

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2018: *Preparation for the End Time*
Lesson 7 “Matthew 24 and 25”

Read for this week’s study

Matthew 24:1–25; Revelation 13:11–17; Matthew 7:24–27; Luke 21:20; 2 Kings 23:13; Matthew 25:1–30.

Memory Text

“ ‘For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect’ ” (Matthew 24:24, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. A Powerful Confirmation of Prophecy
- III. Enduring to the End
- IV. The “Abomination of Desolation”
- V. The Ten Virgins
- VI. Using Your Talents
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “In Matthew 24 and 25, Jesus reveals important truths about end times and about how to be prepared. In a sense, these chapters were Christ’s teaching on last-day events. At the same time, looking to the more immediate future, He sees the impending destruction of Jerusalem, a tragedy of catastrophic proportions for His people.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “But Jesus didn’t just warn about what was coming. In Matthew 25 He told parables that, if heeded, will prepare His people for when the ‘Son of Man’ returns. Yes, hard times will come, but He will prepare a people to meet Him when He does come back.” (Sabbath afternoon)
3. What role does the sermon of Jesus about the end of the world play in the Gospel of Matthew? Jesus uses metaphors and pictures when he speaks about the future. How else can you describe something that has not yet happened? And even if we had an exact description, would we be able to understand and process it?

4. When Jesus spoke about his “*parousia*”, his Greek-speaking audience had a good grasp of what he meant, as the word was commonly used for a state visit, or ‘appearing’ or something dramatic that would reveal the power and presence of Caesar, the king of the world. Thus we need to ask these four questions: What did the disciples mean when they asked Jesus their question? What did Jesus mean in answering them? What did Matthew understand by it all? What does it say to us in our time?
5. “None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict.” (GC 493) What truth is meant in this quote? Is it dogmatic truth? How is dogmatic truth a defense against deception? How is it that the first century Jews, who got so many things right dogmatically, were deceived regarding the identity of the true Messiah? Is it possible that something similar might be repeated at the end of ages? If yes, are there ways to avoid it and not to be deceived?
6. Why is Jesus talking to his disciples about the destruction of the temple? What is the significance of referring to the prophet Daniel? The natural tendency of loyal Jews, (including the disciples), would be to stay in Jerusalem, defend it and fight against the pagan invaders, especially as in their reading of Daniel, Israel would be vindicated over the pagan nations (Daniel 7:13). But Jesus warns them against joining the resistance movement and fighting, and tells them to run away from Jerusalem.
7. We should not miss that in every age, Christians were tempted to follow false messiahs who offered quick and simple solutions for complex problems of humanity. Yet here we are, almost two thousand years later. A simple solution has not been found yet! What is significant about this warning today?
8. Jesus ends his sermon with four parables. How is that related to the disciples’ question (24:3)? The lesson deals with two parables: the parable of ten virgins and the parable of talents.
9. What is the significance of the “virgins”, “lamps”, “oil”? How can the Holy Spirit be collected and stored? How do we prevent turning this parable into allegory? What does this parable add to the repeated warnings Jesus has already given about the need to be ready?
10. What is the significance and meaning of the parable of the talents? There are always people who regard Christianity (as did Judaism of that day) as a kind of heavenly examination. God has given us a textbook to study, things to learn and do, rules to keep. One day he will come and set the final exam so that he can see who passes and who fails... And of course, there will be good rewards for those who pass and bad things for those who fail. Is this what Jesus meant by this parable? Why is reading it like that such a distortion of everything Jesus stood for?
11. How does Jesus prepare his disciples for the long period during which he will not be present? What is the significance of the fact that the ‘talent’ represented about 15

years of a laborer's wage? What does it mean that the third servant failed to respond to the master's generosity? How can we view this parable in the context of God's love and grace that envelops and guides us at every point?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Imagine the Infinite one submitting his character and government to the scrutiny of his mere creatures. Does that say something to us about God? Paul says in Romans, "God may you win your case when you take it into court."

Of course God has won his case! That is, throughout the rest of the universe. It is only down here that some of us are not too sure. He didn't win his case by bribing the judge or intimidating the jury, or hiding some of the evidence. He won his case because to the satisfaction of the whole onlooking universe, the truth, the evidence, was on his side. What evidence? The most costly and convincing evidence the universe will ever see or ever need, which is the subject of our next conversation, "Why Did Jesus Have to Die?"

Now, Satan cannot use this method—the method of open investigation and inquiry. He would lose if he did. He doesn't dare invite our questions, for the truth is not with him. And so he has used religion to silence inquiry. And then diabolically, he calls that willingness to believe without inquiry *faith*.

Instead of evidence and truth, he has to substitute force, and fear, and ignorance, and miracles, and excitement, and feelings, and pomp and majesty, and ceremony, and mystery, and especially claims upon claims.

All these things we must beware and be ready lest we be deceived. Let's not underestimate his cunning. He deceived one-third of the brilliant angels.

Of course, if we read the sixty-six books through, we realize how often we have been warned to beware of such things. Jesus himself warns specifically of Satan's methods. Look at the first passage on the Bible Reference Sheet. The familiar words of Matthew 24:24:

If anyone says to you then, "Look, here is Christ!", or "There He is!", don't believe it. False christs and false prophets are going to appear and will produce great signs and wonders to mislead, if it were possible, even God's own people! (Phillips).

Also a little earlier in the same chapter, in Matthew 24:4, 5:

Jesus answered, "Watch out, and do not let anyone fool you. Many men, claiming to speak for me [and how many there are today], will come and say, 'I am the Messiah!' and they will fool many people." (GNB)

Just to show how far that can go, I brought just one book tonight. I think it is the most unusual Bible I have in my whole collection. I almost hesitate to travel with it lest it be found in my

briefcase. This is the *New Testament of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ as Revised and Corrected by the Spirits*. It is the Spiritists' Bible. It is absolutely unbelievable. It came out in 1861. What is so remarkable about it is that it thoroughly rewrites the New Testament in support of Spiritism. Yet, in the end of the introduction, it claims that Jesus came down from Heaven, the medium that he was, and the apostles came down with him, and they corrected all the errors in the New Testament. And then it says: "Dear Reader, trust in God who made all things after the council of his own will. The Holy Spirits feel much interest in this work and the spirits who corrected this New Testament desire that the world will receive this correction as coming from them directed by God himself, which is true. Signed, Jesus the Christ." A diabolical fraud! But look at the claim. Anybody can make claims. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #7, "The Question of Authority" 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/7MMCAG>*

But now we know that mere denials are not enough. Though coming from the seat of highest authority and power, mere claims do not change falsehood into truth. The Creator of the universe has also been accused. By a disgruntled enemy he has been charged with selfish abuse of divine authority and willful distortion of the truth.

Mere denials are not enough to meet such accusations. Though coming from the Infinite One himself, how would we know if his claims are true? Satan has also made his claims, and with great show of authority and force.

But neither claims nor superior show of power can establish integrity or trustworthiness. Jesus warned against believing mere claims, even when apparently supported by supernatural signs. He spoke of religious leaders that would arise, making all kinds of false claims—even claiming to be Christ! And they would perform great miracles and wonders to prove the truthfulness of their claims. "But don't believe them," Jesus said (see Matthew 24:11, 23–26).

"Watch out," he warned, "and do not let anyone fool you. Many men, claiming to speak for me, will come and say, 'I am the Messiah!' and they will fool many people" (Matthew 24:5, GNT).

"My dear friends," John later advised, "do not believe all who claim to have the Spirit, but test them to find out if the spirit they have comes from God. For many false prophets have gone out everywhere" (1 John 4:1, GNT).

In his description of Satan's effort to sweep the whole world into his camp just before Christ's return, John speaks of the use of authority and force accompanied by the performance of great miracles, even making "fire come down out of heaven to earth in the sight of everyone." As a result, "all the people living on earth" are deceived "by means of the miracles"—except God's true people (see Revelation 13:8, 12–14, GNT).

Long ago Moses had warned the children of Israel not to be misled by the working of miracles. “A prophet or an interpreter of dreams may promise a miracle or a wonder, in order to lead you to worship and serve gods that you have not worshiped before. Even if what he promises comes true, do not pay any attention to him” (Deuteronomy 13:1–3, GNT). {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 37-39. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-05>

Lou: If God is waiting for us to grow up in him, won't he have to wait forever? Because there are always people being converted; is that why time goes on? When are we going to grow up?

Graham: That's true. There will be conversions right along, and we wonder how one could grow up in childhood to this maturity that we talked about. If God is not going to allow the closing events to occur until he has a generation like Job—mature enough and settled into the truth to pass through the time of trouble; thoughts that pass through my mind in that connection are this: I think we have assumed it takes a very, very long time to grow up from rebirth to maturity. I notice that when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he suggested that they could be grown up much sooner.

And in Hebrews, it was just a few years later that he said, “By now you should be teachers, but I see you are still babes in the truth.” I think that we could encourage people to believe they could grow up from rebirth to maturity much sooner; and it would be much more exciting. You know, when we're baptized, we think, “I've launched myself on sixty-five years of slow sanctification.” I think, “No, why not grow up without delay as quickly as possible and be settled into the truth?” But then when we have an absolutely out-of-sight, forbidding conception of perfection, we think, “Well, I'm not going to make it anyway.” The conception of perfection we find in the Bible is the conception of an individual who is so convinced of this truth about God, that if Satan should come as an angel of light—even as “Christ”, and say God is arbitrary, vengeful, unforgiving and severe, a twelve year-old might be able to say, “That's not true and I will not believe it.” So I think we have made the difference too extended in there—and God can, under the accelerating, energizing events of the close of time, he can produce a generation of grown-up Jobs of all ages.

Lou: It strikes me that with the idea of growth, we tend too easily to think of performance. When you have the issues clearly in mind, growth is in terms of trust. And that would happen very quickly if you were willing to examine the evidence, and look at it. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #4 with Lou Venden, “God's Way of Restoring Trust” 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/4MMCAG>

It was there in college that I began trying to read and understand the Bible as a whole. And it helped to have some knowledge of the languages in which it was first written. I soon came to realize that the Bible doesn't always describe sin as just breaking the rules.

In that much-used definition in 1 John 3:4, the Greek word for "transgression of the law" may also be literally translated "lawlessness." This would indicate that sin is first a rebellious attitude or frame of mind, a hostility to God and to his law, that in turn may lead one to commit this or that act of disobedience. The 1989 *New Revised Standard Version* translates, "Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness."

In the introduction to his letter to the believers in Rome, Paul states his conviction that he had been specially commissioned to bring about a new kind of obedience. It was to be different from the kind of obedience he himself had offered before he met Jesus on the Damascus road. It was to be what he calls literally "obedience of faith," "obedience of trust."

"Law-obedience" is what Paul used to practice with such zeal, and he was not at all pleased with the results. It had made him intolerant toward other people, even cruel. "Law-obedience" had actually led him to violate the whole spirit of God's law, the law of love.

By now urging "faith-obedience" or "trust-obedience," is Paul doing away with the law? "By no means!" Paul exclaims. "On the contrary, we uphold the law." (Romans 8:31, NRSV) Phillips interprets, "We put the Law in its proper place."

One proper place for the law has been to serve as "our attendant on the way to Christ." But the ultimate place is the one Jeremiah described. Paul agrees with the prophet. What the law requires may be written on the heart—the place, Paul explains to the Romans, where the conscience is active and people do their thinking. (See Romans 2:15)

"Trust-obedience" is the kind that results from "knowing" God, in the full meaning of that word. It comes from learning the truth about him and his use of law. It is the result of being won back to trust him as a Friend, to admire him for his wise and gracious ways.

This means that the Spirit of Truth has succeeded in writing the law "on our hearts." Now we freely do what the law requires, not because we've been ordered to, but because we're convinced in our own minds that what the law requires is right. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 102-104. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter8.html>

Rote, mechanical, legalistic, unthinking obedience implies a rote, mechanical, unthinking, legalistic, arbitrary God. And those who God chose to be his spokesmen to the world turned out to be the most serious perverters of the truth. To the extent that, when Christ came to set them right and give them a correct picture of God, it was his family, his Sabbath-keeping saints

in the Promised Land, who killed him rather than accept the truth. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Galatians, #3, recorded February, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/3MMGALATIANS66>

Do you know the word “obedience” in the Greek, and one can’t press the etymological meaning of the word too far, means literally “listening under, a humble willingness to listen.” A doorkeeper is called by this word. Now what if you had a doorkeeper who said, “I’m listening, but I don’t intend to carry through with what I hear”? This isn’t just an idle, rude willingness to listen; it’s a *humble* willingness to listen. So when the doorkeeper listens, he hears his master knock, and he proceeds to open the door. Hence the word came to mean “obedience”, but the essence of the word is “a willingness to listen.”

Now does God expect of us perfect performance? He knows better. Can he expect of us perfect willingness to listen? What if we have a twenty five percent reservation here? Then we’re not safe to save. I mean we’ve got a lot of listening to do in the hereafter. So God can demand obedience in this sense, a willingness to listen. And without it he can’t help us. And he says, “All the good things that have come to you have come by hearing; by a willingness to listen, in a mood of trust.” That’s all that is asked. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Galatians, #3, recorded February, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/3MMGALATIANS66>

Some of us believe that this understanding of God’s way of executing his authority and power is far and away the most important of all our Christian beliefs. Every other Christian doctrine derives its importance, and even its meaning, from this central and essential truth about our God. To some of us, the most important information we have to share with our fellow human beings around this planet is this truth about the way God runs his universe and what he wants of his children.

We need to share this more urgently than ever before as we humans, all together, face the closing events of human history. Because before Christ returns, the Bible describes—in fact Jesus describes—a time of confusion and deception such as the world has never seen. All of that will be leading up to Satan’s final attempt to win the whole world to worship him, to trust him. He even asked Jesus to get down on his knees and worship him in the wilderness of temptation. Revelation 13 says that when Satan’s campaign is over, the whole world will be worshipping him, except those few who have not been deceived. So it should not surprise us, if we are as near the end as we believe we are, that we find ourselves surrounded on all sides by conflicting claims to religious authority. Certainly the development of modern media has made

us more aware of this than ever before. As we see and listen to all these conflicting claims, how often they are supported by position, or power, or miracles, or claims of special communications from the Lord.

How Satan would enjoy it if he could turn God's friends on this planet against their heavenly Father!

Or even more seriously, how he would love to deceive God's friends even as they continue professing to be his commandment-keeping people. That would be the most destructive.

No wonder Paul said that we should grow up and not be so easily swayed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4). Again in Hebrews 5 he says we should grow up and have our faculties trained by practice to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong.

Now just as God in many and various ways has sought to reveal to us the truth, so in many and various ways, Satan has sought to keep us from seeing this truth, and coming to know this truth that is so essential. He sought to deceive us into turning against this truth, even as we might be claiming to believe it. That is the perversity of it. Now recall that his special targets are loyal saints. History records that one of his most successful deceptions has been leading God's people into a certain grateful satisfaction that the Lord has blessed us with so much light that we really don't need to pursue it anymore. Not that we would call that pious satisfaction. We would be condemning that as something not to do. We'd rather call this gratitude that God had so favored us with so much truth that we become conservative and seek to discourage even further inquiry and further investigations. Some of you recognize whose words I am quoting there.

Revelation 3 has a most serious message for such falsely secure saints. In Revelation 3:15-1:

I know what you have done [and you have worked very hard]. I know that you are neither cold nor hot. How I wish you were either one or the other! But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold [just reasonably good and contented with your condition], I am going to spit you out of my mouth [the word spit, comes from the Greek *emeo*, from which we get emetic. Your version may say, "I am going to vomit you out of my mouth". We don't make our heavenly Father angry, we make him sick!] You say, "I am rich and well off; I have all I need." But you do not know how miserable and pitiful you are [the Greek word for miserable is worn out from hard work, trying too hard to please the Lord!] You are poor, naked, and blind. (GNB)

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #7, "The Question of Authority" 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/7MMCAG>*

Recommended Listening:

Conversations About God #17 “Satan’s Final Effort To Deceive” is available at:

<http://pkp.cc/17MMCAG>

Conversations About God #7 “The Question Of Authority” is available at:

<http://pkp.cc/7MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

The study of God’s word is continually expanding the mind and strengthening the intellect. There is nothing that will so refine and elevate the character, and give vigor to every faculty, as the continual exercise of the mind to grasp and comprehend weighty and important truths. {4T 545.3}

God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, will quicken all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfill the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. Through a connection with Christ he will have clearer and broader views. His discernment will be more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. He who longs to be of service to Christ is so quickened by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God. {DA 251.1}

As we near the time when principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places will be brought into warfare against the truth, when the deceiving power of Satan will be so great that if it were possible he will deceive the very elect, we must have our discernment sharpened by divine enlightenment, that we may know the Spirit that is of God, that we may not be ignorant of Satan’s devices. {MR311 49.1}

In calling them to His service, God offers them freedom. Obedience to God is liberty from the thralldom of sin, deliverance from human passion and impulse. {TM 247.1}

A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. {ST, July 22, 1897 par. 11}

But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that restraint is removed. God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. {GC 36.1}

No soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. "Man turns from God, not God from him." Our heavenly Father follows us with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. The responsibility rests with the sinner. By resisting the Spirit of God today, he prepares the way for a second resistance of light when it comes with mightier power. Thus he passes on from one stage of resistance to another, until at last the light will fail to impress, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God. {MB 93.1}

Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will; and if by persistent transgression the will itself is wholly bent on evil, and we do not desire to be set free, if we will not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love. {SC 34.2}

Through the Holy Spirit, God's word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver. By implanting in their hearts the principles of His word, the Holy Spirit develops in men the attributes of God. The light of His glory—His character—is to shine forth in His followers. Thus they are to glorify God, to lighten the path to the Bridegroom's home, to the city of God, to the marriage supper of the Lamb. {COL 414.2}

It is the love of God continually transferred to man that enables him to impart light. Into the hearts of all who are united to God by faith the golden oil of love flows freely, to shine out again in good works, in real, heartfelt service for God. {COL 418.5}

In the great and measureless gift of the Holy Spirit are contained all of heaven's resources. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If all were willing to receive, all would become filled with His Spirit. {COL 419.1}

The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ. When Christ reigns in the soul, there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Saviour brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ revealed in the life testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour. {COL 419.6}

As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings. {COL 333.1}

Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed. Goodness, love for our fellow men, becomes our natural instinct. We develop a character which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity. {COL 355.1}