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Who is an Authentic Adventist?

By Martin Hanna

Introduction
The authentic Adventist is not the one who knows when Jesus will come, but the one who is always ready. It is natural to have opinions about the timing of the Advent and to desire that it will happen soon. However, we do not “know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority” (Acts 1:7). Therefore, we should always “be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt 24:44).¹ What does it mean to be always ready? Do we have time to get married, get educated, and build professional careers? Please take note of the following six biblical ways to be an authentic Adventist.

1. **Avoid deceptions.** When the disciples asked Jesus about “the sign of [His] coming and the end of the age,” He warned them: “Take heed that no one deceives you” (Matt 24:3–4); “You will hear of wars,” “famines, pestilences, and earthquakes;” “see that you are not troubled;” “all these are the beginning of sorrows;” but “the end is not yet” (24:6–8). There will be deceptive “signs” (24:24) and tribulation, darkening of sun and moon, falling stars, and shaking heavens (24:29). However, the ultimate “sign” of the end is Jesus actually “coming on the clouds” (24:30) at a “day and hour” that “no one knows,” “but [the] Father only” (24:36).

2. **Consider the repetition of signs.** The warning about deceptions is relevant for every period of history during which authentic Adventists are “faithful until death” (Rev 2:10). “He who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matt 24:13), whether that end is at death or at the Advent. The signs of the times (Luke 21:8–19) were fulfilled in the first century when “Jerusalem [being] surrounded by armies” signaled “its desolation [was] near” (21:20). Similarly, when we see the signs of our times (Matt 24:33; Luke 21:25–28) we should “look up” because our “redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28).²

3. **Get ready and stay ready.** We should not focus on figuring out how much time we have left to get ready, because redemption draws near at the speed of now! Right “now, it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed” (Rom 13:11); “now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2). In fact, the “gospel” of God (Rev 14:6) includes the good news that “the hour of His judgment has come” (14:7). This is good news because God gets us ready and keeps us ready. Jesus said, “The Father” “will give you another Helper;” “the Spirit;” and “I will come to you” and will be “in you” (John 14:16–18, 20).

4. **Receive justification by faith.** We are judged or declared to be righteous, authentic Adventists when we are “crucified” and

¹ The Bible texts in this article are from the New King James Version.

² “Jesus did not [discuss] separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming.” “In mercy...He blended the description of the two great crises.” Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1964), 628.

resurrected “with Christ” (Gal 2:20) and “justified” by His “blood” “through faith” (Rom 3:25; 5:1). Just before His death, He said, “Now is the judgment of this world;” and “and I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32–33). The death of Christ also brings judgment in favor of those who are in Christ by faith. “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1)³ because they are “justified by faith in Christ” (Gal 2:16).

5. *Cooperate with sanctification in love.*

Authentic Adventists cooperate with sanctification by the Spirit of holy love (Rom 5:5; Eph 1:4) sent from Jesus (Acts 2:33), our “Judge” (10:42). “Sanctification is the work of a lifetime,”⁴ because “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6), which is a day of judgment (Rom 2:16). All through the process of sanctification, we are “without offense” (Phil 1:10) through justification, the root that bears “the fruits of righteousness” (1:11). Our “love may abound still more and more” (1:9; cf. 2 Thess 1:3–5) as “evidence of the righteous judgment of God” (2 Thess 1:5).

“At every stage of development [sanctification], our life may be perfect [by justification]; yet if God’s purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be constant advancement [sanctification].”⁵ As Paul testifies, “Not that I “am already perfect,” in myself, but “one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:12–14). Christ “is a perfect and holy example, given for us to imitate. We cannot equal the pattern; but we shall not be approved of God if we do not copy it and, according to the ability which God has given, resemble it.”⁶

6. *Anticipate glorification in hope.* Adventists who are justified and sanctified also wait in hope for the time when “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor 5:10). “If we are true to the promptings of the Spirit of God, we shall go from grace to grace, and from glory to glory, until we have received the finishing touch of immortality.”⁷ “Having been justified by faith,” we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” “because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:1, 2, 5). “We through the

Spirit eagerly wait for the hope [glorification] of righteousness [justification] by faith” “working by love [sanctification]” (Gal 5:5–6).

For some Adventists, this hopeful waiting is interrupted by the unconscious sleep of death (Ps 13:3; Ecc 9:10; John 11:13), followed by resurrection (Dan 12:2), so we can “depart and be with Christ” (Phil 1:23). Other Adventists will be “alive” at “the coming of the Lord” (1 Thess 4:15) and will “meet the Lord” along with those who are resurrected from the sleep of death (4:15–17). Either way, when “absent from the [mortal or corruptible] body,” we come “to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8) in a glorified body (1 Cor 15:40–49; 53–54).

Conclusion. Remember, authentic Adventists avoid deceptions about the signs of the times by considering the fact that some signs reappear in different generations. Authentic Adventists are not the ones who know when Jesus will return; but they are the ones who get ready and stay ready by receiving justification by faith, cooperating with sanctification in love, and waiting in hope for glorification.

Does this mean that Adventists should avoid marriage, drop out of school, or resign our jobs? Not at all! God is the one who calls us to these vocations. John Wesley was asked what he would do if he knew that Jesus would return the next day. He said in effect, “I would go to bed and go to sleep; wake up in the morning, and go on with my work, for I would want Him to find me doing what he had appointed me to do.”⁸ “Even so, come, Lord Jesus! (Rev 22:20).



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³ Jesus refers to judgment as condemnation when He says that believers “shall not come into judgment” (John 5:24); and “I did not come to judge the world but to save the world” (12:47).

⁴ Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2003), 65.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1885–1909), 2:549.

⁷ Ellen White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1994), 421.

⁸ <https://andrewgroves.wordpress.com/category/wesley-john/>