

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

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

### Lesson 7 “Blessed Are Those Who Believe”

#### Read for this week’s study

John 8:54–58; Genesis 12:3; Romans 4:1–5; John 12:1–8; John 19:4–22; John 20:19–31; Daniel 2; Daniel 7.

#### Memory Text

“Jesus said to him, ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’ ” (John 20:29, NKJV).

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

- I. Introduction
- II. Harking Back to Abraham
- III. The Witness of Mary
- IV. The Unwitting Witness of Pilate
- V. The Witness of Thomas
- VI. Our Witness of Jesus
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Throughout his Gospel, John has a diversity of people—people with different backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences—all testifying to who Jesus was. Among the things they said were: “ ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’ ” (John 1:36, NKJV). “ ‘We have found the Messiah’ ” (John 1:41, NKJV). “ ‘We have found Him of whom Moses . . . wrote’ ” (John 1:45, NKJV). “ ‘Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’ ” (John 1:49, NKJV). “ ‘Could this be the Christ?’ ” (John 4:29, NKJV). “ ‘We ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world’ ” (John 4:42, NKJV). “ ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life’ ” (John 6:68, NKJV). “ ‘I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world’ ” (John 11:27, NKJV). “ ‘Though I was blind, now I see’ ” (John 9:25, NKJV). “ ‘Behold your King!’ ” (John 19:14, NKJV). “ ‘I find no fault

in Him' ” (John 19:6, NKJV). “ ‘My Lord and my God!’ ” (John 20:28, NKJV). Which of these testimonies speaks most powerfully to you? What do these collectively tell us about God? This lesson focuses particularly on the testimonies of Abraham, Mary, Pilate, and Thomas. It also briefly addressed our own witness to Jesus. (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)

2. Read John 8:56-58. Why was Abraham’s witness so important that it was included in the Gospel of John? See Galatians 3:8. How was the gospel preached to Abraham? See Genesis 12:3. What did Jesus mean by the statement, “Abraham saw My day”? See Matthew 1:1. (Sunday’s Lesson)
3. Read Romans 4:1-5. Why does Abraham appear at this point in Romans? What is Paul revealing about salvation? See Romans 3:23-25, 28. (Sunday’s Lesson)
4. Read John 12:1-3. What was the significance of Mary’s actions here? How does she witness to who Jesus really was? (Monday’s Lesson)
5. The author of the Gospel no doubt saw Pilate’s witness as particularly important testimony. After all, he was a Roman, a governor, and a judge, whereas the bulk of the witness in the Gospel was from Jews and commoners. Read John 18:38 and 19:4, 6, 19. How does Pilate’s verdict connect to the theme of John’s Gospel? Convinced Jesus was innocent, why did Pilate condemn Him anyway? (Tuesday’s Lesson)
6. Read John 20:19-31. Thomas was not there when Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection (John 20:19-23). According to John 20:24-25, what mistake did Thomas make? According to John 20:26-28, what is it that changed his mind? Was this a good thing or a bad thing? What conclusion did Thomas come to after his encounter with Jesus? Read John 20:29-31. How does the Thomas story relate to the purpose of the Gospel? (Wednesday’s Lesson)
7. The lesson authors suggest that we have even more reasons to believe in Jesus than His disciples had. What are some of the things we have today that they didn’t have? (Thursday’s Lesson)
8. If someone were to ask you what difference Jesus has made in your life, how would you answer? (Friday’s Lesson)
9. Pilate raised the question “What is truth?” How would you answer that question? (Friday’s Lesson)

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

When God picks a person in the Bible who exemplifies the highest fulfillment of His ambitions for us sinners, when He finally really wins somebody, and He inspires later writers to say, “If you want to know what God wants, look at him, all the way through the Bible.” It’s Abraham. Over and over it’s Abraham who was what God wanted. And it says of Abraham that he was God’s friend. And what was it that made him such a friend? It always says Abraham trusted God.

Now, a version may say “believed God.” Same word, there’s only one word for belief, trust, faith, all the same word. That’s why we need the different versions. Abraham trusted God, he really did. And God considered him His friend.

Now evidence that he really trusted God, James says is that he loved cooperating with God and doing what God said. And when God said take your son, sacrifice him; the trust was not, “Well, if you say so God, fine, I’ll do it.” No, he trusted God enough to say, “God, as I know you, that will make sense someday. It surely doesn’t now. But I hear you speaking. We’ve talked so often, I know you wouldn’t ask me to do something wrong, or something that will confuse others for eternity, so I’m on my way. But may I reverently ask you why?” And for three days and three nights he asked Him why. And he came to a conclusion. God would either resurrect his son or provide a substitute and Hebrews says he was right. He showed he was a friend. And James says see how Abraham, the friend of God, *showed* his trust. He didn’t just say, “Sure, I believe in God.”

James says the devils do that and it scares them. They’re no friends of God. Abraham’s trust was the trust of a friend, and a friend shows his friendship in certain, very special ways, like being jealous for your friend’s reputation. And when God said, “I’m going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah” Abraham said, “God how could you? As I know you, you wouldn’t. I mean, if there were fifty saints there you wouldn’t. Forty? Thirty? Forgive me if I seem irreverent, but God, shouldn’t the judge of all the earth do what is right?”

They must have been good friends to talk like that. It doesn’t say, “And God rebuked him for talking like that and didn’t speak to him for a month.” No, God says, “Who else knows me that well? I love your jealousy for my reputation. You’re right, I wouldn’t destroy them if there were five saints, but I can’t find that many.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Three Angels’ Messages, #1, recorded October 1981, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MM3ANGELSM>

Isn’t it in Matthew that we have one of the tellings of the story of Mary anointing His feet at the supper? Now we want to know what God is like, after reading the thirty-nine books. And Simon, who was a leper that Jesus had healed, threw a dinner. And Lazarus was invited, and his sisters, Mary and Martha. Now we really need Luke to get some of the details here. Luke says that this Mary was known as a sinful woman, a wicked woman, in the town. During the supper, Mary takes this costly box of ointment and begins to anoint Christ’s feet. You wonder how she could be under the table doing this, and once again we need to be reminded of circumstances those days. If you look at that famous picture of the upper room, by Leonardo da Vinci, they are all sitting on mid-Victorian chairs around the table, and you wonder how Mary could be under

there, finding the right feet, which of course doesn't make any sense. I almost never liked the picture of John, always with his head on Jesus' bosom. As a boy I thought he must have been a bit of a sissy. And then I read that he was a "Son of Thunder" and wondered what had happened to him. He was no sissy, not John. The thing is that when you reclined at the table, your feet would be sticking out all around, beautifully available for a servant to come and wash the feet. Well, the person to your right, who coveted the privilege of being next to you, that's where his head would be, where your chest is, you see. That's all. So the Son of Thunder was there with his head next to Jesus. And John was no sissy. But the feet were out there for Mary to find, and she must have overlooked the fact that the ointment would smell as strong as it did. And the house was filled with the fragrance, and she was exposed. And Simon said, "If Jesus were a prophet, He would know what kind of woman this is, and He would not let her touch Him." That is, even if Simon had been healed by Jesus, his picture of God was of such a person that God would not let a sinner touch His feet.

And Jesus, knowing what he was thinking, said, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And Simon said, "Well, tell me." As Jesus told the story of the two debtors, Simon realized that Jesus had read his thoughts. And Simon must have been momentarily terrified, because he didn't have a good picture of God, did he? He had a God who wouldn't let a sinful woman touch Him. Now realize the predicament Simon was in. In *Desire of Ages* it says that Simon is the one who led this woman into sin. But more than that, in *Signs of the Times*, Ellen White says that this woman, who was known as a wicked woman in the town, was Simon's niece. It was her uncle who had led her into this kind of sin. More than that, Ellen White says in *Signs of the Times*, another article, that this woman was Mary, the woman taken in adultery, the same woman. And knowing that she had this reputation and this tendency, the rascals who wanted to trap her; in John 8 it's going to tell this, knew that she'd be a good candidate, so they chose her. And they caught her in the act and brought her to Jesus. You remember that story in John 7:53-8:11.

But now look at the scene. Here is Simon, the prosperous businessman, presiding over the feast, and he realizes that Jesus knows the whole thing—that he who led his niece here into sin has been thinking in his heart, "If Jesus knew what kind of a girl this is, and do I know what kind of a girl she is, He would not let her touch Him." Now the Jews would not think well of this kind of thing, that an uncle would lead his niece into sin. And so he must have held his breath, that any minute now, when Jesus finishes that story of the two debtors, He's going to say, "Now, let me give you the moral of these stories. I have something to say about our host. You see this man who has been presiding so piously over this feast. You know this woman here. You all know her, don't you? She is known as a wicked woman in the town. Now, I love what she has done, and I know why she did it. It's a very beautiful thing." Ellen White says that if Christ had not accepted this, He would have crushed her spirit, because she didn't have much self-respect. She knew what her reputation was, and because Jesus courteously accepted her impulsive act,

it meant a great deal to Mary. You know He'd do that kind of thing. And He could have said, "You know who is responsible for this woman having this reputation? This pious fraud at the head of the table!" This would have ruined Simon for the rest of his life, wouldn't it? Absolutely ruined. Now why didn't Jesus expose him? He surely deserved to be exposed. I thought you were supposed to call sin by its right name, and all those other good things.

Simon got the message, didn't he? Did anybody else need to get it? Does Jesus, does God have any pleasure in embarrassing His children? Does it do any good to do so? He'd no more embarrass Simon than He embarrassed those rascals that brought the woman taken in adultery, the same Mary. Remember He wrote their sins in the dust, and a few footsteps and a few puffs of wind, and the record was gone. He did not expose them. They came and looked, and they left. What a revelation this is of God! He does not enjoy humiliating His children. And *Desire of Ages* says that Simon became one of Christ's most devoted followers and what won him was the incredible revelation that the God he thought wouldn't let this woman touch His feet, that instead, God was the kind of Person who wouldn't even expose a sinner who deserved to be exposed. And it really won him, that God did not expose Simon before his friends. Now, that's marvelous good news. {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)

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

When the Lord chose Abraham, it was not simply to be the special friend of God, but to be a medium of the peculiar privileges the Lord desired to bestow upon the nations. {PK 231.4}

God did not design that His people should build up a wall of partition between themselves and their fellow men. The heart of Infinite Love was reaching out toward all the inhabitants of the earth. Though they had rejected Him, He was constantly seeking to reveal Himself to them and make them partakers of His love and grace. His blessing was granted to the chosen people, that they might bless others. {PP 368.1}

Faith is not a happy flight of feeling; it is simply taking God at His word—believing that He will fulfill His promises because He said He would.—Lt 49, 1888. (HC 119.) {2MCP 539.5}

Where there is not only a belief in God's Word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love, and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God. {AG 137.5}

Jesus does not call on us to follow Him, and then forsake us. If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us. His voice, clear and distinct, is heard, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." [John 14:6.] "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." [Psalm 72:12.] {GW 263.1}

When the Christian takes his baptismal vow, divine help is pledged to him. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit stand ready to work in his behalf. God places at his command the resources of heaven, that he may be an overcomer. His own power is small; but God is omnipotent, and God is his helper. Daily he is to make known his wants at the throne of grace. By faith and trust, by availing himself of the resources provided, he can be more than a conqueror. {OHC 157.5}

The Lord God is profuse in His gifts to our world. The question may be asked, Why does the Lord show such waste, such extravagance in the multitude of His gifts that cannot be enumerated? The Lord would be so bountiful toward His human family that it cannot be said of Him that He could do more. When He gave Jesus to our world, He gave all heaven. His love is without a parallel. It did not stop short of anything. . . . {5BC 1101.3}

Christ undertook to redeem man and to rescue the world from the grasp of Satan. The great controversy begun in heaven was to be decided in the very world, on the very same field, that Satan claimed as his. {PP 69.2}

All the angels of heaven are united in the work of bringing to man the infinite treasures of the better world. {FLB 79.5}

God and Christ and the heavenly angels are fighting with you. . . . In the strength of the Redeemer, you can be more than conquerors. {FLB 79.6}

When the mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite, the effect on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. In such communion is found the highest education. It is God's own method of development. "Acquaint now thyself with Him" (Job 22:21), is His message to mankind. {AA 126.1}

Through belief in Satan's misrepresentation of God, man's character and destiny were changed, but if men will believe in the Word of God, they will be transformed in mind and character, and fitted for eternal life. To believe that "God 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), will change the heart, and reproduce in man the image of God. {1SM 346.1}

Received into the heart, the leaven of truth will regulate the desires, purify the thoughts, and sweeten the disposition. It quickens the faculties of the mind and the energies of the soul. It enlarges the capacity for feeling, for loving. {COL 101.1}

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}

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures. {COL 60.1}

The truth as it is in Jesus will not degrade but elevate the receiver, purify his life, refine his taste, sanctify his judgment. {OHC 230.6}

There is an evidence that is open to all,—the most highly educated, and the most illiterate,—the evidence of experience. God invites us to prove for ourselves the reality of His word, the truth of His promises. He bids us “taste and see that the Lord is good.” Psalm 34:8. Instead of depending upon the word of another, we are to taste for ourselves. He declares, “Ask, and ye shall receive.” John 16:24. His promises will be fulfilled. They have never failed; they never can fail. And as we draw near to Jesus, and rejoice in the fullness of His love, our doubt and darkness will disappear in the light of His presence. {SC 111.3}

Jesus is ever ready to speak peace to souls that are troubled with doubts and fear. This precious Saviour waits for us to open the door of our heart to him, and say, Abide with us. {6Red 37.1}

It is Satan’s work to fill men’s hearts with doubt. He leads them to look upon God as a stern judge. He tempts them to sin, and then to regard themselves as too vile to approach their heavenly Father or to excite His pity. The Lord understands all this. Jesus assures His disciples of God’s sympathy for them in their needs and weaknesses. Not a sigh is breathed, not a pain felt, not a grief pierces the soul, but the throb vibrates to the Father’s heart. {DA 356.2}

As a Satanic power is stirring up the elements from beneath, God will send light and power to His people, that the message of truth may be proclaimed to all the world. {Mar 189.5}

It is when we come into difficult places that He reveals His power and wisdom in answer to humble prayer. Have confidence in Him as a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God. He will reveal Himself to you as One who can help in every emergency. He who created man, who gave him his wonderful physical, mental, and spiritual faculties, will not withhold that which is necessary to sustain the life He has given. He who has given us His word—the leaves of the tree

of life—will not withhold from us a knowledge of how to provide food for His needy children.  
{MH 199.4}

If you will ask help of God you need not ask in vain. In order to encourage us to have confidence and trust He comes near us by His holy Word and Spirit, and seeks in a thousand ways to win our confidence. But in nothing does He take more delight than in receiving the weak who come to Him for strength. If we will find heart and voice to pray, He will be sure to find an ear to hear and an arm to save. {TDG 194.5}

In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will. . . . {CC 250.3}

As the wheellike complications were under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of this earth.  
{PK 536.1}

All heaven is interested in our salvation. The angels of God, thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand, are commissioned to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. They guard us against evil and press back the powers of darkness that are seeking our destruction. {6T 63.3}