CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
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Scripture Story: Matthew 2.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages,* chapter 6.

following yonder star



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flashlight

"The wise men had seen a mysterious light in the heavens upon that night when the glory of God flooded the hills of Bethlehem. As the light faded, a luminous star appeared, and lingered in the sky. It was not a fixed star nor a planet, and the phenomenon excited the keenest interest. That star was a distant company of shining angels, but of this the wise men were ignorant" (*The Desire of Ages,* p. 60).

keytext

"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

(Matthew 2:2)

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what do you think?

Imagine the Wise Men. These learned men had studied the night sky and the prophetic writings of old. They arrived expecting to find Jesus easily. To their amazement, they found none who knew about His birth.

The visitors looked about but saw no sign of Him. "Do you know where we may find Him?" they asked.

How would you have responded?

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How would you respond to someone who doesn't know anything about Jesus but is asking you to share what you know about Him? Write down your answer and always be prepared to share who Jesus is to you:

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did you know?

The Wise Men were earnest seekers after the truth who studied the Holy Scriptures. Their faithfulness was richly rewarded. When they found the promised Messiah, they presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Those items were the most valuable of that day, all gifts literally fit for a king yet also holding symbolic value. Gold, an always highly valuable commodity throughout history, was an appropriate gift for a king. Frankincense was used in making incense, a gift appropriate for a priest. Myrrh was an embalming agent. These gifts symbolize that Jesus was King, Priest, and Savior who would die to save us from sin and its consequences.

INTO THE STORY

"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.' When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. . . .

"And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.' When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. . . .

"And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. . . .

"Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more. . . .

"Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 'Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead.' Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'"

(Matthew 2)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why was Herod disturbed at news of the birth of Jesus?

Why do you think the Wise Men were led first to Jerusalem before being led to Bethlehem?

Warned by God in a dream, the Magi headed home after finding Jesus. What does God's intervention through the warning given to the Magi tell you about His care and guidance? What encouragement can you gain from this story about God's fatherly care for each one of His children?

Have you ever had a dream you thought was a divine communication to you? If so, explain.

punch lines

"Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?' " **(Genesis 3:9).**

"So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously' " **(Luke 2:48).**

"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" **(Luke 15:8-10).**

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" **(Psalm 23:6).**

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?" **(Luke 15:4).**

further insight

"While they [the Wise Men] had the star before them as an outward sign, they had also the inward evidence of the Holy Spirit, which was impressing their hearts, and inspiring them with hope" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages,* p. 60).

"The offering from the heart that loves, God delights to honor, giving it highest efficiency in service for Him" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages,* p. 65).

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Sabbath

Read Matthew 2:3.

Herod and all of Jerusalem became alarmed at the words of the Magi. Had they truly accepted the fact that Jesus had come as prophesied, that would mean their lives would be affected, their plans impacted. So, too, our lives and plans are affected by His coming, then and soon to come. God takes a special interest in sharing His love with us through the Holy Scriptures. "In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation" (Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs, The Holy Scriptures).

How does your study of the Word of God help you understand the prophecies and prepare for His soon return?

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Sunday

As you read the account of the birth of Jesus, much happens in a very short time that directly and strikingly fulfills prophecies that had been given long before.

First advent prophecies fulfilled:

- Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
- Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).
- Slaughter of the innocent children of Bethlehem (Jeremiah 31:15).
- Coming from Egypt (Hosea 11:1).
- Messiah to come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10).

We're counseled by Ellen White that "the end will come more quickly than men expect" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 631). With spiritual eyesight, and an eye toward those who failed to realize His first advent, we'll see the signs of His coming. We'll be the wise men and wise women seeking His second advent. Will you be among the wise? How have you sought Him today?

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Monday

Read John 17:17 and 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

The Wise Men were looking for Jesus, led by their study, the Holy Spirit, and an angelic beacon specially provided to show them the way. Convinced they were on the right path, they incredulously realized they were virtually alone in their awareness that the fullness of time had come. What lessons can be learned today from that scenario?

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The Wise Men looked to the east and saw the sign of His coming. So, too, will those alive in the last days look to the east and see the sign of His second coming. Ellen White states in *The Great Controversy*: "Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Savior and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man" (p. 640).

Tuesday

Read 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

The *Flashlight* quote in which Ellen White reveals that the star that the Magi saw was actually a band of angels presents a wonderful opportunity for Seventh-day Adventists. This opens up a natural opportunity to talk about the role of a modern-day prophet. Many people seem especially attuned to spiritual discussion at Christmas and can readily see the plausibility of angels being involved, given their involvement with the shepherds when they proclaimed His birth. Have you ever interjected the knowledge you have into such conversation? How do you seek Jesus today? Do you find Him in the words of the Bible, in the embrace of a loved one, in the smile of a parent, in the expectant eyes of a child, and in the beauty of a glorious sunset?

Wednesday

Read John 5:39 and Ezekiel 34:11-14.

The Holy Scriptures reveal to us God's character of love.

Today's reading reminds us that not only do we seek God, but He also seeks us. Is there a connection between the idea of people searching for Jesus and the knowledge that He is even more interested in seeking us? One day we will seek Him no more, for we shall behold Him face to face.

Thursday

Read Isaiah 55:6-9 and Hebrews 4:12.

Do you actively seek Jesus yourself? Where do you look for Him? Are you in places where you'd expect to find Him? List several ways in which you believe Jesus can be found.

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Friday

Read Psalm 139:1-3.

In the game hide-and-seek, children often place themselves where the seeker can't help finding them! How are you positioning yourself so that God can find you? What changes can you make in your life so that you can be found by God more easily?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 6.

**Humble Hero* is a special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companionbooks#.URIhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

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