

The Great Controversy — Study Guide

(Formally published as Thought Questions and Notes on GREAT CONTROVERSY
BY D. E. Robinson)

Foreword

Seventh-day Adventists need to have more than a superficial knowledge of the contents of “Great Controversy.” The eternal destiny of every soul is dependent upon his relation to the issues of that conflict, whose climax is reached in the last generation of men. The crisis that is before the remnant church is briefly portrayed in Revelation 13 and 14. To His people who must personally face that crisis, God has through the gift of prophecy sent detailed instruction, not only of what is coming, but how to prepare for it. That instruction is found, most completely, in this book. “Bidden to make known to others,” that which the Spirit of God had opened to her mind, the author, in the preface, states the primary purpose of the book to be “to trace the history of the controversy in past ages, and especially so to present it as to shed a light on the fast approaching struggle of the future.” While the author was working diligently to complete the book, in 1884, she wrote: “I want to get it out as soon as possible, for our people need it so much. . . . I have been unable to sleep nights, for thinking of the important things to take place. . . . Great things are before us, and we want to call the people from their indifference to get ready.” As an aid to the study of this book, these thought questions and notes have been prepared. For individual study they will be a help, if they are kept and consulted in connection with the reading of the text. For class or study groups, portions might be assigned to members for special report. An effort has been made to adapt the questions to the high points that are considered, rather than to form them so that they might be answered by “yes” or “no,” or by a single sentence. It would be well for the reader to supplement his study by the use of pen and paper, to note other points of importance that he may discover. The study required to prepare the questions has been of great interest and profit, that it may be equally so to the reader is the desire of the writer. D. E. Robinson

References

References at the end of questions refer to page and paragraph in “Great Controversy.” Thus “19:2” gives reference to paragraph 2 on page 19. Each paragraph is considered a unit and is assigned to the page on which it begins, though it may run over to the following page. Because of a difference in the paging of two current editions—due to the larger number of illustrations in one edition — two sets of references are given. The second reference, in brackets, is to the 1926 and 1927 special and subscription editions. The reader may identify the edition he is using by noting the date of the last copyright registration, which is found on the back of the title page.

Chapter 1 — The Destruction of Jerusalem

1. Study the circumstances and occasion of Jesus' bitter grief and lamentation over Jerusalem. For what reasons must it have seemed strange and unaccountable to the onlookers? 17:1, 2 [15:1, 2]

2. Did Jesus have reason to feel sorrow for Himself as He faced Gethsemane and Calvary? What motive led to His great grief? 18:1 [16:1]

Note.— As we think of the trying times ahead of God's people, should our greatest concern be for our own hardships and tests, or for the fate of the impenitent? If we follow Jesus' example of thinking of lost souls, how shall we manifest this burden in our lives?

3. Meditate on God's compassion and love for His people in His dealings with them in the past and in Christ's mission of love to them. Memorize: "The waves of mercy, beaten back by those stubborn hearts, returned in a stronger tide of pitying, inexpressible love." 20:2 [19:3]

4. What had caused the prophets to weep? How did Jesus' view of the future compare with their expectations — (1) as to the time covered, (2) as to the multitudes of people involved, (3) as to their iniquity, (4) as to the severity of the judgments? 21:1; 22:1; 36:2 [21:1; 22:1; 39:2]

5. Compare the great sin of the Jews with that of the later Christian world. 22:2 [22:2]

6. What prophecy of Micah was to meet its fulfillment in the attitude of the Jews and the destruction of their city? How was it fulfilled? 26:2; 27:2 [27:2; 28:1]

7. What circumstances made it possible for Christ's followers to escape from Jerusalem with their lives? Where did they find a place of safety? 30:2; cf. 37:2 [31:1; cf. 41:1]

8. As illustrated in God's dealings with Israel, note that God exhausts heaven's resources in seeking to persuade men to accept salvation. 20:3; 22:1; 28:1 [19:4; 22:1; 29:1]

9. When men finally and irrevocably reject God, they thereby choose Satan as their ruler. What kind of master is he? Show that the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish nation was a natural consequence of their impenitence. How does this principle apply to our own time? 35:3 [38:2]

10. To whom are we indebted for peace and protection? What may cause the withdrawal of this protection, and with what consequences? 36:1 [39:1]

11. What conditions will prevail up to the time of the close of probation? 38:1 [41:2]

Chapter 2 — Persecution In The Early Centuries

1. In forecasting the experiences of His people to the end of time, did Jesus offer flattering inducements to lead men to accept of Christianity? What phase of their experience did He especially stress? 39:1 [43:1]

Note.—The fact that Jesus foretold the trying experiences through which His church was to pass has exerted a powerful influence in fortifying the believers in their conflict with the forces of evil.

2. What was the secret of the fortitude and perseverance of the faithful amid the awful persecutions under paganism? 41:1, 41:2 [45:1, 2]

3. In what way did the persecution prove to be a blessing—(1) to the cause of truth, (2) to the experience of the individual believers, (3) to the church as a body? 41:3; 41:1 [45:3; 47:2]

Note.—The phenomenal growth of the church under these adverse circumstances is evidence of a remarkable spirit of missionary zeal among the lay members.

4. Changing his strategy against the church, Satan wrought more effectually for its ruin by leading its members to compromise. They increased greatly in numbers, but at a dear cost in spiritual vitality. 42:2; 43:1 [46:2; 47:2]

Note.—We see in the religious world today a popular trend toward compromise at the cost of a surrender of vital truth.

5. What should be our attitude toward the present-day trend toward compromising with error? 46:1 [50:4]

6. What part did apostates act in their warfare against the doctrines of Christ? 45:1 [50:1] (For the application of the same principle in our own time see page 608, paragraph 2) [608:2-681:1]

7. How can the statement of Jesus, “I came not to send peace, but a sword,” be harmonized with His title, “Prince of Peace”? 46:2, 3 [51:1, 2]

8. Notice God’s dealing with the righteous and the wicked, in permitting them to reveal their true character, thus vindicating the justice of His decision in regard to their destiny. 48:1, 2 [52:2, 53:1]

9. Should the fact that there is no bitter persecution against the church be regarded as a matter for great satisfaction? What experience of God’s people will result in a renewal of persecution? 48:3 [53:2]