

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2024: *The Book of Mark*

Lesson 7 “Teaching Disciples: Part I”

Read for this week’s study

Mark 8:22–38; Matthew 20:29–34; John 12:25; Mark 9:1–50; Malachi 4:5, 6; Luke 9:30, 31.

Memory Text

“When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” Mark 8:34, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Seeing Clearly
- III. The Cost of Discipleship
- IV. The Mountain and the Multitude
- V. Who Is the Greatest?
- VI. The Healthy Man in Hell
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. In the previous section of the Gospel according to Mark (4:35-8:21), he emphasizes the disciples’ failure – three boat scenes are contrasted with three good responses featuring two women and a sick girl’s concerned father. This whole section can be summarized in Jesus’ words, “Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?” (8:17)
2. In spite of seeing and hearing Jesus, witnessing and even performing miracles and experiencing the wonders of the kingdom, his disciples stubbornly resist appropriating the good news of God’s remarkable kingdom. In apparent frustration Jesus asks: “Do you have eyes and fail to see? Do you have ears and fail to hear? And do you not remember?” (8:18)

3. Although the disciples have seen, heard and even participated with divine power in God's incipient but growing kingdom, they do not understand. They are blind. Jesus is trying hard to heal them. In the next crucial middle section of the gospel (8:22-10:52), Mark explores what lies at the heart of this blindness – an unwillingness to see. "As Jesus' teachings challenged the twelve disciples 2,000 years ago, so they continue to confront disciples today with the deep cost, and benefit, of following Jesus." (Sabbath afternoon)
4. Why is this miracle of healing the blind so significant in Mark (8:22-30)? Why did it take Jesus two touches to heal the blind man? What lessons can we learn from this story? (Sunday's lesson) "This section of the second Gospel is marked off by the healing of two different blind men, one at the middle of Mark 8 and the other at the end of Mark 10. These miracle 'bookends' illustrate dramatically how discipleship includes spiritual insight regarding who Jesus is and where He is going." (Sabbath afternoon)
5. This central part of the gospel is organized by a pattern of three parallel sequences (8:27-28; 9:30-37; 10:32-45): Jesus is suffering loss, but the disciples are seeking gain. Next comes the need for repentance: Jesus explains to his disciples the evils of the empire way of thinking and the righteousness of God's kingdom.
6. What does the story in Mark 8:31–38 teach us about the cost of following Christ? (Monday's lesson) Where in this section do you see loss, gain and repentance? It is obvious that Jesus is not leading us on a pleasant afternoon walk and that the kingdom of God does not mean merely a few minor adjustments in our ordinary lives!
7. Just like the early Christians, most of us do not experience anything similar to what Peter, James and John shared with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration (9:2-8). What was Jesus trying to achieve with this? (Tuesday's lesson) In what sense is Jesus continuing and completing the task of Moses & Elijah? What does it mean for us today to "listen to Jesus" (9:7)? How do we do that in our own context?
8. In the next sequence, we will again have the pattern of Jesus suffering loss, the disciples seeking gain and the need for repentance (9:30-37). Can you identify them? How does this second round help us to understand what is going on?
9. How does Jesus contrast the way of an empire with the way of God's kingdom? Greatness is not achieved by elevating oneself above others (forcing others to honor and serve), but humbly placing oneself below others, honoring and serving *them*.
10. In this context, how do you understand 9:49-50 (cf. Matthew 5:13)?
11. When God is trying to say something to us, how good are we at listening? In what ways does God speak to you/us today? Are we open to it? Are we prepared to have our earlier ways of understanding things deconstructed in order to experience new ways of understanding? How can we help each other in this regard as a community of faith?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

How do you know for sure? Did Jesus die the death of a sinner? Did God torture His Son to death? In the Garden of Gethsemane, nobody touched Him. He wished somebody would touch Him. He asked the three to come and be with Him, and they slept. Nobody was with Him. All by Himself, He was left to reap the natural results of being a sinner, as if He were. Now we know that He was not a sinner. He had appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration shortly before, hadn't He, in the unveiled glory of God? I used to wonder why that's in the story. If Jesus had been in any respect out of harmony with His Father, what would have happened to Him? When He stood there in the unveiled glory of His Father? He would have been consumed. So the Mount of Transfiguration says, the One who went to Gethsemane and to Calvary was absolutely in harmony with His Father. There was no sin in Him at all. He didn't die because He was a sinner. He was perfect. But He was made to be sin.

In fact, Ellen White says, nobody could make Him to be sin. He made Himself to be sin. He took it on Himself. And nobody could kill Him. He said, "Nobody takes my life from me, but I lay it down of myself." So, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He fell dying to the ground, the angels saw it. And they saw Gabriel speed down to strengthen Him. And had he not gone, He would have died. And that answers question number two. Yes, death is the result of sin, but it is not torture and execution at the hands of our gracious God. The Father's crying, and the Son is dying, and the Father is not hurting His Son. But He's sadly giving Him up, as if He were a sinner. And He's reaping the natural consequences of this being given up, sadly, as if He were a sinner. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Luke, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:

<http://pkp.cc/55MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/56MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

And I wonder what Moses and Elijah discussed with Him. Did they encourage Him to go on through with that demonstration, to remain "gentle Jesus"? They knew He was the infinitely powerful One. But not to give up on His plan to show that the things God wants the most, love and trust, are not produced by force. And Jesus came to make plainer than ever in the history of the universe what God really wants.

So He didn't talk about an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, which they had to do in Old Testament times. He said, "Turn the other cheek. Pray for your enemies." He came to express the ideal, and He did it right to the end. He could have come down from the cross and blotted them all out. Wouldn't that have given you satisfaction? You've been down to Forest Lawn and seen that huge picture of the Crucifixion. How about a frame right after that? And Christ would

say, "That is quite enough." And with His divinity flashing forth, He'd step down off the cross, and He'd terminate all those wicked people, but not till they got down on their knees and admitted that He was the powerful One. Wouldn't that give you some satisfaction? Don't you love to see somebody on the right side show his power? And He didn't do it. That was His difficult task. You know Ellen White's comment, that when He was surrounded by people bent on His destruction, insulting and tormenting Him, and yet they were so pretentiously pious, there came to Him the almost overmastering temptation to use His divine power and blot out His tormentors. But it was His difficult task to maintain the position He had assumed when He came to this earth. She even says there was a stirring among the angels who wanted to rescue their Lord from the torment, and the leaders of the angels held them back and said, "No, watch, wait; you've got to see something confirmed for all eternity in the next few hours." And the One who is infinite in power submitted with perfect gentleness and humility to all that abuse, to tell us something about God.

Well, this is the background. Jesus grew up with all this. He read 1 and 2 Kings. And before He went out to the cross and to all that torture, He had talked with Elijah, and He talked with Moses. And I wish it was on the record, what they talked about. I mean, they didn't talk about the weather, or Christmas coming up. They talked about the fact He was going out to die in that awful way. And they came to strengthen Him to go through with what He had come to accomplish. I wish I knew what the subject was. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – 1&2 Kings*, 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/17MMPOGIA66> (1 Kings-Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/18MMPOGIA66> (1 Kings-Part 2)

<http://pkp.cc/19MMPOGIA66> (2 Kings-Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/20MMPOGIA66> (2 Kings-Part 2)

In fact, when He was alone with the twelve offering explanations, they were more concerned with the positions they would hold in the Kingdom. Even in the upper room the night before He died, and they'd never asked Him about any of these things. And a lot of people haven't from that day to this. I think the time has come to really see if the Bible explains all these matters in the Old Testament. Why the killing? Why the descriptions of an ever-burning hell? Is that really the meaning of Scripture? Has this been answered? Does God say, "Love Me, or I'll kill you"? Has that been explained? "In the day that you eat of it you shall die." Has that been explained? Has anybody died that death? Why, it was Jesus Himself who died that death. So we go to watch Him die. Is there an explanation? Did God kill His Son? This is what we're really looking for, aren't we? To find out what God is really like. And on the basis of these explanations, would

we be able to stand with Moses at the foot of Sinai, and hear God raise His voice, and shake the ground with an earthquake, and there's fire, and lightening, and thunder.

Could we stand with Moses, and understand as Moses did, and say, "Yes that's God speaking, but don't misunderstand. There is no need to be afraid." You see, Moses understood, and he said, remember when we read it in Exodus, "There is no need to be afraid." See, he knew why God was raising His voice. He had to. The people were so hard of hearing. Do we accept these explanations? Could we stand with Job, and hear those three friends explaining, and realize that they were wrong? Would we agree with him? I find to this day people saying, "Look how Job needed to repent at the end of the book." Shame on them. When God came into the scene, He said, "Job has said of Me what is right."

Why don't we look at that compliment, and then go back through and say, "How could it be said that Job said of the Father what is right?"

So we have an opportunity now, Mark, Luke, John, to look at Jesus' explanations. And the most important ones are not His words, but the things that He did, for that's evidence. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Intertestament Period & Matthew, recorded March 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

And then, picture Jesus in the upper room the night before He was crucified. The record says that the twelve disciples were squabbling as to which one of them was the greatest. If you look in Luke's account, he has it in this order. Jesus said to the twelve, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover supper with you. But the one who is to betray Me is sitting with Me at the table." They began to argue as to which one of them would do this terrible thing. But they also were arguing as to which one of them should be thought of as the most important. Can you imagine their arguing about such a subject mixed in with which one of them is going to betray Him?

How did the Son of God treat them? Did He chide them for their childish behavior? Or scold them for their unwillingness to wash each other's feet? Instead, the whole universe watched as their Creator, the One they worshiped, arose, got a basin and a towel, and the supreme Creator got down on His knees and washed a dozen pairs of dirty feet. He even washed the feet of His betrayer, Judas. Think what it says about God that He would treat them in this way. Jesus could have looked up at them and said, "You don't believe My Father would be willing to do this, do you?" {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #13, "How

God Treats His Erring Children” recorded April 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/13MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. {SC 68.1}

The plant grows by receiving that which God has provided to sustain its life. So spiritual growth is attained through co-operation with divine agencies. {Ed 106.1}

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

Peace comes with dependence on divine power. As fast as the soul resolves to act in accordance with the light given, the Holy Spirit gives more light and strength. {TM 518.1}

God is the author of truth. He enlightens the darkened understanding and gives to the human mind power to grasp and comprehend the truths which He has revealed. {SL 49.1}

The enemy can never take out of the hand of Christ the one who is simply trusting in His promises. If the soul is trusting and working obediently, the mind is susceptible to divine impressions, and the light of God shines in, enlightening the understanding. What privileges we have in Christ Jesus! {SD 351.4}

God’s law is the law of love. He has surrounded you with beauty to teach you that you are not placed on earth merely to delve for self, to dig and build, to toil and spin, but to make life bright and joyous and beautiful with the love of Christ—like the flowers, to gladden other lives by the ministry of love. {MB 97.3}

When we are faithful in making God known, our impulses will be under divine supervision, and we shall make steady growth, spiritually and intellectually. {UL 81.4}

So Christ expressed His love for His disciples. Their selfish spirit filled Him with sorrow, but He entered into no controversy with them regarding their difficulty. Instead He gave them an example they would never forget. His love for them was not easily disturbed or quenched. He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came from God, and went to God. He had a full consciousness of His divinity; but He had laid aside His royal crown and kingly robes, and had taken the form of a servant. One of the last acts of His life on earth was to gird Himself as a servant, and perform a servant’s part. {DA 644.5}

And the effort to bless others will react in blessings upon ourselves. This was the purpose of God in giving us a part to act in the plan of redemption. He has granted men the privilege of becoming partakers of the divine nature and, in their turn, of diffusing blessings to their fellow men. This is the highest honor, the greatest joy, that it is possible for God to bestow upon men. Those who thus become participants in labors of love are brought nearest to their Creator.
{SC 79.1}