

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

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

Lesson 4 “Witnesses of Christ as the Messiah”

Read for this week’s study

John 1:19–23; Isaiah 40:1–5; John 1:29–37; Romans 5:6; John 1:35–39; John 1:43–51; John 3:1–21.

Memory Text

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’” (John 3:3, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Testimony of John the Baptist
- III. The Lamb of God
- IV. The Two Disciples of John
- V. Philip and Nathaniel
- VI. The Witness of Nicodemus
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The theme of this week’s lesson concerns witnesses to Jesus as the Messiah in the first three chapters of the Gospel of John. In the Gospel of John, the evangelist calls on a variety of people; Jew, Gentile, rich, poor, male, female, rulers, commoners, educated and uneducated, to bear witness to who Jesus is. This week’s lesson begins with the witness of John the Baptist and follows with Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, Nicodemus and, while he is not named, John himself. (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. John the Baptist is held in high esteem in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But in the Gospel of John, statement after statement is recorded that seems to be attempting to lower the Baptist in the eyes of the readers. Read John 1:8, 15, 20-22, 24-28, and 3:30. Most of these statements are unique to the Gospel of John. What kind of situation might the author be seeking to address by including these

- statements? Try searching the internet with prompts such as “the role of the Baptist in the Gospel of John” and see what turns up. (Sunday’s Lesson)
3. Why should we attempt to study and understand the original setting of the writers of the Bible? Isn’t the meaning for today far more important than what the original readers might have understood? (Sunday’s Lesson)
 4. Read John 1:19-23. How did John the Baptist explain his ministry and mission? How does the context of John’s quotation of Isaiah 40:1-5 add further dimensions to John’s mission statement? On what basis did the early Seventh-day Adventists see the mission of John the Baptist in themselves? Compare Malachi 4:5-6 with Revelation 14:6-7. (Sunday’s Lesson)
 5. The Hebrew nation was looking for a Messiah who would deliver them from Rome. The goal of the Gospel of John was to change their understanding of the Messiah so that they could recognize in Jesus the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the Messiah. How could readers of the Hebrew Bible come up with such contrasting visions of the Messiah? How does Luke 24:25-27 help to resolve the contrast? (Monday’s Lesson)
 6. Read John 1:29-37. What proclamation does John the Baptist make concerning Jesus and His mission? What do you think the Baptist meant by “Lamb” in this passage? Scholars have proposed four main options: The Passover lamb, the sanctuary lamb, the conquering ram (from Jewish apocalyptic) and the lamb of Isaiah 53:7. Which of these makes the most sense to you in this context? Read Mark 10:42-45. If you were president of a country, how could you handle this guidance? How does verse 45 in that context help us understand Jesus’ role as the “Lamb of God”? (Monday’s Lesson)
 7. Read John 1:35-42. What did these two disciples do after hearing John’s witness about Jesus? Why do you think they were so eager to share about their encounter with Jesus? When they declared that “We have found the Messiah” what was it that led them to that conclusion? What aspect of Christian faith can make us just as eager to share as they were? (Tuesday’s Lesson)
 8. Read John 1:43-46. What method did Philip use to approach Nathanael? How did Nathanael respond? How did Philip follow up? What did Jesus do that turned Nathanael around? What can we learn from Nathanael’s “dual personality”? (Wednesday’s Lesson)
 9. Read John 2:23-25. The context for this passage is Jesus’ cleansing of the temple. Read John 3:1-2. What does this passage have to do with John 2:23-25? Read John 3:3-6. What is Jesus trying to communicate in describing the need to be “born again” or “born from above”? What does it mean to be “born again” and why did Jesus put so much emphasis on it? (Thursday’s Lesson)
 10. After this experience, according to Ellen G. White, Nicodemus “searched the Scriptures in a new way, not for the discussion of a theory, but in order to receive

life for the soul." *Desire of Ages*, page 175. What implications might this statement have for our own investigation of the Scriptures today? (Friday's Lesson)

11. How successful do you think the ministry of John the Baptist was? How do you define "success" when it comes to spiritual things? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

The people thought, "If we offer these sacrifices, it will somehow appease the anger of God, and He'll be pleased." And that's been even carried down to the sacrifice of Christ, that if we point God to the fact that Jesus died in our stead, maybe His anger will be appeased. That's the heathen view. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. These sacrifices were not to appease God. They were to say something to us that might lead us to be contrite, to be humble, to realize how serious sin is, and to say, "God, I really need not just to be forgiven, I need to be completely changed. A new heart and a right spirit, and all those things." If the sacrifice of Jesus doesn't lead us to that understanding, it does no good. And David was beginning to understand that. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – 2 Samuel*, 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/15MMPOGIA66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/15MMPOGIA66) [http://pkp.cc/16MMPOGIA66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/16MMPOGIA66)

Now, is there a danger that we might leave too many of these very precious phrases and provisions just as phrases and say, "My Bible says without the shedding of blood there's no remission of sin and I don't know why. I know God knows why. I just want to know if He's satisfied because I want to be saved." Or is it right reverently to ask what does that really mean? Or is it possible that if we settle for the symbols without inquiring for the meaning, we would do exactly what many of the Jews did with the sacrificial system of the Old Testament? Did not that system become a great curse to them because they never asked for the meaning? And they never came to know God. They never thought that when they sacrificed a lamb it represented what we know it did.

Now what if we settle just for the highly symbolic language about the death of Christ and paying the price of sin and without the shedding of blood there's no remission of sin and covered with the righteousness of Christ. Those are interesting phrases, but the meaning is not that clear. Should we settle for the phrases, be grateful that God is satisfied, I want to know what I must do to be saved, believe in all this he says, "These are complications beyond your

understanding, but we had some real problems up here. In order for you to be saved I want to tell you we've taken care of it." And I say, "Thank you, God, I believe it and I want to be saved."

Or do we miss, then, what God paid such a price to reveal? I think He wants us to ask. Hence Ellen White's wonderful, simple words in *Christ's Object Lessons*: "Merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures must [learn the meaning of the words of truth]." Now what's the meaning? And can we be reverent when we ask the meaning? You used the phrase awhile ago. Is there a way in which we could press for the meaning without seeming to be just academic about it? I mean this is life and death to us to find the meaning. What do these things mean? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Hebrews, #4, recorded October 18, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/7MMHEBREWS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/8MMHEBREWS66> (Part 2)

But an illustration of God's preferred way of persuading us—not with denials, not with claims, but with evidence—is provided by the story of John the Baptist. You remember how John really risked his life to present his cousin Jesus to the people. And how gracious he had been: "He must increase, but I must decrease." Now John was in prison. He heard that Jesus was preaching that you really ought to visit people in prison; but He never came to see His cousin. And eventually John sent emissaries to Christ. "Are you really the one or not? Should we be looking for another?" That is a sad inquiry. Did Jesus say, "I am indeed the One and I expect you to believe it!" It could have been the devil masquerading as Christ. Instead, He invited the two to spend the day with Him. When the day was over the two men went back to prison to see John.

"Did He answer my question?"

"No!"

"But what did you see? What did you hear?"

And in the text it's recorded:

Jesus gave them this reply. "Go and tell John what you hear and what you see—that blind men are recovering their sight, cripples are walking, lepers being healed, the deaf hearing, the dead being raised to life and the good news is being given to those in need. And happy is the man who never loses his faith in me." (*Phillips*)

And when the men arrived back at the prison and told this to John; John who knew Isaiah 35 and Isaiah 61 that I've noted there, said, "He is the One."

You see, not a claim but evidence. This is God’s way and the only dependable way. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #6, “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>*

Lou: It’s a popular phrase, isn’t it? “I’m a born-again Christian.” What does that mean?

Graham: Nicodemus even asked what it meant. And Jesus said, “That should be pretty clear, if you’ve read the fifty-first Psalm and other places.” To be changed from a rebel to someone who can be trusted, to be changed from a stubborn person (who is unwilling to listen), to someone who loves, trusts, and admires God and doesn’t want to miss a single word—that is like being born all over again. And that’s why Jesus used such a dramatic picture.

Now, that’s also the meaning of being converted. You know, you turn around and go the other way like a convertible changes its top on a car. So, to be converted means to **turn around and go the other way**. Now I’m stubborn and rebellious—now I’m humbly willing to listen, to love, trust, and admire. And one picture of this change is being born again. I think that Jesus was chiding Nicodemus for being a little slow to pick up something that he should have known. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3 with Lou Venden, “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>*

Further Study with Ellen White

Christ does not bid His followers strive to shine. He says, *Let your light shine*. If you have received the grace of God, the light is in you. Remove the obstructions, and the Lord’s glory will be revealed. The light will shine forth to penetrate and dispel the darkness. You cannot help shining within the range of your influence. {COL 420.1}

When the grace of God reigns within, the soul will be surrounded with an atmosphere of faith and courage and Christlike love, an atmosphere invigorating to the spiritual life of all who inhale it. . . . Those who are humble in heart the Lord will use to reach souls whom the ordained ministers cannot approach. They will be moved to speak words which reveal the saving grace of Christ. {AG 238.5}

And in blessing others they will themselves be blessed. God gives us the opportunity to impart grace, that He may refill us with increased grace. Hope and faith will strengthen as the agent for God works with the talents and facilities that God has provided. He will have a divine agency to work with him. {AG 238.6}

In His plan of government there is no employment of brute force to compel the conscience. The Jews looked for the kingdom of God to be established in the same way as the kingdoms of the world. To promote righteousness they resorted to external measures. They devised methods and plans. But Christ implants a principle. By implanting truth and righteousness, He counterworks error and sin. {COL 77.1}

Satan had clothed the Father in his own attributes, but Christ represented Him in His true character of benevolence and love. In the character in which Christ presented Him to the world it was as if He gave a new gift to man. . . . {LHU 36.4}

In Christ's kingdom there is no lordly oppression, no compulsion of manner. The angels of heaven do not come to the earth to rule, and to exact homage, but as messengers of mercy, to co-operate with men in uplifting humanity. {DA 550.6}

Our influence upon others depends not so much upon what we say as upon what we are. Men may combat and defy our logic, they may resist our appeals; but a life of disinterested love is an argument they cannot gainsay. A consistent life, characterized by the meekness of Christ, is a power in the world. {DA 141.5}

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." —*Ministry of Healing*, p. 143. {WM 60.1}

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. {GW 257.1}

Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. {SC 57.2}

The new birth consists in having new motives, new tastes, new tendencies. Those who are begotten unto a new life by the Holy Spirit have become partakers of the divine nature, and in all their habits and practices, they will give evidence of their relationship to Christ. . . . {LHU 123.4}

God desired to bring all peoples under His merciful rule. He desired that the earth should be filled with joy and peace. He created man for happiness, and He longs to fill human hearts with the peace of heaven. He desires that the families below shall be a symbol of the great family above. {COL 290.2}

We are not to think of God only as a judge and to forget Him as our loving Father. Nothing can do our souls greater harm than this, for our whole spiritual life will be molded by our conceptions of God's character. . . . {TMK 262.2}

The fall of man, with all its consequences, was not hidden from the Omnipotent. Redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam, but an eternal purpose, suffered to be wrought out for the blessing not only of this atom of a world, but for the good of all the worlds that God had created. . . . {TMK 18.2}

The gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. {FLB 59.6}

The power of the Holy Spirit transforms the entire man. This change constitutes the new birth. {4Red 11.3}

When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ's Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven. {SC 73.1}