

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### Second Quarter 2025: Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy

#### Lesson 1 “Some Principles of Prophecy”

#### Read for this week’s study

Jeremiah 29:23, 24; Psalm 139:1–6; Daniel 12:4; Revelation 22:10; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; Hebrews 4:12.

#### Memory Text

“ ‘But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:24, NKJV).

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

- I. Introduction
- II. Whoever Reads, Let Him Understand
- III. God Wants to Be Understood
- IV. Daniel—Shut Up the Words
- V. Studying the Word
- VI. Figurative or Literal?
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Many Christians take the prophecies of the Bible very literally. For example, they see the locusts of Revelation 9 as Marine helicopters flying into battle in the Middle East today. This assumes that Revelation was not written to be understood in John’s day but only in ours. This would seem to contradict Revelation 1:3, which, in the Greek language, indicates that Revelation was intended to be heard “with understanding.” Seventh-day Adventists take a different approach to Bible prophecy, based on texts like Matthew 5:18, 2 Timothy 3:15-17, Luke 24:27 and Revelation 12:7-12. What do you learn from reading these texts? (Introduction to the Quarter)
2. A key element in understanding apocalyptic-style prophecies is to begin by studying the templates of Daniel 2 and 7. Daniel 2 depicts four world empires (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome), followed by the kingdom of God. Daniel 7 portrays

the same empires in the form of four, carnivorous beasts that come up out of the sea. How does Daniel's angel interpreter explain this sequence? Dan 7:17-18.  
(Introduction to the Quarter)

3. The lesson notes that for 18 centuries there was widespread agreement on what the prophecies were trying to say. The author quoted 1 Corinthians 1:10 as evidence that it was God's intention that there be such agreement. Do you think that is an appropriate use of this text? That widespread agreement, however, included many failed predictions, such as those of Joachim of Fiore, the radical reformation, and William Miller. How should one interpret unfulfilled prophecies in a way that avoids embarrassment later on? (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
4. What do you think God's purpose is in placing texts in the Bible that are so difficult to understand? But in spite of those challenges, what are we invited to do when we study prophecy? Read Matthew 24:15, Revelation 1:3, Matthew 11:29 and Jeremiah 9:23-24. So it would seem that the Bible is clear according to its purpose. What is its purpose? (Sunday's Lesson)
5. According to the Bible, what are some barriers to our understanding of prophecy? Read Isaiah 55:8-9, Psalm 139:1-6, Psalm 147:5, Romans 11:33, and 1 John 3:20. While there is much that we don't know, it is important to follow what we do know. (Monday's Lesson)
6. Read Daniel 12:4. What was God telling Daniel? How do you explain the contrast with Revelation 22:10? (Tuesday's Lesson)
7. Studying the Bible is not unlike a jigsaw puzzle. If you look at only two or three pieces, it is nearly impossible to discern the big picture. If you take a single prophetic text out of its context and apply it to current events, you are almost certain to get it wrong (cf. the Marine helicopters above). When asking today's questions, it is important to study everything the Bible has to say on that subject. (Wednesday's Lesson)
8. A key issue where prophecy is concerned is whether the language of a prophecy is to be taken literally or figuratively. One key to doing that is to see how that word is used throughout the Bible. The lesson invites the reader to compare the following sets of texts to see how the Bible interprets itself. Compare Daniel 7:7 with 7:24; Revelation 1:16 with Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12; and Revelation 12:1 with Ephesians 5:31-32 and Jeremiah 6:2. An important element not mentioned in the lesson is distinguishing allusions from echoes. The book of Revelation is primarily symbolic (Rev 1:1). Why would God speak in symbols rather than be more direct in Scripture? (Thursday's Lesson)
9. What are the best ways to protect ourselves from wild and speculative attempts to interpret biblical prophecies? (Friday's Lesson)

## Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

You remember Jonah went to Nineveh, and he announced, forty days, then they will be destroyed; “And I have the Lord’s word on that. My chart is right. Forty days, and you’ll be destroyed.” And when the forty days were up, he went out to see the fulfillment of the prediction, and it didn’t come as he had anticipated. Then he turned to God and said, “I didn’t think you’d go through with that, anyway. That’s why I ran away. But you put so much pressure on me.” And you think of the pressure!

You know, if an evangelist was trying to avoid going to a certain city and he spent a while in the belly of a whale, that’s pressure! And finally, he goes and he gives the message. And then he says, “God, you confuse me. You make me go and deliver the message, and then you don’t come through with it. I’m angry!” And God says, “But aren’t you pleased that the inhabitants of Nineveh have repented?” But Jonah was more concerned about his reputation. As an advent preacher, he’d given a prophecy, and a date. That’s what the charts can sometimes lead us to do. And as you said, the greater concern is that God looked good. And that God did not destroy the inhabitants of Nineveh when they repented made him look very good, and it won some to repentance.

The appeal at the end is so moving in Jonah. “Don’t you care that there are 120,000 people in that city that don’t know right from wrong, and there are even a lot of cattle? Don’t you care, Jonah?” But he didn’t care about God’s reputation. As we study the prophecies here, what do they say about God? Do the prophecies even leave room for delay, by the way? Well, the book of Revelation certainly does. It even speaks of it. “Hold! Do not let these events occur until my servants are sealed in their foreheads.” It’s hard not to get into Revelation when we’re reading Daniel.

As I was reviewing this before coming, it’s significant to me how Jesus commented on the purpose of prophecy. Not just Daniel, of course, but others; but there are so many in Daniel that are so specific. Look at Matthew 24. Jesus himself made some prophecies, and he commented on the purpose of them. Matthew 24:25. You remember they asked how soon he would come. “Well,” he said, “several things will occur before I come.” In fact, verse 23:

Then if anyone says to you, “Lo, here is the Christ!” or “There he is!” do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Lo, I have told you beforehand [suggesting that he had warned them in advance, so they’d be prepared].

But he gave an additional reason in John 13:19. And I think prophecies have these dual purposes, suggesting it does pay to work them out, indeed. There is warning, unless, of course, we misinterpret them and are looking for the wrong thing. So it pays to study carefully. But an additional reason is given in 13:19: “I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does

take place you may believe that I am he.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Daniel, recorded February 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/39MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/40MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

### Further Study with Ellen White

God calls upon His creatures to turn their attention from the confusion and perplexity around them, and admire His handiwork. The heavenly bodies are worthy of contemplation. God has made them for the benefit of man, and as we study His works, angels of God will be by our side to enlighten our minds, and guard them from satanic deception. {4BC 1145.10}

He proposes to be our friend, to walk with us through all the rough pathways of life. He says to us, I am the Lord thy God; walk with me, and I will fill thy path with light. Jesus, the Majesty of Heaven, proposes to elevate to companionship with Himself those who come to Him with their burdens, their weaknesses, and their cares. . . . {OHC 97.4}

His invitation to us is a call to a pure, holy, and happy life—a life of peace and rest, of liberty and love—and to a rich inheritance in the future, immortal life. . . . It is our privilege to have daily a calm, close, happy walk with Jesus. {OHC 97.5}

The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme—of God’s original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for the supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. {CT 462.1}

We can so far comprehend His dealings with us, and the motives by which He is actuated, that we may discern boundless love and mercy united to infinite power. We can understand as much of His purposes as it is for our good to know; and beyond this we must still trust the hand that is omnipotent, the heart that is full of love. {SC 106.1}

The life of Christ was a life charged with a divine message of the love of God, and He longed intensely to impart this love to others in rich measure. Compassion beamed from His countenance, and His conduct was characterized by grace, humility, truth, and love. {FE 179.3}

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}

God wants our minds to expand. He desires to put His grace upon us. We may have a feast of good things every day, for God can open the whole treasure of heaven to us. {Mar 23.3}

The Bible contains a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy. It is the book that makes us wise unto salvation. It tells us how to reach the abodes of eternal happiness. It tells us of the love of God as shown in the plan of redemption, imparting the knowledge essential for all—the knowledge of Christ. He is the Sent of God; He is the Author of our salvation. But apart from the Word of God, we could have no knowledge that such a person as the Lord Jesus ever visited our world, nor any knowledge of His divinity, as indicated by His previous existence with the Father. {LHU 130.5}

The Bible is its own interpreter. With beautiful simplicity one portion connects itself with the truth of another portion, until the whole Bible is blended in one harmonious whole. Light flashes forth from one text to illuminate some portion of the Word that has seemed more obscure. {OHC 207.5}

The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes. {1SM 20.2}

The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull, earthly perception, of earthly beings may comprehend His words. Thus is shown God's condescension. He meets fallen human beings where they are. {7BC 946.1}

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}