

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*

Lesson 11 "What More Could I Have Done?"

Read for this week's study

John 18:37; Romans 3:23–26; Romans 5:8; Isaiah 5:1–4; Matthew 21:33–39; Isaiah 53:4; Romans 3:1–4.

Memory Text

"Pilate therefore said to Him, 'Are You a king then?' Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice'" (John 18:37, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Christ the Victor
- III. The Just and the Justifier
- IV. The Song of My Beloved
- V. Christ's Parable of the Vineyard
- VI. The Vindication of God's Name
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. "Where is God when there is suffering? If God is good, why is there so much evil? The cosmic conflict sheds light on this crucial issue, but many questions remain. Yet, when all our attempts at answers fail to satisfy, we can look to Jesus on the cross and see in Him that God can be trusted, even with all the questions that remain unanswered for now." (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. What does John 18:37 tell us about Christ's work to counter the deceptions of the enemy? (Sunday's lesson) Note that Jesus does not say: 'my kingdom is not *of* this world' as some translations put it (KJV, NKJV, NIV, ESV), as if his 'kingdom' had nothing to do with the present world at all and was an altogether other-worldly, spiritual or heavenly reality. Jesus says that his 'kingdom is not *from* this world' (NRSV, NET Bible, Aramaic Bible in Plain English). Jesus is denying that his kingdom has a this-worldly *origin* or *quality*. He is not denying that it has a this-worldly *destination*. That's why he came into the world himself (v. 37) and why he has sent

his followers into the world (17:18; 20:21). His kingdom does not come from this world, but it is for this world. Why is this distinction so crucial?

3. Why is the demonstration of God's righteousness and love in the cosmic conflict so important (Rom 3:23-26; 5:8)? (Monday's lesson) When we reflect on the Cross and all of God's works in the plan of redemption, how do God's works give us confidence in the love of God, even amid trials and sufferings?
4. Isaiah chapter 5 contains a song (v. 1-7), a lament (v. 8-23) and a judgment (v. 24-30). Comparing Israel to a vineyard is very compelling to Isaiah's hearers because working in vineyards was their livelihood. The prophet describes in detail the three-year effort to produce the first crop of grapes (v. 1-2) (Tuesday's lesson) The rhetorical question asks what should be done with a worthless vineyard that produced bad grapes (v. 2) in spite of the 'choicest vines' being planted. Verses 5-6 announce what will be done and verse 7 clarifies that God is talking about Israel and Judah. The people took the blessings for granted and used them selfishly. Instead of serving the Lord, they served themselves. What lesson is there in all this for us today?
5. How does Christ's parable of the vineyard (Matthew 21:33-39) shed additional light on the character and actions of the vineyard owner? (Wednesday's lesson) Why is it significant that the culpability for the failure of the vineyard does not lie with the owner? How does the cross prove that although because of sin creatures suffer immensely, God suffers most of all and has done everything he morally could for this world?
6. How do texts like Isaiah 5:3-4; Romans 3:1-4, Revelation 15:3; 19:1-6 hint at the vindication of God's character? (Thursday's lesson)
7. The conflict over God's character that could not be settled by the exercise of divine power is met by the voluntarily suffering God of the cross, who still remains omnipotent and sovereign. God, who is love, subjects himself to suffering, making himself 'vulnerable to pain'. As Jürgen Moltmann said: "God incapable of suffering is a loveless being." (*The Crucified God*, 222). "From the cross springs light sufficient to illuminate even the darkest night." (Henri Blocher)
8. How does the cross provide grounds to trust that because God has done everything he could for our best good, that ultimately, he will eliminate all evil at the end of the ages? How can we live with the reality that even as many questions remain unanswered, we can confidently await the final eschatological solution to the problem of evil and its full eradication with the approval of the whole universe?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

So they were rich. They were religious. Remember the Laodiceans? “We are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.” And it says it made God sick. When it says, “I will spit you out of My mouth”, interestingly enough, the Greek word is *emeō* from which we get the word “emetic”. There are other places where it says God is sick as He looks at His children behaving the way they do. For He will lose them if they don’t behave better. So then we come to 5, to show God’s attitude toward them in their very privileged position, but their almost unhealable condition. And this very famous passage, 5:1:

Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dugged it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? [You can hear God saying, “What more could I have done for my people in the Promised Land?”] When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, . . . [And isn’t that precisely what He did? And the Babylonians were free to come; the Assyrians were free to come. And God ceased to protect that little people. I will remove its hedge], and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry!

Isn’t that eloquent translation, by the way? Is yours as good as that? I’m reading the *Revised Standard* of 1952. This is all in poetic form, of course.

Well, what has gone wrong? Does Isaiah explain how they could be so religious and apparently prosperous, which you know was usually interpreted as evidence of God’s blessing. Remember Job? When you’re prosperous, you’re blessed. They just misunderstood. Well, what is it they misunderstood? Look at 5:13 in this very same chapter. Why are the people going into exile?

“Therefore My people go into exile for want of knowledge.” Now, knowledge of what? Well, you remember 1:3? “My people do not know”, what? “They do not understand.” Well, what is it that they don’t understand, that’s leading them to be so religious and yet missing the point entirely? Let’s look at a number of places. And this runs through the whole Bible and is the reason for doing the sixty-six Books. Look at 11:9 for just one of many places, 11:6-9 is one of these famous descriptions of the new earth that artists have used as a basis for famous

paintings; the little child leading the lion, and so on. But at this moment just take verse 9. When all is restored:

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for [when everything is right, look,] the earth shall be full of the knowledge [this time it's specified, the knowledge] of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

There never will be right behavior without a right picture of God. There's no other way to do it. When people attempt to be religious and even do what's right with a false picture of God, it turns out to be very destructive, as has been illustrated so painfully, especially by those who crucified Christ and rushed home to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Isaiah, recorded January 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/33MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/34MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

COMMENT: In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11, we read about the sin that is not forgiven. It says, "Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie."

That's an excellent passage to quote with this. Remember that, in Thessalonians, where in the end the people refused to love the truth and so be saved? Therefore, a strong delusion came upon them. They actually believed what was false. They will all be condemned because they did not believe the truth. And that's Romans 1 very clearly. Well, when Jesus came as the Truth, they preferred Satan's lies to the Truth. They even killed Him to silence His explanation of the Truth. Then what more could God do for them? There was nothing more God could do, and so He turned from them to others who would be more willing to listen. That's a good example, isn't it, right there? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations, recorded January 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:

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But how else can God win our respect to begin with, and then once He has it, tell us He never again wants to make us afraid by a show of His power? Now He wants to reason with us. “Come now, let us reason together. I just want to speak to you softly. Here’s the evidence. Here’s My Son. Look at Him treat His enemies so graciously.” Did that impress the people? They despised Jesus as weak. They misunderstood His gentleness as weakness on His part. Remember Romans 2:4? Don’t misunderstand the patience and long suffering of God as weakness on His part.

He just doesn’t like to lose His children. He is not willing that any should perish. And as they do perish, He cries, “Why will you die? How can I give you up? How can I let you go? But you are bent on leaving Me? What more can I do for you? I’ll have to let you go. What did I do wrong with your fathers?” Remember, we read this? “What did they find wrong in Me? I planted them like a vineyard.” Remember that whole picture in Isaiah? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Ezekiel, 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/37MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/38MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Christ was the greatest teacher the world has ever known. He came to this earth to shed abroad the bright beams of truth, that men might gain a fitness for heaven. “For this cause came I into the world,” He declared, “that I should bear witness unto the truth.” John 18:37. He came to reveal the character of the Father, that men might be led to worship Him in spirit and in truth. {CT 259.1}

Man’s need for a divine teacher was known in heaven. The pity and sympathy of God were aroused in behalf of human beings, fallen and bound to Satan’s chariot car; and when the fullness of time was come, He sent forth His Son. The One appointed in the councils of heaven came to this earth as man’s instructor. The rich benevolence of God gave Him to our world, and to meet the necessities of human nature He took humanity upon Himself. To the astonishment of the heavenly host the eternal Word came to this world as a helpless babe. Fully prepared, He left the royal courts and mysteriously allied Himself with fallen human beings. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” John 1:14. {CT 259.2}

He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, can carry forward His great work harmoniously. That which appears to finite minds entangled and complicated, the Lord’s hand can keep in perfect order. He can devise ways and means to thwart the purposes of wicked men, and He will bring to confusion the counsels of them that plot mischief against His people. {5T 754.2}

Claiming for himself the attributes of mercy, goodness, and truth, Satan attributed his own attributes to God. These misrepresentations must be met and demonstrated as false, by Christ in human nature. {CTr 246.4}

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to reveal, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. {8T 265.5}

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. {6BC 1110.4}

But the work of human redemption is not all that is accomplished by the cross. The love of God is manifested to the universe. The prince of this world is cast out. The accusations which Satan has brought against God are refuted. The reproach which he has cast upon heaven is forever removed. Angels as well as men are drawn to the Redeemer. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," He said, "will draw all unto Me." {DA 626.1}

The spirit of liberality is the spirit of heaven. Christ's self-sacrificing love is revealed upon the cross. That man might be saved, He gave all that He had and then gave Himself. {9T 254.2}

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. Then the prevarications and accusations of him who had once been an exalted angel were seen in their true light. It was seen that his professedly spotless character was deceptive. His deeply laid scheme to exalt himself to supremacy was fully discerned. His falsehoods were apparent to all. God's authority was forever established. Truth triumphed over falsehood. {RC 60.3}

The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God. That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. {TA 205.2}

Through the Jewish nation it was God's purpose to impart rich blessings to all peoples. Through Israel the way was to be prepared for the diffusion of His light to the whole world. The nations of the world, through following corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed

through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man.
{COL 286.1}

God desired to bring all peoples under His merciful rule. He desired that the earth should be filled with joy and peace. He created man for happiness, and He longs to fill human hearts with the peace of heaven. He desires that the families below shall be a symbol of the great family above. {COL 290.2}

In the lives of God's people the truths of His word are to reveal their glory and excellence. Through His people Christ is to manifest His character and the principles of His kingdom.
{COL 296.3}

Satan seeks to counterwork the work of God, and he is constantly urging men to accept his principles. He represents the chosen people of God as a deluded people. He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power is employed against those who work righteousness. The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan's charges by showing the results of obedience to right principles. {COL 296.4}

It was by falsifying the character of God and exciting distrust of Him that Satan tempted Eve to transgress. By sin the minds of our first parents were darkened, their natures were degraded, and their conceptions of God were molded by their own narrowness and selfishness. And as men became bolder in sin, the knowledge and the love of God faded from their minds and hearts. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God," they "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." {5T 738.2}

At times Satan's contest for the control of the human family appeared to be crowned with success. During the ages preceding the first advent of Christ the world seemed almost wholly under the sway of the prince of darkness, and he ruled with a terrible power as though through the sin of our first parents the kingdoms of the world had become his by right. Even the covenant people, whom God had chosen to preserve in the world the knowledge of Himself, had so far departed from Him that they had lost all true conception of His character. {5T 738.3}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. {5T 738.4}

It is beyond the power of the human mind to estimate the evil which has been wrought by the heresy of eternal torment. The religion of the Bible, full of love and goodness, and abounding in compassion, is darkened by superstition and clothed with terror. When we consider in what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, can we wonder that our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, and even hated? The appalling views of God which have spread over the world

from the teachings of the pulpit have made thousands, yea, millions, of skeptics and infidels. {4SP 356.2}

The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary. He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 6}

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, “I have manifested thy name.” “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 9}