

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS

AUGUST 29 2026

lift up your head

Scripture Story: Luke 21:7-28.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire),* chapters 16, 17.
Key Text: Luke 21:25-28.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

From the Reformation to the emergence of the early Adventist awakening, it was a time of openness and searching of Scripture for God to reveal His truth about the end times. This lesson celebrates the Pilgrim Fathers and the long history of leaders who long for the coming of Christ. Chapters 16 and 17 of *The Great Controversy* contain a beautiful summary of the thoughts and hopes of those who long for the appearing of the Lord. The story in Luke 21:7-28 (and Matthew 24:3-30) where the disciples ask Jesus, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?" (NKJV) offers both warning and comfort for fellow disciples today: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them. But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately." The events that mark the era of Christ's soon return are clearly upon us, but the teaching of Christ urges us to "lift up our heads" or live as though Christ were coming this day.

The challenge of this week's lesson is to answer the question the Reformers and "heralds of the morning" sought to answer each day: "What does it mean to 'be ready' for the second coming of Christ?" Being ready is about seizing every moment available to gladly share with others the hope of Christ's soon return.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Be mindful that disciples of Christ live each day as though it were the last. *(Know)*
- Feel joyful and confident when they think of Christ's second coming. *(Feel)*
- Decide to "be ready" by receiving the promise of salvation. *(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 Savior'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 share their responses to the ranking activity in the *What Do You Think?* section. What do you think should be our primary motivation for "being ready" for Christ to return? Does it really matter? Does our motivation affect the way we live in light of the coming day of the Lord's return?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A young man named Philip Bliss wrote these words in a hymn:

"I know not the hour when my Lord shall come,
To take me away to His dear home,
But I know that His presence will lighten the gloom,
And that will be glory for me."

Philip Bliss always had a heart for going home. In fact, he could not remember a time in his life when he did not feel his need for a Savior. He grew up a poor country boy in Rome, Pennsylvania. He loved music and made instruments out of whatever he could find. As a 10-year-old he had still never heard the sound of a piano, but heard an amazing sound coming from someone's house. He followed the sweet music into a woman's living room. He urged her to keep playing. He received no formal training in music, but it was already inside him. As he grew he helped children come to know Christ in song.

Shortly after writing the hymn "I Know Not the Hour When My Lord Shall Come," he and his wife boarded a train and set out to return to Chicago to work as a minister of music. While his train was crossing a bridge in Ohio, the structure collapsed and the train plunged into a ravine. Observers witnessed Philip Bliss escape the horrible wreckage alive and well, but they also saw him climb into the burning wreckage to try to save others, including his wife. Such a passion for Christ's second coming breeds a devotion to help others in the here and now.

Perhaps you have heard the saying "We can be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? How can we live with our heads lifted high waiting for Christ's return and still be attentive to the needs of those around us?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

It is likely that, like Philip Bliss, when we are aware that Christ is coming soon, everything that happens on earth has meaning. Read the words of Christ about the events that frame the end and hear His warning and words of hope.

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.*

- *Underline* some of the specific events Christ mentions that indicate the season in which we live.
- Describe the mood you think the disciples felt as they listened to Jesus talk about what was to come.
- How should those who are living for the second coming of Christ negotiate between what's happening in the world and what Christ has called them to do?
- To what degree do you think the disciples were certain they would see Jesus come in their lifetime? How should we answer the age-old question "The signs are all around, but why is it that Christ still hasn't come?"
- Why do you think that the signs of the end tend to be negative in nature?
- Based on this passage, what do you think should be our motivation to "be ready" for the second coming of Christ?
- What do you think Jesus means by "lift up your heads" at the close of this passage?

Extra Questions for Teachers:

Invite students to compare this passage in Luke with Matthew 24 and note what is similar and what is different.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Acts 1:8-11; Matthew 20; Matthew 24; Matthew 25; Revelation 1.

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Wisdom of Each Other

Students gain much from evaluating and responding thoughtfully to the things that other people have said. Especially when there is a chapter or topic where there are many quotable quotes that contribute bits of punchy wisdom, it is a prime opportunity to get students to think. Asking students to choose which statement or quote speaks to them invites them to think and make a choice as to what resonated with them. Inviting students to share with the class what grabbed their attention is an excellent way to get them to think and to contribute to the discussion.

Sharing Context and Background

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

Since there are many stories and references in the Bible to the Second Coming, it is also helpful to spend some time thinking about what we are to be doing in the meantime.

It has been said that fear and guilt do not motivate people to "be ready" for very long. As we teach this lesson to young people it is essential to remember the context of this passage in Luke as well as the parallel passage in Matthew 24.

In both Luke and Matthew the background of the "signs of the end" is the question "What will be the *sign*?" You will notice that the word for sign is singular, meaning a single sign. Often the long list of events that Christ refers to (earthquakes, famines, wars, false messiahs, stars falling, etc.) are considered to be signs, but Jesus is clear, "for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately" (Luke 21:9, NKJV). "The sign" is explicitly given when Jesus says, "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 24:30, NKJV). The version in Luke mentions that "there will be signs in the sun, and the moon, and the stars. . . . Then they will see the Son of Man coming." There is the idea that there is one sign—the coming of Christ, and the events that build to that day are also considered "signs." The point is to be awake. To be aware.

"Being ready" when Christ comes is just as prominent a theme as all the signs and wonders that take place before the second coming of Christ. Notice that Matthew 25 is all about what it looks like to be ready in the form of three parables Jesus tells about the end:

The parable of the ten maidens (Matthew 25:1-13)

The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

The parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46)

Read *The Great Controversy*, chapter 17, as it gives specific examples of these signs being fulfilled in history as well as offering a rich source of history to the human tendency to fall asleep because Christ

Teaching From the Lesson

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite 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 Great Controversy. *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 spoke 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.*

hasn't come yet. It is essential to speak honestly and openly with youth about the fact that Christ hasn't come when everyone expected Him to. It is never our duty or cause to guess or place energy on the "when" of Christ's return. We are called to be entirely focused on living watchful lives.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Have students make signs (like road signs) for the Second Coming, but instead of the signs being about events, have them make signs that describe people. What will the people look like at the end? What will be their qualities? How will others perceive them? For example, a sign could look like a stop sign reading: "Stop—and rest" because the people at the end will be a commandment-keeping people according to Revelation 14:12. Or a speed limit sign that reads "70 X 7"—because God's people are a forgiving, grace-oriented people. Have the students share their signs and their rationale.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jesus is coming. He assured us of this. But one thing is sure: God's people have a tendency to grow tired of waiting and get involved in doing other things. History shows us that our attention span for His coming is short. So how do we stay attentive? How do we live with our heads lifted high?

The signs are clear, and anyone paying attention can feel that this can't go on much longer. We are warned not to be cynical because in the last days "scoffers will come." We must stay proactive and hopeful by celebrating with joy that we are going home. We continue to keep the Lord's return before us by living, giving, and sharing with others that His promise to return is real. Christ gave us more than enough information about the end of time. Clearly Jesus did not want us to know when He would return, so let us keep focused on what He wanted us to do in the meantime.



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 Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire),* chapters 16, 17.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

AUGUST 29 2026

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Luke 21:7-28.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 16, 17.

lift up your head



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keytext

"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars. . . . Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

(Luke 21:25-28, NKJV)

flashlight

"The doctrine of the Second Advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures. From the day when the first pair turned their sorrowing steps from Eden, the children of faith have waited the coming of the Promised One to break the destroyer's power and bring them again to the lost Paradise. Holy men of old looked forward to the advent of the Messiah in glory, as the consummation of their hope" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 299).

what do you think?

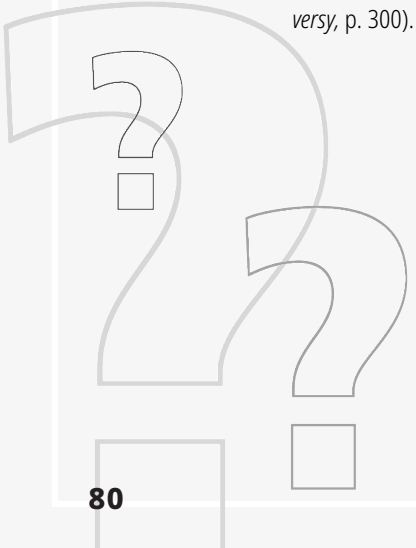
Which do you think is the most powerful motivation for being watchful for the second coming of Christ? Rank according to the strongest emotion you feel (1-strongest; 4-least strong).

____ Fear of being lost
____ Guilt for past
____ Desire for sin to be over
____ Longing to be with Jesus

Why did you answer this way? If you could rank your motivation according to what you think is the ideal, what would be first on your list? Why?

did you know?

The coming of Christ to usher in the reign of righteousness has inspired the most sublime and impassioned utterances of the sacred writers. The poets and prophets of the Bible have dwelt upon it in words glowing with celestial fire" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 300).



INTO THE STORY

"So they asked Him, saying, 'Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?'

"And He said: 'Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and, "The time has drawn near." Therefore do not go after them. But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately.'

"Then He said to them, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls.

"'But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

"'And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.'"

(Luke 21:7-28, NKJV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Underline some of the specific events Christ mentions that indicate that season in which we live.

Describe the mood you think the disciples felt as they listened to Jesus talk about what was to come.

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How should those who are living for the second coming of Christ negotiate between what's happening in the world and what Christ has called them to do?

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To what degree do you think the disciples were certain they would see Jesus come in their lifetime? How should we answer the age-old question, "The signs are all around, but why is it that Christ still hasn't come?"

_____
_____
_____

Why do you think that the signs of the end tend to be negative in nature?

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_____

Based on this passage, what do you think should be our motivation to "be ready" for the second coming of Christ?

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What do you think Jesus means by "lift up your heads" at the close of this passage?

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punch lines

"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" **(Matthew 24:3, NKJV).**

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" **(2 Timothy 3:1-5, KJV).**

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. . . . But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" **(2 Peter 3:3, 4, 8, KJV).**

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" **(Revelation 1:7, KJV).**

"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" **(Revelation 22:12, 13, NIV).**

further insight

"The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 302

Sabbath

Read 2 Peter 3:13, 14.

Read and respond to the activity in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. What motivates you to be mindful of Christ's return? What are the kinds of things that distract you from the events that will frame the return of Christ?

Notice how Peter, close to his own death, refers to the importance of paying attention to how we should live for Christ's coming: "But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him" (2 Peter 3:13, 14, NIV).

According to Peter's frame of mind in this passage, what do you think motivates him to "be ready"?

Sunday

Read Matthew 25:1-13.

As you read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to prompt your study of the text, what emotions do you feel when you imagine and think seriously about the soon return of Christ and the end of the world as it is now? What do you think is the difference between "getting ready" and "being ready" for Christ to return? What do you think God is trying to say to you in this week's passage?

Monday

Read Luke 21:25-28.

The *Key Text* from Luke reveals a solemn reality that "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." This text seems to indicate that people will be aware that *something* is going wrong on earth and it will cause fear, but their fear will come too late, for Christ will be coming at that point. Knowing that *something is wrong* is not enough. We must know Christ. When believers hear of the events that cause others to be afraid, what should be their response?

Tuesday

Read the quote from *The Great Controversy* in the *Flashlight* section of this lesson and reflect on the truth that the Second Coming is the "keynote" theme of Scripture. Reflect on what it would look like in our churches if the second coming of Christ were the "keynote theme of all church life." There is a saying that reads, "People can be so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good." Does this saying apply to those who long for the coming of Christ? Whom do you know who lives with their feet firmly on earth but with their hearts and eyes directed toward heaven? What is their impact on others?

Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson, which verse urges you to be ready? Which verse causes you to worry about friends who are lost? Why do you think this verse is particularly relevant to you today?

Thursday

Read 1 Peter 3:15.

Talking to God and to others about the coming of the Lord heightens your awareness and your anticipation of that day. Every time you pray, take a few moments to talk to God about His return and see how it shapes your overall outlook that day. In your interaction with friends, practice talking with them about the Second Coming in a positive, hopeful way, and notice how it affects what you value throughout the day.

Friday

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 1:7.

Take some time to meditate on the events of Christ's return as you imagine it occurring.

What will it look like?

What will it sound like?

What will it feel like?

It is likely that our mind's eye will fall short of capturing the final event. However, we are called to be watchful for that day.

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy, (or *Love Under Fire),* chapters 16, 17.

**Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of *The Great Controversy*, created for you 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-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.