

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2024: *The Great Controversy*

Lesson 12 “Earth’s Closing Events”

Read for this week’s study

John 8:32; Ezekiel 20:12, 20; Revelation 7:1, 2; Revelation 14:1; Joel 2:21–24; Hosea 6:3; James 5:7, 8; Revelation 18:1–4.

Memory Text

“Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Loyalty to God and His Word
- III. Sealed for Heaven
- IV. Whom Do We Worship?
- V. The Early and Latter Rain
- VI. The Loud Cry
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “The aim of this week’s lesson is to reveal what the prophetic Word says about the closing events and discover anew Christ’s strength to take us through earth’s final conflict and get us home.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Why are truth, wisdom, instruction and understanding so important for our lives (see the memory text)?
3. Sunday’s lesson is about loyalty to God and his Word (cf. 2 Peter 1:16-21). Which personal experience is Peter talking about? What is the role of personal experience and what is the role of prophecy?
4. No personal experience is foolproof. Peter denied Jesus in spite of his marvelous personal experience and Jesus’ “sure word of prophecy” of what Peter would do! Having a fixed understanding of who Jesus was, contributed to the disciples abandoning Jesus in his difficult life situation. What can we learn from that?
5. Peter says that his readers knew more than the prophets of old (1 Peter 1:10-12). Why would the OT prophets themselves have to search and enquire regarding the very things the Spirit was revealing to them? Were they not the authoritative interpreters of those

prophecies? Why did they have to study their own messages—aren't the prophets the source of all answers? What is the implication of the developing truth for us?

6. The rest of the lesson follows the traditional SDA understanding of sealing (Monday), God's seal (Tuesday), the early and latter rain (Wednesday), and the loud cry (Thursday). Ellen White said: "We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed." (*The Review and Herald*, July 26, 1892; 1SM 37.3)
7. How can we keep an open mind so that we can experience nowadays what God wants us to learn and unlearn? How do you speak about something that will happen in the future, if all you have is just the basic framework? The future is open-ended; exactly how it will work out depends on many circumstances. We like to spell out the details and to have charts of last day events. But what is the purpose of prophecy (John 13:19; 14:29)? The Pharisees had detailed charts and yet they rejected Jesus precisely because he did not fit their charts. If the future is worked out in too much detail, isn't it a "clever story"?
8. What is significant about the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29? How was this fulfilled in the events of Pentecost? How did the Holy Spirit create a new community of oneness? How is an agricultural metaphor of the early and latter rain helping us to understand the role of community in the last days?
9. Jesus was born once to save his people from their sins. Bethlehem will not be repeated! Jesus died once for all to give redemption to all believers. Golgotha will not be repeated! In the same manner, Jesus poured out the Spirit once for all to give Spirit baptism to all believers. Pentecost will not be repeated!
10. How can God's truths be preached with a new and convincing perspective in the last days? How can God's last warning message become the "loud cry"? There is always a tension between established tradition and the present truth. The reason that the Word of God is effective is because it comes from God, not because it comes from smart people. The community of Jesus grows best through mutual education and listening to each other with humility! We need one another. Each one has something to contribute.
11. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit created a new community—a community where differences of *race* became irrelevant since the Spirit was being poured out on all people; a community where differences of *gender* became irrelevant since both men and women now had full access to ministry (even to prophecy!). In this new community the differences of *rank* became irrelevant since both young men and elderly patriarchs received God's revelation. In this community the differences of *class* became irrelevant since even male and female servants were receiving the Holy Spirit.
12. How can we be part of what the Holy Spirit longs to do on a large scale in these last days? What kind of community would that replicate?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

They saw in the darkening of the sun on May 19, 1780, and in the remarkable falling of the stars on November 13, 1833, combined with their study of certain other lines of prophecy in Daniel and Revelation, lines that pointed to the dates 1798 and 1844 as being the dates of certain important events. They saw in all these things an accumulation of evidence, signs, and indications that the long-looked-for advent was very near. We do know that it is a historical fact that the great second-advent movement began at that time. Though some are now puzzled about the signs and the dates, it is an incontrovertible fact of history that that was when the great second-advent movement did begin. The time when it began is the time when all those remarkable signs and prophetic periods seemed to come together. It is not just one date, one event, one piece of evidence. It's all that evidence combined. That's the way God has always sought to convince us throughout the history of the conflict. Not to have a little here and a little there, but an accumulation of evidence.

Some of those eager "adventists" were led by their study of the times and the evidences to begin giving special attention to the messages of the three angels in Revelation 14. They came to the conclusion that the time had arrived for these three messages of warning and invitation to be given to the whole world. A very bold venture they undertook, and the excitement and the disappointment of those days is all part of religious history. There are still thousands, even millions of Christians the world around who agree that those early adventists had indeed seen God's signal that the Second Coming was near. They didn't read it correctly at first. It was not a signal to pack for the trip up to heaven. It was rather a call from God to prepare the whole world for His coming. That's why we are still here, because we haven't done it yet.

Now it is true that time has continued much longer than early adventists expected. The signs that so stirred them are now well over a hundred years old. In fact, the first of the signs, the darkening of the sun and the turning of the moon to blood on May 19, 1780—that sign is now 204 years old. But are we surprised? Are we even ashamed, that our God would be willing to wait this long? Are we concerned about our reputation or His? The good news, the gospel; it's not about us.

Sometimes I think we make that mistake. The good news is not about us. The good news is about our God. Now if by our failure to complete our task we may have contributed to the long delay, then we deserve to be ashamed. But the longer God waits, the more gracious He looks. His delay only confirms the good news. I think the delay should lead us to speak with pride of our God and not to make the awful mistake that Jonah made.

You see, God needs better spokesmen than Jonah proved to be. Reluctant teachers of the truth, moved only by fear or obligation, are themselves a very sad denial of the good news. God is waiting for people who look eagerly for the coming of the Day of God, and work to hasten it on. But I've quoted Peter. Look at 2 Peter 3:12, on the Bible Reference Sheet. He advised, way back in the first century: "Look eagerly for the coming of the Day of God and work to hasten it on." (NEB).

So now the question, how much longer do you think God will have to wait? Well, we can trust God to wait just as long as there is hope for anyone. You know He will do that. We can also trust God not to wait forever. He will not wait a moment longer than it makes sense to do so. Who longs more to bring everything to an end, and recreate this world and give it to His trusting saints? When, then, will it end? Only God, the One Who reads our every thought, will know when all final decisions have been made. That's why Jesus gave the serious advice in Matthew 24:44: "So then [disciples], you also must always be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you are not expecting him." (GNT) {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #19, "How Soon Will the Conflict Be Over?" 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/19MMCAG>

I believe that our special work in the world, and one of high privilege, is to warn the world about the dangers of trusting might and power. And to teach the world, rather, that the only safe basis for trust and faith is truth and evidence of which we have so much. But that, of course, is the work of the Holy Spirit. And when what we call the latter rain of the Holy Spirit comes it won't be that there'll be so much more wonder and miracle except the greatest wonder and miracle of all—the ability to bear witness plainly and clearly and simply and very winsomely to the truth. And God won't give us that influence until we know the truth. Could that be the reason for the delay? We still don't really know our God.

We know about His might and power, so does the devil. We know He's coming soon, so does the devil. We sometimes list as one of our major beliefs that God exists and is very powerful, so does the devil. That's not the main one! We have something greater than that to say. Our privilege is to explain to the world the truth about God's use of power. And that's great good news to those who live in fear, for many devout people are scared of God. And they obey Him because of His might and power. God is indeed an infinitely powerful person, but He is equally gracious. And He values nothing higher than the freedom and the dignity and the individuality of His intelligent creatures that their love, their faith, their willingness to listen and obey may be freely given. Such things as that are not produced by force or might or power but only by the persuasiveness of the truth. And so God says, "Not by might, nor by power, I have an infinite amount of both, but I cannot get what I want the most, something I've given my life to keep and preserve. I cannot get it those ways, only by the methods identified with the Holy Spirit of love and of truth and of freedom." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, God's Use of Power, #1, "Not by Might Nor by Power" recorded March 1985, Kettering, Ohio} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/1MMOHIO>

Further Study with Ellen White

Satan is working with great diligence to compass the ruin of the souls of men. He has come down with great power, knowing that he has but a short time to work. Our only safety lies in following closely after Christ, walking in His wisdom, and practicing His truth. We cannot always readily detect the working of Satan; we do not know where he lays his traps. But Jesus understands the subtle arts of the enemy, and He can keep our feet in safe paths. . . . “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) Christ declares. {OHC 16.3}

In every command and in every promise of the Word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the Word is receiving the very life and character of God. {FLB 21.2}

The truths of God’s word are not mere sentiments, but the utterances of the Most High. He who makes these truths a part of his life becomes in every sense a new creature. He is not given new mental powers, but the darkness that through ignorance and sin has clouded the understanding is removed. {CT 452.2}

God is the author of truth. He enlightens the darkened understanding and gives to the human mind power to grasp and comprehend the truths which He has revealed. {SL 49.1}

The evidence of the truth of God’s word is in the word itself. Scripture is the key that unlocks scripture. The deep meaning of the truths of God’s word is unfolded to our minds by His Spirit. {8T 157.1}

Christ seldom attempted to prove that truth is truth. He illustrated truth in all its bearings, and then left His hearers free to accept or reject it, as they might choose. He did not force anyone to believe. In the sermon on the mount He instructed the people in practical godliness, distinctly outlining their duty. He spoke in such a manner as to commend truth to the conscience. The power manifested by the disciples was revealed in the clearness and earnestness with which they expressed the truth. {Ev 171.1}

The Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Saviour. And every object in nature repeats His invitation, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28. {FLB 33.5}

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}

Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God’s people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already. The judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know

what is coming.—Ms. 173, 1902, pp. 1-6. (“Medical Missionary Work in Southern California,” Interview held in Los Angeles, California, September 15, 1902.) {10MR 252.1}

Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. I saw that our bread and water will be sure at that time, and that we shall not lack or suffer hunger; for God is able to spread a table for us in the wilderness. If necessary He would send ravens to feed us, as He did to feed Elijah, or rain manna from heaven, as He did for the Israelites. {EW 56.2}

Soon I saw the saints suffering great mental anguish. They seemed to be surrounded by the wicked inhabitants of the earth. Every appearance was against them. Some began to fear that God had at last left them to perish by the hand of the wicked. But if their eyes could have been opened, they would have seen themselves surrounded by angels of God. Next came the multitude of the angry wicked, and next a mass of evil angels, hurrying on the wicked to slay the saints. But before they could approach God’s people, the wicked must first pass this company of mighty, holy angels. This was impossible. The angels of God were causing them to recede and also causing the evil angels who were pressing around them to fall back. {EW 283.1}

The eye of God, looking down the ages, was fixed upon the crisis which His people are to meet, when earthly powers shall be arrayed against them. Like the captive exile, they will be in fear of death by starvation or by violence. But the Holy One who divided the Red Sea before Israel, will manifest His mighty power and turn their captivity. {GC 634.1}

As in the days of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so in the closing period of earth’s history the Lord will work mightily in behalf of those who stand steadfastly for the right. He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God’s saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a “God of gods,” able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him. {PK 513.1}

Fearful tests and trials await the people of God. The spirit of war is stirring the nations from one end of the earth to the other. But in the midst of the time of trouble that is coming—a time of trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—God’s chosen people will stand unmoved. Satan and his angels cannot destroy them, for angels that excel in strength will protect them.— Letter 119, 1904. {2SM 55.2}

All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through

co-operation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence. {DA 827.3}

The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 40. {ChS 250.2}

The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50. {ChS 251.2}

In the great and measureless gift of the Holy Spirit are contained all of heaven's resources. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If all were willing to receive, all would become filled with His Spirit. {COL 419.1}

Jesus gives the Holy Spirit in large measure for great emergencies, to help our infirmities, to give us strong consolation, to illuminate our minds, and purify and ennoble our hearts. Christ becomes unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. {RC 103.5}

The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression. {1SM 235.1}

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}

As a Satanic power is stirring up the elements from beneath, God will send light and power to His people, that the message of truth may be proclaimed to all the world. {Mar 189.5}

Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of the Saviour shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim His own. It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten, the coming of our Lord. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel! Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come. {CT 324.3}