

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2023: *God's Mission—My Mission*
Lesson 9 “Mission to the Powerful”

Read for this week's study

Daniel 4; 2 Kings 5:1–19; John 3:1–12; John 7:43–52; Matthew 19:16–22; John 19:38–42.

Memory Text

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Nebuchadnezzar
- III. Naaman
- IV. Witnessing to the Learned: Nicodemus
- V. Mission to the Rich
- VI. Mission to the Powerful
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “God is as concerned about the salvation of the rich and the powerful as He is for that of the weak and the needy. [...] This week we will explore God's mission to the rich and powerful. Journey with us as we see how God reached some of these people and how He is calling and preparing Seventh-day Adventists to be a witness to them today as well.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. As you read Daniel chapters 1-4, what does this tell us about how God works with one of the world's most powerful men? (Sunday's lesson) How does the progression reveal God's patience and respect for the pace that Nebuchadnezzar can follow?
3. What can we learn from Naaman's story about reaching people for the Lord (2 Kings 5:1–19)? (Monday's lesson) Because changing one's worldview takes time, what can we do to safeguard against pushing people to change too quickly, especially those who come from a non-Christian background or culture?

4. What does the story of Nicodemus reveal about his spiritual needs and how Jesus addressed them (John 3:1–12)? How do the stories in John 7:43–52 and 19:39 show that Jesus worked with Nicodemus at his pace and not somebody else's?
5. Nicodemus (and Joseph of Arimathea) risked their power and position in the inner circle of Jewish society to become agents of justice because they were recipients of grace.
6. Compare and contrast the story of rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22; Luke 18:18-30) and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). What can we learn from these two stories and why does Luke include them both? (Wednesday's lesson) Why do you think the rich young ruler rejected Jesus and Zacchaeus accepted Him?
7. Why would Joseph of Arimathea, who was afraid that people would know that he was Jesus' disciple, suddenly change with the death of Jesus? (Thursday's lesson) Why is he no longer afraid to lose his privileges or position and does not care what people think of him (see Mark 15:46)?
8. Jesus did not pursue Joseph of Arimathea. What lesson can we learn from this for reaching powerful people? How can we create an environment where these people can be involved in blessing others and fulfilling the needs of other people?
9. At the beginning of the development decades (1960) the world's richest one billion were 30 times richer than the world's poorest one billion. At the end of the development decades (1990) the world's richest one billion were 60 times richer than the poorest one billion. Today the world's eight richest people have the same wealth as the poorest half of the globe's population.
10. You may not think of yourself as rich. But if your annual income is \$1,500, you are among the top 25% in the world. If your annual income is up to \$25,000 you are among the top 10% in the world. And if you earn more than \$50,000 annually, you are in the top 1% in the world.
11. No matter how much or how little you have, the greatest luxury your wealth affords is not the ability to buy – it is the ability to give.
12. "Get involved in something that you care so much about that you want to make it the greatest it can possibly be, not because of what you will get out of it, but just because it can be done." (Jim C. Collins)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

And then, one thing that occupies so much space in Deuteronomy, the blessings and the cursings. We will have occasion to discuss these again. Are there not chapters that say if you're good you'll be blessed, if you're bad, you'll be punished? If you're good, you'll be prospered, if you're bad, you'll be poor.

And this was the theology of the three friends who came to Job, for Job was known as the most prosperous man in the area. If you are prosperous, it's because you are blessed. If you are blessed, it's because you're good. So, obviously Job had been a very good man. But when he lost his family and his belongings and his health, he obviously had been very bad, because when you are bad you are not blessed, and when you are not blessed you lose your prosperity.

So they had it all worked out very simply. They came to Job and said, "We don't know what you've done, but we've never seen so wealthy a man now so poor, and you've even lost your health. You've lost everything. You must have done something very, very wicked. Confess it. It says in Deuteronomy if you will confess and come back God will bless you again and you will regain your prosperity." And Job said, "I think you've misunderstood it all. I don't know why this has happened, but you are wrong." "Why," they said, "we've got all the texts in Deuteronomy to prove it!" Of course, Deuteronomy hadn't been written yet. But this was the idea they had, you see, and the whole book of Job discusses this.

Well, doesn't that influence us to this present time? How about in the days of Christ? Jesus said it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to be saved. His own disciples said, "Well, if a rich man cannot be saved, who can?" Because you see, if you're rich, you're blessed. You're blessed because you're good. So if you're rich, you're good. Then if a rich man cannot be saved, that means if a good man cannot be saved; how can a poor man be saved? Because if you're poor, it's because you're not blessed, and you're not blessed because you're bad.

See, they had it all neatly worked out beautifully, just as we sometimes work it out. You see, when the locusts go through, the neighbor's field, you know he hasn't paid his tithe or something like that. Or if a family has an accident, you know there's an Achan in the camp. We're so quick to figure it out. What are we to understand from this? The blessings and the cursings. God is talking to His children there. "Be good and I will reward you. Be bad and I'll have to spank you." Haven't you done that to your children?

But there comes a time when we have to grow up. The book of Job is not a bedtime story, and I have great confidence in bedtime stories. Bedtime stories are for children. In the bedtime story, when a family runs out of food and they pray, they've hardly said "Amen," when someone is knocking on the door with a food basket. That's happened over and over in wonderful ways, as you know. When a family runs out of food and they pray, and they say "Amen", and nobody

knocks on the door, but they still trust God, that's for grownups. And that's the book of Job. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Deuteronomy, recorded November 1981, 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 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/9MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/10MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Now this raises the significant point, how could it be said that **Israel** does not know God? Who else knew God so well? Look at all the prophets, and all their marvelous pictures of God. Jeremiah said, "I'm glad to know God as I do." But the way many people knew God those days was not knowing God in the special, biblical sense. That is, to know God as a friend, to even know God intimately as a husband and a wife know each other. The Bible says, "Adam knew Eve," his wife. And as a result, they didn't learn each other's names. They had a baby!

Elsewhere, God says of Israel, "Thee only have I known." He knew all the rest. But He knew them in a special way. And when those disappointed saints find that they are not acceptable in the kingdom, and they plead, "Lord, Lord. Open unto us." He says, "Go away. I never knew you." Why, He knew the hairs on their head, but He did not know them as friends. And friendship is the very essence of the relationship God wishes to have with His people. If Israel had really **known** God, they would have been better friends. They would have been jealous for His reputation. And they would have been better people themselves, as were the wonderful prophets in the Old Testament who wrote so well of God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #2, "What Went Wrong in God's Universe" recorded January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

There is no caste with God. He ignores everything of the kind. All souls are of value with Him. Laboring for the salvation of the soul is employment worthy of the highest honor. It matters not what may be the form of our labor, or among what class, whether high or low. In God's sight these distinctions will not affect its true worth. The sincere, earnest, contrite soul, however ignorant, is precious in the sight of the Lord. He places His own signet upon men, judging, not by their rank, not by their wealth, not by their intellectual greatness, but by their oneness with Christ. The unlearned, the outcast, the slave, if he has made the most of his opportunities and privileges, if he has cherished the light given him of God, has done all that is required. The

world may call him ignorant, but God calls him wise and good, and thus his name stands registered in the books of heaven. God will fit him up to do Him honor, not only in heaven, but on the earth.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 332. (1915) {Ev 566.1}

Heaven's plan of salvation is broad enough to embrace the whole world. God longs to breathe into prostrate humanity the breath of life. And He will not permit any soul to be disappointed who is sincere in his longing for something higher and nobler than anything the world can offer. Constantly He is sending His angels to those who, while surrounded by circumstances the most discouraging, pray in faith for some power higher than themselves to take possession of them and bring deliverance and peace. In various ways God will reveal Himself to them and will place them in touch with providences that will establish their confidence in the One who has given Himself a ransom for all, "that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." Psalm 78:7. {PK 377.1}

The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God. No question of policy influenced His movements. He made no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. That which appealed to His heart was a soul thirsting for the waters of life. {9T 191.1}

God takes men as they are, with the human elements in their character, and trains them for His service, if they will be disciplined and learn of Him. They are not chosen because they are perfect, but notwithstanding their imperfections, that through the knowledge and practice of the truth, through the grace of Christ, they may become transformed into His image. {DA 294.4}

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace. {7BC 947.5}

Sanctification means habitual communion with God (RH March 15, 1906). {7BC 908.16}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning. {DA 311.2}

The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man's sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. Our Saviour is always ready to hear and answer the prayer of the contrite heart, and grace and peace are multiplied to His

faithful ones. Gladly He grants them the blessings they need in their struggle against the evils that beset them. {AA 532.2}

When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—a changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride (YI Sept. 26, 1901). {4BC 1164.10}

When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the joy of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see, creates a new being in the image of God. {ML 46.3}

The power of the Holy Spirit transforms the entire man. This change constitutes the new birth. {4Red 11.3}

By the transforming agency of His grace, the image of God is reproduced in the disciple; he becomes a new creature. {DA 391.1}

When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ's Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven. {SC 73.1}

Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven. {DA 555.6}

God is love, God is life. It is the prerogative of God to redeem, reconstruct, and restore. . . . The work of Christ is to redeem, to restore, to seek and to save that which was lost. {HP 291.2}

When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. {DA 324.1}

The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. {DA 407.1}