

THE DELAY

ALSO BY MARVIN MOORE

The Antichrist and the New World Order

The Case for the Investigative Judgment

Challenges to the Remnant

The Coming Great Calamity

Conquering the Dragon Within

Could It Really Happen?

The Crisis of the End Time

Forever His

The Refiner's Fire

How to Handle Fatigue

How to Think About the End Time

THE DELAY

MARVIN
MOORE



Pacific Press® Publishing Association

Nampa, Idaho

Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

www.pacificpress.com

Cover design by Gerald Lee Monks
Inside design by Aaron Troia

Copyright © 2011 by Pacific Press® Publishing Association
Printed in the United States of America
All rights reserved

The author assumes full responsibility for the accuracy of all facts and quotations as cited in this book.

You can obtain additional copies of this book by calling toll-free 1-800-765-6955 or by visiting <http://www.adventistbookcenter.com>.

All Scripture quotations in this book, unless otherwise noted, are from the THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scriptures quoted from KJV are from the King James Version.

Scriptures quoted from NKJV are from The New King James Version, copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Moore, Marvin, 1937-

The delay / Marvin Moore.

p. cm.

ISBN 13: 978-0-8163-2504-7 (pbk.)

ISBN 10: 0-8163-2504-9 (pbk.)

1. Second Advent. 2. Seventh-day Adventists—Doctrines. I. Title.

BX6154.M6236 2011

236'.9—dc23

2011028849

CONTENTS

Introduction	7
Part 1: Putting the Delay in Perspective	
Chapter 1 Abraham	13
Chapter 2 When the Delay Began	19
Addendum: Is Michael Christ?	28
Chapter 3 From Adam to Christ	30
Chapter 4 From the Cross to the Second Coming	37
Chapter 5 The Adventist Movement	44
Part 2: The Delay Is Almost Over	
Chapter 6 Is Jesus <i>Really</i> Coming Soon?	58
Chapter 7 A Sign of the End: The Gospel to All the World	68
Chapter 8 A Sign of the End: Spiritualism	78
Chapter 9 A Sign of the End: The Growing Power of the Papacy	87
Chapter 10 A Sign of the End: Church-State Separation Under Attack	97
Chapter 11 A Sign of the End: Religious Persecution in America	110
Part 3: Misunderstandings About the Delay	
Chapter 12 Expectations	120
Chapter 13 A Dangerous Expectation: Dating the Second Coming	130
Chapter 14 A Dangerous Expectation: Sunday Laws	139
Addendum: Religion and Sunday Rest Laws	150
Chapter 15 A Dangerous Expectation: Sinless Perfection	152
Part 4: Using Our Time Wisely During the Delay	
Chapter 16 The Latter Rain: Revival	164
Chapter 17 The Latter Rain: Reformation	176
Chapter 18 The Loud Cry	183
Chapter 19 Healthful Living	192

Part 5: The End of the Delay

Chapter 20	Nearing the End of the Delay	202
	Addendum: How Long Will the Time of Trouble Last?	211
Chapter 21	The End of the Delay	212
	Addendum: Two Views of the Millennium	221

INTRODUCTION

Since about 1990, I've been giving weekend seminars in churches and at camp meetings in various parts of the United States and Canada and occasionally overseas.* One of these seminars, "Hope for the End Time," includes a Sabbath morning sermon titled "Is Jesus *Really* Coming Soon?" This book is a more comprehensive look at what is also the theme of that sermon: the delay of Jesus' return.

The pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who experienced the Great Disappointment came out of it thinking that while they'd been mistaken in believing Jesus would return in 1844, He surely would come within a few years—certainly by 1860. But Adventists had barely chosen a name for themselves by the time that year ended, and it would be another three years before they organized formally as a church. No doubt the believers who established the General Conference in 1863 were absolutely certain they would see Jesus by the year 1900—yet more than one hundred years have passed since then, and He still hasn't come! Thus, the following comment that a friend wrote to me back in the mid-1990s is understandable.

I don't mean to suggest I'm skeptical of *your* particular perspective

* If you would like to schedule one of my seminars for your church or camp meeting, visit my Web site at <http://www.hopeseminars.org> or call my office at Pacific Press: (208) 465-2577.

on the topic of last-day events. I'm skeptical of all of them. I remain open and interested in the possibility of Christ's soon return. I'm willing to suspend disbelief, but I am frankly skeptical. I do understand, in terms of our traditional story, that last-day events is our primary *reason to be*, but I wonder how long that idea can suffice as the decades rumble along—and nothing happens. Here we are 152 years beyond the Great Disappointment, still waiting. Still wondering.

Now, in 2011, when this book is being published, 167 years have passed since 1844, and we're still waiting, still wondering. How do we deal with this delay? Is there a way to explain it and still maintain our confidence in the soon coming of Jesus?

I wrote this book to respond to that apparent contradiction. I want to assure you that I firmly believe that Jesus will return soon. For much of my life, I believed that I would live to see Him come. However, I'm seventy-four years old now, and I'm beginning to suspect that, just like thousands of Adventists before me, I, too, may not live to see Jesus come. Nevertheless, like those who preceded me, I maintain my confidence that *He really is coming soon*.

In the first chapters of this book I will share with you the context of the delay, which I believe we need to know in order to understand the delay itself. Then I will explain why I believe the delay truly is almost over; I will caution you about certain misunderstandings that have arisen because of the delay; and I will discuss how we should use our time during the delay. In brief, that's what this book is about.

You're probably aware that I have written several books on end-time events: *The Refiner's Fire*, *The Crisis of the End Time*, *The Coming Great Calamity*, *The Antichrist and the New World Order*, *How to Think About the End Time*, *Could It Really Happen?* and *Challenges to the Remnant*. It's inevitable that this book will repeat some of the ideas that I discussed in those books. Where those overlaps occur, I've presented the material in summary form in this book, and I refer the reader to the books that develop the ideas in greater detail.

The underlying theme of this book is the delay. There's a tension between the belief, on the one hand, that Jesus is coming soon and the realization, on the other hand, that He hasn't returned as soon as we had hoped. My purpose in writing this book is to help you to understand that tension better and to be at peace with it.

I hope that what I have written on the pages that follow will give you the same confidence that I have: Jesus *really is* coming soon!

Marvin Moore

February 2011

PART 1

Putting the Delay in Perspective

CHAPTER 1

Abraham

Abram and Sarai were utterly discouraged. For at least forty years, they'd tried and tried and *tried* to have children, but Sarai never got pregnant. Now Abram was seventy-five and Sarai was sixty-five,* and at that age, she would no doubt have been nearing menopause.†

Today, many couples *choose* not to have children, so we might shrug our shoulders at Abram and Sarai's problem and say, "Oh well, too bad." But back then, the more sons a woman could produce, the higher the position she held in her social circles, and to not even be able to have a daughter was a social disaster.‡ Furthermore, back then, children—especially sons—were the couple's form of Social Security. Investments for retirement, monthly checks from the government, assisted living centers, and nursing homes wouldn't come on the scene for another four thousand years. A couple's children took care of them in their old age. Thus,

* Genesis 12:4 says Abram was seventy-five when he set out for the Promised Land, and Genesis 17:17 indicates Sarai was ten years younger.

† People lived considerably longer back then than we do today. Sarai was 127 years old when she died, and Abraham was 175 (see Genesis 23:1; 25:7). At sixty-five, she still must have had a very youthful appearance, because it wasn't long after this that Abram, recognizing her physical beauty, lied about his relationship to her because he was afraid that someone might kill him to get her (see Genesis 12:11). Thus, we can assume that she still had not reached the age of menopause, though she was no doubt approaching it.

‡ At that time, daughters were considered to be less valuable than sons.

it was with both embarrassment and trepidation that Abram and Sarai anticipated the end of her child-bearing years in the very near future.

Then one day God talked to Abram, and the news He brought was wonderful. He told Abram,

“Go from your country, your people and your father’s household
to the land I will show you.

“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:1–3).

The good news was God’s statement, “I will make you into a great nation.” Reflect for a moment on the implication of what God said. In order for Abram to become a great nation, he would have to have at least one son. I can just see Abram rushing to Sarai at the conclusion of his conversation with God. “Sarai, guess what!” he exclaims. “We’re going to have a baby!”

“Abram, please don’t tease me that way.”

“No, my dear, it’s true! God Himself told me! He said He’s going to make me into a great nation, and that can mean only one thing, my dear—you’re going to have a baby boy!”

Abram can’t wait till he can bounce that baby boy on his knees! But the months go by, and the years go by, and there’s still no baby boy. Sarai enters menopause, and they give up hope of having a baby. But then, several years later, God comes to Abram again, and this time He is even more specific. “Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west,” He said. “All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever” (Genesis 13:14, 15).

Offspring! Children! Sons!

However, the years roll on as before, and still they have no children.

Then God comes to Abram a third time, and He says, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward” (Genesis 15:1).

I wish we knew what God intended to say to Abram next, but that information will forever remain hidden, because Abram interrupted Him. “Sovereign LORD,” Abram said, “what can you give me since I remain childless?” (verse 2). In essence, Abram was saying, “God, where’s this son You promised me so long ago? Sarai still hasn’t gotten pregnant!”

Then Abram went on to remind God of the legal implications if he didn’t have a son. He said, “The one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer.” In that culture, a childless couple could adopt one of their slaves and name him as the heir to their estate. He would also care for the couple in their old age. Eliezer was Abram’s most trusted servant and the logical one to fill that role.¹

But God said, “No, Abram; this man won’t be your heir. A son who comes from your own body will be your heir” (see verse 4). So now God has come right out and said it: You will have a son! The Bible says that “Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness” (verse 6).*

So Abram and Sarai kept trying to have children, but Sarai still couldn’t get pregnant! Now we know that men as well as women can be infertile, but they didn’t know that back then. When a woman couldn’t bear children, *it was always her fault*. So in her exasperation, Sarai came up with the next proposal for solving the problem. “The LORD has kept me from having children,” she said. “Go, sleep with my slave [Hagar]; perhaps I can build a family through her” (Genesis 16:2). Even back then, a woman would have to have become pretty desperate before she’d send her husband off to sleep with another woman! However, in that time and place, it wasn’t considered immoral for the husband in a childless

* This is one of the three Old Testament texts that Paul used to support his doctrine of righteousness by faith. The others are Romans 4:7, 8, quoting Psalm 32:1, 2, and Romans 1:17, quoting Habakkuk 2:4.

marriage to have a child by one of his wife's servants. This child, then, would become their legal heir.²

Stop for a moment and consider what rationalization Abram must have come up with. *God said the son would come from my body. He didn't say it would come from Sarai's body. OK, Abram concluded. I'll do it.* And nine months later, Ishmael was born. Now Abram had a baby boy to bounce on his knees!

Now think of this: The Bible informs us that Abram had a huge household consisting of more than three hundred servants (see Genesis 14:14). Given the number of children in the average family back then, it's likely that Abram was providing a living for upwards of two thousand people. That's a huge crowd for one man to support—evidence that Abram was, as the Bible says, a wealthy man* (see Genesis 13:2). And Ishmael was the heir to all of that wealth! As he grew older, everyone in the camp looked up to him as *the prince*, the child of the promise. That's what everyone believed, including Abram himself.

Thus, it was a shock to Abraham[†] when God came to him a fourth time and said, "I will bless [Sarah[‡]] and will surely give you a son by her" (Genesis 17:16). In fact, the Bible says Abraham was so stunned that he fell on his face and laughed (see verse 17). By now Sarah was eighty-nine years old.[§] No doubt she had been through menopause, and, from a human point of view, it truly was ridiculous to suppose that at her age she would bear a son. Nevertheless, a year later Isaac was born (see Genesis 21:1, 2).

Now please note this: at the ages of seventy-five and sixty-five respectively, while Abram and Sarai were still childless, God promised that He would make of Abram a great nation—which by implication meant that Abram and Sarai would have at least one son. But God didn't give them a timetable. Therefore, it's understandable that they expected this son to

* Abram probably acquired much of his wealth from Pharaoh, when that monarch threw Abram out of Egypt for claiming that his wife was his sister (see Genesis 12:10–20).

† God changed Abram's name to *Abraham* (see Genesis 17:4).

‡ God changed Sarai's name to *Sarah* (see Genesis 17:15).

§ Abraham said to God, "Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" (Genesis 17:17). Nine months earlier, she was probably eighty-nine.

be born fairly soon, before Sarai entered menopause, which couldn't have been far in the future. But God delayed fulfilling His promise for twenty-five years!

Abram and Sarai experienced a delay.

I find five good lessons for you and me in Abram's experience. I'll apply these lessons further in later chapters of this book, but let's look briefly at them now.

First, sometimes Abram doubted. This is evident from the fact that when God came to him the third time, Abram interrupted Him with the question, Where is this child You've been promising me? If You don't hurry up and get Sarai pregnant, there won't be a child, because she's about to enter menopause!

Similarly, Jesus hasn't returned when we've expected Him to. Because of this delay, we, too, are sometimes tempted to doubt His promise to "come again" (John 14:3, KJV).

We can also learn from Abram's experience (this is the second lesson) that despite the challenges to his faith in God's promise that a son would be born from his own body, "Abram believed the LORD" (Genesis 15:6). It takes a strong faith to believe that God will fulfill His promises when the outlook is as bleak as it was for Abram and Sarai. This is the kind of faith that God credited to Abraham as righteousness. It's the kind of faith that we need to maintain in Jesus' soon coming despite the delay.

Third, notice that God didn't credit Abram's faith in the coming Messiah as righteousness. He didn't credit Abram's faith that the lambs he sacrificed pointed forward to the Messiah. The faith that God credited to Abram as righteousness was Abram's faith that God would help him through a great personal problem. We also experience profoundly perplexing problems at times—problems that cause us to doubt whether God is on our side, and perhaps whether God even exists. It's true, of course, that God credits to us as righteousness our faith in Christ's death on the cross. But when we place our faith in God's promises in spite of our doubts, including our doubts about His soon coming, we can be sure that God also credits that faith to us as righteousness!

The fourth lesson I learn from Abram's experience is that sometimes

we make mistakes because He hasn't fulfilled His promises the way we expected Him to.

And finally, while at times, Abraham showed a definite lack of faith, he eventually triumphed over his character defects. He developed such a close relationship with God that when God asked him to sacrifice his own son, Abraham obeyed! That's the kind of faith you and I need to be developing as we approach the final crisis—the one that will immediately precede Christ's return.

1. See the comment on Genesis 15:2 in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1953), 1:311, 312.

2. See the comment on Genesis 16:2 in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:317.