

The New Testament Hope



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:12–19; John 14:1–3; John 6:26–51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18.

MEMORY VERSE: “This [teaching] is what God told us: God has given us eternal [everlasting] life, and this life is in his Son [Jesus]. Whoever has the Son has life. But whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11, 12, ERV).



The only hope we have that we will live forever someday comes from Jesus.

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE was not a new hope for Jesus and His followers. In Old Testament times, God's special messengers and Israel's spiritual leaders believed in the resurrection. The resurrection is the time when God will wake up His people from the dead at the Second Coming. Jesus said that Abraham saw this special day in a vision and was filled with joy (John 8:56). Jude says that Enoch told people who were alive before the Flood about the Second Coming (Jude 1:14, 15). The book of Hebrews talks about the heroes of faith who wait for their reward from heaven. But these men and women won't get their reward until we get our reward (Hebrews 11:39, 40). We would have trouble understanding these verses in Hebrews if these Bible heroes of faith already were with the Lord in heaven.

Only people who are saved in Jesus have everlasting life (1 John 5:11, 12). This teaching shows that the spirit does not live forever after the body dies. The New Testament hope is found in Jesus. The only hope we have that we will live forever someday comes from Jesus.

HOPE BEYOND THIS LIFE (1 Corinthians 15:12–19)

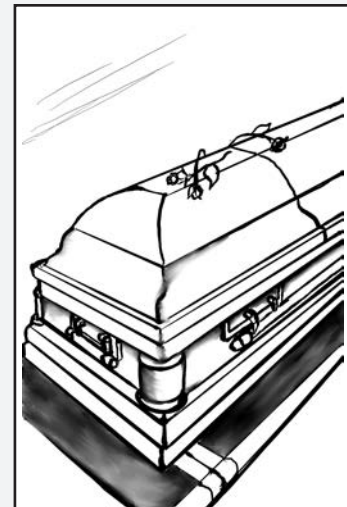
We have the Bible promise of everlasting life **in Jesus**. This idea is very important. His death and His resurrection offer us so much hope. As we already saw, Jesus' resurrection is the time when Jesus woke up from the dead three days after dying on the cross for our sins.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12–19. What is Paul saying here in these verses? How is Jesus' resurrection connected to our own resurrection? Our own resurrection, as we learned, is the time when Jesus will wake up His people from the dead at His Second Coming.

Paul wants us to understand this important idea: we will wake up from the dead because Jesus woke up from the dead. Jesus' resurrection and our resurrection are connected. We cannot separate the two resurrections. If Jesus didn't wake up from the dead, then what? Paul tells us the answer in strong words: "our preaching is worth nothing. And your faith is worth nothing" (1 Corinthians 15:14, ICB). So, in other words, when we die, we stay dead. We never wake up. We are dead forever. That's why Paul also says, "If we are not raised [brought back to life; resurrected] from death, 'Let us eat and drink, because tomorrow we die' " (1 Corinthians 15:32, ERV). What can we do if we have no hope?

If this life is all we have, and if we only live for about 70 years, then we really have no hope at all. No wonder Ellen G. White says, "Heaven is worth more than anything else we have or ever will hope to get. If we lose heaven, we lose everything."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, page 349, adapted.

Think about hope and faith. These are very precious gifts, right? Why must we do everything we can, with God's help, to protect these gifts?



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I WILL COME AGAIN (John 14:1–3)

Almost 2,000 years have passed since Jesus promised to come again. How can we help people understand that this promise is more important than ever for Christians today? Read John 14:1–3 for the answer.



Two thousand years ago, Jesus woke up from the dead and went to heaven.

Four times in the book of Revelation Jesus says, “I am coming soon” (Revelation 3:11; Revelation 22:7, 12, 20, ERV). Jesus’ followers expected Jesus to come back in their day. Many Christians since that time have shared this same hope. But year after year has passed, and Jesus has not come back. So, many Christians start to ask, “How much longer will we need to preach that ‘Jesus is coming soon’? Is it wrong for us to expect Jesus to come back soon?” (Read 2 Peter 3:4.)

Many Christians complain about the long “delay” (compare this idea with Matthew 25:5). But how do we explain this long “delay”? When should Jesus have come back? Was that 50 years ago? Or 150 years ago? Or 500 years ago? Let us read 2 Peter 3:9: “He [God] wants everyone to change their ways and stop sinning” (2 Peter 3:9, ERV). This verse shows us that God is waiting for us. God is so patient with us.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus woke up from the dead and went to heaven. Jesus will come back again. Why must we remember that? Because we live a short time (Psalm 90:10). After that, we sleep in the grave (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10). Then God will wake us up from the dead. We only get one life to decide if we want to obey God (Hebrews 9:27). After we die, when we wake up again, we will see Jesus.

Every day we get one day closer to the Second Coming of Jesus in the clouds of heaven. We don’t know when Jesus will come. But we know that Jesus **will** come back.

A pastor preached a sermon about the Second Coming. He said that he didn’t care when Jesus came back. All the pastor cared about is that Jesus DOES come back. Do you agree with the pastor’s thinking? If yes, how can this reason help you feel hope?

I WILL WAKE HIM UP (John 6:26–51)

Jesus fed 5,000 men with a small amount of bread and fish (John 6:1–14). After this miracle, the crowd wanted to make Jesus their king (John 6:15). Jesus sailed with His followers to the other side of the Sea of Galilee to escape the crowd. But the next day, the crowd followed Jesus there. Then Jesus preached His powerful sermon about the Bread of Life. Jesus talked about the gift of everlasting life, too (John 6:22–59).

How does Jesus show that the gift of everlasting life is connected to the time when He wakes up His people from the dead? Read John 6:26–51 for the answer.

In His sermon, Jesus talked about three basic ideas connected with everlasting life. First, Jesus said “ ‘I am the bread that came down from heaven’ ” (John 6:58, ERV; read also John 6:33). The words written as “I am” are “**egō eimi**” in the Greek language. With these words, Jesus announces that He is the same Person who is named the Mighty “I AM” in the Old Testament (Exodus 3:14). Second, Jesus explained that everlasting life comes from Him: “ ‘He who comes to Me’ ” and “ ‘he who puts his trust in Me’ ” (John 6:35, NLV) will get this blessing. Finally, Jesus connected the gift of everlasting life with the final resurrection of God’s people. The final resurrection is the time when God wakes up His people from the dead at the Second Coming. Jesus promises, “ ‘I will raise [wake] them up on the last day’ ” (John 6:40, 44, 54, ERV).

Jesus also gives us this surprising promise: “ ‘I tell you the truth. The person who believes in me will live for ever’ ” (John 6:47, WE). This promise shows that we already have the gift of everlasting life! Does this mean that the believer will never die? Of course not! Why? Because the words “raise [wake] them up” (John 6:40) show us people who come back to life after they died.

Without Jesus, we don’t have everlasting life. After we accept Jesus and get the promise, we continue living as humans who will sleep when we die. At the Second Coming, Jesus will resurrect or wake us up from the dead. Then He will give us the gift of everlasting life. The gift is promised to us now. We have this gift, but not because we have spirits that never die. Jesus gives us this gift because of our faith in His mercy.



Jesus preached His powerful sermon about the Bread of Life. Jesus talked about the gift of everlasting life, too.

A BLAST FROM GOD'S TRUMPET (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18)



“The dead Christians will get the same gift that God gives to the living when He comes back.”

The Thessalonian Christians believed that God would give everlasting life only to Christians who were alive at the Second Coming. “The Thessalonian Christians carefully protected their friends’ lives. The Thessalonians were afraid that if their friends died, then God wouldn’t give their friends everlasting life at the Second Coming. But their loved ones started to die. The Thessalonians were sad as they looked for the last time at the faces of their loved ones. The Thessalonians hardly dared to hope to meet their dead loved ones again in a future life.” —Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 258, adapted.

How did Paul correct this false idea? Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 for the answer.

Many people have trouble understanding what Paul is saying in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. They don’t understand the words, “bring them together with him when he comes” (1 Thessalonians 4:14, ERV). Some people think the verses say that spirits from dead people are already in heaven. The problem is that these people believe that the spirit lives forever. So, they think that Jesus, at His Second Coming, will bring with Him the spirits of dead people who are already in heaven with God. Then these spirits can join with their bodies again when Jesus wakes them up from the dead. But this idea is false.

Read this quote from a non-Adventist Bible thinker who talks about 1 Thessalonians 4:14: “The Thessalonian Christians cry for their dead church members. But they have hope. Why? Because God ‘will bring’ the dead. What do these words mean? They mean that God will wake up these dead Christians and cause them to be alive at Jesus’ Second Coming. That is what it means when it says that the dead will be ‘with him.’ So, the dead Christians will get the same gift that God gives to the living when He comes back. The dead will not miss out.” —Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1–2 Thessalonians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), page 319, adapted.

If the spirits of the dead are already with Jesus in heaven, why does Paul need to talk with the Thessalonians about the Second Coming? Paul could say that God’s people who are dead are already with the Lord in heaven, but he didn’t! Paul says that God will wake up the dead at the Second Coming.

THE MOST WONDERFUL MEETING (1 Corinthians 15:51–55)

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51–55. What “secret” (1 Corinthians 15:51, ERV) does Paul explain in these verses?

What is this “secret” (1 Corinthians 15:51, ERV) that Paul talks about? Some popular preachers think the “secret” is the same as the “secret rapture” of the whole church. Some Christians think the “secret rapture” is the time when Jesus will sneak down to earth and take loyal Christians with Him to heaven. Everyone else stays here on earth and wonders what happened to them. This “secret rapture” happens seven years before Jesus’ Second Coming. During the secret rapture, someone who is in a taxi may find himself or herself all of a sudden in a car with no driver because the taxi driver was taken to heaven. All that is left behind is the driver’s clothes! A set of 16 books named the *Left Behind* books were written about this topic. Four movies were made from the books. These movies taught the false belief about the secret rapture. Sad to say, millions of people who saw these movies learned about this false idea.

Of course, the Bible doesn’t teach the secret rapture. The “secret” that Paul is talking about is that the living will be changed. Then they will join the dead ones that God has brought back to life at the Second Coming. This experience is the only real “rapture” there is. There is no “secret rapture” because every living person on earth will see the Second Coming happen (Revelation 1:7). The dead will wake up and the living will be changed when God blows His trumpet at the Second Coming (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52).

Jesus’ Second Coming will bring about the most wonderful meeting ever! God’s people who are alive will be changed “in a very short time, no longer than it takes for the eye to close and open” (1 Corinthians 15:52, NLV). At God’s command, God’s people are given bodies that never die. Their bodies are made everlasting. Together, the living people of God are lifted up into the air to meet their Lord. Angels “will gather [bring] his chosen people from every part of the earth” (Matthew 24:31, ERV).

“The holy angels will carry little children to their mothers’ arms. Death separated many friends from each other. Now these friends meet each other again. They will never be separated. Everyone sings songs of joy as they travel together to the city of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 645, adapted.



Jesus’ Second Coming will bring about the most wonderful meeting ever!



“The Romans knew that Christians believed God would wake up their bodies from the dead. So, the Romans did everything possible to make fun of this hope.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Thessalonian Letters,” pages 255–268; “Called to Reach a Higher Standard,” pages 319–321, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“The Romans knew that Christians believed God would wake up their bodies from the dead. So, the Romans did everything possible to make fun of this hope. A report from Gaul [modern France] in A.D. 177 talks about some Christians who were killed for their faith. After the Romans killed the Christians, the Romans left their bodies to rot on the ground for six days. Next, the Romans burned the bodies and threw the ashes in the Rhône River. Then the Romans said, ‘Now let’s see if those Christians will wake up from the dead.’”—Stephen Cave, *Immortality: The Quest to Live Forever and How It Drives Civilization* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012), pages 104, 105, adapted.

The Romans failed to show that the Bible promise isn’t true. The Power who woke up Jesus from the dead can do the same for us, too. So, it doesn’t matter what happens to our body. God made all the stars and planets in outer space. If He can do that, He can wake up the dead and take them to heaven with the living, for sure.

“Paul wrote: ‘When he [Jesus] returns [comes back], many [people] who believe in him will have died already. We believe that God will bring them back with Jesus’ [1 Thessalonians 4:14, NIV]. Many Christians believe that this verse means that Jesus will come from heaven with spirits who were their dead family members and friends. But Paul did not say that. Paul said that God will wake up the sleeping saints from their graves in the same way that Jesus woke up from the dead. Then God will take His people with Him to heaven. Precious promise! Beautiful hope! This promise not only is for the church of Thessalonica. This hope also is for all Christians, wherever they may be.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 259, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What hope do we have against death in our lives?
- ② How can we help someone who believes in the “secret rapture”? (Read Thursday’s study.)
- ③ Read 1 Corinthians 15:12–19. How do these verses show us that the dead are asleep and not in heaven right now with Jesus?

ACCEPTING THE BIBLE: PART 2

Eulalia Rashid lives on the Pacific Island named Saipan. Eulalia wanted to read the Bible all the way through. It took her three years. Because of what she read, Eulalia started to keep the Sabbath and to eat a diet of plant foods. Eulalia had been an alcoholic for 37 years. She told her family that she didn't want to drink anymore because of Jesus.

Eulalia learned she had cancer before she read the Bible. Then Eulalia got a painful rash. Eulalia suffered a lot from both the rash and the cancer. But all Eulalia thought about was Jesus. She felt she didn't really know Jesus even after she read the Bible. She prayed for help to know Jesus better.

After she prayed, Eulalia decided to call the Saipan Seventh-day Adventist Medical Center. When a worker from the center answered the phone, Eulalia said, "I'm sorry, but I'm not calling to see a doctor. I need to talk with someone from your church. I've read the whole Bible, but I want to know more."

A short time later, a young pastor came to Eulalia's door. Eulalia and the pastor liked each other right away. Eulalia felt as if she knew the pastor her whole life. They started to study the Bible together. Then Eulalia asked to get baptized.

Eulalia was baptized in the fall of 2019. About a month before she was baptized, Eulalia's terrible pain went away. A doctor told Eulalia that he couldn't heal her rash. So, Eulalia would suffer for many months. But now the pain was gone! Eulalia touched her stomach. She felt that something else was different. A short time later, her doctor told her she was cancer-free!

Today, Eulalia shares Jesus with her neighbors and family members. Eulalia has four children and 13 grandchildren. Eulalia prays for her family while she takes care of her beautiful, green garden. She calls it her prayer garden. She gives the food she grows to her neighbors. Eulalia also made one of the rooms in her house a place where Adventists and other people come to worship on Sabbath evenings.

Eulalia is 66 years old. She knows the psalm writer was correct when he said, "Your word is like a lamp that shows me the way. It is like a light that guides me" (Psalm 119:105, NIV). She says, "I want to encourage other people to follow the Word. Jesus is the Word. He is the way to everlasting life."

This story shows two parts of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" Plan: Church Growth Task Number 1 and Spiritual Growth Task Number 5. Church Growth Task Number 1 is: "The church will serve God and support His work worldwide. The church will make supporting God's work its way of life." Spiritual Growth Task Number 5 is: "We will help people and families live more Spirit-filled lives."

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



Eulalia prays for her family while she takes care of her beautiful, green garden.

