

# The Second Coming of Jesus



## SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 20

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** John 14:1–3; Matthew 16:27; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Matthew 24:3–14; Matthew 24:42, 44.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust in me also. There are many rooms in my Father’s house. If this were not true, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. If I go and do that, I will come back. And I will take you to be with me. Then you will also be where I am’ ” (John 14:1–3, NIV).

**THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS IS MENTIONED MORE THAN THREE HUNDRED TIMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.** It is the most important subject of our teachings. It is very important to us as Seventh-day Adventist Christians. The teaching is engraved (carved) in our name. And it is an important part of the gospel that we are called to preach. Without the promise of His coming, our faith would be useless. This glorious (wonderful) truth gives us a sense of future success and encourages our missionary work.

It could be argued that the stretching of time beyond our expectations would cause doubt in our belief in Jesus’ promise to return. But this has not happened. For many, our desire for Christ’s return is stronger than ever.

This week we will review what Jesus said about “the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13, NKJV).

## THE PROMISE (John 14:1–3)

After the Last Supper, Jesus told the disciples that He would go to a place where they could not go for a while (John 13:33). The thought of being separated from the Master filled their hearts with sorrow and fear. Peter asked, “ ‘Lord, where are You going? . . . Why can I not follow You now?’ ” (John 13:36, 37, NKJV). Christ knew their desire and promised them that the separation would only be for a short time.

**Read Christ’s promises to us in John 14:1–3. Put yourself in this situation. Why should these promises mean so much to you?**

Our Lord’s promise could not have been stronger. In Greek, the promise “I will come again” is in the present tense, which shows that He is sure to come. It could really mean, “I am coming again.”

Jesus has given us the sure promise of His second coming. He did not say “I may come again,” but “I *will* come again.” Every time He spoke of His return, He used strong words.

Sometimes we make promises we later cannot keep, even though we try hard. That is not the case with Christ. Many times He proved without any doubt that His word is trustworthy.

About His coming in human form the first time, the Lord announced through David: “ ‘Behold, I come’ ” (Psalm 40:7, NKJV). And He did (Hebrews 10:5–7). His first coming proves that His second coming is sure to happen.

During His earthly ministry (work done for God), Jesus promised a discouraged father, “ ‘Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well’ ” (Luke 8:50, NKJV). And sure enough, Jairus’s daughter was made well, even though she had been dead. Christ announced that He would rise from the grave three days after His own death. And He did. He promised the Holy Spirit to the disciples, and He sent Him right on time. Our Lord honored all of His promises in the past. All these seemed impossible to our human thinking. But we can be sure that He will keep His promise to come again.

**How can you keep the fire burning in your own heart for the second coming of Jesus?**

## THE PURPOSE OF JESUS' SECOND COMING (Matthew 16:27)



**“Awake, awake, awake,  
you that sleep in the dust,  
and arise!”**

### DEFINITIONS

1. investigative judgment—the judgment that takes place before the second coming of Jesus. It began in 1844. It will continue until Jesus' return to earth. During this time, Christ will examine the lives of all those who have believed in His name. He will raise from the dead and take to heaven those who were loyal to His name.

2. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

The great plan of salvation will come to a glorious (wonderful) end in the Second Coming. Without Christ's return to this earth, His coming as a human, His death, and His resurrection would have no influence on our salvation.

**What is one of the basic reasons for the second coming of Jesus? Read Matthew 16:27.**

Life is not always fair. In fact, often it is *not* fair. We do not always find justice in our society. Innocent people suffer while evil ones seem to enjoy success. Many people do not receive what they deserve. But evil and sin will not rule forever. Jesus will come to “ ‘reward each person for what he has done’ ” (Revelation 22:12, NIV).

This promise suggests that a judgment must take place before Christ's return. When Jesus comes, the future of each human will already have been decided. Jesus clearly hinted at this investigative judgment<sup>1</sup> in the parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22:11–13). The fact that we are judged by works does not mean that we are saved by our works or by our own good marks. Salvation is by God's grace<sup>2</sup> and received by faith in Jesus.

What is important about the promise in Matthew 16:27 is that justice will be done. We just have to wait for it.

Also, at the Second Coming, those who sleep in Christ will be raised to eternal life. Because we know that the dead are asleep in the grave, the promise of the Second Coming and the resurrection to eternal life are very important to us.

“While the earth shakes with lightning and thunder, the voice of the Son of God calls forth [out] the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the saints. Then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: ‘Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!’ Throughout the earth, the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live. And the whole earth shall ring with the marching of the great army of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. From the prison house of death they come, clothed with eternal glory [great beauty and royal perfection], crying: ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’ 1 Corinthians 15:55. And the living and the risen saints unite [join as one] their voices in a long, glad shout of victory.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 644.

**HOW WILL JESUS COME? (Matthew 24:27)**

In His sermon in Matthew 24, Christ showed concern about wrong teachings about His second coming. He warned His disciples against people who would come in His name, “ ‘saying, “I am the Christ” ’ ” (Matthew 24:5, NKJV; read also verses 23–26). Jesus does not want His followers to be deceived (fooled). So, He clearly showed the way in which He will come.

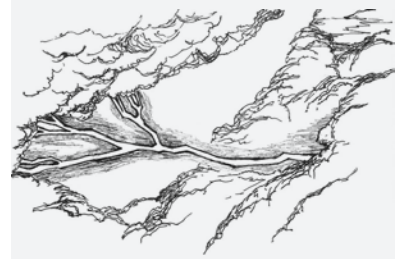
**What does Matthew 24:27 tell us about how Jesus is going to return?**

Lightning cannot be hidden. It flashes and shines throughout the sky in such a way that everyone can see it. The same will happen with Jesus’ second coming. No advertisement will be needed to call people’s attention toward it. Every living human, good and evil, saved and lost, and “even they who pierced [wounded] Him” (Revelation 1:7, NKJV), will see Him coming (Matthew 26:64, NKJV).

**How does 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 help us to understand what the Second Coming will be like?**

During His second coming, Christ will be seen with all His heavenly glory as “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16). When He came the first time as a human, the Son came alone and without any glory. He had “no beauty that we should desire Him” (Isaiah 53:2, NKJV). But this time He will come down with all the glory of the King of kings with “all the holy angels” (Matthew 25:31) and “with a great sound of a trumpet” (Matthew 24:31). If all that were not enough, the dead in Christ will rise to eternal life.

**If we trust the Lord about an event as wonderful as the Second Coming, why should we not trust Him about every part of our lives?**



**Jesus’ coming will be like lightning—everyone will see it.**



**Jesus will come with angels and the great sound of a trumpet.**

**WHEN WILL JESUS COME? (Matthew 24:3–14)**

**In a way, the Second Coming is never farther away than a moment after our death.**

Jesus said of the temple that “ ‘not one stone here will be left on top of another. Every stone will be thrown down’ ” (Matthew 24:2, NIV). The disciples were surprised by this. They asked, “ ‘When will this happen? And what will be the sign of your coming? What will be the sign of the end?’ ” (verse 3, NIV). In their thinking, the destruction of the temple would happen at the end of history at Jesus’ return.

Jesus’ answer skillfully joined the signs for both events: the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and His second coming. He did so because the disciples were not ready to understand the difference between them.

It is important for us to understand the nature and purpose of these signs. They were not given for us to decide on the date of Jesus’ return. This is because “ ‘no one knows about that day or hour. Not even the angels in heaven know. . . . Only the Father knows’ ” (verse 36, NIV). The signs show the historical events to warn us that His coming is near, even at the doors. We should never set a date for His coming. But we must never ignore the time we live in either.

**Read Matthew 24:3–14, 21–26, 29, 37–39 (read also Mark 13 and Luke 21). What picture of the world does Jesus show here? In what ways does it fit the world in which we now live?**

Jesus wanted to direct the disciples’ minds to the important fact that His coming is near. Really, His entire sermon spoke to the apostles (teachers and leaders) as if they were to be alive when He would come (read Matthew 24:32, 33, 42).

In a way, to each of us, the Second Coming is never farther away than a moment after our death. Death is a deep, unknowing sleep. We close our eyes in death. And it does not matter whether one year has passed or 1,000 years have passed. The next thing we know is the second coming of Jesus. So, the idea of the nearness of Christ’s coming, which Paul, Peter, and James also shared, makes perfect sense. For each one of us, His coming is never more than a moment after we die.

**How does this idea help us to understand the nearness of Christ’s second coming?**



**WATCH AND BE READY (Matthew 24:42, 44)**

**Why is it so important for us always to watch and be ready for Jesus' coming? Read Matthew 24:42, 44.**

The important point of Jesus' sermon in Matthew 24 is the great need to *watch*, to be on alert. It does not mean to wait lazily but to be always watchful. It is the same as the owner of a house who remains watchful against any thief (verse 43). While watchfully waiting, we have a work to do. It is the same as the faithful servant who carries out the duties his master entrusted to him during the master's absence (Matthew 24:45; Mark 13:34–37).

**What attitude (thought or feeling) would be fatal for us who claim to believe in the second coming of Jesus? Read Matthew 24:48–51 and Luke 21:34, 35. How can we avoid falling into that attitude? Why is the error so easy to make if we are not careful?**

The parable (a very short story that teaches a truth) of the evil servant is very serious for us as Seventh-day Adventists. This servant represents those who claim to believe that Christ will come again, but not soon. Believing that the Lord is delayed, they think they still have time to live selfishly and enjoy sinful pleasures. They think there will be plenty of time to prepare for the Second Coming. Unfortunately, this idea is a deadly trap. This is because no one knows when Jesus will come. Even if Christ does not come yet, any one of us could die unexpectedly. This would suddenly end our opportunity to make things right with God. But above all, continuing in sin gradually hardens the conscience so that it becomes more difficult to repent (turn away from sin). The devil does not care that we believe in the second coming of Jesus so long as we put off our preparations for it.

How can we be ready today? By repenting and by confessing our unconfessed sin to Jesus, by renewing our faith in His death on the cross, and by surrendering our wills totally to Him. We can enjoy the peace of being covered by His robe of righteousness (perfection and holiness).

**How much do you think about the Second Coming? How much does it influence your life? How do we keep the right balance in going about our daily work while still expecting Christ's return?**

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Ellen G. White, “On the Mount of Olives,” pages 627–636, in *The Desire of Ages*; “Heralds of the Morning,” pages 299–316, in *The Great Controversy [War Between Christ and Satan]*.

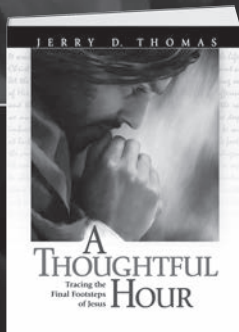
“Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man’s hand. It is the cloud in which the Savior comes. Far off, the cloud seems to be covered in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In serious silence they watch it. As the cloud comes nearer the earth, it becomes lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud. At the bottom it burns like fire. Above it is the rainbow of God’s promise. Jesus rides forth as victorious King. . . . With songs of heavenly beauty, countless angels follow Him on His way. The sky seems filled with glorious heavenly beings—‘ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.’ No human pen can describe the scene. No human mind can imagine its glory [greatness and beauty].”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 640, 641.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① We need to believe in the nearness of Christ’s return. But how can we avoid the dangers of going too far in our thinking?
- ② Think more deeply about the idea that the Second Coming is never far off from each one of us on a personal level. This is because our death is never really that far off, no matter how long we live. What does this idea tell us about just how close the Second Coming really is?
- ③ How do you answer those who laugh at the idea of the Second Coming? Before you answer them, try to put yourself in their shoes. Look at things from their ways of thinking. After you do that and see their arguments, think through ways that you can answer.
- ④ What about this idea that we, as a people, can either help delay the Second Coming or bring it closer? What are the arguments either way in that discussion?
- ⑤ If you knew that Jesus was coming next week, how would you change your life now?

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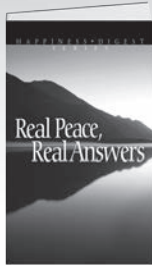
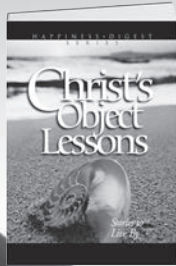
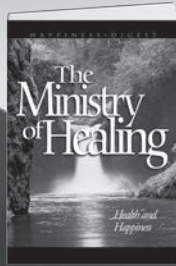
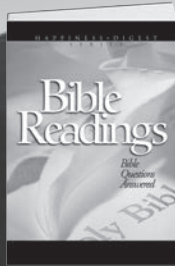
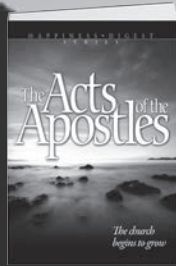
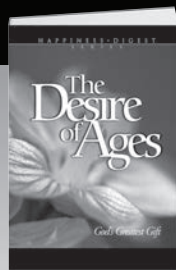
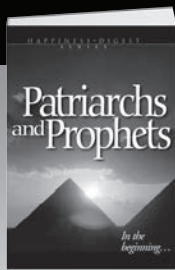
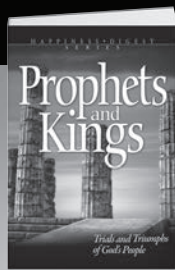


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