

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
DECEMBER 05 2026

the time of trouble

Scripture Story: John 20:1-18.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 39.
Key Text: Daniel 12:1.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The time of trouble is one of those phrases that fills Seventh-day Adventist believers and others who look for Jesus' appearing with trepidation. Even if one is supremely at peace with God, they cannot discount the fearful scenes that will signal the close of earth's history.

By the time of the proclamation found in Daniel 12:1, the record of all humanity is sealed. The filthy will remain so; the holy will be sealed in their holiness. Jesus will cease to mediate on behalf of humanity, and Satan will be freed to use all the power available to him to persecute the followers of God and lead the fallen world to the precipice of destruction. This is one trial that will be worse in culmination than in anticipation.

As you prepare to teach this lesson, know that many teenagers in your class are fearful of the end-time, the time of trouble. Who can blame them? For many years the events that usher in the second coming of Jesus have been used to bludgeon people into following Christ. The youth have experienced this. Avoid the tendency to sensationalize the events of the time of trouble simply as a means of pressuring them to follow Jesus. Fear may take us to Christ, but it will not keep us there.

The youth need to know that even though trying times are ahead, a small remnant of faithful believers, of which they may be a part, will endure to the end. This group will neither give up their faith in Jesus Christ, nor give up the Sabbath. Like Jacob on the night that he wrestled with God's angel (Genesis 32:24-30) they will pray earnestly, pleading with God for mercy and humbling themselves before Him. As they review their lives they see little that is good, but all their sins that they can remember will have been confessed and repented of.

The main point to be communicated this week is the "fierce urgency of now." Now is the time to be right with God. Now is the time to forsake sin and surrender to God—before the time of trouble comes.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn that a time of trouble is coming upon the earth such as never was. *(Know)*
- Experience the assurance that they can stand for Christ, no matter what comes upon the earth. *(Feel)*
- Embrace their role as faithful members of God's end-time remnant. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Remnant and Its Mission, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 13

"The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a per-

sonal part in this worldwide witness" (Dan. 7:9-14; Isa. 1:9; 11:11; Jer. 23:3; Mic. 2:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 4:17; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Jude 3, 14; Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4).

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.*

Review the *What Do You Think?* activity with your class. Chances are you, like your students, have a strong emotional reaction to the time of trouble. It is difficult to be neutral about something that has so many far-reaching implications for one's life.

Ask the students to share their answers. Let the students know that there is no right or wrong ranking of their emotions. The objective of this activity is to help the students take a hard look at what they think about end-time events, and whether or not their reactions are supported by the facts of what will occur before Jesus comes.

(Note: you may need to define the time of trouble for some of your students. One way to describe it would be to say, "There will come a point when God's angel will be instructed to stop holding back the fierce winds of human evil. God's people will then experience their ultimate test of loyalty to Jesus. However, God has promised to deliver His people during this time [Dan. 12:2], and to cut it short for their sake [Matt. 24:22].")

Another way to approach the *What Do You Think?* section is to write the phrase "time of trouble" on a board and have the students call out the first thing that comes to mind. This activity will be less controlled—who knows what might come out of a teenager's mouth?—but you will get a great "gut reaction" from which to teach the lesson.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In the years following World War II, many young people eagerly joined efforts to sell and distribute Christian literature both in their neighborhoods and in more distant towns and cities.

Jonathan was a young literature evangelist who went long distances in his zeal to sell and distribute Bibles and Adventist literature. His ventures were not without risk. At that time it was forbidden to sell Christian literature.

One day as Jonathan was in a town very far from home, someone reported him to the authorities. Pretty soon the police came and found Jonathan carrying and selling Christian literature. He was arrested. After some questioning Jonathan was beaten and placed in prison. When the members of his home church heard the news, they prayed fervently for his release. The conditions in the prison were harsh. In his prison cell Jonathan had only bare wooden planks to sleep on. Yet in spite of the unfriendly conditions of prison life, Jonathan felt great peace in his heart. He felt honored to suffer for his Lord and felt his Savior especially close during that trying time.

After a number of weeks had gone by, to his great surprise and joy, Jonathan was released from prison on a Saturday morning. With his heart overflowing with joy and gratitude to God, Jonathan went straight to the closest Seventh-day Adventist church. As he opened the door and quietly entered in, he found the congregation kneeling and praying. He bowed his head and started listening to the prayers. To his astonishment, the people in the congregation were praying for his release from prison. At the close of the prayer time it was the church's turn to be astonished as they witnessed a most tangible answer to their prayers!

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

God's end-time people will love Him too much to acquiesce to the demands of the world.

We must remember that such a stand is not the product of the moment. To stand for God in times of crisis, one has to be standing consistently in times of peace.

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.*

Three passages of Scripture comprise this week's *Into the Story* section, each of which offers a wealth of learning about the time of trouble. Explore each passage with your students.

Revelation 12:11: This verse more than any other

signals the end of God's probation for humanity. Students need to know that there is an end to God's mercy, that while He loves us, He also hates sin. You may wish to highlight the fact that when God pronounces His final judgment, He is simply confirming the chosen state of each human being. Those who will remain holy chose long ago to be holy. The filthy chose their filth over God. The point to be made here is that God honors our choices.

Genesis 32:24-30: A part of the time of trouble is also referred to as the time of Jacob's trouble. This period refers to the anguish Jacob felt as his brother Esau approached him after many years on the run. Jacob, the supplanter, was about to come face-to-face with the sins of his past life, and he yearned to be forgiven, to have God's blessing, to realize God's promise that He would make of him a great nation. Jacob's night of wrestling with God represents the mental turmoil that will characterize God's end-time remnant.

Psalm 91:1-8. You may wish to encourage your students to read to the end of this psalm. King David knew a thing or two about trouble. For nearly 20 years he was chased and hounded by King Saul, before he ascended the throne of Israel. In hovels and caves, hungry and tired, David drew close to God and depended fully on Him for all his needs. This is the assurance he offers us in Psalm 91. Though we may be tried and in danger of death, God will protect His people. He will see us through, if we put our faith in Him.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Hebrews 13:5, 6; Revelation 16; Matthew 24; Matthew 25:1-13.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. The Beginning. The book of Revelation begins with a clear definition of its theme: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John" (Revelation 1:1, NKJV). The book of Revelation is an unveiling of future mysteries that end in the triumphant return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The first apocalyptic book in the Bible was the book of Daniel, which appeared during the time of the Babylonian captivity in the 6th century B.C. It was Daniel 12:1 that spoke of a time of trouble to come, such as the world had not previously seen. This cryptic message is unveiled in the book of Revelation, especially Revelation 16.

2. The Issue of Worship. The apostle John, the writer of Revelation, lived during the time of the Roman Emperor Domitian. The issue of worship proved to be a deciding element of Domitian's reign. In the Roman provinces of Asia it was not common for temples to be built to conquering Roman generals. But no Roman emperor heretofore required subjects to worship him as did Domitian. Christians who lived during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96) had no legal protection. One scholar notes that he tried to establish his claim to deity by sending out a letter, which began "Our Master and our God bids this be done."

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* 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.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Truth Comes Alive

Many of your students may not understand what it means to survive very difficult, trying circumstances. Is there someone in your church who has been through a "time of trouble"? Why not ask them to visit your class and share a nutshell testimony of God's leading during this difficult time?

There is much "heavy" learning in this week's lesson. Students will grasp the truths best by studying them from the Bible, but others—such as the auditory and kinesthetic learners in the group—will gravitate to a living, breathing example of survival.

Perhaps one of the students has a story of survival. Give them an opportunity to share it, if time permits.

Domitian executed those who refused to worship him and banished others to far-off places. It is believed that John was one of those who were persecuted for their faith during Domitian's reign. Is it any wonder then that the issue of worship figures so prominently in the book of Revelation? John was persecuted because he refused to stop worshipping God. Those who endure the time of trouble will face the same trials and the issue again will be worship.

3. Free Will. When God created Adam and Eve, He gifted them with freedom to choose to obey Him or not. Genesis 2:17 is but one example of this free will. God even was clear about what the consequences would be if they chose to disregard His admonition. God does not trifle with our free will.

"The free will of man is not to be interfered with. Men are to be permitted to live the life of their own choosing, so that their true character may become apparent. Each person of each age will be made manifest in respect to the class in which he belongs, at the second coming of Christ."*

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Share the following in your own words:

The most important part of standing for Jesus at the end of time is the determination to stand for Him now, right where we are. Ask God to give you and your students the solemn resolve to stand tall until we all see Jesus' face.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The time of trouble will be a difficult time for all human beings alive at the time. Not only will Satan be unleashed in all of his terrible ferocity, but angels from heaven will pour out plagues upon the earth that will send the world into a nightmarish frenzy.

Amid the turmoil, a small number of believers will refuse to bow to Satan's pressures. The Sabbath test will be the most prominent issue on which they stand firm for God, but it will by no means be the only one. Religious leaders will point to them as the source of the world's pain and chaos. They will be persecuted mercilessly and driven underground.

But they will survive. Their sacrifice will lead countless others to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. There is no way to soft-pedal the fearful scenes soon to fall upon earth, but we are assured by these words from Jesus: "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Revelation 22:12, NKJV).

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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* *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 896.



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*), chapter 39.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: John 20:1-18.
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the time of trouble



Photo by The Crystal Lenz

flashlight

"When the third angel's message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth. The people of God have accomplished their work. They have received 'the latter rain,' 'the refreshing from the presence of the Lord,' and they are prepared for the trying hour before them. . . . All who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received 'the seal of the living God.' Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, 'It is done. . . . He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' Revelation 22:11" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 613).

keytext

"At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book."

(Daniel 12:1, NKJV)

what do you think?

What have you heard about the time of trouble? Below are several words that describe the way people sometimes feel when they speak or hear about the time of trouble. Rank the following words according to the emotions that most affect you. Place a 1 by the word that best describes how you feel, 2 by your second choice, and so on.

____ No emotion	____ Hopeful
____ Fear	____ Grateful
____ Joy	____ Sick
____ Relieved	____ Ready
____ Stressed	____ Sinful
____ Unprepared	

Why did you choose the ones you did?

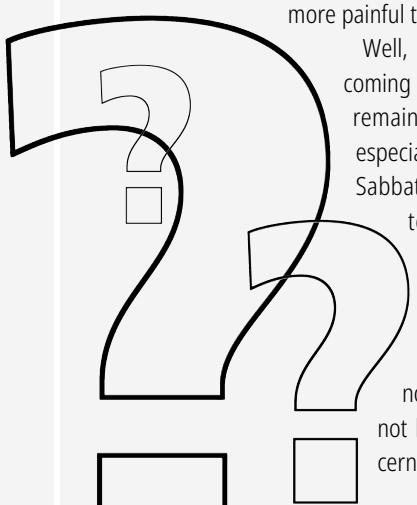
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did you know?

Did you know that the mental uncertainty of whether or not all our sins are forgiven will be more trying than the events of the time of trouble themselves? It's hard to grasp that, isn't it? If you're being hounded to the point of death by angry mobs who believe that you've brought destruction on the world because of your beliefs, what can be more painful than that?



Well, before the second coming of Jesus, those who remain faithful to God—especially as it relates to the Sabbath—will be faced with terrible persecution, even death. However, Revelation 12:11 says: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death" (NKJV). They will not be overly concerned about dying. They will be concerned about living with Jesus Christ forever.

INTO THE STORY

"He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."

"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

"And He said, 'Let Me go, for the day breaks.'

"But he said, 'I will not let You go unless You bless me!'

"So He said to him, 'What is your name?'

"He said, 'Jacob.'

"And He said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.'

"Then Jacob asked, saying, 'Tell me Your name, I pray.'

"And He said, 'Why is it that you ask about My name?' And He blessed him there.

"So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: 'For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.'"

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.'

"Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

"You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked."

(Revelation 22:11; Genesis 32:24-30; Psalm 91:1-8, NKJV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Several different passages of Scripture make up this week's *Into the Story* section. Read each passage and *highlight* one thing from each passage that is directly related to the time of trouble. *Place an X* by the item you select in each passage.

In Revelation 22:11 who is speaking? Who is the audience? Remember, the apostle John is seeing all of this while imprisoned on a deserted island. Why do you think God gave John this view of events, even though John could not understand fully what he was seeing?

_____
_____
_____

Who had been searching for Jacob for many years? Why?

_____
_____
_____

What did Jacob believe that the angel could do for him? Share a time in your life when you "wrestled with God" over a difficult issue.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Psalm 91 suggests that God will always protect His people from pain and suffering. Is this true? Explain.

_____
_____
_____
_____

King David is the writer of Psalm 91. Share one "time of trouble" that David went through in his life.

_____
_____
_____

What assurance about the time of trouble can you take away from these verses?

_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" **(Psalm 34:18, 19, NKJV).**

"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them" **(Psalm 34:7, NKJV).**

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" **(Deuteronomy 6:5, NIV).**

"For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" **(Psalm 30:5, NIV).**

"Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep" **(Luke 6:25, NKJV).**

further insight

"Such will be the experience of God's people in their final struggle with the powers of evil. . . . They will have a deep sense of their shortcomings, and as they review their lives their hopes will sink." But "they will lay hold of the strength of God, as Jacob laid hold of the Angel."

—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets,* p. 202

Sabbath

Read Luke 22:39-44.

Did you complete the *What Do You Think?* activity? What word best captures how you feel when speaking about the time of trouble? Perhaps we should look to Jesus for some guidance on handling the trouble to come.

How did Jesus prepare for His death? From today's reading answer the questions below.

Why did Jesus choose to pray instead of running from the danger He faced?

_____

What specifically was Jesus asking His Father to do?

_____

When His Father refused, what did Jesus say?

_____

Do you believe that Jesus can give you the same courage to stand that He showed as He faced crucifixion?

_____

Sunday

Read Revelation 22:11.

After reading the *Into the Story* section, explore the passage by answering the *Out of the Story* questions.

Why do you think our reading today is one of the most powerful verses in the Bible?

_____

After the death of Jesus, the Jewish temple worship was obsolete. Jesus had become the sacrifice slain for humanity's sins. Yet, the Jews continued to worship at the Temple as though nothing had changed, though they had rejected the Savior.

What special work will God do before He seals our fate? (Revelation 14:7)

_____

Monday

Read Daniel 12:1

This week's *Key Text* was written by Daniel, hundreds of years before the apostle John wrote down the visions he received from God while imprisoned on the island of Patmos.

Daniel was himself coming out of a crisis when he received his end-time vision. What do you think Daniel means when he says, "At that time Michael shall stand up"?

_____

The Michael Daniel mentions is Jesus Christ, who is now talking to God for us in heaven. He is our Mediator (Hebrews 8:6; 12:24). There is a point at which Jesus will stop His mediation in heaven. He will "stand up" to ready Himself to return to earth, save His people, and destroy the wicked.

What did the angel tell Daniel to do with the things he had been shown? (Daniel 12:4)

_____

Why? (Habakkuk 2:3) _____

Tuesday

Read Revelation 16.

In this week's *Flashlight* quotation Ellen White picks up on the finality of the moment when God marks the wicked and seals the righteous.

What role will angels play in the time of trouble?

What are the angels in Revelation 16 doing to the earth? What plagues are they pouring out?

What does Psalm 91:11 tell us about the function of angels in times of trouble?

Wednesday

Read each of this week's *Punch Lines* very carefully and apply them to your life.

The apostle Paul found particular comfort in Psalm 34:19. What did Paul say to Timothy about the troubles that he had suffered? (2 Timothy 3:11, 12)

_____

Timothy was still a young man when Paul wrote to him. What message was Paul attempting to give Timothy?

_____

What does Luke 6:25 tell us about the reality of living in a sinful world?

_____

Isn't it good to know that God will be with us through it all?

Thursday

Ephesians 6:10-19.

List the specific tools that God has given His people in their battle with the devil:

_____

Are you dressed for battle?

Friday

Read Isaiah 41:10; 1 Corinthians 16:13.

Someone once noted that "Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you're scared." Are you still afraid of the time of trouble? Not sure that you'll be able to stand up for what's right? Why not tell God that right now?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 39.

**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.