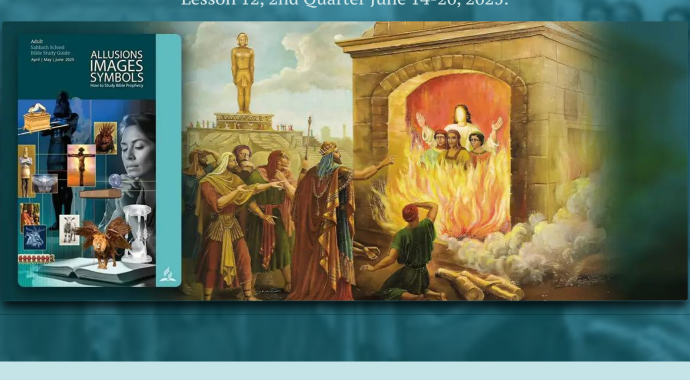
Precursors

Lesson 12, 2nd Quarter June 14-20, 2025.



Sabbath Afternoon June 14

Memory Text:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." KJV — 2Timothy 1:7

"When God sends to men warnings so important that they are represented as proclaimed by holy angels flying in the midst of heaven, He requires every person endowed with reasoning powers to heed the message. The fearful judgments denounced against the worship of the beast and his image (Revelation 14:9-11), should lead all to a diligent study of the prophecies to learn what the mark of the beast is, and how they are to avoid receiving it. But the masses of the people turn away their ears from hearing the truth and are turned unto fables. The apostle Paul declared, looking down to the last days: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." 2 Timothy 4:3. That time has fully come. The multitudes do not want Bible truth, because it interferes with the desires of the sinful, world-loving heart; and Satan supplies the deceptions which they love. GC 594.2

"But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support." GC 595.1

Sunday, June 15

Daniel 2 and the Historicist Approach to Prophecy

Read Daniel 2:31–45. What was Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and how did Daniel interpret it?

The kingdoms that have gone down, the kingdoms that still exist, and the kingdoms that are yet to come, whose legislations involve God's people, have been pictorially chronicled by both Daniel and John the Revelator.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of ancient Babylon while in a quandary as to the duration of his kingdom, was shown in a dream a great image composed of four metals. Its head was of "gold"; its breast and arms were of "silver"; its thighs, of "brass"; its legs, of "iron"; and its feet, of "iron mixed with miry clay." Interpreting the vision Daniel said to the king:

The four metals of the great image symbolize, as do the four beasts, a succession of four kings in their respective periods. The feet (right and left) of iron and clay obviously represent two divisions of kings (rightists and leftists) in a fifth period – the time in which the God of Heaven shall "set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." The toes of the feet, indicate, of course, a multiplicity of kings in both parties, the rightists and the leftists.

"*In the days* of these kings [*not after,* but in the days of the kings who are symbolized by the feet and toes of the great image] shall the God of heaven," says Daniel, calling attention to the kingdom at its beginning, "set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people but it [the kingdom] shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Dan. 2:44. Thus we see that while the nations of our age (symbolized by the feet and toes of the great image of Daniel 2:41, 42) are yet in existence, the Lord will set up the kingdom with which He will overthrow them. Then it shall be said: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. 11:15.

What smites the image? Is it not the stone which Daniel reveals is symbolical of the Kingdom of God restored? Also keep in mind the fact that the image is not smitten by the stone until after it (the stone) is cut out of the mountain, without hands, and that afterwards it grows and fills the earth, thus in turn becoming a mountain of itself. In elucidation of this truth, the prophet Isaiah adds:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isa. 2:2, 3.

Thus as the stone, supernaturally cut out of one mountain, supernaturally turns into another mountain, then fills the whole earth, it reveals the process of the prophecy's turning into history: that the stone (in that it is to grow) is symbolical of the first-fruits in the kingdom; that the infant kingdom begins with the 144,000 "servants of God" (Rev. 7:3); that consequently the church of Laodicea (in that it is the last in which the wheat and the tares commingle, and therefore the one in which the wheat, the 144,000 first fruits, is harvested) is necessarily the mountain out of which the stone, the first fruit of the kingdom, is cut or taken from.

Further, it is seen that their being "cut out without hands," without human aid, obviously points out the fact that they are garnered by the angels; that their increasing, then, as the growth of the stone reveals, is the result subsequently of the gathering of the second fruits out of all nations, causing the mountain or kingdom, to fill the earth; and that this super-natural work of cutting out the stone, of separating the 144,000, the nucleus of the kingdom, is the purification of the church.

Finally, since the stone, as has been seen, is cut out – the infant kingdom set up – "in the days of these kings" (the toe-kings), not after their days, and since the 144,000 "servants of God" stand on mount Zion (Rev. 14:1), it conclusively follows that the stone kingdom in its beginning is set up in the Holy Land, while the toe-kings are yet in existence.

Beyond question, therefore, the 144,000 guileless servants of God (Rev. 14:5), composing the government of God in its beginning, the stone which smites the image, and which subsequently becomes a great mountain that fills the whole earth, are instrumental in the eventual overthrow of all earthly governments. Accordingly, therefore, of who else at that time in all the world, of who else indeed but themselves, could it be written:

"…they are men wondered at;…a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations." Zech. 3:8; Joel 2:2.

Monday, June 6

Worshiping the Image

Read Daniel 3:1–12. What significance can be found in the fact that the statue was all gold and that the king demanded that it be worshiped?

"The words, "Thou art this head of gold," had made a deep impression upon the ruler's mind. Verse 38. The wise men of his realm, taking advantage of this and of his return to idolatry, proposed that he make an image similar to the one seen in his dream, and set it up where all might behold the head of gold, which had been interpreted as representing his kingdom. PK 504.1

"Pleased with the flattering suggestion, he determined to carry it out, and to go even farther. Instead of reproducing the image as he had seen it, he would excel the original. His image should not deteriorate in value from the head to the feet, but should be entirely of gold—symbolic throughout of Babylon as an eternal, indestructible, all-powerful kingdom, which should break in pieces all other kingdoms and stand forever." PK 504.2

"From his rich store of treasure, Nebuchadnezzar caused to be made a great golden image, similar in its general features to that which had been seen in vision, save in the one particular of the material of which it was composed. Accustomed as they were to magnificent representations of their heathen deities, the Chaldeans had never before produced anything so imposing and majestic as this resplendent statue, threescore cubits in height and six cubits in breadth. And it is not surprising that in a land where idol worship was of universal prevalence, the beautiful and priceless image in the plain of Dura, representing the glory of Babylon and its magnificence and power, should be consecrated as an object of worship. This was accordingly provided for, and a decree went forth that on the day of the dedication all should show their supreme loyalty to the Babylonian power by bowing before the image." PK 505.2

Read Daniel 3:17, 18, the words of the three Hebrew boys in defiance of the king. What does this teach us about faith and what at times it could demand of us?

"In vain were the king's threats. He could not turn the men from their allegiance to the Ruler of the universe. From the history of their fathers they had learned that disobedience to God results in dishonor, disaster, and death; and that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, the foundation of all true prosperity. Calmly facing the furnace, they said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so [if this is your decision], our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Their faith strengthened as they declared that God would be glorified by delivering them, and with triumphant assurance born of implicit trust in God, they added, 'But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.'" PK 507.3

"'Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.'" PK 508.2

"From his royal seat the king looked on, expecting to see the men who had defied him utterly destroyed. But his feelings of triumph suddenly changed. The nobles standing near saw his face grow pale as he started from the throne and looked intently into the glowing flames. In alarm the king, turning to his lords, asked, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? … Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." PK 509.1

"How did that heathen king know what the Son of God was like? The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God." PK 509.2

"Important are the lessons to be learned from the experience of the Hebrew youth on the plain of Dura. In this our day, many of God's servants, though innocent of wrongdoing, will be given over to suffer humiliation and abuse at the hands of those who, inspired by Satan, are filled with envy and religious bigotry. Especially will the wrath of man be aroused against those who hallow the Sabbath of the fourth commandment; and at last a universal decree will denounce these as deserving of death. PK 512.1

"The season of distress before God's people will call for a faith that will not falter. His children must make it manifest that He is the only object of their worship, and that no consideration, not even that of life itself, can induce them to make the least concession to false worship. To the loyal heart the commands of sinful, finite men will sink into insignificance beside the word of the eternal God. Truth will be obeyed though the result be imprisonment or exile or death. PK 512.2

"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

Tuesday, June 17

Worshiping the Image Again

Read Revelation 13:11–17; Revelation 14:9, 11, 12; Revelation 16:2; Revelation 19:20; and Revelation 20:4. What contrast is present here that pits the commandments of God against the commandments of men?

The two-horned beast exercises all the power which the first beast, the leopard-like, exercised, again showing it to be a world power. Indeed, it requires just such a power to compel all the inhabitants of the earth to worship as he commands, and to implement a likeness of a church and state government that is as outdated as are the Middle Ages themselves. Yes, it takes such a power to influence the world, save those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, to bow down to it.

When the beast's decree is passed that no one can buy or sell, and should be killed for non-conformity, then God only can protect His people, the people whose names are written in "The Book."

When this comes to pass, which is no longer beyond the horizon, then those whose names are written in the "Book of Life" shall be delivered, but all others will have received the mark of the beast. There will be no middle ground, or middle class.

Read Romans 1:18–25. (Notice the link between Romans 1:18 and Revelation 14:9, 10 about "the wrath of God.") In what way is the issue over worshiping the image just another manifestation of this same principle regarding to whom humans ultimately give their allegiance?

The wrath of God, as commonly understood, is the seven last plagues (Rev. 15:1), and is visited during the period between the close of probation and the second coming of Christ.

"In contrast to those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus, the third angel points to another class, against whose errors a solemn and fearful warning is uttered: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." Revelation 14:9, 10. A correct interpretation of the symbols employed is necessary to an understanding of this message. What is represented by the beast, the image, the mark?" GC 438.1

"The beast with two horns "causeth [commands] all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." Revelation 13:16, 17. The third angel's warning is: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." "The beast" mentioned in this message, whose worship is enforced by the two-horned beast, is the first, or leopardlike beast of Revelation 13—the papacy. The "image to the beast" represents that form of apostate Protestantism which will be developed when the Protestant churches shall seek the aid of the civil power for the enforcement of their dogmas. The "mark of the beast" still remains to be defined." GC 445.2

Wednesday, June 18

Early Church Persecution

Read Acts 12:1–17. What elements of this story might foreshadow last-day events?

"Skeptics may sneer at the thought that a glorious angel from heaven should give attention to a matter so commonplace as caring for these simple human needs, and may question the inspiration of the narrative. But in the wisdom of God these things are recorded in sacred history for the benefit, not of angels, but of men, that as they should be brought into trying positions they might find comfort in the thought that heaven knows it all. Jesus declared to His disciples that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the notice of the heavenly Father, and that if God can keep in mind the wants of all the little birds of the air, He will much more care for those who may become the subjects of His kingdom and through faith in Him may be the heirs of immortality. Oh, if the human mind were only to comprehend—in such measure as the plan of redemption can be comprehended by finite minds—the work of Jesus in taking upon Himself human nature, and what is to be accomplished for us by this marvelous condescension, the hearts of men would be melted with gratitude for God's great love, and in humility they would adore the divine wisdom that devised the mystery of grace!" 5T 749.1

"Today angels of heaven are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. We know not now who they are; it is not yet made manifest who shall overcome and share the inheritance of the saints in light; but angels of heaven are passing throughout the length and breadth of the earth, seeking to comfort the sorrowing, to protect the imperilled, to win the hearts of men to Christ. Not one is neglected or passed by. God is no respecter of persons, and He has an equal care for all the souls He has created." ST December 13, 1905, par. 6

"The same angel who had left the royal courts of heaven to rescue Peter from the power of his persecutor, had been the messenger of wrath and judgment to Herod. The angel smote Peter to arouse him from slumber; but it was with a different stroke that he smote the wicked king, bringing mortal disease upon him.—The Spirit of Prophecy 3:344." TA 234.1

Thursday, June 19

The Mark of the Beast

Read Matthew 12:9–14 and John 5:1–16. What issue caused the religious leaders to want to kill Jesus?

"Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin to answer the charge of Sabbathbreaking. Had the Jews at this time been an independent nation, such a charge would have served their purpose for putting Him to death. This their subjection to the Romans prevented. The Jews had not the power to inflict capital punishment, and the accusations brought against Christ would have no weight in a Roman court. There were other objects, however, which they hoped to secure. Notwithstanding their efforts to counteract His work, Christ was gaining, even in Jerusalem, an influence over the people greater than their own. Multitudes who were not interested in the harangues of the rabbis were attracted by His teaching. They could understand His words, and their hearts were warmed and comforted. He spoke of God, not as an avenging judge, but as a tender father, and He revealed the image of God as mirrored in Himself. His words were like balm to the wounded spirit. Both by His words and by His works of mercy He was breaking the oppressive power of the old traditions and man-made commandments, and presenting the love of God in its exhaustless fullness." DA 204.4

"Jesus had come to "magnify the law, and make it honorable." He was not to lessen its dignity, but to exalt it. The scripture says, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth." Isaiah 42:21, 4. He had come to free the Sabbath from those burdensome requirements that had made it a curse instead of a blessing. DA 206.1

"For this reason He had chosen the Sabbath upon which to perform the act of healing at Bethesda. He could have healed the sick man as well on any other day of the week; or He might simply have cured him, without bidding him bear away his bed. But this would not have given Him the opportunity He desired. A wise purpose underlay every act of Christ's life on earth. Everything He did was important in itself and in its teaching. Among the afflicted ones at the pool He selected the worst case upon whom to exercise His healing power, and bade the man carry his bed through the city in order to publish the great work that had been wrought upon him. This would raise the question of what it was lawful to do on the Sabbath, and would open the way for Him to denounce the restrictions of the Jews in regard to the Lord's day, and to declare their traditions void." DA 206.2

Friday, June 20

Further Thought

"The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The observance of the false sabbath will be urged upon us. The contest will be between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. Those who have yielded step by step to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will then yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. At that time the gold will be separated from the dross. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliance will then go out in darkness. Those who have assumed the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will then appear in the shame of their own nakedness. PK 188.1

"Among earth's inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. In heathen Africa, in the Catholic lands of Europe and of South America, in China, in India, in the islands of the sea, and in all the dark corners of the earth, God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness, revealing clearly to an apostate world the transforming power of obedience to His law. Even now they are appearing in every nation, among every tongue and people; and in the hour of deepest apostasy, when Satan's supreme effort is made to cause "all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond," to receive, under penalty of death, the sign of allegiance to a false rest day, these faithful ones, "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke," will "shine as lights in the world." Revelation 13:16; Philippians 2:15. The darker the night, the more brilliantly will they shine." PK 188.2

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