

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### Second Quarter 2024: *The Great Controversy*

### Lesson 11 “The Impending Conflict”

#### Read for this week’s study

Revelation 14:7, 9, 12; Revelation 4:11; Revelation 13:1, 2; Revelation 12:3–5, 17; Revelation 13:11–18.

#### Memory Text

“ ‘Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth’ ” (John 17:17, NKJV).

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

- I. Introduction
- II. Revelation’s Final Conflict
- III. The Coming Crisis
- IV. Identifying the Beast: Part 1
- V. Identifying the Beast: Part 2
- VI. The Beast From the Earth
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “The aim of this week’s lesson is to reveal the coming conflict over worship. Satan will challenge God’s authority by attempting to undermine God’s law. Specifically, the Sabbath will become the center of a global conflict over worship. (...) There will be a collision of beliefs over the true and false day of worship. God’s final appeal is an appeal to faithfulness to Christ despite persecution, an economic boycott, imprisonment, and a death decree. This week’s study emphasizes Jesus’ strength to take us through earth’s final conflict.” (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. What is the significance of the memory text (John 17:17) in the context of this lesson? How is “making the disciples holy in the truth” going to make a difference in the impending conflict?
3. What is the primary purpose of a prophecy according to Jesus (John 13:19; 14:29)? What was the meaning for the first readers (listeners) of John’s Revelation in their own political and religious context?
4. Sunday’s lesson discusses the final conflict in Revelation. The verb “to worship” is used 24 times in the book of Revelation. The issue in the final crisis of earth's history

is clearly worship (Revelation 13:4.8.12.15; 14:9.11). Seven times between Revelation 13 and 14 there is a call to worship the beast and/or his image. Only once in these chapters is there a call to worship God (14:7).

5. Everybody will end up worshiping somebody or something. Does our worship lift us up or bring us down? If we persecute or marginalize those who have a different opinion, or use power to uphold our understanding of truth, we manifest the characteristics of the Dragon and become like the beast of Revelation 13.
6. Monday's lesson focuses on the coming crisis. Satan, through the beast, uses deception and, when that fails, force and coercion. Why is the use of power a telltale sign of demonic activity? Why do we have a tendency to use power to achieve our goals?
7. Tuesday's, Wednesday's and Thursday's lessons identify the two beasts of Revelation 13 along the traditional lines of Adventist interpretation. Why is combining political, economic, and religious power such a deadly combination? In every age, God's people have had to battle some "beasts". What would be the beasts in your personal, family or local church life? How can these be related to the end-time deception?
8. Where in the Bible would you go to discover that humanity will be divided into two groups and the outcome determines their eternal destiny? How can a better understanding of Biblical Theology help us create some balance between the theology of Revelation and the theology of Matthew?
9. The church does not exist for its own sake, or to impose something on others, but to create a worshiping community of connected people. Worship is the intentional turning to God and seeing all the greatness, goodness and glory that belongs to Him. Worship is giving God the place that rightfully belongs to Him. Worshiping God brings us into His presence and transforms us into His image. "Worship is responding to all that God is with all that we are."
10. Worship prepares us to hear God's voice – in our hearts, in the family, in the church and in the world where we live. How ready are we to recognize God's voice and see God's work all around us? The outcome of any true worship is a joyful participation in what God does today. How can a message about the future empower people and bring them hope?

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

In fact, to be so dedicated to the truth, to be so concerned that we may discern the truth is an act of worship, it suggests here. Isn't that true? What would please God more than to see people on this planet absolutely dedicated to evidence and truth? That we're most eager to discern the truth from the false and we do not wish to be deceived. We wish to see God as He is that we may worship Him aright and do the things that please Him. I mean, this is an act of worship. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 12, recorded

January 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/23MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/24MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

That's all! All they argued about was God and His government, and what He wanted of His children. I believe the Great Controversy will end just as it began. The good news is the truth in the Great Controversy. The truth is the truth that needed to be known in the Great Controversy, and that is the truth about God. The errors, the opposition, they are all about God. And all the details are just reflections about this basic position that we take. Are we on God's side, or not, in the Great Controversy? Are we so settled into the truth about God "both intellectually and spiritually" that we could not be moved? Could you name anybody in the Bible other than the Lord Himself, who was so settled into the truth about God, both intellectually he could talk about it, and spiritually he would stake his life on it, that he could not be moved? Could you name anybody? That's Job? That's what the whole book is about. And the three theologians came and said, "God is like this." He said, "He is not. He is like this. I can't make sense out of what is happening to me, but He could slay me and I'd still trust Him." I believe Job was fully sealed and settled. If we were as settled as Job was, we'd be ready to pass through the time of trouble and the Lord could come.

But, you see, so often we are trying to settle people on all the other matters. If you settle people on the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the state of the dead, tithe, and health, without settling them on the truth about God they might keep the Sabbath as Jesus' enemies did. They might pay tithe as His enemies did. They might read the Bible as His enemies did. We could be developing in this campaign to win a million Adventists, we could, forbid the thought, we could develop a million enemies who faithfully keep the Sabbath, practice health reform, pay tithe, and read their Bibles. Now that is a horrible thought. But if we are not clear on the picture of God we might do well not to be in such a hurry. Have you read Ellen White's comment?

"The Lord is not now working to bring many into the truth, because there are so many unconverted in the church." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Acts, 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)

What I like about this is, the kind of worship God desires is described as rational, intelligent, spiritual worship; not mechanical, not ritualistic, not ceremonial. We worship an intelligent God. He wants us to worship Him in spirit and in truth, Jesus said. So to do something mechanical, learned by rote, is a terrible misrepresentation of the truth about God. Remember

Isaiah? “Your worship of Me is but the commandments of men learned by rote.” You come into the temple, but your hearts aren’t in it. Remember the Sabbath keepers in Amos? All that kind of unthinking obedience suggests an unthinking God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans, recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

A most significant verse about God is in Isaiah 29:13. What was wrong with their worship? They were busy with their worship. Just as when Jesus came, they were never more religious. They tithed, they health-reformed, they kept their Sabbaths, they memorized the scriptures. But it wasn’t doing them any good! Jesus quotes this later on in Isaiah 29:13. “The Lord said: ‘Because this people draw near with their mouth.’” Remember He also says, “Who requires you to trample My courts?” They came, and Amos says they sang a lot. “They honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me.” The heart is where a man does his thinking, his best thinking! Amos continues, “And their fear of me”, and that is their reverence, their worship of Me, “is but a commandment of men learned by rote.” Unthinking, mechanical worship is an utter insult to our intelligent, gracious God. And it doesn’t do us any good! It destroys us to simply do these things because we’re supposed to. And if we Adventists, when we’re asked why we do something or don’t do it—if all we can say is, “Well, because God said so, and I believe it, and that’s all there is to it,” that’s something learned by rote. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Isaiah, recorded 1982, 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 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/33MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/34MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: When you talk about the seal of God, that leads to another phrase that you commented on, and promised us more a little later. What really is the “mark of the beast”?

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: Well, are you suggesting then that the seal of God—and 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.

Graham: All my life.

Lou: In fact, I probably have referred to the Sabbath as the seal of God in itself. But I hear you making a distinction there.

Graham: 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 knowing, meaningful, intelligent, thoughtful observers 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.

Lou: So it has something to do with very deep understanding and experience.

Graham: Yes. That's why you can see, when the chips are down, I mean, when the issues in the Great Controversy are clearly seen, it's conceivable that the preference for a substitute Sabbath could suggest preference for, even faith in, the substitute for the Son of God; the one who said, "I will be like the Most High." The one who said to Christ, "Worship me." But not until then.

{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>

In the end, it's Satan, isn't it? Now, he may have had many representatives, but I think we leave ourselves vulnerable if we pick out one of his representatives, instead of recognizing the one behind them all. Do you remember that beast in Revelation 13 that seemed to represent all the false religious systems of the past? Who's the one to worry about? Was it not the dragon that gave his power to that beast? Who is the adversary in the Great Controversy, who seeks to deceive all, but the dragon, the devil, the serpent. Who says, "I will be like the Most High. I will sit in the sides of the north." By the way, do you remember in Philippians, Jesus did just the opposite. But Satan says, "I proclaim myself to be God."

“Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this? I warned you that these things were yet to happen.” Doesn’t this mean, then, that Paul had quite a view of the Great Controversy, and how it was going to end? Even though he couldn’t look up the book of Revelation. Now, how could Paul work this all out, if he didn’t have Revelation? It’s as if he’d read Revelation 12, 13, and 14. Well, it’s in Daniel, too, isn’t it, and a few other places. But, maybe these are some of the things Paul heard, you remember, when he was caught up to the third heaven, “Whether in the body or not, I really don’t know, and I heard things I can’t tell you.” But somehow, he did get a larger and still larger view of things. And he said, “I told you there are very important things to happen before the end can come.” “And you know what is restraining him now, so that he may be revealed in his time.” Now, in Revelation 7:1-3, that’s the four angels holding the four winds. It’s the same idea. Isn’t it interesting that Paul wrote about these things forty years before John did? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Philippians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/69MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/70MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: Now, last week when we were talking about the Three Angels’ Messages, I think you spent about ninety per cent of the time just talking about the “good news” part. And I was wondering, shouldn’t we have divided the time equally between all three? Why such an overemphasis upon that first one?

Graham: I think there’s a great message there. I think we need to know the everlasting good news before we even look at the other two. You’ve got to know the truth about our God before you can understand the opposition, before you can understand the awful consequence. The truth is our protection there. And I believe we should go to the world, always, with the three angels’ messages and always start with number one. Never start with number three.

Lou: And understand the other two in the light of number one.

Graham: In the light of number one. So ninety per cent—number one. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God, #17 with Lou Venden, “Satan’s Final Effort to Deceive”* 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/17MMCAG>

My understanding of Revelation is that its primary function at the present time is the function that it had when the early Christians read it. Not to get us too involved in working out the schedule which we have to revise from time to time. I believe the purpose of the book of Revelation is to encourage Christians who care enough to be concerned about the fact that the church isn’t doing as well as it should, Christians who are concerned about the long delay since

those old, old signs. And they wonder why. The answer is, look a little higher, realize we are all caught up in this Great Controversy that has involved the whole vast universe, and realize that as far as heaven and the rest of the universe are concerned, they are celebrating the fact that God has won His case. That He won it all 2000 years ago. Therefore, for those of us who claim to be His representatives on this earth to be dragging our weary way along as if God might lose; we've really missed the good news—that He won it 2000 years ago.

Even if all Seventh-day Adventists should let God down, He will not lose His case. He's won it already. And the majority of beings in the universe agree. Therefore I understand our assignment to be, once we're convinced of this, convinced of what the war is about, what the issue is, how it was settled, and whether or not we like the answers, that we have the privilege of joining with the loyal members of the universe in celebrating even now that God has won His case and then spreading the word around. The good news is, not only that He is like this, but He has proven it to the universe and they agree. Read Revelation. Notice in heaven they are always celebrating. For us to be on the defensive is a real denial of all that God has done. He has won His case and we should sound more like members of the winning team. We are really going out to invite people to join in the final celebration which has been going on in heaven for 2000 years. We are privileged to join in this if we wish. {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)

### **Further Study with Ellen White**

Through Jesus Christ, God—not a perfume, not something intangible, but a personal God—created man, and endowed him with intelligence and power. . . . {TDG 273.5}

Amid the perplexities that will press upon the soul, there is only One who can help us out of all our difficulties, and relieve all our disquietude. We are to cast all our care upon Jesus, and bear in mind that He is present, and is directing us to commune with Him. We are to keep our minds stayed upon God; and in our weakness, He will be our strength; in our ignorance, He will be our wisdom; in our frailty, He will be our enduring might. {SD 27.2}

These things were not written merely that we might read and wonder, but that the same faith which wrought in God's servants of old might work in us. In no less marked a manner than He wrought then will He work now wherever there are hearts of faith to be channels of His power. {CG 43.1}

Many hold faith as an opinion. But saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means

an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power. {GW 261.1}

In the experience of the apostle John under persecution, there is a lesson of wonderful strength and comfort for the Christian. God does not prevent the plottings of wicked men, but He causes their devices to work for good to those who in trial and conflict maintain their faith and loyalty.... {CC 360.2}

Not without a purpose does God send trial to His children. He never leads them otherwise than they would choose to be led if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as workers together with Him. He subjects them to discipline to humble them, to lead them, through trial and affliction, to see their weakness and draw near to Him. . . . {HP 267.2}

Christ does not drive but draws men unto Him. The only compulsion which He employs is the constraint of love. {MB 127.1}

The Lord will not compel men to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God; He sets before the human agent good and evil, and makes plain what will be the sure result of following one course or the other. Christ invites us, saying, "Follow Me." But we are never forced to walk in His footsteps. If we do walk in His footsteps, it is the result of deliberate choice. As we see the life and character of Christ, strong desire is awakened to be like Him in character; and we follow on to know the Lord, and to know His goings forth are prepared as the morning. We then begin to realize that "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—R. & H., March 31, 1896. {CS 138.1}

God never compels the obedience of man. He leaves all free to choose whom they will serve. {PK 510.4}

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. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." No one has a right to merge his own individuality in that of another. In all matters where principle is involved, "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Romans 14:12, 5. In Christ's kingdom there is no lordly oppression, no compulsion of manner. The angels of heaven do not come to the earth to rule, and to exact homage, but as messengers of mercy, to co-operate with men in uplifting humanity. {DA 550.6}