

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2024: *The Great Controversy*
Lesson 2 “The Central Issue: Love or Selfishness?”

Read for this week’s study

Luke 19:41–44; Matthew 23:37, 38; Hebrews 11:35–38; Revelation 2:10; Acts 2:44–47; John 13:35.

Memory Text

“ ‘ “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” ’ ” (Isaiah 41:10, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. A Broken-Hearted Savior
- III. Christians Providentially Preserved
- IV. Faithful Amid Persecution
- V. Caring for the Community
- VI. A Legacy of Love
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The Bible study for this week is loosely based on *The Great Controversy*, chapters 1 and 2. Read Matthew 24:1-3. Why do you think the disciples of Jesus connected the stones of the temple with the end of the world? Jesus does not disabuse them of their perspective, instead He treats the two events as if they were one. What does that tell us about God? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. How did Jews at that time respond to the Roman occupation? Do an internet search on “Jewish sects at the time of Jesus” to learn about some of the different ways that Jews responded. Which of the four main options would you have chosen had you been an adult just before Jesus arrived on the scene? (Sunday’s Lesson)
3. Jesus’ end-time story begins with the destruction of Jerusalem. What does Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of the temple tell us about both Jesus’ mission and that of Israel? Read John 1:11; Luke 19:41-44 and Matthew 23:37-38. How could God stand by when His Jewish people suffered so much in AD 70? (Sunday’s Lesson)

4. Read Matthew 24:15-20. What instructions did Jesus give to preserve His people from the coming destruction of Jerusalem? What implications do you see in this passage and its fulfillment that can help us process unfulfilled prophecies in our own day? Read Psalm 91:1-7 and Hebrews 11:35-38. Is there a contradiction in the idea of God's protection on the one hand, and God's allowing some to face painful, undeserved suffering for the cause of Christ on the other? How do you reconcile these biblical passages? (Monday's Lesson)
5. Read Acts 4:1-4, 5:12-18, 6:8-15, and 7:57 – 8:3. What do these verses tell us about the challenges the New Testament church faced and also why it grew so rapidly? What incentives did the early Christians have to remain faithful in the midst of so much suffering (Matt 19:28-30)? In the first generation, Christianity was often protected and preserved by Roman authority. Why do you think the attitude of the Empire changed to hostility so quickly? (Tuesday's Lesson)
6. Read Acts 2:44-47, 3:6-9, and 6:1-7. What principles can we learn from these passages about authentic Christianity? Read John 10:10. What contrast does this text draw between the principles of authentic Christianity and the goals of Satan for humanity? (Wednesday's Lesson)
7. Read John 13:35. What does this text reveal in light of Satan's challenge against the government of God in the Great Controversy? What role is the church destined to play? We are well aware of the early church's failings in regard to compromise with paganism and abandonment of the Sabbath command. But what did the early church get right? (Thursday's Lesson)
8. Why does Satan cause people to behave so cruelly to people of faith? What value can God bring out of persecution? (Friday's Lesson)
9. What can local churches do today to be more like the early church in its impacts on the community? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

How successful has God been in restoring peace on this earth? Because so many have perversely chosen to twist or even reject the truth, instead of producing peace, it has produced argument, debate—even to the point of violence and persecution. Jesus warned of this. Look at His words in Matthew 10:34-36. He foresaw what His demonstration of the truth would cause:

I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. I came to set sons against their fathers, daughters against their mothers, daughters-in-law against their mothers-in-law; a man's worst enemies will be the members of his own family. (GNT)

Look at what the members of Jesus's own family did to Him. Look at John 1:11: "He came to His home, and His own family did not welcome Him." (*Goodspeed*). In fact, they told Him He had a

devil to be so describing his Father. And they killed Him to silence Him. We need to remember as we have mentioned several times in these conversations, that the ones who rejected Christ and preferred Satan's picture of God, were the most pious group of seventh-day Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reforming, Bible-studying "adventists" the world has ever known. Peter warns that those who accept the true picture of God may expect similar treatment and even suffer somewhat as Christ did. Look at 1 Peter 4:12-14:

. . . do not be surprised at the painful test you are suffering. . . . Rather be glad that you are sharing Christ's sufferings. . . . Happy are you if you are insulted because you are Christ's followers; this means that the glorious Spirit, the Spirit of God, is resting on you. (GNT)

Where will such trouble come from for those who hold the true picture of God? Could such trouble come again from the same sort of pious, Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reforming, Bible-quoting "adventists" as before? Could one entertain such a thought? It happened once before.

But now if the Holy Spirit is with these people He will bring peace. Paul says in Galatians 5:22: "The Spirit, on the other hand, brings a harvest of love, joy, peace. . . ." (*Weymouth*). And you know the rest of the list. But how does the Holy Spirit bring peace? Does He bring peace by working on our feelings, like a divine tranquilizer? Or does the Holy Spirit bring peace by reminding us of the truth? Look at Jesus's explanation in John 14:25, 26. And who would know better than He?

. . . the Counselor, the Holy Spirit . . . will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. . . . Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (NIV).

Then He went on giving the reasons why, until He came to what He said that is recorded in John 16:33, and 17:1, 3, 4. It was hard to choose just a few lines from these great chapters:

I have told you all this so that you may find peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but be brave; I have conquered the world [that is, We have won Our case in the Great Controversy. Then He turned and said to His Father,]. Father . . . eternal life is this: to know You, the only true God . . . I have glorified You on earth and finished the work which You gave Me to do. (*Jerusalem*)

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #20, "At Peace with our Heavenly Father" recorded June 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/20MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love. He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity; but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, which refused to receive Him, the way, the truth, and the life. They had rejected Him, the Saviour, but He regarded them with pitying tenderness. His life was one of self-denial and thoughtful care for others. Every soul was precious in His eyes. While He ever bore Himself with divine dignity, He bowed with the tenderest regard to every member of the family of God. In all men He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save. {SC 12.1}

Such is the character of Christ as revealed in His life. This is the character of God. It is from the Father's heart that the streams of divine compassion, manifest in Christ, flow out to the children of men. Jesus, the tender, pitying Saviour, was God "manifest in the flesh." 1 Timothy 3:16. {SC 12.2}

The disciples knew nothing of the purpose of Judas. Jesus alone could read his secret. Yet He did not expose him. Jesus hungered for his soul. He felt for him such a burden as for Jerusalem when He wept over the doomed city. His heart was crying, How can I give thee up? {DA 645.1}

The woes of a fallen race, pressing upon His soul, forced from His lips that exceeding bitter cry. He saw the record of sin traced in human misery, tears, and blood; His heart was moved with infinite pity for the afflicted and suffering ones of earth; He yearned to relieve them all. {GC 22.1}

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}

Whenever He comes to us, His reward is with Him. He does not leave it in heaven, but gives it to us every day. Daily He gives us confidence and light and blessing. Daily our hearts beat in unison with His great heart of infinite love (MS 116, 1902). {4BC 1145.2}

Christ came to this world as the expression of the very heart and mind and nature and character of God. He was the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person. But He laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown, and stepped down from His high command to take the place of a servant. He was rich, but for our sake, that we might have eternal riches, He became poor. He made the world, but so completely did He empty Himself that during His

ministry He declared, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.” {MM 19.1}

The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son, bring out in distinct lines God’s pitying love for those who are straying from Him. Although they have turned away from God, He does not leave them in their misery. He is full of kindness and tender pity toward all who are exposed to the temptations of the artful foe. {COL 198.1}

If you ask the help of God, you will not ask in vain. The Lord is at work in many ways to win your hearty confidence. In nothing does He take more delight than to have you unburden, come to Him for light and strength, and He has promised that you shall find rest to your soul. If you will find heart and voice to pray, He will be sure to hear, and an arm will be reached down to save you. There is a God that hears prayer, and when all other resources fail, He is your refuge, a very present help in time of trouble. . . . {TDG 184.4}

In the future life we shall understand things that here greatly perplex us. We shall realize how strong a helper we had and how angels of God were commissioned to guard us as we followed the counsel of the Word of God. {HP 257.3}

Our God is a very present help in time of need. He is acquainted with the most secret thoughts of our hearts, with all the intents and purposes of our souls. When we are in perplexity, even before we open to Him our distresses, He is making arrangements for our deliverance.—Letter 73, Feb. 1, 1905, to Drs. D. H. and Laretta Kress. {UL 46.6}

Often your mind may be clouded because of pain. Then do not try to think. You know that Jesus loves you. He understands your weakness. You may do His will by simply resting in His arms. {MH 251.3}

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}

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. . . . Not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. {DA 19.2}

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,—as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,—that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan hoped to so confuse the minds of those whom he had deceived that they would put God out of their knowledge. Then he would obliterate the divine image in man and impress his own likeness upon the soul; he would imbue men with his own spirit and make them captives according to his will. {5T 738.1}

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}

The plan of redemption will not be fully understood, even when the ransomed see as they are seen and know as they are known; but through the eternal ages new truth will continually unfold to the wondering and delighted mind. Though the griefs and pains and temptations of earth are ended and the cause removed, the people of God will ever have a distinct, intelligent knowledge of what their salvation has cost. {GC 651.1}

The Lord did not lock the reservoir of heaven after pouring His Spirit upon the early disciples. We also may receive of the fullness of His blessing. Heaven is full of the treasures of His grace, and those who come to God in faith may claim all that He has promised. {6BC 1055.4}

An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light and who was ready to receive the gospel, and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts. The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God's way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men. {AA 109.2}

Faith is the medium through which truth or error finds a lodging place in the mind. It is by the same act of mind that truth or error is received, but it makes a decided difference whether we believe the Word of God or the sayings of men. When Christ revealed Himself to Paul, and he was convinced that he was persecuting Jesus in the person of His saints, he accepted the truth as it is in Jesus. A transforming power was manifested on mind and character, and he became a new man in Christ Jesus. He received the truth so fully that neither earth nor hell could shake his faith. {1SM 346.3}

As the Lord co-operated with Daniel and his fellows, so He will co-operate with all who strive to do His will. And by the impartation of His Spirit He will strengthen every true purpose, every noble resolution. Those who walk in the path of obedience will encounter many hindrances.

Strong, subtle influences may bind them to the world; but the Lord is able to render futile every agency that works for the defeat of His chosen ones; in His strength they may overcome every temptation, conquer every difficulty. {PK 487.1}

His tender compassion fell with a touch of healing upon weary and troubled hearts. Even amid the turbulence of angry enemies He was surrounded with an atmosphere of peace. The beauty of His countenance, the loveliness of His character, above all, the love expressed in look and tone, drew to Him all who were not hardened in unbelief. Had it not been for the sweet, sympathetic spirit that shone out in every look and word, He would not have attracted the large congregations that He did. The afflicted ones who came to Him felt that He linked His interest with theirs as a faithful and tender friend, and they desired to know more of the truths He taught. Heaven was brought near. They longed to abide in His presence, that the comfort of His love might be with them continually. {DA 254.4}

Jesus assumed humanity that He might meet humanity. He brings men under the transforming power of truth by meeting them where they are. He gains access to the heart by securing sympathy and confidence, making all feel that His identification with their nature and interest is complete. The truth came from His lips beautiful in its simplicity, yet clothed with dignity and power. What a teacher was our Lord Jesus Christ! How tenderly did He treat every honest inquirer after truth, that He might gain admission to his sympathies and find a home in his heart. {TM 190.1}

Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man. {8T 286.4}

From the hillside He looked upon the moving multitude, and His heart was stirred with sympathy. Interrupted as He was, and robbed of His rest, He was not impatient. He saw a greater necessity demanding His attention as He watched the people coming and still coming. He “was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd.” Leaving His retreat, He found a convenient place where He could minister to them. They received no help from the priests and rulers; but the healing waters of life flowed from Christ as He taught the multitude the way of salvation. {DA 364.2}

Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. {FLB 142.2}

When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this oneness exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in humanity, that a new principle of life has been implanted. It shows that there is power in the divine nature to withstand the supernatural

agencies of evil, and that the grace of God subdues the selfishness inherent in the natural heart. {DA 678.1}

Every human being is the object of loving interest to Him who gave His life that He might bring men back to God. Souls guilty and helpless, liable to be destroyed by the arts and snares of Satan, are cared for as a shepherd cares for the sheep of his flock. {MH 162.1}

Rich and poor, high and low, free and bond, are God's heritage. He who gave His life to redeem man sees in every human being a value that exceeds finite computation. By the mystery and glory of the cross we are to discern His estimate of the value of the soul. {MH 162.3}

Love was the element in which Christ moved and walked and worked. He came to embrace the world in the arms of His love. . . . {SD 147.2}

Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by *trying* to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance. {COL 384.2}

Holiness is wholeness to God. The soul is surrendered to God. The will, and even the thoughts, are brought into subjection to the will of Christ. The love of Jesus fills the soul, and is constantly going out in a clear, refreshing stream, to make glad the hearts of others (MS 33, 1911). {6BC 1076.2}

The most powerful evidence a man can give that he has been born again and is a new man in Christ Jesus, is the manifestation of love for his brethren, the doing of Christlike deeds. This is the most wonderful witness that can be borne in favor of Christianity, and will win souls to the truth. . . . {SD 293.4}

Christ brings all true believers into complete oneness with Himself, even the oneness which exists between Him and His Father. The true children of God are bound up with one another and with their Saviour. They are one with Christ in God. {SD 293.5}