

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2018: *Preparation for the End Time*

Lesson 10 “America and Babylon”

Read for this week’s study

Revelation 13:1–12; 14:9–11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4; Jeremiah 51:6, 7, 53, 57; Revelation 18:1–4.

Memory Text

“ ‘At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book’ ” (Daniel 12:1, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Deadly Wound Healed
- III. The United States in Prophecy
- IV. An Issue of Worship
- V. “Babylon the Great”
- VI. Come Out of Her, My People
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “Last week we looked at ‘the counterfeit trinity,’ Satan (the dragon) and two earthly powers that together will bring persecution against God’s people. This week we will focus mostly on Revelation 13 and the events and powers portrayed in it, as always asking the questions: What do these events mean, and how can we be prepared for them?” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Jesus repeatedly tells his disciples: “I am telling you now, before it happens, so that when it happens, you will believe that I am the Messiah.” (John 13:19; 14:29; cf. 16:4) It is clear that the purpose of prophecy is not to satisfy our curiosity about the future, but to help us to prepare. We will not be able to truly understand the details of any prophecy before it is fulfilled.
3. A cursory reading of the lesson outline shows the Study Guide’s intended meaning and interpretation. But Revelation 13:8-10 shows what the Biblical writer wants his

readers to wrestle with. Some people are going to be deceived, some are going to be taken captive, some are going to be killed with the sword... How do you respond when such things are happening?

4. We are encouraged to hold firm with patience and faith. The Kingdom of God will be established, dark monsters and even the dragon himself will lose the last remains of his power. We have yet to see how this is going to be worked out, but again, as in chapter 11 we learn that it is through the Lamb's uncompromising, faithful witness that the victory is won.
5. Sin moves from the individual to society; from the Garden of Eden to the entire globe. It moves from individual people, from interpersonal conflict to create for itself a global empire that is in defiance to God. Thus Babylon (Genesis 11; Daniel 3) and Egypt (Exodus 1) become symbols of an anti-kingdom, an empire which is in direct opposition to the values of God's kingdom. Sin, violence and evil become systemic and embedded in the structures of the empire.
6. What is God's response to this development (Genesis 12; Exodus 3-15)? Are the alternative structures and community that God puts in place immune from the "empire building" tendencies that perpetuate power and violence (see Revelation 12 cf. 17)?
7. The conflict in Revelation 12-14 centers on worship. What is so fundamental about worshiping God and crucial about how we do it? How can worship play such an important role in the eschatological crisis (Revelation 13)?
8. What does it mean to "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:1-4)? What is the significance of the fact that God's people are in Babylon? What are the consequences of using religion for exclusivist purposes and seeing ourselves as the only true and faithful ones?
9. Scientists say measuring intelligence is rather complicated and multi-faceted. That's why they came up with an IQ number – Intelligence Quotient. Similarly, we could say, Babylon is a way of thinking. What is your BQ [Babylonian quotient]?
10. What kind of community is God looking for today? Are we in danger of using "Babylonian" and "Egyptian" methods to achieve divine goals? Why is true worship of God so crucial in His bringing the history of humankind to completion?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

I'm not so worried about the beast as I am about the dragon who gives his power to the beast—the one who is behind all the heads. Sometimes we act as if one of the heads is our great enemy. On the contrary. The devil has worked through every false religious system. And it is significant to note that every false religious system has a substitute for the Son of God in one form or another. In the mystery religions that were popular in the days of these early Christians

who were hearing this, there were dying, rising saviors who counterfeited the true Christ. So this substituting for the Son of God has gone on from the very beginning. It began up in Heaven when Lucifer wished to take the place of the other 'Lucifer' in the respect and reverence of the angels.

So if you prefer his side, and you are distinguished in some way as preferring that side; your faith is in him and your loyalty is to him, and you prefer his way of doing things, this is what will happen to you. You will drink the wine of God's wrath. But we've been prepared for wrath for sixty-five books. What is the meaning of God's wrath? In Hosea 11, in Romans 1, specifically in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28, God's wrath is explained. He is the Father of the people he is about to give up. So how does he feel? He sadly turns away in loving disappointment from those who prefer the other side. Think of preferring the leadership of the one who led in the torture of the Son of God. But these people prefer his way of doing things. What would God do to those who would rather worship the deceiver than the infinitely trustworthy one? Does he beat them up, or does he give them up? Remember Hosea 11, where God cries, "How can I give you up, how can I let you go?" We know that is the meaning of God's wrath. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Revelation, recorded August, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*
<http://pkp.cc/79MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/80MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Revelation is an example, reading from beginning to end, there has been a war. God has won that war and up there they are celebrating. And what are we doing down here? Well, he is waiting for us to make up our minds so we'll be settled enough not to be shaken by the closing events. We also will be able to represent the truth about God to the rest of the world and the end will come. That seems to come through clearly. And the early Christians would say, "I guess we're not ready. We are not giving the gospel to all the world and maybe that's because we are not settled into the truth. Could that be?" And then they would read the Laodicean message which has the Laodiceans saying we are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. That doesn't mean we are overpaid. Nobody would say that. What did they lack? What were they told to go and buy? Faith, love, righteousness, and spiritual insight. Do we lack that to this day? Did the early Christians lack that?

I think that it is in these terms that understanding the book of Revelation could influence the kind of people we are. And if the book doesn't do that then what is the use of working out the schedule? Nobody is saved because he has the right schedule. You can have the right schedule and miss the bus. Have you ever done it? So just having a chart with all these details worked out will not get us into the kingdom. You might have the wrong schedule and still get onto the

right bus. That would be the most important thing. So I love her definition of sealing. It's typical of her that it would make such good sense:

To receive the seal of God does not mean to receive any sign or mark that can be seen. It means rather to be so settled into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, that one cannot be moved.

She says as soon as God's people are settled, then indeed the shaking time will come.

COMMENT: The controversy is directly over the character of God. In Revelation 13 the beast says you will worship me or I'll kill you, and he is the one who is claiming to be God. And people who think God is like that will go along with him and have no problem with that at all. This is in stark contrast to Revelation 3 where it says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock."

Graham: That's an excellent passage to put with it: "Behold I stand at the door and knock."

It becomes particularly clear if you take the Gospel of John which John also wrote. And here's God in person on this planet. Look how he behaved. He was so gentle hardly anybody respected him. That is the way he is. Does that sound like the adversary? Just the opposite. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Revelation, recorded August, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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I believe that in the end the Sabbath will—if it is meaningfully, not arbitrarily, but thoughtfully kept with respect to its many and valuable meanings—it will represent the position we've taken in the great controversy and it will be testimony to ourselves, to our fellow believers, to our neighbors, to God, and to the universe, as to where we stand in the great controversy.

Keeping the Sabbath means we accept as true what God said about himself during creation week and in the Exodus and during crucifixion week and many other things that the Sabbath is tied to in the Bible. Our Sabbath keeping then means we believe God is like this. And in that day, when the issues are that clearly seen, the preference for something else would represent a preference for somebody else—the one who has sought to take his place. The one who in all the verses we mentioned earlier said, "I will be like the Most High." The one who uses other methods and is not respectful of freedom, much as he claims to be. Then and only then would the observance of another day mean a rejection of the truth about our God. Only then could you say this is the seal of God and this is the "mark of the beast".

So we should not go around now looking at our good Sunday-keeping friends saying you have the mark of the beast. Look at us; we have the seal of God. There are folks sitting front row center in Sabbath School who if it could be seen, are getting a little more settled into the

condition that will sometime bear the mark of the beast. And there are saints sitting in Sunday School whose state of mind is such that they are closer to having the seal of God. We are not supposed to try to read that kind of thing at all. So I think we should be very careful lest we oversimplify this.

The thing that the Sabbath stands for is not something that we can read superficially, it is an inner conviction, it is truth in the inner man, it is being settled in the great controversy about our God and how can you go around and read that in somebody's heart? Only God knows who are really his. However it does have a way of showing. It is a law we become like the person we worship and admire. If God will not use force, the devil will. A religion that is willing to use force is hardly God's religion. And yet the worst persecutions in history have been in the name of religion. And yet in these modern days there are very subtle ways of using force. There are ways of preaching, there are ways of using, I think, music, there are all kinds of ways other than the persuasiveness of evidence and truth, and they are all the devil's substitutes. So when I see somebody who seems to have unreserved respect for truth and evidence and is willing to accept correction and follow the evidence wherever it may lead and he is very respectful of those who disagree, I feel that he is moved by the same spirit that inspired the prophets. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Revelation, recorded August, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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Paul says in Romans that there are Gentiles who know nothing about the Bible, who know nothing about God's law and instructions. But they do by nature the things that the law requires, and they show that the law has been written on their hearts. And I love the paragraph that is familiar to us both, that says even among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly; those to whom the message was never brought by human instrumentality, but they've heard the voice of God speaking to them in nature. And they've done the things that the law requires, which is love. And they're recognized as God's children. Anybody on this planet who is sincerely and humbly willing to listen; God is not going to abandon that person, and leave him in the dark.

Now it's a great privilege to be the one who gets there with the good news, but sometimes somebody else gets there first. Think of missionaries who have been shipwrecked on the reef as they're about to arrive on an island to somehow "turn those cannibals into Christians."

And as they're drowning out there, here come these cannibals paddling their canoe. And they say farewell to each other; they know what's going to happen shortly. But instead, the cannibals put them in their canoe and take them to the beach and revive them. And finally

when they're comfortable, the missionary says, "Now let us assemble these people and give them the truth." And he starts to preach to them about love.

His missionary wife nudges him and says, "Wait a minute. These people risked their lives to rescue us from the reef!"

The minister says, "But nobody's preached to them yet."

Well, remember Romans 2: "The Spirit of God in many and various ways has approached people." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #2, "What Went Wrong in God's Universe?" 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/2MMCAG>

I believe that to be afraid of God is to misunderstand, even to deny, what he paid such a price to reveal. Though God is infinite in majesty and power, he values nothing higher than the freedom of his intelligent creatures; that their love, their worship, their trust, their willingness to listen may be freely given. I understand that God desires our trust to be freely given, not because he simply prefers it that way, as any parent would, but he knows that if our love and trust are not freely given, then there really is no freedom in his family. And God would rather die than preside over a universe that is not free.

Besides, he also knows, as he sought to explain to us at such cost, that the obedience that springs from fear will actually turn his children into rebels. Rebelliousness is the very essence of sin. God sent his Son to deal with sin. He sent his Son to do away with sin, you recall, in Romans 8. But in order to do away with rebelliousness and distrust, first he must do away with fear, because it is fear that has turned so many away from God. It is fear that has inspired rebelliousness even in the hearts of those who seek to obey him, but do not know him well. As I understand it from our discussion last time, God gave his life to make it eternally clear that there is no need for his children to be afraid of him. Surely a God who would go to such lengths to indicate that though he is infinite in power there is no need for us to be afraid, surely that God is worthy of our love, our reverence, our worship, and our willingness to listen and obey.

Now, if God really were the kind of person his enemies have made him out to be—arbitrary, vengeful, and severe—then obviously there would be no freedom under such a government. Any professions of love and trust on our part would be tarnished and compromised with our fears. How could God be satisfied with expressions of love from children who are afraid? Would you parents be satisfied from such expressions of love from your own children? But no wonder

so many millions have turned away from God, when you consider Satan's perversion of the truth in this matter.

Further Study with Ellen White

All these heavenly beings have one object above all others, in which they are intensely interested—His church in a world of corruption. All these armies are in the service of the Prince of heaven, exalting the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. They are working for Christ under His commission, to save to the uttermost all who look to Him and believe in Him. These heavenly intelligences are speeding on their mission, doing for Christ that which Herod and Pilate did against Him. They confederate together to uphold the honor and glory of God. They are united in a holy alliance, in a grand and sublime unity of purpose, to show forth the power and compassion and love and glory of the crucified and risen Saviour. {7BC 968.1}

In their service, these armies of heaven illustrate what the church of God should be. Christ is working in their behalf in the heavenly courts, sending out His messengers to all parts of the globe, to the assistance of every suffering one who looks to Him for relief, for spiritual life and knowledge. {7BC 968.2}

Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness, and alienation from God, that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ's true followers are still to be found in their communion. {GC88 390.1}

Christ has made every provision that His church shall be a transformed body, illumined with the Light of the world, possessing the glory of Immanuel. It is His purpose that every Christian shall be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. He desires that we shall reveal His own joy in our lives. {PK 720.1}

In the truths of His word, God has given to men a revelation of Himself; and to all who accept them they are a shield against the deceptions of Satan. {GC 465.1}