

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### Fourth Quarter 2023: *God's Mission—My Mission*

### Lesson 13 "The End of God's Mission"

#### Read for this week's study

Revelation 1:1–7; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 14:6–12; Luke 11:23; 1 Timothy 2:4; Revelation 21:1–4.

#### Memory Text

"Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter 3:11, 12, NKJV).

#### Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Revelation: God's Last-Day Mission
- III. The Three Angels' Messages and Mission
- IV. The Final Crisis
- V. Success in Mission
- VI. Mission Complete
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. "In this quarter's final lesson, we will see that Revelation is a missionary book focused on a missionary God who is calling us to be a missionary church. Our calling to proclaim 'present truth' to the world will exist right up until everyone has made the choice for or against God." (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. How does the book of Revelation open with God's mission for human beings (Revelation 1:1–7)? (Sunday's lesson) What does it mean that we are "kings and priests"? If all are kings, are we not servants anymore? If all are priests, are we not friends anymore? (John 15:15)
3. How does Revelation 14:6–12 depict God's mission and his last warning message? (Monday's lesson) If God is so powerful that he is going to triumph ultimately, why does this "require the patience of the saints" (14:12)? In what sense is God's mission given from a position of weakness? How is that reflected in the Gospels, Acts, and Pauline theology? And how was that lost in medieval thinking or in the conquest of new mission fields?

4. Why does the gospel need to go to “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6)? (Tuesday’s lesson) Why does every one of these groups of people matter to God?
5. How we define success, determines what we measure. (Wednesday’s lesson) If we measure the wrong things, the results are more detrimental than if we did not measure at all! What are we going to consider success? Because spiritual things are inherently difficult to quantify, most churches never try, or they measure easily quantifiable factors like attendance, donations, or the condition of the facilities.
6. But if believers must demonstrate marks of growing spiritual maturity, success cannot be determined by the number of conversions, baptisms, or total church membership! Developing people to be fully committed followers of Jesus is also a task for the church. Simply achieving conversions does not fulfil the biblical mission. We also need to ask: Is spiritual transformation taking place? Is there personal spiritual nourishment? Is there involvement in ministry for others? Is there an authentic change in the life of the converts?
7. When is the mission complete (Revelation 21:1–4; 22–22:5)? (Thursday’s lesson) John describes the population of the redeemed as a single multitude, yet gathered from, and still individually recognized as part of every tribe, nation, and people! Unlike human empires, the Church cannot homogenize people into uniform ice cubes but must integrate them like diverse snowflakes into a matrix of interlocking social diversity. That’s how the New Jerusalem in Revelation differs from Babel in Genesis.
8. The supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in Christians produces even more diversity than that given by differences of gender (male and female), or ethnic origin (Jew and Gentile), or the cultural human diversity due to differences of socio-economic status (slave and free) [Galatians 3:28]. This enhanced diversity is a result of differences of the various spiritual gifts God gives each of us and ministries in the fellowship of the Church (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4).
9. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit does not produce a “battery farm” of similar clones, but a vast family of precious individuals, each one loved and valued for their uniqueness and the contribution they bring to the community of redeemed.
10. Wherever we try to generate an exclusive “in” group, wherever we define our world as “them versus us”, we are grieving the Holy Spirit and we are not fulfilling our mission as God’s people. Any time we create polarization in church or society, erect walls of separation and foster barriers of division, we cease to be followers of our God. For God in Christ has stepped into our world to demolish all walls of discrimination and prejudice that sin has constructed.
11. In the world to come the immense diversity that characterizes us as humans is not erased – it is preserved and enhanced in a vast multi-cultural, multi-lingual celebration. In heaven and on the renewed earth, we are not all going to be the same. We are all going to be gloriously different! How can we model and foster in our church life here and now this social richness of that future world?

## Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Now when we read that first angel's message to "worship the Creator of the heaven and earth, the Creator of the sea and springs," perhaps we are reminded that the first mention of the Sabbath comes in the Bible at the end of creation week. I wonder if tonight we could think back in imagination to the very dramatic events of that first week of this earth's history. The war had begun already in heaven. Satan had already leveled his charges and his accusations. One-third of the angels had already agreed with him that God is not worthy of our love and our trust.

Right in the middle of that devastating crisis, God invites His family to watch Him as He creates yet another world—this time, ours. How easily He could have created our world with a snap of His fingers, in just an instant of time. But in the dramatic and significant setting of the Great Controversy, He chose this time to do it in six twenty-four hour days. On the first day, all He said was, "Let there be light." That's all. And then days two, three, four, five, as God in unhurried majesty and drama unfolded His plans for our earth. By the sixth day, what a beautiful place this was. Where now were Satan's charges that God was selfish?

I mean, look at the freedom. He created us in His own image with power to think and to do. And we know from human history that He created us free to either love and trust Him, or hate Him and spit in His face, because it has been done. And He created us able to do it! {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #10, "The Reminder of the 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/10MMCAG>*

For example, do we not understand it is our commission to preach the messages in Revelation 14—the three angels' messages? Now what's the third angel's message all about if it isn't about wind, earthquake and fire? How the wicked will be burned in sulfurous flames. Fearsome words! And if we haven't learned why God uses such language, we can't give that third angel's message without having a wrong influence on people. If we preach the third angel's message and lead people to serve God from fear, we've done more harm than good.

Do you know how to preach those awful words of the third angel's message in such a way that they do not contradict the Good News of the first angel, that God does not wish us to serve Him from fear? Can we not draw from the preceding books in scripture and explain when God raises His voice, it's just as a last resort? If He doesn't raise it, He'll have to give us up. But He makes one last attempt to capture our attention and hold it long enough to tell us what He told Elijah. "I don't like raising my voice, but I'm willing to do it to get your attention."

Now, I see all through the Bible, God raising His voice. And how good to find long before Jesus came, right here in Kings, God making it clear He'd rather talk softly. Because when He raises His

voice, we're too quick to say, "All that the Lord has said, we will do." You remember, at the foot of Sinai? "All that the Lord has said, we will do." But when He stopped speaking so loudly, what were they doing in forty days, but dancing drunk around the golden calf? The obedience that springs from fear doesn't last very long, and it even turns us against the One who asks us to obey. The quality of obedience given to someone we're scared of isn't very good. It even irritates and undermines love and respect and can turn us into rebels. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – 1&2 Kings, recorded November 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/17MMPOGIA66> (1 Kings - Part 1)

<http://pkp.cc/18MMPOGIA66> (1 Kings - Part 2)

<http://pkp.cc/19MMPOGIA66> (2 Kings - Part 1)

<http://pkp.cc/20MMPOGIA66> (2 Kings - Part 2)

As he experienced this separation from His Father, "So great was this agony, that His physical pain was hardly felt. With amazement angels witnessed the Savior's despairing agony." Note the words, agony, fear, consternation. He was really tempted to doubt all that He'd been teaching. He even wondered if He'd rise again."

Maybe He was tempted to believe this legal explanation that the second death is, you die and stay dead forever. And if He was going to pay the price for sin, He would have to die, and stay dead forever. He would never rise again. But He didn't come to pay that penalty. He came to answer the questions, and as soon as He had answered them (He did wait over Sabbath, to add more meanings to the Sabbath, so that every Sabbath we'd remember the questions He'd answered on Friday) He arose a great while before it was day, and He hastened to heaven. And He said to Mary, "Don't detain Me! I have to hasten to heaven." And He appeared before His Father, and the angels, and He said, "Was it enough?" To pay the price of sin? "No," they could have said, "You're supposed to stay dead for eternity. You hurry back! We'll not let anybody know You were out." They never said such a thing! They said, "It is more than enough. You've cleared up all our questions. You've confirmed our trust without fear for eternity." And He came back down to see if the twelve had gotten the message, and they were all in a deep depression. It took Him a long time to revive them.

And to this present day, do we really accept what He came to reveal at such infinite cost, that He does not wish to be served from fear. The Father will no more kill us at the end of the millennium than He killed his Son—which leads some to believe that He did kill His Son as He will kill the wicked at the end. How have you worked this out yourself? How did Jesus resolve these

questions on the cross? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Luke, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/55MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/56MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: It's part of our problem, then, that we are taking models from our legal system here and trying to apply them to God.

Graham: That's a very good point, very much so.

Lou: The "substitutionary," that comes in, say more about that. The "vicarious."

Graham: Ah. He died in our stead. He died as the substitution. In a way, it's very true. I mean, either He dies or we die. However, that's where the comparison ends, because if God has let you and me and all other sinners die, all it would have done is prove the truthfulness of His warning, "If you sin, you will die." And God could say to the universe, "Was I right? I said sinners would die, and look, they're dead." But the universe would not have had answers to questions two and three that I just mentioned. When Jesus died, there was no doubt in the minds of the universe that God was not killing His Son. They were clear about that. And the death of Christ answers all those three questions. So it's not either us or Him. His death was infinitely more significant than ours. But had He not died, then what else could God do but leave us to reap the consequences and we all would have died. So in a sense, yes, He died in our stead. But beyond that there's no comparison.

Lou: But not as a payoff. It's not one or the other.

Graham: It's not His death is equal to all of ours. His death is infinitely more significant than the death of every sinful man or angel who has ever lived. The death of angels and men would not have answered the questions.

Lou: What you're saying then, is that just a simple satisfaction idea doesn't encompass what's involved at all, does it?

Graham: Oh, it makes it much too small. I think it puts God in a very bad light, and it doesn't answer the questions of the Great Controversy. Many folk who prefer those understandings of the plan of salvation do not understand there has been a universe-wide great controversy over the character and government of God. And do you remember at our first meeting, I brought along the evidence that even Luther, hero of the Christian world that he is, could not conceive of these larger issues because he couldn't include the book of Revelation—let alone Hebrews, James and Jude. And this has been the pattern through the years. Not many have seen the sixty-sixth book picture of a universe-wide controversy over the character and government of God.

And so they have seen the death of Christ as primarily a plan just to save you and me, for which we are very grateful. It's just that the larger view makes the cross much more significant. {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>*

### Further Study with Ellen White

In the message to the church at Ephesus, Christ is represented as holding the seven stars in His hand, and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. He is represented as "walking" among them, thus illustrating His constant diligence in behalf of His church. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. Nor does He become indifferent. {7BC 956.1}

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}

Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. {FLB 142.2}

But the work of human redemption is not all that is accomplished by the cross. The love of God is manifested to the universe. The prince of this world is cast out. The accusations which Satan has brought against God are refuted. The reproach which he has cast upon heaven is forever removed. Angels as well as men are drawn to the Redeemer. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," He said, "will draw all unto Me." {DA 626.1}

We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The gospel of Christ is to reach all classes, all nations, all tongues and people. The influence of the gospel is to unite in one great brotherhood. We have only one Model that we are to imitate in character building, and then we all shall have Christ's mold; we shall be in perfect harmony; nationalities will blend in Jesus Christ, having the same mind, and the same judgment, speaking the same things, and with one mouth glorifying God. This is the work the world's Redeemer is to do for us. If we accept the truth as it is in Jesus, national prejudices and jealousies will be broken down, and the Spirit of truth will blend hearts in one. We will love as brethren; we will esteem others better than ourselves; we will be kind and courteous, meek and lowly, easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits. . . . {OHC 171.2}

God does not force anyone. He leaves all free to choose. But He says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." The Lord will not write as wise those who cannot distinguish between a tree that bears thorn berries and a tree that bears olives.—*Manuscript 57, 1896 (Manuscript Releases, vol. 18, pp. 361-363).* {CTr 14.6}

Resistance to truth confirms them in iniquity. . . . All should be intelligent in regard to the agency by which the soul is destroyed. It is not because of any decree that God has sent out against men or women. He does not make them spiritually blind. God gives sufficient light and evidence to enable them to distinguish truth from error. But He does not force them to receive truth. He leaves them free to choose the good or to choose the evil. If people resist evidence that is sufficient to guide their judgment in the right direction and choose evil once, they will do this more readily the second time. The third time they will still more eagerly withdraw from God and choose to stand on the side of Satan. And in this course they will continue until they are confirmed in evil and believe the lie they have cherished as truth.—*Manuscript 126*, 1901 (*Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, pp. 183, 184). {CTr 103.4}

Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will, and if by persistent transgression the will itself is wholly bent on evil, and we do not *desire* to be set free, if we *will* not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” “Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:7, 8) {HP 346.5}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}

I saw that the angels of God are never to control the will. God sets before man life and death. He can have his choice. {EW 221.1}

They [the Pharisees] attributed to satanic agencies the holy power of God, manifested in the works of Christ. Thus the Pharisees sinned against the Holy Ghost. Stubborn, sullen, ironhearted, they determined to close their eyes to all evidence, and thus they committed the unpardonable sin (RH Jan. 18, 1898). {5BC 1092.4}

God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan. {GC 36.1}



No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent (RH June 29, 1897). {5BC 1093.2}

And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise. {GC 678.1}

The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love. {GC 678.3}

God is love. Like rays of light from the sun, love and light and joy flow out from Him to all His creatures. It is His nature to give. His very life is the outflow of unselfish love. {MB 77.2}

Every manifestation of creative power is an expression of infinite love. The sovereignty of God involves fullness of blessing to all created beings. {PP 33.2}

From age to age the Lord has made known the manner of His working. When a crisis has come, He has revealed Himself, and has interposed to hinder the working out of Satan's plans. With nations, with families, and with individuals, He has often permitted matters to come to a crisis, that His interference might become marked. Then He has made manifest that there is a God in Israel who will maintain His law and vindicate His people. {COL 178.2}

The spirit of liberality is the spirit of heaven. Christ's self-sacrificing love is revealed upon the cross. That man might be saved, He gave all that He had and then gave Himself. {9T 254.2}

To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, "It is finished," had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ's victory. {DA 758.2}

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion. {DA 758.3}



Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. Then the prevarications and accusations of him who had once been an exalted angel were seen in their true light.—ST Aug. 27, 1902. {TA 205.1}

God has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. He provides opportunities and opens channels of working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence, and are ready to cooperate with Him, they will see mighty results. {PK 660.3}

Christ has a treasure house full of precious gifts for every soul. {SD 125.5}

In the wilderness of temptation Satan came to Christ as an angel from the courts of God. It was by his words, not by his appearance, that the Saviour recognized the enemy. {HP 350.2}

[T]hose 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}

Through the Holy Spirit, God's word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver. By implanting in their hearts the principles of His word, the Holy Spirit develops in men the attributes of God. {COL 414.2}

By prayer, by the study of His word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go. {MH 182.1}

Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled; for Jesus has promised it. Precious Saviour! His arms are open to receive us, and His great heart of love is waiting to bless us.—*The Review and Herald*, July 1, 1884. {3SM 152.4}

We are sons and daughters of God. Satan is the destroyer and Christ is the restorer. He will make us partakers of His holiness. God does not make light of sin, but He seeks to rescue us from sin. There is not in Jesus Christ harsh, stern repulsiveness or resentment; and if we have the character of Christ we shall have His mold. There is no forcing us to holiness, but . . . He wishes us to imitate His character, to admire Him—true, pure, generous, and loving. . . . {HP 66.3}

In the divine arrangement God does nothing without the cooperation of man. He compels no man's will. {TMK 55.4}

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before

His crucifixion He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.” John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. {PP 68.2}

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}

And as the years of eternity roll, they will bring richer and more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed beat with a stronger devotion, and they sweep the harps of gold with a firmer hand: and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise. {SR 432.3}

The people of God are privileged to hold open communion with the Father and the Son. Now we “see through a glass, darkly.” 1 Corinthians 13:12. We behold the image of God reflected, as in a mirror, in the works of nature and in His dealings with men; but then we shall see Him face to face, without a dimming veil between. We shall stand in His presence and gaze upon the glory of His countenance. {SR 432.1}