

The Bible Truths That Make Us One in Jesus



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 17

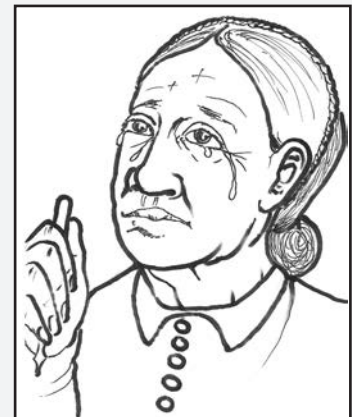
READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Acts 4:8–12; 1 Peter 2:21–24; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Hebrews 8:6; Deuteronomy 5:12–15; 1 Corinthians 15:51–54.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Jesus is the only One who can save people. No one else in the world [on the earth] is able to save us’ ” (Acts 4:12, ICB).

IN 1888, Seventh-day Adventist pastors and church leaders disagreed with each other over some important Bible verses and what they meant. These pastors and church leaders disagreed about what the ten horns in Daniel 7 meant and what the law in Galatians 3:24 really meant. At that time, very few of these Adventists really understood how their unfriendly behavior hurt their friendships with each other. In the end, their rude behavior hurt the peace in the church and the work that God gave them to do on earth.

This problem in the church made Ellen White very sad. She asked the people who were part of the talks to think carefully about their connection with Jesus. They should show their love for Jesus, even when they disagreed with each other. She also said that we should not expect everyone in the church to agree all the time about how to explain every Bible verse.

But Ellen White also said that we should try to agree with each other about how to understand important Adventist beliefs (read Ellen G. White, *Counsels [advice] to Writers and Editors*, pages 28–32). This week, we will study some very important Bible truths that make us Seventh-day Adventists. These truths help us agree with each other about what we believe.



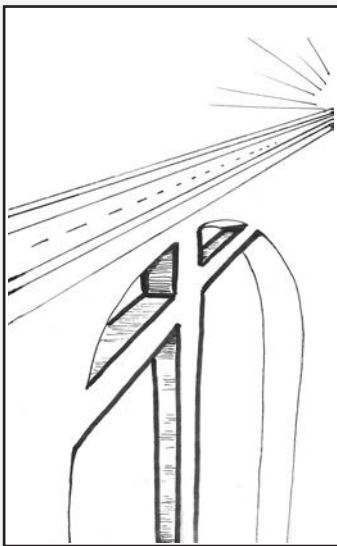
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JESUS SAVES US (Acts 4:8–12)

Seventh-day Adventists and other Christians share many beliefs. But Seventh-day Adventists believe in truths that no other Christian church on earth preaches. These truths help show everyone who we are. They show everyone that God chose us to be His special people with an important truth for the end time.

In Acts 4:8–12 and Acts 10:43, Peter talks about how important Jesus is to God’s plan to save us. In Peter’s eyes, is Jesus important to God’s plan? If yes, how much?

In his Second Letter to the Corinthian church, Paul told the church some Good News. The Good News is that “God was in Christ, making peace between the world and himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19, ERV). This verse tells us that Jesus’ death makes peace between us and God the Father. Sin and death separated us from the Father. But Jesus’ death is a “bridge.” His death connects us with the Father again. Jesus’ work of ending our separation from God and connecting us with Him again has a special name. This work is named “atonement.” “Atonement” is an old word. It used to mean “agreement.” The word “atonement” describes the peace we have in our connections with other people. When we disagree and fight with our friends and the people we love, then we need peace to heal us. Jesus gives us atonement so that we can get this peace. The agreement and peace we see and feel in the church are gifts. These gifts come from Jesus’ work to end sin and separation between us and God. Jesus wants to help us connect with God and each other again.



Jesus’ death is a “bridge.” His death connects us with the Father again.

What do the verses below teach us about Jesus’ death and His waking up from the dead? How important are they to the work God gave our church to do?

Romans 3:24, 25 _____

1 John 2:2 _____

1 John 4:9, 10 _____

1 Peter 2:21–24 _____

JESUS' SECOND COMING (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18)

The first Christians in New Testament times wait for Jesus' Second Coming. To them, His Second Coming is “the blessed hope” (Titus 2:13, NIV). They believe that everything the Bible promises will come true at that Second Coming. Seventh-day Adventists also share this belief. Our name “Adventist” clearly shows that we do. “Adventist” means a person waiting for Jesus' Second Coming. All people who love Jesus believe that they will talk with Jesus in person. Until Jesus comes back, our belief in the Second Coming helps us to stay together in agreement.

Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:26, 27; Revelation 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; and Revelation 19:11–16 talk about Jesus' Second Coming. What do these verses teach us about His Coming? How is this teaching different from what many other Christians teach about Jesus' Second Coming?

Again and again, the Bible tells us that Jesus will come back to take His people to heaven. But we should not try to guess when that will happen. Jesus Himself said that no one but God the Father knows when the Second Coming will happen (Matthew 24:36).

Near the end of His work on earth, Jesus told the picture story about the “ten girls” (Matthew 25:1–13, ERV). Jesus used this picture story to describe the church while it waits for Him to come back. There are two groups of girls in this picture story. The two groups show us the two different groups of believers who say that they wait for Jesus. On the outside, both groups of girls seem the same. But Jesus comes later than all the girls think or expect. Then we see that the two groups of girls are really different. One group kept their hope for the Second Coming alive. They believed Jesus was coming back soon. So, they got ready. Jesus used this picture story to help His followers understand that they must trust God's promise even when there seems to be no proof that it will happen. Today, Jesus invites us also to “watch” and be ready at any time for Him to come back.

Our name “Seventh-day Adventist” shows everyone that the Second Coming is important to us. How can we keep our hope strong in the Second Coming? We do not want to make the same mistake as the ten girls. How can we stay ready?



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JESUS' SPECIAL WORK FOR US IN HEAVEN'S TEMPLE (Hebrews 8:6)

In the Old Testament, God told Moses to build Him a sanctuary on earth (Exodus 25:8). The sanctuary on earth was the place where people worshiped God until Solomon built God a temple (1 Kings 5–8). God used the sanctuary to teach His people about His plan to save them. Both the sanctuary and Solomon's temple were copies of the sanctuary in heaven (Hebrews 8:2; read also Exodus 25:9, 40).

The whole Bible hints at and teaches that there is a real sanctuary in heaven. The sanctuary in heaven is the place where God lives. The sanctuary on earth showed God's people His plan to save humans and helped explain Jesus' work in heaven as our High Priest. A high priest is a holy leader who works to save His people.

Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 9:11, 12, 23–28; and 1 John 1:9–2:2 talk about Jesus' work as our High Priest in heaven's sanctuary. What do these verses teach us about Jesus' special work?

After Jesus woke up from the dead and went to heaven, He entered the sanctuary. There, He started His work to save us (Hebrews 7:25). That is why the Bible tells us we can “go with complete [full] trust to the throne of God. We will receive [get] His loving-kindness and have His loving-favor to help us whenever we need it” (Hebrews 4:16, NLV).

The high priest's work in the sanctuary on earth had two parts. In the same way, Jesus' work as our High Priest has two parts too. Jesus stands between sinners and a holy God. He works to end the separation that sin caused between us and God the Father. He works to connect humans to God again. Humans who turn away from sinning can connect with the Father right away. Jesus makes that connection possible (1 John 2:1). Since 1844, Jesus now works for us in the Most Holy Room in heaven's sanctuary. His work includes judging and making God's people clean. That work was done one time every year on the Day of Cleansing in Bible times (Leviticus 16). The high priest made the sanctuary “clean” on that day. His work is a word picture that shows how Jesus' blood removes sin and joins God and everyone under one peaceful government. Adventists were the first to tell people the truth about Jesus' special work for humans right now in the two rooms of heaven's sanctuary.



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THE SABBATH (Deuteronomy 5:12–15)

The Sabbath is another Bible truth that Seventh-day Adventists believe. The Sabbath is an important teaching that leads to Christian friendship in the church and unity. Unity is agreement. It means that Jesus joins us as one in mind, heart, and the truth. Adventists are one of the few Christian churches that believe in the Sabbath truth.

The Sabbath is God's gift to humans. God gave the Sabbath to humans when He made the earth (Genesis 2:1–3). During the week that God made the earth, He did three things to make the Sabbath special. (1) God rested on the Sabbath from His work of making the earth. (2) God blessed the Sabbath day. (3) God made the Sabbath holy. These three actions separated the Sabbath as God's special gift to humans. The Sabbath helped humans to experience heaven on earth. The Sabbath also helps us to remember the truth that God made the earth in six days. A famous rabbi, or Jewish teacher, has named the Sabbath "a palace in time." That means the Sabbath is a holy day when God meets with His people in a special way.

Exodus 20:8–11; Deuteronomy 5:12–15; and Ezekiel 20:12, 20 talk about the meaning of the Sabbath. What do these verses say that the Sabbath means to humans?

As Seventh-day Adventists, we wish to follow Jesus' example (Luke 4:16). That is why we keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy. Jesus worshiped on the Sabbath. His example shows us that He honored the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship. Jesus did some of His miracles on the Sabbath to show us that healing the body and the spirit is a celebration of the Sabbath (read Luke 13:10–17). The church leaders and believers in New Testament times understood that Jesus did not get rid of the Sabbath. So, they kept the Sabbath and worshiped on that day (Acts 13:14, 42, 44; Acts 16:13; Acts 17:2; Acts 18:4).

Another beautiful part of the Sabbath truth is that it is a word picture that shows us how Jesus frees us from sin. The Sabbath continues to promise us that "God's people have a complete rest waiting for them" (Hebrews 4:9, NLV). All people who want to rest can enjoy that rest now by believing that Jesus saves them. Our keeping the Sabbath shows everyone that we have faith in Jesus alone to save us from sin and give us everlasting life (read Hebrews 4:10).



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DEATH AND EVERLASTING LIFE (1 Corinthians 15:51–54)

God made the heavens and the earth in one week. At the end of that week, God made man. The Bible describes how that happened: “Then the Lord God made man from the dust of the ground. And He breathed into his nose the breath of life. Man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7, NLV). This story shows us that human life came from God. But God lives forever. So, does that mean that the spirit in us never dies too? No. The Bible tells us that God is the only One who does not die (1 Timothy 6:16). The gift of everlasting life is not given to humans when they are born. The Bible tells us that our human lives are the same as “a fog. You can see it for a short time, but then it goes away” (James 4:14, ERV). When we die, our spirits sleep. We do not think or feel anything anymore after we die (read Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10; Psalm 146:4; Psalm 115:17; John 11:11–15).

Humans do not live forever. They will die. But the Bible tells us that Jesus gives the gift of everlasting life to everyone who believes that He saves them (Romans 6:23; 2 Timothy 1:10; John 3:16). So, we do have hope that there is life after death.



God gives people everlasting life at the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:51–54 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 talk about life after death. What do they say about it? When do these verses say that God will give everlasting life to humans?

Paul makes it clear that God does not give everlasting life to people when they die. No, God gives people everlasting life at the resurrection. The resurrection is the time when Jesus will wake up the dead at His Second Coming when the last trumpet shall be blown. God gives believers the promise of everlasting life when they accept Jesus as their Savior. But God gives us the gift of everlasting life when the resurrection happens. The New Testament does not teach the false idea that spirits go to heaven when they die. This teaching is a lie. Where did this false teaching come from? The Greeks in early Bible times taught this lie. This false teaching is not found in either the Old or the New Testament.

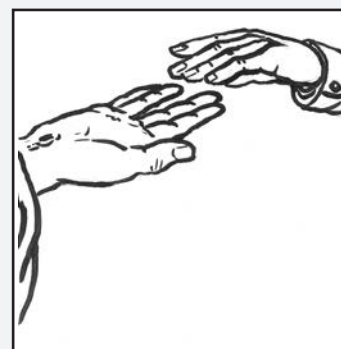
How does the Bible teaching about death help us trust even more fully in the promise about the Second Coming?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Foundations, Pillars [a stone support or post; a word picture for church teachings], and Landmarks [an important time in history],” pages 28–32, in *Counsels [advice] to Writers and Editors*. Read the article “Doctrines [church teachings], Importance [how important something is] of,” pages 778, 779, in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe many of the same teachings that other Christians believe. The most important teaching of all is our belief that God saves us because of our faith in Jesus’ death on the cross for us. Along with other Christians, we believe that we are not made right with God because of our own good behavior. Jesus makes us right with God. God accepts us because Jesus obeyed God and lived a holy life. God accepts Jesus’ holy life in place of our lives of sin. Because of our faith, Jesus’ holy life replaces our lives of sin. We do nothing to earn this gift. As Ellen G. White writes, “Jesus accepted the punishment that we should get. Jesus took our punishment so that we could get everlasting life. Jesus was found guilty for our sins and killed. Jesus did nothing to earn that punishment. But He accepted death on a cross because He wanted His holy life to make us right with God. We did nothing good to earn the gift of Jesus’ holy life. But Jesus accepted the death that was ours. Why? Because He wanted to give us the life that belongs to Him.”—*The Desire of Ages*, page 25, adapted. At the same time, our beliefs and our way of life make us different from all other Christian churches. God wants us to be different so that we will show everyone on earth who He really is. Our love for Jesus and our special teachings should be the most powerful things that join us as one in Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In *Faith and Works*, page 103, Ellen G. White says that our being made right with God is the same thing as God forgiving our sins. Why is our being made right with God and His forgiveness the foundation for all our friendships in the church?
- ② Our church teachings are very important. How has God used them to bring so many different people together as one? What does that tell us about how important our teachings are for agreement in the church?



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