

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Fourth Quarter 2024: *Themes in the Gospel of John*

Lesson 1 “Signs That Point *the Way*”

Read for this week’s study

John 2:1–11; John 4:46–54; John 5:1–16; Mark 3:22, 23; Matthew 12:9–14; John 5:16–47.

Memory Text

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30, 31, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Wedding at Cana
- III. The Second Sign in Galilee
- IV. The Miracle at the Pool of Bethesda
- V. Hard Hearts
- VI. Jesus’ Claims
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. In the wisdom of God, the story of Jesus is told in four Bible books rather than just one. This tells us a number of things. For one thing, the story of Jesus is so huge that no one writer, not even an inspired writer, could do justice to the whole. For another, God meets us where we are. Some readers will understand Jesus best from Matthew’s story. Others prefer the story as told by Mark, or Luke or John. We also learn from this that there is more than one right way to think. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all speak the truth, all are inspired by God, but all are telling the story in strikingly different ways. (Theme of the Quarter)
2. There are a number of similarities in the story of Jesus as told by Matthew, Mark and Luke. John, on the other hand, is very different. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are based on a common oral tradition about Jesus’ life that

circulated widely in the early church. That common story means the Synoptics are similar in many ways. John, on the other hand, fills in the gaps in the common story out of his own personal experience. Writing later than the others, he goes beyond the events in Jesus' life to the deeper spiritual meaning of Jesus' mission. John speaks directly to us in ways the other Gospels do not. As we will see, John speaks especially to the issue of how we can have a living relationship with a God we cannot see hear or touch. (Theme of the Quarter)

3. Read John 1:1. What does the phrase "the Word of God" mean to you and what relationship does that have to the title John applies to Jesus? (Theme of the Quarter)
4. Read John 21:25. What is the implication of this text? Read John 20:30-31. This text provides the purpose of the Gospel. What does John mean by "signs"? The word "you" appears twice in this text. Who is the "you" that John is referring to? How does John 20:24-29 provide context for the purpose statement in 20:30-31? What further context is given in John 21:18-23? (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
5. Read John 17:20 and 15:1-8. How do these passages identify the second generation of Christians and their relation to the disciples of Jesus? What was John's message to the second generation of Christians? That message is found in the miracles (signs) Jesus did in the Gospel of John. According to Luke 4:40, how does Jesus go about healing people? In contrast, consider the wedding of Cana (John 2:1-11), the healing of the nobleman's son (4:46-54), the Pool of Bethesda (5:1-15), the healing of the blind man (9:1-7), and the raising of Lazarus (11:39-44). What do these miracles have in common and what message would that send to the second generation of Christians? (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
6. Read John 4:43-45. How do you reconcile the statement in verse 44 with the welcome Jesus receives in Galilee? Read John 4:46-54. How does this living parable illustrate the truth of Jesus' statement in verse 44? How does it underline the message of the Gospel to the second generation of Christians? If you were to witness an actual miracle, how would you know if it was from God or not? (Monday's Lesson)
7. The rest of the lesson focuses on other "signs" that Jesus did. The first of these was at the Wedding of Cana. Read John 2:1-11. What do you observe taking place in this story? (Sunday's Lesson)
8. Read John 5:1-9. Why does Jesus ask the paralytic if he wants to be healed? Why does Jesus do this miracle at this particular time and place? Read John 5:14. What does this tell us about the healing process in John 5? (Tuesday's Lesson)
9. Read John 5:10-16. Why was it so hard for the religious leaders to respond positively to the miracles of Jesus? Read John 5:38-42. How does this passage help us answer the previous question? (Wednesday's Lesson)
10. Read John 5:16-18. Why was Jesus persecuted for His actions on the Sabbath? (Thursday's Lesson)

11. What is the central issue in Sabbath-keeping? How was Jesus on a different wavelength from the religious leaders of His day? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

I can't think of any book I enjoy more than John, though I don't like to rate one book above another, unless maybe it would be Romans.

Now, John's purpose he announces is different from that of the other three, the Synoptic writers. You know why they're called the Synoptics? Because they are so similar. But in John 20:30, he explains why, writing several years after the others had written, he made a careful selection of the events and teachings in Jesus' life. John 20:30:

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book [and we know that, because some of them are in Matthew, Mark, and Luke]. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in his name."

He also adds, at the end of 21:25: "But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." You think of all the things that Jesus said and did which are not on the record. I wonder how interesting some of them were, and we don't know.

Now, why did he make the choices that he did? That is, why did he feel he had to emphasize the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Well, in his letters, written at about the same time, 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John, he explains what was going on. In 1 John 2:18, for example, he writes:

Children, it is the last hour [sounds like a good Adventist preacher, and this is back in the 90's, A.D. It is the last hour], and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour.

Now, why he would say that so early we should save until we get to 1 John. Where was there mention of an antichrist, by the way? Who had talked about this, and had written already? Hadn't Paul, when he wrote to Thessalonica, mentioned this?

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might be plain that they all are not of us. But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all know. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and know that no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?

Now you see the reason for writing his gospel. “This is the antichrist; he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – John, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/57MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/58MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: This question has come up regarding Deuteronomy 13 on the Bible Reference Sheet. It warns against signs and wonders. And yet when we look in the gospels and the story of Jesus, aren't these miracles that He performed, aren't they a basis for belief?

Graham: At Cana it says, “These beginning of signs that He did.” And they did say something, to be sure. His mother already trusted Him. She said, “Do whatever He says.” I think the miracles do get people started sometimes. But it's not the best evidence, miracles can be counterfeited. Look at the first three plagues in Egypt. A miracle is the poorest type of evidence. But if we're susceptible to it, our God will run the risk, sometimes, of using them. Like Gideon's wet fleece, and then the dry one—that doesn't speak well of Gideon. It speaks very well of God, who generously gave him those signs. God would rather that we would weigh the evidence. So I wouldn't want to say that He didn't use miracles at all, but they are an elementary first step in developing faith, and a hazardous one.

Lou: And the Deuteronomy 13 passage is pointing out the hazard there. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4 with Lou Venden, “God's Way of Restoring Trust” 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/4MMCAG>

Look at Deuteronomy thirteen on the Bible Reference Sheet:

If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass [it actually happens], and if he says, “Let us go after other gods” which you have not known, “and let us serve them,” you shall not listen to the word of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams.
(RSV)

Never mind the miracle. Then look at the extraordinary story told in 1 Kings 13. It's a whole chapter. I wish there was time to retell it; it's so dramatic. About this younger prophet called the “man of God,” who was told by God to deliver a message to the king, not to accept hospitality, but to come home by another route. But on the way an older prophet heard of what had happened. And he asked his sons to saddle his donkey (you remember) and he got on

it and chased after the man of God. When he caught up with him, as it says on the Bible Reference Sheet:

The old prophet said to him, “Come home with me and eat bread.” And he (the man of God) said, “I may not return with you, or go in with you; neither will I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place; for it was said to me by the word of the Lord, ‘You shall neither eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by the way that you came.’” And he said to him, “I also am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, ‘Bring him back with you into your house that he may eat bread and drink water.’” But he lied to him. (RSV)

And you remember that the younger prophet believed the older prophet, and he went home and ate with him. And as he proceeded on his way he was met by a lion that slew him. If you don’t know the story you ought to read it. But that warns us that people who make claims that God has spoken through them may be lying to us. And it’s God Himself who warns us of that.

But the most impressive illustration of how God seeks to convince us—not on authority and power, but on the basis of truth—was provided by Jesus Himself on the road to Emmaus. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #4, “God’s Way of Restoring Trust” 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/4MMCAG>*

So let me pick an illustration that does reflect on the picture of God. In the KJV, in John 5:3, 4, it tells the story that from time-to-time God would look out over the parapets of heaven and see that a large crowd of sick people have gathered around the pool of Bethesda. Every once in awhile the water would move. Now what caused it to move?

The way the story is told here, it would appear that God would look out over the parapets of heaven, see the crowd there, and call over His angels and say, “It’s worth going down again. Go down and stir up the water. And remember, first one in is healed.” And this went on for years and years and years. Finally, an angel said to God, “God, we’ve been watching a man there struggling for thirty-three years to get in, and we angels are so sorry for him; could we bend the rule this once? Could we heal him? Because there’s no way he’s going to get in.” And God says, “You know I never change. First man in is healed.”

I never did like that story. And I was so relieved to start learning Greek in 1938 and discover that the idea that an angel stirred the water is a legend that crept in later on. The older manuscripts say, “the water moved.” And it was probably assumed that an angel did it. Probably though, it was drainage from the temple area or a spring or eddies of air moving. But that legend eventually crept into the text.

Look in the early manuscripts and you have a magnificent story there. These superstitious people thought an angel stirred the water and the first one in would be healed. The real truth was that on a Saturday afternoon God walked by. And the man looked up and saw the kindest face he had ever seen. And the kind face said, "Would you like to be well?" And he said, "I surely would." And that kind face did not berate the man for squandering his health in youthful self-indulgence. He simply said, "Then pick up your little mat and go home, and you will be well." That's the real picture of God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #5, "The Record of 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/5MMCAG>*

Lou: Someone has asked: "Why did Jesus heal the paralytic on the Sabbath?"

Graham: Many of His healings were elective, weren't they? The paralytic had been there thirty-eight years.

Lou: Not a critical emergency.

Graham: Not at all, you see. I think Jesus tried to keep a low profile most of the time. He knew if He became very public, He was so controversial, He wouldn't last very long. And indeed, He didn't when He became very conspicuous. But when it came to the Sabbath, He risked His life repeatedly to clear the Sabbath of misunderstanding. Because an arbitrary approach to the Sabbath puts the Father in the worst possible light. And so, to clear this up, He ran the risk of doing healing, and helping things on the Sabbath. And He ran into trouble every time. It evidently is that important to redeem the Sabbath of arbitrariness, because the Sabbath speaks so eloquently of God, for good or ill. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #13 with Lou Venden, "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>*

Now, you remember when He healed the man with the withered hand, and there was nothing they could say? It drove them to plan His murder. After He resurrected Lazarus, what follows next? It infuriated them, because they knew there was nothing they could do about it. They couldn't contradict this. And immediately they began their final plans to kill Christ. What could move those Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reforming Adventists to want to silence the Son of God, to tell Him He had a devil, and kill Him? What wouldn't they like?

COMMENT: He was taking away their power.

In what way was He taking away their power?

COMMENT: If you want to be practical, they were living on what they were given as donations, and if He took away that power and authority, they'd have to get out and work.

COMMENT: Well, not only that. Their whole reputation was at stake. Their whole theology was at stake.

What reputation would they covet above all others, as really devout, sincere, conservative Pharisees? What was the image they had of themselves?

COMMENT: They liked their position. They didn't want Him to be the top man. They wanted to be it.

COMMENT: They were Bible teachers.

Now, they were known as the experts in the Scriptures, were they not? These were the theologians, the Pharisees, which gave them great influence. In fact, they derived their authority from the general recognition that if you want to know what the Bible teaches, you go to the Pharisees. And Jesus came along and said, "You have misread the Bible." You know, that's extremely offensive. You tell a theologian, "You know, you're really wrong." That surely was involved—and their pride. Supposing the Lord were to come into a group of Adventists and say, "By the way, I know you've been using such and such a verse all along. You know, it's really wrong." Could we accept that with grace? Of course, we don't expect Him to correct us on anything, do we? We know we're right on everything, don't we? So what could I pick that would do?

Well, supposing Jesus came to a group of Seventh-day Adventists, and said, "By the way, you have not been keeping the Sabbath correctly. You have been too strict." How would we react? You know, we'd say, "Well, we've been warned that false prophets would come. 'To the Law and to the Testimony' and you're not speaking in harmony." Because I think we shouldn't underestimate the devotion, the dedication of these Pharisees. And they were highly respected by the people. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Mark*, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/53MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/54MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Jesus began the work of reformation by coming into close sympathy with humanity. While He showed the greatest reverence for the law of God, He rebuked the pretentious piety of the Pharisees, and tried to free the people from the senseless rules that bound them. He was seeking to break down the barriers which separated the different classes of society, that He might bring men together as children of one family. His attendance at the marriage feast was designed to be a step toward effecting this. {DA 150.3}

Christ came not to destroy this institution, but to restore it to its original sanctity and elevation. He came to restore the moral image of God in man, and He began His work by sanctioning the marriage relation. {AH 99.2}

Christ came to change the current of his [man's] thoughts and affections.—1T 196 (1859). {2MCP 670.1}

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters (Letter 406, 1906). {6BC 1074.2}

All heaven has been looking on with interest, and ready to do whatever God might appoint, to help fallen men and women to become what God would have them. God will work for His children, but not without their cooperation. They must have indomitable energy, and a constant desire to become all that it is possible for them to be. {RC 296.3}

The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means that sin is taken away, and that the vacuum is filled with the Spirit. It means that the mind is divinely illumined, that the heart is emptied of self, and filled with the presence of Christ. {OHC 154.5}

God does not deal with us as finite men deal with one another. His thoughts are thoughts of mercy, love, and tenderest compassion. {SC 53.1}

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}

Jesus presented the Father as one to whom we could give our confidence and present our wants. When we are in terror of God, and overwhelmed with the thought of His glory and majesty, the Father points us to Christ as His representative. What you see revealed in Jesus, of tenderness, compassion, and love, is the reflection of the attributes of the Father. The cross of Calvary reveals to man the love of God. Christ represents the Sovereign of the universe as a God

of love. By the mouth of the prophet He said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). {HP 18.3}

In the person of Christ we behold the eternal God engaged in an enterprise of boundless mercy toward fallen man. {FLB 98.3}

He spoke of God, not as an avenging judge, but as a tender father, and He revealed the image of God as mirrored in Himself. His words were like balm to the wounded spirit. Both by His words and by His works of mercy He was breaking the oppressive power of the old traditions and man-made commandments, and presenting the love of God in its exhaustless fullness. {DA 204.4}

Sickness, suffering, and death are work of an antagonistic power. Satan is the destroyer; God is the restorer. {MH 113.1}

The gospel which He taught was a message of spiritual life and physical restoration. Deliverance from sin and the healing of disease were linked together. {CT 465.2}

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." {MH 143.3}

The Son of God came to the world as a restorer. He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Every word He uttered was spirit and life. He spoke with authority, conscious of His power to bless humanity, and deliver the captives bound by Satan; conscious also that by His presence He could bring to the world fullness of joy. He longed to help every oppressed and suffering member of the human family, and show that it was His prerogative to bless, not to condemn. {LHU 37.2}

They [the Pharisees] attributed to satanic agencies the holy power of God, manifested in the works of Christ. Thus the Pharisees sinned against the Holy Ghost. Stubborn, sullen, ironhearted, they determined to close their eyes to all evidence, and thus they committed the unpardonable sin (RH Jan. 18, 1898). {5BC 1092.4}

No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent (RH June 29, 1897). {5BC 1093.2}

The unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either. They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one. {8T 269.4}