



Commentary: *The Desire of Ages*, chapters 2, 3.

countdown to the Savior



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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).

keytext

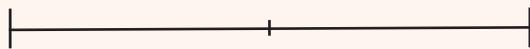
“So in heaven’s council the hour for the coming of Christ had been determined. When the great clock of time pointed to that hour, Jesus was born in Bethlehem.”

(*The Desire of Ages*, p. 32)

what do you think?

Do you agree or disagree with these statements?

The Jewish nation and the SDA Church are **similar**. The Jewish nation and the SDA 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.

Its cruciform layout is common in great cathedrals today.

The last chapter of the Bible ends with the prophecy and promise of the return of Jesus.

INTO THE STORY

“They did not become the light of the world, but shut themselves away from the world in order to escape temptation to idolatry. In the instruction given through Moses, God had placed restrictions upon their association with idolaters; but this teaching had been misinterpreted. It was intended to prevent them from conforming to the practices of the heathen. But it was used to build up a wall of separation between Israel and all other nations” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 29).

“As they departed from God, the Jews . . . lost sight of the teaching of the ritual service. That service had been instituted by Christ Himself. In every part it was a symbol of Him; and it had been full of vitality and spiritual beauty. But the Jews lost the spiritual life

from their ceremonies, and clung to the dead forms. They trusted to the sacrifices and ordinances themselves, instead of resting upon Him to whom they pointed” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 29).

“The Saviour's coming was foretold in Eden. When Adam and Eve first heard the promise, they looked for its speedy fulfillment. They joyfully welcomed their firstborn son, hoping that he might be the Deliverer. But the fulfillment of the promise tarried. Those who first received it died without the sight. From the days of Enoch the promise was repeated through patriarchs and prophets, keeping alive the hope of His appearing, and yet He came not. The prophecy of Daniel revealed the time of His advent, but not all rightly interpreted the message. Century after century passed away; the voices of the prophets ceased. The hand of the oppressor was heavy upon Israel, and many were ready to exclaim, ‘The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth.’ Eze. 12:22. But like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God's purposes know no haste and no delay” (*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 31, 32).

“With intense interest the unfallen worlds had watched to see Jehovah arise, and sweep away the inhabitants of the earth. And if God should do this, Satan was ready to carry out his plan for securing to himself the allegiance of heavenly beings. . . . Through every age, through every hour, the love of God had been exercised toward the fallen race” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 37).

OUT OF THE STORY

Are Seventh-day Adventists you know “in the world but not of the world”? Do you have any good friends who are not Seventh-day Adventists? Why or why not?

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?

Can you reconcile the statement that “through every age, through every hour, the love of God had been exercised toward the fallen race,” yet calamities such as the holocaust and the Christmas 2004 tsunami occur? Explain.

punch lines

“He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’” (Acts 1:7, 8, NIV).

“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession” (Deuteronomy 7:6, NIV).

“So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace” (Romans 11:5, NIV).

“For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him” (Genesis 18:19, NIV).

“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Galatians 4:4, 5, NIV).

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV).

other eyes

“Look upon Jesus, Child of God, come for to save us, Child of God. In His time He came at first prophecy’s end; in our time we pray may He come again. In the world, not of it, the Savior our Guide, we, His blessed children, each must decide: Do we serve God or Mammon as we live out our days? For what shall it profit if we’re not His always.”—Rick Blondo

making it real

Sabbath

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 yet fail to recognize that the hour of His coming is at hand? How can we prevent our being part of that group? What can we do to be alert to the signs of His coming?

Sunday

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. Within Adventism one can find the entire range of degrees of separation as evidenced by how one lives, where one lives, how one dresses, where one goes to school, what one drives, what one drinks, what one eats, and infinitum. Where are you on this spectrum, and why? How do you feel about or react to those who are elsewhere on that spectrum?

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? Do you believe it could happen next month? next year? in your lifetime? Are you hoping to achieve some life milestones prior to the Second Coming, such as learning to drive, graduating from college, getting married and experiencing a sexual relationship, etc.? Does this "not to worry" text often shared with teenagers give you comfort: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9, NIV)? If so, how?

Monday

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?

Tuesday

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, boyfriend, girlfriend, parents, pets (OK, that last one is a bit much, but you get the idea) see you, what is it about God they also see?

Wednesday

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

Should time last long enough for you to establish a home of your own, do you think you'll want to live in an area with a high concentration of Seventh-day Adventists? Why or why not? Would you want to enter

mission service in a country or environment far different from your own? Why or why not?

Friday

If you harbor the notion that the second coming of Jesus will happen at some far-off time, have you ever thought about how short life can be? God forbid it, but if your life were to end tomorrow (in my house we refer to this line of reasoning as "If I were to get hit by a cement truck tomorrow"), then the next thing you'll know is the second coming of Christ. Are you at peace knowing with assurance that you are saved right now through Christ's sacrifice of Himself on the cross? If not, or uncertain, please talk with your Sabbath School teacher, parent, or pastor. It isn't presumptuous to have that assurance of salvation. It is a promise fulfilled.

*A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages* has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

insight

At www.insightmagazine.org you can join the Web forum and help shape the future. Discuss the Sabbath School lessons in a virtual community.

Insight has stories of people today from which you can learn practical ideas for reality living.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages, chapters 2, 3.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.