

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2020: *Daniel*

Lesson 6 “From Arrogance to Destruction”

Read for this week’s study

Daniel 5; Revelation 17:4–6; Psalm 96:5; Colossians 1:15–17; Romans 1:16–32; Ecclesiastes 8:11; Revelation 14:8.

Memory Text

“And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding” (Daniel 2:21, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Belshazzar’s Feast
- III. An Uninvited Guest
- IV. Enter the Queen
- V. Weighed and Found Wanting
- VI. The Fall of Babylon
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “Belshazzar fills up the cup of his iniquities, acting in ways similar to the little horn (see Daniel 8), which attacked the foundations of God’s sanctuary. By removing dominion from Belshazzar, God prefigures what He will accomplish against the enemies of His people in the very last days.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. King Belshazzar holds a great feast. Why does he use vessels from the Jerusalem temple? What elements do you see in the story? Pride, arrogance, attack aimed at the God of Israel, magical thinking, carelessness, lack of strategic deliberation?
3. What is the significance of the fact that a mysterious writing appears on the wall announcing judgment on King Belshazzar and his kingdom? What lesson(s) did Nebuchadnezzar learn that his grandson did not? How do you pass on life lessons, faith, humility to the next generations? Why did the queen have a different attitude (5:10-12)?
4. Once again, Daniel exercises the power of interpretation. The queen gives the king an oral resumé of Daniel’s achievements and positions. Is there any significance in the fact that someone with such an impressive portfolio of lifetime service was forgotten so quickly?
5. Why would Daniel accept the gifts which he refused before (5:17.29)?

6. Belshazzar commits sacrilege by desecrating the 'temple vessels'. How is it possible to desecrate inanimate objects? What are the equivalents of the 'temple vessels' in our own time?
7. Daniel denounces Belshazzar for praising gods who 'do not see or hear or know.' Are there equivalents of such gods in our own secular age?
8. In chapters 4 and 5 we see royal arrogance humbled. Yet the outcome for Nebuchadnezzar & Belshazzar is totally different. One writes a chapter in the Bible, the other goes down in history as a fool who squandered the greatest empire humanity ever knew to this point of time. Why was there such a dissimilar, diametrically opposing result?
9. Life is not so much about what we know but about how we respond to what we know. (See Daniel 5:22.) How is that related to salvation, wisdom and the character of God?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

According to the first chapter of Romans, this indicates the meaning of God's "wrath." Paul describes how God pours out His "wrath" on those who reject and suppress the truth. Three times he explains that God "gives up" such people and "turns them over" to the results of their rebelliousness. See Romans 1: 24, 26, 28.

How consistent this is with what we know about God! Since faith and love cannot be forced, what else can God do but sadly give up those who reject Him?

God's wrath, as Paul seems to describe it, is simply His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable consequences of their own rebellious choice.

Surely no more awful sentence could be pronounced upon a sinner than for God to say, "Leave him alone."

These were the terrible words pronounced over Israel in the days of the prophet Hosea. Long had God sought to persuade His rebellious people to return. But they mocked His love and spurned His every advance. What now is left for Him to do but give them up? Without His protection, the results would be terrible. {Maxwell, A. Graham. *I Want to be Free*, 11-12. Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1970}

Now, immediately Paul begins to discuss God's wrath, which may seem a surprise right here. He's been talking about the good news, without interruption up to this point. Why do you think he switches to talk about God's wrath? "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and wickedness of men, who by their wickedness suppress the truth." Has he

changed the subject, do you think? Has he changed from discussing the good news, the truth about God's righteousness, that he is infinitely trustworthy, and this good news can lead us back to trust, and salvation, and healing. Has he changed the subject, when he begins to talk about God's wrath?

Now this is much discussed, and Ellen White warns that a misunderstanding of God's wrath has turned many people against God. Many people hate God because they misunderstand his wrath. My personal conviction is that he hasn't changed the subject at all. One of the things that has raised the most serious questions about God's righteousness is his attitude toward rebels, and toward sinners. The Bible sometimes describes this as wrath. And the devil has seized on this and tried to picture God as a fierce, arbitrary, unforgiving and severe God, who delights in punishing and tormenting and finally destroying his creatures. Why would I ever want him to come back the second time? How could I ever be comfortable with that kind of God for eternity? This is hardly good news. To me that is the devil's picture of God. But how would God like us to understand his wrath? Paul is saying, "The good news is that God is infinitely righteous. He's not as he's been misrepresented by his enemies", it was essential now to deal with the greatest problem of all, what has been God's attitude toward and treatment of those who have rebelled against him and distrusted him, and rejected the good news and the truth.

Paul goes on to explain. What do you think of his explanation? Is it good news or bad news? "For the wrath of God is revealed [in some way, from heaven, against] ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth." Now he doesn't mention any specific indulgence here, as so serious an offence that God reveals his wrath on such people. He speaks of their suppressing the truth. Would you agree that the most destructive thing a person could do in this universe, is to twist, and pervert, and suppress the good news, the truth about God? What was Satan's ultimately destructive sin, up in heaven? Was he caught attending some show he shouldn't have gone to? Was he drinking and smoking? Was he swearing? What was he doing? Was he committing adultery? What was this awful thing he did up in heaven that split the universe? Wasn't he just twisting the truth, and twisting it so little and so carefully, it appeared that even the loyal angels did not understand what he was doing.

They stayed with God out of sheer loyalty, not because they understood his misrepresentations. Not until Calvary were Satan's purposes finally unmasked. That's how carefully and subtly he had twisted and perverted the truth. What truth? Was he leading the angels to worship on a different Sabbath? Was he leading them to eat things they shouldn't, to give up tithe paying? What was he leading them to do? The only change, as I understand it through the sixty-six books, Satan was seeking to change their understanding of the kind of person God was, and therefore what he wanted of his people. He was twisting and perverting the good news. Because the next verse says, "What can be known about God is plain to people,

[is that right?] because God has shown it to them.” Has he revealed himself to us? Or has he left us in the dark?

Why, ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature, namely his eternal power, and deity has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made, so they are without excuse, these folk who pervert and ignore the truth. “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God, or give thanks to him, but instead, they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened.” Did God do that to them as punishment, or is that what happens when you give up the truth about God? Well, look what follows. “Claiming to be wise, they became fools.” Did God make them fools? Does it say in God’s book for the government of the universe, “anyone who refuses the good news I’ll punish him by making him a fool”? Or, when a man turns from the truth about God to do what follows in the next verse, has he become a fool?

Look what they did: “Claiming to be wise they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, or birds, or animals or reptiles.” And in Egypt they worshiped everything that moved, even beetles. The archeologists dig up lots of these scarabs, these beetles. They even worshiped the river Nile. They worshiped crocodiles and mummified them after they died. The ten plagues of Egypt, as you remember from Exodus, were really supposed to be a blessing from God and a revelation as to the utter impotence of these Egyptian deities. For after they had stamped out frogs and flies all day and swept them up into stinking heaps, how could they kneel down in the evening for worship and say, “Dear God Fly, Dear God Frog, Dear Lord Crocodile, Dear Lord Dagon the fish God,” maybe, “Dear Lord Moloch”, the god who required live infants in his burning hot hands. How could you kneel down at the end of the day and pray to these deities? And so as the Egyptians saw their deities being exposed as utterly weak at the hands of the Infinite One, some of them got the truth, got the message and they joined Israel when they left.

What do you think of a person, though, who would turn from the truth about God, the one of whom Jesus said, “If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father”, and this person would rather kneel down and pray to a beetle, or a frog, or a fly? If you were God, and you had revealed yourself as the kind of person we believe God to be, so respectful of people’s freedom, and dignity, and intelligence, never asking anyone to do anything that didn’t make sense, wishing for everyone only the best good. God, dignity and grace, and intelligence personified, and people would rather turn and kneel down and worship a frog, or a fly, or a louse, or a beetle. As God what would you do to that person? Would you be angry with him? Would you be disappointed? Would you beat the person up? Would you torture him till he’d prefer to worship you rather than the frog?

What does God do to people who know the truth about him, but reject it, waste it, twist it, pervert it, ignore it and turn to other things? What does he do? Does the Bible anywhere tell us

what God does? It says right here, “Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts, the desires of their hearts, to what they wanted to do anyway. To impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves”. Why did he give them up? And what he gave them up to is on record even in the Bible. What were the Israelites so prone to do when they lost reverence for God? When Moses was up in the mountain getting the Ten Commandments, what were the people doing down at the foot of the mountain, but dancing drunk and naked in a fertility cult, right around a golden calf. In the Book of Hosea, when God says, “I’ll have to give you up”, the leaders were even sacrificing with cult prostitutes up in the hills, it says. So God gives people up to what they prefer to do.

When people prefer Satan’s lies about God, and worship and serve the creature, rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever, what does God do? Shall we take verse 18 or verse 24, or both? It says in verse 18: “His wrath is revealed against such people”. Verse 24 says: “God gives them up”. And in verse 26, he says he gives them up. And in verse 28 he says he gives them up. Could this giving people up to the consequences be the meaning of God’s wrath? Well note the words, 26: “For this reason, [that is, people have preferred Satan’s lies about God, that he’s arbitrary, severe, unforgiving, unworthy, untrustworthy, unrighteous.] For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions.” And this is on record, unfortunately. And they reaped the consequences, when God gave them up.

So 28: “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God”. It’s the same thing. The good news has always been available—the everlasting truth and good news about our gracious, trustworthy God. But if people do not see fit to acknowledge that God is that kind of a person, God gives them up to a base mind and to improper conduct and there follows a long list of the sins of such people:

Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity. They are gossips [note that sin in such a dreadful setting], slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents [how about putting that in such a setting?], “foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless, though they know God’s decree that those who do such things deserve to die. . . They not only do them, but approve those who practice them.

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 1, recorded September, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God

desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service. {GC 493.2}

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}

In the creation of man was manifest the agency of a personal God. When God had made man in His image, the human form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it was without life. Then a personal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, intelligent being. All parts of the human organism were set in action. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the senses, the faculties of the mind, all began their work, and all were placed under law. Man became a living soul. Through Christ the Word, a personal God created man and endowed him with intelligence and power. {MH 415.1}

The God of heaven is constantly at work. It is by His power that vegetation is caused to flourish, that every leaf appears and every flower blooms. It is not as the result of a mechanism, that, once set in motion, continues its work, that the pulse beats and breath follows breath. In God we live and move and have our being. Every breath, every throb of the heart, is the continual evidence of the power of an ever-present God. {6BC 1062.5}

So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 7, p. 934). {LHU 372.6}

The angels of glory find their joy in giving,—giving love and tireless watchcare to souls that are fallen and unholy. Heavenly beings woo the hearts of men; they bring to this dark world light from the courts above; by gentle and patient ministry they move upon the human spirit, to bring the lost into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know. {DA 21.1}

All things in nature testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy. His prohibitions and injunctions are not intended merely to display His authority, but in all that He does He has the well-being of His children in view. He does not require them to give up anything that it would be for their best interest to retain. {PP 599.4}

Christ came to this earth to reveal what finite minds can comprehend of the glory of God. He came to unite divinity and humanity, that through Him, with character made perfect, human beings might at last behold God in the fullness of His glory. {UL 316.3}

All things tell of His tender, fatherly care and of His desire to make His children happy.
{MH 412.1}

God's handiwork in nature is not God Himself in nature. The things of nature are an expression of God's character; by them we may understand His love, His power, and His glory; but we are not to regard nature as God. The artistic skill of human beings produces very beautiful workmanship, things that delight the eye, and these things give us something of the idea of the designer; but the thing made is not the man. It is not the work, but the workman, that is counted worthy of honor. So, while nature is an expression of God's thought, it is not nature but the God of nature that is to be exalted.—8T 263. {MM 11.1}

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,—as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,—that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan hoped to so confuse the minds of those whom he had deceived that they would put God out of their knowledge. Then he would obliterate the divine image in man and impress his own likeness upon the soul; he would imbue men with his own spirit and make them captives according to his will. . . . {5T 738.1}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. {5T 738.4}

It is not that God sends out a decree that man shall not be saved. He does not throw a darkness before the eyes which cannot be penetrated. But man at first resists a motion of the Spirit of God, and, having once resisted, it is less difficult to do so the second time, less the third, and far less the fourth. Then comes the harvest to be reaped from the seed of unbelief and resistance. . . . {FLB 58.5}

On the other hand, every ray of light cherished will yield a harvest of light. Temptation once resisted will give power to more firmly resist the second time; every new victory gained over self will smooth the way for higher and nobler triumphs. Every victory is a seed sown to eternal life. {FLB 58.6}

God destroys no one. The sinner destroys himself by his own impenitence. {FLB 58.7}

No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent. {FLB 58.8}

God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself. Everyone who stifles the admonitions of conscience is sowing the seeds of unbelief, and these will produce a sure harvest. By rejecting the first warning from God, Pharaoh of old sowed the seeds of obstinacy, and he reaped obstinacy. God did not compel him to disbelieve. The seed of unbelief which he sowed produced a harvest of its kind. Thus his resistance continued, until he looked upon his devastated land, upon the cold, dead form of his first-born, and the first-born of all in his house and of all the families in his kingdom, until the waters of the sea closed over his horses and his chariots and his men of war. His history is a fearful illustration of the truth of the words that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Galatians 6:7. Did men but realize this, they would be careful what seed they sow. {COL 84.4}

In the laws of God in nature, effect follows cause with unerring certainty. The reaping will testify as to what the sowing has been. . . . {FLB 155.2}

Every seed sown produces a harvest of its kind. So it is in human life. We all need to sow the seeds of compassion, sympathy, and love; for we shall reap what we sow. Every characteristic of selfishness, self-love, self-esteem, every act of self-indulgence, will bring forth a like harvest. {FLB 155.3}

God destroys no one. The sinner destroys himself by his own impenitence. When a person once neglects to heed the invitations, reproofs, and warnings of the Spirit of God, his conscience becomes seared, and the next time he is admonished, it will be more difficult to yield obedience than before. And thus with every repetition. Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved. {5T 120.1}

God destroys no man; but when a man stifles conviction, when he turns from evidence, he is sowing unbelief, and will reap as he has sown. As it was with Pharaoh, so it will be with him; when clearer light shines upon the truth, he will meet it with increased resistance, and the work of hardening the heart will go on with each rejection of the increasing light of heaven. In simplicity and truth we would speak to the impenitent in regard to the way in which men destroy their own souls. You are not to say that God is to blame, that he has made a decree against you. No, he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, and to the haven of eternal bliss. No soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. God follows men with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. The responsibility rests upon 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; and thus he will pass from one stage of indifference to another, until, at last, the light will fail to impress him, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God. {RH, February 17, 1891 par. 2}

God destroys no man; but after a time the wicked are given up to the destruction they have wrought for themselves. {YI, November 30, 1893 par. 6}

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. {GC 390.1}

Through persistently cherishing evil, willfully disregarding the pleadings of divine love, the sinner loses the love for good, the desire for God, the very capacity to receive the light of heaven. The invitation of mercy is still full of love, the light is shining as brightly as when it first dawned upon his soul; but the voice falls on deaf ears, the light on blinded eyes. {MB 92.3}

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. Then even "the light that is in thee" has become darkness. The very truth we do know has become so perverted as to increase the blindness of the soul. {MB 93.1}

The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not lie in any sudden word or deed; it is the firm, determined resistance of truth and evidence (MS 30, 1890). {5BC 1093.1}

It is not God that blinds the eyes of men or hardens their hearts. He sends them light to correct their errors, and to lead them in safe paths; it is by the rejection of this light that the eyes are blinded and the heart hardened. Often the process is gradual, and almost imperceptible. Light comes to the soul through God's word, through His servants, or by the direct agency of His Spirit; but when one ray of light is disregarded, there is a partial benumbing of the spiritual perceptions, and the second revealing of light is less clearly discerned. So the darkness increases, until it is night in the soul. Thus it had been with these Jewish leaders. They were convinced that a divine power attended Christ, but in order to resist the truth, they attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. In doing this they deliberately chose deception; they yielded themselves to Satan, and henceforth they were controlled by his power. {DA 322.2}

What Pharaoh has done, will be done again and again by men until the close of probation. God destroys no man; but when a man stifles conviction, when he turns from evidence, he is sowing unbelief, and will reap as he has sown. As it was with Pharaoh, so it will be with him; when clearer light shines upon the truth, he will meet it with increased resistance, and the work of hardening the heart will go on with each rejection of the increasing light of heaven. In simplicity and truth we would speak to the impenitent in regard to the way in which men destroy their

own souls. You are not to say that God is to blame, that he has made a decree against you. No, he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, and to the haven of eternal bliss. No soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. God follows men with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. The responsibility rests upon 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; and thus he will pass from one stage of indifference to another, until, at last, the light will fail to impress him, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God. {RH, February 17, 1891 par. 2}

The words of truth will grow in importance, and assume a breadth and fullness of meaning of which we have never dreamed. The beauty and riches of the word have a transforming influence on mind and character. The light of heavenly love will fall upon the heart as an inspiration. {COL 132.4}

The appreciation of the Bible grows with its study. Whichever way the student may turn, he will find displayed the infinite wisdom and love of God. {COL 132.5}

The truths of God's word are not mere sentiments, 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 has clouded the understanding is removed. {CT 452.2}

The words, "A new heart also will I give you" (Ezekiel 36:26), mean, A new mind will I give you. This change of heart is always attended by a clear conception of Christian duty, an understanding of truth. The clearness of our view of truth will be proportionate to our understanding of the word of God. 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}

All who come to Christ for a clearer knowledge of the truth will receive it. He will unfold to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and these mysteries will be understood by the heart that longs to know the truth. A heavenly light will shine into the soul temple, and will be revealed to others as the bright shining of a lamp on a dark path. {COL 35.3}

Truth, precious truth, is sanctifying in its influence. The sanctification of the soul by the operation of the Holy Spirit is the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity. It is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ revealed in character, and the graces of Christ brought into active exercise in good works. Thus the character is transformed more and more perfectly after the image of Christ, in righteousness and true holiness. {TDG 224.2}