

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
DECEMBER 19 2026

wiping the slate clean

Scripture Story: 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 41.
Key Text: 2 Peter 3:10.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

After the Second Coming the earth will be made new, but not before the wicked are destroyed. This is not an easy topic to cover. God destroying and killing the evil people is not a comfortable image or idea. However, it is necessary before sin can be eradicated once and for all, allowing us to live in peace and happiness for all eternity.

It is a very natural emotion to pity the wicked. However, Ellen White gives us a unique view into the mental space of the wicked before they are destroyed. They are not sorry for the pain and misery they have caused, only that God has triumphed. They are not redeemable.

God's love for us, and for the irredeemable wicked, is more than we can imagine. God does not want to destroy anyone, which is why He waits so long, waiting to give everyone the last possible chance to change (see 2 Peter 3:9), God loves each of us infinitely more than we love the dearest person in our lives. His heart aches for us. He longs to be reunited and to stop the pain we must endure, but He also longs to save the lost.

The millennium will be used to put God's goodness on trial. We will have the opportunity to ask our questions, see why God did what He did, and let God prove His goodness to the cosmos.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the millennium and the reason for destroying the wicked. *(Know)*
- Sense God's desire to have a relationship with them on a personal level. *(Feel)*
- Choose to seek a relationship with God to prepare for His coming. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Millennium and the End of Sin, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 27

"The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrections. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will be utterly desolate, without living human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels. At its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The unrighteous dead will then be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city; but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners forever" (Jer. 4:23-26; Ezek. 28:18, 19; Mal. 4:1; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Rev. 20; 21:1-5).

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.*

Take a recent news story about a crime committed in your area. Show the students the news story, and ask them these questions:

1. What should be done to the person who did this?
2. What is a fair punishment and why?
3. If the person repents of what they did and changes their life, does your decision change, or does it make a difference?

Note the different responses from different students. Each person will likely have a different idea of what is fair.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

God is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9, NKJV). It is His will that "all [humanity] be saved and . . . come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4, NIV). But there are some that even God cannot save. They have chosen sin rather than righteousness, rebellion rather than obedience, self-centeredness rather than loving service. If God risked bringing them to heaven, they would infect it with the sin virus all over again. If God did not act to eradicate sin, its malignant effect would eventually destroy the entire universe.

"God offers pardon for our past sins and power to live the Christian life in the present. His grace provides forgiveness when we have failed and strength to keep us from repeating the same failures again and again. . . .

"Today God gives us a choice—for Him to consume sin in us through the fiery presence of His Spirit, or to be consumed with our sin at the fiery presence of His soon return. A loving God weeps as sinners are destroyed.

"The destruction of the wicked is an unusual and strange act, but it is unavoidable if the universe is going to be secure forever. Will you allow Jesus to do His cleansing work in your heart today? Will you allow the fire of His presence to purify you within?"[1]

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

God doesn't want even one person to be lost. The choice is ours—we can live with God throughout eternity, or we can reject Him and be separated from Him forever. Our eternal reward is a choice.

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.*

- *Underline* what happens to the saved people.
- What hope do we see here for those who have trusted in God?
- *Circle* what happens to the lost people.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 18.

Sharing Context and Background

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

It is important to remember that for literally hundreds of years people have been taught about hell. Hell is either featured as a place of horrific torment where people's worst nightmares come true, or it is laughed off as funny. Both views are dangerous.

If we look at the first view of hell as a place of horror, it is hard to see a loving God behind it. If hell is a place where evil reigns and people are tortured in the vilest ways, then how can we believe that God is loving? Following God would simply be out of fear, not out of love.

Laughing at hell is equally damaging. Cartoons, stand-up comics, movies, Halloween costumes, and even modern philosophy poke fun at hell. Satan has been deceiving humanity from the beginning, and this is just one more lie to lure people toward destruction.

Hell, according to the Bible, is a temporary situation. The fires will burn long enough to consume sin, and then sin will be no more. The only reminder we will have for what sin did will be in our memories and in the palms of Jesus' hands. Hell is also the opposite of heaven. Hell is a separation from God, and heaven is being reunited with the God who so lovingly created us. God created you because He wanted to have a relationship with you. That relationship pulls us away from sin and the terrible consequences sin brings, and draws us closer to paradise with Him. When we pull away from God, we pull away from the Source of life, and the result is eternal death—eternal separation from God, eternal punishment.

The millennium is a thousand-year period after

Jesus comes and takes those who love Him to heaven. "During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. The apostle Paul points to this judgment as an event that follows the second advent. 'Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.' 1 Corinthians 4:5. Daniel declares that when the Ancient of Days came, 'judgment was given to the saints of the Most High.' Daniel 7:22. At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God. John in the Revelation says: 'I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.' 'They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.' Revelation 20:4, 6. It is at this time that, as foretold by Paul, 'the saints shall judge the world.' 1 Corinthians 6:2. In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death.

"Satan also and evil angels are judged by Christ and His people. Says Paul: 'Know ye not that we shall judge angels?' Verse 3. And Jude declares that 'the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.' Jude 6.

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Contract Teachers

What do you do when you ask a question and no one wants to speak? One way to avoid this kind of situation is to make a contract with the students at the beginning of the class. Nothing they say will leave the classroom. Nothing they say will be used against them. Nothing they say can be wrong, because it is their perspective. And keep your end of the contract, even if they test you. Making a safe environment for discussion is more important than extracting "correct" answers from the students.

"At the close of the thousand years the second resurrection will take place. Then the wicked will be raised from the dead and appear before God for the execution of 'the judgment written.' Thus the revelator, after describing the resurrection of the righteous, says: 'The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.' Revelation 20:5."[2] It is only after those thousand years that God will wipe the earth clean with fire and destroy sin forever. God takes this time with us because He wants to make sure we understand why some people we thought would be in heaven are not there and He wants us to understand His justice. Why? Because that is what you do when

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.*

you have a loving relationship. You take the time you need to understand each other.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask the students each to think of one thing they wish to see obliterated from the earth when Jesus comes. Write each word on one side of the board in no particular order. On the other side of the board, ask the students to do the same exercise, but this time stating something they are looking forward to enjoying for eternity. What things on each side of the board are already in their lives now?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

If God did not love us so much, He would not have given us a choice. If God did not respect us so much, He would not allow us to separate ourselves from Him, thereby destroying ourselves. God's love is so strong that God allows His own heart to be broken. The wicked are not destroyed by God's wish to inflict pain. The wicked are destroyed because God's glory, which comforts those who have stayed connected to Him, is too much for the wicked, and it consumes them.

When God destroys sin and wipes the slate clean, we will finally have a chance to live without pain, frustration, anger, or depression. We will be able to live without fear, learning and growing for eternity. The best part, however, will be being close to God and never being separated from His heart of love.

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[1] Mark Finley, *Solid Ground* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2003), pp. 216, 217.

[2] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* pp. 660, 661.



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 41.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 41.

wiping the slate clean



Photo by Colleen Cahill

keytext

"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."

(2 Peter 3:10, NIV)

flashlight

"The wicked are filled with regret, not because of their sinful neglect of God and their fellow men, but because God has conquered. They lament that the result is what it is; but they do not repent of their wickedness. They would leave no means untried to conquer if they could.

"The world see the very class whom they have mocked and derided, and desired to exterminate, pass unharmed through pestilence, tempest, and earthquake. He who is to the transgressors of His law a devouring fire, is to His people a safe pavilion" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 654).

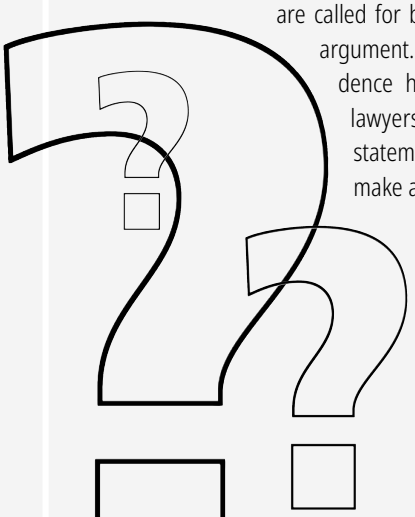
what do you think?

How fair is God? Have you ever questioned God's fairness?
On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least fair and 10 being perfectly fair, what do you think of the following situations?

____ A teen dies young from a driving accident.
____ A good person wins the lottery.
____ An unethical business person becomes increasingly wealthy.
____ A country experiences a natural disaster and thousands die.
____ The devil was not destroyed immediately.

did you know?

There are several steps to a criminal trial in the United States. These steps are there to ensure that every person gets a fair chance to defend themselves in a court of law. First, a person is charged with a crime; however, the accused person is considered innocent until proven guilty. Next, a jury of 12 regular citizens is selected. Both lawyers make opening statements that explain why they think the accused person is either guilty or innocent. Next, witnesses are called for both sides of the argument. When all the evidence has been given, the lawyers recap with closing statements and the jury is left to make a decision.



INTO THE STORY

"And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

"I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

"When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 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. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire."

(Revelation 20, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

How does God judge the evil people?

_____
_____
_____
_____

How are the righteous people involved in the process?

_____
_____
_____

Do you think the righteous people are judging the evil people, or are they judging God's decisions? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

Why would God permit Himself to be put on trial?

_____
_____
_____

What is the second death?

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_____
_____

Does the punishment of the lake of fire seem like an unduly harsh penalty to you? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____

Does the reward of eternal life seem "too good" for the righteous people? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____

Who do you think this trial is intended to convince?

_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"And try Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it" **(Malachi 3:10, NKJV).**

"God then confronted Job directly: 'Now what do you have to say for yourself? Are you going to haul me, the Mighty One, into court and press charges?'" **(Job 40:1, 2, *The Message*).**

"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him" **(Psalm 34:8, NIV).**

"I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears" **(Psalm 34:4, NIV).**

"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance" **(Psalm 32:7, NIV).**

further insight

"By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of the Ages,* p. 764

Sabbath

Read Psalm 86:5.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* activity, and read through the *Did You Know?* section.The American justice system prides itself on being as fair as possible. The accused is innocent until proven guilty. The convicted can appeal a decision. One judge does not make the decision in a criminal trial, but a jury of 12 peers is chosen. These safety features are designed to catch mistakes so that people get a fair trial and the wrong person is not convicted. However, even with all of this, mistakes are made.

If God is perfect and good, do you think it is wrong to "put God on trial"? In what way do you think it is OK to "test" God?

_____

_____

Sunday

Read 1 Corinthians 6:2.

Read the *Into the Story* section and complete the questions in *Out of the Story*. During the millennium, after Jesus takes us to heaven and before we come back to the new earth, we will be very busy reviewing, or "judging" for ourselves, God's decisions. In a way God will be on trial.

Malachi 3:10 tells us to try God and to test Him at His word. The millennium will be a chance to do just that—to dig in and ask all the questions we need to ask.

Why is this person not saved? Why is that person in heaven after all the bad things they did? Make a list of questions that you struggle with, and start praying now for some answers.

_____

_____

Monday

Read 2 Peter 3:10.

The *Key Text* tells us that Jesus' coming will be a surprise, "like a thief," and that the earth will be demolished and scrubbed clean. Watch the news tonight. Make a mental note of all the things you would like to see wiped from the earth: the pain, the heartbreak, the wars, the famine, the gunshots and violence, the poverty. . . . Seeing everything that is happening around the world, how do you feel about a fresh start? What things in your own life would you like "wiped clean"?

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read Psalm 7:9; Psalm 44:21.

In the *Flashlight* quotation Ellen White describes the experience of the wicked before God wipes everything clean again. Is it hard for you to think about the wicked people being destroyed? Ellen White gives us a better view of what the people who have ultimately rejected God are experiencing. God is a fair God who reads the heart. He would not destroy a well-meaning person for misunderstanding. The people who are being destroyed are the ones who have hurt other people and feel no remorse. They have caused pain and misery and their only regret is that God has "caught" them. They will never change.

Think seriously: Is there anything you are holding on to that you would hate to be caught for but don't want to give up?

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* show two different kinds of "testing" God. One is being self-involved and whining, while the other is an act of faith.

A real, living relationship is an evolving thing. You trust God only by watching Him come through for you. We can think about Jesus' coming with certainty and happiness only when we have a relationship with God and know that we will be seeing our best friend come in the clouds.

Give one example of a self-involved and whining test of God, and then give an example of a test that is an act of faith.

_____

Thursday

Read Matthew 24:43, 44.

If you were responsible for protecting your house from burglars, you would probably put an alarm system in place, lock your doors, and keep an inventory of your valuables. You don't want to be caught unprepared.

Of course, even though Jesus' coming will be like a thief—unexpected and surprising—we *want* to let HIm in! But we also want to be ready so that we can go with Him to heaven.

What do you think you need to do to be ready at a moment's notice for Jesus' coming?

_____

_____

Friday

Read Psalm 19:14.

Remembering that it is a friendship with Jesus that will make the difference, what do you think you need to do to develop that friendship? Write a contract with God: "Lord, I want to be Yours. I want to be ready. I don't know how to get to know You better, so please come closer to me. Just as I am, I am Yours." Sign your name. Date it. Keep it. Remind yourself of your ultimate goal—to *know* Him.

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 41.

**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.