

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
NOVEMBER 07 2026

true power

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

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Freedom of conscience and religious liberty are precious commodities that millions of people around the world do not enjoy even in the twenty first century. We know that religious liberty is a very costly freedom because millions of martyrs sealed with their blood their faith in Jesus. From the unnumbered martyrs we can learn to take an uncompromising stand for our Savior in the face of corrupt political and religious systems.

The church has always played a central role in God's story of redemption for humankind. As Seventh-day Adventists we are indebted to the leaders who have shaped the church throughout the centuries.

The prophecies of Revelation 13 can help us to understand the strategy of the evil one in the last days as he works through governmental power in the name of God. If church and state unite, Satan knows that many will be deceived, false worship can be enforced, and our religious liberties denied. This lesson can enlighten students of prophetic happenings behind today's headlines. As earth's final events unfold, use this opportunity to remind students that the only safe place to reside is "in Christ."

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See current events in the light of Bible prophecy. *(Know)*
- Sense that God has always been and remains in control even as the world seems to unravel. *(Feel)*
- Be challenged to live in Christ as we anticipate His soon return. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Church, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 12

"The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to humanity, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word revealed in the Scriptures. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the bride for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will present her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages, the purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish" (Gen. 12:1-3; Exod. 19:3-7; Matt. 16:13-20; 18:18; 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38-42; 7:38; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17, 18; 1 Peter 2:9).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. Discuss their responses. Ask the students to report the results of surveying church members.*

As an alternate activity, ask students to access the Web and search current events that inform our understanding of Ellen White's warnings in chapter 35 of The Great Controversy.

Illustration

Ernest was drafted into the military when he turned 20 and was sent to serve far away from home. Part of the time spent in military service included mandatory agricultural work. Ernest did his work faithfully and conscientiously each day of the week. Realizing that the soldiers would have to work on Saturday as well, Ernest prayed and then he spoke to his supervising lieutenant, who reported him to the colonel.

Ernest stated his case humbly but confidently:

"Mr. Colonel, according to the Bible, the seventh day of the week is God's holy Sabbath. This is a day of worship and holy convocation. Because of this conviction, my conscience does not allow me to work on Saturday. I am more than happy to work longer hours on other days of the week and even at night if needed, but on Sabbath I cannot consent to work."

The colonel decided to give the young man a lesson and to coerce him through peer pressure.

"Young men," he called to the other soldiers. "Look at this fellow. He did not work today. Do you think he deserves to eat?"

The reply came quickly from the rest of the soldiers, "Yes, Sir. Ernest is very conscientious. He works harder during the other days of the week than the rest of us."

The colonel was appalled. He was enraged. To prove his authority before his soldiers, he started shouting threats to Ernest: "I'll have you put in jail for seven years!"

The colonel reported his case to higher-ranking officers, but after questioning him, the committee of officers did not find any reason to punish him. On the contrary, they gave him the freedom to observe the Sabbath. Though this story has a happy ending, many Christians throughout the ages suffered greatly because of their loyalty to God and His law. Yet they endured to the end, knowing that "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29, NKJV).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Religious liberty is a precious commodity that many Christians around the world do not get to enjoy. What are ways young people can share God's love in places they do not experience religious freedom? What would you have done if you were in Ernest's position?

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following material to help them go a little deeper with some of the concepts in Revelation 13.*

Revelation 13:1-4 introduces a leopard-bodied sea beast. In the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation beasts symbolize world powers and political or religious systems.

"Daniel's lion, bear, and leopard symbolized successively the Babylonian, Persian, and Greek empires [see Daniel 7]. His fourth beast symbolized Rome—and among its ten horns he saw an eleventh horn sprout up which was at first a 'little horn' but which developed into a stout, blasphemous persecuting power. . . . The behavior of the leopard-bodied beast was the same as the behavior of the little horn."[1]

Revelation 13:6 described the leopard-bodied creature that rose out of the sea this way: "Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven" (NKJV). Clearly this beast represents a religious persecuting power that is identical to the description in Daniel 7:21-25. It attacks and undermines God's people, His law, and the worship due to Him alone.

The second beast of Revelation 13 is described as a lamb-horned earth beast. This beast uses its power to deceive and lead the world to worship the first beast. "John saw some exceptional persons refusing to worship it. These were the 'rest' of the woman's 'offspring,' the 'remnant of her seed' (KJV), the loyal band who 'keep the commandments of God.' Revelation 12:17, RSV. *Their* names were 'written in the

Lamb's book of life.' Revelation 21:27, RSV."[2]

At the heart of the great controversy between God and Satan is worship. The enemy has devised a false religious system that exalts itself above God and claims to have the authority to change God's law. But each person can choose who will be the object of their worship. God will not force us to obey Him. Only Satan coerces people to accept a false worship. He uses every unjust method possible, employing corrupt political and religious systems to persecute God's people. By contrast, God uses love to draw us to Himself. We have the privilege of knowing and worshiping the true God.

Those who remain faithful to God have the "Father's name written on their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1). "Ancient worshipers had their god's literal name tattooed on their bodies. The 'name' that Revelation talks about is much more. . . . Names in Bible days represented a person's character. . . . When God told Moses His 'name' He listed His character qualities, 'merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,' and so on." Exodus 34:5, 6, RSV. . . .

"God is love. His law is love. When people obey Him fully, they love.

"God is holy. His law is holy. When people obey Him fully, the Holy Spirit lives out in their lives the purity and honesty and unselfishness that mark the character of God Himself. . . .

"God's people at the very end of time *will* be 'spotless.' . . . They will keep God's commandments even when faced with starvation and execution" (see Revelation 12:11).[3]

Sharing Context and Background

Present the following ideas in your own words:

The threat of jail or getting hurt or ostracized for telling people about Jesus is very real. People all over the world are being persecuted for their faith. Governments are going out of their way to make sure new Christian churches are not started.

"Innocent as it may seem, any attempt to regulate a religious day by law violates the fundamental principle of religious liberty."[4]

"Legislation in matters of religion has ever been followed by persecution. It was so during the Middle Ages: witness the massacre of the Albigenses, Waldenses, and others—by the civil power, to be sure, but prompted by the dominant church of the day."[5]

Matthew 24:14 tells us what must happen before Jesus will return. The gospel has to be preached to the whole world. What do we have to do to make this happen in places where it is against the law to preach the gospel? We still must find a way to share it with people.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Pose the following scenario:

You are on a mission trip with your youth group.

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.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Inductive Teaching

"In contrast with the deductive method, inductive instruction makes use of student 'noticing.' Instead of explaining a given concept and following this explanation with examples, the teacher presents students with many examples showing how the concept is used. The intent is for students to 'notice,' by way of the examples, how the concept works."[6]

In presenting the material of this lesson, allow the students to *notice* the connections for themselves. Present the biblical evidence and the commentary of Ellen White, and then through the process of inductive reasoning, allow students to draw their own conclusions.

You and your partner go from house to house sharing Christian books and inviting people to church meetings in the evening. At one house a woman becomes very angry with you for talking about Jesus. She says the last person who talked to her about Jesus is in jail. She threatens that the same will happen to you if you don't stop this Jesus talk in her city.

What would you do—stay back at camp, or continue to share the gospel? Why?

What would influence your decision the most?

Colossians 4:5 tells us to be wise in the way we act with people who are not believers, making the most of every opportunity. How would you show wisdom in dealing with the woman who threatened you because you were witnessing? If you were in prison for sharing your faith, what Bible promise would mean the most to you and why?

How can you become an ambassador for Jesus today?

Summary

The Bible says that when this gospel is preached to the whole world, the end will come.

As ambassadors for Christ, we must go out to our neighborhoods, to our cities, and to faraway places to share the gospel.

This is a risky task. The world is often hostile and mean to Christ's ambassadors. This should not stop us. We should trust in God's promise that He will be with us always.

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[1] C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family (*Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1985), vol. 2, p. 325

[2] Maxwell, p. 330.

[3] Maxwell, p. 384.

[4] *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), vol. 7, p. 820. (See also page 977; Revelation 13:12-18; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948], vol. 1, p. 353; Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* pp. 604, 605.)

[5] *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 7, p. 822. (See also Ellen G. White, *The Great Controvesy,* p. 615; Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917], pp. 605, 606.)

[6] As quoted from www.educ.ualberta.ca/staff/olenka.bilash/best%20of%20bilash/inductivedeductive.html.



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 35.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; Revelation 13.
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true power



Photo by Colleen Cahill

keytext

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

(2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, NIV)

flashlight

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

what do you think?

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

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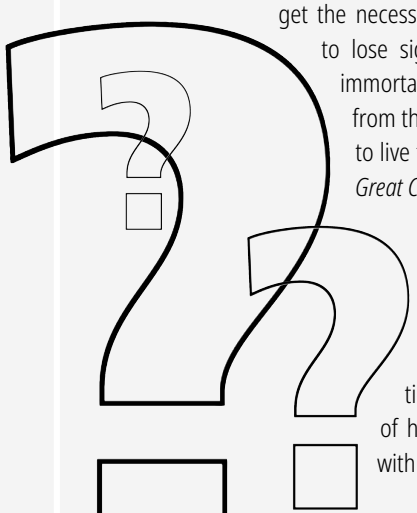
did you know?

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

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



INTO THE STORY

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

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

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

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

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

OUT OF THE STORY

Circle all the animals mentioned in this prophecy.

Underline every reference to worship.

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

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

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_____

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

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

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_____
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_____

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

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

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_____
_____

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

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_____
_____
_____

punch lines

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

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

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

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

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

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

further insight

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

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

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

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

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Matthew 5:13-16.

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

Sunday

Read Revelation 13.

Prayerfully consider Ellen White's commentary on the text:

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

Questions for reflection:

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

Monday

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4.

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

Tuesday

Read John 17:17.

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

Wednesday

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

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

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

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

Thursday

Read Mark 14:38.

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

Friday

Read 1 Chronicles 29:12, 13.

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

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

What does this lesson have to teach me about worship?

this week's reading*

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

**Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of *The Great Controversy,* created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.