

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2023: *Three Cosmic Messages*

Lesson 2 “A Moment of Destiny”

Read for this week’s study

Matthew 24:14; Revelation 14:14—20; Matthew 16:27; Acts 1:9—11; Mark 4:26—29; Revelation 16:1.

Memory Text

“Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe’ ” (Revelation 14:14, 15, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Eternal Choices
- III. The Son of Man Returns
- IV. The Heavenly Judgment
- V. The Victor’s Crown
- VI. Every Seed Produces a Harvest
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Revelation 14:14-15. Should the following items in this text be taken literally or figuratively: A white cloud, a golden crown, a sharp sickle, the temple, reaping the harvest of the earth? How does one decide when such an item should be taken literally or figuratively? How does Revelation 1:1 inform one’s response to this question? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. Read Revelation 14:6 in light of Matthew 24:14. Both texts suggest that the gospel will go to the whole world in the final generation of earth’s history. How can this possibly happen in such a fragmented world as we live in today? Three times in Revelation (20:7, 12, 20) Jesus says, “I am coming quickly”. How are we to

understand these words in light of the many centuries that have transpired since?
(Sunday's Lesson)

3. Read Revelation 14:14. What title does John use for Jesus in this verse? Why do you think John uses this title in the context of the Second Coming? What do we learn about the Son of Man in the context of the Second Coming from Matthew 16:27, 24:27, 30, and 25:31-32? (Monday's Lesson)
4. Read Revelation 14:14 and Acts 1:9-11. What similarities do you find between the two texts? Read Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14. From Daniel's perspective, who is this "son of man"? Why would New Testament writers consider this "son of man" to be Jesus? In what way is having a "son of man" in the judgment good news for the human race? What impact does this have on our understanding of God's character? (Tuesday's Lesson)
5. Compare Revelation 14:15 and Mark 4:26-29. What similarities do you see between these texts? Should we take the ripening here literally or figuratively? What relationship might this theme have with Ephesians 4:13-16? How do you understand Ellen White's statement, "At every stage of development our life may be perfect"? (Wednesday's Lesson)
6. Read Revelation 14:17-20. How should we understand the word "ripening" in the context of the unrighteous? How is Ellen White's statement relevant to this: "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." GC 555. How are we to understand the wrath of God in Scripture? How do you discern the difference between good and evil? Why is this kind of discernment important? (Thursday's Lesson)
7. What is the relationship between being saved by grace and growing in grace? (Friday's Lesson)
8. What are the elements necessary for the growth of plants? What analogies do you see for our understanding of spiritual growth? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

The remaining question is how does one grow up like this? How does one become perfect and mature? You remember in the earlier verses that we are saved, we are healed by faith. And faith, we've discussed so many times in these conversations, faith means trust. It means love. It means admiration. And that means a willingness to listen. It is a law in this orderly universe as God has designed it, that we will inevitably become like the person we worship and admire. We know that from experience. We also see it corroborated and confirmed in Scripture in so many places. Look at 2 Corinthians 3:18, next on the list:

Then with unveiled faces we can all behold as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord. And we become changed into His likeness, from glory to glory, through the Spirit of the Lord working in us. *Norlie*

This is how the Spirit works. He brings us the truth. He brings us the picture of God. He brings us all the evidence of Scripture. We look at the picture. We like what we see and we're changed.

Now, it works in the other direction just as well. Look at Psalm 115:8 about those who worship idols: "Those who make them, [the idols,] will be like them, and so will all who trust in them" (NIV). It is inevitable that we will become like the person or the object we worship and admire. If we regard God as arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe, we too will become the same. History has borne out the truth of that, hasn't it? Think of the cruelty of many people who have claimed to worship God, but having the devil's picture of God, have been incredibly cruel in their treatment of other people, even as Paul was before the Damascus road.

But if we see God as He really is and as His Son proved Him to be, and all the testimony of Scripture, and if we like what we see, we admire what we see, and we even worship the One we see, then it is a law that we will become like Him. How absolutely essential then that we have a true picture of our God. The hazard of a false picture, if we prefer it, is that we will become like that. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #14, "God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done" 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/14MMCAG>

Lou: You've talked of Jesus as our example in this series on conversations about God. We've had several questions come in raising the question about His perhaps having an advantage over us. How could He be regarded as our example if He did have such an advantage? Would you comment briefly on that one?

Graham: Well, I'll cite Paul for that. He said, "Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh to deal with sin." I think really what's behind this is, can we really look to Jesus as an example of the perfection that we should have?

Lou: Yes, I think that's right.

Graham: But was He exactly like us? There are some interesting differences. He was born of the Holy Spirit. And I might be sixty-five before I'm born of the Holy Spirit. So when I'm reborn, I've got sixty-five years of bad habits to fight with for the rest of my life. Jesus never acquired a bad habit. The only way you can get a bad habit is to do something bad, which He never did. And you say, "Well, then He's not an example for me." How low do we want Him to go? Do we want Him to wallow in the gutter as a wino, so that He can be an example as to how you can get out

of the gutter? I don't want Jesus to be more and more like me. I want to be more and more like Him. So He came in human form in the likeness of sinful flesh using no power that is not available to us. And He showed that even little boys can be good. And you can grow up good like that.

And you say, "Well, I had bad habits."

"Look," He says, "I'm your Physician; I understand. I'll be very patient. And I guarantee I'll help you get over all of those things. Just trust Me."

So how many things do we want Him to do more than He did? He's enough of an example to show how we could have lived. Well, we didn't. What will He do with us now? He's the Physician, and He knows exactly what it's like to go through what we are going through. And so you can count on Him to be patient. You say, "Well, I guess that means the Father isn't just as patient." No, Jesus came to show how patient the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are. I think sometimes we run into problems when we raise the wrong questions about what He came to tell us, what He came to show us. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #14 with Lou Venden, "God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done" 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/14MMCAG>*

Someone came between because of the emergency. It's not ideal. God would like to deal directly with us, face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. But because we don't know God, and we've been afraid, God has given us these pictures. He's given us a picture even of Jesus being our judge. Doesn't Jesus deal with this? He says, "You're all comforted that I'm going to be your judge. Because you were scared my Father was going to judge you, isn't that right?" They said, "Oh, we're so relieved you're going to be our judge." Is that because the Father is not as gracious and forgiving as the Son, that we say we're glad the Son's going to be our judge? So before he went back to heaven, he said, "I've got to clear that up, too. Actually, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. You'd receive just as gracious judgment from my Father as from me. But I'd like to take you a step further. I'm not going to judge you anyway." "Oh, there'll be something that will judge you. The truth will judge you. The truth about my Father in the Great Controversy. The truth about the kind of person he is and what he wants of his children, and the way he governs the universe. That's the truth. If you have loved that truth and it has led you to repentance and faith and trust, you will have stood humbly in our presence and said, 'What must I do to be saved and healed?' and we will have been able to save and heal you, and all will be well. But if you have turned down this truth about my Father and about me, you will not know us; you will not be our friends; you will not trust us enough to listen. We will not be able to heal you; and you will perish and we will cry." And that's the judgment. {Graham Maxwell.

Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Leviticus, recorded October 1981, 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 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/5MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/6MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: People want to know about perfection.

Graham: Well, fortunately we have two hours coming up. We have a whole evening entitled, “God can perfectly heal the damage done or completely heal the damage done.” I think it’s that important, because a misunderstanding of perfection is a heavy burden and puts God in a very bad light. Now, I believe God can perfectly heal the damage done. No question about it. And perfection also needs to be understood as maturity and growing up, the need to be so settled into the truth and grown up in the truth that we can survive the time of trouble. But as for not making mistakes—a mistake is not a sin. And I think it’s so important to be relieved of that. In the hereafter, you could plant your pomegranate tree too close to where you are living, and the Lord come by later and say, “You know, you put it too close, didn’t you. You might as well move it.” That is not a sin. Sin is rebelliousness. Sin is distrust. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4 with Lou Venden, “God’s Way of Restoring Trust” recorded February 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>

If God is not going to allow the closing events to occur until He has a generation like Job, mature enough and settled into the truth to pass through the “time of trouble,” thoughts that pass through my mind in that connection are this: I think we have assumed it takes a very, very long time to grow up from rebirth to maturity. I notice that when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he suggested that they could be grown up much sooner.

And in Hebrews, it was just a few years later that he said, “By now you should be teachers, but I see you are still babes in the truth.” I think that we could encourage people to believe they could grow up from rebirth to maturity much sooner, and it would be much more exciting. You know, when we’re baptized, we think, “I’ve launched myself on sixty-five years of slow sanctification.” I think, “No, why not grow up without delay as quickly as possible and be settled into the truth?” But then when we have an absolutely out-of-sight, forbidding conception of perfection, we think “Well, I’m not going to make it anyway.”

The conception of perfection we find in the Bible is the conception of an individual who is so convinced of this truth about God, that if Satan should come as an angel of light, even as Christ, and say God is arbitrary, vengeful, unforgiving and severe, a twelve-year-old might be able to

say, “That’s not true and I will not believe it.” So I think we have made the difference too extended in there, and God can, under the accelerating, energizing events of the close of time, He can produce a generation of grown-up Jobs of all ages. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4, “God’s Way of Restoring Trust” recorded February 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>*

Recommended Listening: The entire series by Graham Maxwell on the Three Angel’s Messages is available at: <http://pkp.cc/MM3ANGELSM>

Conversations About God #16 “God’s Last Pleading with His Children” is available at: <http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>

Recommended Reading:

Conversations about God Chapter 16—“God’s Last Pleading with His Children”

Further Study with Ellen White

The truth will have the same molding influence upon hearts whatever the nationalities. Every human heart that accepts the truth will bow to the majesty of its sway, and when Christ is abiding in the heart by faith they will be of one mind, for Christ is not divided. They will be strong in His strength, happy and united in His peace. The truth is the same in its subduing power upon all hearts. It will refine and ennoble the heart of the receiver. {OHC 171.5}

All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, ... that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. {TMK 99.5}

As the rays of the sun penetrate to the remotest corners of the globe, so God designs that the light of the gospel shall extend to every soul upon the earth. {AG 26.3}

There is no caste with God. He ignores everything of the kind. All souls are of value with Him. Laboring for the salvation of the soul is employment worthy of the highest honor. It matters not what may be the form of our labor, or among what class, whether high or low. In God’s sight these distinctions will not affect its true worth. The sincere, earnest, contrite soul, however ignorant, is precious in the sight of the Lord. He places His own signet upon men, judging, not by their rank, not by their wealth, not by their intellectual greatness, but by their oneness with Christ. The unlearned, the outcast, the slave, if he has made the most of his opportunities and privileges, if he has cherished the light given him of God, has done all that is required. The

world may call him ignorant, but God calls him wise and good, and thus his name stands registered in the books of heaven. God will fit him up to do Him honor, not only in heaven, but on the earth. —*Gospel Workers*, p. 332. (1915) {Ev 566.1}

The opinion is held by many that God placed a separating wall between the Hebrews and the outside world; that His care and love, withdrawn to a great extent from the rest of mankind, were centered upon Israel. But God did not design that His people should build up a wall of partition between themselves and their fellow men. The heart of Infinite Love was reaching out toward all the inhabitants of the earth. Though they had rejected Him, He was constantly seeking to reveal Himself to them and make them partakers of His love and grace. His blessing was granted to the chosen people, that they might bless others. {PP 368.1}

While the wind is itself invisible, it produces effects that are seen and felt. So the work of the Spirit upon the soul will reveal itself in every act of him who has felt its saving power. When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God. {DA 173.1}

It is impossible for finite minds to comprehend the work of redemption. Its mystery exceeds human knowledge; yet he who passes from death to life realizes that it is a divine reality. The beginning of redemption we may know here through a personal experience. Its results reach through the eternal ages. {DA 173.2}

Christ said, “It is expedient for you that I go away.” No one could then have any preference because of his location or personal contact with Christ. The Saviour would be accessible to all alike, spiritually, and in this sense He would be nearer to us all than if He had not ascended on high. Now all may be equally favored by beholding Him and reflecting His character. The eye of faith sees Him ever present, in all His goodness, grace, forbearance, courtesy, and love. . . . And as we behold, we are changed into His likeness. {HP 337.2}

Such transformation of character as is seen in the life of John is ever the result of communion with Christ. There may be marked defects in the character of an individual, yet when he becomes a true disciple of Christ, the power of divine grace transforms and sanctifies him. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed from glory to glory, until he is like Him whom he adores. {AA 559.1}

He who places himself unreservedly under the guidance of the Spirit of God will find that his mind expands and develops. He obtains an education in the service of God which is not one-

sided and deficient, developing a one-sided character, but one which results in symmetry and completeness. {ST, January 2, 1907 par. 6}

By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His purity. It is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character, and the child of wrath becomes the child of God. {AG 302.5}

Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of the Saviour shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim His own. It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten, the coming of our Lord. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel! Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come. {CT 324.3}

Thus will be fulfilled Christ's promise to His disciples, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." John 14:3. Those who have loved Him and waited for Him, He will crown with glory and honor and immortality. The righteous dead will come forth from their graves, and those who are alive will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air. They will hear the voice of Jesus, sweeter than any music that ever fell on mortal ear, saying to them, Your warfare is accomplished. "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34. {AA 34.1}

To His faithful followers Christ has been a daily companion and a familiar friend. They have lived in close contact, in constant communion with God. Upon them the glory of the Lord has risen. In them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has been reflected. Now they rejoice in the undimmed rays of the brightness and the glory of the King in His majesty. They are prepared for the communion of heaven; for they have heaven in their hearts.... {SD 360.3}

As the representative of God, Christ appeared in human flesh. Though in the form of a man, He was the Son of God, and the world was given an opportunity to see how it would treat God. Christ declared, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). But when He comes the second time, divinity is no longer concealed. He comes as One equal with God, as His own beloved Son, Prince of heaven and earth. He is also the Redeemer of His people, the Life-giver. The glory of the Father and the Son are seen to be one. . . . Then shall He shine forth "before his ancients gloriously" (Isaiah 24:23). {HP 357.4}

Satan is not permitted to counterfeit the manner of Christ's advent. The Saviour has warned His people against deception upon this point, and has clearly foretold the manner of His second coming. . . . This coming there is no possibility of counterfeiting. It will be universally known—witnessed by the whole world. {GC 625.2}

The angels of heaven are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. We know not now who they are; it is not yet made manifest who shall overcome, and share the inheritance of the saints in light; but angels of heaven are passing throughout the length and breadth of the earth, seeking to comfort the sorrowing, to protect the imperiled, to win the hearts of men to Christ. Not one is neglected or passed by. God is no respecter of persons, and He has an equal care for all the souls He has created. {DA 639.1}

By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." John 3:16. He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder." God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the "Son of man" who shares the throne of the universe. It is the "Son of man" whose name shall be called, "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6. The I AM is the Daysman between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both. He who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7:26; 2:11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love. {DA 25.3}

Through Christ's redeeming work the government of God stands justified. The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love. Satan's charges are refuted, and his character unveiled. Rebellion can never again arise. Sin can never again enter the universe. Through eternal ages all are secure from apostasy. By love's self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union. {DA 26.2}

The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God's grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, "and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." And

through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,—*Immanuel, “God with us.”* {DA 26.3}

For our sake Jesus emptied Himself of His glory; He clothed His divinity with humanity that He might touch humanity, that His personal presence might be among us, that we might know that He was acquainted with all our trials, and sympathized with our grief, that every son and daughter of Adam might understand that Jesus is the friend of sinners (ST April 18, 1892). {7BC 927.1}

By the life and the death of Christ, the thoughts of men also are brought to view. From the manger to the cross, the life of Jesus was a call to self-surrender, and to fellowship in suffering. It unveiled the purposes of men. Jesus came with the truth of heaven, and all who were listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit were drawn to Him. The worshipers of self belonged to Satan’s kingdom. In their attitude toward Christ, all would show on which side they stood. And thus everyone passes judgment on himself. {DA 57.3}

Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men.—SC 11 (1892). {1MCP 250.1}

We have now come to the last days of the work of the third angel’s message, when Satan will work with increasing power because he knows that his time is short. At the same time there will come to us through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, diversities of operations in the outpouring of the Spirit. This is the time of the latter rain.—Letter 230, 1908. {3SM 83.2}

Christ came to the world that we might become new creatures, created after the similitude of his own character; that we might have purity like the purity of God, have perfection like his perfection. In the work of regeneration, the original loveliness begins to be restored. The attributes of the character of Christ are imparted to the soul, and the image of the divine begins to shine forth. “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” It is plainly declared that a change takes place in the character of the human agent. {ST, August 21, 1893 par. 3}

To human beings, striving for conformity to the divine image, there is imparted an outlay of heaven’s treasure, an excellency of power that will place them higher than even the angels who have never fallen. {HP 148.5}

As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings. {COL 333.1}

The study of God's word is continually expanding the mind and strengthening the intellect. There is nothing that will so refine and elevate the character, and give vigor to every faculty, as the continual exercise of the mind to grasp and comprehend weighty and important truths. {4T 545.3}

The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of the fullness. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." {DA 302.1}

God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, will quicken all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfill the requirements of God. . . . Through a connection with Christ he will have clearer and broader views. His discernment will be more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. He who longs to be of service to Christ is so quickened by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God. {DA 251.1}