CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
NOVEMBER052022

Scripture Story: 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; Revelation 13.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 35.

true power



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"A religion of externals is attractive to the unrenewed heart. The pomp and ceremony of the Catholic worship has a seductive, bewitching power, by which many are deceived; and they come to look upon the Roman Church as the very gate of heaven. None but those who have planted their feet firmly upon the foundation of truth, and whose hearts are renewed by the Spirit of God, are proof against her influence. Thousands who have not an experimental knowledge of Christ will be led to accept the forms of godliness without the power. Such a religion is just what the multitudes desire" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 567).

keytext

"Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, . . . He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."

(2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, NIV)

what do you think?

Based on what qualities do nonbelievers rank leaders? Based on what qualities do Christians rank or value leaders? How do you evaluate people? How would you like to be evaluated by others?

_____
_____
_____
_____

INTO THE STORY

"And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, 'Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?'

"The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world. . . .

"Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And it performed great signs. . . . Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

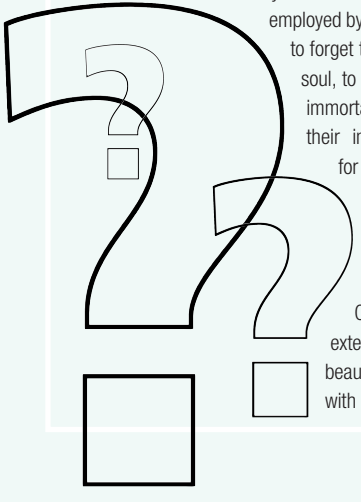
"This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666."

(Revelation 13:1-8, 11-18, NIV)

did you know?

Brilliancy of style is not necessarily an index of pure, elevated thought. High conceptions of art, delicate refinement of taste, often exist in minds that are earthly and sensual. They are often employed by Satan to lead men to forget the necessities of the soul, to lose sight of the future, immortal life, to turn away from their infinite Helper, and to live for this world alone" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 567).

"The religion of Christ needs not such attractions to recommend it. In the light shining from the cross, true Christianity appears so pure and lovely that no external decorations can enhance its true worth. It is the beauty of holiness, a meek and quiet spirit, which is of value with God" (*The Great Controversy,* pp. 566, 567).



OUT OF THE STORY

Circle all the animals mentioned in this prophecy.

Underline every reference to worship.

Put a star next to every reference to "power."

What do you think is the main verse in this passage? Why?

_____

_____

Write the key thought of this passage that is unmistakably clear:

_____

_____

_____

Note the reference to the leopard, the bear, and the lion in verse 2. Now compare this to the symbolism used in Daniel 7. With the help of *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, research what governmental powers these beasts represented. How do these powers compare to the powers represented by the statue in Daniel 2? Why do you think John references these powers in reverse order from Daniel?

_____

_____

_____

_____

There are four references in this chapter to "the dragon." Read Revelation 12:7-9 to identify the dragon. Who fought against the dragon? With what results?

_____

_____

_____

By just reading verses 17 and 18, what do you know about the mark of the beast and the number 666?

_____

_____

_____

Compare verse 18 with James 1:5. How can you find the wisdom needed to understand about the mark of the beast?

_____

_____

_____

_____

punch lines

"For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock" **(Psalm 27:5, NIV).**

"The one who stands firm to the end will be saved" **(Matthew 24:13, NIV).**

"Then they gathered around him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'" **(Acts 1:6, NIV).**

"He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority'" **(Acts 1:7, NIV).**

"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books" **(Revelation 20:12, NIV).**

"For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus" **(Revelation 19:10, NIV).**

further insight

"To those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance, angels of God draw near. The Holy Spirit is given to open to them the rich treasures of the truth."

—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons,* p. 59

"God can deliver by few as well as by many. He is honored not so much by the great numbers as by the character of those who serve Him."

—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets,* p. 550

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Matthew 5:13-16.

Discuss the people in the *What Do You Think?* section. What makes a person powerful? Who are the most powerful people for the cause of Christ today? Why?

Sunday

Read Revelation 13.

Prayerfully consider Ellen White's commentary on the text:

"It has been shown that the United States is the power represented by the beast with lamb-like horns, and that this prophecy will be fulfilled when the United States shall enforce Sunday observance, which Rome claims as the special acknowledgment of her supremacy. But in this homage to the papacy the United States will not be alone. The influence of Rome in the countries that once acknowledged her dominion is still far from being destroyed. And prophecy foretells a restoration of her power. 'I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.' Verse 3. The infliction of the deadly wound points to the downfall of the papacy in 1798. After this, says the prophet, 'his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.' Paul states plainly that the 'man of sin' will continue until the second advent. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8. To the very close of time he will carry forward the work of deception. And the revelator declares, also referring to the papacy: 'All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life.' Revelation 13:8. In both the Old and the New World, the papacy will receive homage in the honor paid to the Sunday institution, that rests solely upon the authority of the Roman Church" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 579).

Questions for reflection:

- Can Satan work more effectively from within the church or from outside the church? Why?
- What examples do you see today that might suggest movement toward a one-world government?

Monday

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4.

Read the *Key Text*. How can we shield ourselves from the deceptions of the evil one?

Tuesday

Read John 17:17.

In the *Flashlight* section Ellen White talks about the "pomp and ceremony of the Catholic worship." Discuss with a friend: Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church susceptible to becoming "a religion of externals"? How can we plant our feet firmly on the foundation of truth?

Wednesday

Read the following Bible references and reflect on their meaning to you.

1 Peter 2:5, 9; Acts 5:12-29; 2 Corinthians 5:20.

What do you see as the primary challenge when government and church get entangled?

What is our duty as Christians regardless of the circumstances and despite persecution?

Thursday

Read Mark 14:38.

Reflect on the following quote: "It is the beauty of holiness, a meek and quiet spirit, which is of value with God" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 567).

Friday

Read 1 Chronicles 29:12, 13.

How is your friendship with Jesus changing your character in His likeness?

What does this lesson have to teach me about my personal convictions?

What does this lesson have to teach me about worship?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 35.

**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.