

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2024: *The Book of Psalms*
Lesson 5 “Singing *the Lord’s Song in a Strange Land*”

Read for this week’s study

Psalm 79:5–13; Psalm 88:3–12; Psalm 69:1–3; Psalm 22:1; Psalm 77; Psalm 73:1–20; 1 Peter 1:17.

Memory Text

“How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land?” (Psalm 137:4).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Days of Evil
- III. At Death’s Door
- IV. Where Is God?
- V. Has His Promise Failed Forevermore?
- VI. Lest the Righteous Be Tempted
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The Psalms were expressed in an imperfect world, one of sin, evil, suffering, and death. There are many statements of perplexity at the apparent absence of God in the face of the great flourishing of evil. One of the most jarring parts of this poetic book is Psalm 137. Read Psalm 137:1-4. The world as we know it today has increasingly become a “strange land” for those who seek to know God. What is your answer to the Psalmists’ question: How do I live a life of faith in a strange land? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. Read Psalms 74:18-22 and 79:5-13. What is at stake in these passages? At what point in Israel’s history would the language of these psalms best fit? To what degree does the behavior of Christians today bring disrepute on God’s reputation? (Sunday’s Lesson)

3. Read Psalm 88:3-12. What stage of life is this psalm describing? What difference does it make to read Psalm 88 after the cross and the resurrection of Jesus? (Monday's Lesson)
4. Read Psalm 102:1-7. What type of suffering is exhibited here and how does the Psalmist deal with it? What can we learn from the psalmist's response to God's apparent absence? How do you respond at times when God appears to be silent? (Tuesday's Lesson)
5. Read Psalm 77. What experience is the author going through and what resolution happens by the end of the psalm? (Wednesday's Lesson)
6. A major theme in the Psalms is the prosperity of the wicked and the challenge that generates for the righteous. The most famous of these Psalms is Psalm 73. After reading it, determine what it is that brings the psalmist through the crisis of faith?
7. It seems clear at this point that biblical faith is not simply about confidence and assertions, it also involves a considerable amount of uncertainty and suspense. What challenging uncertainties have you faced and how did you deal with them? (Friday's Lesson)
8. Ellen White offers the following advice for facing uncertainties: "Summon all your powers to look up, not down at your difficulties; then you will never faint by the way. You will soon see Jesus behind the cloud, reaching out His hand to help you; and all you have to do is to give Him your hand in simple faith and let Him lead you. As you become trustful you will, through faith in Jesus, become hopeful." 5T 578-579. How helpful have tactics like this been in your life? (Friday's Lesson)
9. Another statement of advice about life's challenges: "Faith grows strong by coming in conflict with doubts and opposing influences. The experience gained in these trials is of more value than the most-costly jewels." 3T 555. Share a story of your own experience with doubts and "opposing influences". (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Faith is our conviction. It's being certain about things that at the moment we cannot see. And if you know the background of that verse in Hebrews, you know that this goes back to Habakkuk; chapters one and two where Habakkuk says to God: "Why aren't you going to do something?" And God says: "I am. But you wouldn't believe it if I told you." And Habakkuk says: "I do. And I'm going to wait and see." And God says: "If what I have predicted seems slow, wait for it; it will come. My righteous one will live in trust." That famous verse, "The just shall live by faith," is not discussing forgiveness or justification. The background for that verse is the one who is right with me—and my friend, will trust me and be willing to wait. And that's the kind of trust, and right relationship with God, that really counts. And when we come to Romans, (to look at that verse a little later) that's the background for it.

The angels had such trust, the loyal ones. They had questions! But they said to God, “We trust You enough that we’re willing to wait,” and they waited all the way to Calvary for some of their answers. They even heard the promise to Adam and Eve that God was going to do something, and they were willing to wait because they trusted God. It certainly helps to understand “salvation by faith” and “righteousness by faith,” to understand faith as trust in this way. We’re not saved by faith. That is, faith does not save us. God saves us. But God can only save those who trust Him.

Like a physician, God stands ready to heal all the damage done. But He cannot force us to be well. If we don’t trust Him enough to listen, and to cooperate, and let Him heal the damage done, there’s no way He can heal us. Physicians cannot heal rebellious patients who stay away because they think the doctor is a quack. Only if there is trust there—there needs to be mutual trust—can healing really take place. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3, “All God Asks Is Trust” 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/3MMCAG>

You remember in John 3 and John 12 Jesus says, “I don’t condemn anybody. I didn’t come to judge you. Oh, there is something that will judge you in the last day. I won’t be the one. The truth that I brought to you; it will judge you. If you like the truth, if you like the message about healing and salvation, and you trust Me enough to accept it and follow it, all will be well. If you reject the light, you reject the truth and the plan of healing. I won’t condemn you then, but you will die, and I’ll grieve as I give you up for the last time.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 14, recorded January 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/27MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/28MMROMANS66> Part 2)

But “under the demands of law” belongs to a very legal conception of what has gone wrong in the universe, which we discussed in our second conversation. That what has gone wrong is that we have “broken the rules,” and the law demands that God execute us for breaking the rules. And Jesus died so that somehow God could justly forgive us even though we have broken the rules. I don’t think we have been able to make too much sense out of that. But it goes along with the other one, “satisfying justice.” Whose justice? I have friends who say, “If God does not give Idi Amin several days in the fire, I will not regard Him as a just God.” They have that feeling about the satisfaction of justice. And I think they really mean it, and I would respect them for that. I would love to relieve them of that burden. If I want to know why Jesus died, I should go right to the cross and watch Him die and hear His cry and see how the Father is involved, and

then fit that back into Scripture. I don't see Him fulfilling the requirements of a legal model. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #8, "The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence" recorded March 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>*

But the fact that Jesus washed Judas' feet just before he went out to betray Him tells me how God will treat me every day of my life, even if He foreknows that I am going to be lost and betray Him in the end. Look how Jesus treated Judas! I don't think we can tell from God's blessings whether or not we are going to be saved or lost. He blesses everybody! Isn't that what Matthew 5 says? "God causes the sun to shine on the good and the evil, His rain to fall on the just and on the unjust."

That's the way God is. We're all His children, and if He knows some of us are going to be lost, do you think He would start mistreating us? That isn't the way God is. If anything, if this is the only life we're going to live, He would treat us graciously. He would get down and wash our feet! Even if He knows we are going to be lost. And Jesus showed that, I think, very clearly, in the upper room. {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 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/39MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/40MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: One of our congregation went out of her way to type up the question that she has had for a number of years. She says this, "Can you give a reason why a loving God would allow a good Christian woman to be murdered? She was a good help in her small church. She was the treasurer of her church. The last Sabbath of her life they had a consecration service at the church. She dedicated herself anew to God, and she was murdered that afternoon at her house. She was the treasurer, and she had money at her house, and apparently that was the reason that someone broke in and she was killed." And this individual says, "The reason I know about this is that she was my sister."

Graham: Again, happy the person who knows God very well at a time like this. It doesn't mean that we would know the answer. I don't think Job ever found out why those things happened to him that did. But all he knew was that those theologians were wrong. And those theologians came to Job and said, "You cannot be asking God about this." I mean, Job was crying to God with intense feeling and saying, "God, how can You do this to me? I've been Your good friend all this time, and now You won't even speak to me. You won't explain this." And the theologians

were going on with their very legalistic explanation. Finally he said, “I wish you brethren would be quiet. I appreciate your coming, but you’re not helping me at all.” None of their explanations were good. He said, “If only I could talk to God, I’m sure I could clear this up.” And eventually the boldness of his inquires of God reached such a level that those three men were worried for their friend that God would surely zap him on the spot for daring to inquire. And God broke in and said, “Job, you have said of Me what is right.”

So if a person is wrestling with this, we may not find out. I’m sure we won’t find out the answer to every such absolutely unfair thing that happens on this planet during this emergency. But some things we know for sure; the kind of person God is, and that He welcomes us to lodge our inquires with feeling, and hopefully we will trust Him enough to wait for the answer.

Lou: Acquainted well enough to trust when we don’t know how to answer all these things.

Graham: That’s the thing. And I’d like to think that that sister was such a saint; don’t worry about her. She will arise in the resurrection and say, “What am I doing here?” She will have no complaints. She’ll be looking for her sister. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #6 with Lou Venden, “Evaluating the Evidence” recorded February 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/6MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

Through Christ’s redeeming work the government of God stands justified. The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love. Satan’s charges are refuted, and his character unveiled. Rebellion can never again arise. Sin can never again enter the universe. Through eternal ages all are secure from apostasy. By love’s self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union. {DA 26.2}

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 manifest, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. {MH 419.4}

With intense interest the unfallen worlds had watched to see Jehovah arise, and sweep away the inhabitants of the earth. And if God should do this, Satan was ready to carry out his plan for securing to himself the allegiance of heavenly beings. He had declared that the principles of God’s government make forgiveness impossible. Had the world been destroyed, he would have claimed that his accusations were proved true. He was ready to cast blame upon God, and to spread his rebellion to the worlds above. But instead of destroying the world, God sent His Son to save it. Though corruption and defiance might be seen in every part of the alien province, a

way for its recovery was provided. At the very crisis, when Satan seemed about to triumph, the Son of God came with the embassy of divine grace. Through every age, through every hour, the love of God had been exercised toward the fallen race. Notwithstanding the perversity of men, the signals of mercy had been continually exhibited. And when the fullness of the time had come, the Deity was glorified by pouring upon the world a flood of healing grace that was never to be obstructed or withdrawn till the plan of salvation should be fulfilled. {DA 37.2}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, a God of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. By the world's Redeemer the thick darkness with which Satan had enshrouded the throne of the Deity was swept away, and the Father was again manifest to men as the Light of life. {RH, February 15, 1912 par. 4}

Up to the time of Christ's first advent, men worshiped cruel, despotic gods. Even the Jewish mind was reached through fear, and not love. Christ's mission on the earth was to reveal to men that God was not a despot, but a heavenly Father, full of love and mercy for His children. {18MR 112.4}

But . . . when the great controversy shall be ended, then, the plan of redemption having been completed, the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable. Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. {DA 764.3}

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. {PP 68.2}

Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. {ST, December 22, 1914 par. 4}

If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way;

whatever our perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us. His voice, clear and distinct, is heard saying, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." John 14:6. "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." Psalm 72:12. {COL 173.1}

Not without a purpose does God send trial to His children. He never leads them otherwise than they would choose to be led if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as workers together with Him. He subjects them to discipline to humble them, to lead them, through trial and affliction, to see their weakness and draw near to Him. . . . {HP 267.2}

The people of God will not be free from suffering; but while persecuted and distressed, while they endure privation and suffer for want of food they will not be left to perish. That God who cared for Elijah will not pass by one of His self-sacrificing children. He who numbers the hairs of their head will care for them, and in time of famine they shall be satisfied. {GC 629.2}

We all have many difficulties to meet, many perplexing problems to solve. But we have an all-powerful Helper, who will listen to our requests as willingly and gladly as He listened to the requests of those who, when He was on this earth in person, came to Him for help. . . . {HP 124.2}

In Christ the character of the Father was revealed. As children looked upon His countenance, they saw purity and goodness shining forth from His eyes. In His countenance gentleness, meekness, love, and conscious power were combined. But though every word, every gesture, every expression of His face, betokened His divine supremacy, humility marked His deportment and bearing. He came but for one purpose, and that was the salvation of the lost. {ML 300.4}

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}

It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence. This work began in the heavenly courts. There God gave to human beings an unmistakable evidence of the love with which He regarded them. He "so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. The gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. It testifies that, having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work. {9T 254.1}

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}

To look to God for help at all times, this is our safety. {TDG 199.2}

When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound humanity to Himself by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power save the choice of man himself. Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie—to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. Here is where we need to watch, to strive, to pray, that nothing may entice us to *choose* another master; for we are always free to do this. But let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, and He will preserve us. Looking unto Jesus, we are safe. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand. In constantly beholding Him, we “are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:18. {SC 72.1}

None need abandon themselves to discouragement and despair. Satan may come to you with the cruel suggestion, “Yours is a hopeless case. You are irredeemable.” But there is hope for you in Christ. God does not bid us overcome in our own strength. He asks us to come close to His side. Whatever difficulties we labor under, which weigh down soul and body, He waits to make us free. {MH 249.2}

Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself. He bids them, “Follow Me,” and His Spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to come to Him. Many refuse to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care. He says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth. {DA 480.1}

God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. {DA 224.5}

To those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance, angels of God draw near. The Holy Spirit is given to open to them the rich treasures of the truth. {COL 59.3}

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. {GC 541.3}

Even when he was cast out of heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy Satan. Since only the service of love can be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a

conviction of His justice and benevolence. The inhabitants of heaven and of the worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, he must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, and that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might be forever placed beyond all question. {PP 42.3}

Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages—a perpetual testimony to the nature of sin and its terrible results. The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy beings, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin, and suffering its penalty. {PP 42.4}

The whole universe will have become witnesses to the nature and results of sin. And its utter extermination, which in the beginning would have brought fear to angels and dishonor to God, will now vindicate His love and establish His honor before the universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. Never will evil again be manifest. Says the word of God: "Affliction shall not rise up the second time." Nahum 1:9. The law of God, which Satan has reproached as the yoke of bondage, will be honored as the law of liberty. A tested and proved creation will never again be turned from allegiance to Him whose character has been fully manifested before them as fathomless love and infinite wisdom. {GC 504.1}