

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
DECEMBER 26 2026

earth's makeover

Scripture Story: Revelation 15:1-4; Revelation 20:7-15; Revelation 21; Revelation 22.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 42.
Key Text: Revelation 21:2, 3.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

As Adventist Christians we know that this dark world is not all there is. We live knowing that Christ will come again. The day is coming when we will see our Maker face to face. Any pain, sorrow, or disappointment we're feeling now is temporary.

The Bible promises that one day there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain (Revelation 21:4). The great controversy will be over. The earth will be made new. At last we will experience peace on earth and "good will toward men" (Luke 2:14, KJV). "The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."[1]

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn about heaven. *(Know)*
- Be invited to live with the assurance that some day they will experience the earth made new. *(Feel)*
- Be given the opportunity to experience the peace of Christ as they wait and watch for the Second Coming. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The New Earth, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 28

"On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His presence. For here God Himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and He shall reign forever. Amen" (Isa. 35; 65:17-25; Matt. 5:5; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 11:15; 21:1-7; 22:1-5).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. Ask them to share the basis on which they answered the questions.*

As an alternate activity, wrap up various gifts. Distribute the gifts and then discuss the following questions:

- What is the best gift you have ever received and why?
- Be honest here: do you prefer giving or receiving a gift? Explain.
- Which is a greater gift from God—to come as a baby in a manger? or to come back and take us home to heaven? Why?

- In light of the consumerism of Christmas, how can you be perfectly content with what you have?
- Discuss with your friends what you are looking forward to the most when you get to heaven.

Illustration

"Years ago, in one of the crowded cities of India, a speeding taxi struck a street urchin. A government official who witnessed the accident rushed the badly injured boy to a nearby hospital, where he gradually recovered.

"Every day the official and his wife visited their young friend, becoming quite fond of him. Since he had no family, they decided to adopt him. Upon his release from the hospital, they joyfully brought him to their mansion as one of their own family.

"Every day the mother brought her son back to the hospital to get his bandages changed. One morning she found herself especially busy and asked the boy if he could go by himself. 'Of course,' he replied proudly, 'I know my way around this city.' The mother gave him a dollar and a quarter to pay the doctor, and, with a smile and a kiss, bade him farewell.

"The boy set off for the hospital. Then, just as he turned the corner, a temptation crossed his mind. He stopped, opened his hand, and stared at the shining coins. Never before had he held so much money. Why did he have to give them to the doctor?

"For a minute he stood there thinking. Then the decision was made. Clutching the coins, the boy raced down the street, never to be seen again.

"The father he abandoned had considerable wealth. All his other children were university graduates who eventually held high positions in government and business. He had planned to give his new son every advantage, even making him an heir to the family fortune. But the little fellow threw it all away for $1.25.

"There are times we too give up so much for so little. We clutch the coins of disobedience and flee down the street of sensual pleasure. We leave behind an eternal fortune for a few earthly trinkets. We choose the earthly over the heavenly, the here over the hereafter, the present over the eternal."[2]

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

How often do we get distracted by the trinkets and toys of this world—even though they're worth nothing compared to what is yet to come? Eavesdrop on conversations around any high school and you'll hear high-powered prattle that seems to be really important, but in reality is not important and has no lasting value.

"Check out my new set of wheels!"

"That blouse, like, makes you look beautiful."

"Dude! I scored three goals in the soccer game."

Let's face it: The stuff that often consumes our conversations on this earth is meaningless compared to what is yet to come in the new earth. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 2:9 that what's to come is out of this world. In fact we cannot even conceive of what God has prepared for us in heaven.

Out of the Story for Teachers

Divide the class into three groups and distribute to each group one of the following chapters and assignments. (If your class is small, choose one of the following assignments or do all three of them together.) After 10 minutes of working on the assignment, have each group share their final project with the rest of the class.

Revelation 20: Ask this group to prepare the chapter as a dramatic reenactment. Encourage them to be creative. They may present it as a reader's theater with the students taking turns reading certain words and verses.

Revelation 21: Have this second group recreate the highlights of the chapter using pictures. Their assignment is to share about Jesus' soon return with several foreigners who do not know of the blessed hope that Jesus promised to come again. Using a white/chalkboard, the students are to communicate this entire passage of hope by sketching it out.

Revelation 22: This third group is tasked with the challenge of "selling" this belief that Jesus is coming again. By selecting key phrases and verses in this chapter, have the students prepare an infomercial that will make viewers long for heaven.

Sharing Context and Background

The Beginning: The great controversy between God and Satan began in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed. God then said to the serpent: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15, NIV).

Satan is our enemy. He will do anything he can to get us to follow his evil, deadly path. The phrase "you will strike his heel" refers to Satan's repeated attempts to defeat Christ during His life on earth. "He will crush your head" foreshadows Satan's defeat when Christ rose from the dead. A strike on the heel is not deadly, but a crushing blow to the head is. Already God was revealing His plan to defeat Satan and offer salvation to the world through His Son, Jesus Christ.[3]

The Drama: Ellen White captures the climactic drama of the human story with her opening statements in *The Desire of Ages:*

"'His name shall be called Immanuel, . . . God with us.' 'The light of the knowledge of the glory of God' is seen 'in the face of Jesus Christ.' From the days of eternity the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father; He was 'the image of God.'. . . It was to manifest this glory that He came to our world. To this sin-darkened earth He came to reveal the light of God's love—to be 'God with us.' "[4]

The End: "Between the school established in Eden at the beginning and the school of the hereafter there lies the whole compass of this world's history—the history of human transgression and suffering, of divine sacrifice, and of victory over death and sin. Not all the conditions of that first school of Eden will be found in the school of the future life. No tree of knowledge of good and evil will afford opportunity for temptation. No tempter is there, no possibility of wrong. Every character has withstood the testing of evil, and none are longer susceptible to its power. . . .

"The giving of the tree of life in Eden was conditional, and it was finally withdrawn. But the gifts of the future life are absolute and eternal.

"The prophet beholds the 'river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.' 'And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life.' 'And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.' Revelation 22:1; 22:2, RV; 21:4."[5]

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Wrapping It Up

In this final lesson of the four-year curriculum based on the Conflict of the Ages Series, it would be appropriate to review the entire series beginning with page 1 of *Patriarchs and Prophets* through the final page in *The Great Controversy.* At the Web site titled "Teaching Tips: Teaching and Learning Activities,"[6] education experts advise: "plan an overview." By wrapping up our long journey through the Bible with a brief overview of the entire great controversy that begins with Lucifer's rebellion in heaven and ends in paradise with God, students can get a heavenly perspective.

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.*

III. CLOSING

Activity

Ask your students to each turn to the person sitting next to them and share their greatest expectations/dreams/wishes about heaven.

Summary

Conclude with this simple story and challenge:

"My favorite place in the whole world," Paul exclaimed, "is Grandma and Grandpa's ranch!"

"Yeah," his brother Randy agreed, "and I like Grandma's apple pies the best."

"I like playing soccer in their big yard," Paul added.

Grandma and Grandpa's place was a slice of heaven: swinging on the front porch, swimming in the creek, and best of all, listening to Grandpa tell stories from when he was a kid.

Then everything changed. The aroma of fresh apple pies had disappeared from the kitchen. No one pulled Paul and Randy in the wagon. And the swing was always empty. Grandpa had died, and Grandma had moved to a nursing home.

What do you think Paul and Randy really liked most about visiting their grandparents' house? Although there were fun things to do there, what really made the ranch special were Grandma and Grandpa. Without them, the apple pies lost their flavor and the swing lost its charm.

Heaven promises great things to do—riding rhinos, flying to planets, eating apples the size of watermelons. But without question the best thing about heaven will be spending time with Jesus.

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[1] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 678.

[2] Mark Finley, *Solid Ground,* pp. 365, 366.

[3] *Life Application Bible*, New International Version (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), p. 12.

[4] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 19.

[5] Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), pp. 301-302.

[6] www.usp.edu/teaching/tips/activities.shtml.



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 42.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Revelation 15:1-4; Revelation 20:7-15; Revelation 21; Revelation 22.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 42.

earth's makeover



Photo by Terrill Thomas

keytext

"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.' "

(Revelation 21:2, 3, NIV)

flashlight

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 678).

what do you think?

What Do You Think? A=Agree NS=Not Sure D=Disagree

1. People who live good lives will go to heaven. A NS D
2. Christians should worry more about today than the afterlife. A NS D
3. We can experience heaven today. A NS D
4. Heaven is open to everyone. A NS D

did you know?

The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 678).



INTO THE STORY

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

"The angel said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.'

"'Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.'

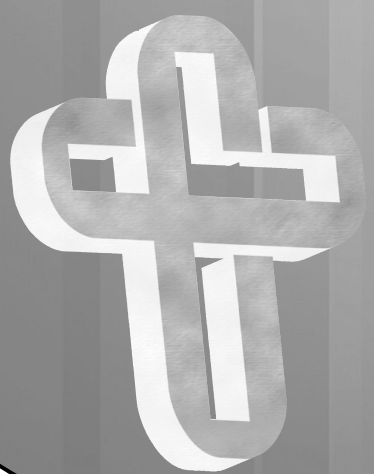
"I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, 'Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!'

"Then he told me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy.'

" '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.

"'Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.'"

(Revelation 22:1-14, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

What are the "new" features of the New Jerusalem in verses 1-6?

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What crops does the river of life yield? How does this relate to the source of the river? Why?

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Compare this passage in the *Out of the Story* section with Ezekiel 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; and Zechariah 14:8. What are the similarities? What are the differences? What do these visions tell us about God?

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What do you think John means when he says that God's name will be on our foreheads?

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_____

Why are we rewarded for what we have done if we are saved by grace? (John 15:8-11; Romans 6:15-18; James 2:14-18)

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What does the Christmas story tell us about God? In what ways are the topics of Christmas and heaven similar?

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punch lines

"To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne" **(Revelation 3:21, NIV).**

"As for me, I will be vindicated and will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness" **(Psalm 17:15, NIV).**

"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" **(1 John 3:2, NIV).**

"'Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life" **(John 5:24, NIV).**

"'What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived'—the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit" **(1 Corinthians 2:9, 10, NIV).**

further insight

"In our life here, earthly, sin-restricted though it is, the greatest joy and the highest education are in service. And in the future state, untrammeled by the limitations of sinful humanity, it is in service that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found."

—Ellen G. White, *Education,* p. 309

Sabbath

How biblical are your answers in the *What Do You Think?* section? Find more information on heaven and hell by studying the following texts:

Revelation 4:1-6	Revelation 21:15-21
Revelation 4:6-11	Revelation 21:22-27
Revelation 5:1-5	Revelation 22:1-5
Revelation 5:6-14	Matthew 8:12
Revelation 6:8	Luke 16:19-31
Revelation 7:16, 17	Matthew 25:41
Revelation 19:1-10	2 Peter 2:4
Revelation 20:10-15	Jude 6
Revelation 21:1-8	2 Thessalonians 1:9
Revelation 21:9-14	Mark 12:25-27

Sunday

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

After reading the passage in the *Into the Story* section, prayerfully reflect on the following words:

"The life on earth is the beginning of the life in heaven; education on earth is an initiation into the principles of heaven; the lifework here is a training for the lifework there. What we now are, in character and holy service, is the sure foreshadowing of what we shall be" (*Education*, p. 307).

What will you choose?

Monday

Read Revelation 21:2, 3.

Read the *Key Text*. Consider the following ideas that pastor and author Max Lucado talks about:

"When the great Russian writer Maxim Gorky visited the United States, he was taken to Coney Island one weekend. His hosts took him on all kinds of thrill rides. . . .

"At the end of what seemed like a perfect day, they asked Gorky how he'd liked it.

"The writer was silent for a moment. Then he said, 'What a sad people you must be!'

"Gorky was right. Any society that bases its very existence on the 'cheap thrills' of the moment must be a sad society indeed.

"Jesus offers something so much better for us. . . .

"There is no greater joy than knowing that we are in the center of God's will. There is no greater happiness than knowing we are pleasing God. There is no greater satisfaction than the genuine satisfaction that comes from sharing His love with some other human being.

"The happiness Jesus gives us is lasting . . . . which will continue until the day He comes to take you home." (Adapted from Mark Finley, *Solid Ground,* pp. 384-385.)

Complete this sentence: When I see Jesus face-to-face, I will

Tuesday

Read Psalm 16:11.

After contemplating the words of Ellen White in the *Flashlight* section, pay attention to glimpses of heaven on earth. Keep a journal for a day, noting all things of "unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, [which] declare that God is love."

Wednesday

Summarize all of the *Punch Lines* in one, concise statement.

Think about what the new earth will mean to you by considering these additional *Punch Lines*:

- New laws of nature (Isaiah 11:6-9)
- New government (Revelation 22:14, 15)
- New lifestyle (Isaiah 65:21, 23)
- New worship (Isaiah 66:22, 23)

Thursday

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10.

Ellen White once wrote, "Even in this life we may catch glimpses of His presence and may taste the joy of communion with Heaven, but the fullness of its joy and blessing will be reached in the hereafter" (*Patriarchs and Prophets,* p. 602).

In light of Ellen White's statement, is it possible to experience heaven today? If so, how? See also *Further Insight.*

Friday

Read Isaiah 65:17.

A little girl was taking an evening walk with her father. Wonderingly, she looked up at the stars and exclaimed: "Oh, Daddy, if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, what does the right side look like?"

How are you preparing today for spending an eternity with Him?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 42.

**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.