

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2018: *Preparation for the End Time*
Lesson 11 “God’s Seal or the Beast’s Mark?”

Read for this week’s study

Genesis 17:9–11; Exodus 31:13, 17; Revelation 13:17; Ephesians 1:13, 14; Hebrews 4:9, 10.

Memory Text

“Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints” (Revelation 15:3).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. God’s Sign Identifying His People
- III. The Beast and False Worship
- IV. The Seal of God
- V. The Mark of the Beast
- VI. The Sabbath as the Seal
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “Many confusing ideas as to what this mark of the beast is have been suggested over the years: a bar code in the forehead, a credit card number, or some biometric identification. We should not be surprised at the proliferation of confusing ideas in Babylon. After all, its name means ‘confusion.’ But God’s remnant people need a clear understanding of this topic in order to proclaim the third angel’s message with power. This week, we’ll try to understand better what the mark of the beast is and how to avoid it—by receiving the seal of God.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Revelation 13:16 speaks about the mark of the beast which is contrasted with the seal of God (14:1). Both symbols reflect people who are committed to the God they worship. How is this related to the parable of the last judgment in Matthew 25?
3. Circumcision and Sabbath are in some sense similar and some sense different (Monday’s lesson). What arguments could be used to show that they are not in the same category (belonging to the cultural signs of the Old Testament covenant)?

4. The sea beast requires worship (Revelation 13:15) which clearly breaks the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." The land beast sets up an image of the sea beast and breathes power into it, so that all people worship it (13:14.15). This clearly breaks the second commandment, "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything... You shall not bow down to them or worship them..."
5. The sea beast utters proud words and blasphemies against God and his sanctuary (13:5.6), clearly breaking the third commandment, "You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God..." (NRSV). Therefore, this is not an accidental slip-up, but rather an intentional violation of the commandments that address our relationship with God as written on the first table of the Decalogue.
6. "The seal of God is a sign of God's ownership and protection of His people. Paul describes a sealing in connection with conversion and reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit. He calls this gift a 'deposit' or 'down payment' given to all believers as an assurance of the complete redemption and future inheritance they will receive when Jesus comes." (Tuesday's lesson; cf. Ephesians 1:13, 14; 4:30; 2 Timothy 2:19) What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our religious experience?
7. What is the significance of the fact that God's seal is received on the forehead (14:1), while the mark of the beast is received either on the forehead or on the right hand (13:16)? Note also, that the beast uses economic sanctions and death decrees to achieve its goals (13:17).
8. To understand and apply this properly, once again, we need to ask what the author wants his readers to wrestle with. Worshiping or not worshiping Caesar quickly became the dividing line between first century people who were accepted in the local community and those who weren't. So the early Christians faced a stark alternative: stay true to the Lamb and risk losing your livelihood, the ability to buy or sell; or capitulate to the beast, sacrifice to Caesar and all would be well, except for losing your integrity as a follower of the Lamb.
9. Those who crucified Christ kept the Sabbath. Just as keeping the Sabbath *per se* does not make anyone a genuine Christian, keeping Sunday *per se* does not make one a "lost case". What is the real issue behind this? To what extent have we been deceived by counterfeits posing as the real thing? How do we approach that difficult task of searching our conscience and society with our eyes open and asking the hard questions?
10. In each era Satan offers his alternative to God's true goods. The alternative is a fake, but so close to the real thing that it is highly deceptive. We know that certain things will be understood only "when they happen" (John 13:19; 14:29). How does knowing God's character help us to stay close to Him and recognize the deceptions that engulf us in our times?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

The sealing is mentioned first in Revelation, then the mark of the beast. I think the mark of the beast, really a symbol of loyalty to the opposition, should be compared with the symbol of loyalty to God. **I believe that to receive the seal of God is to be so settled into the truth both intellectually and spiritually that one cannot be moved. I believe that to receive the “mark of the beast” is to be settled into the lie. There are Scriptures that talk about the Lie, preferring Satan’s lies to the truth—you’ve substituted his lies for the truth. I believe to receive the mark of the beast is to be so settled into Satan’s false picture of God that not even the Spirit of God could move us. We cannot be moved. So in essence, the seal or the mark represents an inner decision and commitment for eternity with respect to God.**

Lou: For those of us who have roots in Seventh-day Adventism, for example, the seal of God has been tied very closely to the Sabbath. In fact, I thought we had referred to the Sabbath as the seal of God in itself. But I hear you making a distinction there.

Graham: Well, one has to stop and realize that the people who crucified Christ kept the seventh-day Sabbath scrupulously; very, very carefully. Did they have the seal of God? They certainly were not settled into the truth about God. When Jesus brought the truth about God, they said he had a devil, and they killed him to silence his witness. On the other hand though, you remember the evening we talked about how the Sabbath sums up the good news about our God? I believe that the knowing, meaningful, intelligent, thoughtful observance of the seventh day—as a reminder of all these great demonstrations of the truth about our God, could be an outward expression of an inward conviction and a “settling into” this truth about our God. The seventh-day Sabbath beautifully fits this mark of identification of those who are committed to the truth about God.

Lou: So it has something to do with very deep understanding and experience.

Graham: Yes. That’s why you can see, when the chips are down, when the issues in the great controversy are clearly seen, it’s conceivable that the preference for a substitute Sabbath could suggest preference for, even faith in, the substitute for the Son of God; the one who said, “I will be like the Most High.” The one who said to Christ, “Worship me.” But not until then. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #10 with Lou Venden, “The Reminder of the Evidence” recorded March, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/10MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ's Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven. {SC 73.1}

The new birth consists in having new motives, new tastes, new tendencies. Those who are begotten unto a new life by the Holy Spirit, have become partakers of the divine nature, and in all their habits and practices they will give evidence of their relationship to Christ. (RH April 12, 1892). {6BC 1101.1}

When by the Holy Spirit divine truths are impressed upon the heart, new conceptions are awakened, and the energies hitherto dormant are aroused to co-operate with God. {AA 520.1}

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}

The new birth consists in having new motives, new tastes, new tendencies. Those who are begotten unto a new life by the Holy Spirit have become partakers of the divine nature, and in all their habits and practices, they will give evidence of their relationship to Christ. . . . {LHU 123.4}

The command, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," would never have been given if every provision had not been made whereby we may become as perfect in our sphere as God is in His. We are to be ever advancing from light to a greater light, holding fast what we have already received, and praying for more. Thus we shall never be left in darkness (*Review and Herald*, Apr. 12, 1892). {LHU 123.5}

When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—A changed life. {MYP 72.1}

When a man turns away from human imperfections, and beholds Jesus, a divine transformation takes place in his character. He fixes his eye upon Christ as on a mirror which reflects the glory of God, and by beholding, he becomes "changed into the same image, from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). {TDG 46.3}

The Spirit of Christ, working upon the heart conforms it to His image; for Christ is the model upon which the Spirit works. By the ministry of His Word, by His providences, by His inward working, God stamps the likeness of Christ upon the soul. {TDG 46.5}

The grace of Christ is essential every day, every hour. Unless it is with us continually, the inconsistencies of the natural heart will appear and the life will present a divided service. The character is to be full of grace and truth. Wherever the religion of Christ works, it will brighten

and sweeten every detail of life with more than an earthly joy and a higher than earthly peace (Letter 2a, 1892). {6BC 1117.15}

There every power will be developed, every capability increased. The grandest enterprises will be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations will be reached, the highest ambitions realized. And there will appear new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects of study to call forth the powers of body and mind and soul. {ML 358.5}

God saw that a Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise. He needed to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God and meditate upon His power and goodness. He needed a Sabbath to remind him more vividly of God and to awaken gratitude because all that he enjoyed and possessed came from the beneficent hand of the Creator. {PP 48.2}

The Sabbath calls our thoughts to nature, and brings us into communion with the Creator. In the song of the bird, the sighing of the trees, and the music of the sea, we still may hear His voice who talked with Adam in Eden in the cool of the day. And as we behold His power in nature we find comfort, for the word that created all things is that which speaks life to the soul. He “who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:6. {DA 281.4}

To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ’s creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him. The Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Saviour. And every object in nature repeats His invitation, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28. {DA 289.1}