

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
OCTOBER 18 2025

preparing for tomorrow today

Scripture Story: John 12:20-43; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21:5-38.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 68, 69.
Key Text: Matthew 24:42-44.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

David Marshall observes: "To talk the language of apocalypse is to talk hope in a hopeless world. No hell conceived by human imagination could exceed in awfulness our own sick, polluted world going on in unending existence. Ecologists say things cannot go on. The Bible says things cannot go on. But the apocalypse of the ecologist is a catastrophe that would send the entire human race into eternal oblivion. The apocalypse of the Bible is an encounter with Jesus."[1]

This lesson focuses on the apocalypse—the great revealing. A natural place for the discussion to go would be toward the signs that suggest the soon return of Jesus. You may wish to reference the ecology (climate change, pollution, etc.), the economy (the plummeting stock market, the financial crises, global uncertainty, etc.), the shaky political climate around the world; the wars and rumors of wars; the natural disasters; and any one of a host of other indicators that suggest the Second Coming could occur in our lifetime. However you approach this topic, keep in mind that "the apocalypse of the Bible is an encounter with Jesus."

This "encounter with Jesus" may take you to John 12:20-43 for a study about the Greeks who say to Philip: "Sir, we would see Jesus" (KJV). Chapter 68 in *The Desire of Ages* or *Humble Hero* is rich with insights about mission, prejudice, and judging others outside of one's personal faith.

Or you may opt to follow the direction of this teacher's guide and explore the apocalypse. The emphasis you make on this topic is of utmost importance. We would strongly discourage scaring youth about the terrors of the time of trouble or laying on guilt for not being prepared for the judgment. A better approach is to emphasize that the key issue in the last days is remaining faithful to Jesus. To live in the presence of Jesus—that is the invitation of apocalypse. So long as we are "in Christ," we have nothing to fear.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Be exposed to the doctrine of the Second Coming. *(Know)*
- Be challenged to assess world events in light of Jesus' promise, "I will come again." *(Feel)*
- Be offered an invitation to live in Christ until He comes. *(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. Or consider this alternative activity to introduce the topic:*

Organize a "hymnfest" in which you sing lots of the old Advent hymns that focus on the soon return of Jesus. Share some history of Seventh-day Adventists and their hope in the Second Advent that bound their hearts together as a community. Explain that an Adventist is simply someone who believes in the "Advent of Jesus—the Second Coming."

Illustration

A story went around the Internet that tells of a huge German shepherd named Bear. The watchdog was minding his family's house when a burglar dropped in through a second-story window. Bear snarled like an idling bulldozer.

The burglar sprang to the top of a cabinet, trembling but happy to have a pumping heart. But now what? He couldn't escape. He couldn't relax for fear the monster dog might jump up. He'd have to sit there until the beast got distracted.

But Bear knew better. His master, Dave, trained dogs for a security company. Trained to use minimum violence, the dog patiently watched.

The burglar waited for the owners to come home and call the watchdog off. He figured he could bolt to safety at that point. He looked at his watch (well, someone else's actually). Two o'clock in the afternoon on Friday.

He waited . . . and waited . . . and waited.

On Monday afternoon Bear's family returned from their weekend vacation. Inside, they found Bear on guard, and the burglar sitting atop the cabinet. For three days he hadn't slept, eaten, or drunk. "Help!" he begged.

When Dave got close enough to take control, Bear bolted out the door toward the lemon tree. The dog's house training was impeccable. After relieving himself, Bear guzzled from the water bowl, gulped some dry food, and then rushed back to report for duty.

The burglar had started his descent—until he saw Bear return. He bounced back to the top of the cabinet and stayed there sniveling until the police arrived. They were amazed at Bear's "welcome." The burglar went to prison and had to eat food that wasn't as good as Dog Chow pet food.

Bear was rewarded with a fresh prime rib and a dozen Hostess Twinkies. As tasty as the reward was, I suspect Bear didn't keep watch over the house for the reward, but rather because he loved his master.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Use the following discussion questions to follow up the story:

We too are commanded in Scripture to keep watch for our beloved Master, Jesus, who is coming soon. Matthew 24 lists the signs that alert us to the nearness of His coming.

Questions to consider:

- What is the difference between watching and waiting?
- What does it mean for you to be actively watching for Jesus to come as compared to passively waiting?
- What signs are there today of Jesus' soon return?

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. Split your class into three groups and assign each group one of the following passages (Bible passages that complement Mark 13) and assignments. After approximately 15 minutes of working on the assignment, have each group share their project with the rest of the class. (If your class is small, use one assignment.)*

Read John 12:20-43—Challenge this first group to create a presentation titled "We Would See Jesus." Have the students key in on that request by the Greeks (verse 21) and share personal and practical suggestions on how we can see Jesus in daily life.

Read Matthew 24—Have this second group list all of the signs of the Second Coming that Jesus

warned us to be aware of. Then have them produce a documentary (supply a video camera and a TV to show it to the rest of the class) connecting the prophecies of Jesus with our world today.

Read Luke 21:5-38—Have this third group leave the classroom to interview people, asking the question: "When you think about the second coming of Jesus, what do you look forward to the most? Why?" Provide them with pens and notepads or a recording device. This group will then share the responses they receive.

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 Setting. Jesus shared this teaching on the Mount of Olives—the very place where Zechariah had predicted that the Messiah would stand when He came to establish His kingdom (see Zechariah 14:4). This was the ideal place for the disciples to ask Jesus when He would come in power and glory. Jesus spoke of events that would transpire before His coming, but He emphasized that His disciples should be less concerned about the date of His return and more concerned about living God's way consistently. Thus, regardless of the time of the Second Coming, they would be ready.

Prophecies Fulfilled. Jesus prophesied that "'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken' " (Matthew 24:29, NIV). Traditionally, Seventh-day Adventists have pointed to the following historical occurrences that correspond with this prophecy:

- *The sun.* The sun darkened on May 19, 1780. It was termed "the great dark day."
- *The moon.* On the night of May 19, 1780, the moon looked as if someone covered it with a giant cloth—as if the sun had been veiled that day.

  The dark day was described by a captain at sea in a letter in *The Independent Chronicle* (Boston), June 15, 1780, as "the blackest cloud" he ever saw. About 11:00 there was a little rain, and it grew dark. Between 1:00 and 2:00 he had to light a large candle to steer by.

  In Conway, Massachusetts, the people dined by candlelight, and farmers had to stop working in their fields because it was too dark. At Fishkill, New York, in the afternoon many businesses were closed due to the darkness.
- *The stars.* On November 13, 1833, the greatest display in history of falling stars occurred. Jesus' prediction about the falling of the stars was described in the *American Journal of Science and Arts*: "The morning of November 13, 1833, was rendered memorable by the exhibition of the phenomenon called shooting stars, which was probably more extensive and magnificent than any similar one hitherto recorded. Probably no celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country, since its first settlement, which was viewed with so much admiration and delight by one class of spectators, or with so much astonishment and fear by another class."[2]

Why the Delay? For an activity, bring copies of this week's readings in *The Desire of Ages* or *Humble*

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.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Feeding Holy Curiosities

As human beings we are naturally curious. As an instructor, it is important for you to recognize and nurture the innate curiosity of the students. Given the topics of the Second Coming, the future, heaven, and so on, this lesson lends itself nicely to capitaliz-ing on the questions and curiosities that students have. Before teaching this lesson, ask yourself: "How can I feed students' curiosity while providing biblical support in answer to their questions?" Whenever questions are raised that express doubt, pray with your students and lead them in Bible study on the topics that are under discussion. Continue praying for the Holy Spirit's leading in the lives of your students.

Hero. Have students read and search the copies for reasons for the delay in Jesus' coming. Here are some of the reasons Ellen White gives:

1. Sin must run its course so we'll worship God out of love, not fear.
2. Our failure to proclaim the third angel's message.
3. Sabbath reform hasn't been carried out.
4. Our selfishness.
5. So that more people won't die the eternal death.

Question for discussion: In your opinion, what is the primary reason for the delay?

III. CLOSING

Activity

Summarize the lesson with this activity:

In light of the frequency of the signs of Christ's coming, Sunnyside youth group organized a visit from their pastor. They wanted to know more about the Second Coming. Assuming you are the pastor, how would you answer their questions?

- Are we living in the last days?
- Why didn't Jesus tell us when He was returning?
- How has your belief in the Second Coming affected your life?

Summary

Conclude by addressing the two simple questions:

So what?

The apostle Peter paints a sign that signals Jesus' soon return. He describes a world of contaminated with sin (see 1 Peter 4:3, TLB). He then concludes, "The end of the world is coming soon" (verse 7, TLB).

He does not stop there, however, but continues to suggest specific things we should do in order to be ready. "Therefore be earnest, thoughtful men of prayer. Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love makes up for many of your faults. Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay for the night.

"God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God's many kinds of blessings. Are you called to preach? Then preach as though God himself were speaking through you. Are you called to help others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies, so that God will be glorified through Jesus Christ—to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:7-11, TLB).

Now what?

Because the end is near, note the things Peter says you should do today:

- Pray (verse 7).
- Show deep love for each other (verse 8).
- Cheerfully share with those in need (verse 9).
- Help others (verse 10).
- Use your special abilities to glorify God (verse 11).

[1] David Marshall, "How Soon Is Soon?" *Adventist Review*, Jan. 2, 1992, p. 39.

[2] Vol. XXV, 1834.



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 68, 69.

Humble Hero is book 3 in a special adaptation of the Conflict of the Ages series, created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Read more about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: John 12:20-43; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21:5-38.
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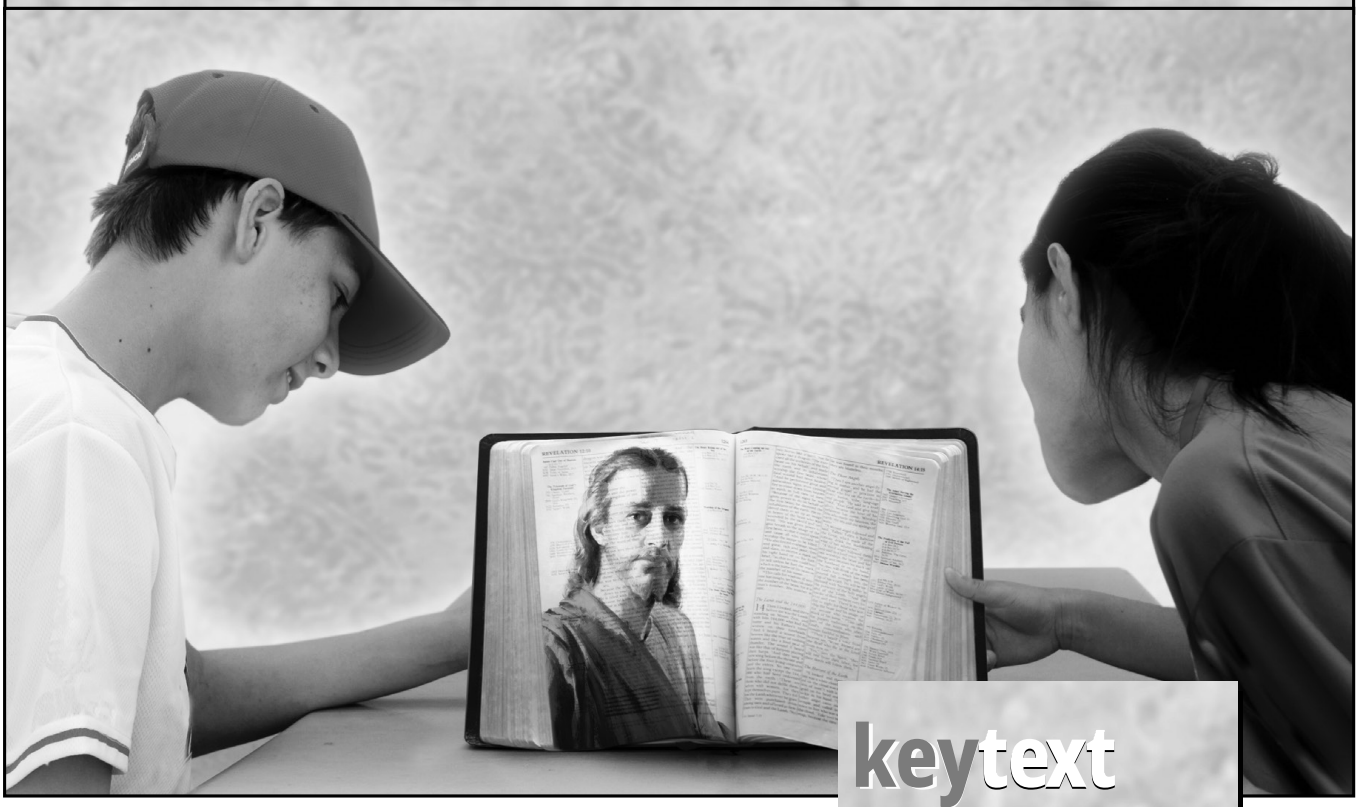


Photo by Terrill Thomas

flashlight

"Christ has given signs of His coming. He declares that we may know when He is near, even at the doors. He says of those who see these signs, 'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.' These signs have appeared. Now we know of a surety that the Lord's coming is at hand. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away,' He says, 'but My words shall not pass away'" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 632).

keytext

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. . . . If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. . . . The Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

(Matthew 24:42-44, NIV)

what do you think?

T (true) or F (false)?

____ The second coming of Christ is one of the predominant themes in the Bible.

____ Christians should thoroughly understand biblical prophecy.

____ Believing that Jesus is coming again is an essential part of our identity as Seventh-day Adventists.

____ Events in the Middle East point to the soon return of Jesus.

____ Even if Jesus does not return in my lifetime I can have peace placing my hope in His soon return.

did you know?

One of the most solemn and yet most glorious truths revealed in the Bible is that of Christ's second coming to complete the great work of redemption. To God's pilgrim people, so long left to sojourn in 'the region and shadow of death,' a precious, joy-inspiring hope is given in the promise of His appearing. . . . The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 299).

INTO THE STORY

"As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?'

"Jesus said to them: 'Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, "I am he," and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

"You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.' . . .

"'At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

"'Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

"'But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

"'Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: "Watch!" ' "

(Mark 13:3-37, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What does this passage teach us about the second coming of Jesus?

_____
_____
_____

How does this passage inform our understanding of world issues?

_____
_____
_____

What does it mean to "watch" for Jesus to come? Is this any different than "waiting" for Him to come? If so, how?

_____
_____
_____

Contrast Mark's account (Mark 13) of Jesus' teaching on the Mount of Olives with the other Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 24 and Luke 21:5-38). In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different? What does this comparison study tell you about . . .

Mark? _____
_____
_____
_____

Matthew? _____
_____
_____

Luke? _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" **(Matthew 28:19, 20, NIV).**

"In all history there has never been such a time of terror. It will be a time of trouble for my people Israel. Yet in the end they will be saved!" **(Jeremiah 30:7, NLT).**

"In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation" **(1 Peter 5:10, NLT).**

"As for me, I look to the LORD for help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me" **(Micah 7:7, NLT).**

"For the LORD of Heaven's Armies has a day of reckoning. He will punish the proud and mighty and bring down everything that is exalted" **(Isaiah 2:12, NLT).**

further insight

"There's something equally as important as coming to Christ. Are you in a saving relationship with Christ? If you are, then you're ready for His coming right now!"—Morris Venden, Seventh-day Adventist pastor and author

Sabbath

Read Acts 1:9-11.

Reflect on why you answered either true or false for each question in the *What Do You Think?* section. Go back to each question and think about somebody giving the opposite answer as you. What rationale might they use? Could you defend the opposite answer? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

Sunday

Supplement the Scripture reading from *Into the Story* by reading the following passages listed under "READ." Reflect on the thought questions under the heading "THINK" and then put the passages into practice by doing the suggested activity under "ACT."

READ

- 1 Thessalonians 4:17
- Daniel 12:1-3
- Revelation 1:7; 6:14; 13:11-18
- 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6
- 2 Peter 3:10, 11
- 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52
- 2 Thessalonians 2:8

THINK

- Is my faith in Jesus strong enough to carry me through the last days?
- How can I live today in order to be ready for the Second Coming?
- How would I explain to a friend to "watch and be ready" for Jesus' second coming?

ACT

- Pray that you can stay connected to Jesus through every circumstance in life.
- Meet with some friends and talk about current events in light of what the Bible teaches about the Second Coming.
- Read the final chapters in *The Great Controversy* by Ellen G. White.

Monday

Read Matthew 24:42-44.

Consider the following story that illustrates the difference between watching and waiting.

A fishing vessel returned home after many days at sea. As they neared the shore, the sailors gazed eagerly toward the dock where a group of their loved ones had gathered. The skipper looked through his binoculars and identified some of them: "I see Bill's Mary, and there is Tom's Margaret and David's Anne."

One man became concerned because his wife was not there. Later, he left the boat with a heavy heart fearing something tragic had happened to her. He hurried to his cottage. As he opened the door, she ran to meet him, saying, "I have been waiting for you!"

He replied with a gentle rebuke, "Yes, but the other men's wives were watching for them!"

Watching is not a spectator sport. As Oswald Chambers put it: "The only way to wait for the Second Coming is to watch that you do what you should do, so that when He comes is a matter of indifference. It is the attitude of a child, certain that God knows what He is about. When the Lord does come, it will be as natural as breathing."

Tuesday

Read 1 Peter 5:10.

After reading the *Flashlight* section, consider another observation Ellen White wrote about the Second Coming:

"Those who are watching for the Lord are purifying their souls by obedience to the truth. With vigilant watching they combine earnest working. Because they know that the Lord is at the door, their zeal is quickened to co-operate with the divine intelligences in working for the salvation of souls" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 634).

_____

_____

_____

How do you live in the here and now, knowing that our Lord is about to return? What are you doing for the salvation of souls?

Wednesday

Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

After each text included in *Punch Lines*, write a simple summary. For example, after Jeremiah 30:7 you might write, "Salvation is sure!"

_____

_____

_____

Thursday

Read Micah 7:7.

If I knew Jesus was going to come tomorrow, how would I live today? Is that the way I will live today? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

Friday

Read Matthew 28:19, 20.

As you think with anticipation of Jesus' second coming, what can you do to prepare starting today? How much of your time, energy, means, resources, talents, and spiritual gifts are you willing to contribute to share your hope of Jesus' return with others?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapters 68, 69.

*A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.