

The Great Controversy

The Two Witnesses

Lesson #6 for May 11, 2024

Scriptures: Revelation 11:3-6,15-18; 12:5-6,14-15; Zechariah 4:14; Daniel 7:25; Isaiah 40:8; 54:17; Psalm 119:89.

1. In this lesson we will be focusing on “the two witnesses” and what they accomplished through the end of the 1260-year period prophesied in Daniel and Revelation.

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] This study centers on the foundational role, authority, and power of the Word of God in the great controversy. Specifically, we will focus our attention on **the Word of God as represented by the two witnesses who preached in sackcloth for the prophetic period of 1,260 years.**

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the devil directed his efforts and energy against God’s Word, the Scriptures, and against God’s people. **The mission of the church was to testify of Jesus Christ and His Word, which is the revelation of God’s character and will.** In Revelation 11, the Word of God is represented by the Old Testament expression the two witnesses (*Zech. 4:14*). [What did the two witnesses mean to Zechariah?] This metaphor speaks to the fact that the Word of God has a perpetual presence and power, being of divine origin, having been transmitted through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The parallel between Jesus and the Word is obvious: in the same way that Jesus ministered three and a half years under the pressure and persecution of His own people, who were supposed to receive Him, Scripture ministered to the world for three and a half prophetic years, or 1,260 historical years, under the pressure of the very people that claimed to be the guardians of the Word of God. Just as Jesus, the Word of God, died and was resurrected, Scripture, the Word of God, “died and was resurrected.” As Jesus was triumphant, so His Word will be triumphant, and His people also will be triumphant in Him and in His Word.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 80.††§

2. This lesson discusses two major themes:
 1. [BSG:] **The two witnesses of Revelation 11 symbolize the Holy Scriptures.** The two witnesses ministered in a time of persecution, during the prophetic period of 1,260 years, between A.D. 538 and A.D. 1798.
 2. **At the end of this prophetic period, the two witnesses died and were resurrected,** just as Jesus died and was resurrected, pointing to the fact that God will have, through Jesus and in His Word, the final victory in the great controversy.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 80.††
3. What features identify these two witnesses?

[BSG:] Through the centuries, God’s Word has been dissected, doubted, and discarded. It has been chained in monasteries, burned in public squares, and torn to shreds. Its believers have been ridiculed, mocked, imprisoned, and even martyred. Through it all, God’s Word has prevailed.

The medieval church persecuted faithful, Bible-believing Christians. Yet, God's Word illuminated the darkness. Oppression and persecution did not stop the proclamation of the Word of God. As English Bible translator William Tyndale was tried for his faith, he was asked who aided him most in spreading God's Word. He pondered the question and then answered, "the Bishop of Durham." The magistrates were shocked.

Tyndale explained that on one occasion, the bishop purchased a supply of his English Bible translation and publicly burned them. What the bishop did not know at the time was that he was greatly aiding the cause of truth. He had purchased the Bibles at a much higher price than usual. With such a large purchase, Tyndale was able to print many more Bibles than were burned. Truth crushed in the dust has risen again and again to shine in all its brilliance.

This week, we explore one of the most vicious attacks on the Scriptures and the Christian faith. During the French Revolution, blood flowed in the streets of France. The guillotine was set up in Paris's public square, and thousands were slaughtered. Atheism became the state religion. Nevertheless, the witness of God's Word could not be silenced.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, May 4.‡

Revelation 11:3-6: ³ "I will send my two witnesses **dressed in sackcloth, and they will proclaim God's message** during those 1,260 days."

⁴ The two witnesses are **the two olive trees** and **the two lamps** that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵**If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes out of their mouths and destroys their enemies; and in this way, whoever tries to harm them will be killed.** ⁶**They have authority to shut up the sky so that there will be no rain** during the time they proclaim God's message. **They have authority also over the springs of water, to turn them into blood; they have authority also to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they wish.**—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Revelation 11:3-6). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].†‡

4. What are the marks of these two witnesses? What forces in biblical history fit the description in Revelation 11? They are two olive trees, two lamps, have fire from their mouths, the ability to stop rain, ability to cause water to change to blood, and the ability to cause every plague.
5. Zechariah 4 in the Old Testament refers to the same images we find in Revelation 11: Olive trees feed oil to the lampstand so that it continues to give light. Psalm 119 makes it very clear that God's Word gives light. Oil represents the Holy Spirit. (Zechariah 4:2,6) John picked up those same images in Revelation 11.
6. What power has demonstrated that it can stop the rain from falling and send 10 plagues of all types on the earth? Only God's Word! During the Dark Ages, God's Word was the Bible and not the church. It was not the power of Moses or the power of Elijah that caused those similar things to happen in Old Testament times!

James 5:17: Elijah was the same kind of person as we are. He prayed earnestly that there would be no rain, and no rain fell on the land for three and a half years.—*Good News Bible.**

7. First Kings 17&18 tell the story of Elijah confronting the prophets of Baal. What were Elijah's challenging words to the people of Israel?

1 Kings 18:21: Elijah went up to the people and said, "How much longer will it take you to make up your minds? If the LORD is God, worship him; but if Baal is God, worship him."—*Good News Bible*.*†

8. In Exodus 7-14, we are told about the plagues being sent on Egypt, the exodus, and crossing the Red Sea. During that time, Pharaoh and many of his followers, especially the first-born sons, who opposed every decree that God made suffered by losing their lives.

Jeremiah 5:13-14: ¹³⁻¹⁴ They have said that the prophets are nothing but windbags and that they have no message from the LORD. **The LORD God Almighty said to me, "Jeremiah, because these people have said such things, I will make my words like a fire in your mouth. The people will be like wood, and the fire will burn them up."**—*Good News Bible*.*†

9. It is important to notice that in John 5:39 and Matthew 24:14, the words of the Bible are referred to as *witnesses*, using the same word in Greek as is used in Revelation 13 where it is translated *witnesses*.

10. **Sackcloth** is worn in times of mourning. What does that imply?

[BSG:] Who are these two witnesses? **In view of these biblical points and the characteristics given in Revelation 11, we can conclude (not dogmatically, however) that the two witnesses are the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, communicating God's light and truth to the world.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, May 5.†‡

11. Read **Revelation 11**. Is it clear to you that these events from the Old Testament parallel the words of Revelation 11? Is there any other power that can do these things except God's Word?

12. What is the significance of the 1260 days of prophecy?

[BSG:] The two witnesses " 'will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth' " (*Rev. 11:3, NKJV*). This is the same time period as the 42 months during which the "Gentiles" (those who oppose God's truth) will tread the Holy City underfoot (*Rev. 11:2*). The enemies of God tread underfoot God's truth for 1,260 days (42 x 30 = 1,260, each day symbolizing a year in apocalyptic prophecy), and God's two witnesses, the Old and New Testaments, prophesy against them during this same time.

As we already have seen (see lesson 4), Daniel 7:25 says the little-horn power that would arise out of the breakup of the Roman Empire would persecute God's people " 'for a time and times [literally, "two times"] and half a time' " (*NKJV*). **A "time" is one year (360 days)**. So, three and a half times equals 1,260 days.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, May 6.†‡Ω§

13. Why does the Bible sometimes say three and one-half years, sometimes 1260 days, and sometimes 42 months? Were God and the prophets trying to hide something? (See Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 12:6,13; 11:2-3.) Was God asking us to do our homework?

[BSG:] When the authority of Scripture is neglected, other (human) authorities arise instead. This often leads to persecution of those who uphold the Word of

God, which happened during the time of papal domination from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798, when the medieval church descended into deep spiritual darkness. The decrees of men substituted for the commandments of God. Human traditions overshadowed the simplicity of the gospel. The Roman Church united with the secular power to extend its authority over all of Europe.

During these 1,260 years, the Word of God—His two witnesses—were **clothed in sackcloth. Their truths were hidden under a vast pile of tradition and ritual.** These two witnesses still prophesied; the Bible still spoke. Even amid this spiritual darkness, God's Word was preserved. There were those who cherished it and lived by its precepts. But in comparison to the masses in Europe, they were few. **The Waldenses, John Huss, Jerome, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, John and Charles Wesley, and a host of other Reformers were faithful to God's Word as they understood it.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, May 6.^{†‡}

14. Notice a few of the most important **contradictions to Scripture** that were introduced by the church: Sunday sacredness, the authority of the pope, consciousness after death, and the role of priests in forgiving sins on this earth.
15. In Revelation 11:7-9, we are told that a beast comes up out of the abyss. Who is that beast?

[BSG:] By A.D. 538, the pagan Roman Empire had collapsed. Justinian, the Roman emperor, surrendered civil, political, and religious authority to Pope Vigillis. The long period of the medieval church's domination began. It continued until A.D. 1798. The French general Berthier, on orders from Napoleon, marched unopposed into Rome on February 10, 1798. Pope Pius VI was taken captive and brought back to France, where he died. This date marks the prophetically predicted end of the Roman Church's secular authority, the 1,260 days or years as depicted in Daniel and Revelation.... [See earlier in this lesson. During these years, the Roman power exercised not only religious authority but also military and civilian authority. They lost that authority in 1798.]

What a powerful manifestation of the truth of biblical prophecy! Daniel, writing more than 500 years before Christ, so accurately predicted events more than 2,300 years later. We can, indeed, trust the prophecies given in the Bible.

Meanwhile, during all this, the truth of the gospel was kept alive by the witness of the Word. But even greater challenges threatened biblical truth. The beast that ascended from the bottomless pit (Satan [See Revelation 9:11.]) made war against the Scriptures. He initiated new assaults on the Bible's authority through the French Revolution that began in 1789.

In the **French Revolution**, the government officially established the **Cult of Reason** as a state-sponsored atheistic religion, intended to replace Christianity. A **Festival of Reason** was held nationwide on November 10, 1793. Churches across France were turned into **Temples of Reason**, and a living woman was enthroned as the **Goddess of Reason**. Bibles were burned in the streets. God was declared nonexistent, and death was pronounced to be an endless sleep. Satan worked through godless men to kill God's two witnesses.

Their dead bodies would “lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified” (*Rev. 11:8, NKJV*).

Egypt was a culture of many gods that denied the true God (*see Exod. 5:2*). Sodom represents gross immorality. In the French Revolution, God’s two witnesses—the Old and New Testaments—lay dead as a result of the atheism and immorality that ran rampant as normal restraints were loosed in revolution and bloodshed.

Revelation 11:9 says that the bodies of God’s two witnesses would lie unburied for “three-and-a-half days” (*NKJV*), i.e., prophetic “days” representing three and a half literal years. **Atheism was at its height in the French Revolution**, at least for about three and a half years. This period extended from November 26, 1793, when a decree issued in Paris abolished religion, to June 17, 1797, when the French government removed its restrictive religious laws.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, May 7.^{†§}

Revelation 11:11: After three and a half days a life-giving breath came from God and entered them, and they stood up; and all who saw them were terrified.—*Good News Bible*.*

16. What happened to these two witnesses who appeared to be dead?

[BSG:] At the end of the French Revolution, God’s Word would, figuratively, come to life again. There would be a mighty revival. Great fear would fall on those who saw God’s Word once more become the living power of God unto salvation. At the end of the eighteenth century, God raised up men and women who were committed to taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. People spread the message of the Bible rapidly. One such person was **William Carey, who traveled to India** and translated the Bible into dozens of local dialects. Propelled by the power of the Bible, missionaries were sent around the world.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, May 9.^{†‡}

17. On March 7, 1804, the **British and Foreign Bible Society** was founded with the aim of supplying Bibles and New Testaments, Scriptures, without note or comment, on a world-wide basis, in a language people could understand and at a price they could afford. This society with its aim to make the Bible available as cheaply and widely as possible made the decision to **eliminate the portions of Scripture that were known as the Apocrypha** and which were particularly emphasized by the Roman Catholic Church. The society sponsored such people as William Carey who carried the truth to India.

<https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/bible-societys-library#:~:text=The%20British%20and%20Foreign%20Bible,a%20price%20they%20could%20afford>.

18. This was the beginning of the death knell for the “Cult of Reason” and its atheistic beliefs.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] The infidel Voltaire once boastfully said: “I am weary of hearing people repeat that twelve men established the Christian religion. I will prove that one man may suffice to overthrow it.” Generations have passed since his death. Millions have joined in the war upon the Bible. But it is so far from being destroyed, that where there were a hundred in Voltaire’s time, there are now ten thousand, yes, a hundred thousand copies [now, more than a billion] of the book of God. In the words of an early Reformer

concerning the Christian church, “The Bible is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 288.2.†

19. Anyone who thinks s/he can destroy God’s Word and eliminate its influence is a fool.

20. How does it make you feel when you read or hear stories about these reformers?

[BSG:] Revelation 11 begins with Satan’s attempt through the French Revolution to destroy the Christian faith and eradicate belief in God, but the chapter ends with the triumph of God’s kingdom over the principalities and powers of evil. It provides encouragement to all who go through fiery trials for the cause of Christ and His truth.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, May 9.† [See the contrast in Revelation 14:6.]†

21. Revelation 11:15-18 make it clear that these two witnesses once again arise and influence the entire world. God will triumph in the end. ***Would you be willing to die for the truth?***

[BSG:] The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord. Christ is victorious. Evil is defeated. Jesus wins and Satan loses. Righteousness triumphs. Truth reigns. We would do well to heed the following instruction: “Whatever is built upon the authority of man will be overthrown; but that which is founded upon the rock of God’s immutable word shall stand forever.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 288[.3].—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, May 9.†

[BSG:] Within the ark [covenant box] was the law of God. [See Revelation 11:19.] **Although we are saved by grace alone through faith, obedience to God’s law reveals whether our faith is genuine.** The law of God is the basis or the standard of judgment (*James 2:12*). This fact becomes especially important and relevant at the end of time (*see Rev. 12:17, Rev. 14:12*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, May 9.†§

[EGW:] When the Bible was proscribed by religious and secular authority; when its testimony was perverted, and every effort made that men and demons could invent to turn the minds of the people from it; when those who dared proclaim its sacred truths were hunted, betrayed, tortured, buried in dungeon cells, martyred for their faith, or compelled to flee to mountain fastnesses, and to dens and caves of the earth—**then the faithful witnesses prophesied in sackcloth.** Yet they continued their testimony throughout the entire period of 1260 years. In the darkest times there were faithful men who loved God’s word and were jealous for His honor. To these loyal servants were given wisdom, power, and authority to declare His truth during the whole of this time.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 267.2-268.0.†

[EGW:] 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. From devastated provinces and ruined cities a terrible cry was

heard—a cry of bitterest anguish. **France** was shaken as if by an earthquake. **Religion, law, social order, the family, the state, and the church—all were smitten down by the impious hand that had been lifted against the law of God.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 286.1.†‡

[EGW:] Unless the church will follow on in His [God's] opening providence, accepting every ray of light, performing every duty which may be revealed, religion will inevitably degenerate into the observance of forms, and the spirit of vital godliness will disappear.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 316.1.‡

22. Consider these topics for discussion.

1. [BSG:] How are the principles of the great controversy revealed in the French Revolution? [Contrast the French reformers with the French Revolution!]
2. 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 is that phrase “without looking for no-trespassing signs” so instructive to the motives many have for rejecting God? How might such ideas help explain some of what happened in the French Revolution?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, May 10.‡

23. As we think about the power of God’s Word and its ability to survive through the Dark Ages, it is important to notice some parallels to the life of Jesus Himself.

[BSG:] Why do Adventists maintain that the two witnesses, or the Holy Scriptures, were suppressed during the Middle Ages? Did not the people of that time know about the Bible? Were not the cathedrals and churches decorated with biblical themes? Were not the scholastics teaching their students from the Bible in their university classes? The answer to all of these questions is yes. **So, why insist that the 1,260-year period, between A.D. 538 and A.D. 1798, was a time of persecution, a time when the two witnesses wore sackcloth, a symbol of crisis and humiliation?**

Before answering the question, let us complicate the issue a bit further. Some may be quick to point out that persecution against Scripture existed *before* A.D. 538. Indeed, the Romans attempted to mock or suppress Scripture during the early persecutions against Christians. The pagan emperor Diocletian (emperor A.D. 284–305) specifically targeted the Bible to be annihilated, ruling that Christians must renounce, and denounce, their holy book. While most Christians did not have Bibles, some who had biblical manuscripts surrendered them to be publicly burned and desecrated; others died for their faith instead. Eventually, the Word of God emerged honored and victorious from this onslaught. At the end of the 1,260-year prophetic period, French revolutionaries, as well as other later dictatorial atheistic and Communist regimes, also targeted Christian Scripture for annihilation, just as Diocletian had. [Today, what countries are trying to destroy Christianity?]

Unlike Diocletian, however, the French Revolutionaries succeeded in annihilating Scripture in their territory for a short period of time (Rev. 11:7–9). True, both Diocletian and the insurrectionists of the French

Revolution sought to denigrate the Word of God; but the French revolutionaries did so by attempting to utterly annihilate it instead of permitting it to prophesy in sackcloth. In addition, the period of 1,260 years, during which the two witnesses suffered humiliation, far exceeds the first two or three centuries of persecutions, the ten years of persecution under Diocletian, or the few years of the French Revolution. For these reasons, we must look elsewhere in history to discover the meaning of the Word of God ministering in sackcloth.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 80-81.^{†‡§} [The Bible ministering in sackcloth occurred during the 1260 years.][†]

Revelation 11:7-9: ⁷ When they finish proclaiming their message, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will fight against them. He will defeat them and kill them, ⁸and their bodies [Bibles] will lie in the street of the great city, where their Lord was crucified. The symbolic name of that city is Sodom, or Egypt. ⁹People from all nations, tribes, languages, and races will look at their bodies for three and a half days and will not allow them to be buried.—*Good News Bible.*†*

[BSG:] Thus, to understand when, and how, the two witnesses or the Scriptures ministered in sackcloth, we need to emphasize two facts. **One**, the two witnesses ministered during a period of 1,260 years. As our lesson details, Seventh-day Adventists understand that this period spanned from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798 and encompassed the rise, the establishment, and the rule of the Roman Catholic Church. **Two**, the two witnesses were not killed during this period but were clothed in sackcloth.

The allusions to Zechariah (*Rev. 11:4, Zech. 4:14*), Elijah (*Rev. 11:5, 6*), and Moses (*Rev. 11:6*) in Revelation 11 seem to suggest that the prophetic ministry of the two witnesses, wearing sackcloth, took place within the context of the persecution of God's people. Revelation 11 does not say that the two witnesses were killed during the 1,260 years; rather, they were empowered by God to prophesy wearing sackcloth during this time (*Rev. 11:3*). Elijah wore sackcloth during a time of profound spiritual crises in Northern Israel, when that nation had consciously and deliberately changed God's law, placing themselves above, and against, God's revelation. Likewise, the major question is not whether the Roman Catholic Church had any knowledge of Scripture, or used Scripture at all to do theology, during the 1,260 years of church supremacy and persecution. The question is: What was the church's attitude toward Scripture throughout this persecuting period? **The Roman Catholic leaders' attitude closely resembled the attitude of Northern Israel: they knew God's special revelation, but they deliberately placed themselves above it.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 81-82.^{†‡§}

Revelation 11:4: The two witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lamps that stand before the Lord of the earth.—*Good News Bible.**

Zechariah 4:14: Then he said, "These are the two men [*KJV*: the two anointed ones] whom God has chosen and anointed to serve him, the Lord [*sic*] of the whole earth."—*Good News Bible.*†*

Revelation 11:5-6: ⁵ If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes out of their mouths and destroys their enemies; and in this way, whoever tries to harm them will be

killed. ⁶They have authority to shut up the sky so that there will be no rain during the time they proclaim God's message. They have authority also over the springs of water, to turn them into blood; they have authority also to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they wish.—*Good News Bible*.*

Revelation 11:3: "I will send my two witnesses dressed in sackcloth, and they will proclaim God's message during those 1,260 days."—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] The Protestant principle of *sola scriptura* emphasizes that Scripture is the complete, self-sufficient, and clear revelation of God. **Whenever the divine revelation is an inconvenience, or hindrance, to a human project, the devil and his false teachers introduce traditions to justify reinterpreting the inconvenient biblical passages; or they simply introduce new teachings or practices that are crassly against Scripture.** Church tradition and the magisterium are portrayed as the exclusive interpreters of the Bible and as the only authority with the power to create and establish dogmas. God's Word is diminished, denigrated, and placed under the control of the church, though Scripture clearly stipulates that it must be the other way around. In this regard, several quotations from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* are simply astonishing.

According to the CCC, God's revelation "through his Word in the Holy Spirit" is "present and active in the Church," and thus church tradition is an inseparable part of God's special revelation, just as the prophets and the apostles (CCC, p. 79). For this reason, **"the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation are entrusted, 'does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the Holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence' "** (CCC, p. 82).

True, the CCC does stipulate that the magisterium, being the only interpreter of Scripture (CCC, pp. 86, 100), "is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant" (CCC, p. 86). However, the magisterium does not draw only from Scripture but from both Scripture and tradition (CCC, p. 82). Because tradition is of equal authority with Scripture, and because the magisterium ("the Pope and the bishops in communion with him") has the sole authority to "authentically" interpret the Word of God (CCC, p. 100), **the magisterium will draw materials from both tradition and Scripture, whenever convenient.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 81-82.†§

24. Just as in the experience of the Old Testament in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah when careful following of the Scriptures was set aside, soon human ideas and rules took their place.
25. Notice these ideas which are promoted by the Roman Catholic Church in our day.

[BSG:] Thus, in misinterpreting and teaching directly against Scripture, the Roman Catholic Church claimed the following errors:

- That it has power to change God's Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day of the week, thus deliberately transgressing the fourth [Sabbath] commandment and diminishing God's status as Creator and King.

- That Christ left the church in the charge of the bishop of Rome and of the sacramental ecclesiastical hierarchy.
- That the church is a necessary element of God's salvation.
- That the church and the saints can mediate for people and offer them merit for salvation.
- That Mary, the mother of Jesus, was born with a sinless nature (immaculate conception).
- That Mary has a special role in salvation being called Mediator (Mediatrice), Advocate, Helper, titles reserved in Scripture only for Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- **That salvation is by works, such as penance and indulgences.**
- That the soul is immortal, hell is eternal, and purgatory exists.
- That there are seven sacraments that impart salvation.
- That infants must be baptized.
- That the very substance of the bread and wine are literally changed into the body and blood of Christ during the Mass (**transubstantiation**).
- That the so-called laity cannot share in the cup during the Communion.
- That the priests themselves are a sacrament and impart salvation.
- That the priests of the church must not marry, having to remain celibate.
- That Christians can and, in fact, must venerate and worship images and statues, thus flagrantly transgressing the second commandment.

With such a stunning misinterpretation, or flagrant rejection, of Scripture and its teachings for more than a millennium in and by the self-professed people of God, it comes as no surprise that God describes the Scripture, or His two witnesses, as dressed and prophesying in sackcloth.

Yes, eventually, the two witnesses were killed in a secular, as opposed to a religious, context (during the French Revolution). However, the atheistic French Revolution itself was a reaction to the long-standing lawlessness of the Catholic Church against God Himself, against His special revelation, and against humanity, who is so desperately in need of salvation. The great controversy is complex. The devil aims to destroy God's revelation in His Written Word. But he especially aims to suppress the Word of God in His church. This satanic objective has not succeeded, nor ever will it. The Protestant *sola scriptura*, the biblical and missionary societies, the Adventist three angels' messages, and the loud cry will prevail. God's Word will be ever clearer in its communication of God's love.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 83-84.^{†‡§}

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