

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

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

#### Lesson 3 “The Backstory: The Prologue”

#### Read for this week’s study

John 1:1–5; Genesis 1:1; John 1:9–13; John 3:16–21; John 9:35–41; Matthew 7:21–23; John 17:1–5.

#### Memory Text

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” John 1:1.

#### Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. In the Beginning—The Divine Logos
- III. The *Word* Made Flesh
- IV. Hearing or Not Hearing the *Word*
- V. Reappearing Themes—Belief/Unbelief
- VI. Reappearing Themes—Glory
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read John 1:1-18. The Prologue to the Gospel of John provides essential context for the reader. While the characters in the Gospel have no idea who Jesus really is, the reader knows this from the start of the Gospel. Some scholars suggest that the Prologue was a more Gentile-oriented introduction to an earlier version of the Gospel, which would have been written with a Jewish audience in mind. But there is no direct textual evidence for that. (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. Read John 1:1. How far back in time does “the Word” go? In terms of history, this is the earliest text in the entire Bible. “In the beginning” is a reference to Genesis 1:1, the point in time when God began to create the universe. What element in the text of John 1:1 tells us that it refers to a time even before that? How is “the word of God” used in the Old Testament? How is “the Word” (Greek: *logos*) being used here? Using a computer search, how did the Greek philosophers use *logos* in relation to the concept of God? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)

3. Read John 1:1-5. This is structured like an early Christian hymn. Read Genesis 1:3. How does this text relate to the story of creation in Genesis? (Sunday's Lesson)
4. Read John 1:14. What was happening when Jesus came to this earth? What does the fact that God Himself, the Creator, became a human being tell us about the reality of God's love for humanity? (Monday's Lesson)
5. Read John 1:15-18. In what other ways is Jesus greater than others who represented God before Him?
6. Read John 1:9-13. To whom on earth has the light of God come? How does light come to those who haven't heard? When Jesus came to earth, what was the general reaction to Him? How do people become children of God? (Tuesday's Lesson)
7. The theme of belief or unbelief is brought up a number of further times in the Gospel. Read John 3:18-21, 9:35-41 and 12:36-46. How do these texts expand on the theme? To what degree is believing a gift of God or a human choice (John 6:37-47)? (Wednesday's Lesson)
8. Read John 17:1-5. In what way does Jesus glorify the Father during His sojourn on earth? (Thursday's Lesson)
9. Does it ultimately matter whether or not God created the universe? Does it ultimately matter when He did it or how He did it? (Friday's Lesson)
10. What impact would it have on our understanding of the cross if the person dying there was a created being rather than the "God/man" that Jesus Christ was? (Friday's Lesson)

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Lou: You've talked of Jesus as our example in this series of conversations About God. We've had several questions come in raising the question about His perhaps having an advantage over us. How could He be regarded as our example if He did have such an advantage? Let me just refer to a couple of these. "When Christ came to the world and took on human flesh, did He take on sinful flesh in essence or vicariously?" The question of Jesus and His humanity, what was His humanity, I think ties in here in an important way. Would you comment briefly on that one?

Graham: Well, I'll cite Paul for that. He said, "Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh to deal with sin." I think really what's behind this is, can we really look to Jesus as an example of the perfection that we should have?

Graham: But was He exactly like us? There are some interesting differences. He was born of the Holy Spirit. And I might be sixty-five before I'm born of the Holy Spirit. So when I'm reborn, I've got sixty-five years of bad habits to fight with for the rest of my life. Jesus never acquired a bad habit. The only way you can get a bad habit is to do something bad, which He never did. And

you say, “Well, then, He’s not an example for me.” How low do we want Him to go? Do we want Him to wallow in the gutter as a wino, so that He can be an example as to how you can get out of the gutter? I don’t want Jesus to be more and more like me. I want to be more and more like Him. He came in human form, in the likeness of sinful flesh using no power that is not available to us. And he showed that even little boys can be good. And you can grow up good like that.

And you say, “Well, I had bad habits.”

“Look,” He says, “I’m your Physician; I understand. I’ll be very patient. And I guarantee I’ll help you get over all of those things. Just trust Me.”

So how many things do we want Him to do more than He did? He’s enough of an example to show how we could have lived. Well, we didn’t. What will He do with us now? He’s the Physician, and He knows exactly what it’s like to go through what we are going through. And so you can count on Him to be patient. You say, “Well, I guess that means the Father isn’t just as patient.” No, Jesus came to show how patient the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are. I think sometimes we run into problems when we raise the wrong questions about what He came to tell us, what He came to show us. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #14 with Lou Venden, “God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done” recorded May 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/14MMCAG>*

Now other saints are in danger of underestimating Satan’s ability to deceive and confuse. I heard many say, “There is no way I could be deceived when Satan comes as Christ in the last days. I have two or three things carefully stored away by which I will test him when he comes.” They are such obvious things, that I doubt that the Devil will treat us so gently. History is full of warnings of such overconfidence. For example, when Jesus suffered and died, and rose again, Satan knew that the great weight of evidence was against him. Therefore, something must be done to destroy the evidence. One of his most diabolical successes, very early in the first century, was in leading some to believe that Jesus did not really come in the flesh. He did not **really** suffer and **really** die. He had actually faked it all. There goes all the evidence. The group of people who believed that were known as the Docetists. It comes from a Greek word that means “it seemed.” They taught that Jesus only seemed to do those things. See how Satan sought to destroy the evidence. Yet this idea was spreading in John’s later years. He warned against the teachers of this heresy. Look at 1 John 4:1, 2:

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God [The Spirit who tells the truth]: every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. (NIV)

You might wonder why he would choose to mention that, except that we know historically that people were going around saying that Jesus had not really come in the flesh. John mentions this in many places. He even writes his whole gospel to show that the One who came was really God.

But even before Christ came, Satan was at work to undermine and confuse the evidence by even counterfeiting the first coming of Christ. He accomplished this most notably in what is known as the “mystery religions.” It is almost unbelievable unless you’ve read about them. Some of these began long before Christ came. The central figure was a dying, rising savior who had been supernaturally born, died a cruel and violent death, and then was exalted up to heaven, there to mediate supernatural help to his followers on earth. Later he would return and resurrect them and annihilate all the forces of evil. Does that sound familiar? That isn’t all. In those mystery religions they had Lord Suppers. They had baptism and washing in the blood and many other things I could list if there were time. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #17, “Satan’s Final Effort to Deceive” recorded May 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/17MMCAG>*

Lou: The “substitutionary,” that comes in, say more about that. The “vicarious.”

Graham: Ah. He died in our stead. He died as the substitution. In a way, it’s very true. I mean, either He dies or we die. However, that’s where the comparison ends, because if God has let you and me and all other sinners die, all it would have done is prove the truthfulness of His warning, “If you sin, you will die.” And God could say to the universe, “Was I right? I said sinners would die, and look, they’re dead.” But the universe would not have had answers to questions two and three that I just mentioned. When Jesus died, there was no doubt in the minds of the universe that God was not killing His Son. They were clear about that. And the death of Christ answers all those three questions. So it’s not either us or Him. His death was infinitely more significant than ours. But had He not died, then what else could God do but leave us to reap the consequences and we all would have died. So in a sense, yes. He died in our stead, but beyond that there’s no comparison.

Lou: But not as a payoff. It’s not one or the other.

Graham: It’s not His death is equal to all of ours. His death is infinitely more significant than the death of every sinful man or angel who has ever lived. The death of angels and men would not have answered the questions.

Lou: What you’re saying then, is that just a simple satisfaction idea doesn’t encompass what’s involved at all, does it?

Graham: Oh, it makes it much too small. I think it puts God in a very bad light, and it doesn't answer the questions of the Great Controversy. Many folk who prefer those understandings of the plan of salvation do not understand there has been a universe-wide great controversy over the character and government of God. And do you remember at our first meeting, I brought along the evidence that even Luther, hero of the Christian world that he is, could not conceive of these larger issues because he couldn't include the book of Revelation—let alone Hebrews, James and Jude. And this has been the pattern through the years. Not many have seen the sixty-sixth book picture of a universe-wide controversy over the character and government of God. And so they have seen the death of Christ as primarily a plan just to save you and me, for which we are very grateful. It's just that the larger view makes the cross much more significant. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #8 with Lou Venden, "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>

Is there a verse in the Bible that says that when Jesus died, He was given up? Romans 4:25 says Christ was given up for our transgressions. And many versions, with their reformation influence translate this "Christ was put to death." There is nothing in there about being put to death. It says He was given up. To tie that in with the issue in the Great Controversy, God gave up His Son as if He were a sinner. Just as He will give us up, if we are real sinners at the end. Because you can't force people to trust you, in a free universe, what can you do but give people up? When Jesus was given up, yes, He died.

So I believe there were three questions answered by Gethsemane and the cross. One: who is right, God or the devil? Is God a liar when He says sin results in death? The devil says, "Yes, God has lied to you." "You will not die" is the teaching of the devil. God says, "You will die. But it is not torture and execution at My hands." The devil developed the whole doctrine of hell to turn the universe against God. And God says that is not true. And I say, "Well, how do I know how the wicked are going to die?" He says, "Only one person has ever died the death as a result of sin. It's only happened once in all eternity. I died that death. I wouldn't ask any of you to prove the truthfulness of My word. This is the meaning of substitutionary death." Yes, He died in our place, but not for legal reasons. He died because He wouldn't think of asking anybody else to go through that painful experience to demonstrate the truth. Besides, our death wouldn't have answered it anyway. Because if our dying would have answered the question, then He might as well have let Lucifer die in the beginning.

But you remember the explanation. Had He left Lucifer to die, the universe would have misunderstood and assumed God had put him to death. So only by God coming, He said, "No one takes My life from Me. Nobody can kill Me. I'm going through this Myself. I have arranged

this with my Father.” And the universe looking on said the Father isn’t killing the Son. God isn’t killing God. And it was clear enough to them that they could say, “Our questions are answered. One: sin does result in death. Two: it is not torture and execution at the hands of our gracious God.

Only one thing left. “God, why were you so concerned that we understand this?” God says, “Because if you serve Me from fear, it will turn you into rebels—holy rebels.” He says. “Come to Calvary.” On Calvary, Jesus was tortured to death. By whom? The most devout, blueprinting Adventists the world has ever known. Absolutely dedicated to God, the scriptures, creation, Sabbath, the Ten Commandments, you name it. Jesus said you even strain gnats out of your goat’s milk. Real health reformers. You couldn’t fault them for a thing. You couldn’t have disfellowshipped one of the people who crucified Christ. Their lives were apparently without blemish.

But they hated Him. They hated His picture of God. They killed Him to silence His unbiblical heresy. And the angels looking on said, “We thought, by sending Your Son to Palestine, You did that to get a good running start with people who already agreed with You. We didn’t realize You sent Him there to prove this costly point, that if we obey You for the wrong reason, because we don’t really know You, we could turn into Your worst enemies in the middle of our Sabbath keeping and our tithe-paying and our health-reforming.” And that’s why I think the biggest mistake the Adventist church could make in these last days is to have one tremendous revival in reformation, get out the blueprint, straighten out our lives, without spending much more time on the picture of God. Because if we do the right things for the wrong reason, we’ll do what some of the Jews did and become His enemies.

So I believe the cross was the only way to answer the questions. Without answers to the questions, there would be no peace, no freedom, no security throughout the universe. So it was for these specific reasons. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Questions People are Asking About the Plan of Salvation, recorded April 1983, Redlands, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMQUESTP> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMQUESTP> (Part 2)

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 had 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.

And the angels understand this. Now they'll never serve Him from fear. When they see the wicked die at the end of the millennium, they'll know God is not torturing His children to death. He's simply giving them up and handing them over to the inevitable consequences of being rebelliously out of harmony with God. And the glory of Him who is love will consume them because they've chosen to be out of harmony. And God is crying, "How can I give you up? How can I let you go? Why will you die?" {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)

### **Recommended Listening:**

Conversations About God #4 "God's Way of Restoring Trust" is available at:

<http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>

### **Further Study with Ellen White**

Looking upon Him, we behold the invisible God, who clothed His divinity with humanity in order that through humanity He might shed forth a subdued and softened glory, so that our eyes might be enabled to rest upon Him, and our souls not be extinguished by His undimmed splendor. We behold God through Christ, our Creator and Redeemer. {7BC 925.2}

The Son of God came to this earth to reveal the character of the Father to men, that they might learn to worship Him in spirit and in truth. He came to sow the world with truth. He held the

keys of all the treasures of wisdom, and was able to open doors to science, and to reveal undiscovered stores of knowledge, were it essential to salvation. The Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, every phase of truth was evident to Him. {CT 28.2}

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. . . . But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which "seeketh not her own" has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto. {DA 19.2}

Remember that God and Christ are interested in you, and that all the host of Heaven are engaged in the work for the salvation of sinners. {SJ 77.8}

Jesus was the healer of the body as well as of the soul. He was interested in every phase of suffering that came under His notice, and to every sufferer He brought relief, His kind words having a soothing balm. None could say that He had worked a miracle; but virtue—the healing power of love—went out from Him to the sick and distressed. Thus in an unobtrusive way He worked for the people from His very childhood. And this was why, after His public ministry began, so many heard Him gladly. {DA 92.1}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. {5T 738.4}

The Majesty of heaven was not discerned in the disguise of humanity. He was the divine Teacher sent from God, the glorious Treasure given to humanity. He was fairer than the sons of men, but His matchless glory was hidden under a cover of poverty and suffering. He veiled His glory in order that divinity might touch humanity, and the treasure of immense value was not discerned by the human race.... {TMK 58.4}

God regards us as His children. He has redeemed us out of the careless world and has chosen us to become members of the royal family, sons and daughters of the heavenly King. He invites us to trust in Him with a trust deeper and stronger than that of a child in his earthly father. Parents love their children, but the love of God is larger, broader, deeper, than human love can possibly be. It is immeasurable. {COL 142.1}



Christ's work in behalf of mankind is not finished. It continues today. Through John He declares that as many as receive Him, to them will He give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.—Manuscript 79, Oct. 1, 1906, "Leave Your Nets and Follow Me." {TDG 283.5}

But adoption into the family of God makes us children, not slaves. {TMK 118.5}

Christ presented to men that which was entirely contrary to the representations of the enemy in regard to the character of God, and sought to impress upon men the love of the Father, who "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. He urged upon men the necessity of prayer, repentance, confession, and the abandonment of sin. He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love not only those who loved them, but those who hated them and treated them spitefully. In all this He was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth. {CT 29.3}

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}

All should be intelligent in regard to the agency by which the soul is destroyed. It is not because of any decree that God has sent out against man. He does not make man spiritually blind. God gives sufficient light and evidence to enable man to distinguish truth from error. But He does not force man to receive truth. He leaves him free to choose the good or to choose the evil. If man resists evidence that is sufficient to guide his judgment in the right direction, and chooses evil once, he will do this more readily the second time. The third time he will still more eagerly withdraw himself from God and choose to stand on the side of Satan. And in this course he will continue until he is confirmed in evil, and believes the lie he has cherished as truth. His resistance has produced its harvest (MS 126, 1901). {6BC 1112.5}

The Lord Jesus came to our world full of mercy, life, and light, ready to save those who should come unto Him. But He can save no one against his will. God does not force the conscience; He does not torture the body that He may compel men to compliance with His law. All this work is after the order of Satan. . . . {SD 182.2}

Provision has been made whereby the communication between heaven and our souls may be free and open. Finite man can place himself where rays of light and glory from the throne of God will be given him in abundance. {HP 70.2}

God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. {AG 313.5}

God never forces the will or the conscience, but Satan's constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty. Through fear or force he endeavors to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself.—GC 591 (1888). {1MCP 325.1}

Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed. . . . In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father. {TMK 338.4}

Jesus came into the world to illustrate the character of God in His own life, and He swept back the misrepresentations that Satan had originated, and revealed the glory of God. It was only by living among men that He could reveal the mercy, compassion, and love of His heavenly Father; for it was only by actions of benevolence that He could set forth the grace of God. The unbelief of men was deep seated, and yet they could not resist the testimony of His God-like example, and His deeds of love and truth. {SD 139.3}