

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2018: *Preparation for the End Time*

Lesson 9 “End-Time Deceptions”

Read for this week’s study

Revelation 2:13, 24; 2 Corinthians 11:13–15; Psalm 146:4; Genesis 1–2:3; Revelation 13:1–17.

Memory Text

“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:9, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Grandest Deception
- III. The Two Great Errors
- IV. The Immortality of the Soul
- V. Sabbath and the Theory of Evolution
- VI. The Counterfeit Trinity
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week, we will look at some of the devil’s most effective deceptions and how we can be protected from them.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “The problem, though, is that many people, Christians included, don’t believe in the great controversy because they don’t believe in Satan. For them, Bible texts talking about Satan or the devil are merely the expressions of a prescientific culture trying to explain evil and suffering in the world. For way too many people the idea of a literal, supernatural entity who has malevolent designs on humanity is the stuff of science fiction.” (Sunday’s lesson)
3. What arguments would you use to demonstrate that Satan is a personal being rather than a metaphor for all the evil in the world? Why does it matter what we believe about this?

4. The lesson identifies Satan's two greatest errors as the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness (GC 588). How would you explain Near Death Experiences (NDEs)?
5. "As Christians, why must we stick to the Word of God, even when our senses tell us something different?" (Tuesday's lesson) To what extent do you agree with this sentence? How do we establish what we believe?
6. We think in models of interpretation, and each model has strengths and weaknesses. If we neglect the hard work of examining our own model, we risk defaulting into a "truth vs. error" mindset, or perhaps resort to conspiracy thinking. Scientists talk about this as "true believer syndrome", the attitude of "don't confuse me with the facts, my mind is already made up." Is this really the sign of a true believer, or do you agree with the scientists that it is a dangerous mode of thinking? Why?
7. What is the connection between the Sabbath and evolution? "Evolution denudes the seventh day of any real importance because it turns the six days of Creation into nothing but a myth similar to the one that says Romulus and Remus were nursed by wolves." (Wednesday's lesson)
8. Thursday's lesson discusses the counterfeit trinity in Revelation 13. "At the end, the land beast performs a counterfeit of Pentecost! For what purpose? To prove to the world that the counterfeit trinity is the true God. What are other end-time deceptions that we need to be aware of, and how can we help others recognize them as deceptions, as well?" (Thursday's lesson)
9. The lesson is about alternate reality, parody and deception. What is it that John wants his readers to wrestle with? If we adopt a simple, definite interpretation too quickly we run the risk of short circuiting the struggle and thus miss the benefits of evaluating the different aspects and working through to an understanding for ourselves. What dilemmas did Christians face during the time of John? Does it matter if...? Does it count as a compromise if...?
10. What choices do we face today, which are not as clear-cut as we would like? How do we in our own times distinguish the reality from the parody? How do we use discernment and act accordingly?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Other saints are in danger of underestimating Satan's ability to deceive and confuse. I have heard many say, "There is no way I could be deceived when Satan comes as Christ in the last days. I have two or three things carefully stored away by which I will test him when he comes." They are such obvious things, that I doubt that the devil will treat us so gently. History is full of warnings of such overconfidence. For example, when Jesus suffered and died, and rose again, Satan knew that the great weight of evidence was against him. Therefore, something must be

done to destroy the evidence. One of his most diabolical successes, very early in the first century, was in leading some to believe that Jesus did not really come in the flesh. He did not really suffer and really die. He had actually faked it all. There goes all the evidence. The group of people who believed that were known as the *Docetists*. It comes from a Greek word that means “it seemed.” They taught that Jesus only seemed to do those things. See how Satan sought to destroy the evidence. Yet this idea was spreading in John’s later years. He warned against the teachers of this heresy. Look at 1 John 4:1, 2:

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God [the Spirit who tells the truth]: every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. (NIV)

You might wonder why he would choose to mention that, except that we know historically that people were going around saying that Jesus had not really come in the flesh. John mentions this in many places. He even writes his whole gospel to show that the one who came was really God. But even before Christ came, Satan was at work to undermine and confuse the evidence by even counterfeiting the first coming of Christ. He accomplished this most notably in what is known as the mystery religions. It is almost unbelievable unless you’ve read about them. Some of these began long before Christ came. The central figure was a dying, rising Saviour who had been supernaturally born, died a cruel and violent death, and then was exalted up to heaven, there to mediate supernatural help to his followers on earth. Later he would return and resurrect them and annihilate all the forces of evil. Does that sound familiar? That isn’t all. In those mystery religions they had Lord Suppers. They had baptism and washing in the blood and many other things I could list if there were time. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #17, “Satan’s Final Effort to Deceive” 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/17MMCAG>*

If you wanted to prove the Trinity, how would you set out to do it? Would you look up the Trinity in the Concordance? Is the word ‘Trinity’ ever in the Bible? No, it’s not in there, anyway. But supposing you wanted to show there are three co-equal, co-divine Persons who are as one. Where would you best start? How about allowing one member of the Godhead to discuss the relationship between himself, and the Father, and the Holy Spirit? “I and the Father are one. And when I go I’ll send another Counselor just like myself to be with you.” And then you look in Hebrews to see the status of the one we call the Son. And God says to the angels, “worship the Son.” And then maybe you go back to Isaiah 9:

Unto us a child is born, to us a son is given; and his name will be called "Almighty God, Everlasting Father, Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace."

And you realize how all the members of the Godhead seem to have the same name, really. They are co-equal and co-eternal. I think it would be good to use the Gospel of John, where at length Jesus talks about his Father, and the Holy Spirit, and how they are as one. And so on, to take our true position on the Trinity. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – 1, 2, 3 John & Jude, recorded August, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/77MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/78MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Faith in a lie will not have a sanctifying influence upon the life or character. No error is truth, or can be made truth by repetition, or by faith in it. Sincerity will never save a soul from the consequences of believing an error. Without sincerity there is no true religion, but sincerity in a false religion will never save a man. I may be perfectly sincere in following a wrong road, but that will not make it the right road, or bring me to the place I wished to reach. The Lord does not want us to have a blind credulity, and call that the faith that sanctifies. The truth is the principle that sanctifies, and therefore it becomes us to know what is truth. We must compare spiritual things with spiritual. We must prove all things, but hold fast only that which is good, that which bears the divine credentials, which lays before us the true motives and principles which should prompt us to action.—Letter 12, 1890. {2SM 56.1}

Satan has ability to suggest doubts and devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue and mark of intelligence in them to be unbelieving and questioning, and quibbling. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and teachable spirit. All should decide from the weight of evidence. {RH, September 16, 1873 par. 10}

Here is a test which all may apply if they will. None need be left in uncertainty and doubt. There is always sufficient evidence upon which to base an intelligent faith. But God will never remove from any man all occasion for doubts. Those who love to dwell in the atmosphere of doubt and questioning unbelief can have the unenviable privilege. He who turns from the weight of evidence because there are a few things that he cannot make plain to his finite understanding, will be left to the cold, chilling atmosphere of unbelief and skepticism, and will make shipwreck of faith. {ST, December 30, 1886 par. 6}

Every individual soul has a responsibility before God, and is not to be arbitrarily instructed by men as to what he shall do, what he shall say, and where he shall go. We are not to put confidence in the counsel of men and assent to all they shall say unless we have evidence that they are under the influence of the Spirit of God. {RH, July 1, 1909 par. 4}

He maintained his disguise till he had interpreted the Scriptures, and had led them to an intelligent faith in his life, his character, his mission to earth, and his death and resurrection. He wished the truth to take firm root in their minds, not because it was supported by his personal testimony, but because the typical law, and the prophets of the Old Testament, agreeing with the facts of his life and death, presented unquestionable evidence of that truth. When the object of his labors with the two disciples was gained, he revealed himself to them that their joy might be full, and then vanished from their sight. {3SP 214.2}

I am afraid of anything that would have a tendency to turn the mind away from the solid evidences of the truth as revealed in God's Word. I am afraid of it; I am afraid of it. We must bring our minds within the bounds of reason, lest the enemy so come in as to set everything in a disorderly way. {3SM 373.2}

The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true, that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested. {4SP 411.1}

We must study the truth for ourselves. No man should be relied upon to think for us. No matter who he is, or in what position he may be placed, we are not to look upon any man as a criterion for us. We are to counsel together, and to be subject one to another; but at the same time we are to exercise the ability God has given us, in order to learn what is truth. Each one of us must look to God for divine enlightenment. We must individually develop a character that will stand the test in the day of God. {TM 109.4}

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought. . . . Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act, men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions. {Ed 17.2}

Those who have not been in the habit of searching the Bible for themselves, or weighing evidence, have confidence in the leading men and accept the decisions they make; and thus

many will reject the very messages God sends to His people, if these leading brethren do not accept them. {TM 106.4}

God permitted Satan to carry forward his work until the spirit of disaffection ripened into active revolt. It was necessary for his plans to be fully developed, that their true nature and tendency might be seen by all. Lucifer, as the anointed cherub, had been highly exalted; he was greatly loved by the heavenly beings, and his influence over them was strong. God's government included not only the inhabitants of heaven, but of all the worlds that He had created; and Lucifer had concluded that if he could carry the angels of heaven with him in rebellion, he could carry also all the worlds. He had artfully presented his side of the question, employing sophistry and fraud to secure his objects. His power to deceive was very great. By disguising himself in a cloak of falsehood, he had gained an advantage. All his acts were so clothed with mystery that it was difficult to disclose to the angels the true nature of his work. Until fully developed, it could not be made to appear the evil thing it was; his disaffection would not be seen to be rebellion. Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character or see to what his work was leading. {PP 41.2}

Lucifer had at first so conducted his temptations that he himself stood uncommitted. The angels whom he could not bring fully to his side, he accused of indifference to the interests of heavenly beings. The very work which he himself was doing, he charged upon the loyal angels. It was his policy to perplex with subtle arguments concerning the purposes of God. Everything that was simple he shrouded in mystery, and by artful perversion cast doubt upon the plainest statements of Jehovah. And his high position, so closely connected with the divine government, gave greater force to his representations. {PP 41.3}

With the earliest history of man, Satan began his efforts to deceive our race. He who had incited rebellion in heaven desired to bring the inhabitants of the earth to unite with him in his warfare against the government of God. Adam and Eve had been perfectly happy in obedience to the law of God, and this fact was a constant testimony against the claim which Satan had urged in heaven, that God's law was oppressive and opposed to the good of His creatures. And furthermore, Satan's envy was excited as he looked upon the beautiful home prepared for the sinless pair. He determined to cause their fall, that, having separated them from God and brought them under his own power, he might gain possession of the earth and here establish his kingdom in opposition to the Most High. {GC 531.1}

Had Satan revealed himself in his real character, he would have been repulsed at once, for Adam and Eve had been warned against this dangerous foe; but he worked in the dark, concealing his purpose, that he might more effectually accomplish his object. {GC 531.2}

As we near the end of time, falsehood will be so mingled with truth, that only those who have the guidance of the Holy Spirit will be able to distinguish truth from error. We need to make

every effort to keep the way of the Lord. We must in no case turn from His guidance to put our trust in man. The Lord's angels are appointed to keep strict watch over those who put their faith in the Lord, and these angels are to be our special help in every time of need. Every day we are to come to the Lord with full assurance of faith, and to look to Him for wisdom. . . . Those who are guided by the Word of the Lord will discern with certainty between falsehood and truth, between sin and righteousness (MS 43, 1907). {7BC 907.1}

Satan's policy in this final conflict with God's people is the same that he employed in the opening of the great controversy in heaven. He professed to be seeking to promote the stability of the divine government, while secretly bending every effort to secure its overthrow. And the very work which he was thus endeavoring to accomplish he charged upon the loyal angels. {GC 591.1}

God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan's constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty. Through fear or force he endeavors to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself. To accomplish this, he works through both religious and secular authorities, moving them to the enforcement of human laws in defiance of the law of God. {GC 591.2}

There is one safeguard against Satan's deceptions and snares, that is the truth as it is in Jesus. The truth planted in the heart, nourished by watchfulness and prayer, nourished by the grace of Christ, will give us discernment. The truth must abide in the heart, be felt in its power in spite of all the alluring enchantments of Satan, and your experience and mine must be that the truth can purify, guide, and bless the soul. . . . {TMK 301.4}

He will reveal to us as much of His purposes as it is for our good to know, and beyond that we must trust the Hand that is omnipotent, the Heart that is full of love. {GC 527.1}

Satan can present a counterfeit so closely resembling the truth that it deceives those who are willing to be deceived, who desire to shun the self-denial and sacrifice demanded by the truth; but it is impossible for him to hold under his power one soul who honestly desires, at whatever cost, to know the truth. Christ is the truth and the "Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John 1:9. The Spirit of truth has been sent to guide men into all truth. And upon the authority of the Son of God it is declared: "Seek, and ye shall find." "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." Matthew 7:7; John 7:17. {GC 528.2}

Neither wicked men nor devils can hinder the work of God, or shut out His presence from His people, if they will, with subdued, contrite hearts, confess and put away their sins, and in faith claim His promises. Every temptation, every opposing influence, whether open or secret, may be successfully resisted, "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Zechariah 4:6. {GC 529.1}

Satan is well aware that the weakest soul who abides in Christ is more than a match for the hosts of darkness, and that, should he reveal himself openly, he would be met and resisted. Therefore he seeks to draw away the soldiers of the cross from their strong fortification, while he lies in ambush with his forces, ready to destroy all who venture upon his ground. Only in humble reliance upon God, and obedience to all His commandments, can we be secure. {GC 530.1}

It is beyond the power of the human mind to estimate the evil which has been wrought by the heresy of eternal torment. The religion of the Bible, full of love and goodness, and abounding in compassion, is darkened by superstition and clothed with terror. When we consider in what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, can we wonder that our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, and even hated? The appalling views of God which have spread over the world from the teachings of the pulpit have made thousands, yes, millions, of skeptics and infidels. {GC88 536.2}

The reason why it seems so difficult to win souls for Christ, is that Satan is continually engaged in misrepresenting the character of God to the human mind. Christ came to reveal the Father to the world in his true character, that the false conceptions which men entertained of the divine character might be swept away. {RH, May 31, 1892 par. 9}

The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds. Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same—a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will. To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin. {Ed 99.2}

No intangible principle, no impersonal essence or mere abstraction, can satisfy the needs and longings of human beings in this life of struggle with sin and sorrow and pain. It is not enough to believe in law and force, in things that have no pity, and never hear the cry for help. We need to know of an almighty arm that will hold us up, of an infinite Friend that pities us. We need to clasp a hand that is warm, to trust in a heart full of tenderness. And even so God has in His word revealed Himself. {Ed 133.1}