

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2023: *Three Cosmic Messages*
Lesson 11 “The Seal of God and Mark of the Beast: Part 1”

Read for this week’s study

Revelation 14:12; Ephesians 2:8–10; Matthew 27:45–50; Revelation 13:15–17; Revelation 14:4; Luke 5:18–26.

Memory Text

“Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, ‘Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads’ ” (Revelation 7:2, 3, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Steadfast Endurance
- III. The Cosmic Struggle
- IV. Reaping What We Sow
- V. Those Who Follow the Lamb
- VI. Jesus: Our Only Mediator
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “In this lesson, we will explore further the difference between how God operates and how the enemy of souls does. He usurps God’s authority, commands loyalty, and introduces a counterfeit system of worship through the use of force, coercion, and at times bribes and rewards—all in order to compel worship. In contrast, love is the great motivating force of the kingdom of God. God’s people find their greatest joy and highest delight in worshipping Him. They are committed to Him because they know how committed He is to them.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Sunday’s lesson looks at “steadfast endurance” from Revelation 14:12. After the announcement of the fate of those who reject worshipping God (vs. 9-11), John turns our attention to discuss four characteristics of those who worship God: they have

- steadfast endurance; they are saints; commandment-keepers and have the faith of Jesus. But there is more to this text than law and gospel, obligation and promise.
3. Monday's lesson illustrates what "faith of Jesus" means by focusing on Jesus' death in Matthew 27:45-50. God has been revealed in the world through the witness of Jesus. What matters in this situation—the situation when the cosmic conflict comes to an end—is the perseverance of the saints. They hold on to the commandments of God as revealed by the "*faithfulness of Jesus*" (14:12). The attitude of his witnesses speaks of the constancy of God that was so clearly demonstrated in Jesus. That's what reflecting his name, his character, his seal represents.
 4. Tuesday's lesson uses the principle of "reaping what we sow" (Galatians 6:7-9) to illustrate the fate of those who choose worshiping the beast over worshiping God. Satan works by misrepresentation (Genesis 3:4 cf. 2:17) and imitation, providing his alternative. The dragon tried to imitate the testimony of Jesus; he also deals in witnesses pretending to be killed with violence (Revelation 13:3). But it will not work. There is a telling difference between the two, the one who was killed with violence (5:6; 13:8) and the one who uses violence to kill (13:15; 18:24).
 5. Wednesday's lesson contrasts those who follow the beast (13:3-5, 8) and those who follow the Lamb (14:1, 2). What cultural realities of today's world are universally "worshiped" without being questioned by the majority? What would a call to faithfulness and "following the Lamb" look like in today's world?
 6. Thursday's lesson discusses the role of the mediator. First Timothy 2:5 teaches that there is one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ. What is the role of Jesus, if he himself said, "I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf, for the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God" (John 16:26-27)?
 7. The false Trinity in Revelation 13 seeks to put its "mark" on "those who live on the earth." They achieve it partly by deception and partly by coercion. God responds in Revelation 14 in two ways. First, he warns people not to take the mark (14:9-11). Secondly, he puts forward his own mark (7:1-17; 14:1), "the seal of God." Revelation presents this as "the confrontation of signs". Two things should be said about these "marks." First, they are profoundly representative of the two sides of the cosmic conflict — the mark reflects the *name*. Second, the dragon's side is in the business of *imitation*. Thus, his "mark" must be, too. The result is that every person is either "sealed" or "marked" in the context of the eschatological crisis.
 8. Because the divine command was *misrepresented* before it was *violated* (Genesis 2:17-3:4; Romans 7:7-13), God's making things right had to address the misrepresentation and not only the violation. Therefore, the third angel draws attention to "the commandments of God as explained by the faithfulness of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).
 9. How do we, in our time and culture, model to the world in a positive way what God's name, character and putting things right represent?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

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

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

Graham: Well, one has to stop and realize that the people who crucified Christ kept the Seventh-day Sabbath scrupulously; very, very carefully. Did they have the seal of God? They certainly were not settled into the truth about God. When Jesus brought the truth about God, they said He had a devil, and they killed Him to silence His witness. On the other hand though, you remember the evening we talked about how the Sabbath sums up the good news about our God? I believe that the knowing, meaningful, intelligent, thoughtful observance of the seventh day as a reminder of all these great demonstrations of the truth about our God, could be an outward expression of an inward conviction and a settling into this truth about our God. The Seventh-day Sabbath beautifully fits this mark of identification of those who are committed to the truth about God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #18 with Lou Venden, "God Waits for His Children to Grow Up" recorded June 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/18MMCAG>*

Lou: Seventh-day Adventists are notorious, or shall I say famous, or well-known, for emphasis upon the mark of the beast. It seems to be very important to the message. What is it? Would you say a bit more about that?

Graham: Well, since such dreadful things happen to those who have the mark, we had better know something about it. As you know, there are many, many different views. Fortunately, though, there will be opportunity next time, when we talk about Satan's final effort to deceive, to go into this in more detail. In the meantime though, earlier in the book of Revelation it talks about God's loyal people having a seal. It seems they have some mark of loyalty and trust. And I would make this comparable. There's some indication that they prefer Satan's lies to the truth. They have

accepted him, the false Christ, as their redeemer. So we need to look for something that would be an appropriate mark.

I'm very impressed with, among the many, many meanings, with the fact that if you go the *Vicarius Filii Dei*, which you'll find not just Seventh-day Adventists have done, many others too, the literal meaning is, "substitute for the Son of God," which is exactly what Satan has wanted to be, substitute for the Son of God. But I'm more intrigued with the fact that you can find the very number 666 back to the centuries and the millennia, connected with devil worship and other misrepresentations of the truth. The one thing sure, it is a mark of rejection of the truth, a preference for Satan's side and loyalty to him, whatever it is. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #16 with Lou Venden, "God's Last Pleading with His Children" 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/16MMCAG>*

Lou: There's another word in there: "Here is the patience of the saints." I remember some of the translations say, "Here is the endurance of the saints." And now this one has, "Patient endurance."

Graham: That's an interesting combination here. There are two words, one is "patience," you know, "I am patiently waiting for the Lord to come; don't disturb me." The actual Greek word here means, "remaining under," as if you were pushing something. You put your shoulder to the wheel, and you stay under, and you shove with all your might. That's the word here. "Endurance" is better. But the *New International* says, "This calls for patient endurance." That's really bridging them both.

Lou: That struck me that that would be comparable to our colloquial expression today, "hanging in there."

Graham: That's true.

Lou: Standing under.

Graham: And it's not going to be easy. It calls for endurance. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #16 with Lou Venden, "God's Last Pleading with His Children" 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/16MMCAG>*

So in imagination let's go to the cross, and watch Jesus die. Did He really die? The soldiers were surprised to find he was already dead. Crucifixion was a slow way of dying. Evidently something else had happened. Is it true that Jesus was dying the death of a sinner, to show us how the sinner really dies? Look at the next verse on our sheet, 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin" (RSV). He did die the death of a sinner. And what caused

Jesus to die? As you watch him dying on the cross, is God killing His Son? Is He torturing his Son to death? Is God pouring out His wrath on His Son; something the Bible so often pictures God doing toward sinners for whom there is no further hope?

Well, it all depends on the meaning of wrath. What is God's wrath? One of the clearest explanations in the whole Bible is in Romans 1, the next passage. And I wish we could read at least the whole first chapter. But look at these few verses; Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth . . . [and it is the truth about God in that whole section]. Therefore, God gave them up . . . For this reason God gave them up . . . And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up. (RSV)

Three times it states in Romans 1 that God's wrath is simply His turning away, in loving disappointment, from those who do not want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequence of their own rebellious choice. Was Jesus given up? Look at Romans 4:25: ". . . Jesus our Lord, who was put to death [given up] for our trespasses" (RSV).

There is nothing in the Greek that says He was "put to death." It says what is in the brackets there. "Jesus our Lord, who was given up for our trespasses . . ." and it is exactly the same word as in Romans 1:24, 26, 28. And versions ought to leave them the same to show the point that Jesus died under the wrath of His Father. But look at the real meaning of God's wrath. And this was not new with Paul. It's all through the Old Testament; most dramatically in Hosea 11. Again, I wish we could read the whole chapter. Hosea 11 just verses 7 and 8: "My people are bent on turning away from me . . . but How, oh how can I give you up, Ephraim! How, oh how, can I hand you over Israel!" *Phillips*

Did Jesus understand that this is the experience He was passing through? Did Jesus know He was being given up as Hosea describes it? And Paul later in Romans 1 and 4? What did Jesus cry just before He died? "My God, my God, why are You beating Me up? Why are you torturing Me? Why are you killing Me?" No! "Why have you given Me up?" He knew.

We should have come earlier, though—to Gethsemane. For He began this awesome experience of demonstrating the truth about God's gracious but awful warning, that the wages of sin is death. We should have come to Gethsemane. And there Jesus fell to the ground dying. The angels were watching. Was God killing His Son in the Garden of Gethsemane, or did Jesus feel His unity with His Father breaking up? He began to feel the awesome loneliness of being given up. Had Jesus been left in the Garden of Gethsemane, and had died there, could you say that the Father had killed the Son? Now had He been a mere creature you wouldn't know; but the angels knew who Jesus was. They knew that He was God. And they knew the meaning of His words. I should have included the verse in John 10:18. Jesus said, "No one takes My life from Me. No one can. I lay it down of Myself. I have the power to lay it down and I have the power to

take it up.” The angels knew that was the truth. And if Jesus died it was not because His Father had killed Him. The Father was giving Him up and both of them suffered, and the Father was crying, “How can I give you up?” The Son who had assumed humanity was the One who died. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #8, “The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence” recorded March 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>*

I’m not so worried about the beast as I am about the dragon who gives his power to the beast, the one who is behind all the heads. Sometimes we act as if one of the heads is our great enemy. On the contrary. The devil has worked through every false religious system. And it is significant to note that every false religious system has a substitute for the Son of God in one form or another. In the mystery religions that were popular in the days of these early Christians who were hearing this, there were dying, rising saviors who counterfeited the true Christ. So this substituting for the Son of God has gone on from the very beginning. It began up in heaven when Lucifer wished to take the place of the other ‘Lucifer’ in the respect and reverence of the angels.

So if you prefer his side, and you are distinguished in some way as preferring that side, your faith is in him and your loyalty is to him, and you prefer his way of doing things, this is what will happen to you. You will drink the wine of God’s wrath. But we’ve been prepared for wrath for sixty-five books. What is the meaning of God’s wrath? In Hosea 11, in Romans 1, specifically in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28, God’s wrath. He is the Father of the people He is about to give up. So how does He feel? He sadly turns away in loving disappointment from those who prefer the other side. Think of preferring the leadership of the one who led in the torture of the Son of God. But these people prefer his way of doing things. What would God do to those who would rather worship the deceiver than the infinitely trustworthy One? Does He beat them up? or give them up? Remember Hosea 11, where God cries, “How can I give you up, how can I let you go?” We know that is the meaning of God’s wrath. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Revelation, recorded August 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/79MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/80MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: You’ve talked about intercession, a mediator, as part of an emergency measure. Does that mean that we don’t need an advocate? First John, second chapter talks about, “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Are you saying that we don’t need an advocate?

Graham: As I mentioned, if one is still afraid of God, the Bible says we have an advocate with the Father. However, knowing that we really don't need someone to intercede with the Father, do we still need an advocate? Well, if we only determined who it is that's really against us, then we would see why we need an advocate standing beside the Father, the Paraclete, called to His side to help. Satan is against us, the accuser of the brethren who accuses us day and night before God. Look in Zechariah 3, who is accusing Joshua the High Priest? Who is defending? In Job, who is accusing? Who is defending? So since we have an enemy, God's enemy is our enemy too. We need an advocate. We need someone to represent us. To God? No. He's our Friend as much as the Son and the Holy Spirit.

But our future neighbors and friends, the inhabitants of the universe, might not be too sure about us. And God doesn't ask them to accept His list of candidates. He doesn't run His universe that way. So He allows Satan to accuse, and has Jesus explain. If He can defend, He does. If He can't, He won't. And so it's very real to me that Jesus is in this role of advocate and intercessor defending His loyal children who may even be just babes in the truth. If they trust Him like the thief on the cross, Jesus can say, "Yes, he has a terrible record as the Devil has pointed out, but he has a new heart and a right spirit. I commend him as safe to save, even to live next door to." And his guardian angel heaves a big sigh of relief.

Lou: Not from God's wrath or anything like that, that He's protecting us.

Graham: No. So often, we've got the wrong enemy.

Lou: He made God the enemy.

Graham: Yes.

Lou: Exactly what the devil would like to have us think.

Graham: Exactly. The Father's not our foe. No. "If God can be for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #11 with Lou Venden, "God's Emergency Measures" recorded April 1984, Loma Linda, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:

<http://pkp.cc/11MMCAG>

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

By beholding Jesus as He is, the sinner is transformed and elevated to the very summit of dignity, even to a seat with Christ upon his throne. . . . {TMK 96.4}

The plan of redemption provides for every emergency and for every want of the soul. If it were deficient in any way, the sinner might find some excuse to plead for neglect of its terms, but the infinite God had a knowledge of every human necessity, and ample provision has been made to supply every need. . . . {TMK 96.5}

As God raised Christ from the dead, that He might bring life and immortality to light through the gospel, and thus save His people from their sins, so Christ has raised fallen human beings from spiritual death, quickening them with His life, filling their hearts with hope and joy (MS 89, 1903). {6BC 1115.13}

Every human being is the object of loving interest to Him who gave His life that He might bring men back to God. Souls guilty and helpless, liable to be destroyed by the arts and snares of Satan, are cared for as a shepherd cares for the sheep of his flock. {MH 162.1}

God's grace is ever working upon the human heart, and when it is received, the evidence of its reception will appear in the life and character of its recipient, for spiritual life will be seen developing from within. The grace of Christ in the heart will always promote spiritual life, and spiritual advancement will be made. {TMK 163.2}

God makes no requirement without making provision for its fulfillment. Through the grace of Christ we may accomplish everything that God requires. {COL 301.2}

It is God's pleasure and will that the blessings bestowed on man shall be given in perfect completeness. He has made provision that every difficulty may be overcome, every want supplied through the Holy Spirit. {7BC 932.5}

Where there is not only a belief in God's Word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love, and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God. {AG 137.5}

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to

doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith. {SC 105.2}

With the trusting faith of a little child, we are to come to our heavenly Father, telling Him of all our needs. He is always ready to pardon and help. The supply of divine wisdom is inexhaustible, and the Lord encourages us to draw largely from it. {3BC 1146.8}

God is ever seeking to instruct finite men that they may exercise faith in Him and trust themselves wholly in His hands. Every drop of rain or flake of snow, every spire of grass, every leaf and flower and shrub, testifies of God. These little things so common around us, teach the lesson that nothing is beneath the notice of the infinite God, nothing too small for His attention (GCB Feb. 18, 1897). {3BC 1141.3}

But though the conflict is a ceaseless one, none are left to struggle alone. Angels help and protect those who walk humbly before God. Never will our Lord betray one who trusts in Him. As His children draw near to Him for protection from evil, in pity and love He lifts up for them a standard against the enemy. Touch them not, He says; for they are Mine. I have graven them upon the palms of My hands. {PK 570.4}

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}

The Lord will not disappoint any who put their trust in Him. He will be first and last and best in everything to us. He will be a present help in every time of need. In these last days of service we shall ... be held, and led, and protected, by the power of Christ. {RY 112.1}

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is "alienated from the life of God." Christ says, "All they that hate Me love death." Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them. {DA 764.1}

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe. {DA 764.2}

God destroys no man. Every man who is destroyed will destroy himself. When a man stifles the admonitions of conscience, he sows the seeds of unbelief and these produce a sure harvest.... {OHC 26.4}

He was the teacher sent by God to instruct mankind. As one in whom all restorative power is found, Christ spoke of drawing all men unto Him, and of giving the life everlasting. In Him there is power to heal every physical and every spiritual disease. {LHU 167.5}

God does not control our minds without our consent; but every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they may find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who consent to enter into covenant with God are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature. {MH 93.1}

In matters of conscience the soul must be left untrammelled. No one is to control another's mind, to judge for another, or to prescribe his duty. God gives to every soul freedom to think, and to follow his own convictions. {DA 550.6}

Men have the power to quench the Spirit of God; the power of choosing is left with them. They are allowed freedom of action. {FLB 58.3}

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}

It is no arbitrary decree on the part of God that excludes the wicked from heaven; they are shut out by their own unfitness for its companionship. The glory of God would be to them a consuming fire. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. {SC 17.2}

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. {MB 93.1}

Jesus began His work by breaking Satan's power over the suffering. He restored the sick to health, gave sight to the blind, and healed the lame, causing them to leap for joy and to glorify God. He restored to health those who had been infirm and bound by Satan's cruel power many years. With gracious words He comforted the weak, the trembling, and the desponding. The feeble, suffering ones whom Satan held in triumph, Jesus wrenched from his grasp, bringing to

them soundness of body and great joy and happiness. He raised the dead to life, and they glorified God for the mighty display of His power. He wrought mightily for all who believed on Him. {EW 159.3}

The Saviour was above all prejudice of nation or people; He was willing to extend the blessings and privileges of the Jews to all who would accept the light which He came to the world to bring. It caused Him great joy to behold even one soul reaching out to Him from the night of spiritual blindness. {5BC 1134.5}