

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

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

#### Lesson 12 “Precursors”

#### Read for this week’s study

Daniel 2:31–45; Daniel 3:1–12, 17, 18; Revelation 13:11–17; Romans 1:18–25; Acts 12:1–17; Matthew 12:9–14.

#### Memory Text

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”  
(2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV).

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

- I. Introduction
- II. Daniel Two and the Historicist Approach to Prophecy
- III. Worshiping the Image
- IV. Worshiping the Image, Again
- V. Early Church Persecution
- VI. The Mark of the Beast
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week, we will look at two more Bible stories that foreshadow last-day events in remarkable detail. [...] Both examples highlight remarkable courage and provide keys to finding peace of mind under the most trying of circumstances. [...] Yes, last-day events will be difficult and trying for those who seek to stay faithful to God. But ultimately, we should view these events with hope, not fear. (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Sunday’s lesson focuses on Daniel chapter two: “the prophecies go through history in an unbroken sequence of empires, starting in antiquity and ending in the future, even to our time.” While it is true, the period from Daniel’s time to the end of the Roman empire covers 1080 years. The last period, covered by three verses, spans 1550 years till today. More details covering this period will be provided in Daniel chapters 7 and 8.
3. The chapter shows: the superiority of God-given wisdom over worldly wisdom, and points to the climax of history as the kingdom of God, not a human empire based on power and violence.

4. Monday's lesson spotlights chapter three. The common theme between chapters 2 & 3 is the image (stature) and enforced worship. In Daniel 3, king Nebuchadnezzar seems to believe that **size** will achieve his goal: the size of the idol matches Nebuchadnezzar's pride. He builds a colossal statue made entirely of gold, which is 90 feet (27 meters) high and 9 feet (2.7 meters) wide. In which aspects of our society and church today do we still trust in *size*?
5. What is the significance of the repetitions in Daniel 3 (seven groups of people, seven types of musical instruments)? Why is the whole machinery of the state assembled to deliver a uniform response? Obviously, Nebuchadnezzar believed that **power** would achieve his goal. Do we see trust in *power* in our society and church today? Why was Nebuchadnezzar so obsessed with compliance?
6. There are always those who eagerly point out non-compliance to people in power: "they do not serve the gods of Babylon, worship the golden image, yet *you* put them in charge..." (3:12) Why did Nebuchadnezzar believe that **conformity** would achieve his aim—everyone must express obedience and loyalty in the same way, with no exception? Is there a temptation to enforce *conformity* in today's society and church?
7. How does Revelation 13:11-17 portray another command, again punishable by death, to worship another image? How does Revelation 13 go beyond Daniel 3? What is the antecedent for the breath to the image so that it can speak (Genesis 2:7; 3:1; 1 Kings 18:38 – fire from heaven)
8. The focus of Wednesday's lesson is the story in Acts 12:1-17. James becomes a martyr, Peter is delivered. We are not told why (Abel & Enoch). How do you measure faith (Hebrews 11)? What are the results of comparing ourselves with others? Herod can persecute and execute, but God delivers; Passover ironically becomes what Passover was: God's act of liberating the enslaved. God opens the city gate for Peter, but Rhoda must open the house door for him!
9. The lesson on Thursday turns attention to the "mark of the beast" in Revelation 13. What can we learn from this about force, oppression, empire, choice and consent? The Seal of God and the mark of the beast are presented as mutually exclusive options for the earth's inhabitants. While the seal of God can only be placed "on the forehead" (Revelation 7:1; 14:1), the mark of the beast can be placed "on the right hand or on the forehead" (13:16; 14:9; 20:4). Why is this significant and what does it reveal about how God works?
10. Most humans prefer power to truth. We spend far more time and effort on trying to control the world (and the people in it) than on trying to understand them. Sadly, even when we try to understand the world, we usually do so in the hope that our understanding will make it easier to control people. And this is a problem not only in the political realm, but in the religious realm too! The biblical stories we looked at in this lesson show why coercion will not achieve what God is looking for.
11. As believers, how do we make sure that our response is not based on *size*, *power* or *conformity*? How can we be the community God wants us to be in these last days?

## Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

So Daniel explains, and in chapter 3:5, 6, after the king has the explanation, he thinks he'd like to build an image entirely of gold, maybe to suggest that the golden part of that image would last forever, and Babylon would last forever. And then the burning fiery furnace and the threat, in 3:5, 6. Let's start, say, with 4:

The herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that when you hear the sound of the music, you are to fall down and worship. [And verse 6] Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace."

What kind of evangelism is that? Here's the picture of god, the image, and if you don't get down and worship, you will be thrown into the burning fiery furnace. Has that method been pursued through the years? Have Christians ever used that method? Think of all the people who were tied to the stake, and they were threatened that if they didn't accept the religion that was being represented, they were to be burned. Even Paul used that method, didn't he, when he went out with fury to persecute and imprison the Christians? You see, many people have thought that the all-powerful God would appreciate this kind of firm, authoritative evangelism.

Well, after the experience of the three being thrown in, and then being marvelously preserved, and the king seeing this fourth Person, he's convinced that the God of Israel is a God to be reckoned with. So he tries a little evangelism in favor of the God of Israel. So look at verse 29. He hasn't changed his method:

"Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way."

Now, how's that? His methods have not changed. He now recognizes the God of Israel, but he's still using force. He still has a long way to go. You see, all he recognizes is that the God of Israel is not too weak. He's never seen a "god" rescue three young men in a burning fiery furnace before. He's impressed with God's power, so he uses power now to force submission and worship. {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)

Lou: Now, you did refer to this in the third message, this “mark of the beast.” And Seventh-day Adventists are notorious, or shall I say famous, or well-known, for emphasis upon the mark of the beast. It seems to be very important to the message. What is it? Would you say a bit more about that?

Graham: Well, since such dreadful things happen to those who have the mark, we had better know something about it. As you know, there are many, many different views. Fortunately, though, there will be opportunity next time, when we talk about Satan’s final effort to deceive, to go into this in more detail. In the meantime though, earlier in the book of Revelation it talks about God’s loyal people having a seal. It seems they have some mark of loyalty and trust. And I would make this comparable. There’s some indication that they prefer Satan’s lies to the truth. They have accepted him, the false Christ, as their redeemer. So we need to look for something that would be an appropriate mark.

I’m very impressed with, among the many, many meanings, if you research *Vicarius Filii Dei*, which you’ll find not just Seventh-day Adventists have done, many others too, the literal meaning is, “substitute for the Son of God,” which is exactly what Satan has wanted to be, substitute for the Son of God. But I’m more intrigued with the fact that you can find the very number, 666 back to the centuries and the millennia, connected with devil worship and other misrepresentations of the truth. The one thing sure, it is a mark of rejection of the truth, a preference for Satan’s side and loyalty to him, whatever it is. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #16 with Lou Venden, “God’s last pleading with His Children” 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/16MMCAG>*

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

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 this earth. {PK 536.1}

In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will. . . . {CC 250.3}

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}

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}

Christ knows our weakness, and to Him we can go daily for help. It is not necessary for us to gain strength a month ahead. We are to conquer from day to day (MS 28, 1886). {7BC 974.3}

We can but look onward to new perplexities in the coming conflict, but we may well look on what is past as well as what is to come, and say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12). "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25). The trial will not exceed the strength which shall be given us to bear it. {TDG 58.3}

It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell. If occupied with commonplace matters only, it will become dwarfed and enfeebled. If never required to grapple with difficult problems, it will after a time almost lose the power of growth. As an educating power the Bible is without a rival. In the word of God the mind finds subject for the deepest thought, the loftiest aspiration. The Bible is the most instructive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and a divine hand has preserved its purity through all the ages. It lights up the far-distant past, where human research seeks vainly to penetrate. In God's word we behold the power that laid the foundation of the earth and that stretched out the heavens. Here only can we find a history of our race unsullied by human prejudice or human pride. Here are recorded the struggles, the defeats, and the victories of the greatest men this world has ever known. Here the great problems of duty and destiny are unfolded. The curtain that separates the visible from the invisible world is lifted, and we behold the conflict of the opposing forces of good and evil, from the first entrance of sin to the final triumph of righteousness and truth; and all is but a revelation of the character of God. In the reverent contemplation of the truths presented in His word the mind of the student

is brought into communion with the infinite mind. Such a study will not only refine and ennoble the character, but it cannot fail to expand and invigorate the mental powers. {PP 596.2}

The search for truth will reward the seeker at every turn, and each discovery will open up richer fields for his investigation. Men are changed in accordance with what they contemplate. If commonplace thoughts and affairs take up the attention, the man will be commonplace. If he is too negligent to obtain anything but a superficial understanding of God's truth, he will not receive the rich blessings that God would be pleased to bestow upon him. It is a law of the mind, that it will narrow or expand to the dimensions of the things with which it becomes familiar. {MYP 262.1}

The Lord Jesus came to our world full of mercy, life, and light, ready to save those who should come unto him. But he can save no one against his will. God does not force the conscience; he does not torture the body that he may compel men to compliance with his law. All this work is after the order of Satan. . . . But God deals with men after a different plan. He will give the sinner sufficient evidence to convict his conscience, and then if, of his own free will, he yields to the winning invitation of Jesus, he will receive the Spirit of God. Jesus pleads with the world, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." {YI, August 17, 1893 par. 2}

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of his hands shall love him because he is worthy of love. He would have them obey him because they have an intelligent appreciation of his wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love him because they are drawn toward him in admiration of his attributes. {4SP 362.1}

It is no part of Christ's mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit, who seek to compel the conscience. Under a pretense of zeal for righteousness, men who are confederated with evil angels sometimes bring suffering upon their fellow men in order to convert them to their ideas of religion; but Christ is ever showing mercy, ever seeking to win by the revealing of His love. He can admit no rival in the soul, nor accept of partial service; but He desires only voluntary service, the willing surrender of the heart under the constraint of love. {AA 541.1}

It is by the Spirit that God works upon the heart; when men willfully reject the Spirit, and declare It to be from Satan, they cut off the channel by which God can communicate with them. When the Spirit is finally rejected, there is no more that God can do for the soul. {DA 321.3}

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 soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. "Man turns from God, not God from him." Our heavenly Father follows us with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. The responsibility rests with the sinner. By resisting the Spirit of God today, he prepares the way for a second resistance of light when it comes with mightier power. Thus he passes on from one stage of resistance to another, until at last the light will fail to impress, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God. Then even "the light that is in thee" has become darkness. The very truth we do know has become so perverted as to increase the blindness of the soul. {MB 93.1}

The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not lie in any sudden word or deed; it is the firm, determined resistance of truth and evidence (MS 30, 1890). {5BC 1093.1}

It is not God that blinds the eyes of men or hardens their hearts. He sends them light to correct their errors, and to lead them in safe paths; it is by the rejection of this light that the eyes are blinded and the heart hardened. Often the process is gradual, and almost imperceptible. Light comes to the soul through God's word, through His servants, or by the direct agency of His Spirit; but when one ray of light is disregarded, there is a partial benumbing of the spiritual perceptions, and the second revealing of light is less clearly discerned. So the darkness increases, until it is night in the soul. Thus it had been with these Jewish leaders. They were convinced that a divine power attended Christ, but in order to resist the truth, they attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. In doing this they deliberately chose deception; they yielded themselves to Satan, and henceforth they were controlled by his power. {DA 322.2}

A guardian angel is appointed to every follower of Christ. These heavenly watchers shield the righteous from the power of the wicked one. This Satan himself recognized when he said: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" Job 1:9, 10. The agency by which God protects His people is presented in the words of the psalmist: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Psalm 34:7. Said the Saviour, speaking of those that believe in Him: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father." Matthew 18:10. The angels appointed to minister to the children of God have at all times access to His presence. {GC 512.2}

Thus God's people, exposed to the deceptive power and unsleeping malice of the prince of darkness, and in conflict with all the forces of evil, are assured of the unceasing guardianship of heavenly angels. Nor is such assurance given without need. If God has granted to His children promise of grace and protection, it is because there are mighty agencies of evil to be met—agencies numerous, determined, and untiring, of whose malignity and power none can safely be ignorant or unheeding. {GC 513.1}

The Lord is our helper, our defense. God has provided that no soul that trusts in Him shall be overcome by the enemy. {CTr 47.4}

But God's servants are not to trust to themselves in this great emergency. The program of coming events is in the hands of the Lord. The world is not without a ruler; the Majesty of heaven has the destiny of nations, as well as the concerns of His church, in His own hands. . . . {CTr 316.5}

In the closing scenes of this earth's history, when intensity is taking possession of every earthly element, the Lord requires of us a vigilance that knows no relaxation. But we are not left to struggle alone. Amid the dangers increasing on every hand, those who walk humbly before God, distrustful of their own wisdom, will have angels as their helpers and protectors. In times of special peril they will know the power of God's keeping care.—RH April 25, 1907. {TA 272.3}

He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, will carry forward His own work. He will thwart the purposes of wicked men, and will bring to confusion the counsels of those who plot mischief against His people. He who is the King, the Lord of hosts, sitteth between the cherubim, and amid the strife and tumult of nations He guards His children still. {MB 121.1}

The third angel's message has been sent forth to the world, warning men against receiving the mark of the beast or of his image in their foreheads or in their hands. To receive this mark means to come to the same decision as the beast has done, and to advocate the same ideas, in direct opposition to the Word of God. {7BC 979.12}