

King of Kings and Lord of Lords!



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Matt. 24:23-51, 7:21-29, John 14:1-3, Acts 1:9-11, Phil. 2:9-11, Rev. 20:7-9.*

Memory Text: “Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. . . . And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (*Revelation 19:11, 16, NKJV*).

Key Thought: Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will come again in glory to gather the redeemed of all ages into His eternal kingdom. All those who have received Him as Savior and Lord will welcome Him with joy when He returns to this earth.

Of all the promises that Jesus, our Savior and Lord, has given us, the greatest promise is that He will return and take us from this sin-sick world. We have this hope, the hope in the coming of the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, as our Savior, reconciled earth to heaven and thus paved the way for the great and glorious day of His return when—as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS—He will bring that reconciliation to its eternal consummation.

This is the great hope of all whose acknowledgment of Christ as Lord has been made manifest in their lives; in contrast, for those who—regardless of what they confess—have rejected Jesus as Lord of their lives, the Second Coming will be a sad and fearful event.

Why not, right now, make that complete surrender to the One who, at Calvary, surrendered all for us?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 24.*

The Certainty of Christ's Return *(John 14:1-3, Acts 1:9-11)*

Those who have received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are a people of hope. With joyful expectation we are “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (*Titus 2:13, NKJV*). Our hope concerning the return of our Lord Jesus Christ is not wishful thinking. It is based upon the faithfulness of our Lord to honor His promises.

What promise did Jesus Christ give to His followers concerning His return to this earth? *John 14:1-3.*

We trust in this promise of Jesus: “ ‘I will come again.’ ” This phrase might literally be translated “I am coming again.” The verb *to come* is in the present tense. We call this a “futuristic present,” which emphasizes the certainty of that which is being described. In this promise, Jesus Christ assures us His return is as certain as if it were already taking place!

What promise of two heavenly messengers confirmed the promise of Jesus regarding His return? *Acts 1:9-11.*

Seventh-day Adventist Christians have long cherished the blessed hope of the glorious return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our name, Adventist, reminds us that Jesus Christ, who came once as a baby in Bethlehem's manger, will come again as King of kings and Lord of lords. Even though our pioneers expected His return long before now, the promise is still sure. “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. But the day of the Lord will come” (*2 Pet. 3:9, 10, NKJV*). The apostle Paul affirms the certainty of our hope in these words: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven” (*1 Thess. 4:16, NKJV*). The second coming of Jesus is not wishful thinking. It is our certain hope.

Feeling discouraged, worried, fearful? Prayerfully, read again John 14:1-3 and place yourself, your name, in each spot where it's appropriate. Realize that in a very real sense, Jesus is talking to you, that those words are for you. What hope do you draw from this precious, and intimate, promise of Jesus—to you, personally?

Key Text: *Acts 1:11*

Teachers Aims:

1. To discuss Christ's return as King and Lord.
2. To emphasize the surety of Christ's promise to return.
3. To examine the difference between people who will be ready and those who will not.

Lesson Outline:

I. Christ the King (*Rev. 19:16*).

- A. Why will Jesus return as both Lord and King?
- B. Why is He called Faithful and True?
- C. What gives Him the right to rule this earth as King of kings?

II. The Blessed Hope (*2 Pet. 3:9, 10*).

- A. Why can we be sure of Christ's promise to return?
- B. At Christ's ascension, why did angels assure the disciples of His return?
- C. Why does the Bible describe how Jesus will return?

III. Will You Be Ready? (*Rev. 16:15*).

- A. How can we go about our daily lives yet live as if Christ will return at any moment?
- B. Discuss what it means to be ready when Christ returns.
- C. Why will everyone confess that Christ is Lord when He returns?

Summary: We can be sure Jesus will return. On that day even the wicked will confess He is Lord. We must decide now if we want to be ready to meet Him when He comes. Because ready or not, Jesus is coming again!

COMMENTARY

King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Ancient Hebrew civil law recognized God as the ultimate Judge. That meant the exclusive goal of every human judicial proceeding was to discover God's judgment on the matter. God's actions as Judge were not just the model human judges were to follow. He was the Authority to whom human judgments must submit (*see 1 Kings 8:31, 32; 2 Chron. 19:6, 7*). Today we tend to ignore this aspect of human judgment because we do not follow a biblical understanding of the activity of a judge.

We tend to think of judges in terms of condemning people. When a person is found guilty of an offense in Western tradition, a judge pronounces the sentence that condemns that person for his or her improper activity. Even in the Hebrew tradition, there is a need for this. In the Bible, however, the principle task of the judges was

The Nature of Christ's Return

Our Lord Jesus Christ wants us not only to be certain of His return but also to understand the nature of His return. We have already discovered from yesterday's study that His coming will be literal. Jesus declared, "I will come again." We must reject any interpretation that would attempt to spiritualize Christ's second coming as His coming into our hearts. While it is true that Christ can dwell in our hearts through faith (*see Eph. 3:17*), this dwelling in our hearts by the Holy Spirit does not replace His literal return in glory.

What can we learn from the following comments of Jesus about the nature of His return? *Matt. 24:23-26, 27, 30, 31.*

The second coming of Jesus will not be secret. It will be dramatic, visible, and audible. These words of Jesus also imply that a resurrection of the dead will occur at the time of His coming. Listen to another promise of Jesus: "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (*John 6:40, NKJV*).

Read Paul's descriptions of the nature of Christ's second coming (*1 Thess. 4:16, 17*). **Why would that be something hard for an imposter to fake? Why, too, with such clear biblical testimony regarding the nature of Christ's return, have so many people been fooled by false christs in the past?**

The apostle Paul reinforces the teaching of Jesus regarding the nature of His return. The second coming of Jesus Christ is personal: The Lord Himself will descend from heaven. It is dramatic: The Lord will shout and the trumpet will sound. There will be a resurrection: The dead in Christ will rise first. Finally, all the redeemed will be gathered up to meet the Lord in the air.

Using your imagination, depict in writing what it will be like when Jesus returns. Share it with your class.

to set things right. As part of that task, judges categorized acts, thus clarifying the difference between good and bad actions. In fact, the words for *right* and *righteous*, *judge* and *judgment*, all have the same root in Greek: *dikaiao*. The poor, the outcast, the oppressed, the widows and the orphans went to the judges to ask them to come to their defense and set aright a wrong that had been done to them. Thus, the Old Testament uses the words *salvation* and *righteousness* as synonyms (see *Ps. 71:13-16, Isa. 51:5, 56:1, 59:15-17*).

When God acts as a righteous Judge to set things right, He brings salvation, vindication, and deliverance to the oppressed and the exiled. God clears up the confusion of right being called wrong and wrong being called right. In Jesus' parable, the woman knows where to go to get things set right, and she keeps going there until the judge acts on her behalf, even though he is an unjust judge (*Luke 18:1-8*).

So, when Jesus and Paul talk about righteousness and judgment, they are more concerned about the process of setting things right than they are about condemning anyone. In the book of Judges, the "judges" did very little of what we would consider judicial activity. But what they did do was work to set things right.

The judges' task was not ended when they passed sentence. It was their job to follow through to make sure the sentence was carried out and the right thing was actually done. That might involve punishment for the wrongdoer, restitution to the one wronged, or both. Judges got the right things done. They did not just tell other people to do the right things.

It is not enough, however, to render a judgment and see that it was carried out. That judgment must be published as widely as possible so all concerned could agree the judgment was just. Everyone who heard it, whether the innocent party or the guilty party, whether the prosecutor or the defender, whether the witnesses or the spectators, needed to agree that the decision was correct.

Instead of each party being the adversary of the other, all the parties had a responsibility to see justice done. When a just judgment was given, everyone then agreed the matter had been settled, that what was wrong had been made right and that the judge had done exactly what needed to have been done.

Perhaps this helps us understand what the investigative judgment is all about. God is not trying to determine whom to condemn. He is trying to clear things up on this earth. This judgment is an investigation into what has happened. It is an investigation in which facts are revealed and truth is told. The Judge renders a verdict, and that verdict brings salvation to God's righteous people because of their relationship with Christ. They are not just covered with His "robe of righteousness." They have become part of the body of Christ. They themselves are a people working for justice.

Then God publishes the verdict for all to examine it. First, the

The Timing of Christ's Return

Almost two thousand years ago, in His last recorded comment in the book of Revelation, our risen Lord declared, “ ‘Surely I am coming quickly’ ” (*Rev. 22:20, NKJV*). Christians have wrestled with that declaration ever since. From our perspective, it doesn't seem as though He is coming quickly. We realize, of course, that the Lord is not locked in time as we mere mortals are. The apostle Peter reminds us that “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (*2 Pet. 3:8, NKJV*).

Dwell upon what Peter wrote regarding the Lord and time. What mistake should these words protect us from making?

In terms of eternity, the Lord Jesus Christ is coming quickly. And yet, many times we find ourselves crying out with the souls under the altar, “ ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ ” (*Rev. 6:10, NKJV*).

Read the parable Jesus tells in Matthew 24:45-51. In your own words, write out what you believe is the basic message Jesus is giving us here. Why is this parable so relevant for us as Adventists?

There's been a long-running debate in the church about the question of a delay. Is there one? If so, why? If not, then why hasn't Christ returned? And though we probably won't get all these questions resolved this side of eternity, the crucial thing for us is to be ready always, regardless of when He comes.

If someone were to ask you, What does it mean to be ready for Jesus' return, how would you respond? If Christ returned today, would you be ready? Justify your answer.

heavenly beings do so, after which they render their agreement (*Rev. 5:11-14*). Then, the redeemed examine the verdict and render their judgment that it is just (*1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Rev. 20:4*). Finally, all humanity, the just and the unjust, bow in submission to confess that God's verdict is just (*Isa. 45:21-23, Phil. 2:10, Rev. 20:11-15*).

Only then is God able to destroy sin without leaving any questions unanswered. No doubts remain. The difference between good and evil is forever settled. The Judge of all the earth has done what is right.

Concepts for this commentary are contained in Vernard Eller, *Towering Babble* (Elgin, Ill.: The Brethren Press, 1983), pp. 104–109.

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *John 14:1-3, Acts 1:7-11, Philip-
pians 2:5-11, Revelation 19:11-16*

- ❶ The differences between Christ's first and second advents could hardly be more pronounced. At His first coming He was totally vulnerable. He spent His entire public life as a servant. However, He will come again as a Conquering Hero who vanquishes sin in every form. Is our present experience more like Jesus' first or second advent? Why? How does serving Christ as Lord prepare us to live with Him in glory?
- ❷ The parable of the ten virgins (*Matt. 25:1-13*) speaks directly to the delay between Christ's ascension and His return. The wise and foolish maidens both slept, but only the wise were prepared for the delay. What keeps you motivated to keep watching for the Lord's return? What is more conducive to waiting productively—activity or inactivity? What are your preferred methods of staying active?
- ❸ The man who built his house on the rock (*Matt. 7:24-27*) did not prevent a flood from happening. Nor did having a house on the rock hasten or delay the flood. The only benefit to having a house on the rock was being prepared when the flood came. What/whom does the rock symbolize? (*Ps. 18:2*). What specific steps then can we take to be prepared? How does knowing Jesus as Lord help you to keep your focus?
- ❹ Read Colossians 3:1-4. What did Paul mean when he wrote, "Your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (*vs. 3, NIV*)? What assurance do you have that your life is indeed *hidden with Christ*? What practical differences does that make in your life? What do other people—particularly non-Christians—notice?

The Impact of Christ's Return

The glorious return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will impact those living on the earth in one of two ways. For those who have refused to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, it will be a time of terror. Even for many professed followers of Christ, those who never let Him be Lord of their lives, it will be a time of fearful judgment.

Read carefully the following texts in light of this whole quarter's lesson: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (*Matt. 7:21-23*). How do these verses capture the essence of what it means to *profess* Jesus as Lord but not allow Him to be Lord? What is the crucial difference between the two?

Our Savior is very clear: We can't separate a profession of faith in Him from a life of obedience to Him. Notice how Jesus here links obedience with actually being in a saving relationship with Him; He says He "never knew" those who—though professing Him as Lord, and even doing deeds in His name—weren't obedient to the will of God. This has to be one of the strongest statements Jesus ever made about the futility of calling oneself a Christian while not living like one, and living like one demands that we do the will of the Father in heaven. Otherwise, our faith is made out of nothing but sand.

Read the parable that comes right after Christ's words here (*Matt. 7:24-29*). How does this fit in exactly with what Jesus said in verses 21-23?

Witnessing

Even if God never did another good thing in our life, He would still be worthy of our praise, for He is King of kings and Lord of lords!

It is our response to God that determines our preparedness for His return. As Adventists, awaiting the Second Advent, we are in danger of staring into the sky as the disciples did at Christ's ascension.

We look forward to His return, but while we are here, He has a work for us to do. We think we are ready, but if we have not made God Lord of our priorities, our thoughts, our desires, our speech, our prayers, our relationships, our resources, our body temples, our labor, our worship, and our service here on earth, how can He be our Lord in heaven?

And so the question comes down to us through the ages: "Why stand ye gazing?" (*Acts 1:11*).

Jesus will come back, but we have a commission to fulfill in the meantime. We must let others know of this Lord and King; we must share the hope we have in the soon coming of the Lord.

If Jesus is Lord of our life, then we would be no more willing that any perish than He is willing for any to perish. Yes, we find ourselves in enemy-occupied territory awaiting our sovereign Lord to take back what the enemy stole. But let us work to help as many come over to the Lord's side as are willing, so they might rejoice with us on that day when He comes back in all His glory.

The Cosmic Confession

For Christians, their profession that Jesus is Lord is matched by a life of faithful obedience, not an obedience that saves (it can't), but an obedience that expresses a true faith in God.

Read Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, and Hebrews 9:12. What do these verses tell us about how we are redeemed?

And yet, these people are not the only ones who acknowledge Jesus as Lord. According to the apostle Paul, the day is coming when every knee will bow and every tongue will make that same confession.

Read Philippians 2:9-11. What is Paul talking about here?

“At His first coming, Christ was denied and rejected by men, and by them dragged as a criminal to Pilate’s bar, where they charged Him with blasphemy. He was scourged and crucified. Nails were driven through His hands and His feet. . . . At His second coming, the scene will be changed. He will be acknowledged by all as the King of glory. At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The angels will bow in adoration before Him. His enemies will see the mistake they have made, and every tongue will confess His divinity.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, April 19, 1905.

However, for the wicked, this will not be a saving confession but simply a recognition of that which is undeniably true. There is no change of heart. No repentance. In fact, according to Revelation 20:7-9, they continue their rebellion against the Lord.

In contrast, there are those who—though sinners, though imperfect, though in and of themselves possessing no righteousness—have, nevertheless, committed their souls to the Lord Jesus by surrendering their will to Him. These people will proclaim Jesus as their Lord, and their lives will reflect that proclamation. Our praise of the Lord in heaven will simply be our picking up where we left off praising Him here. If we love and serve Jesus even amid the toil, pain, sin, and corruption on earth now, then how much more so in the new heaven and a new earth? Our service to Jesus as Lord there will just be the continuation of our service to Him here but without the cumbrousness of sin, disease, ignorance, and the devil. That’s the victory Jesus won for us. We can, by trusting and living by faith with Jesus as Lord, start enjoying the fruits of that victory, even now.

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: What troubles you? If you were making a list, would it include inadequate finances, negative interpersonal relationships, or unrealistic demands at work? Or is it all those things and more? In John 14:1, Jesus says “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (*NASB*). What reasons does He give for peace in adversity? (*vss. 2, 3*). How does the worldview of a soon-coming Savior allow us to stand firm even during difficult times?

Thought Questions:

1 At your place of employment, who has the final say, the most authority? This person usually “lays down the law” and is the consummate problem solver. In the universe, God the Father is the ultimate Authority. He wants to solve our worst problems—sin and separation from Him. He even sent His Son so we would have tangible proof of His rescue plans. Why is it important to you that Jesus is “Faithful and True” (*Rev. 19:11, NKJV*)? How does this compare with your boss? How would you explain your trust in God’s authority and plans to a work colleague?

2 Reread Matthew 24:23-51. Here Jesus paints a verbal picture of end-time events. He invites His followers to be aware of the signposts that will announce His return. He also tells a parable of those who wait. How will you answer His question, “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household?” (*Matt. 24:45, NASB*). As a class, pray for the ministry and witness of each member. Covenant together to support one another to be faithful and watchful.

Application Question:

God prophesies that “at the name of Jesus every knee will bow . . . and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (*Phil. 2:10, 11, NASB*). Scripture also records that some who worship Jesus will praise Him and others will call for the rocks to hide them from His presence. How does the blessed hope of His imminent return benefit your life? What will you do this very week to authentically share the good news of a soon returning Savior, who is worthy of praise, honor, and worship?

Further Study: Read the last four chapters in the book of Revelation. Take time to meditate on this beautiful scene of the new earth: “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever” (*Rev. 22:1-5, NKJV*).

What a blessed hope is ours. Soon our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will return as King of kings and Lord of lords. He will create a new heaven and a new earth, and we will reign with Him forever and ever. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Discussion Questions:

- 1 As a class, compare notes from what you wrote in Monday’s study about what it will be like when Christ returns.
- 2 What do you say to someone who, when the subject of Christ’s return is brought up, says, “Look, ever since I was a kid, I was told that Christ was coming soon. That was so many years ago. Please, don’t bother me with this talk of His ‘soon’ return”?
- 3 If you read the selection above in Revelation, talk as a class about what you think life will be like in the new earth. What will the major difference be between life there and life here now?
- 4 As a class, talk about the difference between merely believing in Jesus as Lord and experiencing that lordship in your life.