

Allusions, Images, and Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy

The Nations: Part 1

Lesson #4 for April 26, 2025

Scriptures: Genesis 10:1-12; 12:1-9; 1 Samuel 8:4-18; Matthew 20:25-28; Daniel 7:14; Revelation 18:1-4.

1. In Bible prophecy, how can one identify which nation is being referenced or discussed?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] **The book of Revelation shows us God's solutions for our fallen world. In the final chapters, access to the tree of life is restored, the curse is lifted, and we are readmitted into the presence of God. Revelation, in some ways, is the book of Genesis in reverse, which is why Genesis remains an important key to understanding how the world's problems developed in the first place.**

One of the key issues in both Daniel and Revelation is worldly government, a succession of human attempts to control a planet that rightfully belongs to God, who will—once this horrible episode of sin and rebellion is forever ended—ultimately rule in righteousness.

It is a very long process that leads to this moment, covering thousands of years of **human experiments in self-government**. They have never worked; even those expressing the highest ideals have always fallen short, often terribly short, of those ideals. So much of the sad history of humanity through the millennia is nothing but accounts of the tragedy that these failed systems have brought upon us. **And it only will get worse until God's "everlasting kingdom" (Dan. 7:27) finally is established.—Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sabbath Afternoon, April 19.†‡§**

Adam & Eve & The Garden of Eden

2. Just think how wonderful it would be if Adam and Eve had never eaten from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We could all still be living in an expanded Garden of Eden!

[BSG:] In the Garden of Eden, the story of the confrontation between Eve and the serpent reveals **the root cause of human failure; namely, the ambition to replace God**. The serpent appears first in the narrative. When he speaks, he sounds like God, the Creator Himself. The serpent "said" (*Gen. 3:1, NKJV*), just as God "said" ten times in the Creation story. The same verbal form *wayyo'mer*, "He said," is used in both stories. The construction of the phrase is troubling, for the subject of the verb "he said" is not indicated. In fact, this is the only case in this entire passage that the subject is not clearly given. And to add to the confusion, the verb is even preceded by the name *Elohim*, "God," giving the impression that God is speaking. The Hebrew text has the following sequence of words: "God ... said to the woman." **Thus, the serpent seems to have replaced God.—Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* 52-53.†‡§** [Remember that Eve and the serpent were NOT speaking Hebrew!][‡]

3. The ancient Hebrew vocabulary was very limited, stated to be about 1% of modern English which has at least 250,000 to 1,000,000 words. Was the similarity in Hebrew wording noted in the study guide due to the limited ancient Hebrew vocabulary? Or, with God's help, did Moses prepare an eloquent work of literature with underlying and poetic meanings? Or, both?

Genesis 3:1: Now the snake was the most cunning animal that the LORD God had made. **The snake asked the woman**, “Did God really tell you not to eat fruit from **any** tree in the garden?”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Genesis 3:1). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{††} [Did Eve know it was the Devil?][†] [BSG:] Interestingly, the same phenomenon occurs when the woman engages in disobeying God. The phrase describing her behavior, **“the woman saw . . . was good”** (*Gen. 3:6, NKJV*), is **reminiscent of God’s evaluation of His creation: “God saw that . . . it was good”** (*Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 25, 31*). This echo between God’s words and Eve’s words suggests that she has already replaced the divine Creator with her own opinion. Indeed, she behaves like God: “She *took* of its fruit and *gave* to her husband with her, and he *ate*” (*Gen. 3:6, NKJV*). These three verbs (italicized in the quotation) have so far been associated only with the Creator. God “gave” to eat (*Gen. 1:29*). God “took” the man (*Gen. 2:15*), and God “took” one of his ribs (*Gen. 2:21, NKJV*). Thus, Eve identifies herself as the Creator and one-sidedly imposes her “rule” over Adam.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 53.^{††§}

4. In Genesis 1, the phrase, *God was pleased with what he saw (GNB)*, is repeated many times. Unfortunately, the same words were used by the woman in Genesis 3:6. She *took* some of the fruit, and she *ate* it; and she *gave* it to her husband, who also *ate* it.

Genesis 3:6: The woman saw how beautiful the tree was and how good its fruit would be to eat, and she thought how wonderful it would be to become wise. So she **took** some of the fruit and **ate** it. Then she **gave** some to her husband, and he also **ate** it.—*Good News Bible.*†*

[BSG:] Later, **both Adam and Eve will attempt to take God’s place again when they realize that they are naked**. The biblical text reports that they “**made** themselves coverings” (*Gen. 3:7, NKJV*). The verb “**make**” has so far been used only in conjunction with God, the Creator (*Gen. 1:31, Gen. 2:2, etc.*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 53.^{††§}

Genesis 3:7: As soon as they had eaten it, they were given understanding and realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and covered themselves.—*Good News Bible.**

Genesis 1:31: God looked at everything he had **made**, and he was very pleased. Evening passed and morning came — that was the sixth day.—*Good News Bible.*†*

Genesis 2:2: By the seventh day God finished what he had been doing and stopped working.—*Good News Bible.**

5. Despite being forced to leave the Garden of Eden, God still promised a future for Adam and Eve and the possibility of oneness with God. He said that it would not always be easy.

Genesis 3:16-19: ¹⁶ And he said to the woman, “I will increase your trouble in pregnancy and your pain in giving birth. In spite of this, you will still have desire for your husband, yet you will be subject to him.” [How many children did Eve have? Probably many!]

¹⁷ And he said to the man, “You listened to your wife and ate the fruit which I told you not to eat. Because of what you have done, the ground will be under

a curse. You will have to work hard all your life to make it produce enough food for you. ¹⁸It will produce weeds and thorns, and **you will have to eat wild plants** [vegetables]. ¹⁹You will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything, until you go back to the soil from which you were formed. You were made from soil, and you will become soil again.”—*Good News Bible*.*††

6. The Garden of Eden remained on this earth and was visible to sinful humans until the flood.

[EGW:] The Garden of Eden remained upon the earth long after man had become an outcast from its pleasant paths. The fallen race were long permitted to gaze upon the home of innocence, their entrance barred only by the watching angels. At the cherubim-guarded gate of Paradise the divine glory was revealed. Hither came Adam and his sons to worship God. Here they renewed their vows of obedience to that law the transgression of which had banished them from Eden. **When the tide of iniquity overspread the world, and the wickedness of men determined their destruction by a flood of waters, the hand that had planted Eden withdrew it from the earth.** But in the final restitution, when there shall be “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1), it is to be restored more gloriously adorned than at the beginning.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 62.2.†† [How could they become atheists?][†] [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.212&index=0>][†]

7. Even though the Garden of Eden was on the earth for anyone to see with the angels guarding the entrance, some of the people forgot God’s plans for them and tried to invent man-made solutions to their new-found problems. Thus, after the flood, they built the tower of Babel.

After the Flood and Babel

8. After the flood, the descendants of Noah spread out some. **Read Genesis 10:1-12.**
9. One of the first attempts at solutions came to be called *city-states* with a local leader who often tried to conquer surrounding cities to control them as well.

[BSG:] Some have read about Nimrod and concluded that he is a noble hero, much like the conquering heroes of pagan mythology. But when the Bible describes him as “a mighty one on the earth,” and a “mighty hunter before the LORD,” it is not a compliment. **Nimrod is great in his own estimation, and he stands “before” the Lord in the sense that he defies God.** What we see in these texts is the spreading of the rebellion against God, a rebellion that will exist until, ultimately, all rebellion will be forever eradicated.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, April 20.††

10. Why do so many seem to want to “climb a ladder” and make themselves rulers over others? This is a sin of rebellion against God. Returning to the story of the tower of Babel:

[BSG:] **The language that is used to describe the work of the builders of Babel echoes the Creation account, with the deliberate intention of reversing the work of Creation and replacing the God of Creation....** Nimrod, whose name means “we shall rebel,” is presented as the creator of Babel, just as God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 53-54.††

Genesis 10:10: At first his kingdom included Babylon, Erech, and Accad, all three of

them in Babylonia.—*Good News Bible*.*

11. The Hebrew has definite correlates between God's creation and Nimrod building the city. However, the English translations do not show that close correlation. Is that due to the greatly reduced vocabulary in ancient Hebrew compared to English?

[BSG:] In the story of the tower of Babel, we observe the same usurpation....

The builders of Babel have the same ambition as Eve: **they want to be like God**.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 54.†‡

12. The builders of the tower of Babel were not building that monument to worship God! They were trying to accomplish at least two things: 1) To climb up to the clouds to see where all that water during the flood came from, and 2) If necessary, to protect themselves against any future flood(s) that God might send. See Genesis 11:3-4.

13. Also, the **builders of Babel were trying to make a name for themselves**. The Bible says it is only God who can have a great name. (Joshua 7:9)

[BSG:] The builders of Babel wanted to **make for themselves a great name** and make themselves into a unique universal nation (*Gen. 11:4*). But it is God who makes a name great and only God who makes one particular nation great and unique in contradistinction to the other nations.... Babel stood, then, in place of the Creator. The call to Abram restores God's prerogatives. Only God, as the Creator, can truly "make"; and only God can "make a name." Moreover, only the name of God is described as "great" (*Josh. 7:9*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 54-55.†‡§

Abram/Abraham & His Descendants & The Hebrew Nations

14. In the midst of all that chaos when God caused a "confusion" of language and communication during the building of the tower of Babel, we come to the story of Abram/Abraham.

Genesis 12:1-9: ¹ The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a land that I am going to show you....

³I will bless those who bless you,
But I will curse those who curse you.

And **through you I will bless all the nations.**"

⁴ When Abram was 75 years old, he started out from Haran, as the LORD had told him to do; and Lot went with him....

⁷The LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "**This is the country that I am going to give to your descendants.**" Then Abram built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸After that, he moved on south to the hill country east of the city of Bethel and set up his camp between Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There also he built an altar and worshipped [*sic-Br*] the LORD. ⁹Then he moved on from place to place, going towards the southern part of Canaan.—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

[BSG:] **God intended to use Abraham to establish a nation that would stand in contrast to human kingdoms.** They were not to have a king other than God Himself. **The people were to show what would happen if the human race returned to their Creator.** Israel was established to be a blessing to "all the families of the earth" (*Gen. 12:3, NKJV*). God had poured out upon the Israelites light and privileges that had not been seen in the world since,

perhaps, before the Flood.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, April 21.^{†‡§}

15. These verses make it clear that **Abraham was supposed to develop a nation that would be a witness to the world and bring the world back to YAHWEH.**
16. Not too many years later, it was necessary for God to make a plan to **get His children out of Egypt.** He recognized that taking them to the land of Canaan—which He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—was fraught with some terrible possible problems.

Deuteronomy 4:5-9: [Moses said:]⁵ “I have taught you all the laws, as the LORD my God told me to do. Obey them in the land that you are about to invade and occupy.⁶ Obey them faithfully, and **this will show the people of other nations how wise you are.** When they hear of all these laws, they will say, ‘What wisdom and understanding this great nation has!’

⁷ “No other nation, no matter how great, has a god who is so near when they need him as the LORD our God is to us. He answers us whenever we call for help.⁸ No other nation, no matter how great, has laws so just as those that I have taught you today.⁹ Be on your guard! Make certain that you do not forget, as long as you live, what you have seen with your own eyes. Tell your children and your grandchildren.”—*Good News Bible.*^{*†‡}

[BSG:] This was not a single individual bearing witness in a single community; **this was [supposed to be] an entire nation that, by working together and in cooperation with God, could exhibit the glory of His character.** Notice, too, in the words spoken to them that it wasn’t just “statutes and judgments” that God had given them that made them so special, but **their adherence to them that would cause the other nations to say, “ ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” ’ ”** (*Deut. 4:6, NKJV*). However wonderful the truths given to the people, their failure to live up to them, to obey them, would bring curses instead of blessing and death instead of life.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, April 21.^{†‡§}

17. Should the idea of an entire “nation” or people (Israel) who are supposed to exhibit God’s character remind us of the upcoming times of the end when God is waiting for not just a few “Jobs” or a few “Abrahams” but rather God is waiting for a “large” group of people to stand up to Satan and exhibit to the universe explicit trust in God.

[BSG:] **That Abram heard the call to leave a place saturated with the memory of Babel makes sense and should not surprise us, not only because of historical and geographical considerations but also because of its theological implications.** From the cry of the prophets to the apocalyptic supplication, the divine call to **“get out of Babylon” (the Greek name for Babel)** has a long theological history in biblical tradition (see *Isa. 48:20, Rev. 18:4*). The divine call means not only deliverance from oppressive exilic conditions, as well as national restoration to the Promised Land, but also implies a return to the covenant.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 54.^{†‡§}

18. In many places throughout the Bible, in both Old and New Testament, God’s people were challenged to get out of Babel/Babylon! God, of course, was intending that Abraham and his descendants would provide the needed missionary outreach for which He had been longing.

[BSG:] The word *barak*, “bless,” is a keyword in God’s call to Abram, where it appears five times. The use of this word is particularly prominent in the book of Genesis, where it occurs 88 times (in comparison to 356 times in the rest of the Hebrew Bible). The Hebrew concept of “blessing” is often associated with the prospect of fruitfulness (*Gen. 1:21–23*). Thus, the call to Abram overturns the ideology of Babel. Against the builders of Babel, who refused to go along with the divine plan of creation to multiply, the blessing of Abram restores the forces of creation and the promise of the future. [Farmers needed fruitfulness.]

While the builders of Babel founded their security only on themselves, the blessing of the nations is solely dependent on God’s blessing to Abram. The essential reason for this blessing lies in a future historical event: “ ‘in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed’ ” (*Gen. 12:3, NKJV*). The prepositional phrase “in you” means “**in your seed**” or “**through your seed.**” That is, it is not “in Abram” that the blessing is obtained, but “in the seed” of Abram, which is the **same Messianic “seed” as in Genesis 3:15**, with which our text shares many common words, grammatical forms, and associations of words and themes. The same language is used by Paul to describe the universal effect of the covenant “in Christ Jesus” (*Gal. 6:15, NKJV*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 55.†§

19. The story of the children of Israel (descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) is very sad.

[BSG:] As originally established, Israel was not to have a human monarch, the way that other nations did. In time, however, the people’s faith faltered, and they found themselves pining for the things that “the nations,” the Gentiles, had.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, April 22.‡

20. Because Samuel’s sons were very evil, the people went to Samuel and said they wanted a king. The story is told in 1 Samuel 8:4-18. But, God did not leave them without guidance.

[BSG:] It is important to notice that **the request for a king was a rejection of God’s reign over His people**. As established, the nation was to answer directly to the Creator, and their relationship to Him was put on display through the sanctuary and its services, among other things. **By requesting a king, they would bring the same kinds of suffering on themselves that the Gentile kingdoms experienced: military conscription in the king’s wars, confiscation, taxation, and other ills.** They would discover that human potentates tend to rule in their own favor instead of benevolently, as God does.

Also, the new arrangement would be permanent: Israel would be given what they asked for, but when they realized that it was a downgrade, they would be stuck with it. “ ‘And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day’ ” (*1 Sam. 8:18, NKJV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday.†§

21. God had explained in detail what would happen if they chose a king; there would be many problems. Moses had warned them 400 years earlier!

Deuteronomy 17:14-20: ¹⁴ “After you have taken possession of the land that the LORD your God is going to give you and have settled there, then you will decide you need a king like all the nations round you. ¹⁵Make sure that the man you choose to be king is the one whom the LORD has chosen. He must be one of

your own people; do not make a foreigner your king. ¹⁶**The king is not to have a large number of horses for his army**, and he is not to send people to Egypt to buy horses, because the LORD has said that his people are never to return there. ¹⁷**The king is not to have many wives, because this would make him turn away from the LORD; and he is not to make himself rich with silver and gold.** ¹⁸**When he becomes king, he is to have a copy of the book of God's laws and teachings made from the original copy kept by the levitical priests.** ¹⁹**He is to keep this book near him and read from it all his life, so that he will learn to honour [sic-Br] the LORD and to obey faithfully everything that is commanded in it.** ²⁰**This will keep him from thinking that he is better than his fellow-Israelites and from disobeying the LORD's commands in any way. Then he will reign for many years, and his descendants will rule Israel for many generations.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*††}

[BSG:] One simply has to look at the history of Israel after they decided to have a king in order to see just how badly things went for them under these kings. Though some kings were better than others, even the “good” ones had done wrong (think of David and Bathsheba). **In many cases, the nation lived under the rule of one king after another who did “evil in the sight of the LORD”** (see *1 Kings 11:6, 1 Kings 15:26, 1 Kings 16:30, 2 King [sic] 3:2, etc.*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, April 22.^{†‡§}

1 Kings 11:6: He [Solomon] **sinned against the LORD** and was not true to him as his father David had been.—*Good News Bible*.^{*††}

1 Kings 15:26: Like his father before him, he [Jeroboam] **sinned against the LORD** and led Israel into sin.—*Good News Bible*.^{*††}

1 Kings 16:30: He [Ahab] **sinned against the LORD** more than any of his predecessors.—*Good News Bible*.^{*††}

2 Kings 3:2: He [Joram, the son of Ahab] **sinned against the LORD**, but he was not as bad as his father or his mother Jezebel; he pulled down the image his father had made for the worship of Baal.—*Good News Bible*.^{*††}

22. There was a rapid, downhill spiral into more and more departure from God's ways.

[BSG:] **Back then, or even today, all human governments share one thing in common: sinners governing other sinners. What possibly could go wrong?**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, April 22.^{†‡§}

The New Testament Church and Even Today

23. But, Israel was not the only nation who have had problems with governing themselves!

[BSG:] God's dealings with Israel provide rich insights into His dealings with the New Testament church. In fact, in many ways, the nation of Israel served to foreshadow the errors of the church. **Far from being able to claim any kind of superiority to ancient Israel, Christians have been, and still are, very much susceptible to the same temptations.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, April 23.^{†‡} [See *Prophets and Kings 177.2*.][†]

24. What error did Jesus warn His disciples to avoid in establishing the Christian church?

Matthew 20:25-28: ²⁵So Jesus called them all together and said, “You know that the rulers of the heathen have power over them, and the leaders have complete

authority. ²⁶**This, however, is not the way it shall be among you. If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest;** ²⁷and if one of you wants to be first, he must be your slave — ²⁸like the Son of Man, who did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life to redeem many people.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

[BSG:] Israel asked for a human king, a request that led to the moral downfall of the nation. The kings became progressively more wicked until God allowed the Babylonians to take His people captive as a matter of course correction.

Something similar happened in the history of the Christian church. Even though they were not to structure themselves like a Gentile nation, **when Constantine came to power and professed to be a Christian**, believers were relieved—persecution was now ended! That in itself was a blessing, **but then it occurred to the church that they might be able to leverage the power of the emperor to their own advantage.**

Several major disputes broke out among Christians in the fourth century, and when the church found itself incapable of resolving them, it allowed the emperor to intervene. **Gradually the bishop of Rome rose in prominence**, where he had once been one senior bishop among equals. The church allowed the state to intervene in the religious matters, and once the state had a foot in the door, things went from bad to worse.

Like Israel of old, many of the darkest chapters in Christian history are the direct **result of the church compromising with the world.... The church gradually adopted many of the means and methods of a pagan empire to the point that many faithful believers were martyred because they were perceived as threats to the church-state institution.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Wednesday, April 23.^{†‡} [That time was called *the Dark Ages*.][‡]

25. Can you think of any time when God’s choice of groups of people to represent Him correctly to the surrounding nations was a very successful plan? Abraham apparently converted a large number of people who followed him. The disciples managed to start a powerful Christian witness and church. The Great Awakening of the 1830s and 1840s led hundreds of thousands to be “converted,” looking expectantly for the second coming of Jesus.

[BSG:] **The primary purpose for which God established the nation of Israel was not to condemn the rest of the world but to save it.** Certainly, most of us feel condemned when we are confronted by righteous behavior in someone else; so the existence of Israel also served to highlight the sin and selfishness of the nations around it. Believers living in harmony with God highlight His righteous character, which naturally leads to conviction. Ideally, the lives of people who “keep the commandments of God” (*Rev. 14:12*) **should showcase His character.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Thursday.^{†‡§}

Revelation 14:12: This calls for endurance on the part of God’s people, those who obey God’s commandments and are faithful to Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

26. God’s plans were thwarted many times in many ages by the unfaithfulness of His people.

[BSG:] However, **had the Israelites acted as they should have and done what they had been told to do, the nations would have come to them in peace, seeking to know more about them and their God.** Tragically, as the

Babylonian captivity showed, these nations came to wage war instead.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, April 24.^{†‡}

27. If only any group of human beings could have been the kind of witnesses that Jesus was, we would be in the Kingdom today! He was the ultimate Example of what God wanted to happen.

[BSG:] The ultimate purpose for establishing the nation of Israel was the same as God's purpose in establishing the church: **He longs to use His people to draw sinners toward Christ.** The call of the three angels' messages, delivered through His church, goes out, not to a select few but to "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (*Rev. 14:6, NKJV*). **Revelation 18:1 predicts that the whole earth will be lighted up with the glory of God prior to Christ's return.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, April 24.^{†‡§}

28. In a number of different places in the Old Testament, the children of Israel were told to witness to the Gentiles. See, for example, Numbers 14:17-21; Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:6; & Isaiah 60:3.

29. However, when we come to the end of the New Testament, we find that **God is still calling His people to come out of Babel/Babylon!** See Revelation 18:1-4. God's people have not done His bidding.

Revelation 18:4: Then I heard another voice from heaven, saying:

"Come out, my people! Come out from her!

You must not take part in her sins;

you must not share in her punishment!"—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

30. On occasion, God has even had to use pagan foreign kings to help His people. Consider the story of Cyrus as recorded in Isaiah 44&45 (Isaiah 44:24-45:13).

31. Turning again to the story of the apostasy of the Christian church:

[EGW:] **Little by little, at first in stealth and silence, and then more openly as it increased in strength and gained control of the minds of men, "the mystery of iniquity" carried forward its deceptive and blasphemous work.** Almost imperceptibly the customs of heathenism found their way into the Christian church. **The spirit of compromise and conformity was restrained for a time by the fierce persecutions which the church endured under paganism.** But as persecution ceased, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions. **The nominal conversion of Constantine,** in the early part of the fourth century, caused great rejoicing; and the world, cloaked with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. **Now the work of corruption rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be vanquished, became the conqueror. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 49.2-50.0.^{†‡}

<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p132.202&index=0>[†]

32. It is interesting to consider that Abram/Abraham was originally called out of Mesopotamia, the area of Nineveh (Assyria) and Babylon. But, unfortunately, his descendants eventually ended up going back there in exile. Once again, God had to use Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus

to try to “purify” His people and get His children back to Canaan. In summary:

[BSG:] When God created the earth, He had a plan of happiness and love for the people who would live there. However, instead of fulfilling God’s plan for them, people fell into the temptation of choosing their own ways.... **We will study how nations failed to find the right path and how God guided people in their struggle to find light in the darkness. This darkness was produced by their desire for self-government.**

The desire for self-government first manifested in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve, under the influence of the serpent, disobeyed God and fell under the temptation of longing to be “ ‘like God’ ” (*Gen. 3:5, NKJV*). Consequently, Adam and Eve, as fallen beings, gained a knowledge of sin and thus lost the moral power to choose good over evil (*Gen. 3:22*). Later in the early history of humanity, the **men of Babel decided to erect a tower in order to get to the door of God (“Bab-El”) in heaven so that they might usurp God’s place** (*Gen. 11:1–4*). But the builders of Babel became confused [in language] and, as a result of their presumption, God dispersed them over the earth.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 52.†‡§

33. How well are we doing at witnessing to the world?

[BSG:] **Replacing God.** Knowing that the essence of sinning is to replace God, ask yourself this question: How, if we are not careful, may God be replaced in every level of our lives? Discuss the following aspects in your class:

In your words: when you lie, you hide or distort a fact. You have replaced the truth (what God sees) with your version of it. When you boast, you generally exaggerate your value at the expense of your neighbor or even at the expense of God Himself, just as Nebuchadnezzar did when he built the city of Babylon (*Dan. 4:30*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 55.†‡§

Daniel 4:30: He [Nebuchadnezzar] said, “Look how great Babylon is! **I built it as my capital city to display my power and might, my glory and majesty.**”—*Good News Bible.**††

[Continuing from BSG:] ***In your work:*** when you overwork, you ignore the laws of health or your family, who needs your presence and attention. When you are lazy, you do a sloppy job. When you cheat and when you plagiarize, you steal the work or findings of someone else, pretending that it is yours.

In your religion: when you worship someone else or something else other than God, whether it is money, work, a car, a house, or yourself, you thus commit idolatry.

Responding to God’s Call. Knowing that replacing God is sin, what can you do to allow God to remove self from the throne of your heart and enthrone Himself?—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 55-56.†‡§

©2025, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged. *Electronic version. †Bold type is added. ‡Brackets and content in brackets are added. §Italic type is in the source. [sic-Br]=This is correct as quoted; it is the British spelling.

Last Modified: March 17, 2025

Email: Info@theox.org