

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2023: *Three Cosmic Messages*

Lesson 9 “A City Called Confusion”

Read for this week’s study

Revelation 17:1, 2, 15; Revelation 18:1–4; Revelation 17:4–6; Matthew 16:18; Jeremiah 50:33-38; Psalm 115:4–8.

Memory Text

“ ‘These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful’ ” (Revelation 17:14, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Two Contrasting Systems
- III. The Wine of the Wrath
- IV. Mystery, Babylon the Great
- V. A Call to Commitment
- VI. Babylon: The Center of Idolatry
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “In this week’s lesson, we will study these two women of Revelation and probe, more deeply, the conflict between truth and error.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. The second angel’s message is only one verse long in Revelation 14:8, but it is then developed and expanded further in chapters 17 & 18. Sunday’s lesson compares God’s faithful people from the image in chapter 12 with an apostate religious system in chapter 17.
3. Monday’s lesson discusses the wine of the wrath of God from Revelation 17 & 18. What causes such a strong reaction on God’s part? Tuesday’s lesson looks further into Revelation 17 to unveil the nature of Babylon and the subsequent call to commitment to God in light of the prevailing apostasy (Wednesday’s lesson).
4. When the call “Babylon has fallen, has fallen!” was given the first time, it was good news (Isaiah 21:9; Jeremiah 51:6-8). How was this call the “eternal gospel” in its

antitypical meaning of Revelation 14 in John's day? And how can it be "good news" in our context of the end-time world? Remember, it is one message given by three messengers (14:6-12)!

5. What do we learn from reading Genesis 11:1-9 and Daniel 3 & 6 about the nature and significance of Babylon?
6. When we try to reach heaven by our own effort and self-sufficiency, or build our identity on our achievements and self-preservation, we follow the footsteps of Babylon.
7. If we ridicule or persecute those who have a different opinion, or use power to uphold our understanding of truth, we follow the footsteps of Babylon. Then we are also guilty of worshiping a false image of God (Thursday's lesson).
8. Jesus has given authority to His church (Matthew 16:18 cf. Revelation 17:13-14). But all institutions have a tendency towards self-preservation. What does it mean to come out of a broken system or institution (Revelation 18:4)? The church does not exist for its own sake but to create a worshiping and serving community of connected people (Matthew 25:31-46).
9. The dragon of Revelation 12 was once "the Shining One," described in one of the Bible's finest poems as "the king of Babylon" (Isaiah 14:4). That is Babylon's starting point. What is Babylon's ending point? "And in you" — in Babylon — "was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been killed with violence on earth" (Revelation 18:24). While the Babylonian or Roman Empires, or the medieval church may be blamed for much, they should not be blamed for the blood "of all who have been killed with violence".
10. Scientists say that intelligence is a complex thing to measure. That's why they express it using the IQ—the intelligence quotient and EQ—the emotional quotient. How would you apply a BQ — "Babylonian quotient" to your own mentality and that of your (local) church? How can coming out of a Babylonian mentality be "good news" for us today?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Isn't it becoming clearer in scripture, that when God indeed has used force and displayed his power, it may have gained attention, but it has never accomplished what he really wants? How about the Flood? Did the Flood lead people to deny the existence and power of God? No. When they built Babel, was it because they didn't believe in God? Was it because they didn't believe he had the power to destroy? Or was it because they *did* believe in God, and they did believe he had the power to destroy? Now, they didn't think he could be trusted when he said, "I'll never drown you again." They didn't believe that. That's why they built that tower. Isn't that what it says?

You see, they really believed in God, his existence and his power. That's why to believe that doesn't say which side you're on. The devils believe that, too. In fact, they had such confidence that God could destroy, they built that tower as tall as they did. You see, the exercise of power and force may only make rebels worse, but it might for a moment gain the attention of those who are sinners indeed, but would love to hear what you would have to say, if they and everybody else would be quiet. And *God* wins people every once in a while, during those quiet moments. But the devil must mock him for failure to be able to clear up the problems on this earth by the exercise of power. But the Great Controversy is not over who has the power, is it? It's over who is telling the truth. God has been accused of the abuse of divine power, and I'm sure Satan accused him of abusing his power in the time of the Flood. "See what he'll do; obey him, or he'll drown you!" The inhabitants of Babylon believed that. "Believe God, or he'll drown you!" Well, they didn't want to obey him, so they built the tall tower so they could escape the next flood when it came! {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Exodus*, recorded October 1983, 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/3MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/4MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: This question was asked: "Could the word 'wrath' have been translated differently, as in the three angels' messages? Could there have been a better word than 'wrath' used?"

Graham: Hmm. That's an interesting question. That's a limitation of human language. The word is *orge*, which just **did** mean wrath, even fury. God is limited to our human language with all the hazards thereunto appertaining. And so we have to take the whole context to understand. The question there that appeals to me most is, "Why would God use the word at all, if He does not wish to be understood as angry?" It would seem to me that He has left the impression that He is angry with us.

I would have to compare that with a father's conversation with his little girl. You've tried everything else under the sun to persuade her not to help herself to cookies at three in the afternoon and it hasn't worked. But finally you put this little youngster in front of you, and you know how it is with the little daughters; we both have them, and how cute and innocent they can look, even in the midst of iniquity. And you say, "Look, if you do that one more time, Daddy's going to be **very, very** cross with you." Now, don't smile when you say that, because she doesn't know what "cross" means. She can't look it up in *Webster's*. She knows what "cross" means by the look on your face and the tone of your voice. So you feel like a bully. Here's this little, tiny child with pigtails, and you're saying, "Daddy will be very, very cross with you."

And a little later, though you thought you had impressed her adequately; you find her tiptoeing around the corner and reaching up and taking another cookie. And it's so cute, you wish you had your camera. And then you suddenly realize, no, this is the time for some stern discipline. And you put this helpless little girl in front of you. She puts her hands behind her and assumes that little posture that little girls can, and you as a big brute say, "Daddy told you that if you did that one more time, he'd be very, very cross." You have to look cross, sound cross. Don't glance over to your wife, you know, or you'll melt. You've got to go through with this thing.

I think it's a matter of communication. And God has dealt with children. We've been the immature children. He even has to say, "Do that one more time and I will be furious with you! And I wish I didn't have to say that one more time." So I think our human experience helps us to understand the Scripture. Parents and teachers and little ones are in the best position to read the Bible sympathetically, it seems to me. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #9 with Lou Venden, "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>*

If we have allowed God to reveal himself through all the various stories and teachings of Scripture, if we have learned to view the Bible as a whole and relate all its parts to the one central theme—the everlasting Good News about our gracious and trustworthy God—then we are ready to read some of the most fearsome words in all the sixty-six books, the message of the third angel of Revelation 14:

"And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If any one worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also shall drink the wine of God's wrath poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name'" (verses 9–11).

God must hate having to speak to us like this. But Jesus joins with his Father in sending us this message (see Revelation 1:1; 22:16). The One who said "Blessed are the meek" must have an urgent reason for warning us in such fearsome words.

The Bible has prepared us to understand the symbolic terms. The beast and its image have already been mentioned as representing God's enemies in the great controversy, and the mark as the badge of loyalty to Satan's side (see Revelation 13). The fire that lasts "for ever" has already been compared to the burning of a field of stubble (Malachi 4:1); it is like the "eternal fire" that totally consumed Sodom and Gomorrah many centuries ago (Jude 7). And lest the

fearfulness of the warning should lead us to doubt the gracious purposes of God, he sends the first and second angels with messages that prepare us for the third.

The first angel reminds of the everlasting truth. He calls on all men everywhere to make up their minds about God. Do we find the weight of evidence a sufficient basis for our faith? Can we trust and worship the One who created the whole vast universe?

The second angel reminds us of the falsity and deception of God's enemies. Every system based on Satan's lies is fallen in corruption and defeat.

Then the third angel warns of consequence. It is not God's will that any should perish. Nothing is plainer in all Scripture! But if we prefer Satan's lies to the truth, if we persist in rejecting God's every effort to save and heal, there is nothing else he can do but sadly give us up and hand us over to the awful consequence of our own rebellious choice. This is what it means to experience God's wrath unmixed with mercy at the end. And if we are not healed and ready to live in his presence again, the life-giving glory of him who is love will consume all that is out of harmony when he comes. {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 109-110. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-10>

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

Christ will give strength to all who seek it. No man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan. The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. He may distress, but he cannot contaminate. He can cause agony, but not defilement. The fact that Christ has conquered should inspire His followers with courage to fight manfully the battle against sin and Satan. {GC 510.3}

Christ came to this earth in human form that He might stand as the Captain of our salvation, so that we should not be overcome by Satan's power. And when the enemy has seemed to be

gaining a signal victory over righteousness, God has been working in mercy and power to counteract his designs. {TDG 308.4}

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 the Scriptures. {AG 34.2}

In the closing scenes of this earth's history, when intensity is taking possession of every earthly element, the Lord requires of us a vigilance that knows no relaxation. But we are not left to struggle alone. Amid the dangers increasing on every hand, those who walk humbly before God, distrustful of their own wisdom, will have angels as their helpers and protectors. In times of special peril they will know the power of God's keeping care.—RH April 25, 1907. {TA 272.3}

When self is hid in Jesus, we are shielded from the darts of the enemy (Letter 16a, 1895). {7BC 908.1}

Every weak, doubting, struggling soul who yields fully to the Lord is placed in direct touch with agencies that enable him to overcome. Heaven is near to him, and he has the support and help of angels of mercy in every time of trial and need. {AA 299.1}

A guardian angel is appointed to every follower of Christ. These heavenly watchers shield the righteous from the power of the wicked one. . . . The angels appointed to minister to the children of God have at all times access to His presence. {GC 512.2}

Thus God's people, exposed to the deceptive power and unsleeping malice of the prince of darkness, and in conflict with all the forces of evil, are assured of the unceasing guardianship of heavenly angels. {GC 513.1}

But those who follow Christ are ever safe under His watchcare. Angels that excel in strength are sent from heaven to protect them. The wicked one cannot break through the guard which God has stationed about His people.—GC 511-513, 516, 517. {TA 13.1}

Angels of God are watching over us. Upon this earth there are thousands and tens of thousands of heavenly messengers commissioned by the Father to prevent Satan from obtaining any advantage over those who refuse to walk in the path of evil. And these angels who guard God's children on earth are in communication with the Father in heaven.—HP 99. {TA 16.4}

The angels are with us every day, to guard and protect us from the assaults of the enemy. {TA 19.1}

Christ has made every provision that His church shall be a transformed body, illumined with the Light of the world, possessing the glory of Immanuel. It is His purpose that every Christian shall

be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. He desires that we shall reveal His own joy in our lives. {PK 720.1}

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}

The Lord's angels are appointed to keep strict watch over those who put their faith in the Lord, and these angels are to be our special help in every time of need. Every day we are to come to the Lord with full assurance of faith, and to look to Him for wisdom. . . . Those who are guided by the Word of the Lord will discern with certainty between falsehood and truth, between sin and righteousness. {AG 201.4}

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. He passes from death unto life; he becomes spiritual and discerns spiritual things. The wisdom of God enlightens his mind, and he beholds wondrous things out of His law. As a man is converted by the truth, the work of transformation of character goes on. He has an increased measure of understanding. In becoming a man of obedience to God, he has the mind of Christ, and the will of God becomes his will. {1SM 338.1}

As we near the time when principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places will be brought into warfare against the truth, when the deceiving power of Satan will be so great that if it were possible he will deceive the very elect, we must have our discernment sharpened by divine enlightenment, that we may know the Spirit that is of God, that we may not be ignorant of Satan's devices. {MR311 49.1}

Press close to Jesus, and place your hand in His, and He will firmly hold your hand, and never let go of the soul who maintains his faith in Him. . . . {UL 42.3}

The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. The way to heaven is consecrated by His footprints. Every thorn that wounds our feet has wounded His. Every cross that we are called to bear He has borne before us. The Lord permits conflicts, to prepare the soul for peace. The time of trouble is a fearful ordeal for God's people; but it is the time for every true believer to look up, and by faith he may see the bow of promise encircling him. {GC 633.1}

Amidst great discouragement, Nehemiah made God his trust, his sure defense. And He who was the support of His servant then has been the dependence of His people in every age. In every crisis His people may confidently declare, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:31. However craftily the plots of Satan and his agents may be laid, God can detect them, and bring to nought all their counsels. The response of faith today will be the response made by

Nehemiah, "Our God shall fight for us;" for God is in the work, and no man can prevent its ultimate success. {PK 645.2}

When the Christian takes his baptismal vow, divine help is pledged to him. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit stand ready to work in his behalf. God places at his command the resources of heaven, that he may be an overcomer. His own power is small; but God is omnipotent, and God is his helper. Daily he is to make known his wants at the throne of grace. By faith and trust, by availing himself of the resources provided, he can be more than a conqueror. {OHC 157.5}

He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, will carry forward His work. He will thwart the purposes of wicked men and will bring to confusion the counsels of those who plot mischief against His people. He who is the King, the Lord of hosts, sitteth between the cherubim, and amidst the strife and tumult of nations He guards His children still. When the strongholds of kings shall be overthrown, when the arrows of wrath shall strike through the hearts of His enemies, His people will be safe in His hands. {PK 176.1}

God has a deep and earnest love for every member of the human family; not one is forgotten, not one is left helpless and deceived to be overcome by the enemy. And if those who have enlisted in the army of Christ will put on the whole armor of God, and wear it, they will be proof against all the assaults of the enemy. Those who really desire to be taught of God, and to walk in His way, have the sure promise that if they feel their lack of wisdom and ask of God, He will give liberally, and upbraid not. {FE 299.2}

He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, can carry forward His great work harmoniously. That which appears to finite minds entangled and complicated, the Lord's hand can keep in perfect order. He can devise ways and means to thwart the purposes of wicked counselors, and those who plot out mischief. {4BC 1161.1}

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}

He finds His faithful ones, and holds communion with them, encouraging and strengthening them. And angels of God, that excel in strength, are sent forth by God to minister to His human workers who are speaking the truth to those who know it not. {8T 17.3}

From the beginning, faithful souls have constituted the church on earth. In every age the Lord has had His watchmen, who have borne a faithful testimony to the generation in which they lived. These sentinels gave the message of warning; and when they were called to lay off their armor, others took up the work. God brought these witnesses into covenant relation with

Himself, uniting the church on earth with the church in heaven. He has sent forth His angels to minister to His church, and the gates of hell have not been able to prevail against His people. {AA 11.2}

Through centuries of persecution, conflict, and darkness, God has sustained His church. Not one cloud has fallen upon it that He has not prepared for; not one opposing force has risen to counterwork His work, that He has not foreseen. All has taken place as He predicted. He has not left His church forsaken, but has traced in prophetic declarations what would occur, and that which His Spirit inspired the prophets to foretell has been brought about. All His purposes will be fulfilled. His law is linked with His throne, and no power of evil can destroy it. Truth is inspired and guarded by God; and it will triumph over all opposition. {AA 11.3}

God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Where Christ is even among the humble few, this is Christ's church, for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church. {UL 315.5}

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}

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. Weaknesses that have been manifested in a vacillating will and powerless character, are overcome, for continual devotion and piety bring the man in such close relation to Christ that he has the mind of Christ. He is one with Christ, having soundness and strength of principle. His perception is clear, and he manifests that wisdom which comes from God. {1SM 338.2}