

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
NOVEMBER 14 2026

the world's worst terrorist

Scripture Story: Revelation 12:17; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 36.
Key Text: Revelation 12:17.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Tying into the theme of terrorism shouldn't be a difficult challenge these days. Current examples often hog the headlines.

Pollster George Gallup surveyed Americans to discover how the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, affected their lives:

- 20 percent of Americans knew someone who was missing, hurt, or killed in the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, or the plane crash in Pennsylvania.
- 58 percent of men and 82 percent of women say they have cried as a result of the terrorist attacks on September 11.
- One third of Americans will change aspects of their personal lives in order to reduce their chances of becoming a victim of terrorism.[1]

The Bible warns believers that just before Jesus returns the world will be plagued by chaos and confusion. The evil one will launch an all-out terrorist attack that will destroy as many as possible.

This lesson presents an ideal opportunity to talk straight with your class about what's happening in our world today. The scenario painted by Ellen White more than a century ago is now being played out on the global stage.

If there ever was a time to talk about the themes of this study—spirituality, authority, respect, and obedience—it is now! Jesus is coming again! Challenge your students with the question: "Are you ready?"

Pastor Dwight Nelson writes: "'Are you ready for Jesus to come?' is really the invitation to step into the embrace of His forever friendship every day and every night *until* He comes. It's that simple."[2]

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See the relevance of Bible prophecy in current events. *(Know)*
- Sense that the second coming of Jesus is at hand. *(Feel)*
- Be challenged to be ready to meet Jesus. *(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. Discuss other methods that Satan might use in the last days to deceive even the most elect.*

As an alternate activity, ask your students to come up with situations in which Satan tempts them, and then counter the temptations with ways to resist and defeat Satan. Encourage them to look at real-life situations—tying them to current events that expose the great controversy between God and Satan. Remind them to use the Bible just as Christ did when He was tempted.

Illustration

It's been labeled the single greatest upset in Olympic history. On September 27, 2000, 29-year-old Rulon Gardner, who grew up on a Wyoming dairy farm, walked into the Exhibition Hall in Sydney, Australia. That's when the "miracle on the mat" happened—he pocketed a gold medal after defeating the world's greatest wrestler of all time, Russian Alexander Karelin.

Mind you, this Russian had never lost in international competition. He'd never even been scored on in 10 years! He pummeled opponents despite broken ribs, torn muscles, and opposing coaches who would spend years designing strategies just to beat him. Karelin was considered the most intimidating athlete in Olympic history, so feared by opponents that two prior finalists essentially quit on the mat rather than to keep absorbing the pounding. And, according to legend, the Russian once carried a refrigerator home from the store and up seven flights of stairs.

So no one expected the American to win. In fact, the International Olympic Committee chairman even showed up at the match in order to present the Russian his fourth gold medal—the medal he wouldn't get.

After the historic match, reporters swarmed around Rulon. "When did you think you could beat him?" they asked.

"When did I think I could beat him? About 10 minutes ago," Gardner replied. "I kept saying, 'I think I can. I think I can.' But it wasn't until it was over that I knew I could."

Turns out that Gardner used a simple strategy to counter Karelin's dreaded lifts and relentless pressure. He approached the match with only two things on his mind: to stay focused and hang on. And for nine excruciating minutes that's exactly what he did. Now, Gardner is a legendary hero.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

When you think about it, Gardner's strategy is a good one that extends beyond the wrestling mat. After all, it's easy to lose our focus in the spiritual battle that we all must fight. The great controversy between God and Satan rages around the world. Satan seeks to destroy you. But in the end, if you stay focused and hang on to Jesus, you will be triumphant.

Out of the Story for Teachers

Compare 2 Peter 3:8-17 from the Into the Story *section with 1 Peter 4:1-11.*

The apostle Peter says when you see the "debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry" (1 Peter 4:3, NIV) in this world you can know this: "The end of all things is near" (1 Peter 4:7, NIV).

Jesus is coming again! Ours is a dark and evil world, but don't despair, Jesus is coming again. So what are we to do as we wait for the second coming of Christ? Peter poses this question in the passage from the *Into the Story* section: "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming" (2 Peter 3:11, 12, NIV).

In 1 Peter 4:1-11 the apostle unpacks what it means to live "holy and godly lives." Peter calls us to do three things as we wait for Jesus to come.

First, Peter tells us to pray. "Therefore," he writes, "be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray" (1 Peter 4:7, NIV). As Christians we may not be able to mend the moral corruption of our world, but we can pray. Prayer is the practice of living in Christ.

Second, we can love. Next, Peter writes: "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8, NIV). As we wait for Jesus to come, we are called not only to be a community of prayer, but a community of love.

Finally, Peter calls us to serve. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as

faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:9, 10, NIV). While we wait for Jesus to come, we are to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace.

Sharing Context and Background

On February 28, 2007, the day after the Dow Jones Industrials plunged more than 400 points, a reporter from CNN interviewed a financial expert. The reporter asked the question everyone wanted to know: "Given the violent volatility of the market, what should we do with our investments at this point? Should we buy? Sell? Or hold?"

The expert's answer struck a familiar chord for Adventists—that is, for those waiting for Jesus to come. The financial analyst gave simple advice: "Wait and watch."

Wait and watch. Don't panic. Don't buy. Don't sell. Just wait and watch.

Jesus gave the same counsel when He spoke about the chaos in the last days. "Don't panic," He said. In Matthew 24 we find an extensive list of signs that alert us to the nearness of His coming—earthquakes, wars, increase of knowledge, and so on. Jesus then trumpets the punch line in verse 42: "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come" (NIV). Then again, in Matthew 25:13 Jesus said: "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Hope, Not Fear

When teaching on the topic of "The Impending Conflict," it is important to focus on hope, not fear. Don't scare the bile out of kids with the "good news" that Jesus is coming again! Of course we might be tortured for our faith. The pastor may betray his own congregation.

But the truth is this: we don't know how the final days of this earth's history will unfold. So encourage your youth with the words of Jesus: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. . . . I go and prepare a place for you" (John 14:1-3, NIV).

Note, Jesus did not just say to "wait," suggesting a passive activity. Rather, He commanded "wait and watch."

Watching is not a spectator sport. "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief" (2 Peter 3:10, NIV). Remember that Peter was with the other disciples when Jesus said, "But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into" (Matthew 24:43,

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

NIV). Thus, Peter reminds us that the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

Peter then writes: "The heavens will disappear with a roar." There's an interesting word picture associated with this Greek word translated "roar." The same word, *roizedon*, is used to describe the sound a spear makes as it sails through the air. The idea here is that faster than a flying bullet, "the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare."

Peter tells us that the Second Coming will catch many by surprise. So Peter urges us to wait and watch. "You ought to live holy and godly lives," he says, "as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming" (2 Peter 3:11, 12, NIV).

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close by reading 1 Peter 4:7-10. Ask the kids to brainstorm a list of specific things they can do in the week ahead to live out the commands "love each other deeply" (1 Peter 4:8, NIV); "offer hospitality" (1 Peter 4:9, NIV); and "serve others" (1 Peter 4:10, NIV). Explain that this activity will take a week and they are to come back the next Sabbath prepared to share stories of what they did to put these verses into action.

Summary

Clearly, there are specific things we ought to be doing while we wait for Jesus to return. William Miller, the Adventist pioneer who erroneously interpreted Daniel 8:14 to mean Jesus would come on October 22, 1844, discovered this in his later years. Shortly before his death, he confided to his friend Hendrix: "I now *know* when Jesus will come."

"Really?" his friend replied. "You were quite wrong last time. Now when do you think Jesus will come?"

The aged Miller replied, "Jesus is going to come today, today, today . . . until He comes."

We too know when Jesus will come. He's coming today, so let's pray. Today, so let's love. Today, so let's serve. *Today* . . . until He comes.

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[1] George Gallup, "Impact on Americans," *Gallup Tuesday Briefing,* September 25, 2001.

[2] Dwight K. Nelson, *What "Left Behind" Left Behind* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Hart Books, 2001), p. 17.



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 36.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Revelation 12:17; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 36.

the world's worst terrorist



Photo by Terrill Thomas

flashlight

"Satan's policy in this final conflict with God's people is the same that he employed in the opening of the great controversy in heaven. He professed to be seeking to promote the stability of the divine government, while secretly bending every effort to secure its overthrow. . . . While Satan seeks to destroy those who honor God's law, he will cause them to be accused as lawbreakers, as men who are dishonoring God and bringing judgments upon the world" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 591).

keytext

"Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus."

(Revelation 12:17, NIV)

what do you think?

Ellen White touches on a number of ways in which Satan will deceive people in the last days (see *The Great Controversy,* chapter 36). In the end, Satan will reveal his true identity as the world's worst terrorist. Next to each method that Ellen White mentions, see if you can find a current example of it by doing an Internet search, scanning magazines and newspapers, and talking with friends and family members. Write your example in the blank provided.

"The press publishes the revolting details of vice" (p. 586).

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"Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions" (p. 588).

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"Through spiritualism" (p. 589).

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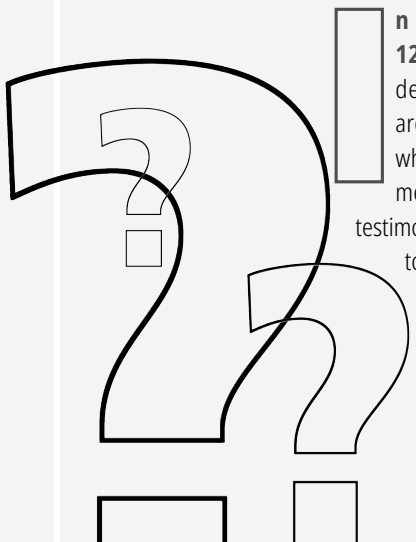
"Satan works through the elements also to garner his harvest of unprepared souls" (p. 589).

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"He will bring disease and disaster" (p. 589).

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did you know?



In Revelation 12:17 God's devoted followers are defined as those who keep His commandments and "hold fast their testimony about Jesus." According to Revelation 19:10, this "testimony of Jesus" is the "spirit of prophecy," meaning that Jesus communicates to His people through the gift of prophecy.

INTO THE STORY

"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

"So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

"Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen."

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people."

(2 Peter 3:8-18; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

How does the message that Peter sent to believers regarding the last days (2 Peter 3:8-18) compare with the excerpt from Paul's letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 3:1-5)?

In what ways are the passages similar?

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How are the passages different?

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How would you define "holy"? What does it mean to live a holy life? (Do a word search of "holy" at www.blueletterbible.com.)

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How does a person "grow in the grace and knowledge" of Jesus Christ?

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Based on what you know about Peter's story, what else would you expect him to say to Christians waiting for Jesus to return?

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Based on what you know about Paul's conversion, what else would you expect him to say to Christians waiting for Jesus to return?

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punch lines

"My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to hear your words, but they do not put them into practice. Their mouths speak of love, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice" **(Ezekiel 33:31, 32, NIV).**

"Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord, who makes you holy" **(Leviticus 20:8, NIV).**

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" **(1 Corinthians 11:1, NIV).**

"These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you" **(Titus 2:15, NIV).**

"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 22:14, NIV).**

further insight

"The word of God, received into the soul, will be manifest in good works. Its results will be seen in a Christlike character and life."

—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons,* p. 60

"We shall no longer live the common life of selfishness, but Christ will live in us. His character will be reproduced in our nature. Thus shall we bring forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit."

—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons,* p. 61

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Romans 10:9, 10.

Discuss the following questions with your friends:

What are some other deceptions that are not mentioned by Ellen White that you see Satan using today to ensnare Christians?

If you were the devil how would you attack the people of God in the last days?

What can you do to ensure your salvation?

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Sunday

Read 2 Peter 3:10-13.

Brainstorm a list of ways that you can "be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position" (verse 17, NIV).

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Complete the following sentence in light of today's reading: Because Christ will return, Christians should _____

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Monday

Read Revelation 12:17; Ephesians 6:10-12.

Read the *Key Text*. Reflect on the following excerpt from *The Great Controversy,* pages 582, 583.

"God's holy Word, which has been handed down to us at such a cost of suffering and blood, is but little valued. . . .

"Though in a different form, idolatry exists in the Christian world today as verily as it existed among ancient Israel in the days of Elijah. The god of many professedly wise men, of philosophers, poets, politicians, journalists—the god of polished fashionable circles, of many colleges and universities, even of some theological institutions—is little better than Baal, the sun-god of Phoenicia."

Tuesday

Read Matthew 24:24.

Compare the comments in the *Flashlight* section with the warning of Jesus in Matthew 24:24 Spend some time in prayer seeking God's wisdom today so that you will not be deceived in the last days.

Wednesday

After reading the *Punch Lines,* reflect on the following letter that was written by Karen Watson, a missionary to Iraq. The letter was dated March 7, 2003. Karen was killed, along with four other missionaries, on March 15, 2004.

"Dear Pastor Phil and Pastor Roger:

"You should only be opening this letter in the event of my death.

"When God calls there are no regrets. . . . I wasn't called to a place. I was called to Him. To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected, His glory my reward, His glory my reward.

"One of the most important things to remember right now is to preserve the work. . . .

"I thank you all so much for your prayers and support. Surely your reward in heaven will be great. Thank you for investing in my life and spiritual well-being. Keep sending missionaries out. Keep raising up fine young pastors.

"In regards to any service, keep it small and simple. Yes, simply, just preach the gospel. . . . Be bold and preach the life-saving, life-changing, forever-eternal gospel. Give glory and honor to our Father.

"The Missionary Heart:

"Care more than some think is wise.

"Risk more than some think is safe.

"Dream more than some think is practical.

"Expect more than some think is possible.

"I was called not to comfort or success but to obedience. . . . There is no joy outside of knowing Jesus and serving Him. I love you two and my church family.

"In His care,

"Karen."*

Thursday

Read Philippians 4:12, 13.

How am I ready for the impending conflict that Ellen White describes?

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Friday

Read Revelation 12:17; 2 Chronicles 20:15.

Scripture warns us that in the last days the evil one will "make war with the remnant" (Revelation 12:17, KJV). Do you see the effects of spiritual warfare in the world today? How about personally, in your life? If so, how? What is the best way to fight spiritual battles (see 2 Chronicles 20:15)?

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* "Keep Sending Missionaries," *Baptist Press,* March 24, 2004.

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 36.

**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.