based on something more sure than that of the people of Easter Island?

# The Jesus Hope?

## EVIDENCE

Matt. 24:14; Col. 1:27; Rev. 14:12

The Scriptures manifestly point to the hope of Jesus' second coming to this earth. And Christians can be assured and reassured by Jesus' own words of His return encapsulated within the verses of John 14:1-3. Nevertheless, these words are nearly 2,000 years overdue in their fulfilment. For some the overriding question "Where is the promise of His coming?" seems more appropriate, when we consider that the scales of life appear to be consistently tipped in favor of disasters, broken homes, heartaches, horrendous crimes, etc.

This was not exclusive to our time. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, "had been troubled in regard to the dead. It had seemed to him that the righteous and the wicked would go to the dust together, and that this would be their end."<sup>1</sup> But Enoch was given a vision that dispelled the cloud of gloom. Enoch looked forward to Jesus' return saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 14, NKJV).

A person's word is not always enough, however, so prophecy not only foretells but also provides waymarks from which the human race is to know the nearness of Christ's second coming (Luke 21:25; Mark 13:24-26). Bible scholars have attributed these events to various periods of history.

The stage is set; campaigns are on the uptake; and Internet, radio, and satellite broadcasts flourish with the gospel message. What is there left to do? Perhaps Jesus is waiting and hoping for something. "Christ is seeking to reproduce Himself in the hearts of men; and He does this through those who believe in Him . . . The Christian is in the world as a representative of Christ, for the salvation of other souls."<sup>2</sup>

"Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church [members]."<sup>3</sup> When His character is reproduced [witnessed] through His people, then He will come." This cannot be accomplished without the aid of the Holy Spirit as the hand of faith (human effort) takes the mantle of infinite power.

"The witness is not only for the world but also Satan the 'accuser of the brethren.' Jesus looks to His church as that 'blessed hope' when they shall gloriously appear as a 'bride adorned' for the bridegroom having 'kept His commandments and [demonstrated] His faith.'"<sup>4</sup>

**A person's word is not  
always enough.**

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 85.

2. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 67.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

4. *Gospel Workers*, p. 289.

Monday  
October 21

## Antidote for Troubled Hearts

### LOGOS

John 14:1-3

The context of John 14 is the event recorded in the previous chapter in which Jesus and His disciples were sitting at the table partaking of the Lord's Supper (see also John 14:31). The disciples were troubled by what Jesus had said about leaving them. Soon they were to be left alone to face persecutions and trials. No doubt Jesus' death would demolish all their dreams for they had yet to understand Christ's mission that the Messiah must suffer and die (Luke 24:21). There was much to trouble them. Under the circumstances, Christ gave them one of the greatest assurances found in Scriptures: the promise of His return to earth. To Jesus, belief and confidence in His second coming is the antidote for troubled hearts.

The imperative "let not your heart be troubled" is a negative command. Literally it means "stop letting your heart be troubled" or "set your heart at ease." Christ offered five reasons that joy should replace trouble.

First, the promise of His second advent is based on a double assurance. "You believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1, NKJV). There was this unbreakable

**Instead of letting their hearts be troubled, the disciples should look further ahead.**

and binding union between God the Father and God the Son (verses 7-12). The belief in the Father and the Son was in reference to the soon departure of Christ at the close of His earthly mission. His departure was not a permanent farewell but a necessary step for the glorious

and eternal reunion. One phase of Christ's mission would soon end; the new phase was just about to begin. Instead of letting their hearts be troubled, the disciples should look further ahead and connect the departure of Jesus with the promise of the permanent home in heaven. In short, the coming again is the counterpart of the going away. What comfort! What reassurance!

Second, the saints are to be God's eternal joy. The outcome of the second coming of Christ implies eternal fellowship and residence with God. "In My Father's house are many rooms" (verse 2, NIV). The imagery of rooms has its origin in eastern culture, in which the sons and daughters and their families live under the same roof as their parents. Christ desires that His children live together with Him. It means that in heaven there is plenty of room for all. Earthly accommodations sometimes turn guests away because of room shortage. But heaven never will run short. Jesus' message is, "Do not be afraid. People may shut the door to your face. But My Father

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never does and never will. Rest assured that none would be shut out from My Father's house. None would be excluded." What provision for eternal joy!

Third, Christ is our forerunner. "I go to prepare a place for you" (verse 2, KJV). By His going is meant His death and ascent to heaven. This is indeed a remarkable statement that Christ should prepare for His servant. Customarily it was the servant who should prepare for the master in an event. The master merely arrived to enjoy the fruits of the servant's labor. But here Jesus said, "I, your Lord and Master, go to prepare a place for you." This is but another example of divine condescension, consistent with Christ's humility and service. Just as John the Baptist served as the forerunner of Christ, Christ is here described as the forerunner of the redeemed, blazing the trail, as it were, ahead of the redeemed. What tender care!

Fourth, Christ is coming again. This is a statement of great triumph. The Second Advent is the hope of the ages; the climax of history; the conclusion of all earthly matters, and the culmination of the great controversy between God and Satan. When Jesus comes as the King of kings and Lord of lords, He remembers who His friends are and will welcome them to His home. The guarantee is unmistakable, for His return is as sure as His departure (Acts 1:11). " 'Because I live, you will live also' " (John 14:19, NKJV).

Fifth, we will be home at last. " 'Where I am, there you may be also' " (verse 3, NKJV). The German theologian Karl Barth used to say, "Heaven is where Jesus is." There is no need to speculate where heaven is and what it is like as long as we know who is there.

## Conclusion

The message of John 14:1-3 was originally intended for Christ's disciples when they were deeply distressed by the impending departure of Christ. Christ offered them the antidote for troubled souls based on the promise of His return to earth at the Second Advent. The same message is also meant for God's people in all ages. Christ declared that the Christian heart is not to be troubled because He has gone on to prepare a place for us. It was a picture of the future. He said in effect, "Whenever you are weary of the present life and all its struggles, look forward to the future. Whenever circumstances seem threatening and you are on the verge of giving up, think of the end and be glad." Christians are to look at the present through the perspective of the future.

Praise God that Jesus' preparations will not be in vain. The rooms will not stand empty. If He has prepared a place for us, He will prepare us for the place. " 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him' " (1 Cor. 2:9, NKJV). " 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' " (Matt. 25:34, NKJV).

Tuesday  
October 22

## Keeping Our Eyes on the Hope

### TESTIMONY

John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Titus 2:13; Heb.12:2

In the book *Maranatha*, Ellen White shares a glimpse of her own testimony of hope in Jesus. Let's listen in. "Jesus said He would go away and prepare mansions for us, that where He is there we may be also. We shall ever dwell with and enjoy the light of His precious countenance. My heart leaps with joy at the cheering prospect. We are almost home. Heaven, sweet heaven! It is our eternal home. I am glad every moment that Jesus lives, and because He lives we shall live also. My soul says, Praise the Lord. There is a fullness in Jesus, a supply for each, for all, and why should we die for bread or starve in foreign lands?

"I hunger, I thirst for salvation, for entire conformity to the will of God. We have a good hope through Jesus. It is sure and steadfast and entereth into that within the veil. It yields us consolation in affliction, it gives us joy amid anguish, disperses the gloom around us, and causes us to look through it all to immortality and eternal life. Earthly treasures are no inducement to us, for while we have this hope, it reaches clear above the treasures of earth that are passing away and takes hold of the immortal inheritance, the treasures that are durable, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fade not away."<sup>1</sup>

With this encouraging testimony, the following challenge makes this hope even more practical and urgent: "We are pilgrims and strangers who are waiting, hoping, and praying for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If we believe this and bring it into our practical life, what vigorous action would this faith and hope inspire; what fervent love one for another; what careful holy living for the glory of God; and in our respect for the recompense of the reward, what distinct lines of demarcation would be evidenced between us and the world."<sup>2</sup>

**"We are almost home."**

"There is salvation for us, and why do we stay away from the fountain? Why not come and drink that our souls may be refreshed, invigorated, and may flourish in God? Why do we cling so closely to earth? There is something better than earth for us to talk about and think of. We can be in a heavenly frame of mind. Oh, let us dwell upon Jesus' lovely, spotless character, and by beholding we shall become changed to the same image. Be of good courage. Have faith in God."<sup>3</sup>

1. *Maranatha*, p. 304.

2. *Evangelism*, p. 220.

3. *Maranatha*, p. 304.

# Hesitation: It's Fatal

## HOW-TO

John 14:1-3, 6

"What religion is that?" my friend asked.

"Seventh-day Adventist," I replied with a little hesitation. It had been a common conversation until questions were raised about why I did not do certain things. If you fall within the number of believers that are *born* Seventh-day Adventist, perhaps you can relate to my struggle at times as to why I claim to be one. Please don't look down on me for saying that.

My faith in the One who has provided the means for eternal life has not always been in all that great shape. Perhaps you can also relate to that feeling. One basic step is often missed by my own presumption that I can somehow be *born* into a religious movement and miraculously give me a head start into heaven. The bottom line is that the way to heaven and eternal life is *through* Jesus (John 14:6). That's the goal. If our motivation falls outside that one concept, not one religion or movement will help us reach that goal.

Please don't look down on me for saying that.

This hope—to get hold of Jesus and make His second coming the ultimate goal in our lives—is the one thing we should not be hesitant about. It takes preparation. It takes patience. It takes prayer. It takes departing from earthly possessions. It takes faith. It takes sharing. Without this hope of His soon second coming, do not bother to cling to anything, because the battle is lost. It is over.

How can you keep the fire for God burning in your heart? Begin by asking Jesus to clean any impurity and sinful desire from your heart. Let Him take hold of your life from every single angle and let Him shake loose those things that keep you from coming into a closer walk with Him. Your life will change and the hope of His soon return will be good news again.

## REACT

1. What are some of the steps of preparation needed to have the hope of Jesus' return?
2. What is the relationship of patience and prayer to our Christian hope?
3. Why might someone be likely to respond to a person (you) with a goal (Jesus) that has a great reward at the end (Second Coming)? How can you capitalize on that to share Jesus with others? Be specific.
4. What are two specific ways you can keep your faith in Jesus and your hope for eternity fresh and central to your life?
5. Think of several hopes you have. How do you rank them in importance and why? What place do spiritual hopes have in your list?

Thursday  
October 24

## No Hope? No Chance?

### OPINION

Titus 2:13

Nineteenth-century Russia was not a great place to live if you weren't of the right class. It was a great age of learning, music, and engineering, but if you were poor, you'd had it. Take the case of the protagonist in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. Rodion Raskolnikov was an educated man, but he was disillusioned by his own theories. He committed acts of murder and lies as a social experiment, not knowing whether the outcome would be for better or for worse. He does prepare for the latter and eventually gives himself up to the authorities, which were corrupt and cruel.

His reasons for embarking on the road of crime could be viewed as noble or justifiable. But as I read more, I too, became as desperate as Raskolnikov. I hoped for him and wished for justice, though fearing the worst. Then came a glimmer of faith in the unlikely form of a young woman driven by circumstances into a disgraceful trade.

Sonia's strength, derived from her own personal experiences, makes her frighteningly powerful to Rodion, who resists and even spurns her love for him. She

**He committed actions of murder and lies as a social experiment.**

translates her hope to others in Siberia where he is imprisoned, where she becomes a friend of the "rejects" and finally, he accepts her love and gives his. Rodion finds hope through her constant love and dedication, which never

condoned his original actions but supported him through the darkest hour. "Love and affection rose upon them; the heart of one held within it an eternal store of light and love for the heart of the other."<sup>1</sup> His salvation comes in response to her love. Rodion acknowledges his wrongs and determines to lead a new life with Sonia. That burden is lifted when he accepts the hope offered. "Life, full, real, earnest life, was coming, and had driven away his cogitations. Under his pillow lay the New Testament. . . . The book belonged to Sonia; it was that same from which she had read to him of the raising of Lazarus. At the commencement of his confinement he thought that she would pester him; but, to his astonishment, she never spoke of religion, nor ever mentioned the Scriptures. . . . It had remained unopened now, but one thought burned within him: Her faith, her feelings, may not mine become like them?"<sup>2</sup>

### REACT

What is the relationship between hope and love?

1. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (London: Wordsworth Editions, Ltd., 1993), p. 401.

2. Ibid.

# Hope in One Name Under Heaven

## EXPLORATION

Gen. 3:15; Isaiah 53; 66:15-24; Malachi 4; Matt. 24:30-51; Luke 1:46-53;  
John 14:1-3

## CONCLUDE

As Christians our hope is based on Jesus—what He did, what He is doing, and what He's going to do for us. He died, so we can live. He saves us, even now, as we call on His name. He not only drags us back from the brink of our individual crises of despair and destruction, but as we think and talk with Him, He is to us an abundant, nurturing fountain, giving us a full and flourishing life moment by moment. And what He does for us now is surety for His promises that He is preparing to receive us, that He will return to bring us to our eternal home with Him.

## CONSIDER

- Painting three designs on your bathroom mirror or other surface you see often, that will remind you and others of your hope in what Jesus did, is doing, and will do for you.
- Dividing an 8½ by 11 sheet of paper in half and comparing God's people's hope in the First and Second Coming. As a jump start, you may want to read such verses as Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 53; Luke 1:46-53; Malachi 4; Isaiah 66:15-24; Matthew 24:30-51. Note similarities and differences.
- Rewriting John 14:1-3 as a letter addressed by Jesus to yourself. Be as specific and graphic as you can about the home Jesus is preparing for you, and the confidence and joy He is expressing in His desire to have you with Him.
- Writing an additional verse about the morning of the Second Coming for the song "Morning Has Broken" in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 44.
- Sculpting or carving a figure or a group of figures that express hope, as they anticipate Christ's return.
- Planning a prayer meeting or vesper service around the theme of hope in Christ's second coming as illustrated in the parable of the ten wise and foolish virgins. Give each participant a lamp, and plan activities illustrating anticipation for the coming wedding supper.
- Envisioning the reunions that will occur at the Second Coming and imagining the dialogues between yourself and Jesus, your guardian angel, loved ones you've lost contact with or lost in death.

## CONNECT

*The Great Controversy*, pp. 635–652; *Early Writings*, pp. 285–291; *Maranatha*, p. 12.  
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*.

# The **Hope** of our **Hope**



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“ ‘I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior’ ”  
(Mic. 7:7, NIV).

# A Reason to Hope

## INTRODUCTION

Rom. 5:5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 6:18

It has been said that behind every dark cloud there is a silver lining. To believe this saying one must also have faith that no matter how depressing one's circumstances may be, life is never really as bad as it seems.

Hence, the following probing questions may be asked: How does one become so overwhelmed with trials and obstacles that all hope is lost and totally eclipsed from the mind? How does it behoove us simply to put mind over matter, or to push the matters that trouble us into our subconscious and pretend they don't exist?

In *The Diary of a Young Girl*, we learn about the seemingly oppressive and bleak circumstances in which Anne Frank lived while hiding from the Gestapo in Amsterdam during World War II.

To an outsider, she had every reason to be hopelessly downcast. She was cramped and confined in a small attic with seven people. She had frequent feuds with these people. She

To an outsider, she had every reason to be hopelessly downcast.

was frequently misunderstood. She couldn't make any noise for fear of detection and deportation to a concentration camp. Given this prisonlike existence, how does one find any hope, i.e., meaning in their life?

Amazingly, at the end of her diary, Anne comes to a startling realization that despite what is going on around her, inside the attic, and in the outside world, there is still a lot of good in the world. Fortunately, in her journey from hopelessness, she discovers the secret to having a meaningful life.

As we approach the lesson study for this week, let us honestly grapple with the answers to the following questions as we prepare for our Lord's soon return:

1. How has the gospel message changed my life in spite of my personal problems or circumstances in the world today?
2. On a day-to-day basis, what do I hope for? Why?
3. What would be the best way to share "the blessed hope" with others?

Sunday  
October 27

## Jesus, the Worthy Substitute

### LOGOS

1 Corinthians 15; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 21:3, 4

The eighth-grade class sits quietly as they await Mrs. Savage, their well-respected teacher. There's fumbling with the door handle and in walks the teacher. The students break out into casual conversation. What happened? Where's the respect? A teacher entered but it was not Mrs. Savage. It was a substitute; someone had to replace her for the day. Mr. Henson, the substitute, slightly raises his voice and says to the class, "I'm here in place of Mrs. Savage. Treat me as you would treat her."

### The Substitute Lamb (Lev. 4:28-31)

In Leviticus we learn of another kind of substitute. The sinner brings a lamb or a goat to the sanctuary. The priest examines the offering to be sure it is acceptable.

**What happened?  
Where's the respect?**

It must be without blemish or it is disqualified. Then the sinner places his hands on the head of the offering. He asks the priest, "Why am I doing this?" (This was not the sinner's first sin; it was

his first time dragging a sacrifice to the sanctuary.) The priest responds, "You are placing your hands upon the head of the offering because you are symbolically transferring your sins to the innocent lamb, making him guilty of your sins." As the process continues, the priest hands a knife to the sinner then motions him to kill the guilty beast.

"The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23, KJV). Someone must die and it cannot be the sinner because he transferred his sins to the lamb. The sinner's innocent lamb became his substitute; the lamb slain in the sinner's place. What a paradox. All the sacrificing pointed to Jesus and inspired hope in the sinner.

After years of lambs dying and blood flying and the True Lamb nowhere in sight, the holy service became a ritual. The ritual turned into drudgery. Hope that was found in whom the sacrificial system pointed to, was lost. Ellen White describes the Jews' spiritual and physical condition just before Jesus came as a babe in Bethlehem. She says, "In the region and shadow of death, men sat unsolaced. With longing eyes they looked for the coming of the Deliverer, when the darkness should be dispelled, and the mystery of the future should be made plain."<sup>1</sup> She continues, "The senses, the nerves, the passions, the organs of men, were worked by supernatural agencies in the indulgence of the vilest lust. The very stamp of demons was impressed upon the countenances of men."<sup>2</sup>

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## Behold the Lamb (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 15:17, 19)

Looking upon Jesus, John the Baptist proclaimed, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, NKJV). Thank God, the Deliverer came and chose to say what Mr. Henson said to the eighth-grade students: "Treat Me as you would treat them (humankind)." Jesus became the guilty beast for you and for me. He felt the penalty of sin that we deserve. Ellen White helps us again: "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. With His stripes we are healed."<sup>3</sup> Wow! Jesus gave humanity His righteousness, because all humankind had to offer was wickedness (Rom. 3:10).

What hope springs in the heart when we realize that Hope died and rose again for our sakes? In these last days when homelessness, joblessness, and hopelessness are rampant, looking to Jesus can still solve these ills. Millionaires are popping up by the dozens, but hopelessness is present among them too. Not even money can buy Hope. Will you accept Him for free?

### REACT

1. Why could holy angels not have been a substitute for our sins?
2. How can we unconsciously make the church service a ritual and lose hope?
3. Does a millionaire need hope in this life? If so, in what way?
4. What is the difference between faith and hope?
5. How do the two relate to each other?
6. After Jesus returns, will hope no longer be a characteristic of God's people?

Explain your answer.

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1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 32, 33.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Monday  
October 28

## Hope's Down Payment

### TESTIMONY

Col. 1:27

There are differing uses of the word "hope," and Ellen White uses several. The Christian hope is uniquely based on God's sure promises. It hopes for recovery of His gifts, forfeited by sin. It is not based on ambition or anticipation.

When Adam lost Paradise and Eternal Life, there seemed little reason to live. God brought him to sacrifice a lamb, as a promise of Jesus' restoration in the future. "And he marveled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty. A star of hope illumined the dark and terrible future and relieved it of its utter desolation."<sup>1</sup>

The word of hope was kept alive. "From the days of Enoch the promises repeated through patriarchs and prophets had kept alive the hope of His appearing."<sup>2</sup>

This word of hope was cherished not only by Jews. "Outside of the Jewish nation there were men who foretold the appearance of a divine instructor. These men were seeking for truth, and to them the Spirit of Inspiration was imparted. One after another, like

**This word of hope was  
cherished not only by Jews.**

stars in the darkened heavens, such teachers had arisen. Their words of prophecy had kindled hope in the hearts of thousands of the Gentile world."<sup>3</sup>

Adam must have focused on Paradise and lost life, which were so dominant in his existence. For us, the effects of sin are most apparent in the loss of power to cope and love. Our hope still focuses on regaining heaven and eternal life, but we hope for power and real love. Ellen White sees hope as motivating us right through to the end of time. "We may rejoice in hope. Our advocate is in the heavenly sanctuary, pleading in our behalf. Through his merits we may have pardon and peace. He died that he might wash away our sins, clothe us with his righteousness, and fit us for the society of heaven, where we may dwell in light forever."<sup>4</sup>

During the times of despair at the end of the world, this is her description of the Christians who will live through that terrible crisis. "Their only hope is in the mercy of God; their only defense will be prayer. As Joshua was pleading before the Angel, so the remnant church, with brokenness of heart and earnest faith, will plead for pardon and deliverance through Jesus their Advocate."<sup>5</sup>

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 68–101.
2. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 699–703.
3. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 33–101.
4. *Bible Echo*, 1888.
5. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 473.

# When Not Seeing Is Believing

## EVIDENCE

Deut. 29:29

After Jesus was resurrected and had appeared to various followers, there was one person who had not yet seen Him—Thomas. Since Thomas was one of the disciples, he had heard Jesus state how He would be killed but be raised on the third day. To be fair, all of the disciples lost hope after Jesus was crucified. Yet when Peter and John first heard that Jesus had been resurrected, they ran to the tomb. When Thomas heard it, he said he wouldn't believe until he had seen the nail marks in His hand (John 20:25).

A whole week transpires and Thomas still doesn't believe. While the disciples were in someone's home with the doors locked, Jesus appears to all of them. He allows Thomas to touch His wounds and tells him to stop doubting and believe (John 20:27). Doubting Thomas becomes believing Thomas and he worships Jesus. Jesus notes that Thomas has believed because he has seen. But He blesses those who have not seen yet still believe.

Our key text, Deuteronomy 29:29, states that " 'The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law' " (NIV). The account of Thomas and Jesus illustrates a fundamental difference in why humanity uses evidence as compared to why God uses it. Thomas wanted evidence to prove a fact that had been unknown.

**A whole week transpires  
and Thomas still  
doesn't believe.**

However, Jesus didn't reveal Himself to Thomas to *prove* that He was resurrected. Rather, He revealed Himself to strengthen Thomas's faith to help him be a better follower. God reveals things to us in order that we may follow all His words.

Being our Creator, Jesus understands the human psyche better than anyone. He knows how difficult it is for us to believe when we don't see. So He realizes that in order to strengthen our faith, evidence of His existence, of His care, and of His power sometimes is necessary. But where do we get this evidence? Well, the text refers to His words. The Scriptures are a certain source of God's evidence. We also get evidence through His works of nature and how in His providence "all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Rom. 8:28, NIV).

But remember, although God has given ample evidence for faith, He will never remove all excuse for unbelief. That's why we need to have faith in God's evidence in order to please Him (Heb. 11:6).

Wednesday  
October 30

# The Power of Hope

## HOW-TO

1 Cor. 15:2

The story is told of a teacher participating in a volunteer program to provide lessons to hospitalized youth. The teacher was asked to teach nouns and verbs to a gravely injured patient, but was not briefed on the extent of the young person's injuries or prognosis. Arriving in the patient's room, the teacher was momentarily arrested by his student's poor appearance. But, recovering quickly, he proceeded as planned. "I'm here to teach you nouns and verbs," he announced.

The next day the hospital staff questioned the teacher about the previous day's lesson. "What happened in there yesterday? What did you say to our patient?" The teacher expressed the hope that he had not done anything that proved to be a

**None of your business!**

setback. "On the contrary," came the answer. "The child seems like a new person—like a person with new reason to live."

Asked later about the turnaround, the child explained, "I figured they wouldn't be teaching nouns and verbs today to someone likely to die tomorrow."

Where there is no hope for the future, there is no power in the present.

There is power in hope. Consider the following:

1. If not for the storms, we would never appreciate the smooth sailing. Hope is easy to talk about in hopeful times. In fact, it's practically a platitude. Hope becomes a pillar only when things seem hopeless. Hope strengthens us—and is strengthened itself—only when we exercise it in the face of truly hopeless circumstances.

2. Don't sweat the details. "But someone may ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?'" (1 Cor. 15:35, NIV). None of your business! Don't worry about it. *How* God might resolve your particular situation is up to God. All we have to do, and it sounds easier than we sometimes make it, is rely on Him and wait for Him.

3. The work is already done. Merriam-Webster defines hope as "desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment."\* Our greatest hope, though, is already fulfilled. The outcome we most hope for is already assured. "By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you" (verse 2, NIV). We are saved now—in the present tense.

## REACT

1. How are hopelessness and death related concepts?
2. How would you explain the "blessed hope" to someone in a hope crisis?

\*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary <<http://www.m-w.com/dictionary.htm>>

# Hope in the Righteousness of Christ

## OPINION

1 Cor. 15:19, 20, 58

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name."\* Isn't it amazing how song lyrics such as these get stuck in our head! And isn't it also amazing how some of us quote these lyrics as Scripture even! Although these particular words cannot be quoted as actual biblical text, the sentiment expressed in these two lines is definitely a source of inspiration to Christians. Christ's atoning sacrifice and His imputed righteousness is a great basis for hope.

As Christians, ours is a copy that is built on the assurance of a righteous Savior, Jesus Christ, who lived a sinless, righteous life (in a sinful world); who was crucified a righteous Man; who was resurrected in righteousness; who ascended in righteousness; and who now sits as our Mediator and High Priest in the presence of a righteous God. He is the embodiment of our hope of one day sitting, as righteous beings, in the presence of a holy God.

Our hope extends beyond the realm of this third planet from the sun. Our hope is grounded on the Son of God. He is the One in whom we place our trust and confidence. Our labor here on this earth will not be rewarded like that of Sisyphus, with frustration and futility. No, on the contrary, our reward will be a transformation from mortal to immortal. We will be rewarded with a *full* clothing of Christ's righteousness.

Our hope will be made tangible in the glorious moment of Christ's earth-shattering, time-ending return. It is a hope that is sustained with the belief that eternal life with Him *is* attainable and *is* assured to those who love Him, because He who has promised *is* faithful. O what a glorious hope!

"My hope is built on  
nothing less."

## REACT

1. Why does Paul describe Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:20 as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep?
2. As individuals whose hope extends beyond this earth, how should we as Christians thus live? (Should we not plan for graduations and weddings? Should we not build our dream homes?)

\*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, No. 522.

Friday  
November 1

# Hope Against Hope

## EXPLORATION

Heb. 6:19

I *hope* you won't misunderstand me when I say "I feel like hope is tired." Having been squeezed for every drop of promise, hope has lost its purpose. We assume an attitude of hope for almost every part of daily life. We hope we're not late for an appointment. We hope we have the right clothes. We hope we have enough food. We hope "he/she" will be at the party. We hope we do well on the exam. Is our hope worn out? How do we keep our hope of the Second Coming alive? What is our hope built on?

## CONSIDER

- Interviewing someone who is at least 90 years old. Ask him or her questions like the following: "What keeps hope alive for you? What do you hope for each day? What do you do when you get tired of hoping?"
- Singing all the verses of "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" in *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, No. 522. Note the date when this hymn was written. Is our hope the same as when this song was written?
- Using a concordance and/or chain-reference Bible to read as many texts as possible that have the word "hope" in them.
- Writing down things you still hope for in life. Categorize these things by whether or not you have the power to make them a reality. Consider how your hope is affected when you do not have the power to make something a reality.
- Browsing the Internet for two or three Web sites that express a hopeful Christian viewpoint. Share the URLs of these sites with someone who needs the encouragement.
- Visiting a cemetery near your home. Read the inscriptions on the headstones. How many of them have inscriptions that inspire hope? Why do you think they carved them in stone? Are the hopeful inscriptions on recent headstones or mostly on older ones?
- Asking children, teenagers, and adults when they hope Jesus will return. How do their answers differ? Why do you think they differ?

## CONNECT

Psalm 62.

Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*; Charles R. Swindoll, *Strengthening Your Grip*, chap. 3.

# Hope: Motivation for Mission



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“Since we have such a hope, we are very bold”  
(2 Cor. 3:12, NIV).

Sabbath  
November 2

## Fevered Hope

### INTRODUCTION

Matt. 8:5-13

For nearly five days, I lie in bed  
With body temperature running up to 40 degrees C,  
Not knowing whether I have typhoid fever or viral syndrome.

My mind drifts.  
What if it's dengue? I could die.  
Oh, God, am I ready to die?  
Yes, I decide, I am ready to die.  
But what about my children? My husband?  
Who's going to take care of them?

My mind wanders.  
But, oh, the pain, the penetrating headache.  
Why, oh, Lord, am I suffering like this?  
With burning fever, I feel like lashing out at God for making me suffer like this.  
Then, in desperation, I cry,  
"Oh, God, help me! Please make me well!"

Thoughts of other suffering people come to mind—  
People with no hope  
In a world of misery,  
People not knowing where to go.

Wait! What am I doing to myself?  
Don't I have such a blessed hope that I am making this  
    little suffering like it's the end of the world?  
Don't I have Christ who made the blind see, the lame walk, the palsied well again?  
Don't I have Christ—the hope of the sick, suffering world?  
Yes, indeed!  
And I have this mission to share Him  
Not only to my kin  
But to the people in the community.

I should go on.  
This "little suffering" should not put me down.

Now, as I lie in bed, still burning with fever, my heart is also burning—  
    burning with hope!

And I wonder.  
Is your heart burning with hope too?

# Experiencing Hope

## EVIDENCE

Acts 4:1-4

In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant stated: "The whole interest of reason, speculative as well as practical, is centered in the three following questions: (1) What can I know? (2) What ought I to do? (3) What may I hope?" Though philosophy has preoccupied itself with the first two questions, Christian theology answers the third. Through the ages, this has provided the Christian church with meaning and direction to its mission.

In the New Testament, the Greek word for hope is *elpis*. It is the confident expectation, the "happy anticipation of good."

Christ is the object upon which that hope is fixed. Hope is the antidote to the discouraging effect of the present crisis in human society and the fear of the future.

The book of Acts presents the church as a people of hope. They are experiencing hope in the God who is present in His promises. The return of the resurrected Savior gave the early church a vision of reality much broader than personal salvation.

The God-given hope in the gospel of our Lord, in turn, created comforting and

**Christ is the object upon  
which hope is fixed.**

transforming vision for the mission of the people of God. It was this hope that motivated the members of the early church to share by word and lifestyle the reality that their *Kurios* (Lord) is

coming soon. Their optimistic response to persecution, tragedy, and hardship was a result of anticipating the appearance of the future in their own time.

The future was seen with joy and gladness in the resurrection of the One who came to redeem people from sin. The future is made real and visible in the eyes of faith for whoever believes and trusts Him in the present. The source of their motivation to share the truth and invite others to be members of the community of hope—the hope of eternal life—is rooted in the veracity of the resurrection story and the accuracy of the apocalyptic forecast of His return. Their passion to share the truth about their resurrected Redeemer resulted in the conversion of thousands.

Because of this apocalyptic hope, we also have a duty and obligation to help others prepare for the coming of our resurrected Lord and Savior.

## REACT

1. What is the link between the resurrection and the second coming of Jesus?
2. Why is the Resurrection important in providing hope in the reality and certainty of the Second Coming?

<sup>1</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1934), p. 457.

Monday  
November 4

## Great Hope, Great Boldness

### LOGOS

Matt. 8:5-13; 9:1-8; Mark 5:1-19; John 5:1-17; Acts 4:1-22

What is it about the Christian hope (Greek *elpis*) that it should motivate believers for mission? Though the secular *elpis* anticipates future events of all kinds—both good and evil—the Christian *elpis* expects only the good.

And the believer doesn't necessarily have to wait for the future to experience it.

**The Christian hope  
is neither transient  
nor trembling.**

Theologians have described the Christian hope as “already but not yet.” For example, with the promise of Christ’s coming, the situation described in terms of hope in the past has essentially changed. What was previously

future has now in the Redeemer become present. Hope is already here—now. Yet there’s more to come.

Unlike its secular counterpart, the Christian hope is not a “hesitant hope that perhaps the promises of God may be true. It is the confident expectation that they cannot be anything else than true.”<sup>1</sup>

The Christian hope is neither transient nor trembling, neither faint nor phantom, neither feeble nor fable. It’s not a temporary illusion, not a human pipe dream. Secular hopes tend to be “contingent upon unpredictable things and events.” The Christian hope is “a great hope, grounded in God and in His unchangeable purpose for the individual and for mankind.”<sup>2</sup>

### The Components of Hope

In the New Testament, the Christian hope includes several positive things: resurrection (1 Thess. 4:13, 14); salvation (2 Cor. 1:7, 10); eternal life (Titus 1:2; 3:7); the triumphant second coming of Christ (Titus 2:13); and a new dispensation of love (2 Cor. 3:12). All these have their foundation in Christ. We hope, not because of our strength, but because we are now sure of Christ’s help. Hope is grounded in God (1 Tim. 4:10; cf. Rom. 15:13) and looks to God (Acts 24:15; 1 Pet. 1:21).

### Hope’s Connection With Faith and Love

Paul identifies hope as one of the great pillars of Christianity. The other two are faith and love (1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8; Gal. 5:5, 6; 1 Cor. 13:13; Heb. 6:10-12; 1 Pet. 1:21, 22).

*Hope and faith.* Faith gives substance to our hope (Heb. 11:1), provides the assurance of things hoped for. Though faith and hope have an invisible and unprovable object, both carry unconditional certainty within themselves.

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Hope is inseparable from faith in God. Because of God's past and present deeds through Christ, the Christian dares to expect future blessings that are at present invisible (2 Cor.1:10).

Humankind can abound in hope through faith in God's faithfulness to deliver. This God toward whom Christians direct their faith is called "the God of hope" (Rom.15:13), one who can be trusted to implement His promises.

*Hope and love.* With love, hope is freed from all selfishness (Col. 1:4, 5). Christians do not hope for blessings for themselves alone. When they love the rest of humanity, they hope that they will also be recipients of the good things that they know God longs to give them.<sup>3</sup>

## Great Hope and Great Boldness

Hope causes a Christian to bear fruits of joy (Rom.12:12), love (Col. 1:4, 5), endurance (1 Thess. 1:3). It also produces boldness.

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul says that because of his hope, he is very bold. Hope breeds boldness in the Christian life. Like Paul, we can have confidence that God is at work to change hearts to give life (verse 6), righteousness (verse 9), and permanence (verse 11) to all God's people.

To be bold can mean at least three things. Those who possess Christian hope are:

*a. fearless in righteousness.* One aspect of boldness is the absence of fear or timidity (1 Thess. 2:2). Boldness overcomes the fear of what humankind can do to us, of suffering persecution.

*b. unashamed of the gospel.* Boldness overcomes the temptation to feel shame about the gospel (Phil.1:20).

*c. forthright in all they say.* They use frank, straightforward speech concerning the things of God (John 10:24). There are no minced words or vague communication. They are unwilling to cloak the Word of God in euphemisms that obscure the clear contours of the truth.

If we are not bold in our witness, it may be that our hope is defective. Perhaps we have never really thought seriously about the relationship between the strength of our hope and the boldness of our service to Christ. A great hope produces great boldness for sharing it.

## REACT

1. Having Paul's boldness begins with being aware of the greatness and certainty of the Christian hope. In the face of such hope, what can prevent you from having the same attitude?

2. Is it possible to be very bold without hope? Explain your answer.

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1. William Barclay, *More New Testament Words* (N.P.: SCM Press, 1958), p. 46.

2. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Advent Hope for Human Hopelessness* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Biblical Perspectives, 1986), p. 27.

3. J. D. Douglas, et al., eds., *New Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1982), s.v. "Hope."

Tuesday  
November 5

## What a Blessed Hope!

### TESTIMONY

Ps. 31:24

Ellen White speaks of hope as embodied in the person and mission of Jesus Christ—and in His soon return.

"In the synagogue at Nazareth Jesus announced his divine character and mission . . . to preach the gospel to the poor, . . . to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And then came the words so full of hope and comfort, 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.'"<sup>1</sup>

"The [second] coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers. The Saviour's parting promise upon Olivet, that He would come again, lighted up the future for His disciples, filling their hearts with joy and hope that sorrow could not quench nor trials dim. Amid suffering and persecution, 'the appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' was the 'blessed hope.'"<sup>2</sup>

This hope can be had in the not-so-distant future, and it is already in the believer's possession because of Christ. Such present hope encourages the possessor to share it with others despite hindrances in doing so.

"The agencies of Satan are always at work to hinder the work that will make man successful over the powers of darkness; but this should not discourage us or cause

us to cease our efforts. . . . To His disciples He [Christ] says, 'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' A life of sanctification and joy in believing is held out to every soul who in faith will claim the promises of the word of God,

**Hope encourages the possessor to share it with others.**

and draw upon divine strength for the work of overcoming. . . . A true discerning of Christ will lead to a true confiding in Him, and this will give comfort and courage and hope in Him."<sup>3</sup>

"Many who are now dwelling in the shadow of sin and death, as they see in God's faithful servants a reflection of the Light of the world, will realize that they have a hope of salvation, and they will open their hearts to receive the healing beams, and will in turn become light bearers to others yet in darkness."<sup>4</sup>

1. "Trust in the Lord," *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 3 February 1885, par. 8.

2. *Maranatha*, p. 12.

3. *The Signs of the Times*, 9 December 1908, par. 9.

4. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 469.

# Dare to Hope

## HOW-TO

Heb. 6:18

*Lift up the trumpet, and loud let it ring;*

*Jesus is coming again!*

*Cheer up, ye pilgrims, be joyful and sing;*

*Jesus is coming again!*

We've been singing that song for quite a long while now, yet Christ has not come!

Our forefathers fervently believed in Jesus' promise that He will come again (John 14:1-3). They lived and shared this blessed hope and expected this event to happen during their time. They were probably disappointed by His nonappearance, but their hope certainly remained unaltered.

Today, we continue to cling to that hope—Jesus' second coming—savoring even now that glorious day when we will be lovingly welcomed to our heavenly home by our loving Father. And because Jesus' promises never fail, we can dare expect positively and confidently the fulfillment of that blessed hope. We can dare share boldly our mission of letting others know of His soon return. How?

You can never "outstem"  
a *camote*.

**1. Memorize Bible verses brimming with hope.** When saved in your memory bank, they can be retrieved at a moment's notice. When tempted to grow tired of waiting, when the distractions and glitter of this world are too tempting to resist, we can always remain focused on the Reason of our hope.

Two beautiful hope verses:

"We are looking forward to the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13, *The Clear Word*).

"You would feel secure again because there would be hope. You would look around you and be unafraid because God would be there to protect you. Your soul would be at peace" (Job 11:18, *The Clear Word*).

**2. Share this hope with others.** In my country there is a leafy vegetable called the *camote*. The more this plant's stems are cut, the more stems will sprout. You can never "outstem" a *camote*. Hope is like that. Sharing it with a friend, a colleague, a neighbor, a stranger, or a family member via literature, homemade bookmarks, notes, conversation, or emails will definitely reinforce our hope in God's promise.

**3. Live this hope.** This is the ultimate essence of it all. Failure to live this hope is cutting the very life that keeps our faith alive. Live it through songs, prayer, and personal meditation—and the hope will remain burning until Jesus comes.

Thursday  
November 7

## Hope Here and Hereafter

### OPINION

Luke 18:29, 30

Hope for the future with assurance of the certainty of that hope is a basic human need. One does not hope for that in which one has no faith.

The Christian has a hope that is sure and steadfast. It is based on God's never-failing promises. The certainty of the Christian hope must, therefore, move us to "go into all the world" (Mark 16:15, NKJV) with confidence and courage to share the gospel. "Each has his place in the eternal plan of heaven. Each is to work in cooperation with Christ for the salvation of souls. No more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God."\* The hope we believe in should awaken interest to do good for others, help those in need, strengthen the weak, and, above all, to bear testimony for Christ.

Opportunities must be created, not awaited. We must be able to carry our religion into everything. For when we boldly take the good news to those in darkness, they will find security in the midst of a violent society, feel comfort and healing in a life of sorrow and pain, discover purpose in a chaotic world, attain fulfillment beyond frustrations, and experience salvation amidst destruction.

Seventh-day Adventists speak of God's coming kingdom and the new earth. If we're not careful, however, we might be sharing the blessings of Christianity in terms of life hereafter and forget the life here and now. According to Jesus, the rewards of Christian living are many in this present life as well. In Luke 18:29, 30, Jesus made it plain

**Opportunities must be  
created, not awaited.**

that true Christians who have forsaken things most precious to the human heart—possessions and loved ones—for the sake of the kingdom, will find more of both, here on earth and in the world to come.

It is not a matter of choosing between life now or life hereafter. It is a matter of choosing to begin living now, with the genuine hope of continuing to live with ever-increasing satisfaction throughout eternity. Such blessed hope can be ours today.

May this hope empower us to share the good news of Christ and salvation.

### REACT

In sharing the good news, is there danger in having too much futurism in Adventism? Explain your answer.

\**Messages to Young People*, p. 219.

# Keeping Hope Alive

## EXPLORATION

2 Cor. 3:12

## CONCLUDE

The Greek word for hope, *elpis*, literally means “happy anticipation of good.” No sadness, no negativity, no hesitation, just confidence and joy that God will do what He says. It’s one of the three things that remains when the other temporal gifts pass away. Though not a fruit of the spirit, hope causes a Christian to bear those fruits and others in gratitude to the Savior for what He has done—and has promised to do. These others include a holy boldness and perseverance that help us press on when trying to communicate this hope to others.

## CONSIDER

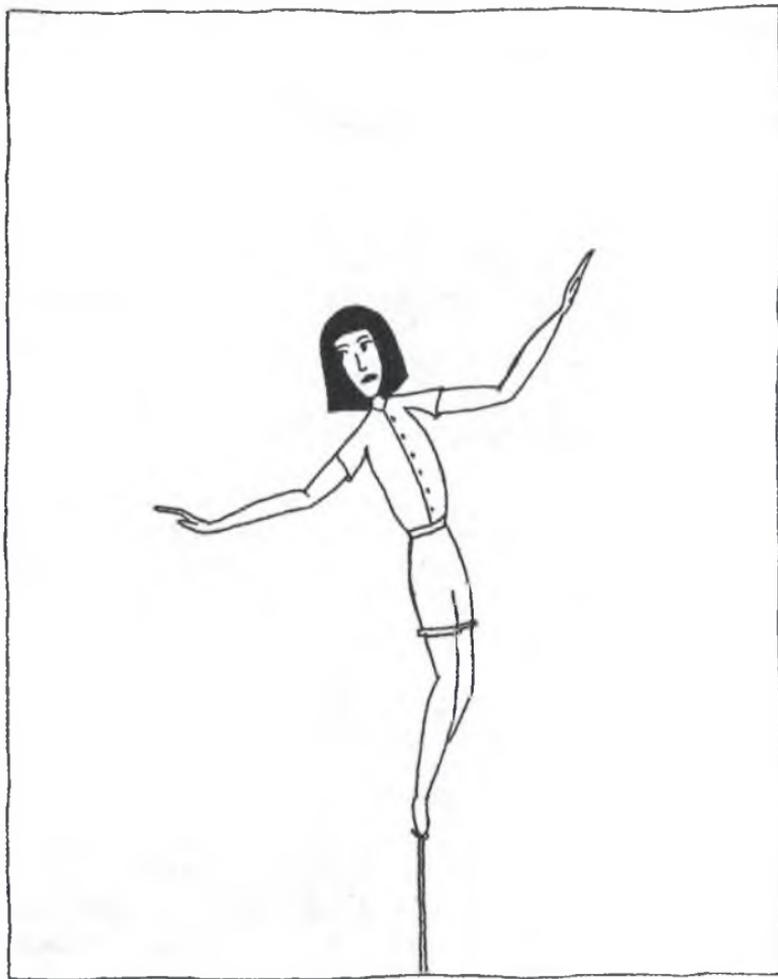
- Thinking about what Adventism would be without hope. In your mind, go through the usual program order of your Sabbath School and worship services. What would those be/look /sound like without hope? Without hope what could happen to these services? Now mentally go through your day, how different would it be without hope? Ask yourself, “What difference does having hope make in my life?”
- Singing about hope. A theme song for General Conference session, the business meeting of the church, is voted in every five years. The theme song for the past two General Conference sessions was “We Have This Hope.” Why do you think this one was chosen again? Find the words to the song in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 214. Read, sing, or play it.
- Creating a symbol of hope. Using found objects (clay, fabric, yarn, wood) make a representation of hope that you can leave where you or your family will often see it.
- Finding out how many times hope (and its derivatives: hoped, hoping, hopeful, hopeless) appear in the Bible. Which part of the Bible mentions it more, the Old or New Testament? Ask yourself, “What is the difference, if any, in the way hope is presented in the two sections?”
- Asking everyone you meet in the course of a day, “What gives you hope?” Tally the responses. What is the number-one reason for hope?
- Searching the natural world for hope. Take a walk in a park or the woods or sit in a garden. Ask yourself, “What plant/flower/tree, animal/insect/aquatic creature, heavenly body, or land form/object/natural phenomenon in nature most embodies hope for me?”

## CONNECT

*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 832–835.

*Seventh-day Adventists Are Hands of Hope.*

# Hope: too **Much** or not **Enough**



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“Rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet.1:13, NKJV).

# Hope in the Balance

## INTRODUCTION

Rom. 8:20-26

The word “balance” is quickly reaching favored status among Christians. Recently, we have been bombarded by new and exciting ways to balance the many and varied aspects of our lives. The result of this balance, I am told, is to achieve some level of harmony rarely known on this earth!

Though overdone at times, the concept of balance and/or moderation is not necessarily bad. In fact, it appears to be quite healthful and is rooted in and endorsed by Scripture. On the contrary, holding extreme views or living recklessly rarely proves beneficial in this life, and often is unhealthful. Needless to say, balancing how, where, and in whom we place our hope(s) should be an important consideration for the professed Christian.

Too much of a good thing? It can be argued that our faith and hope in the soon coming of Jesus should lead us to be radical or extreme. However, how does one maintain a balance between our hope of what is to come and the present? How do we continue to function as members of our respective societies, without either losing credibility or becoming too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good (if possible)? How do we prevent ourselves from burnout? Finding a balanced view of hope at times seems to be an elusive goal. We often either have too much or too little.

**How do we function as members of society without becoming too heavenly minded to be any earthly good?**

Stop reading this paragraph and proceed to the next when this scenario begins to sound familiar. New convert, full of zeal, ready to take on world, meets old convert who is less zealous, seemingly less passionate. New convert must quickly decide to become like old convert or . . . well, you know the rest. We should embrace new hope and knowing hope and refuse to be comfortable to have known hope or to have no hope.

Hope needs to last us a lifetime. How we meet the challenge to avoid an overemphasis of hope in our early Christian experience or a loss of vibrancy later is the central question we will address this week. As you study this week's lesson, examine your ratio of hope to reality and explore ways to cultivate a healthful balance between the two.

Though sounding strikingly similar, this original thought was not stolen from a bumper sticker.

Sunday  
November 10

## The Great Motivator

### LOGOS

Luke 24:13-25

Imagine that you've just walked seven miles of rocky, dusty terrain. It's been a long, tedious journey and you're glad to be home—a cool shower, a home-cooked meal, and a soft bed await you. But before you can kick off your dusty shoes, you discover that you have to hike back the seven miles! How would you feel? What kind of reasons would motivate you to gladly trek the road you just traveled?

The scriptural passage for this week focuses on one of the greatest short stories of hope. The setting: A westbound road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. The time: The end of the day, toward sunset. The characters: Two men and a stranger. The story: a simple, yet

**The Christian does not look back into the past.**

profound, chain of events. From this familiar story, there are lessons to be learned.

### **Walk into the sunrise, not the sunset (Luke 24:13-17).**

Having just witnessed the crucifixion of the "prophet" whom they hoped would bring deliverance from Roman bondage, these grief-stricken men are returning home depleted of hope for the future. Jesus meets them on the road. He greets them. Yet they do not recognize Him. Why? Probably because the dazzle of the setting sun (Emmaus was west of Jerusalem) blurred their vision. If the sunset had been behind them, perhaps they might have recognized Jesus. It is only with hope that you can move toward the sunrise, toward a new day. The Christian does not look back into the past, into the sunsets; the Christian looks to the future, to the dawn of each new day. The difference? Hope!

### **Make sense of the confusion (Luke 24:25-27).**

The story begins with faces twisted with grief, but ends with hearts burning with good news. Jesus walks the long rocky terrain with them. He provokes their thinking, explains their questionings, clears their doubts. Despite His shortage of time, Jesus walks with them, eats with them, stays with them. The same Jesus is there for us for as long as it takes to make sense of the confusion around us. Because of Jesus' company on the journey home, the men discovered the sequel to the mysterious weekend they had experienced in Jerusalem. The sequel was the fulfillment of prophecy, the fulfillment of the hope of the Messiah.

### **Share the joy.**

What motivated the men to hike back to Jerusalem? The discovery of hope!

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When they realized that their traveling Companion was the same Jesus who was crucified just three days earlier, they forgot about their tired feet, forgot that it was too late in the day to travel back to Jerusalem. Without hope, you experience the lethargy of depression. With hope, you are energized with a desire to share joy with others.

Hope creates a bond of fellowship. It is like the birth of true friendship. You can be casual friends with many, but when you share an experience and create a memory with someone, you are bonded for life. Hope is a great motivator. It can help you do things you would not otherwise do. It was hope that made the two men travel back to Jerusalem. What parts of your life do you want hope to take you back to? Consider two things you would like to see happen in your personal life and in the world Church. How can hope help these things happen? Imagine yourself in Old Testament times. How different would your life have been without the Cross?

### **REACT**

1. When was the last time you felt your heart burning within you (Luke 24:32) at the stirring of Christ's hope?
2. What are tangible ways to share our hope?
3. How is hope more than a feeling?
4. In what can we find hope beyond ourselves and our feelings?
5. Did biblical characters have an easier time hoping than we do? Why or why not?
6. What are some examples of biblical characters who struggled with events that could stifle their hope?
7. How healthy is your hope today?

Monday  
November 11

## Faith in *the* Hope

### TESTIMONY

1 Pet. 1:13

“Hope has been set before us, even the hope of eternal life. Nothing short of this blessing for us will satisfy our Redeemer, but it is our part to lay hold upon this hope by faith in Him who has promised. We may expect to suffer, for it is those who are partakers with Him in His sufferings who shall be partakers with Him in His

**All Scripture is clear to  
point to the Hope  
that is Jesus.**

glory. He has purchased forgiveness and immortality for the sinful, perishing souls of men, but it is our part to receive these gifts by faith. Believing in Him, we have this hope as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast.

We are to understand that we may confidently expect God’s favor not only in this world but in the heavenly world, since He paid such a price for our salvation. Faith in the atonement and intercession of Christ will keep us steadfast and immovable amid the temptations that press upon us in the church militant. Let us contemplate the glorious hope that is set before us, and by faith lay hold upon it.”\*

The balancing of hope rests not in monitoring how much is enough or how much you need, it’s discovering the Christ that gives us hope—not just Calvary, but the very life of Christ. As much as the Gospels give us a broad view of the life of Christ, all Scripture is clear to point to the Hope that is Jesus. This hope is what sustains us through our seemingly hopeless times—not because we want to go to heaven or live forever, but because we believe in Jesus. We have this faith that strengthens our “hope which burns within our hearts”: hope that Christ will return and faith that He will take us away from our times of seeming hopelessness.

Faith and hope are what helps us balance our lives.

### REACT

1. What practical (realistic) ways can help keep our hopes from dwindling?
2. If God offers hope, how do you accept it? Be specific.
3. How has hope brought balance to your life? How should it?
4. At what times in your life has your hope been especially vital?

\**That I May Know Him*, p. 79.

# Seven Miles From Despair to Hope

## EVIDENCE

Luke 24:13-35

Throughout high school, every time I tried a new sport, I would have a faint question in the back of my mind as to whether this might be the sport at which I might be a champion. It seemed that it would be just a matter of time until I found the sport or activity at which I would be a “natural.” I just had not found it yet. Some sporting attempts were more successful than others. However, there were usually—and especially on first attempts—mistakes, bruises, and a realization that I might have to practice. However, the next opportunity to try something new always brought similar vague hopes of instant stardom.

Feeling hope can be a fickle thing. We can begin a day—or a new sporting endeavor—with the sun shining and hope seemingly all around us; but by evening we might be tired, disappointed, and struggling to remain hopeful. However, hope can also work the other way: A day beginning without sunshine or hope can end in a glorious sunset.

This was the experience of Cleopas and another of Jesus’ followers one Sunday afternoon. Jesus had been crucified the previous Friday and, rather than being comforted and filled with hope, these two disciples were even more upset by the wild stories circulated about a possible resurrection. With these disappointments weighing on their hearts and minds and their hopes all but gone, they were walking home to Emmaus—a small town seven miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a walk that filled them with hope. It was not the exercise, the fresh air, the warm afternoon sun, or any of their surroundings—although all these may have distracted them from their confusion; the one thing that renewed their hope that afternoon was time spent with Jesus.

Though they recognized Him only at the end of their time together (Luke 24:31), they then recognized the influence He had been having on them for the entire afternoon (verse 32), sharing with them the Old Testament writings about Jesus Himself. Before revealing Himself to them, Jesus encouraged and guided the two disciples to hope beyond their feelings. It was a hope that had been with them throughout the disappointment, grief, and confusion of that weekend. As they now recognized Him, it was a hope they would carry with them for the rest of their lives.

**Some sporting attempts  
were more successful  
than others.**

Wednesday  
November 13

## Just One Hope

### HOW-TO

Ps. 71:5-14; Eph. 4:4-7; Phil. 4:12

The call of ministry brought me to my hometown, where most people didn't want me to stay. But I volunteered for a lay organization that promised support for their ministry.

Hope existed.

Last night an impersonal email terminated the project. All promises for my return home have been dissolved; no benefits, no severance.

Hopelessness redefined itself in stronger terms.

I was single when I started on this project. But now married, it's scary not knowing what we're going to do. My stipend hasn't been paid in the last several months. In the middle of a project that is going nowhere, my present condition seems hopelessly convoluted.

Should you hope when it seems hopeless to try? Have you ever hoped so much that exhaustion zaps your inner strength, dropping tears uselessly to the floor?

I was there last night wondering if I placed way too much hope on this ministry.

Is there a limit to hoping? If you mess with that limit, do you need serious counseling?

Here's what I do know:

1. There is just one hope: God. Everything else is an extension of His goodness. Hope comes from God, as all goodness does.

2. Hope sustains the individual, strengthens the Christian. We sing "We have this hope" because we believe *that* hope is there to remind us there is no end to

God's goodness. Even when humans forsake you, God will see you through (all the way to heaven). Balancing your good times with your bad may feel like a process of negation. But listing the times God has seen you through

strengthens hope for better days to materialize in His ways (in His goodness).

3. Cry your heart out. The good people in the Bible cried. They let loose their frustration in prayer and emptied their discouragement, allowing hope to fill that void. God may not part waters anymore, but He does fill up the emptiness—if you ask Him. Read the stories of Ruth, Elijah, Esther, Jeremiah, Jesus, Peter, Barnabas. See God leading them, bringing hope to their seemingly hopeless worlds.

Hope is the helium of the soul. In times when it seems hopeless, do good for someone else and you will experience the joy that comes from encouraging someone to hope. It will lift you higher than you hoped possible.

I know, because writing this article has me believing again.

**Hope is the helium  
of the soul.**

# Thinking About Hope

## OPINION

Deut. 6:5; Ps. 46:10; Col. 1:13, 14; 1 Pet. 1:3-9

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13, 14, NKJV).

The kingdom of the Son is a significant part of our hope. Yet for the average person with many responsibilities, full schedules, and countless goals to reach, when is there time to think about heaven?

When we were children, heaven was such a fun topic. The thought of seeing

### Where did all those childlike visions of heaven go?

Jesus and sitting on His knee always brought smiles to our little faces. We could never hear enough about the lion and the lamb, sliding down the neck of a giraffe, or flying like

a bird above the trees. Where did all those childlike visions of heaven go? When did the pictures fade and the smiles no longer appear?

As we grow older and our minds bulge with information, we start to focus more and more on our life on earth. Our work, our families, our friends, and our daily responsibilities slowly become greater and greater. We have to keep up with the growth and changes of our society, but how can we balance this life with our hope for an infinitely better life in heaven?

Part of the answer is found in the sermon Jesus gave in Matthew 6. He says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, . . . for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (verses 19-21, NIV).

Keeping God first is a complex and constant struggle. It cannot mean that we think 100 percent of God, 24 hours, 7 days a week. In order to keep our priorities straight, and our minds on God, we must give Him our attention: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5, NKJV).

And last, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10, NKJV). Be still in a world that never stops. Be still when everything crashes down on you. Be still and know that God is God.

## REACT

1. What comes to mind when you think of heaven?
2. What are some treasures you have on earth?
3. What is a "treasure in heaven"?

Friday  
November 15

# The Secret of Survival

## EXPLORATION

1 Pet.1:13

## CONCLUDE

Early in Christian experience, hope is abundant. As time goes by, however, detours of life temper hope and diminish the ratio of hope to reality. But hope means looking ahead to the sunrise rather than dwelling on the past. The Messiah provides a hope that replaces the lethargy of depression. Belief in Jesus sustains through seemingly hopeless times. The Bible says that though human feelings change, God never fails. Understanding this keeps life in perspective and sustains hope. Making sense of the confusion of life, hope is the secret of survival.

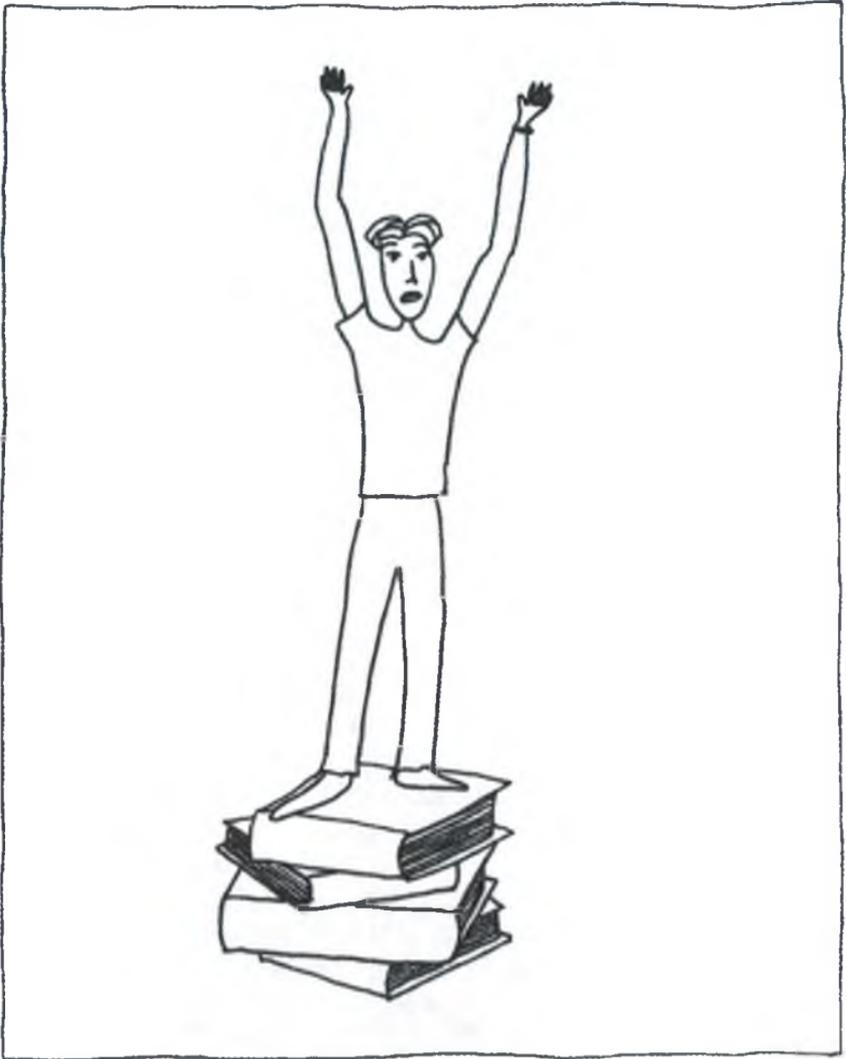
## CONSIDER

- Using a kaleidoscope to look at the beautiful patterns that form out of the broken glass. Reflect on how God takes the broken pieces of our lives, including broken promises, and makes a work of art.
- Making a banner to celebrate "Hope Is in the Sunrise." Collect beautiful fabric scraps, including a piece large enough to serve as the background, and decorative items such as glitter, ribbon, etc. Once you have a design, cut out the pieces and glue or sew them onto the background. Fasten a piece of ribbon to the top and hang the banner.
- Finding a way to encourage hope in a different person every day in the coming week.
- Experiencing a sunrise to note the freshness of the day and the quickening tempo of the awakening world. Write down ten observations for reflection and prayer.
- Making a chart of hope. First, collect a dozen messages of hope. Then create a symbol for each. Mount the messages and quotes on poster paper.
- Reading Luke 24:13-17. Walk around your neighborhood. As you pass each house, visualize that person and how they might come to know Jesus. Pray for them and move to the next house. Repeat for each home you pass. As you walk, consider whether you, like the two disciples, have failed to recognize the Lord as you go through your daily routine. Consider the people with whom you have daily conversations.

## CONNECT

C. Stephen Evans, *Despair: A Moment or a Way of Life? An Existential Quest for Hope*; Walter H. Capps, *The Future of Hope*; Roy Branson, editor, *Pilgrimage of Hope*; Glenn Tinder, *The Fabric of Hope*.

# A **Living** hope



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“In [God’s] great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet.1:3, NIV).

## The Search for Meaning

### INTRODUCTION

1 Pet. 1:3

**Logic led Tolstoy to conclude that life is merely a sexually transmitted terminal illness.**

Nineteenth-century Russian writer Leo Tolstoy recounts the ancient tale of a young prince who was allowed, for the first time in his life, to venture outside the palace walls to the world beyond. As he rode about in his carriage, he saw things he had never been allowed to see before: a toothless old man, a sick person tottering along the street, and a corpse. All at once, the young prince was confronted by the grim specters of old age, disease, and death. Devastated by the harshness of reality and his own mortality, he determined to find a way to be freed from the curse that is life, including the possibility of life after death. In the course of this quest for oblivion, the young prince became the Buddha.\*

Though Tolstoy did not believe in reincarnation, logic led him to the same conclusion: life is merely a sexually transmitted terminal illness. His reasoning indicated only one rational solution. Suicide.

Fortunately, Tolstoy didn't succumb to pure logic. He discovered that the unquestioning Christian faith of the Russian peasantry was a vaccine against the despair that had so nearly overwhelmed him. Their simple religion permeated every aspect of their existence. Tolstoy saw that, although their lives were squalid, they endured difficulties with confidence and even joy.

While Tolstoy was irresistibly attracted to the moral teachings of the peasant carpenter from Roman times, he could not logically comprehend His conception, miracles, or resurrection. Although Tolstoy had denounced academia as the way to find meaning, he continued to cling to his intellect. Perhaps he never really understood Jesus' paradox that a person must be born again; that self must die with Christ so that His resurrection can give new life (John 3:3; Rom. 6:4).

To have a living hope a line must be crossed, a leap of faith needs to be made. There is no "safe" way to come to God. It is a faltering, hobbled hope that rests on a tower of human logic, reaching for the sky. A living hope that transcends human reason and embraces the miraculous exists only in the invisible arms of God.

\*Leo Tolstoy, *My Confession* (London: Fount Classics, 1995).

# Dead or Alive

## EVIDENCE

1 Cor. 15:1-26, 50-57; 1 Pet. 1:3-21

Persecution of the Christians had begun, and Paul—followed by Peter—exhorted recently baptized believers to *hang on!* With a Jewish revolt looming, Paul, who had visited Corinth at least three times and written at least four (and possibly six) letters,<sup>1</sup> prophetically comforts potential martyrs. Threatened with extinction, converted Jews and Gentiles who embraced the Messiah Jesus Christ, felt afraid. Messianic hope, once kindled with daily optimism as new believers were baptized, were now experiencing punishing, and often times, grueling attacks. In A.D. 55, the Corinthians no longer understood a basic doctrine, resurrection of the dead. Hopelessness had permeated their ranks, and confusion had set in. By the time Peter's letter was written to believers in Asia Minor in A.D. 64, he was having to reassure them "even angels long to look into these things" (1 Pet. 1:12, NIV). From hope to hopelessness!

Existentialist thinking is not new. "What is the meaning of life?" has been a question floating around before Solomon ever penned these words: "Meaningless! Meaningless! . . . Everything is meaningless" (Eccles. 1:2, NIV). Everyone, when faced with mortality, questions whether his or her life must end. Christians scattered around the world today reflect the concerns shared by northwest Asia Minor over 1,900 years ago: Will I live again? Transcendental thinking, as taught in the Middle Eastern and Oriental religions, places high value on achieving a blissful state of being, developing a oneness with God. Within our soul lies a void unfulfilled until it becomes immortal. "God has given life to man, in order that through a knowledge of the Word and by practicing its principles, the human agent may become one with God, obedient to the divine will."<sup>2</sup>

**Existentialist thinking  
is not new.**

In contrast to the individual's experience of becoming enlightened, Christianity promises transformation for all who allow themselves to die, be resurrected via the substitution of Calvary, and become imperishable "in a flash!" (1 Cor. 15:52, NIV). God's Word reassures us that we exist for holiness. Just think, everlasting life! Life where the one constant will be hope fulfilled!

1. James B. Pritchard and L. Michael White, eds., *The Harper Collins Concise Atlas of the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), p. 126.

2. Ralph Larson, *Tell of His Power* (The Cherrystone Press, 1988), p. 181.

Monday  
November 18

## It Changes Everything

**LOGOS**

1 Pet. 1:3-21

### The Heart of the Matter

Years ago an American football coach was quoted as saying, "Winning isn't the most important thing. It's the only thing." This could also be said about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Resurrection is not just the most important thing in a long list of Christian doctrines. It is the heart of Christianity; without this heart, Christianity becomes just another religion, another system of ritual and ethics. A body, though impaired, can live without hands and toes, even hands, feet, arms, and legs—but it cannot exist without a heart. Apart from the Resurrection, Christianity's unique claim to follow a living and eternal founder dies. Jesus claimed that He would die and come back to life. If that didn't happen, everything else that He said and stood for falls on its face.

### The Matter of the Heart

The theme of Peter's first chapter is that this heart of the gospel is the foundation for God's power to transform the human heart. Though the Resurrection is the basis for the hope that we can live eternally, the gospel promises much more. The Resurrection anchors the promise that we can be changed. It assures us that the human heart, plagued by myriad weaknesses, sometimes fickle in loyalty, prone to selfishness and insensitivity, is not beyond hope.

Paul declared, "Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that

**The Resurrection anchors  
the promise that we can  
be changed.**

please the Spirit. If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace. . . . The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised

Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you" (Rom. 8:5, 6, 11, NLT).

Peter agrees. He says, in our theme passage, that God has provided an inheritance. It is not something that we have built or earned, but it is something that we are responsible for preserving. Though the heart is by nature deceitful and wicked, we have an inheritance that God provides which overrides our natural tendencies and inclinations. Even as we are faced with trials we can live in peace because we trust in a God who has already overcome the ultimate enemy which is death.

When David killed Goliath, the Philistine army broke and ran. They reasoned

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that if David could defeat their giant leader, they had no hope to stand up against him and the Israelite army. Jesus defeated the big enemy and Satan's forces tremble in fear when we claim the power of Christ over the most forceful temptation. The Resurrection makes the miracle of heart transformation and Christlike character a real possibility.

## The Heart of a Friend

It is quite likely that Peter initially penned these words as a recollection of a short sermon delivered at the baptism of some first-century converts. Christians were not popular then and becoming a Christian, in some circumstances, could lead to death. Not many years after Peter wrote these words, he was himself crucified because he refused to compromise his faith. In this context he was preparing these early believers for what would likely lie ahead for many of them.

For Peter, suffering was not merely a possibility for the Christian—it was a virtual certainty. In this chapter he opens up his heart to his new friends in Christ, offering them the hope of eternal life and God's transforming grace. Both of these things are rooted in the resurrection of Jesus.

Without the power of the Resurrection, any call to holy living or ethical conduct would have to be secured by human willpower and unusually determined effort. Humanity's record of self-destruction demonstrates that willpower and effort can never bring about the necessary transformation. Yet the New Testament's call to holy living is not rooted in human ability but in the matchless power of the Resurrection. It is the promise of change now. It is the promise of life forever.

"Obey God because you are his children" (1 Pet. 1:14, NLT). The motivation for living a changed life is the fact that we are God's children, His heirs. The inheritance *belongs* to the children. Our inheritance is a life that is eternal *and* transformed. Why would we want to live any other way?

## REACT

1. How does my behavior reflect (or not reflect) my royal, *heavenly* ancestry?
2. What is the role of trial and temptation in developing character?
3. If Christ's character is the only one acceptable for heaven, how can any of us expect to be there?
4. What is the difference between the values society places on human life and the values Christ placed on human life? Where does the Church fit in?
5. If the Resurrection is the foundation for God's power to transform the human heart, is what I know of it enough for my salvation?
6. Does my understanding of the Resurrection help me to cope with the untimely death of the innocent through diseases like cancer?
7. How would you explain the meaning of the Resurrection to someone who does not understand the Bible?

Tuesday  
November 19

## 10.0 on the Richter Scale

### TESTIMONY

John 11:25

**“The angel . . . rolled away the stone as though it had been a pebble.”**

“Before anyone had reached the sepulcher, there was a great earthquake. The mightiest angel from heaven, he who held the position from which Satan fell, received his commission from the Father, and clothed with the panoply of heaven, he parted the darkness from his track. His face was like the lightning, and his garments white as snow. As soon as his feet touched the ground it quaked beneath his tread. The Roman guard were keeping their weary watch when this wonderful scene took place, and they were enabled to

endure the sight, for they had a message to bear as witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. The angel approached the grave, rolled away the stone as though it had been a pebble, and sat upon it. The light of heaven encircled the tomb, and the whole heaven was lighted by the glory of the angels. Then his voice was heard, ‘Thy Father calls Thee; come forth.’”<sup>1</sup>

“‘I am the resurrection, and the life’ (John 11:25). He who had said, ‘I lay down my life, that I might take it again’ (John 10:17), came forth from the grave to life that was in Himself. Humanity died; divinity did not die. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death. He declares that He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will.”<sup>2</sup>

“When the Life-giver rose from the dead a triumphant conqueror, and made himself known unto his disciples, he was of the same size as before his crucifixion. There were no special marks which would at once cause the men of Emmaus to know that he was the Son of God. They did not know him until he told them who he was.”<sup>3</sup>

### REACT

1. If the Roman guards witnessed the resurrection of Jesus, why did they do everything in their power to say that Jesus’ body had been stolen and did not rise from the dead?
2. What is the significance, if any, that Jesus’ shroud had been folded?
3. Do the tears that normally accompany the death of a loved one indicate that we do not believe in John 11:25? If not, why the tears?

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1110.

2. *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 301.

3. *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4-A, p. 119.

# How to Prepare for Eternity

## HOW-TO

1 Cor. 13:8-10; 15:50

Part of being a Christian means believing that we are going to live forever. This week, we've talked about the hope the Resurrection offers us, because through Christ, even the worst trials and suffering of this world will one day pass away. Jesus proved that everything He said was true when He died and rose again.

But though the pain of this world will one day be a distant memory, for us who are living, the world is a very real place. We have work to do, bills to pay, and families to care for. We cannot forget about the present.

A healthful lifestyle, for example, is an important part of the Christian message. When we trust in God's original plan for our lives, we feel better and live better. Yet the Bible teaches that even those who are alive at Christ's return will not be taken up to heaven with the same bodies they had on earth. Why then, do we take care of a body that will one day pass away?

It is for the same reason that we do anything in life: to build character. We are learning now how to behave for eternity. "A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next."\*

Here are a few steps to help you prepare for eternity:

**1. Make a list of some things you will not take with you.** Looking around you, what do you see that will be left behind when Christ returns? Your car, your house, your furniture, and even your appearance are just a few examples. First Corinthians 13:8-10 says that even knowledge and prophecies will fade away.

**2. Now make a list of the things you will take with you.** Character has already been mentioned as the one treasure that will remain with us forever. The apostle Paul mentions three aspects of character in his writings to the Corinthians: faith, hope, and love. Can you think of other aspects of character that have eternal significance?

**3. Examine yourself.** When you look at the above lists, where are your priorities in light of what Jesus says in Luke 12:34?

**4. Prioritize.** If you were to compile the two lists, what would come first on your list? Second? Third? What can you do to live your life in such a way as to make this a reality? Resolve to focus on what really matters, remembering that Christ is the only person whose character is perfect enough to last forever.

The pain of this world will  
one day be a distant  
memory.

\*Christ's Object Lessons, p. 332.

Thursday  
November 21

## Hope—*The Movie*

### OPINION

1 Pet. 1:3

Many people like to watch movies. I enjoy watching films that have comedy in them. In many of the ones I have seen, the main character has a mission or gets caught up in something that he never thought of doing or did not want to get involved with. He ends up getting hurt, but in the end the tables turn and he wins.

From 4 B.C. until A.D. 31 a movie was being made. There were no props, stuntmen, or even special effects. Everything was real and there were no cuts, no editing. Jesus, the main character, had a mission. His mission was to save the human race from eternal death. He was not merely concerned with their life in the hereafter, but with the quality of life they would enjoy here and now.

He was kind and compassionate so He helped many people to see, hear, talk, walk, and live a normal life. He wanted the people to know the truth and to have the hope of living forever if they would only trust and follow Him. But for all of Jesus' kindness, the human

**From 4 B.C. until A.D. 31  
a movie was being made.**

race rejected Him and nailed Him to a cross. Yet on the third day—just as He promised—He rose from the dead. His resurrection is our hope for life after death and a really full life while living!

You can see this remarkable heartbreaking movie from four viewpoints. It does not matter if you see it through the camera of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. You will see the power that came from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus let go of His glory and power to come down to earth and become one of us. Then He died so that we could be forgiven of all our sins and be saved. Now that gives us hope for eternal life. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead alone makes that hope a living hope.

### REACT

1. Try to imagine the whole story from beginning to end. What is the central picture that comes to mind?
2. How does the plan of salvation create hope?
3. How can you know with certainty that you have that hope?
4. Basing hope on secondhand knowledge was difficult for the first-century converts. Is it any different for you today? Explain your answer.
5. Peter expresses hope as the fulfillment of “receiving the goal of your faith” (1 Pet. 1:9, NIV). What would you classify as your goal?

# Anchor of the Soul

## EXPLORATION

Heb. 6:18, 19

## CONCLUDE

Jesus Christ took our place. He suffered separation from His Father so we wouldn't have to. He defeated the devil and allows us to claim His victory. Because of His resurrection, we have hope that we, too, will be resurrected and have life eternal.

Hope will be an anchor to sustain us in our trials. This hope does not come about through a casual belief in God. Living hope is taking God's Word so seriously that it actually becomes real enough to stake your life on its precepts and promises. It takes a leap of faith, but the results are transforming.

## CONSIDER

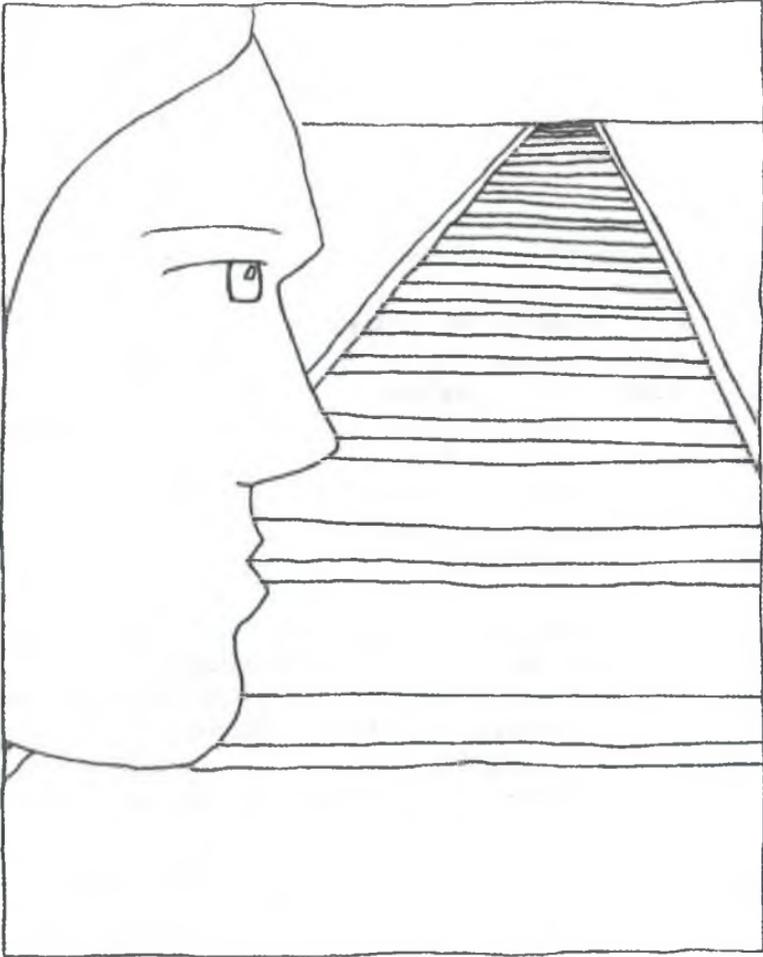
- Spending a quiet hour reflecting on how God's promises have come to pass in your life.
- Singing and memorizing the words to a hymn written about hope.
- Searching the newspapers for a person who is experiencing a severe trial—like the tragic loss of a loved one, contraction of an incurable disease, or the loss of home and possessions through fire or flood. Write the person a note of encouragement and send a Bible verse that offers hope.
- Reading Emily Dickinson's poem " 'Hope' is the thing with feathers" in a poetry anthology or at <http://www.americanpoems.com/poets/emilydickinson>. Consider whether this poem enriches or limits your concept of hope.
- Writing an article on the impact of Christ's resurrection on your life.
- Researching to find out how many soldiers guarded the tomb of Christ and then calculate how many people they could have told about the Resurrection on the way back to the city if they had each recounted the story to at least three people who in turn told the story to three people.
- Examining your priorities this week and see how they center on building character.

## CONNECT

*The Desire of Ages*, chaps. 78–81; *The Great Controversy*, chap. 40.

Kim Allan Johnson, *The Gift*; Lonnie Melashenko and John Thomas McLarty, *Stand at the Cross and Be Changed*.

# Hope and “The Delay”: part one



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“Keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour” (Matt. 25:13, NIV).

# The Parable of the Train Tracks

## INTRODUCTION

Ezek. 33:7

Suppose the eye could say to the body, "Let us walk down these train tracks. The way is clear. Not a train is in sight." So the body starts down the tracks. Then the ear says, "I hear a whistle coming from the other direction."

The eye argues, "But nothing is on the track as far as I can see. Let's keep on walking." The body listens only to the eye and keeps on walking.

Soon the ear says, "That whistle is getting louder and closer!"

Then the feet add, "I feel the rumbling motion of a train coming. We'd better get our body off these tracks!"

If this were your body, what would you do?

Would you run and tell others on the path that the train is coming?

Would you trust your eye and keep on walking since your eyes have never let you down before?

Symbolically the church is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27), and it functions best when all members are able to share what they sense God wants the church to be and do.

As a member of the body of Christ, is there fervency in your witnessing steps, is there passion in your voice, is there a fire in your bosom, bursting to gush forth?

**"We'd better get our body  
off these tracks!"**

If you answered yes, then you have the blessed hope. What will you do with it? As a church, we have a biblical obligation that far exceeds the commission simply to watch and wait.

"It is true that time has continued longer than we expected in the early days of this message. Our Savior did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the Word of the Lord failed? Never! God has committed to His people a work to be accomplished on earth."\* May we, the body of Christ, understand the urgency of these times, and sustain hope and commitment.

In conjunction with one of the biblical parables, this week's lesson will determine and emphasize the significance of the Christian's literal duty during this period of "delay" in the event of the Advent.

\**Evangelism*, p. 695.

Sunday  
November 24

## Hope in Time

### LOGOS

Matt. 25:1-13

We have this hope: Christ died for our sins and He is coming back. Yet in a time when it seems that “everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation” (2 Pet. 3:4, NIV), how do we hold on to that hope? Jesus helps us understand the relationship between this delay and our hope. The parable of the ten virgins reveals much about our current situation.

### Not Knowing When: Being Prepared

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour” (Matt. 25:13, NIV). Just previous to His parable of the virgins, Jesus twice warned that no one knows when His return will be, save for the Father (Matt. 24:36, 42). Jesus

**It's what we do in the interim that makes all the difference.**

closes the parable with the same admonition. It is His fervent desire that we be ready for His coming. The virgins all hoped for the bridegroom's soon appearance, but when it was delayed, five were found unprepared.

Their lamps lacked the vital oil that provided light. When it came time to join the bridal party, they had to go in search of merchants to buy oil. The unexpected delay caught them unawares. They did not know when the bridegroom would come. Their only assurance was that he was coming. Their assumption of a quick arrival cost them entrance to the banquet.

Jesus wants us to be ready when He comes again. He gives us these stories that we might heed their lessons. Don't be fooled. There will come a time when the door closes. Prepare for that day so when the call goes forth that the bridegroom approaches, you look at your lamp and find an ample supply of the Holy Spirit to fuel your flame.

It's what we do in the interim that makes all the difference.

### While We Wait: Sharing the Hope

“Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you” (Isa. 60:1, NKJV). Even while waiting, the virgins' lamps shone. Their light was not extinguished merely because of the bridegroom's delay. It was as midnight approached, when it was darkest, that the lamps were most needed. Much like our own time, as darkness seems to overwhelm, it is imperative that our light shines while we wait.

“At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the

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darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth.”<sup>1</sup>

The greatest hypocrisy comes from living as if it were 9:30 when you know it is near midnight. To hope for the fulfillment while acting as if you did not truly expect it reveals a shortage of oil. Hope minus the expectation of fulfillment equals mere desire. And while desire may denote strength of feeling and strong intentions, even the best intentions can fall to the floor, never activated.

The hope we have is to be mobile. “You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:14, 16, NKJV). “There are many from whom hope has departed. Bring back the sunshine to them.”<sup>2</sup>

“In the parable the wise virgins had oil in their vessels with their lamps. Their light burned with undimmed flame through the night of watching. It helped to swell the illumination for the bridegroom’s honor. Shining out in the darkness, it helped to illuminate the way to the home of the bridegroom, to the marriage feast.”<sup>3</sup> There is no better use of time than to share the hope we have in Christ.

## Buying Time

Jesus wants us to act now, as He says, “I counsel you to buy from me” (Rev. 3:18, NIV). Now is the time to seek the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The call is open now. “Come! Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Rev. 22:17, NIV). Please, help yourself to it. Only you can.

“Character is not transferable. No man can believe for another. No man can receive the Spirit for another. No man can impart to another the character which is the fruit of the Spirit’s working.”<sup>4</sup>

“‘I will come back,’” Jesus says in John 14:3 (NIV). He’s coming back. Expect Him to fulfill His words, especially while we wait. That’s living the hope.

## REACT

1. What does the hope of Christ’s return mean to you in today’s world? Be specific.
2. How can you watch and remain faithful to that hope?
3. Jeremiah 48:10 says, “A curse on him who keeps his sword from bloodshed!” (NIV). Numerous other texts in the Bible speak of the Christian life in militant terms. To what extent are you actively involved in (spiritual) battles right now?

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1. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 415.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 418.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 414.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 411.

## Hope and "The Delay": Part One

### TESTIMONY

Matt. 25:1-12

Hope is one attribute that clearly describes Adventism. Though many professed Christians wait for the Second Coming, only those whose hopes are based on the solid Rock will seemingly stand throughout the delay and disappointment.

In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus illustrates the experience of the Adventist people. Two classes represent the waiting people in the end time: the five wise

**"My hope in the coming of Christ is as strong as ever."**

virgins and the five foolish virgins. " 'The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps' " (Matt. 25:4, NKJV). These are those who at the end will be received by the Bridegroom. "In

the fear of God they had studied the Scriptures to learn the truth, and had earnestly sought for purity of heart and life. These had a personal experience, a faith in God and in his Word, which could not be overthrown by disappointment and delay."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, " 'Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them' " (verse 3, NKJV). They are those who "had gone forth to meet the Lord, full of hope in the prospect of immediate reward; but they were not prepared for delay and disappointment."<sup>2</sup> And so here we see the difference in the preparation they made. " 'While the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept' " (verse 5, NKJV). "By the tarrying of the bridegroom is represented the passing of the time when the Lord was expected, the disappointment, and the seeming delay. In this time of uncertainty, the interest of the superficial and half-hearted soon began to waver, and their efforts to relax; but those whose faith was based on a personal knowledge of the Bible had a rock beneath their feet, which the waves of disappointment could not wash away."<sup>3</sup>

After 1844 William Miller said that "the coming of Christ is as strong as ever."<sup>4</sup> What a great inspiration for us today!

### REACT

1. How can you make the waiting time a good opportunity to witness for Christ? Be specific.
2. How can you explain the delay to a nonbeliever?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 394.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, p. 407.

# Self-Centered Hope or Deep-Down Ache?

## EVIDENCE

1 Cor. 3:10-15

Work, for the night is coming,  
When man's work is done.  
Give every flying minute  
Something to keep in store;  
Work, for the night is coming,  
When man works no more.<sup>1</sup>

We have this hope. Does it burn within our hearts? Is it a self-centered hope for our own rescue from pain and trouble, or a deep-down ache to share with others so that they, too, can have hope and share with others, so then they . . . and so on, in an exponential growth curve. That is how the message can spread to billions of people in a short time.

It's a bit like a referral marketing business plan. You, one person, have a message. You share with six, now seven have it. Those six share with four, we're at 31. Those four share with two, and we're at 49. Or you can keep it to yourself and nobody gets it. Even what you have will be taken away (Matt. 25:29).

On the other hand, look at the difference one person can make. Who knows what the actual numbers will look like because you chose to make a difference in the world? Look at what you can do (1 Cor. 3:10-15). But you have to get beyond your daily routine of making a living and getting by.

"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:7, 8, NIV).

Hope has been woven throughout all creation,  
An anchor that holds through the waves  
Hope is the helmet of each noble soldier.  
For only the warrior who hopes can be brave.  
Hope you in the Lord  
And renew your strength  
Soar you up on eagles' wings  
Tirelessly run the long race that's set before you  
Your life's a song the Father sings.<sup>2</sup>

We are in a calm before the storm hits. The sun is shining. It's time to make hay!

1. Anna L. Coghill, "Work, for the Night Is Coming," *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, No. 375.

2. Michael Card, *Hope*, Sparrow SPD1421, 1994, compact disk.

Wednesday  
November 27

## The Benefits of Waiting

### HOW-TO

Rom. 8:24, 25

God has set His clock according to His purposes and plan. And when the determined time comes, the foretold event is sure to be fulfilled. But often from the human standpoint when the promised happening doesn't occur as expected, we are perplexed and our hope is in question. Sometimes, we may call this "the delay," although from God's standpoint the time set by Him hasn't arrived yet. Even in the experience of the ten virgins, the groom comes according to the time he decided to come, but the bridal party has to wait longer than their expectation. The truth is that we do not know the time set by God!

Hope involves waiting. Our hope is rather tested when we need to wait. Hope should be resting on faith in a person rather than time. If hope is focused on time

**Hope involves waiting.**

rather than the event, our hope can be shattered when the expected time passes without fulfillment. The event—the Second Coming of Christ—is sure to take place. The

groom is surely coming. The timing is left to God. We need to be ready any time and always. We might even die before His coming, but we need to die fully prepared to meet Him when He comes. We are admonished to wait patiently in hope until the day comes. We are to:

1. Trust in God and await with hope the Lord's coming. We should never doubt or go astray.
2. Prepare ourselves during the waiting time so that we will not be taken by surprise when the Lord comes.
3. Utilize the time to prepare others for the great day of the Lord's return.
4. Realize that the Lord's coming is an event according to God's plan and that God decides when the Lord should return.
5. Understand that the Lord is going to save only those who are ready. Therefore we should be watchful and patient.

### REACT

1. What is the link between hope and faith?
2. Why would the Lord come as a thief?
3. What does it mean to be prepared for the coming of Jesus? Is there a danger of mentally preparing only for an imminent return of Christ?
4. The five wise virgins did say no to the foolish ones who needed help. How do you decide when it is appropriate to refuse a genuine request for help from a colleague or friend?

# He Is Coming!

## OPINION

Matt. 25:13

I have asked some of my friends their opinion: "Is there any relationship between our hope, that Christ is coming soon, and the fact that His coming seems to be delayed?"

Their short and immediate answers were alike: His coming is not delayed. He is not late, He just patiently waits for those who are not saved yet.

Thinking about the fact that Jesus, our Friend, is coming back is not only a hope, but rather a conviction. Just think about all the promises that are fulfilled! And there are even more prophesies about this one. He promised to come back, and there was never any doubt about it. There are no conditions for this promise; He *is* coming.

Though we don't know the exact date, we do have a *date!* The parable of the ten virgins is about the certainty of Christ's coming, and the fact that we have to be prepared. Staying awake is not enough; we have to live according to our belief. If we believe that He is late to save those who are yet lost, then we have to know that we are the ones who have to raise that lamp high, to show

the way to the open doors of heaven. Those who don't have enough oil will not only lose the people they are working for, but they will also lose their goal.

The doors are open. Jesus is waiting, and He is coming back! "Stay awake and be prepared, because you do not know the day or hour of my return" (Matt. 25:13, NLT). We are living in the days of the last hours. Some might even say that these are in fact the last minutes. The shout is declared: Jesus is coming! It is the last chance to show the way to the doors. I would rather the doors of heaven close on my heels than before my nose.

The doors are open. Jesus is waiting, and He is coming back! "Stay awake and be prepared, because you do not know the day or hour of my return" (Matt. 25:13, NLT). We are living in the days of the last hours. Some might even say that these are in fact the last minutes. The shout is declared: Jesus is coming! It is the last chance to show the way to the doors. I would rather the doors of heaven close on my heels than before my nose.

**I would rather the doors of  
heaven close on my heels  
than before my nose.**

## REACT

1. Where can you buy oil? What does this refer to?
2. What are you using your lamp for?
3. Since 1844 it has often been said that Jesus is coming soon. What did "soon" mean to those who died in 1850? What does "soon" mean to you?
4. What is the difference between the hope that Jesus will return and the conviction that Jesus will return? What does knowledge have to do with either of them?
5. How sure are you that Jesus will return? What is the basis of your conviction or of your uncertainty?

Friday  
November 29

# We Know He Will Show Up!

## EXPLORATION

Rev. 22:12

### CONCLUDE

Waiting. Nothing is more frustrating than waiting for someone who never shows up. For many, Jesus' promise to return to earth and save His people seems like little more than a fable. Many have lost hope. Yet, God sent us a special message through His servant John the revelator. He promised to come again and He left little doubt as to the time frame—quickly. Sadly, for many His coming will be too soon. But God also sent another message to John: "I am bringing with Me a special reward to give to every person according to his or her work on earth." Our wait for Jesus is a unique opportunity to work for Him.

### CONSIDER

- Asking a few friends the following question: "What one activity would you like Jesus to find you doing when He returns?"
- Ranking the following activities in terms of their importance as you prepare for the Second Coming: volunteering in your community, watching TV, prayer, Bible study, hanging out, going on vacation, going to school, witnessing, getting married, making new friends.
- Keeping a journal of the time spent doing activities such as eating, sleeping, going to school, working, talking on the telephone, etc. Ask yourself: Am I preparing for the second coming of Christ?
- Developing a dramatic presentation focusing on how to prepare for the soon return of Jesus Christ.
- Reading Matthew 24 for a picture of the world just before Christ returns.
- Creating a PowerPoint presentation that depicts the hope of the Second Coming. Share the presentation with your Sabbath School class.
- Planning a trip to a national park. Look for signs of the decay brought on by sin, and try to imagine what the new heaven and earth will look like.

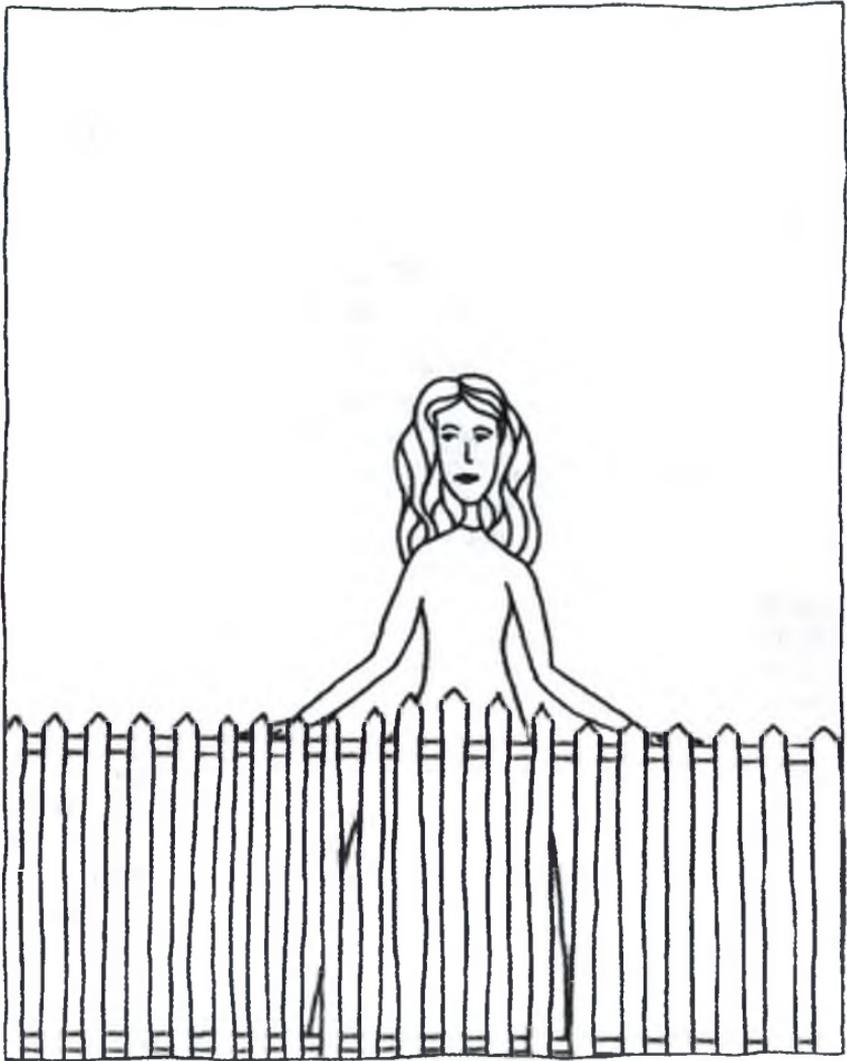
### CONNECT

Ezekiel 3.

*Gospel Workers*, pp. 20–30.

Arnold Wallenkampf, *The Apparent Delay*, chaps. 7–9; Stephen H. Travis, *I Believe in the Second Coming of Jesus*, chap. 7.

# Hope and “The Delay”: part two



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“Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Rom. 5:5, NIV).

## My Beloved Will Return for Me

### INTRODUCTION

Deut. 4:9; John 14:2-4; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9; 2 Pet. 3:3-15

The young maiden's face glowed with excitement. Her time had come and now she was betrothed to her beloved. She thought about the betrothal ceremony. Her family had gathered to witness the solemn yet happy occasion. There had been feasting and excitement, happiness and shouts of approval. There was the moment when her beloved offered the cup and she had to choose whether or not to accept it and drink its contents.

The maiden mulled that moment over in her mind. The cup had been cool to her touch as her fingers curled around its stem. Glinting in the sunlight, the silver chalice reflected the couple's faces as they reached across to each other—the groom's hand

**Her beloved offered the cup and she had to choose.**

reaching out to the maiden, beckoning her toward a new life. Accepting the cup, she put it to her lips and tasted what she had never sampled before.

Soon the celebration was over, but the work had just begun. Before the marriage would take place there were many arrangements to make. Her beloved had departed from her with the promise: "I will come back."

Months passed. She watched at the gate for her groom. Each day she made sure her clothes were in order. She was ready to depart at a moment's notice. The months turned to years and still the maiden waited. Her face was not as young, but the joy and anticipation were still evident in her countenance.

"Why don't you forget about him?" her friends urged. Others scoffed saying, "You wait for someone you made a promise to when you were young and inexperienced. He's not kept his promise, so why should you?"

Listening to those around her, the maiden became more determined. She remembered her father's instruction from her youth. "Be careful and watch yourself closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen, or let them slip from your heart as long as you live." Her father promised her that even though her betrothed would go to prepare a home for them, he would return. "Never forget, daughter. He will come again. The promise is made and it is true. Make sure you are spotless at his arrival."

The maiden comforted herself with these thoughts. More years slipped by and her friends ridiculed her faithfulness. But she stood firm in her faith because she knew other maidens were waiting for their beloved to return to them in the same manner. And still the maiden waits at the gate as she anticipates her beloved's return.

# Microwave Mentality or Mindful Meditation?

## EVIDENCE

2 Pet. 3:3; Ps. 46:10

Today's society has a microwave mentality. We want everything now. Microwave ovens heat our food in minutes. The latest cars accelerate from 0 to 60 mph in seconds. Fast food restaurants are in. Buy a new computer and next year it's obsolete. You can fill up at the gas station without waiting for an attendant; just swipe your card. Young people are waiting less and less time before engaging in their first sexual encounter. Speed is desirable. Anything slow or delayed is inferior, out of date, or somehow defective.

This mentality sets the stage for doubt and lack of interest in the promise of Jesus' second coming. There are two groups within this mind set. Though different, both groups react to the same elements in their society, face the same dangers, and need the same remedies.

In the first group, a life of instant gratification breeds a self-centered attitude. The Bible says, "Scoffers will come, . . . following their own evil desires" (2 Pet. 3:3, NIV). Their lives center on evil desires or lust, things that feel good and that they can experience immediately. They scoff at Jesus' promise to return because it's been around so long. They choose to forget the evidence of long ago because they operate in the present, influenced only by things they can get in minutes, not millennia.

The second group responds to this fast-paced life in the same way the biblical character Martha did. They live a life of hurry, always attending to the urgent, desperately trying to keep up with the world. This robs them of the ability to meditate and concentrate long enough to understand God's Word and hear His voice. Although they may know and believe Jesus' promise intellectually, their fast-paced lifestyle doesn't allow them to experience God and develop a relationship with Him. And without a passionate relationship with Him, what's the reason for even caring if He'll return? Humans look forward to a reunion only with those they know and love, not strangers or mere acquaintances.

Is there a remedy? Can a society programmed for immediacy cling to a 2,000-year-old promise? The Creator whispers, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10, NIV). Try quietness, solitude, and unhurried devotions. Though these defy our hectic schedules, they dispel selfishness, give us that experiential knowledge of God, and place a longing in our hearts for His coming that will never dim.

**Can a society programmed  
for immediacy cling to a  
2000-year-old promise?**

Monday  
December 2

## A Canticle of Hope

### LOGOS

Matt. 24:36-44; 2 Pet. 3:3-15

#### **Scoffers and Skeptics (2 Pet. 3:3-7)**

Self-assured. Self-confident. Self-contained. Self-motivated. Self-taught. Self-sufficient. Peter saw people brimming with the confidence of their own intelligence and reason. They would draw their own conclusions from the pages of history and prophesy their own futures.

Entrusting themselves to reason, they would lead themselves into a wilderness empty of hope. Inconvenient facts would be discarded because they do not fit the hypothetical framework of knowledge. Initial conclusions spawning new generations of ideas would be added to what is already known. Big bang. Survival of the fittest. Plausible deniability. Alternative lifestyles. And from generation to generation, "all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!" (2 Pet. 3:4, NRSV).

Today's culture has all but suppressed knowledge of a world created from the void and a world unmade by floods of water. We are a community that declines to

**We are a society that discounts the reality of impending judgment.**

acknowledge being formed in the image of our Maker. We are a society that discounts the reality of impending judgment. Yet in this we are little different from those who failed to note or care about the arrival of a baby

in the Bethlehem manger. From the rhythm of daily routine, from the context of contemporary culture, our question becomes: "Where is the promise of His coming?"

#### **Considering All the Evidence (Matt. 24:36-44; 2 Pet. 3:8-10)**

Peter reminds us that our worldview is significantly different from God's view, that our timeline is not the same as His. In His mercy, the Lord stretches out time to give us the opportunity to return to Him. And for the Eternal One, such an expanse of time is but the blink of an eye. Peter points us to Matthew's gospel, in which Jesus issued a call for watchfulness and compared the coming of the Son of man to the arrival of a thief. Once again the past presents itself as the prologue to our present condition.

Noah labored for 120 years preparing for pending judgment. The entire human condition watched, unmoved by repeated calls to repentance. Little did they understand that time was stretched out to give them the opportunity to accept a message. For the people of Noah's day, "all things continue[d] as they were from the beginning of creation" (2 Pet. 3:4, NKJV). They could see no reason to accept Noah's assertion that change was about to happen. "People didn't realize what was going

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to happen until the Flood came and swept them all away' ” (Matt. 24:39, NLT).  
“When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day' ” (verse 37, NLT).

## **Drawing Conclusions (2 Pet. 3:11-15)**

Peter calls us to action, placing before us the prospect of impending judgment. If we accept this message, if we believe that Jesus will return, then how should that be reflected in our attitudes, in our thoughts, and in our lives? There must be a discernable difference, and we must be anchored in our Savior; otherwise, the tide of today's culture will sweep us out to sea.

In his book, *A Canticle of Leibowitz*, Walter M. Miller, Jr., paints a dark and foreboding word picture of the insipid despair that arises from human wisdom. His story suggests a beacon of hope arising from a faith in something external, something beyond the daily routine—faith in a different tomorrow, faith that past glory will once again be restored.

Peter also points us to the future hope, warning us to resist the culture that denies that future. “In accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation” (2 Pet. 3:13, 15, NRSV).

## **REACT**

1. Is Peter's warning directed primarily at the skeptic, or is he addressing the believing workaholic? Explain your answer.
2. What circumstances do I allow to distract my thoughts from a present Advent hope?
3. What is my responsibility to those for whom a daily routine has diminished their hope?
4. What roles do passion and reason play in a Christian's life?
5. After using logic to determine truth, is the final decision to act an emotional one? Explain your answer.
6. Did God create a fully mature universe? Which is more mature—a tree or a seed, a single cell or an electromagnetic field? Explain your answer.
7. If God caused a worldwide flood, did that override the freewill of humanity? Explain your answer.
8. How could Christ be God and die?
9. Do you think everyone lost in the great Flood was also lost eternally? Explain your answer.
10. Does it really make any difference to us individually that the story of humankind is destined to end in self-destruction? What difference would it make to individuals if in the end humankind were going to achieve a perfect world on their own?
11. How do we overcome secret desires that Jesus delay His coming?
12. What can we do as individuals and corporately to infuse a spirit of anticipation for the Second Coming in our church family?

Tuesday  
December 3

## Blessings of the Tarrying Time

### TESTIMONY

2 Pet. 3:9

"I have been shown that God's people who profess to believe present truth are not in a waiting, watching position. . . . They are becoming rich in worldly things, but

**"They may profess much  
faith; but they deceive  
their own souls."**

not rich toward God. They do not believe in the shortness of time; they do not believe that the end of all things is at hand, that Christ is at the door. They may profess much faith; but they deceive their own souls, for they will act out

all the faith that they really possess. Their works show the character of their faith and testify to those around them that the coming of Christ is not to be in this generation."<sup>1</sup>

Paradoxical as it might be, the delay can be regarded as a time of opportunity instead of a time of distress. On the optimistic side we can enhance our own preparation (maybe even fix it, if we belong to the aforementioned group) and work diligently in the short time left in favor of many who are still ignorant about our blessed hope. "The long night of gloom is trying; but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready. God's unwillingness to have His people perish has been the reason for so long delay."<sup>2</sup>

"Again I appeal to the members of the church to be Christians, to be Christlike. Jesus was a worker, not for Himself, but for others. He labored to bless and save the lost. If you are Christians you will imitate His example."<sup>3</sup>

"Glorious will be the reward bestowed when the faithful workers are gathered about the throne of God and the Lamb. . . . They stand before the throne, signifying that they are accepted. All their sins are blotted out, all their transgressions borne away. Now they can look upon the undimmed glory from the throne of God. They have been partakers with Christ of His sufferings, they have been workers together with Him in the plan of redemption, and *they are partakers with Him in the joy of beholding souls saved through their instrumentality to praise God through all eternity.*"<sup>4</sup>

### REACT

What determines whether the delay of Jesus' coming is a blessing or not?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 196.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

3. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 466.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 467, italics supplied.

# Anticipating the Advent

## HOW-TO

Matt. 24:44, 45; 2 Pet. 3:10-14; Rev. 16:15

The scene is repeated everywhere. The victim comes home to find his house ransacked by an unknown intruder. Items of value are missing; the order of daily living is disrupted. There are feelings of anger and disbelief, heart-pounding adrenalin courses through the body as it attempts to manage the emotions of outrage, fear, and disbelief.

Thieves are generally unexpected. When they break into a home, snatch a purse, or hijack a car, the victim is usually unprepared to respond either physically or emotionally. In our society we put alarms on our homes, take self-defense classes, and generally try to prepare for the thief who may try to catch us off guard.

Jesus said His coming would be like a thief in the night for those who aren't watching and anticipating His return. If we don't want to be caught off guard, we have to prepare ourselves for the event. When we have accepted Him as our Savior, our anticipation of His coming is fresh and exciting. As the months and years roll by, it is easy to lose that anticipation in the busyness of daily life. We often look forward to other events, such as weddings, birthdays, and job promotions, with great expectation. How can we do any less with the second coming of Christ?

With much more at stake than material possessions if we are caught unawares at Christ's coming, the need for anticipation is vital. When the trumpet sounds and every eye sees Him, there will be multitudes who will feel the adrenalin of fear and disbelief. They will cry out that the coming was unexpected. And, yes, there will be those who will be left behind.

Anticipation usually includes preparation. Renewing the excitement daily will nourish enthusiasm for Christ's return. Keep your anticipation fresh. Spend daily moments reading about the Second Coming. Use different Bible versions to see the Advent in different perspectives. Reread books such as *The Great Controversy* to refresh your thoughts. Know why you believe in the Second Advent and how it will occur. Do your friends follow the "Left Behind" saga? What do you say to someone who believes that after the rapture, they will have seven years to get their act together?

Actively share your anticipation of the Advent with those around you. It may not be in a formal Bible study. Find ways to tell others that Jesus is coming soon. The more you share the news with others, the more you will anticipate it yourself.

Do your friends follow the  
"Left Behind" saga?

## REACT

Why would anticipating the Advent become stale in our daily lives?

Thursday  
December 5

## Hope: A Legacy From Father to Daughter

### OPINION

2 Pet. 3:3-5, 11

My father used to tell me how when he was young he never imagined that he would ever be married, graduate from college, have children, etc. He always thought that Jesus was going to come back before he did any of those things, but here he was, talking about it with his daughter.

Similarly, my greatest desire was for Jesus to come back when I was still a child, because I thought it would be a lot of fun for a kid to go to heaven. Well, that did not happen either. Here I am, all grown up! I am sure many people had similar reactions when they were young, or even later in life. It is easy to become discouraged and hard to keep motivated to continue waiting and hoping, maybe not to see the expected event happen in our lifetime.

The Lord knew that generation after generation His children would be uttering questions like these. That is why He tells us in the Bible not to worry about His delay in texts such as the one we are studying this week.

People react in different ways to the fact that Jesus has not come yet. I feel blessed that my father continued faithful in his ministry as a pastor, motivating me and all who came in contact with him to have a personal relationship with Jesus, and to acknowledge that salvation and going to heaven are the most important things in life. Peter warned us, however, that some would scorn God and use His delay as an excuse to get back at Him by doing everything He warned us against

**Here I am, all grown up!**

(2 Pet. 3:3-5). These people (and maybe even we sometimes) forget that God has a greater plan. They overlook the great war that has been taking place between God and the enemy for so long.

In His infinite love, our Father is waiting to enter people's hearts. The only thing we can do is to let Him come into our hearts, and ask ourselves: "What kind of people ought [we] to be?" (2 Pet. 3:11, NIV) and look forward with hope to His coming (verse 12).

### REACT

1. Can people have a relationship with God without knowing Jesus Christ? Explain your answer.
2. In your own words, what does John 14:6 mean when it says that no one comes to the Father except through Jesus?

# Refill, Please

## EXPLORATION

Rom. 5:5

## CONCLUDE

A promise is a comfort to a fool. Many believe that those are fools who trust in Christ's promise to come again. However, those who are in a close relationship with Him whose promises fail not, recognize the delay as God's merciful way of allowing more people to come to repentance. They actively prepare by refilling with God's Spirit every day, which transforms their lives. For them, the delay is not a deterrent, only a prelude to the most joyous event of their lives.

## CONSIDER

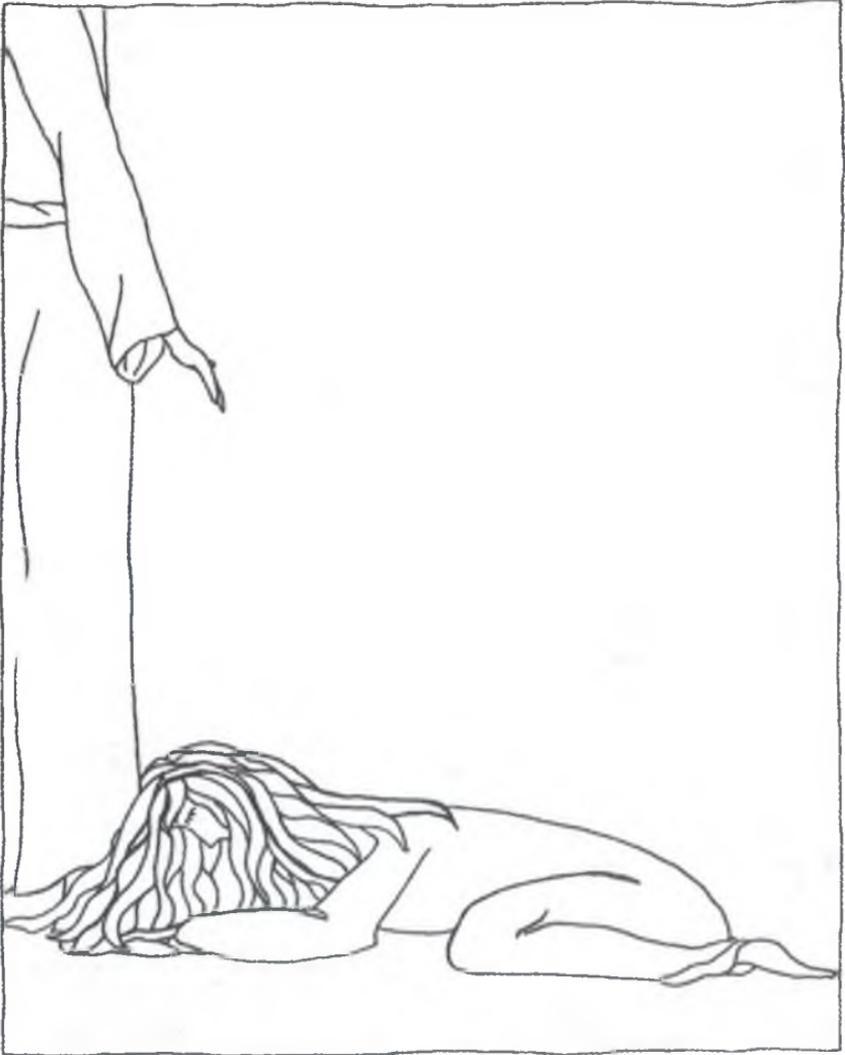
- Photographing people at an airport who are waiting for a loved one. Look at the range of emotions displayed on the faces. Which face most closely matches yours as you wait for Jesus' return?
- Calculating how many minutes there are in a day; a week; a month; a year. While a day or even a week is like a moment to an adult, it can seem like an enormously long time to a child, who thinks in terms of minutes. Likewise, a thousand years, which seems like an eternity to us, are to God as a day.
- Responding to Martha's anxious email that said that Lazarus is very sick and they have sent for Jesus but He had not come. Considering the outcome of that story, what can we learn about the times that God apparently delays?
- Recording yourself or someone else singing No. 604 in the *Seventh-Day Adventist Hymnal*. Play it, or sing it often as a reminder that Jesus' second coming is sure.
- Researching the lives of that group of Christians who were preparing for Jesus to come in 1844. With a few friends, discuss what they did and decide if anything they did to prepare could be copied by us today.
- Keeping a "delay journal" by recording your wait times. For example, waiting for a bus, waiting in line, waiting at a doctor's office. Use this record to become aware of how you respond to delay. Try filling your delay times with a positive attitude expressed in singing or recitation of Bible verses. Practice makes perfect.

## CONNECT

Matthew 24:42-51.

*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 634-636.

# Too Rich to hope?



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“ ‘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’ ” (Rev. 3:17, NKJV).

# Too Rich to Hope?

## INTRODUCTION

Rev. 3:17

One of my close friends was having trouble with his spiritual journey. A mutual friend was ministering to him, and as they sat in his quiet dorm room, talking, he was suddenly asked this question: "Are you desperate for God?"

My friend sat quiet for literally ten minutes! His failure to reply or give a quick Yes indicated that he was still trying to manage his own life. My friend isn't financially wealthy; neither is he "not in need of a thing."

Riches come in different packages. My good friend was at a point in his life in which he was wealthy in pride.

He knew he wasn't at the point in his life (spiritually or emotionally) where he wanted to be, but he still wasn't *desperate* for God. If we're not totally desperate for God, will He still work out and finish that "good work" (Phil. 1:6) within us?

**With your face to the ground  
you will see more.**

As mentioned above, we should be careful not to pin Revelation 3:17 solely on a financial yardstick. Other measurements are listed—wretched, pitiful, blind, and naked. Areas in our lives, such as pride, prevent us from receiving God's transforming power and indwelling presence. Someone once said that we don't praise the Lord because our pride gets in the way.

It's easy to sit frozen in the pew, or mechanically sing hymns to our Savior, but any type of movement such as the lifting of the hands in joy to the Lord is often restrained, not only because of accepted practices, but also because of those around us who might see. I'm not advocating hand springs and bellowing loud gestures, but our pride sometimes truly prevents us from a deep intimacy with Jesus.

Mary Magdalene treasured intimacy with her Lord. Swallowing any pride left in her, she let down her hair to wash the feet of a Man. That's more embarrassing than raising an arm in church. It hits home for me when I recall the countless times I've burst with 50 times more excitement over San Antonio Spurs basketball games than I have about my precious Jesus.

My prayer for my searching friend has been, "Lord, bring him to his knees, and bring his face to the ground." I pray that for myself also. From the ground, I can see my true condition—naked, blind, and lost without my Lord.

Pride is only one roadblock hindering the Spirit's indwelling. With your face to the ground you will see more, and also be on your way to regaining intimacy with Christ, just as Mary did. Are you desperate for God, or are you, also, too rich *for Jesus*?

Sunday  
December 8

## To the Church in Laodicea

**LOGOS**  
Rev. 3:14-22

### **The True Witness (Rev. 3:14)**

We might be tempted to pass right over this first verse as just an introduction to the message to follow, but it is a vital part of the message. Not only does it reveal the authority of the message giver as Ruler of creation, but by declaring Himself “ ‘the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness’ ” (Rev. 3:14, NKJV), Christ puts Himself in stark contrast to the members of the church of Laodicea who, as we will see, only appear to be faithful and who bear a testimony of themselves that is not true, but that is in fact the opposite of the truth.

### **The True Testimony (Rev. 3:15, 16)**

Here Christ begins by implying that others may be fooled, but “ ‘I know your deeds’ ” (Rev. 3:15, NIV). He knows their true condition. The Laodiceans neither

**They have even fooled  
themselves.**

accepted nor rejected God's will; they expressed neither love nor hate for His precepts. He shows His distaste for this condition through a stern warning. Anyone continuing in this spirit of apathy,

neither hot nor cold, stands to be spit out of the mouth of God. Metaphorically, the image is quite graphic. You would reserve spitting something out of your mouth only for those items that are too bitter, too slimy, too salty, too disgusting to swallow. The metaphor was to help the Laodiceans understand just how sick God feels when His creation, His own proclaimed children are apathetic toward Him, and do not fully appreciate the marvelous and unmerited plan of salvation. God prefers either extreme to this comfortable state of oblivion.

### **In a State of Denial (Rev. 3:17)**

Then the Lord describes a people whose outward appearance has become so convincing that they have even fooled themselves. Their spirit of compromise, their riches and material wealth, has lulled them into a false sense of success and self-satisfaction. “They possess all the outward evidence of cultural attainment, yet they are actually wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked . . . When worldliness eats its way into our hearts, it destroys our passion for souls. All too many of us are comfortable and self-satisfied, yet we know not our real condition; we are inoculated with just enough Christianity to make us immune to the genuine

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thing. Could anything be more tragic?"<sup>1</sup> But for God's people tragedy can be transformed into hope.

### **An Eternal Shopping List (Rev. 3:18)**

God had not given up on His people even despite their apathy, their pride, their self-sufficiency. He offers to sell them real wealth, real garments, and real vision. Only then will they truly have hope. You might expect God to offer to give them what they need if they would just realize they need it and ask, but He speaks in terms that the Laodiceans understand. He knows that to a wealthy society, the more you pay for something, the more valuable it is. He says, "Buy from Me."

But there is a special price, not to be met by all the material wealth the world can offer. The currency is one that is common to all humanity and one cherished by the church at Laodicea. It is the currency of self; our habits, our condition, our will. Even the poorest of the poor can buy, and the man of material wealth is of no distinction (Isa. 55:1). Christ's plea to His people is to exchange the counterfeit for the real thing. He offers it to us at a price we can afford.

### **Knock, Knock. Who's There? (Rev. 3:19, 20)**

The Lord rebukes His children out of His love for them and not out of anger. The purpose of His message is not to insult or to hurt, but to turn the hearts and minds of His people back to Him. He does not wait for us to come to Him, but He says, "Here I am!" No matter what condition we may be in, no matter where our minds are focused, our Lord takes His place at the door of our hearts, where He stands continuously, knocking to come in. He does not wait for us to cry out to Him, but He lets us hear His voice calling out to us. Our only hope lies in the truth that it is not through human initiative that our salvation is won, but God's, who has come down from His throne to sit at the table with anyone who will receive Him. But we must open the door and receive Him.

### **To Him Who Overcomes (Rev. 3:21, 22)**

In order to overcome, the Laodiceans had to receive Christ's provision for them and not trust in what they could provide for themselves. This truth is the hope for every believer throughout the pages of history and days yet to come. "The overcomer will share in the glory and power of Christ, even as Christ shares in the glory and power of His Father. . . . Only on the basis of Christ's victory can man hope to overcome."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Roy Allan Anderson, *Unfolding the Revelation* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1961), p. 44.

2. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 763.

## TESTIMONY

Isa. 8:22

“Through the long centuries of ‘trouble and darkness’ and ‘dimness of anguish’ (Isaiah 8:22) marking the history of mankind from the day our first parents lost their Eden home, to the time the Son of God appeared as the Saviour of sinners, the hope of the fallen race was centered in the coming of a Deliverer to free men and women from the bondage of sin and the grave.

“The first intimation of such a hope was given to Adam and Eve in the sentence pronounced upon the serpent in Eden when the Lord declared to Satan in their hearing, ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.’ (Genesis 3:15).

“As the guilty pair listened to these words, they were inspired with hope; for in the prophecy concerning the breaking of Satan’s power they discerned a promise of

**“The first intimation of such a hope was given to Adam and Eve.”**

deliverance from the ruin wrought through transgression. Though they must suffer from the power of their adversary because they had fallen under his seductive influence and had chosen to disobey the plain command of

Jehovah, yet they need not yield to utter despair. The Son of God was offering to atone with His own lifeblood for their transgression. . . . This hope of redemption through the advent of the Son of God as Saviour and King, has never become extinct in the hearts of men.”<sup>1</sup>

“Christ is our only hope. We may look to Him, for He is our Saviour. We may take Him at His word, and make Him our dependence. He knows just the help we need, and we can safely put our trust in Him.”<sup>2</sup>

## REACT

1. How can we persuade others (and ourselves) not to place hope in things of the world, but rather, to put hope in Christ? Be specific.

2. “Christ is our only hope.” Here all our eggs are in one basket. How can one be so sure, so emphatic that Christ is the answer?

3. The Christian journey can be described as a long walk home. What help can you rely on during your journey? Can you be sure that this help is always available? Explain your answer.

1. *Lift Him Up*, p. 27.

2. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 486.

# Laodicea's Message

## EVIDENCE

Rev. 3:14-22

Laodicea was a city in ancient Asia Minor, situated only 40 miles east of Ephesus and only 10 miles from Colossae. Today magnificent ruins, including a stadium, three theaters, aqueducts, and a gymnasium can be found on Laodicea's ancient site in western Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

The city, a multicultural center, was said to be prosperous. Its economy rested on successful banking and trading operations, a renowned medical center specializing in the eyes, and the production of glossy black wool garments.<sup>2</sup>

The passage in Revelation now begins to make sense, historically and culturally. First, the play on words—"You say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing"" (Rev. 3:17, NIV)—rang loud and clear for the Laodiceans who had grown accustomed to being financially rich and had allowed the complacency and the self-sufficiency to settle into their spiritual lives as well.

Second, Laodicean readers would have immediately understood the reference to eye salve (verse 18). The medical center, with a specialization in treating eye troubles was also well known for its "secret recipe," a healing powder for an assortment of eye disorders. God counsels the Laodiceans to buy spiritual eye salve from Him so that their vision could be more than just merely physical.

The reference to "white garments" (verse 18), again, would have made sense to the readers of the day. Laodicea was proud of its black, glossy wool clothing industry, but Jesus, in His message to those whom He loves uses the spiritual contrast of black and white to offer " 'white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness' " (verse 18, NIV).

Finally, perhaps the most famous word associated with the Laodicean rebuke is "lukewarm."

Laodicea lacked an adequate source of water. Consequently an aqueduct, six miles in length was built to carry the water. The stone pipes, still visible today, have a diameter of two feet, and are fitted into each other at the ends. The water carried via the aqueduct came from a series of hot springs to the south and consequently arrived at Laodicea *lukewarm*.

The message to the Laodiceans is a loud and clear rebuke, but ultimately one of hope. God challenged not only Laodiceans of that time, but Christians of today to be either hot or cold and consider investing in wealth that will last eternally.

The message to the  
Laodiceans is ultimately  
one of hope.

1. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company), pp. 176, 177.

2. Wigoder, Geoffrey, General Editor, *Illustrated Dictionary & Concordance of the Bible*, (Jerusalem: G.G. The Jerusalem Publishing House Ltd., 1986), pp. 612, 613.

## Jesus, Our Only Hope

### HOW-TO

1 John 2:5, 6

In chapters two and three of Revelation, Jesus addresses the seven churches. Each church had its good points and bad points. These churches were not left to their own fate. God always brought the faithful ones through in spite of their downfalls. This isn't to say that He saves us in our disobedience, but He is willing to bring us through when we place our trust in Him, and when we allow Him to carry us forward.

Many of us as Seventh-day Adventists fall into the danger of being comfortable in our Christian status and feel overly satisfied because we are Adventists. We feel

**The danger lies in the self-sufficient attitude.**

we lack nothing and no one can tell us anything because we have the truth. We think we are spiritually rich and have it all! The danger lies in the self-sufficient attitude, so much so that

sometimes not even the voice of God is heeded. Thinking we are rich, we are actually poor and destitute. Jesus knew this would happen, so He provided a way out. He knows of our needs before we even realize we need help. Always remember to:

**1. Ask the Lord to reveal what is lacking.** He is faithful to show you what is lacking in your character, in your daily living, and your habits. It is important to listen and follow God's leading when He reveals these things.

**2. Keep your eyes on Jesus.** Our only safeguard is found in this. Jesus can mold us and shape us and soften our corrupt and self-sufficient hearts. Though in our hearts we feel we need nothing else, we can be assured that Christ knows what we are lacking and will lead us to the everlasting water.

The most important thing to remember is that Christ has walked in our shoes. He knows what it's like in this journey, and because He is familiar with our tests and trials, He can help us to be victorious. Jesus, God, who was willing to die for us, will not leave us to our own destruction. He will do whatever it takes to bring us back to His fold, even when we don't realize we've strayed away.

That is the power of God—our only hope!

### REACT

1. In what ways do you feel satisfied and self-sufficient in your life? Be specific.
2. If God gives a person talents and skills, how can he or she avoid self-sufficiency in those talents and skills?
3. What can you do to make sure that your hope is in Christ's provision for you and not in your own?

# Hope for the Hopeless

## OPINION

Psalm 23

Have you ever taken the role of being a hope messenger in a hospital setting? As I discovered during the course of my hospital ministry class, it's not quite what I had envisioned. *After all*, I thought, *how hard could it be to go visit a patient at the hospital and say a few words of encouragement?*

Then I would follow that up by opening my Bible and reading Psalm 23; after all, there are no more comforting words found in all of Scripture. In my mind I could now see patients looking up at me with tears and a big smile, reaching out for me to hold their hands. Then with a twinkle in my eye, I would smile back, grip their hands, and once again strike the chord of hope, "I'll be praying for you."

Before entering the room, I cracked the door open just to get a sneak peek as to what awaited me. It did not look good at all. From what I could gather, the patient was inside of what seemed to be a transparent space capsule hooked up to all types of equipment that made beeping noises. How was I supposed to comfort someone who is in such bad shape?

The patient was a newborn baby with jaundice, which requires that the newborn be in an incubator exposed to only a certain kind of light. Standing there in front of the incubator was the newborn's mother. At that point in time I threw all my own thoughts out the window and introduced myself. I talked with her for a while about her family and the situation with her baby. It was very evident that she was stressed about her baby's condition. After two or three weeks, the condition had not improved.

**Hope is not given through cliché religion.**

During the course of our discussion, she disclosed that her other two children were born with the same condition and they were doing well. *Here is the hope that she needs to hear and know.* If her two other children turned out to be healthy, then there was hope for her newborn. We dwelt on that fact for a while and I could see her whole countenance change from worried to a lot less worried. We ended that visit with a simple prayer for the family and the recovery of the baby.

The first step in giving hope is to come to a realization of the existing condition. Many people do not think anything is wrong with the world today. It's fun, attractive, and they think, *We'll overcome whatever consequences without harm to ourselves or others.* This is the mentality of a Laodicean. Hope is not given through cliché religion. Christians need to learn to empathize with and share in the realities of their neighbor. Identifying with them will make it possible to share the hope of Christ with them.

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## The Only Hope for the Filthy Rich

### EXPLORATION

Rev. 13:14-22

### CONCLUDE

As the people of God in the last days, we are forced to look at ourselves in the mirror as we read the end of Revelation 3. We think we're pretty well off, but our reflection, coming from God's mirror, tells a different story. "You are sickening in your complacency," Jesus says. "What you think is good-looking, healthy, and well-heeled is worthless. I'm your only hope—what comes from Me alone is of any value."

### CONSIDER

- Creating a bulletin board or poster for your meeting room, using a mirror and the theme of Revelation 3:14-22.
- Taking a walk around your home and community, noting the examples of how people (yourself included) are inoculated with just enough of what they think of as good, so that they don't recognize their need of the Best.
- Listing the factors the Laodiceans were proud of. Compare this list with the factors we as Seventh-day Adventists tend to be proud of. Make a final list of what Jesus labels as truly valuable.
- Researching the word "rich" and "riches" in the New Testament. How many times do these references refer to God's riches as compared to human riches? What kinds of riches does God offer? Why is it important to fill our minds with thoughts of these riches, as opposed to earthly riches?
- Singing the song "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus" in *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, No. 290 several times throughout the day. Ask yourself at the end of the day how this song has affected your daily routines.
- Role-playing the scenario of Revelation 3:14-22 for a youth meeting or Sabbath School. Perform the story in a modern setting.
- Interviewing family members during family worship or at meal time, about what they want to buy most from Jesus.
- Imagining yourself face to face with Jesus. What would He offer you as your greatest need? What do you pride yourself in the most that you need to relinquish to Him?

### CONNECT

Morris Venden, *Modern Parables*, pp. 11–14, 82–89; Roy Allan Anderson, *Unfolding the Revelation*, pp. 41–47.

# Called to one Hope



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"The hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time" (Titus 1:2, NIV).

## INTRODUCTION

John 3:16

It was Christmas season for the world, but not for the residents of Tin Can Valley. When they have to scratch for their daily food, how could they celebrate Christmas? Jimmie lived with his mother in Tin Can Valley. He was just eight years old, with lots of energy. One day a well-dressed woman visited the shack where Jimmie lived. She spoke to him kindly, and told him the whole story of Jesus—from birth to death.

A few days later she came again and invited the residents of Tin Can Valley to a Christmas celebration. They were promised not only food to eat, but music and gifts, too. And, most important of all, the Christmas story.

On the day before Christmas, they all met at the mission compound. Jimmie drank in every word of the Christmas story. At its close, he went to the minister and asked, "If that Baby died for me too, then I should tell others, who don't know it, shouldn't I?" The man nodded.

That night, Jimmie just disappeared from his home. Late in the night he returned and when his mother asked where he had been, he said, "Telling everyone I could about Jesus." Then he asked, "Mother, do you suppose those people up in the pretty homes know of Jesus?"

"Of course," his mother said.

But he was unconvinced. "If they have known, why didn't they tell us? Maybe they don't know. I will tell them."

During a snowstorm, he went from house to house asking, "Do you know Jesus?" The answer was "Yes" and the boy was disappointed. He went to the biggest house at the end of the street and asked the man who answered the door, "Do you know Jesus?"

**During a snowstorm, he went from house to house.**

When the man said "Yes," Jimmie asked, "Then why didn't you tell us?" With these words, he turned back toward the snow-filled world with his meager, tattered clothing.

When the man tried to persuade him not to go out in the snowstorm, Jimmie said that he had to tell others about Jesus. But by this time he was too weak even to walk. The man took him into his home, but after a few hours the boy died.

When the story of Jimmie circulated around the neighborhood, the wealthy homeowners were stirred. They built proper houses, schools, and most of all a beautiful church for the people of Tin Can Valley. Over the pulpit were written these words: "If you know Jesus, why don't you tell others?"\*

\*Author Unknown, *Christmas in My Heart*, vol. 5.

# Life's Arena

## EVIDENCE

Rom. 12:3-6; 1 Cor. 6:17; 10:16, 17, 21; Col. 3:15; 1 Thess. 2:12

Imagine for a moment that you are a famous football player. You proudly and bravely run onto the field, you hear the spectators cheering for your team. You and the rest of the team have one unifying goal: to win. The hope and excitement are running high. The truth is only a few get the chance, but you as a follower of Christ get the opportunity of a lifetime—to be a player in the intergalactic arena.

You must walk worthy of the One who has called you to glory (1 Thess. 2:12). The player that joins this team must be one in spirit with its leader (1 Cor. 6:17). The team must be able to operate together like a single unity; no one better, stronger, or more clever than a fellow team member. All are equal in the effort toward a single goal.

You proudly and bravely  
run onto the field.

Everyone knows their key function in the team. Each one accomplishes their function to perfection with the power bestowed on them.

They are bound together in one body with one goal and one hope (Rom. 12:3-6; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17). The team must be united. There is no place for doubt. Doubt is shattered hope and how can a team stand with no hope? It's the singular hope and total conviction that keeps a team together (1 Cor. 6:21). During the intergalactic game, you and I must learn to forbear, forgive, and care for our fellow team members. Most important is for team members to have the peace of God ruling in their hearts, which will call them to one body (Col. 3:13-15).

The intergalactic arena is the set for the great controversy. There are two kinds of participants. First, those standing for God and everything He stands for, they need to share in His one Hope and vision for the universe. The second stand for the dark side—vengeance and destruction. The universe is the spectator for this contest.

You are responsible for making the choice of which team to join. Why not today? The Lord is knocking and is waiting to share His great love with you and to bring you to the One Hope.

## REACT

1. Why do we have a need for hope as humans?
2. Is it essential that this universe self-destruct because of the consequences of bad choices? Explain your answer.
3. How would we know whether we are going to be saved?
4. What will happen to those who are sincere but wrong?

Monday  
December 16

## Hope's Winsome Witness

### LOGOS

Eph. 4:1-6, 11-13

#### **Being right is not enough (Eph. 4:1-3).**

"When you've got it, flaunt it!" proclaims the spirit of our age. Whether the blessing is wealth, beauty, talent, knowledge, ability, strength, or influence—pride turns gifts of God into self-seeking spectacles.

The same spirit (sometimes disguised as earnestness) motivates some people to boast that they "have *The Truth!*" Such "witnessing" inevitably leads to misunderstanding and cuts conversation short. By shifting attention away from Christ, all such approaches negate the very hope we attempt to proclaim.

Living a life worthy of our calling in Christ means that we acquire the mindset

**One of the best ways to express  
Christ's humility is to assume  
the attitude of a learner.**

of Jesus, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a

servant, . . . humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Phil. 2:5-8, NIV).

Though it is important to be clear about the Bible, it is not enough simply to be right about certain topics and texts. Witnesses who are right but not particularly nice are ineffective. The love and humility of Christ will win hundreds where argumentation turns people away.

One of the best ways to express Christ's humility is to assume the attitude of a learner. Inquiring minds initiate conversations and plant seeds of truth without erecting barriers. Good learners know that people with different beliefs and practices may nonetheless teach them important things about Christ. Our openness to learn from others leaves them free to learn from us.

#### **Jesus is our common ground (Eph. 4:4-6).**

Winsome witnesses find and emphasize common ground with others. The apostle Paul assures us that our common ground with all believers is *Jesus!*

It is easy to speak of truth in the abstract, as if it were merely a concept. But we are not called to an idea. Our hope is not in a concept but in a person. Truth resides in the One who declared *Himself* "the way and *the truth* and the life" (John 14:6, NIV, emphasis supplied). "No one comes to the Father except through me" (verse 6, NIV). "Our hope," as the familiar hymn affirms, "is built on nothing

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less than Jesus Christ and [His] righteousness.”

Adventism’s distinctive expressions of Christian faith do not constitute stand-alone doctrines, unrelated to the larger picture. To treat them as such is to foster confusion. Christ is the core of our hope, faith, and unity with other believers! All other truths are peripheral. Just as computer peripherals are useful only when connected to the core processor, so every other teaching of the Bible finds significance only when connected to Christ. The Sabbath, for instance, became a burden and a curse to those who refused to acknowledge Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28). The doctrine of grace, much debated among Christians of various traditions, takes on rich new meaning when understood in the Person of One who came to embody “grace and truth” (John 1:14).

### **Gifts are for building up the community (Eph. 4:11-13).**

Just as a knowledge is intended to unify God’s people, so leadership gifts are to build up the community of faith as well. In appointing evangelists, pastors, and teachers, Christ signaled a new paradigm—the *servant leader*. He taught servant leadership by modeling acts of service (John 13:12-17) and envisioned a time when His church would be structured around serving and caring for others. Leaders are to serve those who are below them on the organizational chart by resourcing them, cutting through bureaucratic red tape, and equipping them with everything they need to care for and serve people inside and outside the body of Christ.

Leaders and members of the body of Christ have built-in job security. There will never be a time when their gifts and unique abilities to serve will not be needed. And there will always be room for the church to grow in unity and service. Attaining the “whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13, NIV) for individuals and for His church, is not a static state achieved this side of Christ’s return (1 John 3:1-3). Those who center their hope in Christ will be so confident of His all-sufficient grace to cover the past and assure the future, they will be able to grow beyond self-concern and self-advancement, to devote their lives to serving others and building up the community of faith until Christ comes to take them home.

### **REACT**

1. How would you describe a winsome witness? Be specific.
2. If ultimate truth is beyond our understanding, why should we bother to look for it?
3. Can we be held responsible for accepting a truth that does not make sense to us? Explain your answer.
4. What role, if any, did niceness play in the way the apostles presented their beliefs to the public? How should we apply this concept to our witness today?
5. How can we know that our beliefs are correct when we admittedly do not fully understand them?
6. What does it mean to say that our hope is built on Jesus Christ and His righteousness?

Tuesday  
December 17

## Destined for Greatness

### TESTIMONY

Phil. 4:13

There are people who criticize and discourage; they waste their time on discussing petty issues, and then there are others who feel it's easier not to speak up, that it's better to stay quiet so they won't get hurt. Both the critical individual and the one fading into the background are acting out of insecurity and therefore not reaching their potential. They limit themselves by their own mediocrity.

Mediocrity does not unify; it divides us and fosters contempt for our neighbors. One of the best weapons in Satan's arsenal is mediocrity; it tears away at our community by prohibiting greatness. Think of how the Pharisees tried to sabotage the ministry of Jesus with their narrow-minded rules. As Albert Einstein said, "Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds."

By being less than your best, you are saying to the world that God's creation is not awesome. How can you inspire hope in unbelievers if you yourself don't believe

**One of the best weapons  
in Satan's arsenal is  
mediocrity.**

in the power of God manifest within you and each of us? "The children of God are called to be representatives of Christ, showing forth the goodness and mercy of the Lord . . . In every one of His children, Jesus sends

a letter to the world. If you are Christ's follower, He sends in you a letter to the family, the village, the street, where you live. Jesus, dwelling in you, desires to speak to the hearts of those who are not acquainted with Him."<sup>1</sup> We are called to represent Christ wherever we are. The mission field is right here, right now.

"Satan ever seeks to make the religious life one of gloom. He desires it to appear toilsome and difficult; and when the Christian presents in his own life this view of religion, he is, through his unbelief, seconding the falsehood of Satan."<sup>2</sup> To doubt your ability to spread the message of hope is to deny the power of God within you and perpetuate Satan's cause. "Christians are set as light bearers on the way to heaven. They are to reflect to the world the light shining upon them from Christ."<sup>3</sup>

The Lord has empowered you as His messenger of good news to rise up out of mediocrity to bring hope to a dying world. The people of this world need Christians like you to love them, to give them hope, to encourage them, and to shine your light where it's darkest. For as long as we let our light shine, we allow others to do the same.

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 115.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

# The Power of Expectation

## HOW-TO

2 Chronicles 20; Phil.1:20

The Edomites were coming and King Jehoshaphat had no army to defend Judah. But instead of instituting a draft, Jehoshaphat called for a fast. He wanted Judah to be of one mind when they sought the Lord in prayer. If the "prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16, NKJV), then more prayer means more power. As "all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the Lord" (2 Chron. 20:13, NKJV), their collective hope in God allowed the Holy Spirit to move on their behalf (Eph. 3:20).

God's ability to do things on our behalf is determined by the access He has to our hearts. Unlike Satan, God does not force Himself upon us. He goes only where He is welcomed (Rev. 3:20), so when Judah united in supplication to God, they provided an amazing channel for the Holy Spirit to work.

The real power of unified prayer, however, is its declaration of hope in the Lord. In 2 Chronicles 20:12, Jehoshaphat declares: "'We know what to do, but our eyes are upon You'" (NKJV). According to the *Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, to hope "[cherishes] a desire with anticipation; to expect with confidence," and to expect implies "a high degree of certainty and usually involves the idea of preparing and envisioning."\* Hope in God anticipates His intervention on our behalf because "all things work together for good" (Rom. 8:28, KJV). Remembering God's past faithfulness helps us prepare for His future blessings.

The Judeans waited on God and obediently prepared their hearts and minds for His instructions. God calls us to do the same. Unity as a body of believers gives us access to God's promised power to help spread the truth about Jesus Christ. By allowing Christ to bless us, we help men and women come to know who God the Father is, through the life of Jesus, His Son (John 17:23). If we pray and move in faith, earnestly expecting that God will unify the Christian family, God will honor our trust in Him. He will not allow those who place their trust in Him to be ashamed (Ps. 25:20, 21).

**God will honor our  
trust in Him.**

## REACT

1. What other good or bad Bible examples show the power of a unified body?
2. How does unity reproduce the character of God in our hearts?

\*www.webster.com

Thursday  
December 19

## The Hero's Cup

### OPINION

Eph. 4:1-4

For twenty years, Ray Borque had been a star player for the Boston Bruins. Fans wore his jersey, chanted his name and singled him out as the epitome of all that is good in a professional athlete. Yet for 20 years his quest to lead his team to an NHL Stanley Cup title fell short. At age 40, it seemed that his lifelong hope would come to nothing. But the Colorado Avalanche, who had won the Stanley Cup just six years previous and hoped to repeat the feat, breathed new hope into Borque's quest by signing him to play in the 2000-2001 season.

The Stanley Cup final playoff pitted the Avalanche against one of the most aggressive and talented teams in the league, the New Jersey Devils. After five games the Devils had a three-games-to-two advantage in the best-of-seven series. But the Av's had retained home ice advantage going into the playoffs, which meant game seven would be played in Denver. For Ray Borque it was do or die.

The Av's beat the Devils in New Jersey in game six. Few teams in professional sports had managed to win the final two contests in a best-of-seven series, but on the final night, the Av's did just that—they won the final game of the playoffs on home ice. The players and the crowd were ecstatic! United behind Ray Borque's hope of finally winning a Stanley Cup before retirement, they proved that by uniting behind one hope, despite the odds, they could achieve their goal.

For over 150 years Seventh-day Adventists have been called to "one hope"—the soon return of Jesus Christ and with it the reward of eternal life. Just as in professional

**It seemed that his lifelong hope would come to nothing.**

sports there are different players and different positions, so in the Christian church there are different roles and responsibilities in working with and for Christ. As Christians we work with Jesus, our "star player" for one hope: to

reach our goal and realize our hope because of our calling. We have been called to wait for the "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13, KJV), the second coming of our Lord.

As Paul wrote to the young Christians in Ephesus, he emphasized how important it was for them to be united in Christ (Eph. 4:3). Teams don't win when they don't play together. When there is jealousy, bickering, and dissension, we lose sight of our goal. Our calling is to prepare the world for the glorious return of Jesus. He is our Example of striving for unity as our hope is placed in Him. Our goal is greater than any world championship—it is to have the "fullness of Christ" (verse 13, NIV) formed within us! And when the Captain and Hero of our team returns to celebrate our victory with Him, we will be "unashamed" because He recognizes His character which has matured in us (1 John 2:28).

# One Great Expectation

## EXPLORATION

Titus 1:2

## CONCLUDE

For more than 150 years Adventists have looked, prayed, and hoped for the Second Coming. However, it isn't enough just to expect Him to come back for us. We should be actively preparing for His return. Our friends, coworkers, and neighbors should know that His soon return is our one great expectation. Do they know? If not, we need to get busy. If our hope is for the soon return of Jesus, we should be ready now. We should be pressing onward to the prize.

## CONSIDER

- Listening to Larnelle Harris's song "One Day" on the CD *Unbelievable Love*. Close your eyes and imagine the day when Jesus returns and all the pain and suffering of this world is over. How does that make you feel?
- Painting a sunrise/sunset. Capture the glory of the colors. Envision the day when Jesus breaks through the clouds to take us home.
- Reading Revelation 21. We cannot fully understand the glories pictured there. We must take them on faith and expect great things.
- Singing three of your favorite hymns/songs about the Second Coming for Sabbath worship. Talk with a loved one about your dreams of what heaven will be like.
- Writing a letter to Jesus. Describe your life here. Think of Him as your First Love. Tell Him how much you love Him, how you cannot wait for Him to return and take you home with Him.
- Attending a performance of Handel's *Messiah* during the Christmas season. Get a copy of the score and follow along with the words of hope and expectation throughout the performance.

## CONNECT

Revelation 21.

*Christian Service*, pp. 266–275; *The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 58.

# Ultimate things



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“Encourage each other with these words”  
(1 Thess. 4:18, NIV).

# The Real "Happily Ever After"

## INTRODUCTION

Rev. 21:4

For weeks I would lie on my bed crying, like Job, feeling that it would have been better if I had not been born. I would be on my knees pouring out my heart in tears to God and His answer to me would be, "Be still, and know that I am God."

One day as I sat with my sister, talking about the suffering in this life, she said something to me that had the same effect on me as to those who heard the words of Christ, "Rise up and walk." "Bridgette, what tears would God wipe from our eyes if in this life we were not to shed tears?" The message in today's text had a new meaning in my life.

God's will for our lives was never that we should experience pain and suffering, but because of sin, this is what we face. But God, in His inexplicable grace, chooses not to let the story end this way to "whosoever believes."

Instead He gives us the hope of ultimate things. That even though we may suffer pain, shame, death, and all the horrible things that happen in this life, yet we can live beyond these circumstances because this is not the way the story ends. We can wipe the tears from our eyes knowing that someday they will ever be dry. We can go through this suffering and shame, knowing that it is only for a while. We can overcome temptation in our lives knowing that the tempter will soon tempt us no more.

Yes, in one way or another we have all suffered in this life, but the ultimate thing is

No more sorrow

No more pain

No more death

No more tears

For the former things are passed away.

It is because of the hope we have in these ultimate things that we exclaim in song:

What a day that will be

When my Jesus I shall see

When I look upon His face

The one who saved me by His grace

When He takes me by the hand

And leads me to the Promised Land

What a day, glorious day that will be!

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Sunday  
December 22

## Hope Is Alive and Well on Planet Earth

### LOGOS

1 Thess. 4:13-18

Gaius heard the wailing before he turned the street corner. His skin prickled. Only a death generated such a clamor. He pushed his way through the hired mourners and stepped into the house. Before him lay the rigid body of Junia. Jars of olives and baskets of bread lined the walls, provisions for their wedding. Now they would supply the guests who came to Junia's funeral.

In the following days, Gaius plunged into a desperate grief. Together he and Junia had embraced Paul's teachings. Together they had walked into the waters of baptism. Together they had expected to ascend into the heavens at Jesus' second advent. Now Junia was gone—forever. If only she had lived until Jesus' return.

It was for people like Gaius that Paul wrote his first letter to the believers in Thessalonica. Because of its strategic location, Paul had visited Thessalonica on his first missionary journey. He planted a church there with Jewish and Greek converts. In his short stay, he had not had time to clarify every issue. Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to encourage the new believers. Perhaps Paul wrote his first letter in response to Timothy's report.

The believers in Thessalonica didn't understand the relationship between the living and the dead at Christ's return. Some were grieving over loved ones who had died. They thought that these dead ones would now miss the glorious experience of the Lord's return. So Paul writes, "We do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep" (1 Thess. 4:13, NIV). Paul wants them to know the truth that their lost loved ones are sleeping in Christ.

When Jesus' friend Lazarus died, Jesus compared death to a sleep (John 11:11). The disciples thought Jesus meant natural sleep, but He clarified His meaning by saying, "Lazarus is dead" (verse 14, NIV). The Jews had conflicting theories regarding the state of death. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection

**Before him lay the rigid  
body of Junia.**

and a future life after death; the Sadducees did not. The Greeks and the Romans had little hope of life after death. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" was a well-known dictum. Jesus'

response to the death of Lazarus revealed that death is a state of unconsciousness and that resurrection is a reality.

Millions living today have accepted the theory of evolution with its premise, "This life is all there is." They live this maxim: "You go around only once in life, so grab for all the gusto you can." But Paul interjects, "We do not want you to be

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ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13, NIV). Paul is not condemning natural grief at the loss of a loved one. Instead he is saying, "Don't be immersed in hopeless human sorrow." It is natural to mourn for those who have died. It is a normal human emotion to grieve, but Paul contrasts the despair of believing that this life is all there is with the Christian's hope in a future life.

Paul used Christ's resurrection as his proof. "We believe that Jesus died and rose again" (verse 14, NIV). Because Jesus died and rose again, His followers who die will rise again. Christ's power breaks the bonds of death itself. The proof of this is Christ's resurrection from the dead. No other worldview has this proof. No other worldview has eye-witness accounts of flesh-and-blood life after death.

Paul believed in the imminent return of Jesus. "According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep" (verse 15, NIV). It's evident that Paul and the believers in Thessalonica lived in the continuous hope of Jesus' immediate return. The Thessalonians didn't know what would happen. Paul makes it clear that when Jesus returns those alive on that day will not be taken to heaven ahead of their loved ones who have died in the Lord (verse 16). The resurrected ones will rise from the earth first, then the living believers will rise from the earth. Together they will meet Jesus in the sky.

Paul's message is one of hope: "Encourage each other with these words" (verse 18, NIV). In the non-Christian world, there is no equivalent for the hope in the resurrection and a future life in a world without suffering, sorrow, pain, or death. There is no equivalent to a God who became human, who lived a model life, who died as a substitute, and who lives today. Paul has explained the great mystery of death and his conclusion is to live in the hope of a soon coming Savior. The early Christians "got it." They understood Paul's message. The catacombs are a tribute to their hope in another world.

The passageways are narrow and the steps descend rapidly into the maze of niches carved from stone. Many tombs are still identified by family name. Christian symbols painted over doorways and on walls still proclaim the hope of those who rest in these dark cubicles.

The Greek word *koimeterion* means "burial place." It is the same word used for "dormitory" or "sleeping room." All those who are asleep in Jesus will rise on that day when the skies can't encompass Jesus' shout, "Come forth." So comfort each other, encourage each other with these words.

## **REACT**

1. In addition to the death of a loved one, what other life events need the benefit of encouragement?
2. What makes hope integral to Christianity?
3. Explain how Lazarus and Moses differed in form after they were resurrected.

Monday  
December 23

## Is There Hope in the Future?

### TESTIMONY

1 Thess. 4:16, 18; Rev. 20:1-3

Hope is defined as “the expectation of something desired” or “to look forward to with desire.” We hope for so many things in this world that we forget that our most important hope should be based on Jesus’ second coming.

This old world began with a beautiful creation by God, but then sin messed it up destroying its beauty. Then a great flood reshaped the earth’s surface and landscape.

### Is there hope for the future?

This earth has experienced many incidents such as the crucifixion of Jesus in biblical times to the bombing and destruction over the past centuries.

But is there hope for the future with all this destruction, warfare, hostility, bombing, and struggle? Jesus’ second coming will bring an end to all the misery and pain that has been suffered by humankind.

When the Savior appears, there will be two groups of people. Those who have kept His commandments and have held hope in Jesus’ second coming “shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (verse 17, NKJV).

Satan and his followers will be bound and locked away. “I [John] saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him” (Rev. 20:1-3, NKJV).

The time is running near when Jesus will return to take us to our new home where there are mansions and golden footpaths. Are you ready? If you want your family, peers, friends to come along with you to heaven, then you should witness to them about the hope Jesus has promised us. Paul says, “Comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:18, NKJV).

### REACT

1. How can you make yourself ready for Jesus’ second coming?
2. Is the archangel Michael (the one who is like God) the same being as the glorified Christ? If not, then why the name “Michael”?
3. If it is impossible to keep God’s commandments perfectly, how were those saved who were included in the first resurrection?
4. Is heaven already existing someplace inside this universe? Is it at least theoretically reachable by a space ship?

# Sisyphus's Punishment or the Glorious Hope?

## EVIDENCE

Rom. 6:4, 5; 1 Thess. 4:13-18

Paul founded the church in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). The city of Thessalonica was formerly known as Therme, and was rebuilt by Cassander who named it in honor of his wife Thessalonice, a stepsister of Alexander the Great. While in the city Paul first appealed to the Jews, but after three Sabbaths was not allowed to enter the synagogue. However, both Jews and Gentiles believed. The envy of the Jews was aroused and Paul was compelled to leave and he went to Berea and then to Athens (Acts 17:10, 16; 18:1) and Corinth where he remained for 18 months.<sup>1</sup>

When he was still in Corinth, he sent Timothy to ascertain the conditions in this new church (1 Thess. 3:1-3). When Timothy returned to Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5), he reported on the steadfastness of the faith of the believers. They were disturbed, however, by erroneous ideas regarding the Lord's return.

There was a popular opinion that those who died before the Lord's return would not see the Lord coming in His glory. As a result of this error, sorrow consumed them as they mourned for loved ones who had died. This prompted Paul to write, "I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus" (1 Thess. 4:13, 14, NKJV).

**Sorrow consumed them as they mourned for loved ones who had died.**

Grief and sadness that engulfed the young Thessalonian church is consuming much of the world today. But God has proven beyond doubt that this is not the case. His own resurrection was a type of the final resurrection of all who sleep in Him. The Lifegiver is coming to break the fetters of the tomb. "Jesus was the first fruits of them that slept. When He came forth from the tomb, He called a multitude from the dead, thus settling forever the long-disputed question of the resurrection. In raising this multitude from the dead, He gave evidence that there will be a final resurrection of those who sleep in Jesus."<sup>2</sup>

1. *Home Health Education Bible*.

2. *The Present Truth*, February 18, 1886.

Wednesday  
December 25

## The Ultimate Survivor?

### HOW-TO

2 Thess. 2:16, 17

Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychologist, went through a traumatic time in his life when he was captured and imprisoned in a concentration camp of Nazi Germany. He felt helpless as he watched most of his comrades die of the appalling living conditions. He made a conscious decision not to fall into despair—but rather keep his mind active by secretly conducting a psychological experiment. He wanted to know what the difference was between the few who survived compared to the majority who died.

He looked at several factors including the health, vitality, family structure, intelligence, and survival skills of each of the prisoners. However, he discovered

**People who have hope are better at dealing with their present situations.**

through his discussions and observations that it was none of these factors that kept them alive. He concluded that the single most influential factor was a sense of hope for the future that each of them had while in

detention. Those who were convinced that they would survive the ordeal or strongly believed they still had reasons to live were the ones who were able to cope with the situation. Those who put their hope in a better future ultimately survived.

Similar conclusions have been made from other sociological and psychological studies, which shows that people who have hope are better at dealing with their present situations.

How can this story apply to us now? Ask yourself these questions:

1. What is my present situation? What is your attitude to life right now? What are some of the issues going on in your life that influence your answer? Some of us may be going along in life just nicely. Others may be really struggling.
2. What do you see your future to be like? When you look at where you think your life is heading, what emotions come to mind? Are you excited, scared, indifferent? What are the reasons behind the way you think about the future?
3. Does the second coming of Jesus add a different dimension to the outlook on your present and future situations?

As Christians, we have the ultimate hope in Jesus' second coming. This vision of the future should enable us to deal more effectively with our present lives.

Just as the survivors of the Nazi camp in Germany survived their ordeal because they had a vision of better things in the future, so too we can face the problems and complexities of our lives, knowing that there is something much grander to come in the future. There can be no possible greater motivator than this.

We have this ultimate hope!

## It's Time to Get Busy

### OPINION

Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; John 14:2, 3; 2 Pet. 3:9

When I was small, I used to get very excited about the coming of relatives. All of my extended family members lived up in the northeast part of the country, and their visits were always an exciting occasion. On the day that they were supposed to arrive I would sit at the living-room window waiting for them to come. This time always passed very slowly.

Time passed by much more quickly, though, when I would busy myself by helping my mom with tidying up the house or cooking. When I was busy preparing for the arrival of my relatives, the time seemed to fly by, and before I knew it they were actually there!

This quarter's lessons have been based on the hope that we have in Jesus Christ's soon coming. Just as when I was a little girl looking forward to seeing my relatives again, we Christians are looking forward to seeing Jesus' soon coming.

Yet we have a lot of work ahead of us to prepare ourselves as well as the world for His second coming. Not only do we need to prepare our own hearts by accepting Jesus as our Savior and Friend, but we also have the tremendous responsibility of drawing others closer to Christ.

Jesus gave His people a great commission in anticipation of His coming: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20, NKJV).

Yes, we have a glorious hope in knowing that our Creator, Savior, and God is coming to take us home with Him. But, we have a job to fulfill while we await His coming. What better way to pass the time than daily to preach the good news of the gospel to all with whom we come in contact!

Let's not be idle as we wait for Jesus to return for us. It may seem like our wait is long, but, "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9, NKJV). Let's get busy doing the Lord's work so that the gospel will be spread to all the world and Jesus' coming, which we are all so hopefully looking forward to, will be quickened!

**Let's not be idle as we wait  
for Jesus to return for us.**

### REACT

What does Jesus mean when He says that we are the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world"? See Matthew 5:13-16. How should we apply this to our daily lives?

## EXPLORATION

1 Thess. 4:18

## CONCLUDE

Grief is a mixture of pain and fear: pain because your loved one is gone; fear because you don't know how *you* are going to survive without that person in your life. The early Christian's grief had a third element: they were afraid that their dead loved ones would miss out on the most glorious event in human history. Do we have that same hope? Paul assuaged the Thessalonians' fears by assuring them that Jesus died and rose again and when He returns we will be reunited with our loved ones. What comfort! What a Savior!

## CONSIDER

- Visiting the grave site of a loved one. Imagine what will happen the moment Jesus returns—your loved one rising whole and holy. Think about greeting your loved one on your journey to heaven to be with the Lord and each other forever.
- Listening to or reading the words to Handel's *Messiah*, Part III, Librettos 45-48 (which are based on Job 19:25, 26; 1 Cor. 15:20, 51, 52).
- Spending time with someone who has just lost a loved one. Encourage that person to talk about the person who died. Share good memories of the deceased. Bring photos, video, or cassette tapes of the deceased to give to the survivor.
- Volunteering at a hospice. Talk to the staff about how they help terminally ill patients cope with their impending death. Talk with some of these patients about their hopes.
- Viewing the video *Hope Floats* (1998). Consider how hope that the central character and her daughter find is similar to or different from the hope expressed in the gospel.
- Creating a visual representation (diorama, drawing, computer graphics, digitally enhanced photography, collage) of the second coming of Jesus. Hang it in a prominent place in your home, workplace, or church.
- Thinking about ways to incorporate hope into the way you handle everyday stresses and frustrations. Ask yourself, If I have hope in Jesus, how will I react to traffic jams, annoying coworkers, last-minute demands from bosses, rude store clerks?

## CONNECT

*The Great Controversy*, pp. 644–647.

C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*.

<<http://members.ozemail.com.au/~jpassion/messiah/libretto.htm>>.

# THE PROMISE: GOD'S EVERLASTING COVENANT

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for first quarter 2003, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

## Lesson 1: What Happened?

Logos: Gen. 1:1, 27-29; 2:15, 16; 3:1-6

**THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION** of humanity is one filled with hope, happiness, perfection. Each day of Creation ended with the divine pronouncement that it was "good." Certainly that didn't include typhoons, earthquakes, famine, and disease.

## Lesson 2: Covenant Primer

Logos: Gen. 6:18; 12:3; 17:2; Exod. 6:6; Jer. 31:31-33

**WHAT DOES THE WORD "COVENANT" MEAN?** What elements make up the covenant? What was the covenant that God made with Noah? What hope was found in the covenant with Abraham? What role do faith and works play in our, the human end, of the covenant? Is the covenant just a deal, or does it have relational aspects to it? What is the essence of the "new covenant"?

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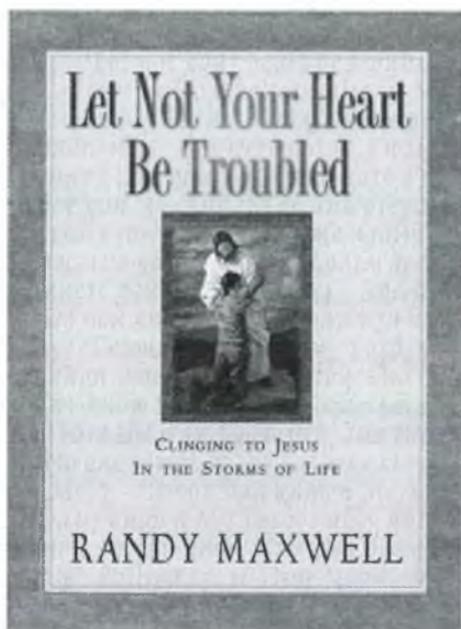
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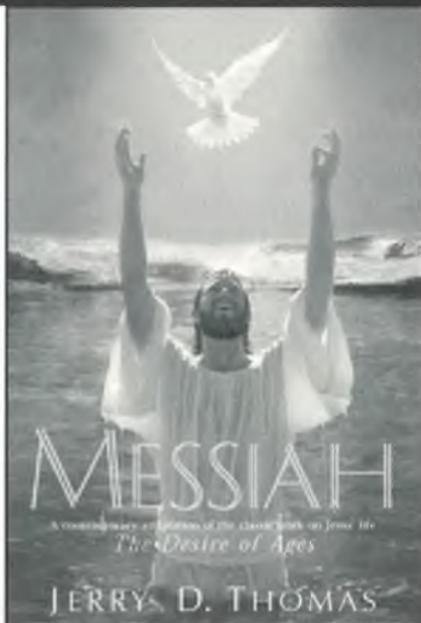


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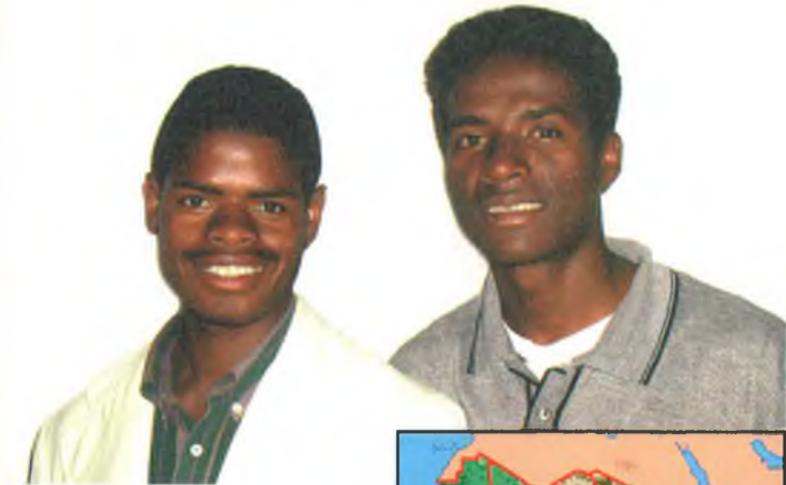
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Romuald and Florent live in a housing development built by a priest for the homeless and poor of Antananarivo, Madagascar.

As teens, the two friends spent their time seeking pleasure. The boys drifted apart as Romuald grew tired of this life and wanted to fill his mind with more worthwhile things. He began reading the Bible and praying. His brother, a new Adventist, came to visit and saw Romuald's spiritual hunger. The brothers talked at length about God, nature, the prophecies, and the Sabbath.

Then Romuald met Florent again and discovered that his former friend had become an Adventist. The two attended church together. Romuald and Florent began sharing their faith with their neighbors.

Romuald's parents, fearing that the priest would force the family from their home if he learned that Romuald was now an Adventist, begged their son to stop sharing his faith. "God will provide for you," Romuald assured them. "As for me, I must be true to my conscience."

What happened when the priest learned what the boys were doing? Read their story in this quarter's Teen Mission.



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