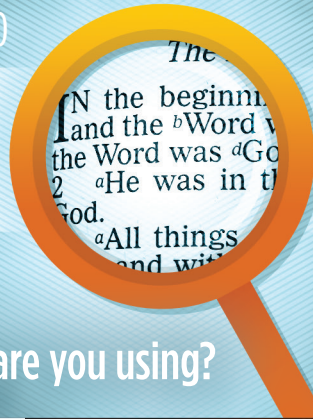


BIBLE



OPTICS

What lens are you using?

The WORD or the world?

This issue:

01. *The End. Is It Really Coming?*
02. *What are You Listening For?*
03. *Bible Q & A*
04. *Tips for Hearing the Voice of God*



From the Pastor

What a trying year 2020 has been! With Covid-19, civil unrest, political polarization, hurricanes, and wildfires, it has made an indelible mark upon our minds.

As Christians, we should not be surprised at the state of our world. Jesus said, “These things must come to pass... These are the beginning of sorrows” (Matt. 24:6,8). And the book of Daniel warns, “There shall be a time of trouble such as never was” (Dan. 12:1). But God’s Word gives us hope.

As the world groans, events foretold by our Savior millennia ago are coming to pass. Jesus said, “I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe (John 14:29).

The Bible comforts us and strengthens our faith as we prepare for the future. The vast majority of prophetic events have already been fulfilled. We are fast approaching the Second Coming.

Bible Optics uses Scripture as a lens to shed light on current events. This month we look at perspectives on the end of the world and what the Bible says will really happen. We also take time to consider who we are listening to and learn how to listen to God.

We invite you to join us each month as we seek wisdom from the Lord. I think you’ll agree that it’s an exciting time to be alive.

Steve Caza | Pastor

Memphis Raleigh Seventh-day Adventist Church



The End. Is It Really Coming?

The end is coming... Or maybe not...

“The end of the world is near—again! For centuries, dooms-dayers have prophesied the apocalypse. But there’s a tiny catch: None of the end-of-world predictions ever come true.” (“[The Best Apocalypses in History.](#)”)

Good point.

History abounds with failed doomsday predictions. Even famed explorer Christopher Columbus predicted in 1501 that the world would only last 155 more years ending in 1656. A more recent prophecy based on the Mayan calendar claimed the end would come on December 21, 2012. This year, “World One,” a computer program developed in 1973 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), predicts the beginning of a series of catastrophic events leading to the end of human civilization.

Theoretical physicist [Matt Caplan](#) believes that not only the Earth but the entire universe will cease to exist...sometime over the “next few trillion years.” Perhaps we shouldn’t worry too much. But then again, the [National Resources Defense Council](#) believes we have only 20 years before climate change produces irreparable damage to our earth. Will global warming take us out in just a few short generations?

As Christians, should we be worried about the end of the world? And what does the Bible say about what to expect?



What Are You Listening For?



New York's Times Square is a whirlwind of noise, especially at lunch hour. Yet for a visiting Native American, the honking cabs, clattering streetcars, and shouting street vendors could not drown out a cricket's chirp. He stopped, listening intently, then followed the chirping to its source... a small insect hiding under a leafy plant across the street.

"How in the world could you hear that cricket in the midst of all this noise?" his friend asked in astonishment.

"It all depends on what you're listening for," the Native American assured him.

Just like the Native American's ears were tuned to the natural world, so our hearts can be tuned to God's voice. We can learn to hear Him above the cacophony of this world. Jesus promises, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27).

When you focus on Jesus as revealed in His Word, you will learn to recognize Him calling for you by name. "The sheep hear His voice; and He calls His own by name and leads them out. And when He brings out His own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know His voice" (John 10:3-4)

Imagine the shepherd calling his flock. As soon as they reach him, he beckons them, "This way! Follow me!" The shepherd goes before the sheep, and they follow him because they know he will lead them safely.

It is the same with your Heavenly Father. When you know His voice, you listen to Him because His voice is the one of peace. He goes before you, a confident smile on His face as He says, "Come! This is the way. Follow Me! I will never lead you astray. With Me you will find peace."

But how can we know we are listening to the right voice? In verse 5 Jesus says, "...by no means will [the sheep] follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." God's voice is unmistakable when you know HIM.

Do you know Him as your Friend and Savior? Have you invested time in getting to know Him through His Word so you can recognize His voice? Are you ready to meet Him when He returns?

Is hearing His voice the most important thing to you today? When it is, you'll hear Him... Just like the Native American in Time Square... it's all about what you're listening for.

By Sara Scarpino

Would you like to hear God's Voice more clearly? Read "**Tips for Hearing Gods' Voice**" on page 5

Bible Q&A

If Paul says Jesus will come “as a thief in the night,” (1 Thessalonians 5:2) then why does John say, “Every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7)?



At first glance, these texts seem contradictory. What kind of a “thief” is seen by “every eye”? Jesus says, “For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Matthew 24:27), yet in the very same chapter (v.43) He compares His return to a thief. Peter also uses paradoxical language stating that “the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10). What we end up with is a loud, destructive thief that everyone will see coming! How do we make sense of this?

The picture grows clearer when we add a few more verses to the mix. Christ warns, “Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief”

The End. Is it Really Coming? Continued from page 1

Yes, It’s coming!

“Let not your heart be troubled,” Jesus said. “I will come again” (John 14:1, 3). The Bible is unequivocal: The end of the world is coming. How? Jesus, our precious Savior, will come again to end the pain and sadness in this world and create all things new.

Speaking to his disciples on the Mount of Olives Jesus said, “For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:38,39).

Our Savior compares His second coming to the unexpected cataclysmic event of the flood. His return will bring the world as we know it to an end. Scripture is clear that the Second Coming will be sudden and unexpected. Christ said, “of that day and hour no one knows” (Matthew 24:36).

Yet the manner of Jesus’ return is clearly revealed.

- **It will be visible.** “Every eye will see Him,” (Revelation 1:7).
- **We will hear Him.** “The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- **Like the flood, this will be a literal worldwide event.** “All the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30).
- **His return will be glorious.** “The Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels” (Matthew 16:27).
- **It will be unlike anything the world has ever witnessed.** John saw in vision that, “there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth,” (Revelation 16:18) and “every mountain and island was moved out of its place,” (Revelation 6:14).
- **No one will have to tell us about it when it happens.** It will be impossible to miss! Jesus warned, “If anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it” (Matthew 24:23, 24).

Our Blessed Hope

“Christ is coming with clouds and with great glory. A multitude of shining angels will attend Him. He will come to raise the dead, and to change the living saints from glory to glory. He will come to honor those who have loved Him, and kept His commandments, and to take them to Himself. He has not forgotten them nor His promise” (Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 632.).

The second coming of Christ is the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13) of every believer. We can have full confidence that Jesus will come again. Why? Because He was victorious over Satan at the cross. In fact, the success of His first coming guarantees the certainty of His second.

(Revelation 3:3). And Paul declares, “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:4). Scripture is saying that the lost will experience Christ’s return as a thief in the night – sudden and unexpected.

This parallels the flood account in Genesis. When the door of the ark closed, those on the outside did not know their fate was sealed “until the flood came and took them all away” (Matthew 24:39). As we near the second coming, probation will close, and those “outside the ark” will not know that the thief has come until Jesus appears in glory. Then they will realize that they have lost everything.

“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame” (Revelation 16:15).

Dig Deeper

Luke 12:35 - 48, Matthew 25, Genesis 6 & 7, (Ellen White, Patriarchs and Prophets, Chapter 7 - The Flood)

Got a Question?

Is there a Bible verse you’ve been puzzling over? Or a concept that someone shared and you’re wondering if it’s Bible truth or not? Or maybe its a world event that you’re trying to make sense of from a Biblical perspective.

We’d love to be of assistance.
Send your questions to:
godled@kytn.net.



The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus “appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself,” and that He “will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Hebrew 9:26, 27). “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them,” (Colossians 2:15). He was “declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4).

Christ won a decisive victory over the powers of darkness at the cross. Because of this, we can have confidence that He is coming again to end Satan’s dominion and restore the world to its original Edenic beauty.

Jesus is coming! But when will it be?

Thankfully our merciful God has not left us in the dark. The careful study of Scripture reveals that Jesus is coming soon. Very soon!

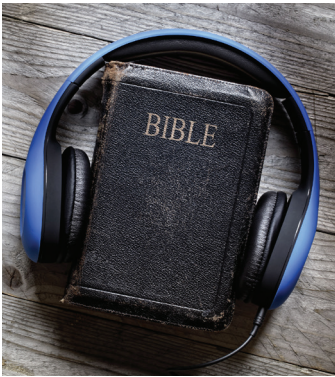
In upcoming articles, we will be looking at fulfilled prophecies in history as well as comparing the Bible with current events to understand where we are in the flow of prophetic time. Be prepared to see how prophecy is unfolding before your very eyes!

The end is near, but no man or earthly theory can accurately predict how or when it will happen. The only reliable guide we have is the Word of God. His Word tells us that the end of this world is just the beginning for those who love Him. The Good Shepherd is leading us into eternity. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:27,28).

During the days of Noah, the only safe place was in the ark. Today, the only safe place is in Christ. As children of the King, we do not need to fear the end of the world because “Perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). We are free to look forward with hope to that moment when we will “meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

By John Cloud

Tips for Hearing The Voice of God



Have you ever wished you could hear God's voice better? You can! The answer is found in God's word.

"Why do I believe the Bible? Because I have found it to be the voice of God to my soul (*Steps to Christ, Ellen G. White, p.112*).

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

We may hear the preaching of the word at church each Sabbath, but it is our privilege to search the Scriptures daily. This will lead to moments when we exclaim, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32). Jesus still delights to open the Scriptures to us today. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, Christ assures us, "He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14).

Here are 5 steps you can take to hear God's voice more clearly throughout the day:

- Read the Bible in the morning. It will set the course for the day.
- Listen to a sermon or audio Bible on your commute to work or while doing chores at home. Try audioverse.org
- Take time to study and discuss Scripture with your spouse and children.
- Make it a priority to attend your church's weekly prayer meeting.
- Read the Bible on your smartphone in your downtime.

"Jesus met Satan with the words of Scripture. 'It is written,' He said. In every temptation the weapon of His warfare was the word of God" (*The Desire of Ages, Ellen G. White, p.120*)

Related Articles

[Tools for Bible Study](#), [Finding a Quite Place Alone With God](#), [How to Turn On God's Alarm Clock](#).



Steve Caza
Pastor

Our goal is to help you grow in your understanding of key Bible teachings, gain a Biblical perspective on what is happening in our world today, and find tools to share your faith more effectively.

Learn more at www.raleighsda.org & www.GodLed.net



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