

Light Shines in the Dark



SABBATH—APRIL 13

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 14:6; Acts 20:27–32; John 17:15–17; Proverbs 16:25; *The Great Controversy*, chapter 3.

Satan caused many people to get baptized who really didn't understand Bible truth.

MEMORY VERSE: “Jesus said to them, ‘The Light [Jesus] will be with you for a little while yet [longer]. Go on your way while you have the Light so you will not be in the dark. When a man is walking in the dark, he does not know where he is going’ ” (John 12:35, NLV).

THE BOOK OF REVELATION uses two animals as word pictures for the devil. The devil is shown both as a dragon and as a snake (Revelation 12:9). Satan is the same as a dragon because he wants to destroy God's people. Satan is also the same as a snake. He uses all his evil skill to trick God's people with lies. Years after Jesus died, Satan caused the Romans to kill thousands of Christians. The Christians refused to worship Roman gods. So, the Romans tortured the Christians for their faith. The Romans also fed Christians to hungry lions. Or the Romans burned Christians alive. Did this stop Christianity from growing? No! Many Christians continued to share the Good News about Jesus. The church grew.

Satan's attacks against the church only made the church grow strong. So, Satan came up with a new plan to destroy God's people. What was Satan's plan? He “joined” the church! How? He caused many people to get baptized who really didn't understand Bible truth. These new members brought Satan's false ideas about God into the church.

God was with His church in these dark times. He helped His true followers stay loyal to Bible truth.

GIVING UP SOME BIBLE TRUTH: SATAN'S SNEAKY PLAN (John 14:6)

How are Jesus and Satan different from each other? Compare John 14:6 with John 8:44 for the answer.

Jesus is Truth. So, everything that Jesus says is true. Bible truth comes from God. God's behavior shows support for all our teachings and beliefs.

Satan lies about everything. He invented lying, tricks, and false information. Satan uses lies to lead people away from Bible truth. In Eden, Satan tricked Eve with lies. Satan's lies caused Eve to doubt God. Satan convinced Eve that God lied to her. "The snake said to the woman, 'No, you for sure will not die!'" (Genesis 3:4, NLV) if she ate the fruit. Satan, with his lies, gave a wrong meaning to everything God said. Worse, Satan changed God's words to lies. Satan continues to use these same sneaky tricks today. He causes people to doubt the Bible. Satan teaches lies as Bible truth and says his lies come from the Bible.

Compare Proverbs 23:23; John 17:17; and John 8:32. What do these verses teach us about the Bible's wisdom?

"Satan knew that the Bible told men the truth. The Bible showed men that Satan was sneaky and a liar. People who read the Bible didn't fall for Satan's tricks. The Savior Himself used Bible truth to win the fight against Satan. Every time Satan attacked Jesus, Jesus said, 'The Bible says.' Jesus answered Satan's lies with powerful wisdom from the Bible. The Bible was the same as Jesus' shield. Satan can control only those people who don't study the Bible. They will more easily accept his control and the pope's leadership. The Bible commands us to worship only God, and not man. So, Satan tries to prevent people from learning Bible truth. In the past, Satan hid the Bible and its truths from people. The Roman Catholic Church followed this same plan. For hundreds of years, the Catholic Church didn't allow people to read the Bible or own a copy at home. Catholic religious leaders or priests taught things that the Bible didn't say. They taught that the pope was God's chosen king on earth. So, people accepted the pope as the head of both the church and the government."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 51, adapted.

How does Satan try to change Bible truth today?



"For hundreds of years, the Catholic Church didn't allow people to read the Bible or own a copy at home."

WILD AND HUNGRY WOLVES (Acts 20:27–32)

On his way to Jerusalem, Paul stops in the city of Miletus. There Paul meets with church leaders from Ephesus. Paul warns them about the future. What two things does Paul warn the leaders about? Read Acts 20:27–32 for the answer.

Paul warns the leaders about two things that will happen after he leaves them. First, Paul says, “Yes, I know that when I am gone, hungry wolves will come in among you. They will try to destroy the church” (Acts 20:29, NLV). The wolves are a word picture for people who will hurt Christians for their faith. Not long after Paul left, everything happened just as he warned. In the first century (years A.D. 1–100) and second century (years A.D. 101–200), the Romans attacked Christians for their faith. These Christians refused to worship the Roman king or bow down to Roman gods. The Romans threw these loyal Christians in prison or burned them alive.

Second, Paul warns the church leaders about another danger. This danger will come from inside the church. Paul says, “Also, men from your own group will begin to teach things that are wrong. They will lead some of the Lord’s followers away from the truth to follow them” (Acts 20:30, ERV). Men will bring false teachings into the church. In the fourth century (years A.D. 301–400) and in the fifth century (years A.D. 401–500), church leaders mixed false teachings with Bible truth to win more people to Jesus. What happened? The church rejected important Bible truth.



In the fourth century (years A.D. 301-400) and in the fifth century (years A.D. 401 to 500), church leaders mixed false teachings with Bible truth to win more people to Jesus.

What happens when the church rejects Bible truth? Read 2 Thessalonians 2:7–12 for the answer.

The church in Paul’s day already started to reject Bible truth. False teachers taught that people didn’t need to obey God’s law. Some Christians brought statues of false gods into the church and named them after Christian saints. Church leaders said that the statues helped non-Christians to accept Christianity more easily. The church also replaced the Sabbath with Sunday. Sunday was the day of worship for the Roman sun god. The church started to worship God on Sunday in honor of Jesus’ resurrection when He woke up from the dead. The Bible does not support the change of the Sabbath to Sunday. Today, most Christians continue to worship God on this false sabbath.

THE BIBLE KEEPS US SAFE (John 17:15–17)

Compare John 17:15–17 and Acts 20:32. What advice do Jesus and Paul give us? What should we do to protect ourselves from Satan’s lies and tricks?

The Bible is God’s Word. The Bible shows us God’s plan for our lives. The Bible can’t give us wrong advice. So, we can always trust the Bible and its teachings. The Bible also shows us God’s plan to save sinners. Paul says, “God has breathed [put] life into all Scripture [the Bible]. It [the Bible] is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right” (2 Timothy 3:16, NIV). The whole Bible comes from God, not just parts of it. We must accept that all of the Bible comes from Him. If we don’t, Satan can trick us with his lies.

The Bible shows us God’s love in the worldwide war between good and evil. The Bible also shows us Satan’s lies and evil tricks. Satan hates the Bible. He does everything he can to destroy its control over our lives.

Without the Bible, how much can we understand about God’s plan to save sinners? Or how much can we understand about the life and teachings of Jesus? Without the Bible, can we understand Jesus’ death on the cross? What about Jesus’ waking up from the dead or His Second Coming?

The Bible tells us about all these important teachings. The Bible and the Bible only must be the reason for our faith and everything we believe.

So, we must reject the teachings of anyone who says the Bible is not from God. Many Christians who say they love the Bible cause people to doubt its teachings. These Christians teach that the Bible comes from man and not from God. They say, “Kings, shepherds, fishermen, poets, and priests or spiritual leaders wrote the Bible. They lived a long time ago. Their ideas are old-fashioned. So, they don’t really have anything important to say to us today.”

Really?! The Bible teaches us that these thinkers are mistaken. For sure, we know that the Bible is filled with important truth for our lives today!

What part does the Bible have in God’s plan to save us? Read Psalm 119:105, 116, 130, 133, and 160 for the answer.



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THE WAY HOME (Proverbs 16:25)

God made our minds. His Holy Spirit communicates with us in our thoughts. The Spirit invites us to use our minds to explore the mysteries of nature. With our minds, we can invent or imagine many new things and ideas. As Christians, we don't stop thinking when we go to church. At the same time, human thinking can't understand Bible truth without help from the Holy Spirit. People did not invent Bible truth. Bible truth comes from God.

How does Satan plan to trick us? Read Proverbs 16:25; Judges 21:25; and Isaiah 53:6 for the answer.

The Bible warns us about one of Satan's most powerful lies. Satan tries to convince us that we can understand God's plan for our lives without the Holy Spirit or the Bible. We may think an idea, belief, or choice is correct. But in God's eyes, this way of thinking may be wrong.

A few years ago, my wife and I (Pastor Mark Finley) went hiking in the forest near the hotel where we stayed for the night. We hiked for almost an hour. I was sure I could find our way back with no problem. But soon we were lost in the forest. The sun was setting. I feared we might be stuck in the woods. Then we met some other hikers who knew the way back. My wife and I were at least five miles away from our trail! The hikers led us to a road where they parked their car. They gave us a ride back to our hotel. We got back safely because we found someone who knew the way.

God knows the way home, too. He has not left us alone on our trip to heaven. The Holy Spirit shows us the way in the Bible. Without the Bible, we can't understand right and wrong or good and evil. When anything or anyone says that Bible truth is wrong, we can be sure that they are wrong. False ideas are never safe. We always can trust ideas and teachings that agree with Bible truth. So, we must make the Bible our final judge of truth and good behavior.

Why do we need the help of the Holy Spirit to understand Bible truth? At the same time, how do our minds help us understand the Bible? Now look at the special message about time in Daniel 2. This special message tells us about things that will happen in history, from the time of Babylon to the future. How does this special message about time convince our minds that we can trust the Bible?



The Holy Spirit shows us the way to heaven in the Bible.

BATTLE FOR THE MIND (2 Corinthians 4:3–6)

Read 2 Corinthians 4:3–6. In verse 4, Paul says, “The devil who rules [controls] this world [planet] has blinded the minds of those [people] who do not believe” (ICB). What does Paul mean when he says that Satan makes people blind? How do these people get back their sight?

The Greek word for “minds” in 2 Corinthians 4:4 is “noema.” “Noema” means our thoughts or understanding. *The SDA Bible Commentary* gives us this helpful explanation about 2 Corinthians 4:4: “The war between Jesus and Satan is a fight for people’s minds. (Read Romans 7:23, 25; Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:14; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Philippians 2:5; Philippians 4:7, 8.) Satan wants to ‘blind’ people’s minds. In other words, the devil doesn’t want people to learn Bible truth. How does Satan blind our minds? Satan causes us to eat and drink too much. He keeps us so busy with the things of life that we have no time for Bible study. Satan also fills our hearts with pride so that we worship self and not God. Then we think that we don’t need God at all.”—Volume 6, page 854, adapted.

The people in 2 Corinthians 4:4 are lost. They have no knowledge. Why not? Are they dumb? Of course not! They have no knowledge because they refuse to know Bible truth. Many of these lost ones had the chance to learn Bible truth. But they refused to believe. Satan “blinded” their eyes. Satan’s kingdom is a kingdom where there is no light, only dark. *The SDA Bible Commentary* adds, “The Good News is the only thing that helps us ‘see’ Satan’s evil plans. The Good News leads us from Satan’s dark lies into Bible truth.”—Volume 6, page 854, adapted. The New Testament teaches us the Good News about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection is the time when Jesus woke up from the dead. The whole Bible is about Jesus (John 5:39).

Read John 1:4, 5, 9, and 14. What do these verses tell us about Jesus?

To the first Christians, Jesus was the same as the light. Jesus saved His followers. He changed their lives. The Good News protected them from Satan’s tricks and lies. Jesus always has loyal men and women who stand for Bible truth. In the early years of the church, Jesus’ love, mercy, and truth made the dark become bright again.



The Good News leads us from Satan’s dark lies into Bible truth.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “In every age, God’s enemies are filled with the same spirit of hatred and anger against Bible truth. God needs His servants to watch and be ready for Satan’s attacks. God’s servants must also be loyal to Him and Bible truth. When Jesus lived on this earth, He told His followers, ‘I tell you this, and I say it to everyone: ‘Be ready!’ ’ Mark 13:37 [ERV].”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 56, 57, adapted.

Satan works hard to cause people to doubt the Bible. One way Satan weakens our faith in the Bible is to use science. Another way Satan weakens faith in the Bible is to get Bible thinkers to teach false ideas. If we accept these ideas, they will weaken our trust in the Bible. Let’s look at one example of a false teaching. The Book of Daniel was written more than 500 years before Jesus was born. But many Bible thinkers say that the Book of Daniel was written only 150 years or so before Jesus was born. If Daniel wrote his part of the Bible 500 years earlier, then he would have been correct about everything that happened in the future. That would mean Daniel really was a special messenger from God. And that can’t be possible in the view of these thinkers. So, they say the Book of Daniel wasn’t written when it says it was written. The Book of Daniel had to be written hundreds of years later. Sad to say, this lie about the Bible is only one of many lies that modern Bible thinkers teach. Many people accept this lie because they trust the Bible thinkers who teach it. No wonder Paul warns us, “Test everything. Keep what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, ICB).



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What does Satan do today to cause people to doubt the Bible?
- ② What is our best protection against misunderstanding the Bible?
- ③ In the worldwide war between good and evil, Satan wants people to believe that God is mean and nasty. How does Satan trick people into believing this lie? How does God answer Satan’s lie?
- ④ Peter says that no man “made up” any part of the Bible (2 Peter 1:20, NLV). So, we must not change the Bible to make it say what we want it to mean. How do we protect ourselves from this sin?

SARA KNOWS THE ANSWER!

In Italy, schoolchildren may attend an hour of religion class every week in public school. As a small girl, Sara decided to go because she wanted to learn more about the Bible.

Sara's classmates soon learned that Sara knew the Bible well. So, when the teacher asked a question, the students said, "Sara knows the answer!"

The teacher asked Sara, "How do you know the Bible so well?"

Sara said, "I go to the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

The teacher wanted to know more. So, she went to church with Sara.

Sara got a new religion teacher in the 6th grade. Again, Sara answered all the teacher's questions about the Bible. The teacher was amazed at how much Sara knew. So, the teacher invited Sara to give an hour-long talk to the class about the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Sara got help from her pastor and other church leaders. At the end of Sara's talk, her classmates asked her questions about the seventh-day Sabbath.

Today, Sara is in high school, and her religion teacher is a nun. A nun is a Catholic woman who promises to serve God all her life and lives with other nuns in a special religious community. During an exam, Sara amazed the nun when she wrote a Bible verse in one of her answers. Other teenagers didn't often write Bible verses on their exams. The nun asked Sara to explain how she knew the Bible so well. Sara told the nun about her faith. After that, the nun came to Sara's church.

In another high school class, a teacher got upset when Sara couldn't answer a question about the Catholic religion. Sara explained that she didn't know the answer because she wasn't a member of the Catholic Church. Then the teacher asked Sara questions about her faith and invited Sara to give the class a lesson about the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Sara's lesson pleased the teacher, who said, "It's wonderful to learn about another faith in our class."

The next year Sara had a class on Saturday from the same teacher. The teacher kept trying to get Sara to attend. The teacher said, "Please come to school. We won't tell anyone you came." For weeks, the teacher made fun of Sara. To Sara's surprise, the class started to take her side against the teacher.

Then one Sabbath, when Sara was in church, the teacher praised Sara to the class. The teacher said, "Sara is only here half the time. But she gets better grades than the rest of you!"

Sara knows God has blessed her for being a strong and loyal Christian. She says, "I do not hide my faith from anyone. My classmates respect me and know my faith is important to me."

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



"Sara knows the answer!"