



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 08 2022

shut door.  
open books.

**Scripture Story:** Genesis 7:6-23.

**Commentary:** *The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire)*, chapter 28.

**Key Text:** Genesis 7:23.

**PREPARING TO TEACH**

**I. SYNOPSIS**

This week's lesson brings students to the sobering reality that there will be a judgment. In truth God is doing the work of judgment today and Adventists refer to this phase as the investigative judgment, the time before Christ returns and everyone's life is accountable to God. Ellen White wrote about the judgment: "Every man's work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness."<sup>1</sup> Throughout the Bible the theme of accountability continues to emerge in direct and clear terms. Even the image of an open book conveys the courtroom atmosphere of the investigative judgment. Malachi wrote: "A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name" (Malachi 3:16, NIV). The world today is reticent to hear about this truth, and yet around the world the three angels' messages cry out, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come" (Revelation 14:7, NIV).

One of the tasks for this lesson will be to remind the students that God will pronounce everyone who confesses their sin and claims the blood of Christ "not guilty." Pardoned. Redeemed. Forgiven. Restored. Righteous—according to the eyes of heaven. Students need to be challenged with the truth that today is the time of judgment and they need to make the choice to follow Christ. The story of Noah is perfect because the antediluvians needed to make the decision to come into the ark before the Flood came. It may appear to young people, and the rest of the world, that decisions

about loyalty to God can wait. This attitude is pervasive and as old as the world, but it is foolish. This week is a crucial time to urge young people to confidently, but seriously, face the truth about the judgment.

**II. TARGET**

The students will:

- Discover the reality and the rewards of the investigative judgment. (*Know*)
- Grasp the need to live each day with the knowledge that the books of heaven are open. (*Feel*)
- Choose to be faithful and loyal to God's rule and reign in their life today. (*Respond*)

**III. EXPLORE**

**Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 24**

"There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle that the Lord set up and not humans. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross" (Lev. 16; Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6; . . .).

**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.

The What Do You Think? activity involves choosing key words that relate to the message of God's

judgment of all who have lived. As they share the words that resonate with them, invite them to share the words they are unfamiliar with. It is likely that many students will respond to words such as “forgiveness” or “assurance” because they are more common, but probe them about what they know about the other words they might want to know more about.

### **Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

During the mid-1500s the Anabaptists were severely persecuted in Germany and the Netherlands. Hans Smit and Hendrick Adams were meeting in a home near the German-Dutch border for Bible study and prayer. Suddenly the entire house was surrounded, and they were all arrested, brought before a judge, and sentenced to prison. The councilor Aix-la-Chapelle bitterly and viciously sought to put these two men to death for speaking against “the church.” They were both tortured and brought again and again before the judgment seat and pressed to recant. But Hans and Hendrick stood firm each time they were brought to face questions about their faith. The vindictive councilor screeched out a verdict shouting, “Away with them, away with them, to death and the fire . . . no pardon should be offered them anymore!” Clearly Aix-la-Chapelle was out of control. Hendrick Adams looked him straight in the face and calmly prophesied, “You will not live to see my death.” Hans Smit sang joyfully as they led him through the streets and he walked deliberately to the stake, where the bloodthirsty church leaders ended his life and his body was burned. However, it was clear to all present that day that this man answered to a different judge and a higher court. Three days later Hendrick Adams was led to the stake with the same brave enthusiasm for truth, and was executed. But the councilor who eagerly sought the deaths of these two men became stricken with an illness shortly after he pronounced their death sentence. He confessed in his final moments that he had sinned and God would judge him for his bloodthirsty behavior. He died before Hendrick Adams was led to the stake for execution, fulfilling the words that were spoken to him three days prior.

## **II. TEACHING THE STORY**

### **Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Throughout history there have been many sad moments when men stood in the place of God and passed judgments, condemning others to death. God alone is Judge, and His judgment is not only fair, but merciful.

Although mankind may pretend to deliberate truth and justice, there is only one Judge, and He has declared that the books are open! As you reflect on the story of Noah and the Flood, consider the awesome message and the opportunity for salvation that was freely offered to all. The same sobering message of judgment and salvation goes out today. How will people respond? Will it be like the days of Noah, where only a handful paid attention?

### **Out of the Story for Teachers**

- Read every word and phrase carefully and *underline* the parts that you think are crucial to the story.
- As you read this story, what insights do you see in the account of the Flood that relate to people living at the time of the end?
- Read Matthew 24:39 and note the way the story of the Flood is likened to the judgment scene at the end of time. How is this story a perfect illustration of the judgment scene? How might it be different?
- Read Daniel 7:1-10 and note especially the judgment scene in verses 9 and 10. What is the connection between the judgment that came in the time of Noah and the judgment that is currently taking place today?
- In Matthew 25 there are three parables that describe the judgment scene at the end.
  - How is it that so few responded to Noah’s message? What might be different about “the end” that is before humanity today and the “then end” that was before Noah and the antediluvians long ago?
  - By the time the door shut and the floodwaters came, everyone had decided how they would stand before God—alone on their own merits, or like Noah, who “found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” When does the judgment take place? How does the day of atonement and the heavenly sanctuary speak to this part of the last-day message to the world? Read Chapter 28 in *The Great Controversy* for a thorough explanation.

- On what basis can believers today be confident that God is declaring them “not guilty”?
- What other stories or events in Scripture remind you of the judgment scene depicted in this lesson?

### **Extra Questions for Teachers:**

- Take a poll in your class about the attitude of people to the idea of a judgment. What are the sentiments of people today about being accountable to God about the truths He has revealed?
- How do you think the last-day message of Revelation 14:7 will be received?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:* 1 Kings 18; Genesis 6; 11; Jeremiah 36; Exodus 5:2.

### **Sharing Context and Background**

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

This week’s lesson has a couple of different angles to discuss the judgment. (1) There is a personal approach for each student to be accountable to God, genuinely and purposively. (2) There is the big-picture approach to the judgment, looking at the prophetic view of the “investigative judgment” prophesied in Daniel and portrayed in the doctrine of the sanctuary.

**Personal angle:** Throughout Scripture there are many passages that describe being accountable to God personally about our decision to repent and receive the provision God has made, or trust in our

own way. As a result, there tends to be three classes of people described in Scripture, as noted in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*:

“Human beings belong to one of three classes: (1) the wicked, who reject God’s authority; (2) genuine believers, who, trusting in the merits of Christ through faith, live in obedience to God’s law; and (3) those who appear to be genuine believers but are not.”<sup>2</sup> There are various parables (Matthew 6:25; Matthew 7:23; Matthew 13; 20; and especially Matthew 25) that depict a judgment scene where individuals have to face the results of their own choices.

**The investigative judgment angle:** The message of the sanctuary is not simply an afterthought of the Exodus, but is an earthly portrayal of a heavenly reality. The ministry and message of the sanctuary captures God’s plan of salvation, which includes the work of judgment. This topic will take more time than can be achieved in a Sabbath School class, and it is suggested to use *The Great Controversy* as a key resource. You might consider breaking the topic up in three parts, mirroring the outline given in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*:

“The events of the Day of Atonement illustrate the three phases of God’s final judgment. They are (1) the ‘premillennial judgment’ (or the ‘investigative judgment’) which is also called the ‘pre-Advent judgment’; (2) the ‘millennial judgment’; and (3) the ‘executive judgment’ which takes place at the end of the millennium.”<sup>3</sup>

## **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.*



## Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

### Less Is More

Less is more when more is required. When it comes to topics such as the judgment, where so much information is needed to “get it,” it is important to understand what can be done in one Sabbath School class, and what can’t be done. Furthermore, if you can identify what you can do effectively, then you have a platform for further study and more interaction with students beyond the class. Every book on youth ministry today will claim that extended time with students, whether in a small group or a social or service-centered activity, deepens your capacity to teach. It is likely with a subject such as the sanctuary or the judgment that you can seize an opportunity to study further—and more effectively—by saying, “If you want to look into this topic more let’s meet at . . .” See what happens.

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leaned on it so as to represent putting their sin on the lamb. This was an act of confession and repentance.

Then in groups of two or three, invite the students to make a list on another piece of paper of all the things they can remember that Christ did that would be considered “righteous acts” of obedience to God. Have the students report what they compiled. The key issue of the judgment is: do you want to answer by your own works (good and bad) for yourself, or do you want God to judge you based on Christ’s righteousness?

You can have the students press their folded papers down on the table and then cover all of the papers with the pages that have the works of Christ, as a symbol of God’s pronouncement of their redemption.

## Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

We need to convey a sobering message to young people today, not by guilt or by fear, but by the clear and pressing truth that we are living in the hour of God’s judgment. It is through our hope in Christ’s righteousness that we can bravely face each day knowing that as God looks at the list of our deeds, the word “PARDONED” is written. You could say something like this: “If there is one thing that I want more than anything else, it is that all of you will choose to have God pardon you and write your names in the book of life. It doesn’t happen just because you want it, you must deliberately choose it. Confess that your list is not good enough to cover you. Lean fully on the work that Christ has done for you. And claim the truth that God has judged you ‘not guilty.’”

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 482.

<sup>2</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988, 2005), p. 361.

<sup>3</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 352.

## III. CLOSING

### Activity

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

Invite the students to respond to the question: “Which would be easier to do, make a list of the good things you have done this year or compose a list of the bad things you have done this year?” They can draw a line down the center of a piece of paper making two columns and begin making a list. Just have them make a mark when they remember events and acts that were either good or bad (O for good, and an X for bad) so as to protect their privacy. On the Day of Atonement (judgment) everyone who wanted to be pardoned placed their hands on the lamb, and they



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 28.