

# Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

## Second Quarter 2024: *The Great Controversy*

### Lesson 6 “The Two Witnesses”

#### Read for this week’s study

Revelation 11:3–6; Zechariah 4:14; Revelation 12:5, 6, 14, 15; Daniel 7:25; Isaiah 54:17; Psalm 119:89; Revelation 11:15–18.

#### Memory Text

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isaiah 40:8, NKJV).

#### Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Two Witnesses
- III. Prophetic Time Periods
- IV. The Two Witnesses are Killed
- V. The Two Witnesses Resurrected
- VI. Truth Triumphant
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. This lesson is based on chapters 12 through 17 in the book *The Great Controversy*. These chapters include The French Reformation (12), The Netherlands and Scandinavia (13), Later English Reformers (14), The Bible and the French Revolution (15), The Pilgrim Fathers (16), and Heralds of the Morning (17). These chapters cover the later Reformation in France, Netherlands, Scandinavia and Great Britain and address the transition of Protestant vitality into the New World, particularly the fledgling United States. The author of the lesson chose to focus primarily on the French Revolution and its impact on the study of the Bible. Since Revelation 11 is highlighted in the chapter of GC on the French Revolution, that is the primary Bible text addressed in this lesson. (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)

2. The French Revolution was significant to *Great Controversy* because it was the first time in human history that atheism was a state religion. Ellen White tied the French Revolution to Revelation, chapter 11. Read Revelation 11:1-6. This passage seeks to identify the two witnesses. Scholars suggest three main options regarding the two witnesses: 1) They represent the people of God (the church), 2) They represent the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, and 3) They represent two individuals who will play a role in the last events of earth's history. What evidence is there in the passage that would help us understand which of the three John most likely had in mind? (Sunday's Lesson)
3. Many Christians today tend to downplay the Old Testament, labeling it as irrelevant for Christians since we have the New Testament. How do you feel about that attitude and what would you say to counter it if someone expressed such a view? If you were forced to choose one Testament or the other, which one would it be? (Sunday's Lesson)
4. The biblical period of 1260 days or three and a half years is found in seven different places in the Bible (Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). What similarities do you see in these prophetic periods? (Monday's Lesson)
5. Read Revelation 11:7-9. What do these verses suggest would happen to the two witnesses after the 1260 "days"? *Great Controversy* interprets the death of the two witnesses in terms of the French Revolution's attempts to demolish the authority of the Bible and the awareness of God among the French people. If you interpret the two witnesses as the church, what would this represent? The three and a half days of Revelation 11:9 are understood to refer to the "Reign of Terror" (1793-1797). Which do you think is a greater danger to God's cause, a church that has deviated from God's truth or an atheistic nation? What is the context in which atheism flourishes? (Tuesday's Lesson)
6. Read Revelation 11:11-13. What prediction does this passage make about the Word/People of God? (Wednesday's Lesson)
7. Read Psalm 119:89 and 111:1-10. What does it mean that God's Word is "fixed" in heaven? What do these passages tell us about the trustworthiness of the Bible? (Wednesday's Lesson)
8. Read Revelation 11:15-18. According to these verses what events take place when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet? Read Revelation 11:19. What did John see when he looked up into heaven? (Thursday's Lesson)
9. In *The Great Controversy* (page 286), Ellen White saw the French Revolution as a preview of the end of time. "When France publicly rejected God and set aside the Bible, wicked men and spirits of darkness exulted in their attainment of the object so long desired—a kingdom free from the restraints of the law of God. . . . The restraining Spirit of God, which imposes a check upon the cruel power of Satan, was in a great measure removed, and he whose only delight is the wretchedness of men was permitted to work his will. Those who had chosen the service of rebellion were

left to reap its fruits until the land was filled with crimes too horrible for pen to trace.” Do you see any signs of that in today’s world? (Friday’s Lesson)

10. When arguing that there is no God, one person wrote that “we are free to establish our own goals and to venture across any intellectual boundaries without looking for no-trespassing signs.” Why would an atheist talk about living “without looking for no-trespassing signs”? What does that tell us about the motives behind rejecting the very concept of God? How did that work out in the time of the French Revolution? (Friday’s Lesson)

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Well, if we have the Son, why should we spend so much time in the Old Testament? Why not read the Gospels? And there how clear the picture is! The Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the poor.” “Pray for your enemies.” How gracious that whole message. Then you see the way Jesus treated sinners. How forgiving! Anything arbitrary in the record? Anything exacting? Anything severe? Look how Jesus treated Judas. He washed the feet of His betrayer the night before He died. And the way He seemed to cover people’s sins as much as He possibly could. Even the men who brought that woman taken in adultery—and had arranged the whole thing. He didn’t expose them to the crowds. And then when Jairus’ daughter was raised and the crowd rushed out of the room to celebrate, who called after them, “This little girl is hungry. Get her something to eat.” The Bible even says that the Son of God attended the funeral of one of His friends and He cried.

This doesn’t sound like the Devil’s picture of God. Obviously, in the Gospels, Jesus is not the kind of person Satan has made God out to be. Then why don’t we just settle for the magnificent record in the Gospels? However, as one reads on through the Gospels, one cannot help noticing Jesus’ own use of the Old Testament. For example, John 5:39, 40, on the list: “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life.” That’s almost a form of bibliolatry, worshiping the Bible as if there were some power in the book. “No,” He said, “these are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (NIV) But note how He speaks of the Old Testament Scriptures as bearing witness to the truth about Him. Would we want to waste them? And note again in Luke 24:27 how He used the Old Testament: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets,” that’s really covering the whole Old Testament, “he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” (NIV)

Then to really follow Christ’s example, is to use the Old Testament. Where do you think He found His picture of God? How did he know God so well? He grew up with the thirty-nine books

of the Old Testament. We would be very wasteful not to use them, too. So back again we go to the Old Testament, meanwhile remembering that 2 Timothy 3:16 does say “all scripture inspired of God is profitable.” Let us see how profitable it can be this next time. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #6, “Evaluating the Evidence” recorded February 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/6MMCAG>*

### Further Study with Ellen White

The whole world is embraced in the contract of the great plan of redemption (MS 65, 1912). {4BC 1180.5}

As we search the word of God in humility of heart, the grand theme of redemption will open to our research. It will increase in brightness as we behold it, and as we aspire to grasp it, its height and depth will ever increase. {COL 129.2}

The Bible was not written for the scholar alone; on the contrary, it was designed for the common people. The great truths necessary for salvation are made as clear as noonday; and none will mistake and lose their way except those who follow their own judgment instead of the plainly revealed will of God. {SC 89.2}

The mind will enlarge if it is employed in tracing out the relation of the subjects of the Bible, comparing scripture with scripture and spiritual things with spiritual. {SC 89.3}

When you search the Scriptures with an earnest desire to learn the truth, God will breathe His Spirit into your heart and impress your mind with the light of His word. The Bible is its own interpreter, one passage explaining another. By comparing scriptures referring to the same subjects, you will see beauty and harmony of which you have never dreamed. There is no other book whose perusal strengthens and enlarges, elevates and ennoble the mind, as does the perusal of this Book of books. Its study imparts new vigor to the mind, which is thus brought in contact with subjects requiring earnest thought, and is drawn out in prayer to God for power to comprehend the truths revealed. {4T 499.1}

The truths of the Bible, treasured in the heart and mind and obeyed in the life, convince and convert the soul, transform the character, and comfort and uplift the heart. . . . {TMK 199.2}

In the great closing work we shall meet with perplexities that we know not how to deal with; but let us not forget that the three great powers of heaven are working, that a divine hand is on the wheel, and that God will bring His promises to pass. He will gather from the world a people who will serve Him in righteousness. {8T 254.1}

The appreciation of the Bible grows with its study. Whichever way the student may turn, he will find displayed the infinite wisdom and love of God. {COL 132.5}

The Bible with its precious gems of truth was not written for the scholar alone. On the contrary, it was designed for the common people; and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus. The great truths necessary for salvation are made clear as the noonday, and none will mistake and lose their way except those who follow their own judgment instead of the plainly revealed will of God. {5T 331.2}

All whom God has blessed with reasoning powers are to become intellectual Christians. They are not requested to believe without evidence; therefore Jesus has enjoined upon all to search the Scriptures. Let the ingenious inquirer, and the one who would know for himself what is truth, exert his mental powers to search out the truth as it is in Jesus. Any neglect here is at the peril of the soul. We must know individually the prescribed conditions of entering into eternal life. . . . We cannot allow these questions to be settled for us by another's mind, or another's judgment. . . . We cannot trust the salvation of our souls to ministers, to idle traditions, to human authorities, or to pretensions. . . . The Lord positively demands of every Christian an intelligent knowledge of the Scriptures. {RH, March 8, 1887 par. 1}

When one surrenders to Christ, the mind is brought under the control of the law; but it is the royal law, which proclaims liberty to every captive. By becoming one with Christ, man is made free. Subjection to the will of Christ means restoration to perfect manhood. {MH 131.1}

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}

Even when he was cast out of heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy Satan. Since only the service of love can be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence. The inhabitants of heaven and of the worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, he must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their

true light by all created beings, and that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might be forever placed beyond all question. {PP 42.3}

If the human agent consents, God can and will so identify His will with all our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His Word, that when obeying His will, we are only carrying out the impulses of our minds. {UL 187.5}

But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. {SC 60.2}

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service. {PP 34.3}