

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### Second Quarter 2023: *Three Cosmic Messages*

### Lesson 12 “The Seal of God and Mark of the Beast: Part 2”

#### Read for this week’s study

Revelation 12:6, 14; Daniel 7:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; Deuteronomy 6:8; Deuteronomy 11:18; Exodus 20:8–11.

#### 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. The Deadly Wound
- III. The Falling Away
- IV. Satan’s Final Strategy
- V. The Mark of the Beast
- VI. The Sabbath Test
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. How does the devil work by imitating God through the false Trinity in Revelation 13? Notice the “deadly wound” (13:3 cf. 5:6), its healing (13:3, 12, 14), the time period allotted to the beast’s activity (13:5), blasphemous activity (16:6), and the final outcome (13:7). What does it teach us about recognizing satanic powers at work? How is God’s activity different? (Sunday’s lesson)
2. Monday’s lesson focuses on the predicted “falling away” (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, 9-12) which was at work in Paul’s time and would flourish in later centuries. What can one do to avoid being swept away by this deception? (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12)
3. What can we learn about Satan’s final strategy in Revelation 17:12-14? (Tuesday’s lesson) What is the role of this gathering (cf. 16:12-16)? Notice the close connection between the Lamb and his believing community (17:14). Here we learn the outcome

of the Armageddon war which was not clear in 16:13-16. Note the destruction by implosion from within (17:16-17), rather than by divine retribution.

4. Wednesday's lesson finally brings us to the mark of the beast (Rev 14:9; 13:16-17). Why is the "mark of the beast" placed either in the forehead or the hand, while the "seal of God" is placed only on the forehead? (3:12; 7:2-3; 22:4)
5. Already in Deuteronomy 6:8 when Moses told the Israelites to bind the commandments 'as symbols on your hands and bind them on your forehead', it was not intended to be taken literally. It was meant as a teaching tool to demonstrate the choice to internalize the commandments. Jesus and the New Testament authors are clear that the function of circumcision is not merely physical, but what it signifies on the heart (Romans 2:29).
6. The Gospel of John shows the risk of observing the Sabbath while separating it from its meaning (John 19:31). The day itself had achieved independent standing: the *day* had become more important than its *meaning*. Finally, there was no need to consider the *meaning*. Worse yet, it became the *right day* but the *wrong meaning*. That's why Jesus devoted a significant portion of his ministry to correcting the spirituality wrongly understood or pursued.
7. Based on Calvinist theology, the Sabbath has been seen through the centuries more as "the sign of God's *authority*". Thus, what was emphasized was the *authority-question* and the necessity of *obedience-response*. But is that the meaning of the Sabbath in the Bible?
8. Seen through the prism of God's character, the Sabbath is a sign of God's *commitment* more than a divine *commandment*. God's commitment is the primary biblical meaning. We see God's commitment in God's rest in Genesis (Gen 2:1-3) and in God's promise in Isaiah (Isa 56:1-8). We see it clearly in John, where the extent of God's commitment is demonstrated in conspicuous Sabbath healings (John 5:1-18; 9:1-41). This absurdity comes to a head precisely on the Passover Friday when Sabbath-observing Jews were rushing to put things in order so they could observe the Sabbath properly (John 19:31).
9. When, Revelation says, "God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them" (Revelation 21:3), it portrays Sabbath in the form of God's enduring commitment as a start of eternal Sabbath.
10. Classical Christianity argues that the Sabbath is changeable because it is arbitrary. Most Sabbath defenders concur that it is arbitrary, but they do not agree that it should be changed. But if the controversy between good and evil in the biblical narrative revolves around the question of whether God is arbitrary, it is difficult to appreciate how God will be vindicated from the charge that he is arbitrary under a symbol that proves God's arbitrariness. Moreover, if the alleged arbitrary feature of the Sabbath is made to be its most fundamental characteristic, it certainly leaves a residue of arbitrariness on God's reputation. By choosing this line of reasoning,

defenders of the Sabbath may be winning the battle for the Sabbath at the tremendous cost of losing the war concerning the character of God.

11. If the third angel's message is the 'eternal gospel' (like the first two messages), then it must be about God's character of love, undeserved grace and eternal commitment to his created children. And because of the finality of the outcome of this last battle, in his final pleading God uses such language to give his wayward children every chance to understand the critical and eternal significance of the choice they make. He wants to see his children saved, not deceived!
12. When preaching the third angel's message, how can we express this in a positive and motivating context, rather than denouncing people? When we deal with a future unfulfilled prophecy, how can we help people concentrate on God's character, rather than on a day? (John 13:19; 14:29)

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

See quotes with lesson number 11.

**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

God had a knowledge of the events of the future, even before the creation of the world. He did not make His purposes to fit circumstances, but He allowed matters to develop and work out. He did not work to bring about a certain condition of things, but He knew that such a condition would exist. The plan that should be carried out upon the defection of any of the high intelligences of heaven—this is the secret, the mystery which has been hid from ages. And an offering was prepared in the eternal purposes to do the very work which God has done for fallen humanity (ST March 25, 1897). {6BC 1082.3}

The purpose and plan of grace existed from all eternity. Before the foundation of the world it was according to the determinate counsel of God that man should be created, endowed with power to do the divine will. But the defection of man, with all its consequences, was not hidden

from the Omnipotent, and yet it did not deter him from carrying out his eternal purpose; for the Lord would establish his throne in righteousness. God knows the end from the beginning; “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” Therefore redemption was not an afterthought—a plan formulated after the fall of Adam—but an eternal purpose to be wrought out for the blessing not only of this atom of a world but for the good of all the worlds which God has created. {ST, April 25, 1892 par. 1}

Not one cloud has fallen upon the church that God has not prepared for; not one opposing force has risen to counterwork the work of God but He has foreseen. All has taken place as He has predicted through His prophets. He has not left His church in darkness, forsaken, but has traced in prophetic declarations what would occur, and through His providence, acting in its appointed place in the world’s history, He has brought about that which His Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to foretell. All His purposes will be fulfilled and established. His law is linked with His throne, and satanic agencies combined with human agencies cannot destroy it. Truth is inspired and guarded by God; it will live, and will succeed, although it may appear at times to be overshadowed. The gospel of Christ is the law exemplified in character. The deceptions practiced against it, every device for vindicating falsehood, every error forged by satanic agencies, will eventually be eternally broken, and the triumph of truth will be like the appearing of the sun at noonday. The Sun of Righteousness shall shine forth with healing in His wings, and the whole earth shall be filled with His glory. {2SM 108.2}

The enemy can never take out of the hand of Christ the one who is simply trusting in His promises. If the soul is trusting and working obediently, the mind is susceptible to divine impressions, and the light of God shines in, enlightening the understanding. What privileges we have in Christ Jesus! {SD 351.4}

In the great closing work we shall meet with perplexities that we know not how to deal with; but let us not forget that the three great powers of heaven are working, that a divine hand is on the wheel, and that God will bring His promises to pass. He will gather from the world a people who will serve Him in righteousness. {8T 254.1}

Upon the banks of the river Chebar, Ezekiel beheld a whirlwind seeming to come from the north, “a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber.” A number of wheels, intersecting one another, were moved by four living beings. High above all these “was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.” “And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man’s hand under their wings.” Ezekiel 1:4, 26; 10:8. The wheels were so complicated in arrangement that at first sight they appeared to be in confusion; but they moved in perfect harmony. Heavenly beings, sustained and guided by the hand beneath the wings of the

cherubim, were impelling these wheels; above them, upon the sapphire throne, was the Eternal One; and round about the throne a rainbow, the emblem of divine mercy. {Ed 177.3}

As the wheellike complications were under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations, He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of the earth. {Ed 178.1}

The animating Spirit of God, working through human agencies, leads the believers to be of one mind, one soul, unitedly loving God and keeping His commandments—preparing here below for translation (RH Oct. 13, 1904). {7BC 984.3}

The heavenly intelligences, angels that excel in strength, are waiting, obedient to His command, to unite with human agencies; and the Lord will interpose when matters have come to such a pass that none but a divine power can counteract the satanic agencies at work. When His people shall be in the greatest danger, seemingly unable to stand against the power of Satan, God will work in their behalf. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. {2SM 373.1}

There is a marked contrast between those who bear the seal of God and those who worship the beast and his image. The Lord's faithful servants will receive the bitterest persecution from false teachers, who will not hear the word of God, and who prepare stumbling blocks to put in the way of those who would hear. But God's people are not to fear. Satan cannot go beyond his limit. The Lord will be the defense of His people. {Mar 191.3}

Satan is at work from beneath to stir up the hellish powers of his confederacy of evil against the just. He imbues human agencies with his own attributes. Evil angels united with evil men will put forth efforts to harass, persecute, and destroy. But the Lord God of Israel will not forsake those who trust in Him. Amid the strengthening of infidelity and apostasy, amid the pretended illumination which is the blindest presumption and delusion, there will be a light from the sanctuary above shining upon God's people. The truth of God will triumph. {UL 262.2}

This world is a theater. The actors, the inhabitants of the world, are preparing to act their part in the last great drama. God is lost sight of. There is no unity of purpose, except as parties of men confederate to gain their ends. God is looking on. His purposes in regard to His rebellious subjects will be fulfilled. The world has not been given into the hands of men, though God is permitting the elements of confusion and disorder to bear sway for a season. (Letter 141, 1902). {6BC 1106.2}

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 517.2}

Had Eve refrained from entering into argument with the tempter, she would have been safe; but she ventured to parley with him and fell a victim to his wiles. It is thus that many are still overcome. They doubt and argue concerning the requirements of God; and instead of obeying the divine commands, they accept human theories, which but disguise the devices of Satan. {GC 531.2}

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 (MS 43, 1907). {7BC 907.1}

Invisible armies of light and power attend the meek and lowly ones who believe and claim the promises of God. Cherubim and seraphim, and angels that excel in strength, stand at God's right hand, "All ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."—AA 154. {TA 17.1}

You are not alone in the warfare against wrong. Could the curtain be rolled back, you would see heavenly angels fighting with you. This they must do; it is their work to guard the youth. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels minister to the youth.—YI Jan. 1, 1903. {TA 19.2}

God's faithful, praying ones are, as it were, shut in with Him. They themselves know not how securely they are shielded. Urged on by Satan, the rulers of this world are seeking to destroy them; but could the eyes of God's children be opened as were the eyes of Elisha's servant at Dothan, they would see angels of God encamped about them, holding in check the hosts of darkness. {PK 590.3}

The cloud that was a wall of darkness to the Egyptians was to the Hebrews a great flood of light, illuminating the whole camp, and shedding brightness upon the path before them. So the dealings of Providence bring to the unbelieving, darkness and despair, while to the trusting soul they are full of light and peace. The path where God leads the way may lie through the desert or the sea, but it is a safe path. {PP 290.3}

God is constantly seeking to draw men close under His protection, that Satan may not practice his cruel, deceptive power upon them. {PP 503.3}

The Sabbath and the family were alike instituted in Eden, and in God's purpose they are indissolubly linked together. On this day more than on any other, it is possible for us to live the life of Eden. . . . {Ed 250.2}

Determined to efface the image of God in man, Satan works with an intensity of effort to hide God from view. Not openly does he work, but secretly, mingling the human and the divine, the spurious and the genuine, so seeking to bring confusion and distress. But in proportionate power divine mercy is revealed to counteract this wicked working, and bring to light the enemy's hidden purposes. {TDG 308.5}

The seal of the living God will be placed upon those only who bear a likeness to Christ in character (RH May 21, 1895). {7BC 970.3}