

Earth's Final "Storm"



SABBATH—JUNE 15

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Revelation 13:13–17; Joel 2:21–24; *The Great Controversy*, chapters 37, 38.

MEMORY VERSE: “Learn the truth and never reject it. Get wisdom, self-control and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23, ICB).

The lessons from Daniel and Revelation will help us meet life's final storms or troubles.

IMAGINE in your mind that you have a teenage daughter. She is driving home from college for summer vacation. As you wait for her to arrive, you check the weather reports. A storm is coming. You feel worried as the wind grows stronger. Heavy rain pours down. Trees are blown over. Soon the road home is blocked with fallen trees. Then a neighbor tells you that a sideroad is open. Your daughter can drive safely around some of the fallen branches. You finally get a text message to your daughter. You tell her the best route to take to come home safely.

More than anything, Jesus wants to lead us through the “storms” of life and get us safely home. Ellen G. White warns, “A storm [trouble in the end times] is coming. This storm will be terrible. Are you ready for it?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, volume 8, p. 315, adapted. Jesus came to this earth to live and die for us. Now He works in heaven's temple to make sure we get safely home. The Books of Daniel and Revelation are lessons for God's end-time people. These lessons will help us meet life's final storms or troubles.

This week, we will learn what the Bible says we need to do to get ready for earth's final fight. We will learn how Jesus' strength will get us safely home.

LOYAL TO GOD AND TO THE BIBLE (Proverbs 23:23)

Read Proverbs 23:23; John 8:32; and John 17:17. What same thing do these verses teach us?

All through history, the worldwide war between God and Satan has been a fight between good and evil. Satan is a liar. He is also the inventor of lies (John 8:44). Jesus is the truth. He said, “ ‘I am the Way and the Truth and the Life’ ” (John 14:6, NLV). The truth makes us free from Satan’s lies. Where do we find this truth? In the Bible, God’s Living Word. The Bible uncovers Satan’s plans and shows us God’s plans. The Bible is the same as a lamp that shows us the way to heaven (Psalm 119:105). The poet who wrote Psalm 119 says to the Lord, “As people understand your word [the Bible], it brings light [wisdom] to their lives. Your word makes even [also] simple [foolish] people wise” (Psalm 119:130, ERV). Then the poet adds, “Every word you say can be trusted” (Psalm 119:160, ERV).

Read 2 Peter 1:16–21. What does Peter tell us in these verses about special messages from God? What word picture does he use to help us understand that God’s special messages are important?

Peter says, “The things we told you were not just clever stories that people invented. . . . This [the things we told you; our experience with Jesus] makes us more sure about what the prophets [God’s special messengers] said” (2 Peter 1:16, ERV). The Bible helps us understand right from wrong. Without the Bible, we would be easily tricked. “The Bible is our sure defense. It protects us from false teachers and lying spirits. Satan uses everything he can to prevent us from learning Bible truth. The Bible uncovers Satan’s lies and tricks. . . . Satan is about to tell his last big lie. He will do many miracles. Satan’s miracles will look as if they are really from God. Bible truth is the only thing that will help us know these miracles are from Satan. . . . The only people who will be safe during this final fight will be the ones who know Bible truth. Every person must answer the question, Will I obey God or men? The testing time is almost here. Have you filled your mind with Bible truth? Are you ready to defend God’s law? Do you have the same faith that Jesus had?”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 593, 594, adapted.



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HEAVEN'S MARK (Exodus 20:8–11)



God has a special mark and an important record, the Bible, which contains His law. So, we should expect to find God's mark in His law (compare Isaiah 8:16).

The coming test will be about worship. God's people will not give up their faith or break His law (Revelation 14:12). The Holy Spirit will mark God's people at that time (Ephesians 4:30). This mark shows that nothing can convince God's people to worship the sea beast or his statue. In Bible times, people put special marks on important papers or records. A mark showed that you could trust the paper or record. A mark also showed who the paper or record belonged to. God has a special mark and an important record, the Bible, which contains His law. The final fight will be about worship and God's law. So, we should expect to find God's mark in His law (compare Isaiah 8:16).

Read about the Sabbath commandment in Exodus 20:8–11. What parts of a mark does the Sabbath commandment have?

The Sabbath commandment shows us three parts of a real and true mark: (1) the name of the person who owns the mark, (2) his job, and (3) his territory. So, we see that the mark belongs to "the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:10, ERV). What is His job? He is the One who "made" everything (Exodus 20:11, ERV). What is His territory? Because He made all things, His territory is "the sky, the earth, the sea, and everything in them" (Exodus 20:11, ERV). A mark is sometimes named a sign in the Bible (Romans 4:11). The two words mean the same thing. As God's mark or seal, the Sabbath will be the final test in the end times. So, the final fight between God and Satan will be about worship (Ezekiel 20:12, 20; Revelation 12:17).

Compare Revelation 7:1–3 and Revelation 14:1 with Revelation 13:16, 17. Where is God's mark put on people? Where is the beast's mark put on people? What is different about the two marks?

God's mark is put in the forehead. The forehead is the top part of the face above the eyes. What is behind the forehead? Your mind. So, God's mark isn't put only **on** the forehead. God's mark is put **in** the forehead to show that a person chooses to obey God's law. The beast's mark is put in the forehead or in the hand. The mark in the mind shows that people believe Satan's lies. The mark in the hand shows they accept his lies to avoid being killed.

WHO WILL WE WORSHIP? (Revelation 13:13–17)

In the final days of earth's history, the worldwide war between God and Satan will be about worship. Do we worship Jesus, the One who made us? Or do we worship the beast and its false statue? Jesus and Satan are our only two choices. The first angel in Revelation commands men and women everywhere to “worship God. He made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water [the places where water comes out of the earth]” (Revelation 14:7, ERV). The third angel warns about the terrible things that will happen to the people who worship the sea beast. They “will drink the wine of God’s great [awful] anger. His wine has been poured full strength into the cup of his anger” (Revelation 14:10, NIV). The ones who worship Jesus “keep the laws of God and believe [have the same faith] in Jesus [that Jesus had in God the Father]” (Revelation 14:12, WE).

God made the skies and the earth in six days. This work that God did is the reason we worship Him (Revelation 4:11). Because God “made all things through [with] Jesus Christ,” (Ephesians 3:9, NMB), Satan hates Jesus. Satan has worked through kings and other leaders in the past to change the Sabbath. The Sabbath helps us remember that God made the skies and earth in six days. The coming fight about the law of God also will be about control. If Satan can get rid of Sabbath worship, he will announce that he controls the earth, and God doesn’t. How will Satan get away with getting rid of the Sabbath? He will try to convince or force everyone on earth to accept a fake sabbath.

Read Revelation 13:13–17. What punishments will people get who refuse to accept the mark of the beast?

People who are loyal to Jesus will be punished with laws that won’t allow them to buy or sell. They will be forced to pay money as punishment for not worshiping the beast or its false statue. A law will be made to kill God’s people. We don’t know how the final test will happen. But we see that we will suffer for our faith. Without God, people are evil. Jesus knew this Bible truth. John says that Jesus “did not need anyone to tell him about people. Jesus knew what was in a person’s mind [heart]” (John 2:25, ICB). Again, maybe we can’t understand now how all these awful things will happen. But we do know that people who don’t know God can do awful things to each other.



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THE EARLY AND THE LATE RAINS (Joel 2:21–24)

What did Joel say that the Lord would do for His people? When did God keep that promise? What happened after the early rain fell? Read Joel 2:21–24 and Acts 2:1–4, 41–47 for the answers.

God poured His Spirit on Jesus' followers during Pentecost. Pentecost was the time when God kept His promise to pour His Spirit on His church after Jesus went back to heaven. Acts records many miracles that happened during Pentecost. 3,000 people gave their lives to Jesus in one day. "But many [people] who heard the message believed. The number of men who believed grew to about 5,000" (Acts 4:4, NIRV). The church started with 120 people. They came together to pray. God answered their prayers in a big way. Thousands of people joined the church. Also, "a big group of Jewish priests [spiritual leaders] believed and obeyed" (Acts 6:7, ERV). With the Holy Spirit's help, Jesus' followers preached the Good News all over the earth in a very short time. God's promise in the Book of Joel about the early rain happened at Pentecost. But the late rains will fall with more strength. God will send these rains to get people ready for Jesus' Second Coming.



The early rains and the late rains are word pictures for the work the Holy Spirit does to help us announce the Good News.

How will God finish His work on earth? Read Zechariah 4:6; Zechariah 10:1; Hosea 6:3; and James 5:7, 8 for the answer.

The words "early rains" and "late rains" are farm language. The early rains fell on the fields in the fall to help plants to grow. The late rains fell in the spring on the crops to help ripen them. The early rains and the late rains are word pictures for the work the Holy Spirit does to help us announce the Good News. "The 'early rains' is a word picture for the time when God poured His Holy Spirit on the church at Pentecost. The Spirit caused the Good News to grow the same as seed in people's hearts. In the same way, God will give the 'late rains.' He will pour His Spirit on His people in the end times to help them finish His work on earth. . . . God's work in the end times will end with more power than it started with at Pentecost. The special messages about the 'early rain' will happen again with the 'late rains' before Jesus comes back again."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 611, 612, adapted.

THE STRONG SHOUT (Revelation 18:1–4)

Read Revelation 18:1–4; Habbakuk 2:14; and Matthew 24:14. How will God’s work on earth be finished? Read Revelation 18:1–4; Habakkuk 2:14; and Matthew 24:14 for the answer.

The angel in Revelation 18 announces Babylon’s sins. This angel is very powerful. This angel, the same as the first three angels in Revelation 14, is a word picture for human messengers. The angel in Revelation 18 honors God so fully that his praise for God fills the whole earth. The Bible says this angel had “much power [might; strength]” (Revelation 18:1, NLV). The Greek word for power in the New Testament is “exousia.” Bible writers often use “exousia” to talk about Jesus’ control over the demons of hell. Jesus also used the word “exousia” in the Book of Matthew when He sent out His followers to do God’s work. In Matthew 10:1, Jesus gives His followers control over the demons and powers of hell. Jesus sends His followers out with strength from heaven to win the fight against evil. Later, after Jesus wakes up from the dead, He sends out His followers again. Jesus says to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So go and make disciples [new followers] in all countries’” (Matthew 28:18, 19, WE).

The Holy Spirit filled Jesus’ followers with His strength. In a few short years, Jesus’ followers announced the Good News everywhere on earth (Colossians 1:23).

At the end of time, God will pour the Holy Spirit on His church in more power than He poured it out at any time in the past. With the Holy Spirit’s help, God’s end-time church will share the Good News about Jesus everywhere on earth. Then thousands of people everywhere will give their lives to Jesus every day. God’s mercy and Bible truth will change this whole planet. In this way, everyone on earth will be warned. The Good News and the hope it offers about Jesus will be shared worldwide.

“God’s servants will go from place to place in a very short time. Their faces will shine with holy light from God. They will announce the message from heaven. Thousands of people all over the earth will give the warning. God’s people will do miracles. They will heal the sick. They will show many powerful signs from God and do wonderful works in His Name.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 612, adapted.



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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Everyone who refuses to accept the false sabbath will be punished. Finally, people will announce that Sabbath keepers must be killed. But God’s law commands us to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy. God rested on this day after He made the skies and earth. God’s law commands us to honor the Sabbath. God warns us that He will punish everyone who breaks His commandments.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 604, adapted.

“A storm [trouble in the end times] is coming. When God’s people see the storm about to fall on them, many of them will give up their faith in the third angel’s message and join God’s enemies. These false Adventists believed in the third angel’s message. But they didn’t obey Bible truth, so their lives were not made holy. These false Adventists joined with the people on this earth and have much the same views. When the final test comes, these false Adventists are ready to choose the easy, popular side. They use their skills and talents to trick and lie to people. These same people loved Bible truth in the past. But now they become the worst enemies of the men and women who were their Christian brothers and sisters. When Sabbath keepers stand in the courts to answer for their faith, these false Adventists are Satan’s best servants. Satan uses them to accuse them and lie about the Sabbath keepers. These false Adventists make false reports about the Sabbath keepers and cause the leaders in the land to be angry with them.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 608, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Why do we need to understand end-time happenings? How will our understanding these things help us in the coming time of trouble? How does the Bible protect us from Satan’s many tricks and lies?
- ② Many countries worldwide have protected religious freedom for hundreds of years. How could that freedom change in a short time?
- ③ Look at the last quote from Ellen G. White above. What choices are you making today that could cause you to join with those false Adventists tomorrow?
- ④ God will send the late rains to help us finish His work on earth. What can we do to get ready for the late rains?

TOUCHING HEARTS IN SPA

Vadym Krynychny was from Ukraine. He moved to Portugal to set up air conditioners. 20 years later, Vadym was the pastor of a church in Spain. Vadym's church helped many people who came to Spain to escape the war in Ukraine. Vadym said, "We started with only a few members. But our church grew. God has blessed us."

How did Vadym go from setting up air conditioners to becoming a pastor? What happened?

After Vadym left Ukraine with his wife, Alina, they started an air conditioning business in Portugal. Their business was a big success. Vadym and Alina became citizens of Portugal.

12 years later, their lives changed when they were asked to help a family who arrived in Portugal. The family didn't speak the Portuguese language. They spoke only the Russian language. Vadym and Alina invited the family to go to church with them. The family accepted this offer and started to study the Bible with Vadym and Alina, too. Three months later, the family gave their hearts to Jesus and were baptized.

Vadym and Alina were so happy. They searched for more people to help. In 18 months, they started a church with 20 people. Vadym preached every Sabbath. Alina was in charge of the music. Vadym says, "Alina and I were very tired at the end of every Sabbath. But we were filled with so much joy, too, from all the work we did for God."

Vadym and Alina believed that God wanted them to work only for Him. They wanted to win people for God's kingdom. So, Vadym and Alina closed their business. They moved to Sagunto Adventist College in Spain. Vadym finished school four years later after studying to become a pastor.

Then Vadym started a Bible group with 20 people who spoke the Russian language. The group met every Sabbath afternoon for Bible studies. Visitors to the group were invited to church. Before long about 10 visitors went to church each week. The Sabbath afternoon group kept growing. Vadym says, "We saw that people had a need to get together with people who spoke their own language." Soon the group grew to 26 members. They became a church, with help and support from the Adventist Church in Spain. Vadym says, "We want to serve all people who speak the Russian language. We want to bring them to Jesus. God has blessed us so much in our work."

Your 13th Sabbath Offering next Sabbath will help the Seventh-day Adventist Church share the Good News about Jesus in the Euro-Asia Division, where many people live who speak the Russian language. Thank you for your offering. We will finish this story next week.

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



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