

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2020: *Daniel*

Lesson 4 “From Furnace to Palace”

Read for this week’s study

Daniel 3; Revelation 13:11–18; Exodus 20:3–6; Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 15:12–26; Hebrews 11.

Memory Text

“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king” (Daniel 3:17, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Golden Image
- III. The Call to Worship
- IV. The Test of Fire
- V. The Fourth Man
- VI. The Secret of Such a Faith
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “While facing the threat of death because of the issue of worship might seem a thing of some pre-scientific and superstitious age, Scripture reveals that at the end of time, when the world has greatly ‘advanced,’ something similar will unfold, but on a worldwide scale. Thus, from the study of this story, we get insights into the issues that, according to Scripture, God’s faithful will face.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. While certainly it is profitable to read the story this way and draw such lessons from it, what are the dangers of reading it **only** through this lens? What are we perhaps missing that the original readers were intended to see?
3. In Daniel 3, king Nebuchadnezzar seems to believe that size will achieve his goal: so he builds a colossal statue made entirely of gold. At 90 feet (27 meters) high and 9 feet (2.7 meters) wide, the **size** of the idol matches Nebuchadnezzar’s pride. Do we see trust in size in our society and our church today?
4. What is the significance of the repetitions in Daniel 3 (seven groups of people, seven types of musical instruments)? Why is the whole machinery of the state assembled

to deliver a uniform response? Obviously, Nebuchadnezzar believed that **power** would achieve his goal. Do we see trust in power in our society and church today? Why was Nebuchadnezzar so set on compliance?

5. There are always those who like to point out non-compliance to people in power: “they do not serve the gods of Babylon, worship the golden image, yet *you* put them in charge...” (3:12) Why did Nebuchadnezzar believe that **conformity** would achieve his aim—everyone must express obedience and loyalty in the same way, with no exception? Is there a temptation to enforce conformity in today’s society and church?
6. We all love happy endings. What is the significance of the response of the three men: “But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we will not...” (3:18)?
7. “Those men surely [knew] the experience of Isaiah and Zechariah, who [were] put to death by impious kings. All through sacred history, even to our day, faithful Christians have endured terrible suffering that ended for them, at least here, not in a miraculous deliverance but in a painful death.” (Wednesday’s lesson) What is the significance of the fourth man in the fire? What role does “deliverance” play in the book of Daniel?
8. How do you measure faith (Hebrews 11)? What are the results of comparing ourselves with others (Abel & Enoch)?
9. Most humans prefer power to truth. We spend far more time and effort on trying to control the world (and the people in it) than on trying to understand them. Sadly, even when we try to understand the world, we usually do so in the hope that understanding will make it easier to control. And this is a problem not only in the political realm, but in the religious realm too!
10. How do we make sure that our response as believers is not based on size, power or conformity?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

And then the burning fiery furnace and the threat, in 3:5, 6. Let’s start, say, with 4: “The herald proclaimed aloud, ‘You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the music, you are to fall down and worship.’” And verse 6: “whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.”

What kind of evangelism is that? Here’s the picture of god, the image, and if you don’t get down and worship, you will be thrown into the burning fiery furnace. Has that method been pursued through the years? Have Christians ever used that method? Think of all the people who were tied to the stake, and they were threatened that if they didn’t accept the religion that was being represented, they were to be burned. Even Paul used that method, didn’t he,

when he went out with fury to persecute and imprison the Christians? You see, many people have thought that the all-powerful God would appreciate this kind of firm, authoritative evangelism. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Daniel, recorded February, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/39MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/40MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

When you consider Satan’s picture of God and his threats to his children, the adversary has made God look even more cruel than old King Nebuchadnezzar and his burning fiery furnace. You recall how in the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar built that very large idol and he issued an order that everyone was to get down on his knees at the given signal and worship his god. Anyone who refused to worship the image was to be thrown into the burning fiery furnace. You remember what happened to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. We recoil in horror at such cruel tyranny. “You either submit to my god or I will throw you into the burning fiery furnace!” And yet somehow, many of us find it possible to accept a God who is described as doing the very same thing. Would that God say to us, “On your knees, worship me, or I’ll throw you into the burning fiery furnace”? But it is even worse than that. God does not want what Nebuchadnezzar was willing to settle for. Nebuchadnezzar simply demanded submission: “on your knees.” God asks for our love and our trust. Then he is caricatured as saying, “But if you will not love and trust me, then I will throw you into the burning fiery furnace. And I won’t burn you as briefly as Nebuchadnezzar did. I will burn you forever and forever.” Does it make sense? Is it acceptable? I love Ellen White’s words. “Such thoughts destroy human reason.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #9, “There is no Need to be Afraid of God” 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/9MMCAG>*

How you define faith and trust enters into this. And we need to read other places. To me, faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well known; and we get to know him through the gospel. The good news is about God, that he is infinitely worthy of our trust. It implies an attitude toward God of love, and trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in God, based upon the more than adequate evidence, all summed up in the good news, to be willing to believe what God says—as soon as we’re sure *he* said it! And to accept what God offers, as soon as we’re sure *he’s* offering it, and to do whatever God wishes, without reservation, as soon as we’re sure *he’s* asking us, and not somebody else. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians,

recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

Lou: In our Bible reference sheet we have the passage regarding Abraham, and James' reference to that. Abraham is referred to as a "man of faith." Couldn't you call it "blind faith" when Abraham set out to obey God—when God said, "Take your son. I want you to bring him and to offer him as a sacrifice"?

Graham: This is very similar to the example you just gave. We were not there at Creation to see. We do have confidence in the biblical record because it has proved in so many other ways to be trustworthy. Abraham's relationship with God—why, they were two of the best friends in all history! Abraham knew God well. He had had long experience with God. When God asked him to do things before, it had always worked out well and it made sense. So there was no *blind* faith on Abraham's part. God asked him to do something that puzzled him a great deal. At the moment he couldn't understand. But he said, "God, if it is you saying it (and I know you so well) I know this will make sense and there will be some solution, so I'm on my way." This kind of faith is saying, "God, I'm on my way, but may I ask you why?" And so on the way, he asked why. And as he thought it through, he thought, the one who gave me this son miraculously is well able to resurrect my son. Or maybe he will provide a substitute. And Hebrews says he was right. So instead of that being blind faith, I would say he knew God well enough to go—and to know that there would be a solution that would make sense. And so it did.

Lou: But there was in that experience an element of uncertainty. That is to say, how will it work out? There was pain, certainly.

Graham: He wondered.

Lou: Yes. So faith can include that kind of thing.

Graham: Because God is so trustworthy, we are willing to obey him when he asks us to do something beyond our present understanding. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3 with Lou Venden, "All God Asks is Trust" 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/3MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

It was right for the king to make public confession, and to seek to exalt the God of heaven above all other gods; but in endeavoring to force his subjects to make a similar confession of faith and to show similar reverence, Nebuchadnezzar was exceeding his right as a temporal sovereign. He had no more right, either civil or moral, to threaten men with death for not

worshiping God, than he had to make the decree consigning to the flames all who refused to worship the golden image. God never compels the obedience of man. He leaves all free to choose whom they will serve. {PK 510.4}

We shall meet with opposition of every description, as did the builders of the walls of Jerusalem; but if we watch and pray, and work as they did, God will fight our battles for us, and give us precious victories (RH July 6, 1886). {3BC 1138.2}

He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God's saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a "God of gods," able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him. {CC 252.5}

It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell. If occupied with commonplace matters only, it will become dwarfed and enfeebled. If never required to grapple with difficult problems, it will after a time almost lose the power of growth. {PP 596.2}

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures. {COL 60.1}

As the mind dwells upon Christ, the character is molded after the divine similitude. The thoughts are pervaded with a sense of His goodness, His love. We contemplate His character, and thus He is in all our thoughts. His love encloses us. If we gaze even a moment upon the sun in its meridian glory, when we turn away our eyes the image of the sun will appear in everything upon which we look. {RC 310.4}

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature, that by beholding, we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward. {GC 555.1}

Men put God out of their knowledge and worshiped the creatures of their own imagination; and as the result, they became more and more debased. The psalmist describes the effect produced upon the worshiper by the adoration of idols. He says, "They that make them are like

unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.” Psalm 115:8. It is a law of the human mind that by beholding we become changed. Man will rise no higher than his conceptions of truth, purity, and holiness. If the mind is never exalted above the level of humanity, if it is not uplifted by faith to contemplate infinite wisdom and love, the man will be constantly sinking lower and lower. The worshipers of false gods clothed their deities with human attributes and passions, and thus their standard of character was degraded to the likeness of sinful humanity. They were defiled in consequence. “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . . The earth also was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence.” God had given men His commandments as a rule of life, but His law was transgressed, and every conceivable sin was the result. The wickedness of men was open and daring, justice was trampled in the dust, and the cries of the oppressed reached unto heaven. {PP 91.2}

Amid the perplexities that will press upon the soul, there is only One who can help us out of all our difficulties, and relieve all our disquietude. We are to cast all our care upon Jesus, and bear in mind that He is present, and is directing us to commune with Him. We are to keep our minds stayed upon God; and in our weakness, He will be our strength; in our ignorance, He will be our wisdom; in our frailty, He will be our enduring might. {SD 27.2}

We may be assured that we need not go into the heavens to bring Jesus down to us, neither into the deep to bring Him up; for He is at our right hand, and His eye is ever upon us. We should ever seek to realize that the Lord is very near us, to be our counselor and guide. . . . {SD 27.3}

The faith that works by love and purifies the soul produces the fruit of humility, patience, forbearance, long-suffering, peace, joy, and willing obedience. {HP 109.6}

Jesus does not call on us to follow Him, and then forsake us. If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us. His voice, clear and distinct, is heard, saying, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” [John 14:6.] “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.” [Psalm 72:12.] {GW 263.1}

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.” [Isaiah 26:3.] The arm of Omnipotence is outstretched to lead us onward and still onward. Go forward, the Lord says; I will send you help. It is for My name’s glory that you ask; and you shall receive. Those who are watching for your failure shall yet see My word triumph

gloriously. “All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” [Matthew 21:22.] {GW 263.2}

It is faith that familiarizes the soul with the existence and presence of God; and when we live with an eye single to His glory, we discern more and more the beauty of His character. Our souls become strong in spiritual power, for we are breathing the atmosphere of heaven, and, realizing that God is at our right hand, we shall not be moved.... We should live as in the presence of the Infinite One.... {OHC 324.5}

Divine wisdom will order the steps of those who put their trust in the Lord. Divine love will encircle them, and they will realize the presence of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. {OHC 324.6}

A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. . . . It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness. {SC 70.2}

The Christian always has a strong helper in the Lord. The way of the Lord’s helping we may not know; but this we do know: He will never fail those who put their trust in Him. {PK 576.1}

God created the earth to be the abode of holy, happy beings. The Lord “formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited.” Isaiah 45:18. That purpose will be fulfilled, when, renewed by the power of God, and freed from sin and sorrow, it shall become the eternal abode of the redeemed. {PP 67.1}

Faith is trusting in God—believing that He loves us, and knows what is for our best good. Thus, instead of our own way, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership, and accepts its blessing. Truth, uprightness, purity, are pointed out as secrets of life’s success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these. Every good impulse or aspiration is the gift of God; faith receives from God the life that alone can produce true growth and efficiency. {FLB 90.3}

Faith . . . reaches out to grasp the hand of Christ, knowing that He will hold more firmly than it is possible for the human hand to hold, and that He will never let go. While the human agent is willing to be led, Christ will lead him. . . . {UL 72.2}

God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. {MH 479.2}

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures. {COL 60.1}

Our God is a very present help in time of need. He is acquainted with the most secret thoughts of our hearts, with all the intents and purposes of our souls. When we are in perplexity, even before we open to Him our distresses, He is making arrangements for our deliverance.—Letter 73, Feb. 1, 1905, to Drs. D. H. and Laretta Kress. {UL 46.6}

He who constantly depends upon God through simple trust and prayerful confidence, will be surrounded by the angels of heaven. He who lives by faith in Christ, will be strengthened and upheld, able to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold upon eternal life. {HP 16.7}

God desires us to rest content in His love. The contentment that Christ bestows is a gift worth infinitely more than gold and silver and precious stones. . . . {HP 186.3}

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}

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}

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. {2SM 43.2}

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}

But beware of rejecting that which is truth. The great danger with our people has been that of depending upon men and making flesh their arm. 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}

The Bible with its precious gems of truth was not written for the scholar alone. On the contrary, it was designed for the common people; and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus. The great truths necessary for salvation are made clear as the noonday, and none will mistake and lose their way except those who follow their own judgment instead of the plainly revealed will of God. {5T 331.2}

In the Bible the will of God is revealed. Through all time this book is to stand as a revelation of Jehovah. To human beings the divine oracles have been committed to be the power of God. The truths of the Word of God are not mere sentiment, 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 have clouded the understanding, is removed. {RH, November 10, 1904 par. 4}

It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light, and encourage others to follow his example. Ignorance of God's word is sin, when every provision has been made that we may become wise. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought, and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help, we are to form our opinions for ourselves, as we are to answer for ourselves before God. {4SP 416.2}

Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the Word of God. The Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures.—*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, April 13, 1891. {1SM 43.2}