

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2017: “Feed My Sheep”: 1 and 2 Peter

Lesson 12 “The Day of the Lord”

Read for this week’s study

2 Peter 3:1, 2; John 21:15–17; 2 Peter 3:3–13; Psalm 90:4; Matthew 24:43–51; 2 Peter 3:14–18.

Memory Text

“Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11, NRSV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Line of Authority
- III. The Scoffers
- IV. A Thousand Years as a Day
- V. So What?
- VI. A Final Appeal
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. If you knew you had one week to live, how would you live differently? What is it that would truly matter to you at the very end of your life? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read 2 Peter 3:1-2. What is the point of these comments? Is this the first reference ever to a two-part Bible of prophets and apostles? Why must the Word of God, and not culture or our own judgment or reason, be the ultimate authority in our lives? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read 2 Peter 3: 3-4. What is the primary argument that skeptics of Christ’s return advance? But is that really such an unreasonable statement to make? In your own faith experience, how do you deal with the fact that Christ has not returned yet? In verse 3, why does Peter draw a connection between sinful passions and false teachings? (Monday’s lesson)
4. Read 2 Peter 3:8-10. How does Peter respond to the argument that the scoffers will bring? What does he say that even now can help us to understand why Christ has not yet returned? What is the larger view of the delay of the Advent? (Tuesday’s lesson)

5. Read 2 Peter 3:11-13. How does Peter answer the question of the relevance of the Second Coming to everyday life? Read Matthew 24:43-51. What is the role of accountability in Christian service? How is accountability better than or similar to serving God out of fear? How much does the reality of the Second Coming affect your daily life and thinking? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read 2 Peter 3:14-18. To whom is Peter appealing, and what is he warning about in this appeal? (Thursday's lesson)
7. What are some ways in which we deal with the fact that Christ has not yet returned? (Friday's lesson)
8. Albert Einstein presented the world with the idea that time is not absolute. Time is very mysterious and acts in ways we don't fully understand. What is the relevance of Einstein's theories to the delay of the Second Advent? How might this help explain the idea that time for God is not exactly the same as it is for us? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

When the man who had been up on Mt. Sinai came down carrying the Ten Commandments, with his face shining so brightly they couldn't even look at him; when he said, "I am giving you some dependable messages from the Lord," there was every reason to accept those, to take them seriously. So they built up a collection of the first five books. They became known as the *Law*; the *Law of Moses*. They became a standard; or the rule, or even the *Canon*.

Then as later books came along written by other prophets, they were all measured by the first standard: the *Law*. Until by and by we had the *Law* and the *Prophets*. And then other writings came along known as the *Writings*, the *Holy Writings*, or the *Psalms*. These were compared with the *Prophets* and with the *Law*, until finally there were the thirty-nine, divided into three Canons: the *Law*, the *Prophets* and the *Writings*, or the *Law*, the *Prophets* and the *Psalms*, since Psalms was number one in the third Canon. Sometimes the *Law*, the *Prophets* and the *Hagiographa*, that is the *Holy Writings*.

The New Testament consistently recognized these and I think it is most significant that Jesus would refer to the Old Testament by these three Canons without any question as to their dependability. Look at Luke 24:44. I'm sure you're familiar with these texts. "Everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." (RSV).

But in reading other verses in the New Testament it's important to know that sometimes they shorten the *Law*, the *Prophets* and the *Psalms* down to just the *Law* and the *Prophets*. Sometimes they shorten it clear down to the *Law*. So sometimes the *Law* means the whole Old Testament. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #5,

“The Record of the Evidence” recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/5MMCAG>*

The Second Coming seemed to be indefinitely delayed. They thought he would come around 50 A.D., and Paul had to tell them, “No, not yet”, in his letter to Thessalonica. There were still more things to happen. By the 90’s—what had gone wrong that Jesus had not yet returned? And besides this, there were heresies in the church. Some were even teaching that Christ had not really come in human form. He had not really suffered and really died. He had faked it all. They’re called the *Docetists*, who taught he just pretended to do it. And then there was great opposition, and serious persecution. The apostles were all dead, save one. And he was the elderly John, now a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos. What good news was there, to encourage the early Christians?

And you could count on God when things were that bleak, to send a message of encouragement and enlightenment and explanation to his people. He surely wouldn’t send a book of mysteries and dates and schedules of events that they could not possibly understand. Rather, that sixty-sixth book that he did send, the book of Revelation (which means clarification, not mystification), that sixty-sixth book is an invitation to discouraged early Christians to look a little higher—to take the *larger view* of things. To see how they’ve all been caught up in a vast great controversy that affects the whole universe! And that it’s a controversy over God’s own character and government. And then to read on and see that God has already won this war, and the angels all agree with him. To see that this is the good news. And then to read on and realize that God is inviting us to join in the celebration; and then to go out to the world and invite all others who are willing to listen, to join in God’s victory in the war. And then we Christians might not seem so much on the defensive all the time; we have good news to tell. There’s no way God and his side can lose. And should we not *join the winning side*? That’s the invitation in this sixty-sixth book.

And the book also says that you can count on God to wait until this truth about him—this good news about his character and government—has been spread all over the world. Because God is the kind of person who will wait until his children have had an opportunity to understand the issues in the war; and to be ready for the awesome events the Bible describes as taking place before Jesus’ return. To see and to present the plan of salvation in the larger setting of the great controversy over the character and government of God is, I believe, the highest privilege of God’s friends on this planet today. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #1, “The Conflict in God’s Family” recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/1MMCAG>*

Now it is true that almost two thousand years have passed since God won his case on Calvary. Satan's lies and accusations have long ago been met. The freedom of the universe has been eternally secured. Why do you think God still tolerates this one rebellious spot in his loyal universe? All the rest have been convinced. We know that he longs to recreate our world, as described in Isaiah, Revelation, and elsewhere, and give it to his trusting saints. Why then does God still wait?

We know that when Jesus returns, he will come to a generation of believers who will have experienced Satan's final desperate attempt to deceive and destroy God's loyal children on this planet. This generation of believers will have succeeded in accomplishing something that one third of the brilliant angels failed to do. They will have refused to be turned against God by Satan's lies. They will have been able to say with Paul, "If anyone, if even an angel from heaven, should come with a different version of the everlasting good news, a different picture of God, he is wrong and we will not believe it."

Lest we underestimate the seriousness of these final times of confusion and deception and lest we underestimate Satan's cunning and persuasive power, there are vivid descriptions of this time to come, both in the Old Testament and New, beyond even the ones that we included in our Bible Reference Sheet last time. Look, for example, at the first one, Daniel 12:1, 3, familiar words to many of us:

There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then [remember the book of Revelation 13, last time? The whole world will worship the adversary except those whose names were written in this book]. But at that time your people - everyone whose name is found written in the book - will be delivered. . . . Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. (NIV)

Notice in this passage as in many others, the saints who survive the time of deception and confusion not only survive themselves, but they are always described as leading others to righteousness. Our concern is not only to survive, but to bear an encouraging witness to the truth about our God.

Compare Paul's picture in the next passage, 1 Timothy 4:1-3, as to what it will be like in these last final days as Satan seeks to deceive:

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. [For example] They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. (NIV)

Now, I continued that passage to include “forbidding people to marry and ordering them to abstain from certain foods” to indicate the kind of thing that will be done in the last days to misrepresent our God. You recall Satan has accused our God of being arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe. Look at such arbitrary things as forbidding people to marry, and to abstain from certain foods, evidently for ceremonial reasons. Wouldn’t the devil love to have us forget how and why God gave us marriage in the Garden of Eden? What an eloquent representation of his willingness to share his creative power with us, enabling us to create little people in our own image. What an answer to Satan’s charge that God selfishly refused to share his creative power. Satan would have us forget that, and would forbid people, particularly those who want to be especially spiritual, to marry. He would forbid them to eat certain foods, for not health reasons, but for ceremonial reasons.

Compare also Paul’s very dramatic description of Satan’s purposes and methods in the next passage, 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10. It’s just a shame to leave out anything in that whole chapter. But just the heart of it:

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed. . . [remember how sin is defined as lawlessness in 1 John 3:4]. He opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped [we know who that is], and even sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God. . . [remember our earlier conversations when we talked about the conflict in God’s family, and what the devil really wants]. Now you know what is holding him back. . . . For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work [this was in the 50s AD]; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so until he is taken out of the way. . . The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (NIV)

You notice the contrast in all these passages between deceit on Satan’s side and the truth on God’s side. Because truth and evidence are not on the adversary’s side, Satan cannot use evidence. He cannot dare invite inquiry and investigation, as God can with perfect safety and freedom. In order to win his case, the devil always has to use things like counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders to persuade. Are you impressed with how much of this is going on at the present time?

Now people who survive this period of extreme deception and confusion are certainly not babes in the truth. Rather, they are grown-up, adult believers. They meet the Biblical description from an earlier conversation, “God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done,” of perfection and Christian maturity. These are people who have their faculties trained by practice

to distinguish good from evil. Though their faith be severely tried, they will never let God down. They have more than the faith of a little child. They still have that. But when one has the faith of a little child, he still needs much protection. These saints, like Job, can stand alone.

I understand that God is waiting for such firm believers. He waits in mercy because he loves his children. He is not willing that any of them should be lost. God knows that if these final, awesome, closing events should be allowed to come too soon, his children would be unready. They would be confused, and some deceived. You recall from an earlier conversation, he would never allow anyone to be tested more than he is able to bear. Of course he waits. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #18, "God Waits For His Children To Grow Up" 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/18MMCAG>*

But surely there is much fearsome wording in these three angels' messages. If this is God's last pleading with his children, would it be better perhaps to have just the first angel's message, and then the last sentence of number three? If this is pleading with us to trust him, might it have been better to just have it say, "Honor God. Give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the seas, and the springs of water." And then go straight to, "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus." Why do we need all that fearsome wording in between? Wouldn't that have seemed more like pleading?

Of course, we must note the sequence of what has gone before, particularly Revelation 12, 13, and then 14. You recall that chapter 12 describes the war, and all the efforts of Satan to deceive both angels and men. Then chapter 13 describes Satan's final efforts to deceive, which is the subject for our conversation next time. This time, in his final effort, he is primarily seeking to deceive the people living on this planet. Chapter 13 describes Satan's almost complete success. The whole world worships him, except for a certain few. It even describes the powers and the organizations that Satan works through in order to accomplish his deceptive purposes. These powers and organizations are represented by certain symbols in the customary biblical way that we are familiar with. More than that, near the end of chapter 13 that describes his final campaign, his loyal followers are pictured as bearing a certain mark of their preference for him and their trust in him—that mark that is notoriously known as the "*mark of the beast.*"

Then comes chapter 14, God's last pleading with his children, the three final messages of warning and invitation that are the subject of our conversation this evening. Knowing what has gone before, one is not so surprised to find the fearsome words of warning in the second and third angel's messages. But we should always note when we read these three that the first angel comes with good news. He comes with the everlasting gospel. And as you know, gospel

means good news. Notice that he doesn't come with new information. God's last appeal is not something new. It is not something additional. It is the everlasting good news. For this good news has always been the truth. It will always remain the truth. It will always remain the basis of our faith and trust, and freedom for eternity. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #16, "God's Last Pleading with His Children" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>*

Recommended Listening:

Conversations About God #16 – "God's Last Pleading With His Children" is available at: <http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>

Conversations About God #18 – "God Waits for His Children to Grow Up" is available at: <http://pkp.cc/18MMCAG>

Conversations About God #19 – "How Soon Will the Conflict Be Over?" is available at: <http://pkp.cc/19MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

The long night of gloom is trying, but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready. God's unwillingness to have His people perish, has been the reason of so long delay.—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 194. (1868) {Ev 694.2}

Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming. {Mar 200.2}

It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain. {COL 69.2}

One of the divine plans for growth is impartation. The Christian is to gain strength by strengthening others. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." This is not merely a promise; it is a divine law, a law by which God designs that the streams of benevolence, like the waters of the great deep, shall be kept in constant circulation, continually flowing back to their

source. In the fulfilling of this law is the secret of spiritual growth (ST June 12, 1901).
{7BC 947.3}

The truths of God's word are not mere sentiments, but the utterances of the Most High. He who makes these truths a part of his life becomes in every sense a new creature. He is not given new mental powers, but the darkness that through ignorance and sin has clouded the understanding is removed. {CT 452.2}

The words, "A new heart also will I give you" (Ezekiel 36:26), mean, A new mind will I give you. This change of heart is always attended by a clear conception of Christian duty, an understanding of truth. The clearness of our view of truth will be proportionate to our understanding of the word of God. He who gives the Scriptures close, prayerful attention will gain clear comprehension and sound judgment, as if in turning to God he had reached a higher plane of intelligence. {CT 452.3}

It is growth in knowledge of the character of Christ that sanctifies the soul. To discern and appreciate the wonderful work of the atonement transforms him who contemplates the plan of salvation. By beholding Christ he becomes changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. The beholding of Jesus becomes an ennobling, refining process. . . . The perfection of Christ's character is the Christian's inspiration. . . . {TMK 166.2}

Recommended Reading: *Steps to Christ* Chapter 8 – "Growing Up Into Christ"
<https://egwwritings.org/>