

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### Third Quarter 2015: *Missionaries*

#### Lesson 5 “Exiles as Missionaries”

#### Read for this week’s study

Daniel 1–12; Isaiah 39:5–7; Daniel 2:44; Matthew 24:14, 15; Genesis 41.

#### Memory Text

“He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed’ ” (Daniel 7:14, NIV).

#### Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Exile
- III. Witnesses (*Daniel 2–5*)
- IV. Daniel in Persia
- V. Daniel and God’s Eternal Kingdom
- VI. More Exiles as Missionaries
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Moderator: Daniel Duda

1. “The book of Daniel is also a kind of handbook for missionary activity. From it we can draw lessons on how the Lord was able to use some of His people to witness to those who were steeped in spiritual and theological ignorance. Through their faithfulness and diligence and unwavering faith, these believers revealed the reality of the living God to those who knew only false ones and gave these pagans a chance at a place in this everlasting kingdom, as well.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “Read Isaiah 39:5–7 and Daniel 1:1, 2. How are these verses related?” (Sunday’s lesson) Hezekiah sincerely (and naively) shows emissaries everything – to give a testimony “for God’s glory”. “They saw everything in my palace,” Hezekiah said. “There is nothing among my treasures that I did not show them.” (Isaiah 39:4) Isaiah implies that this unwise move was a security threat. In what ways can something we sincerely do “for God’s glory” become a curse rather than a blessing? Why is sincerity not always the best guide for spontaneous actions?

3. “Think how easy it would have been for Daniel to have compromised, especially given his circumstances. What does his example teach us about how lame our excuses for compromise often really are?” (Sunday’s lesson) Is this based on reading the Bible text (and from knowledge of historical background) or could it be influenced by reading the Bible through a puritan/pietistic lens? What were the challenges the three young men and Daniel had to encounter in the Babylonian court and face during their training?
4. “The book of Daniel paints a beautiful picture of men who learned to live out their commitment to truth in the absence of the temple, the priesthood, and sacrifices.” (Sunday’s lesson) Compare with Jeremiah 29:4-11. How is God teaching His people to stay open-minded in their new environment, assuring them that He is above the circumstances?
5. “What does the king say that shows he learned something about the true God? See Daniel 2:47. In Daniel 4, what confession did King Nebuchadnezzar again make regarding the true God, all thanks to the witness of Daniel? See Daniel 4:37.” (Monday’s lesson) Do you see any progression in Nebuchadnezzar’s understanding of God?
6. “What in the chapter [Daniel 6], indicates that Daniel had already been a great witness to the king? Also, what in the king’s decree indicates that he knew more about Daniel’s God than he could have learned merely from the dramatic rescue? What does this tell us about Daniel’s witness to him?” (Tuesday’s lesson)
7. “Then King Darius wrote to all nations and peoples of every language in all the earth: ‘May you prosper greatly! I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions’” (Daniel 6:25–27, NIV). Would you welcome your government (or the UN) issuing a similar decree today? What is it that “signs and wonders” can communicate to people? What is still lacking?
8. “Daniel’s visions especially emphasized that, despite earthly rulers and their plans and machinations, God retains final control of nations. In the end, He and His final kingdom will triumph, and that triumph will be complete (see Daniel 2:44).” (Wednesday’s lesson) The lesson connects Daniel 7:13-14 and Matthew 24:14: “The gospel is to be preached unto ‘all the world,’ and only then will Jesus return. And we are the ones called to preach it. Some then argue that Jesus can’t return until we do our work. How are we to understand our role in the timing of Jesus’ return?” So what is the meaning of this gospel that needs to be preached? How do we understand “finishing the work”?
9. What are the parallels between the experiences of Daniel, Esther and Joseph (Genesis 41)? How can their stories help us find principles that can be applied to our situations, our culture today?

10. "In what situations in which you find yourself can you witness for your faith? Are you giving a passive or active witness, or both? What are things you can either say or do that would make a more powerful impression on others about the goodness and love of our God?" (Thursday's lesson)

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Note what kind of a man Nebuchadnezzar was. He was used to having his authority recognized. You remember how the story goes along, and you remember that the Chaldeans could not tell him the dream that he'd forgotten.

Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. So the decree went forth that the wise men were to be slain. And they sought Daniel and his companions, to slay them.

This is the way the king did his business. Then you look over in 2:24 and you notice that Daniel says, "I am ready to answer the king's request." And so, "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; but let me come and explain." So Daniel explains, and in chapter 3:5, 6. After the king has the explanation, he thinks he'd like to build an image entirely of gold, maybe to suggest that the golden part of that image would last forever, and Babylon would last forever. And then the burning fiery furnace and the threat, in 3:5, 6. Let's start, say, with 4: "The herald proclaimed aloud, 'You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the music, you are to fall down and worship.'" And verse 6: "whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace."

What kind of evangelism is that? Here's the picture of god, the image, and if you don't get down and worship, you will be thrown into the burning fiery furnace. Has that method been pursued through the years? Have Christians ever used that method? Think of all the people who were tied to the stake, and they were threatened that if they didn't accept the religion that was being represented, they were to be burned. Even Paul used that method didn't he, when he went out with fury to persecute and imprison the Christians? You see, many people have thought that the all-powerful God would appreciate this kind of firm, authoritative evangelism.

After the experience of the three being thrown in [the fiery furnace], and then being marvelously preserved, and the king seeing this fourth Person, he's convinced that the God of Israel is a God to be reckoned with. So he tries a little evangelism in favor of the God of Israel. So look at verse 29. He hasn't changed his method.

Therefore I make a decree, any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins; for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.

Now, how's that? His methods have not changed. He now recognizes the God of Israel, but he's still using force. He still has a long way to go. You see, all he recognizes is that the God of Israel is not too weak. He's never seen a "god" rescue three young men in a burning fiery furnace before. He's impressed with God's power, so he uses power now to force submission and worship.

Does he ever improve? Well, look at chapter 4, King Nebuchadnezzar's own testimony as to his later experience. . . .

How much had he learned? Certainly for a king who was accustomed to total and absolute submission in his presence, and a king who could speak so arrogantly in the beginning, he had come a long way, hadn't he? Maybe God wasn't winning His own people so well. He certainly was enjoying considerable success with Nebuchadnezzar. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Daniel*, recorded 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

\*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/39MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/40MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Of all the things Jesus said that must and will happen before the conflict is over, He especially mentioned one. He said the gospel, the good news, the true picture of God, simply must go to the whole world before the end will come. We can trust God to wait until His children all over this planet have had a chance to make an enlightened choice and decision. As we have discussed before, in view of the awesome events to come, the confusion and the deception, God would not ask anyone to pass through that period without sufficient information upon which to base an intelligent choice.

This is only consistent with the way God has treated angels and men ever since the great controversy began. He has always waited patiently for His children to make up their own minds. Think of how many centuries He waited for Israel to respond to the information brought by the prophetic messengers that He sent one after the other. And not until the children of Israel had resisted the truth so long that they were beyond even the Creator's power to restore, did He finally and reluctantly give them up. But after the Israelites had been taken off to Babylonian captivity, God inspired the writer of 2 Chronicles to explain why He could no longer protect them, why He had to let them go. Look at 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16, on the sheet:

The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people [grossly as many of them were misbehaving, as you know from the Biblical record]; but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, till the wrath of the Lord [and we know that

means His sadly giving people up, from Romans and Hosea and elsewhere], till the wrath of the Lord rose against the people, till there was no remedy. (RSV)

It was not an arbitrary decision. He simply could not do anything more for them. He had to let them go into the discipline of captivity. Fortunately, it was not the final awful destruction at the end of the world. But it still was discipline. And though God seemed to have abandoned them, He went with them, didn't He? He blessed Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, Esther, Mordecai, Ezekiel. Think of the distinguished saints that grew up there in Babylonian captivity. But by and large, God could not work through His people as a nation at that time. He had to give them up into the discipline of captivity. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #19, "How Soon Will the Conflict Be Over?" recorded June, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/19MMCAG>*

**Recommended reading:** *Servants or Friends?* Chapter 4—"Trust Cannot Be Commanded"

### Further Study with Ellen White

God brought Daniel and his associates into connection with the great men of Babylon, that in the midst of a nation of idolaters they might represent His character. How did they become fitted for a position of so great trust and honor? It was faithfulness in little things that gave complexion to their whole life. They honored God in the smallest duties, as well as in the larger responsibilities. {PK 487.2}

Through the Hebrew captives the Lord was made known to the heathen in Babylon. This idolatrous nation was given a knowledge of the kingdom the Lord was to establish, and through His power maintain against all the power and craft of Satan. Daniel and his fellow-companions, Ezra and Nehemiah, and many others were witnesses for God in their captivity. The Lord scattered them among the kingdoms of the earth that their light might shine brightly amid the black darkness of heathenism and idolatry. To Daniel God revealed the light of His purposes, which had been hidden for many generations. He chose that Daniel should see in vision the light of His truth, and reflect this light on the proud kingdom of Babylon. On the despot king was permitted to flash light from the throne of God. {4BC 1169.3}

Often the Israelites seemed unable or unwilling to understand God's purpose for the heathen. Yet it was this very purpose that had made them a separate people and had established them as an independent nation among the nations of the earth. Abraham, their father, to whom the

covenant promise was first given, had been called to go forth from his kindred, to the regions beyond, that he might be a light bearer to the heathen. {PK 367.3}

In the renewal of the covenant shortly before the birth of Isaac, God's purpose for mankind was again made plain. "All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him," was the assurance of the Lord concerning the child of promise. Genesis 18:18. And later the heavenly visitant once more declared, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Genesis 22:18. {PK 368.1}

Had Israel been true to her trust, all the nations of earth would have shared in her blessings. But the hearts of those to whom had been entrusted a knowledge of saving truth, were untouched by the needs of those around them. As God's purpose was lost sight of, the heathen came to be looked upon as beyond the pale of His mercy. The light of truth was withheld, and darkness prevailed. The nations were overspread with a veil of ignorance; the love of God was little known; error and superstition flourished. {PK 371.1}