VICTORY AND DEFEAT

During Napoleon’s invasion of Russia in 1812, the Russian army employed what’s known as the scorched earth policy, destroying crops and infrastructure as they retreated further into their territory. This approach significantly weakened the French forces, ultimately leading to their defeat.

When Jesus gained victory over death and forced Satan to retreat, Satan employed his own scorched earth policy on the church. Jesus’ triumph had rendered Satan an eternally defeated enemy, and he became filled with “great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time” (Rev. 12:12). Satan focused on inflicting as much damage as possible on God’s people and mission as Christianity spread throughout the known world. The book of Acts records some of the hardships the early church faced at the hands of angry mobs and hostile authorities. Satan did everything he could to keep the gospel from spreading. He knows that God feels deep sadness and pain for every person lost, for each one of them has a special, irreplaceable spot in His heart.

We should be thankful that God didn’t go on vacation after salvation was secured at Calvary. Instead, Jesus continued His work on the earth through the Holy Spirit. The many conflicts in the two thousand years that followed Calvary are a testament to the intense fight over the continued success and mission that Jesus began on earth. This lesson will delve into the dynamics of the great controversy after Jesus returned to heaven, aiming to understand how God provided and continues to provide victory for His people.
Write out Revelation 12:10–17 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out verses 11 and 17. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
DIVINE LIGHT AMID DARK AGES

Revelation 12 warned God’s people that the true church would suffer centuries of persecution and would have to flee into the remote parts of the earth to escape total annihilation. However, it also promised that no matter how intense the persecution would become, God would always preserve His church from being completely destroyed (v. 14).

The first major persecution against Christians began about three and a half years after Pentecost. Saul, later known as Paul, was notorious for how many Christians he harassed and arrested during that time (Acts 8:3; 9:13, 26), but later he converted to Christianity and became the leading missionary and church planter in Europe as well as the most prolific author of the New Testament. His zealous preaching of the gospel made him the target of severe hostility and persecution, which eventually led to his imprisonment and execution in Rome. Over the following centuries, millions more paid the ultimate price for their faith and “did not love their lives to the death” (Rev. 12:11).

In the fourth century, Christians began to persecute other Christians for the first time. The church in Rome asserted the right to dictate what churches in other cities could teach and practice. During this time, church dogma was widely enforced by the state and dissenters were hunted down and punished. Though this time of Roman domination was very difficult for Bible-believing Christians, God provided a way for the truth to be safeguarded and passed on through groups such as the early Irish-Scottish Christians and the Waldenses. In the early days, the first Christians on the British Isles experienced minimal Roman influence due to their distance from Italy and used this relative safety to train and send missionaries to the rest of Europe. For centuries, the Waldenses took shelter in the remote mountain regions of Northern Italy, similarly secluded, and sent young missionaries to surrounding countries. The Waldenses suffered several massacres at the hands of crusading Catholic armies, but such pockets of faithful Christians kept Bible truth alive until brave men such as Wycliffe, Huss, Jerome, Luther, and Zwingli ushered in the Reformation. At this point, the people began slowly rediscovering Bible truth and the influence and power of the papacy decreased. These two changes culminated in the “deadly wound” of 1798 (Rev. 13:3), when Pope Pius VI was arrested and imprisoned by Napoleon’s general Louis Berthier.

Just as the Italian Alps and remote British Isles provided wilderness shelters to earlier believers, so the discovery of the Americas presented a new wilderness in which persecuted believers could find refuge and freedom of religion away from the overreaching papacy and monarchy. “The earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth” (Rev. 12:16). God kept His hand over both His Word and His people. Yes, many paid the ultimate price, but to this day, their blood provides the opportunity for millions more to hear the gospel.
END-TIME DEFIANCE

When pro-democracy protests in Beijing reached a boiling point in June 1989, the Chinese government responded with a brutal military crackdown. Amid the ensuing chaos, one man whose identity remains unknown took a stand that has echoed through history. Armed with nothing but shopping bags, the Tank Man of Tiananmen Square, as he has since come to be known, positioned himself in front of a column of advancing tanks, refusing to let them pass. He even climbed onto the lead tank at one point, briefly conversing with the driver before returning to his defiant stance. This remarkable act of courage was captured in photographs and videos that quickly spread around the world. Despite facing a powerful regime determined to crush dissent, the Tank Man's unwavering conviction in the face of overwhelming oppression has inspired countless others to stand up for their beliefs.

Throughout history, God's faithful ones have always been in the minority. This small remnant has included Enoch, Noah, Abraham, the 7,000 in Elijah's day, the 120 in the upper room during Pentecost, and other various groups throughout the last 2,000 years. Truth and faithfulness have never been popular with the masses, especially if they could cost one's life. It's no surprise that in these last days of earth's history, when truth and falsehood come to a boiling point, God still has a group of remnant believers. Just as he has in the past, Satan has taken a special, sinister interest in them. He is angry and wants to crush the dissent: "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17, emphasis added).

Revelation 12:17 points out two identifying characteristics of this remnant: they offer grace-empowered, love-based obedience to God (see v. 11), and they receive a manifestation of prophetic testimonies and messages (cf. Rev. 19:10; 22:9). This small group of believers, armed with the faith of Jesus (see Rev. 14:12) and God's truth, are called to position themselves spiritually before the advancing "tanks" of falsehood, sin, and Babylon in a courageous final protest. Under the banner of the three angels' messages (see Rev. 14:6–12), they are to engage the world with unwavering conviction, inviting them into allegiance with Jesus Christ, the soon-returning Savior of the world and King of the universe.

The Seventh-day Adventist movement strives to fulfill the mission of God's end-time remnant of believers who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. Organized to facilitate global mission more effectively, its goals are clear even in the face of overwhelming odds: making disciples for Jesus and sharing the everlasting gospel of the three angels' messages with the whole world in preparation for Christ's soon return. Satan's war against those who embrace (cont. on p. 85)
Review your memorized verse from Revelation 12:10–17.

(Cont. from inTerpret, p. 84):

this mission is relentless, and his methods are far too often successful: inspiring lukewarmness (see Rev. 3:14–21), infighting, polarization, theological and ecclesiological rabbit holes, reluctance in mission, and Christless preaching, among a myriad of others. All have limited the remnant’s influence in this world. There is hope even in the face of this great opposition, for the “sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:19, KJV) shows that the remnant church will be victorious in the end. The only question is this: will you be part of it today?

What relationship do the following verses have with Revelation 12:10–17?

Revelation 10
Revelation 14:6–12
Revelation 12:1–9
Revelation 19:10
Daniel 12:1
John 16:33
Matthew 24:21, 22
Romans 8:31–39

What other verses come to mind in connection with the primary passage?
Malala Yousafzai, a young girl from Pakistan, emerged from unspeakable hardship as a beacon of hope and courage in the face of great adversity. At just eleven years old, she defied the Taliban's oppressive restrictions on girls' education by fearlessly writing a blog for BBC Urdu, inspiring countless others to believe in and fight for girls' right to education. In an assassination attempt, Malala was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman while she was riding her school bus. The shot did not kill her immediately, and as she fought for her life, her story captured the hearts of millions worldwide.

Miraculously, Malala recovered and continued with her work, her testimony and unwavering dedication stronger than ever. She established a nonprofit organization to empower girls through education, and in 2014, at the age of seventeen, she became the youngest ever recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize—a testament to her incredible impact on the world. Her story demonstrates that even a single voice can rise above the darkest circumstances, inspire positive change, and ultimately achieve victory in the pursuit of a worthy cause.

As remnant believers, we have the worthiest cause of all: taking the gospel to “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6). We are called to be a beacon of hope, courage, and light in this dark world of confusion. Fearlessly and passionately, through love and acts of grace, we must proclaim the truth as it is in Jesus. People need to hear the good news that they can escape the oppressive restrictions of Satan and sin. They need to know “salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser... has been cast down” (Rev. 12:10). Satan is a defeated enemy!

Whether they’re conscious of it or not, every human being longs for wholeness, peace, freedom, healing, hope, and victory over all that sin has done. All of this and more is found in Christ. He gained the ultimate victory over sin through His death on the cross, and He sealed it with His resurrection. It is by faith in “the blood of the Lamb” (v. 11) that His victory becomes ours. God’s salvation is made possible only because Jesus died as our substitute. The blood of the Lamb reveals the indescribable love of God. Embracing His love provides the only means by which grace-empowered obedience is possible.

The great controversy involves supernatural beings and affects geopolitical, religious, and social movements, but it also shakes individuals to their very core. This personal experience of Christ’s triumph in our lives must not remain hidden. We must tell our stories! Our testimonies of victory and hope in Jesus must be shared far and wide (Rev. 12:11). Satan stands powerless in the light of the cross, and he loses his control over people when we testify of God’s faithfulness and victory. When we love God more than we love our lives, Christ is glorified and becomes irresistible to the honest seeker. Nothing is to keep us from sharing these things, not even the possibility of persecution and death.
inSight

Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the passage, what are some personal applications you are convicted of in your life?

What are some practical applications you must make in your family, workplace, church, and outreach?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/GC10-7

VINDICATORS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“The Saviour watches with a deep interest over the human family. When He ascended to the Father, He did not leave His followers without help. In His earthly life He overcame in their behalf, and they are to overcome in His strength. All have trials to meet. There are the old natural temperaments to contend with; but these temperaments are to be brought into subjection to Jesus Christ, that we may stand on vantage ground with God.... “The crown of glory will be placed on the brow of all who have overcome temptation by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony. This word of our testimony means a great deal. It is before all the heavenly universe and before the world. The soul who dishonors God by his words and works, who does not acknowledge Christ as his Saviour, places himself on the losing side.” (Ellen G. White, In Heavenly Places [1967], 278.)

“The holy life of Abel testified against Satan’s claim that it is impossible for man to keep God’s law. When Cain, moved by the spirit of the wicked one, saw that he could not control Abel, he was so enraged that he destroyed his life. And wherever there are any who will stand in vindication of the righteousness of the law of God, the same spirit will be manifested against them. It is the spirit that through all the ages has set up the stake and kindled the burning pile for the disciples of Christ. But the cruelties heaped upon the follower of Jesus are instigated by Satan and his hosts because they cannot force him to submit to their control. It is the rage of a vanquished foe. Every martyr of Jesus has died a conqueror.” (Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets [1890], 77.)

“The victory gained at His [Christ’s] death on Calvary broke forever the accusing power of Satan over the universe and silenced his charges that self-denial was impossible with God and therefore not essential in the human family.” (Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 1 [1958], 341.)

“Our people have been regarded as too insignificant to be worthy of notice, but a change will come. The Christian world is now making movements which will necessarily bring commandment-keeping people into prominence. “The whole world is to be stirred with enmity against Seventh-day Adventists, because they will not yield homage to the papacy, by honoring Sunday, the institution of this antichristian power. It is the purpose of Satan to cause them to be blotted from the earth, in order that his supremacy of the world may not be disputed. “Every position of truth taken by our people will bear the criticism of the greatest minds; the highest of the world’s great men will be brought in contact with truth, and therefore every position we take should be critically examined and tested by the Scriptures. Now we seem to be unnoticed, but this will not always be. Movements are at work to bring us to the front, and if our theories of truth can be picked to pieces by historians or the world’s greatest men, it will be done.” (Ellen G. White, Maranatha [1976], 217.)
inQuire

Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

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Why does God allow His people to suffer persecution and hardship?

How has God provided for His people during difficult times in the past?

How do you apply Jesus’ victory in a practical way in your life?

What are some ways to testify of Christ’s triumph over the power of sin, death, and Satan to people who know nothing about God and the Bible?

What does it mean to be a Seventh-day Adventist? What has your personal journey in understanding the identity and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church been like?

What kinds of hostilities against believers have you experienced or witnessed?

How can we look forward to the future without being fearful of persecution and hardship?