

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JANUARY 18 2025

countdown to the Savior

Scripture Story: Genesis 3:15, 16; Genesis 22:18; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6, 7; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:1, 18-23; Acts 2:29, 30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 1:18-21.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 2; 3.
Key Text: Galatians 4:4, 5.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Ellen White's writing in chapters 2 and 3 of *The Desire of Ages* focuses on the Jews through history and the circumstances at the time of Jesus' birth. In chapter 2, "The Chosen People," she sets the scene for the coming Messiah by describing how the Jews had been entrusted to reveal God to humanity, but as they departed from God, they lost sight of their calling and purpose. Although the Jews desired the Messiah's coming, at the time of His arrival their hope was deliverance from Roman rule rather than the promise of their redemption from sin. "They looked for the Messiah to come as a conqueror, to break the oppressor's power, and exalt Israel to universal dominion. Thus the way was prepared for them to reject the Saviour" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 29).

Chapter 3, "'The Fullness of the Time,'" centers on the circumstances present when God saw fit to send forth His Son and that the timing of His arrival was as He had ordained. A historical look at the progression of the Jews as His chosen people and a review of the times at Jesus' birth provides opportunity to look at the circumstances of today's world and the role of Seventh-day Adventists in revealing Jesus. As we ponder the return of Jesus, her words (on page 32) remind us that "like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God's purposes know no haste and no delay."

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Recognize the similarities that exist between the times Jesus was born and the world today. *(Know)*
- Realize the risk that exists for Seventh-day Adventists to miss the signs of His coming as did the Jews of old. *(Feel)*
- Resolve to be ready for His coming while revealing His character and saving grace. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Second Coming of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 25: "The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is near. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times. (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-6; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 1:7; 14:14-20; 19:11-21.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Invite the students to discuss the similarities or differences they identified between the Jews of old and the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. One idea is to re-create the continuum on the floor (using masking tape), asking the students to stand on the line according to their response.

Review some of the signs of the coming of Christ compared with conditions or events in the world today. Ask, without any outward show of response, if any are unsettled or worried about what is taking place in the world and/or their assurance of salvation. Remind your students that Jesus has promised His grace is sufficient.

Make a list in front of the class of what the students suggested regarding what to watch for and pray for.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

I recall a dream I had while a high school student some months after hearing the Adventist teaching about the second coming of Christ for the first time. In the dream I was dazed and walking on a New York City street as a terrified horde of people ran toward me. The buildings were shaking, the ground quaking. As I turned around and began to run with the crowd, I asked a man next to me what was happening. His answer struck fear in my heart: "Jesus is coming!" I turned and looked upward but could see nothing but a skyscraper canyon and an endless stream of panic-stricken people. Then I heard an amazingly loud sound like an air horn amplified to 200 decibels, and I awoke with a start, heart pounding and brow sweaty. Although I was a Christian who believed that Jesus would come again, the immediacy of that dream caused me to wonder why I woke up frightened.

Four years later, then a student at Southern Missionary College, I was walking on campus on a glorious spring day. Suddenly the silence was shattered by a horn blast-like sound that caused an immediate flashback to that memorable dream. Not knowing what it was, I immediately spun and looked eastward, anticipating the sight of the coming King. It was the volunteer fire department signal horn high atop Lynn Wood Hall. I smiled and realized I was disappointed. No pounding heart, no sweaty brow, just an assurance that when He did come, I would be ready to greet my Lord with joy.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

For more than a half century the strains of "Lift Up the Trumpet" have traveled the airwaves as the Voice of Prophecy radio ministry enters the homes of millions of radio listeners. The words of each stanza, and the stirring refrain, bring the promise of Christ's coming home. "Coming again, coming again, Jesus is coming again!" Well, sure, we believe that. We teach that. But what did we do this week that shows we live that belief?

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- How can you explain calamities such as the Holocaust and the 2004 tsunami in light of the great controversy? How is it reassuring to know that Jesus has fulfilled the promise given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15 and that He will put an end forever to the consequences of sin and evil in our world? "Through every age, through every hour, the love of God had been exercised toward the fallen race" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 37). But calamities are part of our post-Eden world. See www.whiteestate.org/issues/calamities.asp for information regarding God's love and calamities.
- If you live in an Adventist center, discuss with your students the pros and cons about daily life in such circumstances.
- Identify what symbols of Christ are included in an Adventist worship service. Describe how the various components of the Temple ritual service were symbols of Christ. What symbols of Christ are included in Seventh-day Adventist worship services?
- Why were the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds intensely interested in what was happening on earth? Do you think those beings are as interested in today's world?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Luke 19:37-44.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

"The [Old Testament] prophecies concerning Israel

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Engaging the Senses

In order to make more real for your students something that happened long ago or will happen in the future, such as the Second Coming, ask your students to engage all their senses as they view a photo, look at a graphic, or form an image in their mind about an event. After reading the Biblical account that describes the scene, ask them to visualize the event as though they were participating in it. In the case of a photo or other graphic it is useful to have them view the image in quadrants so they can focus special attention and likely see more detail.

constitute a declaration of God's *purpose* with respect to the Jews as the covenant people; these prophecies were strictly *conditional* upon their cooperation; by rejecting Jesus as the Messiah the Jewish nation withdrew from the covenant relationship and forfeited its special relationship to God under the covenant; the covenant promises and privileges were permanently transferred to the Christian church as the new covenant people, to be fulfilled to the extent that they are applicable under the new historical situation; details dependent on literal Israel retaining its status as the covenant people, resident in Palestine, have lapsed by default; we are dependant upon later inspired writers for a valid application of these [Old Testament] predictions to the church" (*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* [1976], vol. 10, p. 686).

"The invitation to participate in the second coming of Christ is paralleled by other occasions when God Himself has sent His servants at pivotal times in history to offer salvation to humanity. A study of the key elements involved in each of these events will clarify the issues just before the second coming of Christ.

"As we study these events, a pattern emerges that parallels the event of the second coming of Christ.

"1. In the fullness of time, God acted on His own time schedule to bring about judgment and salvation.

"2. The event initiated by God took place when humanity had sunk in sin to its lowest depth.

"3. The political, religious, and intellectual leaders of the age were foremost in leading the people into sin and apostasy.

"4. Apostasy led to the creation of 'designer gods' who fit the mood, the culture, the worldview, and the intellectual thinking of the age. Reliance upon 'designer gods' led to the rejection of God and doubt in His message.

"5. God chose a messenger to bring His Word of warning and salvation.

"6. God's people received the salvation offered by God because they accepted His Word by faith. Faith is what gave them certainty in the prophecies of God's Word" (E. Edward Zinke, taken from the devotional message

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Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* The Desire of Ages. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

delivered September 30, 1999, at the 1999 Annual Council, found at https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1999-09-10ACb.pdf).

Use the handout that is at the end of the lesson to engage students in a discussion about how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies about the Messiah with exact precision.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Ask if any students have had an opportunity to share about the Second Coming and what the response was from the ensuing conversation. Use guiding questions to engage students in a discussion about the events preceding the second advent of Christ and ways we can prepare for Jesus' return as well as fulfill our mission as the remnant that proclaims Jesus' soon return. Refer to the following Bible passages in the discussion: Matthew 6:33, 34; Matthew 24:6, 7, 14, 32, 33, 36; Matthew 25:13; Mark 13:32, 33; Luke 12:40; Luke 21:36; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:6; Hebrews 3:7, 8, 12, 13, 15; 4:7; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 John 2:28; Jude 24; Revelation 1:7; and Revelation 22:12. Offer to discuss further God's saving grace and the need to have the assurance of salvation.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

"As the world races through the twenty-first century, have you ever considered what our greatest need is? What do men and women living in the twenty-first century need most?" "We can live days without food, hours without water, a few minutes without air, but no time at all without hope. Hope buoys up our spirits. It lifts our vision from what is to what will be. It is a candle in the darkness. It is like water in the desert or food to a starving man. It provides encouragement for the future. The Bible is filled with the best hope of all—the hope of our Lord's return. The apostle Paul states, 'For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures might have hope' (Romans 15:4)" (Mark Finley, *What the Bible Says About*, p. 41).

As we draw closer with each passing week to the day of His coming, challenge your students to daily live their lives standing on principle, serving those around them, and looking forward in confidence to the Second Coming. The word *advent* is part of our name, chosen to identify our denomination in 1863. We Adventists should reveal Jesus through many ways, including how we live our lives.

Messianic Prophecies and the Plan of Salvation

Match the Bible verse from the Old Testament regarding the prophecies about Christ to the New Testament text that prove the fulfillment was found in the life of Christ.

	Old Testament (Prophecy)	**New Testament** (Fulfillment)
A.	"And His name will be called . . . " (Isaiah 9:6, 7).	"The acceptable year of the LORD" (Luke 4:18, 19).
B.	"Yet out of you shall come . . ." (Micah 5:2).	"Do not be afraid" (Matthew 1:18-23).
C.	"The earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 22:18).	"That we might become . . ." (2 Corinthians 5:21).
D.	"When he looked . . . , he lived" (Numbers 21:9).	"Son of David . . ." (Matthew 1:1).
E.	"He has sent Me" (Isaiah 61:1, 2).	"He indeed was foreordained" (1 Peter 1:18-21).
F.	"I will greatly multiply . . ." (Genesis 3:15, 16).	"He would raise up the Christ" (Acts 2:29, 30).
G.	"The Lord Himself will give . . ." (Isaiah 7:14).	"Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14-16).



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*),* chapters 2, 3.

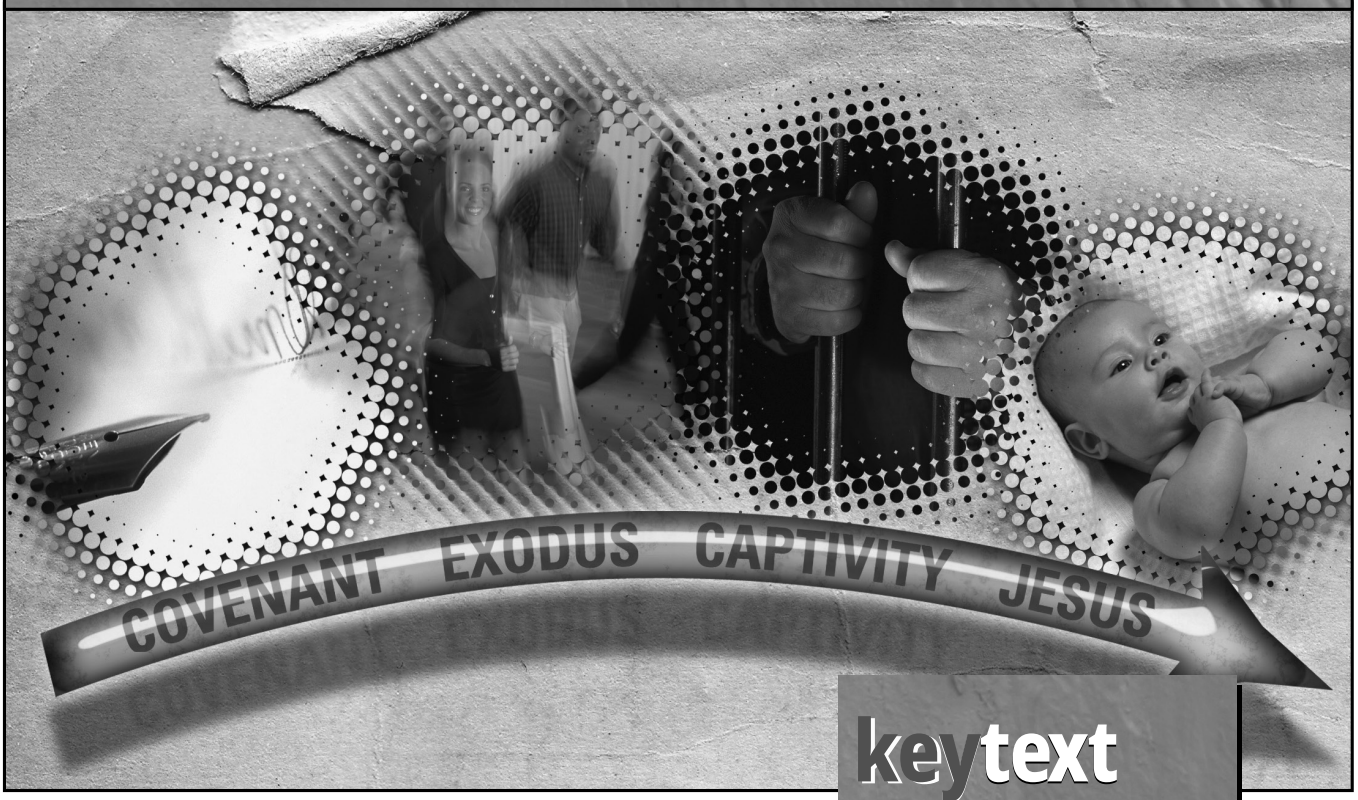
*A special adaptation, *Humble Hero*, has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Genesis 3:15, 16; Genesis 22:18; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6, 7; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:1, 18-23; Acts 2:29, 30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 1:18-21.
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countdown to the Savior



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keytext

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

(Galatians 4:4, 5)

flashlight

"For more than a thousand years the Jewish people had awaited the Saviour's coming. . . . In song and prophecy, in temple rite and household prayer, they had enshrined His name. And yet at His coming they knew Him not. . . .

"Yet God had chosen Israel. He had called them to preserve among men the knowledge of His law, and of the symbols and prophecies that pointed to the Saviour. . . . They were to reveal God to men" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 27).

what do you think?

Do you agree or disagree with these statements?

The Jewish nation and the Seventh-day Adventist Church are **similar.**

The Jewish nation and the Seventh-day Adventist Church are **different.**

Mark on the continuum where your response to these statements would fall. Be prepared to explain your answer.

did you know?

The Bible contains many prophecies pertaining to the coming Messiah, and specifically to both His first and second advents. The first prophecy is found in Genesis 3:15, speaking not only about Satan's war against God's church, but also the eventual crushing of Satan after the lesser harm (albeit human death) he inflicts on Christ.

Adam and Eve believed their firstborn son would be the Messiah. Every part of the Temple ritual was a foreshadowing of Christ. The last chapter of the Bible ends with the prophecy and promise of the return of Jesus.

INTO THE STORY

Old Testament (Prophecy)

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

New Testament (Fulfillment)

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.'

"So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us' " (Matthew 1:18-23).

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith

and hope are in God" (1 Peter 1:18-21).

OUT OF THE STORY

Describe how the various components of the Temple ritual service were symbols of Christ. What symbols of Christ are included in Seventh-day Adventist worship services?

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Why were the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds intensely interested in what was happening on earth? Do you think those beings are as interested in today's world?

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How can you explain calamities such as the Holocaust and the 2004 tsunami in light of the great controversy? How is it reassuring to know that Jesus has fulfilled the promise given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15 and that He will put an end forever to the consequences of sin and evil in our world?

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punch lines

"And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' " **(Acts 1:7, 8).**

"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth" **(Deuteronomy 7:6).**

"For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him" **(Genesis 18:19).**

"The LORD has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" **(Isaiah 52:10).**

further insight

"So in heaven's council the hour for the coming of Christ had been determined. When the great clock of time pointed to that hour, Jesus was born in Bethlehem."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 32

Sabbath

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. . . . The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is near. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times" (The Second Coming of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 25).

"And yet at His coming they knew Him not" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 27). Do you believe the adage "What is past is prologue"? Will there be a group of people in the last days who, like the ancient Jewish nation, are students of the Scriptures and who will recognize that the hour of His coming is at hand? How can we be part of that group? What can we do to be alert to the signs of His coming?

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Sunday

Read Romans 12:1, 2 and 2 Corinthians 6:16-18.

Adventists are called to be a separate people, meaning that we do not conform to the degenerate ways of this world, yet are still part of this world.

The Messiah did not come as quickly as the patriarchs thought He would. Over time, many people lost hope. Others lost the vision entirely. Ellen White states: "God's purposes know no haste and no delay." What are your personal thoughts on the second coming of Christ?

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How does this promise of Jesus give you comfort: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9)?

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Monday

Read 2 Peter 3:9.

Who comprises the heavenly council? If things on earth are transpiring according to a metaphorical "great clock of time," is there merit to the idea of predestination? Is it possible we humans can hasten or delay the second coming of Christ?

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Tuesday

Read Hebrews 3:7, 8, 12, 13, 15.

Have you heard people say that the second coming of Jesus will happen in the distant future? How can you help someone who has such a perspective by pointing their attention to the counsel found in the Bible in light of the passages listed for today's reading?

How do Seventh-day Adventists reveal God to men and women? Here's another way to think about that: When your classmates, friends, neighbors, coworkers, teachers, police officers, parents, see you, what is it about God they also see?

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Wednesday

Read Jeremiah 23:3 and Luke 15:10.

You're not out here all alone. Someone is looking after you or for you as a shepherd does his sheep. Does that thought bring you comfort or annoy you? That may depend on where you're at in relation to the rest of the flock. And the someone could be a Someone or others such as a grandparent, parent, pastor, teacher, friend. Maybe you're sometimes the someone looking after or for another person. With the "finding" of a lost sheep, coin, or person comes rejoicing on earth as it does in heaven. Have you had a "rejoicing" experience—either from your "being found" or from "finding" someone else?

Thursday

Read Mark 10:29, 30, and John 14:1-3.

Should time last long enough for you to establish a home of your own, would you want to enter mission service in a country or environment far different from your own? Why or why not?

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Friday

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Revelation 22:12.

How do these promises about Jesus' second coming strengthen your confidence and hope in Him and give you assurance of salvation? What are you doing to share this hope with those around you?

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this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 2; 3.

**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#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.