

Prophecies About the End



SABBATH—MAY 28

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Mark 13.

MEMORY VERSE: “The good news has to be preached to all nations before the end comes” (Mark 13:10, NirV).

A PEOPLE OF THE END-TIME. Seventh-day Adventists are a people who believe in the time of the end. We believe this world will not get better. Instead, the world will come to a sudden end. But it will not be destroyed in an atomic war, a meteor from outer space, or some other disaster. It will be Jesus who brings about the end. He will return in power and glory. After the 1,000 years of Revelation 20, God will make a new heaven and earth. This new heaven and earth will be the eternal¹ home of His people.

Our very name, *Adventists*,² tells the world we believe Jesus is coming again. Jesus believed He would come again. So Jesus was an Adventist, too! The Bible verses we will study this week outline the future from Jesus' own day until He comes again. The speaker is Jesus Himself.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: What was the theme of Jesus' speech about the end of the world? What hope did He offer? How well does world history compare³ with His prophecies about what it will be like before His second coming?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 4.

¹eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

²Adventists—the word *Advent* means “coming.” So people who believe in and look forward to Jesus' second coming are called Adventists.

³compare—show how things are the same.

SUNDAY—MAY 29

THE DISCIPLES' QUESTIONS**(Mark 13:1-4).**

What was the setting (time and place) for Jesus' prophecies about the end? Mark 13:1-3.

Matthew writes that as Jesus ended His teaching in the temple, He wept over Jerusalem. He prophesied, "Look, your house is left empty" (Matthew 23:38, NIV). Jesus said this because the disciples were talking about the great foundations and wonderful buildings of the temple as they walked away from it. Today, if you were to visit the Old Temple square in Jerusalem, you would be impressed by the size and glory of what it had been. Some of the stones of the foundation have been dug out, and they are very big. No wonder the disciples were surprised at Jesus' prophecy that the temple would be destroyed.

Compare Mark's story with Matthew's story in Matthew 24:1-3. Note carefully the disciples' questions. The disciples thought they were asking one question. But Jesus talked about the destruction of Jerusalem and about His Second Coming. Why do you think He talked about both events?⁴

To the disciples, the events that would lead to the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem would be so terrible that it would seem to be the end of the world. For them, the fall of Jerusalem would come with the return of Jesus to earth. But they were wrong. Jerusalem and the temple would fall. But many more years would pass before Jesus would come back. It is the same as people traveling across the plains⁵ of India. They see the Himalayan Mountains coming up before them. They think they see the top of the mountains. But they are really seeing only the first mountain ridges. As they climb, they see another ridge beyond, and another ridge, and another ridge, each rising higher. Far inside the mountains, they come to Mount Everest.

The setting of Jesus' words is very important for interpreting His prophecies about the end. His answer included both parts of the disciples' question—the fall of Jerusalem and His Second Coming. His answer is complete. Some prophecies point to the fall of Jerusalem. Some prophecies point to the end of the world. Some prophecies speak about both events.

The disciples look with pride at the temple. The temple is a glorious building in their world. The temple is the center of their faith.

⁴events—things that happen.

⁵plains—large, flat pieces of land.

But Jesus tells the disciples the temple will become nothing but rocks. What is the spiritual principle⁶ here that we need to always remember? Job 8:9; Jeremiah 7:3, 4; James 4:14; 2 Peter 3:10-12; 1 John 2:16-17.



The temple.

MONDAY—MAY 30
SIGNS OF THE END
(Mark 13:5-13).

There will be trouble, suffering, and bloodshed before the end of the world. But how does Jesus encourage His followers? Mark 13:5-13.

Jesus makes clear that the time of the end will be a time of bad news

and good news. Jesus' followers can expect upsets and confusion in the social, political, and natural worlds. Everything will be out of order. But there will be good news. The good news of salvation shows God's love through Jesus. Salvation will be preached to all nations.

Even 100 years ago, the prophecy of the gospel⁷ going to all nations would have seemed almost impossible. What has changed that now makes the fulfillment of this prophecy possible?



⁶principle—a law upon which other laws are based. For example, the Ten Commandments are based on two principles: (1) love for God, and (2) love for other people.

⁷the gospel—the good news of salvation.

As Christians, we are always saddened by wars and natural disasters,⁸ such as earthquakes. Jesus Himself said that these things would happen. But His words of encouragement should help us to keep our faith strong. The prophets in the Old Testament warned about destruction, judgment, and natural disasters. But they also gave words of hope to people who would probably have been very tempted to give up on God (2 Chronicles 7:13, 14; Jeremiah 29:10; Jeremiah 36:1-3; Amos 5:4). As you read Mark 13:5-13, remember that we still have many reasons to hope.

We may face struggles, troubles, and problems. But what hope and promises do you have that keep you going? Write a paragraph about the hope you have in Jesus.

TUESDAY—MAY 31

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM (Mark 13:11-19).

Mark 13:11-19 are good for Christians in every time period. But some of these verses point only to the fall of Jerusalem.

What was the sign of the end of Jerusalem? Mark 13:14. Also read Matthew 24:15 and Luke 21:20.

Jesus talked about the abomination of desolation (“the hated thing that destroys,” NIV) spoken of in Daniel 9:27. Daniel is talking about Jerusalem being destroyed by the Romans 600 years after Daniel received this vision. We know this, because Jesus Himself shows that this is what the abomination meant.

The Christians took Jesus’ words seriously, too. The storm clouds of war were approaching. At last, the Roman armies were ready to invade Jerusalem in A.D. 66–70. Jesus’ warning showed that when the time came to leave Jerusalem, Christians should leave right away. And that is what they did. But how could they escape from Jerusalem when Roman soldiers had surrounded the city? The Jewish historian Josephus, who lived through the fall of Jerusalem, explains in his book (*War*, vi. 9.3 [420]): “More than one million people died during and after the siege⁹ of Jerusalem. Ninety-seven thousand more people were taken prisoner. But during a short break the Romans unexpectedly stopped their siege of Jerusalem. Then all the Christians fled. Not one of them lost his life. They escaped to Pella, a city in the foothills east of the Jordan River, about 17 miles . . . south of the Lake of Galilee.”

“According to Josephus, Titus, commander of the Roman armies, said that his armies could not have

⁸disasters—very bad happenings, such as earthquakes, floods, wars, car accidents, et cetera. Natural disasters involve nature.

⁹siege—a long war; also when an enemy surrounds a city so the people cannot get food or water.

been successful in breaking down the walls of Jerusalem if God Himself had not so willed it. The stubborn defense of the city made the Roman soldiers so angry that when they finally entered Jerusalem, their desire for revenge knew no limits.”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 499.

The siege of Jerusalem was one of the most cruel events in history. Women, children, and babies starved to death. Families murdered each other for every bit of food, including pigeon droppings. And yet God knew it all in advance, as both Daniel’s and Jesus’ prophecy showed. How would you, as a Christian, explain to a non-Christian how a loving God would let this happen? How do you make peace with your own mind that an all-loving, all-powerful God would let these cruel, sad events happen?

**WEDNESDAY—JUNE 1
THE SECOND COMING
(Mark 13:19-27).**

After signs of a more general nature, Jesus gives clear proof showing the capture of Jerusalem (Mark 13:14-18). Then He moves toward the end of the world. He gives direct, clear statements about the Second Coming (Mark 13:26, 27).

Study Mark 13:14-27. Keep in mind that Jesus is no longer discussing the fall of Jerusalem. Write a summary of the important part of what Jesus said would happen just before His return. Focus on the general condition of the world. Compare what you wrote with the condition of the world today.

Read Mark 13:23. After describing how terrible things will be, Jesus says, Look, these terrible things are happening. But do not be discouraged or lose faith. I am telling you about these terrible things so you know not to be discouraged. God always wants to give us hope. Jesus said that when these things happen, they would prove the truth of what He had said (John 13:19). We must remember not to focus on these terrible events. Instead, we need to remember that these events lead up to the Second Coming.



Disasters will happen before the Second Coming.

Russian poetess Anna Akhmatova was writing during a terrible crisis in her homeland. She was a Christian. She wrote, “Everything is stolen, betrayed, sold.” But she asked, “Why then do we not feel hopeless?” Her answer was: “By day, from the surrounding [nearby] woods, cherries blow summer into town; at night the deep transparent [clear] skies glitter [shine] with new galaxies.” *Poems of Akhmatova* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1973), p. 73. Where did her hope come from?

THURSDAY—JUNE 2

WAITING FOR THE SECOND ADVENT (COMING) (Mark 13:28-37).

What lesson does the fig tree teach us? Mark 13:28, 29. Why can we not know the exact date of Jesus’ coming? Mark 13:28, 29, 32, 33. Why might it not be good to know the exact time of Jesus’ return?

Nature itself warns us of the Second Coming. We need to open our eyes. Every spring, as the earth puts forth new growth, we know that summer is coming. We do not know just when the hot days will come. But we can be 100 percent sure that they

will come. In the same way, the signs of Jesus’ coming have been adding up over the centuries.¹⁰ And we can know that His coming will follow as surely as summer follows spring.

During Ellen White’s long ministry,¹¹ she challenged people who set dates for the Second Coming. She refused to be trapped into guessing at a date for when Jesus would return. Instead, she advised Adventists to stay away from setting dates. She gave a sermon at Lansing, Michigan, in 1891. She advised the people to give more attention to how we live day by day. She called her sermon, “It Is Not for You to Know the Times or the Seasons.” This title came from Jesus’ words in Acts 1:6, 7. Her sermon included the following advice: “Again and again God has warned me about time setting. There will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time. We are not to know the exact time for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Jesus. . . .

“We are not to live upon time excitement. We are not to worry ourselves about the times and the seasons which God has not shown. Jesus has told His disciples to ‘watch,’ but not for an exact time. His followers are to be listening for His orders. They are to watch, wait, pray, and work, as they approach the time for Jesus’ coming. But no one will be able to tell just when that time will come, because ‘of that day and hour

¹⁰centuries—hundreds of years.

¹¹ministry—work for God.

knoweth [knows] no man.' You will not be able to say that Jesus will come in one, two, or five years. But you are not to put off His coming by saying that it may not be for ten or twenty years."—Adapted from *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 188, 189.

What word does Jesus use to describe the attitude we need to have while we wait for Him? Mark 13:34-37.

Jesus' parable¹² in Mark 13:34 teaches the same lesson as His example of the fig tree (Mark 13:28, 29). Jesus' return is sure. But we cannot know just when He will return. Each passing day brings His return one day closer.

In Mark 13:34-37, watching meant being ready to open the door when the master returned. What does watching mean to us today? What things can cause us to fall asleep? How can we avoid these things?

FRIDAY—JUNE 3

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Compare Mark 13 with Matthew 24 and Luke 21:5-36. Read Ellen G. White, "On the

Mount of Olives," in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 627–636.

Jesus gives a speech about the signs leading up to the Second Coming. He explains that it is important not to be so interested in all the gloom and doom that we forget the great hope awaiting us. This hope is eternal life in Him: "No wonder, then, that the New Testament is full of promises of eternal life (John 6:54; John 10:28; Luke 18:30; John 3:16; 1 John 5:13; 1 Timothy 1:16; Romans 6:22; Titus 3:7, and on and on). Only eternity¹³ can guarantee repayment. A million years, even a billion years, might not have enough good moments to make up for the bad we suffer here. But eternity alone can balance all things out. This is because the infinite¹⁴ is more than the finite.¹⁵ It will always be that way!" —Adapted from *Adventist Review*, "Infinity's Twin" by Clifford Goldstein, February 28, 2002, p. 22.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Read the above quote from the *Adventist Review*. What is the author saying? As a class, discuss the hope this quote is talking about.
2. Study all the signs of the Second Coming given in this week's lesson. Which sign is not fulfilled yet? What is our role in fulfilling that

¹²parable—a simple story that gives a moral or religious lesson.

¹³eternity—life without end.

¹⁴infinite—having no limit.

¹⁵finite—having limits; being limited.

sign? Are we part of the reason we are still here? Explain your answer.

3. How can we believe that the Second Coming is soon without focusing on the unnatural excitement of the end-time?

SUMMARY: It is not wrong to focus on the Second Coming. This focus starts with Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Just before the close of His life, Jesus talked with Peter, Andrew, James, and John. He gave them, and His followers in all history, a preview of the future. That future would bring Jerusalem's fall. But Christians would know when that was near so they could flee for their lives. After Jerusalem's fall, a long time of suffering would take place. But the end would come in God's chosen time.



**Focus on Jesus
while you wait for Him.**