

## LESSON 14



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

DECEMBER 31 2022

## eternal liberation

**Scripture Story:** Isaiah 65; Isaiah 66; Malachi 3; Malachi 4.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings (or Royalty and Ruin)*, chapter 60.

**Key Text:** Matthew 26:29.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

#### I. SYNOPSIS

The promise of the second coming of Christ and the eternal liberation He will bring to His true followers runs across the Bible from beginning to end. “Today the controversy of the ages is rapidly coming to a close, and the promised blessings will soon arrive. Despised, persecuted, and forsaken, God’s children in every age have looked forward to the time when He will fulfill His assurance, ‘I will make you an eternal excellence, a joy of many generations’ (Isaiah 60:15).

“The church will triumph, but not without severe conflict. ‘The bread of adversity,’ ‘the water of affliction’ (Isaiah 30:20), these are common to all of us; but none will be overwhelmed if they put their trust in the One mighty to deliver. ‘Thus says the Lord, who created you, . . . “I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior”’ (Isaiah 43:1-3).

“There is forgiveness with God; there is acceptance full and free through the merits of Jesus, our crucified and risen Lord. ‘I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.’ ‘You shall know that I, the Lord, am your Savior’ (verse 25; Isaiah 60:16).”<sup>1</sup>

Isaiah proclaimed a message of hope to the people of Israel that God would set His people free and take them home to Jerusalem. Our Father in

heaven has given us assurance that Jesus will return to redeem us from this world of sin and suffering and take us to His heavenly home. Let us live with this awareness and share with everyone the good news of Jesus’ soon return.

#### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand God’s desire to offer eternal life to His true followers through Jesus Christ. (*Know*)
- Realize the unchanging nature of God’s promises. (*Feel*)
- Choose Christ as their personal Savior and Redeemer. (*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.

Form groups of three or four and have students share the various responses according to the *What Do You Think?* section. Ask: In what ways have you offered these same words of comfort to others?

#### Illustration

Many years ago when I was about to graduate from high school, one of my classmates told me, “Philip, I pray that you make your light shine in the world outside. . . . Be a loyal citizen, so that you are not found on the other side of the law.” I had considered it trivial up to sometime recently when I paid a casual visit to one of my country’s prisons. That is when I witnessed what it means to be on the other side of the law. Although I was not an inmate myself, I can testify that freedom is really worth what it is, and that liberation is far more than what we already know about it. I came to cherish my friend’s words.

### II. TEACHING THE STORY

#### Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

In this world, we are actually behind bars in a place full of pain, suffering, and sin. Each day we get bad news from the media reports, and fear continues to grip us as we desperately look for solutions to our daily problems. In this state of affairs, the world does not seem like a good place for us to live.

Therefore, how good it is to hear that our Father in heaven cares about our predicament in this world! It is thanks to God’s grace that we are adopted into His family and have the blessed hope of His return and of eternal life in His kingdom. While God offers to everyone His saving grace, He respects our freewill decisions. Our part is to accept God’s gift of grace and allow Him to transform our characters. If we choose Him, God’s power enables us to live in harmony with His will (2 Peter 1:3, 4, 10, 11; Romans 12:1, 2). It is our privilege to believe in Jesus as our personal Savior and follow Him as we prepare to meet Him at His soon return.

#### Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- *Underline* those words that you find difficult to understand in the selected passages.
- What promises does God make to the people of Israel in these passages? Could the same promises be applicable in your case today?
- Choose and *circle* two verses that appeal to you the most. Why did you choose these?
- List the features in these passages that are specific to the “new heavens and a new earth” cited in the story.
- What do you think is the most important to understand as far as our spiritual walk is concerned: where we have come from, where we are, or where we are going?
- What do you think is significant about the fact that God will fulfill only His “best” promises to His “true” followers?
- Read Malachi 4:5, 6 and try to explain it to a friend, a relative, or a nonchurch member in your own words.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 17:10-13; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1; Isaiah 11:6-9; Romans 10:20, 21.

#### 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 Bible reveals a number of details about Jesus’ second coming:

- Jesus promised that He is preparing a place for us in heaven and that He will return to take us with Him (John 14:1-3).
- When Jesus ascended to heaven after His resurrection, angels appeared to His disciples, confirming that He will return (Acts 1:9-11).
- Enoch prophesied that Jesus will return in glory (Jude 14).
- When Jesus will return in glory, He will reward everyone according to their deeds (Matthew 16:27).
- Jesus’ return will be visible to everyone (Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:27) and it will also be an audible event (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- The unrighteous, who chose to reject Jesus, will try to hide from His face, wishing they

could die, rather than face Him in His glory (Revelation 6:14-17).

- Jesus in His parables distinguished between those who follow Him and are prepared to meet Him and those who reject His offer of grace (Matthew 13:37-43).
- The true followers of Jesus will rejoice greatly at His return (Isaiah 25:9).
- While at His first coming Jesus came humbly and suffered greatly to save us, at His second coming Jesus will return as “King of kings and Lord of lords” (see Revelation 19:16).
- Jesus’ second coming constitutes the “blessed hope” for those who await His return (Titus 2:13).
- As we ponder the significance of the glorious event of Jesus’ second coming we must come to Him today, for He can satisfy our spiritual thirst and longing after righteousness (Revelation 22:11, 12, 17-20). (See Mark Finley, *Studying Together*, pp. 15, 16.)

“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. . . . The doctrine of the Second Advent is the very keynote of the sacred Scriptures.”<sup>2</sup>

When Elizabeth Mills wrote the song “We Speak of the Realms” (*The SDA Hymnal*, no. 434), she was inspired to remind believers of our heavenly home. We can imagine the overall tranquillity, the total absence of evil, and the most precious presence of Christ in that place. Think of Jesus’ promise to His true fol-



### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

#### Random Assignment Lead

Assign the seven daily activities from the students’ Bible study guide to seven members of your class. Each assigned member will lead the class through the day for which he or she is assigned. The entire class tackles issues emerging from the respective days, with the day leader presenting his or her personal views. As the class facilitator, your role is to come up with thought-provoking questions and clarification where your students may need help. In this way the whole class becomes actively involved in answering questions, and as a result the students can gain a deeper understanding of this grand subject that points our attention to Jesus’ second coming, the fulfillment of Bible prophecies.

lowers: “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3, NKJV). Isaiah records: “But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy” (Isaiah 65:18, NIV). John the revelator also gives us a glimpse of the activities of this Holy City: “The greatness and the wealth of the nations will be brought into the city.

## Teaching From . . .

*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 Prophets and Kings. 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 quotes in Further Insight convey the point of the story in this lesson.*



But nothing that is impure will enter the city, nor anyone who does shameful things or tells lies. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of the living will enter the city" (Revelation 21:26, 27, GNT).

The Spirit of Prophecy explains: "In the earth made new, the redeemed will engage in the activities and pleasures that brought happiness to Adam and Eve in the beginning. They will live the Eden life, the life in garden and field. 'They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands' (Isaiah 65:21, 22, NKJV). They will develop every power, increase every capability, engage in the grandest activities, and realize their highest ambitions."<sup>3</sup>

Finally, we have been given the freedom to choose either to be or not to be there. But the big question rests with us: What must we do to be there?

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

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

Designate volunteers to read the following Bible passages about the resurrection of the saved at Jesus' second coming: Isaiah 26:19; Isaiah 35:5, 6; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Invite students to elaborate on the passages they have read, and be prepared to answer questions they might have.

For example, clarify to them that not everyone who is dead will be resurrected at Jesus' coming. Only those who died believing in Him will be resurrected and taken to heaven. Explain that the resurrection of the wicked will happen after the millennium (Revelation 20).

#### Summary

Read the following passages and discuss with the students ways we can prepare for Jesus' soon return:

"Look up, and let your faith continually increase. Let this faith guide you along the narrow path that leads through the gates of the city into the wide, limitless future of glory.

"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (James 5:7, 8, NKJV).

"The nations of the saved will know no other law than the law of heaven. All will be a happy, united family. The morning stars will sing together, and the sons of God will shout for joy, while God and Christ will unite in proclaiming, 'There shall be no more sin, neither shall there be any more death.'

"'From one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the Lord.' 'For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord.'

"'As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you' (Isaiah 66:23, NKJV; 51:3, NKJV; 62:5, NKJV)."<sup>4</sup>

**Ask:** How can we live with a sense of urgency as we await Jesus' soon return? What is our mission to the people around us who do not know Jesus? What are ways you can share with others the blessed hope of Jesus' second coming?

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Royalty and Ruin* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2008), p. 253.

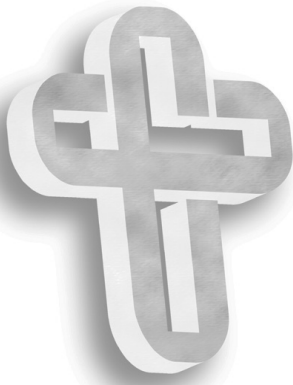
<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 299.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Royalty and Ruin*, p. 255.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Royalty and Ruin*, p. 256.



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 *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 60.



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## STUDENT LESSON

**Scripture Story:** Isaiah 65; Isaiah 66; Malachi 3; Malachi 4.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 60.

### eternal liberation



Photo by Terrill Thomas

### flashlight

“The darkest hour of the church’s struggle with the powers of evil is that which immediately precedes the day of her final deliverance. But none who trust in God need fear; for ‘when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall,’ God will be to His church ‘a refuge from the storm.’ Isaiah 25:4” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 725).

### keytext

“I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

(Matthew 26:29, NIV)

# what do you think?

**As Christians we look forward to the day Christ will come** and take the righteous elect to their heavenly home. While we are still battling with sin, pain, and suffering in this world, which voice of the Lord appeals to you most in times of distress?

- "I am here."
- "I hear you."
- "I understand."
- "I care."

Think of the saddest moment you have experienced in your life; does the issue of God's grace through Christ give you some hope to overcome? How can you encourage your friends in similar situations to accept that God cares?

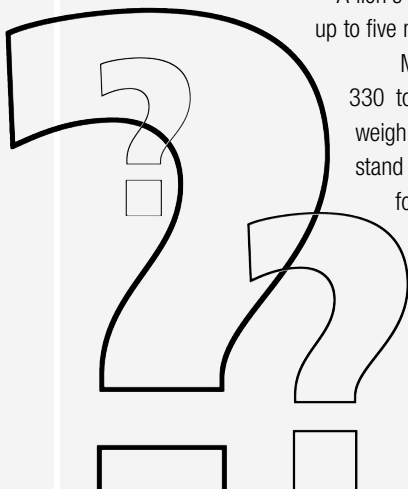
## did you know?

**T**he lion, particularly the face of the male, is one of the most widely recognized animal symbols in human culture.

Lions live for approximately 10 to 14 years in the wild, while in captivity they can live up to 25 years.

A lion's roar can be heard up to five miles away.

Male lions weigh from 330 to 530 pounds; females weigh 270 to 300 pounds. Lions stand between three and a half and four feet tall at the shoulder.



## INTO THE STORY

**"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth.**

The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit."

"The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the Lord."

"For this is what the Lord says: 'I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.' When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass; the hand of the Lord will be made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes."

"As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,' declares the Lord, 'so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,' says the Lord."

"So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,' says the Lord Almighty. 'I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.'"

"Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction."

(Isaiah 65:17-21, 25; Isaiah 66:12-14, 22, 23; Malachi 3:5, 6; Malachi 4:4-6, NIV)



# OUT OF THE STORY

Place *brackets* around the major sections of the Bible passages as though they were scenes in a play. How many different themes do you see emerging from this story?

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What do you as an individual understand by God saying that “I will create new heavens and a new earth”?

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Isaiah 65:25 says that “the wolf and the lamb will feed together” (NIV). How is this possible in God’s “new earth” in light of the current situation in which wolves and lambs are enemies?

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The Lord promised the people of Israel a lasting prosperity and comfort. What were they supposed to do on their part to qualify for this offer?

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As you read these selected Bible passages, is there:

- A warning to heed?
  - A prayer to pray?
  - A truth to proclaim?
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How do the teachings of the prophets and the law prepare us for Christ’s second coming?

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Why is preparation of the way for the Lord needed before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord? (Malachi 4:5, NIV)

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## punch lines

“**For if we believe** that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words”  
**(1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, NKJV).**

“**Salvation is found** in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” **(Acts 4:12, NIV).**

“**Behold, I tell you a mystery:** We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’” **(1 Corinthians 15:51-54, NKJV).**

“**For in the days** before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man”  
**(Matthew 24:38, 39, NIV).**

## further insight

“**Today the church of God is free to carry forward to completion the divine plan for the salvation of a lost race.**”

—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 714

“**Soon we shall see Him in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered.**” —Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 732

# connecting to life

## Sabbath

Read John 14:1-3.

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" (Fundamental Belief 25, The Second Coming of Christ).

Although we live in a time and age characterized with pain and suffering, the loving voice of our Savior constantly appeals to us not to harden our hearts but to make a noble choice to accept Him as our Savior. This week, think about how you can humbly take steps to respond to the four voices of Christ in the *What Do You Think?* section.

## Sunday

Read Isaiah 65:17.

The excerpt from Isaiah 65:17 talks of God making a new earth and new heavens. In view of your own situation in the present earth, would God be just in His decision to destroy the current earth and replace it with a new one? What about those who believe in the joy and happiness of this world and its luring incentives? Do you think they will inherit the new earth? What must you do to be part of the eternal liberation that will come by Christ's second coming?

## Monday

Read Matthew 26:29.

The *Key Text* reminds us of Christ's commitment toward our salvation. Reflect on the circumstances in which you have shown the virtue of commitment. To whom were you most committed? Your parents? Your nation? Your teacher? God? Rank them from the most to the least and give a reason for your ranking.

The *Key Text* also projects into the future, after the end of sin. How does this testimony of Jesus give you hope? How can you improve your scope of hope in relation to your faith? Consider teaming up with your friends and identify opportunities to feed your faith as a heaven-bound child of God.

## Tuesday

Read Revelation 1:7.

Take a look at the powerful statement of Ellen White in the *Flashlight* section of the lesson. The ability and power of Christ to redeem a fallen world revealed the profound grace and mercy, and complete liberation, which are deeply entrenched in God's master plan of salvation. Are there situations in your life in which you have borne the consequences of other person's mistakes? How did you feel? As you consider these situations, think about what Christ experienced on your behalf at Calvary.

Situation(s):

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Consequence(s):

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## Wednesday

Read Hebrews 12:2-4.

After reading the selected verses in the *Punch Lines* section of the lesson, choose two verses which you think are most relevant to your life as you wait for the second coming of Christ. Do you have friends or relatives with similar experiences? In what way can you encourage them to remain strong in their faith amid pain, suffering, and boredom, which continue to suppress us in this world? Paraphrase the verses you chose and recite them to a friend during a dinner invitation this week.

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## Thursday

Read Isaiah 66:23.

Take time to read *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 60. An overview of the new earth is

provided: "There every power will be developed, every capability increased. The grandest enterprises will be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations will be reached, the highest ambitions realized. And still there will appear new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects of study to call forth the powers of body and mind and soul" (p. 731). In view of the powerful insight that Ellen White gives on the state of the new earth, what do you look forward to the most?

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## Friday

Read Revelation 22:12-21.

Have you ever thought of what life will be like in the new earth? Think of a time you moved from one home to another—a better one. How did you feel in your new home? As you reflect on the promised new earth, consider making this your prayer:

*"Dear God, I admit that I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead so that I might have eternal life. Please forgive me of my sins. I accept Your gift of eternal life and choose to follow You, confessing Jesus as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for making Your home in my heart. In Jesus' name I pray, amen."*

## this week's reading\*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 60.

\**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, 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#.URlhf1rB09s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.