

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2012: *Glimpses of our God*

Lesson 5 “The Holiness of God”

Read for this week’s study

Matt 11:10; Mark 1:2; Job 42:5, 6; Luke 4:31–36; Gen 2:3; Ex 3:5; Ps 99; Is 6:1-8; Dan 10:4-12; Luke 5:1-11; Rev 4; Rev 15:1-4; Rev 19:1-5;

Memory Text

“Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy” (Psalm 99:9).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. It Is Written
- III. To be Set Apart
- IV. To Repent in Dust and Ashes
- V. Depart From Me
- VI. When Demons Speak
- VII. Further Study

Questions for Consideration

Moderators: Tom and Judith Utt

1. Fill in the blank: Holiness is _____.
2. What is the opposite of holiness?
3. Obviously, we use the term “unholy,” but what others?
4. In the Bible, the first use of “holy” is time or place, depending on the version.
5. We observe holidays (Holy-days), but this has lost much of its original meaning in our modern world.
6. We sing songs to God’s Holiness.
7. We are called to be holy; and, in the end, the pronouncement is made “let he who is holy remain holy.”
8. It is a given that God is Holy. Does God’s Holiness relate to His glory, majesty, sacredness, love, patience, forgiveness, caring, blessedness, sanctification, character, truth, etc.?
9. Is Holiness simply one aspect, one attribute, one characteristic of God?
10. How does someone (or something) become holy?
11. Is it bestowed, simply declared, or ...?
12. If someone who is unholy may become holy, is the opposite true?
13. What does it mean for us to be called to be Holy?
14. How can that happen since we are all sinners? Again, is it by declaration?
15. Is a mediator needed? What is the mediator’s/intercessor’s role?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Now, if you know the writings of Ellen White, she says the service of fear produces the character of a rebel. Therefore, until fear is eliminated from the family, the seeds of sin and rebellion are there. Therefore, fear must be eliminated. The so-called “forensic view” does not eliminate fear. It does not attempt to eliminate fear, it just says “you better be sure you’re on God’s side! Then you have no need to be afraid.” So I’m afraid the reformation revival does not solve the problem of security in the universe. There is not the security in that legal view that there is in the other view, the trust/healing model - the great controversy model. There is security there, because that model includes the elimination of fear. There is no need to be afraid of our God. {Graham Maxwell – excerpt from the audio series – Questions People Are Asking About the Plan of Salvation, April 1983, Redlands, California}

Was the good news known in Old Testament times? Was it ever referred to? Did Abraham know the good news? Did Moses know the good news? Anyone who could stand at the foot of Mt. Sinai amidst all that lightning and thunder and earthquake and say “There’s nothing to be afraid of”, he knew there is no fear in love. “Perfect love casts out all fear.” He knew all those good things. He knew God so well that he was a great friend of God. He was reverent, but he wasn’t afraid. He knew the good news way back in Old Testament times. He knew the good news about God so well, that when God said, “Moses, I’m tired of these people, step aside, let me destroy them,” and “I’ll make a great nation of you”, Moses could say, “God, you couldn’t do that. Think what it would do to your reputation. What would the heathens say, that you brought your people out here to destroy them? You couldn’t do it, God.” And God replied, as it were, “You’re absolutely right Moses. Not many people know me that well, but you do. I love to hear you talk like this.”

Just as Abraham knew the good news, and when God said, “I’m going down to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah”, Abraham could say, “God you wouldn’t do it if there were 50 righteous there, I know you wouldn’t. Not even 40, 30, 20. Why, should not the judge of all the earth do all that is right?” Abraham was reverent, but he wasn’t afraid. “There is no fear in love” First John says. Fear has to do with punishment, not worship. Perfect love casts out all fear. To know God as He really is, is to be deeply reverent, but unafraid, and even comfortable in His presence. Abraham and Moses knew the gospel, they knew the good news and they were not afraid. They could even talk to God so courageously, and God in turn designates those two men as His friends, to whom He could talk face to face. {Graham Maxwell – excerpt from the audio series – Romans Chapter 1, September 1977, Loma Linda, California}

This gospel is the everlasting Good News that God is not the kind of person Satan has made him out to be—arbitrary, unforgiving, and severe. He is, instead, the loving heavenly Father Jesus came to reveal. Though awesome in his majesty and power, he is infinitely gracious toward all his people, especially his unruly children on this earth.

How could the angel bearing such good news speak also of fear and judgment? Would our loving Father call on his children to worship him with fear?

John taught that when a man comes to know and accept the truth about God, he no longer is afraid. He even anticipates the Day of Judgment without fear! {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, pp. 99-100. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

Early in the Biblical record God came down on Mount Sinai to speak to his people. The whole mountain shook at the presence of the Lord. There was thunder and lightning, fire and smoke, and the sound of a very loud trumpet. And God said to Moses, “Keep the people back. If anyone even touches the mountain, he must die. Whether man or beast, he must be stoned or shot. Let a boundary be set around the mountain. If anyone breaks through, I shall consume him!” (see [Exodus 19:10–25](#)).

The people were terrified. “They trembled with fear and stood a long way off. They said to Moses, ‘If you speak to us, we will listen; but we are afraid that if God speaks to us, we will die’” ([Exodus 20:18, 19](#), GNT).

But Moses reassured the people that there was no need to be afraid. Moses knew the truth about God. Though he always approached him with deepest reverence and awe, he was not afraid. The people used to stand in their tent doors and watch Moses go in to meet God in the Tabernacle. And there the Lord would speak to Moses “face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” ([Exodus 33:11](#)).

Think how fearlessly but reverently Moses replied to God’s offer to abandon Israel and make a great nation of him instead (see [Numbers 14:11–19](#)).

All the way from Egypt to Sinai the people had grumbled and complained, forgetting the miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea and God’s generous provision of water and food. How could God gain the attention of such people and hold it long enough to reveal more of the truth about himself?

Should he speak softly to the people, in a “still small voice,” as he would speak years later to Elijah at the mouth of the cave ([1 Kings 19:12](#))? Should he sit and weep over Israel as he would centuries later, sitting on another mountain and crying over his people in Jerusalem? (See [Luke 19:41–44](#); [13:34](#).)

Only a dramatic display of his majesty and power could command the reverence of that restless multitude in the wilderness. But what a risk God would thereby run of being misunderstood as a fearsome deity, just as Satan claimed him to be! Would this not be playing right into the hands of his enemy in the great controversy?

But it was either run this risk or lose contact with his people. And the Lord is not willing to let his people perish, uninstructed and unwarned. He is willing to run the risk of being temporarily

feared, even hated, rather than lose touch with his children. {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, pp. 101-102. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

God would do anything to spare us from this final destruction. Think of what he has already done! But what can he do with those who are not moved by the persuasive appeals of the still small voice? What can he do with those who are not stirred by the messages of the prophets through the years—not even by the sad story of Hosea? How can he awaken those who are deaf even to the thunders of Sinai? How can he reach those who are not even touched by what happened on Calvary nor warned by the nature of Christ's death of how terrible is the ultimate consequence of sin?

Our heavenly Father is about to witness the loss of vast numbers of his children. For one last time he raises his voice. He—the gracious One, the One who would so much rather speak to us gently of the truth—raises his voice in one last awesome warning and appeal: “If you are bent on leaving me, I must let you go! But when I give you up, you will be destroyed!”

The devil would have us misunderstand this message as the words of an angry God, hardly one to be loved. But this terrible warning only serves to confirm the everlasting Good News. You could trust the God we worship to send these three final messages to the world. In these last days before the end he would not leave his children unenlightened and unwarned.

And behind the fearsome wording of the third angel's message stands the God of Hosea crying, “Why will you die? How can I give you up! How can I let you go!”

A God such as this we can worship without fear. {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, pp. 111-112. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

Further Study with Ellen White

The work of God's dear Son in undertaking to link the created with the Uncreated, the finite with the Infinite, in His own divine person, is a subject that may well employ our thoughts for a lifetime. This work of Christ was to confirm the beings of other worlds in their innocence and loyalty, as well as to save the lost and perishing of this world. He opened a way for the disobedient to return to their allegiance to God, while by the same act He placed a safeguard around those who were already pure, that they might not become polluted. {MYP 253.3}

While we rejoice that there are worlds which have never fallen, these worlds render praise and honor and glory to Jesus Christ for the plan of redemption to save the fallen sons of Adam, as well as to confirm themselves in their position and character of purity. The arm that raised the human family from the ruin which Satan has brought upon the race through his temptations, is the arm which has preserved the inhabitants of other worlds from sin. Every world throughout immensity engages the care and support of the Father and the Son; and this care is constantly

exercised for fallen humanity. Christ is mediating in behalf of man, and the order of unseen worlds also is preserved by His mediatorial work. Are not these themes of sufficient magnitude and importance to engage our thoughts, and call forth our gratitude and adoration to God? {MYP 254.1}

Again the piercing look of Jesus swept over the desecrated court of the temple. All eyes were turned toward Him. Priest and ruler, Pharisee and Gentile, looked with astonishment and awe upon Him who stood before them with the majesty of heaven's King. Divinity flashed through humanity, investing Christ with a dignity and glory He had never manifested before. Those standing nearest Him drew as far away as the crowd would permit. Except for a few of His disciples, the Saviour stood alone. Every sound was hushed. The deep silence seemed unbearable. Christ spoke with a power that swayed the people like a mighty tempest: "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." His voice sounded like a trumpet through the temple. The displeasure of His countenance seemed like consuming fire. With authority He commanded, "Take these things hence." John 2:16. {DA 590.4}

Three years before, the rulers of the temple had been ashamed of their flight before the command of Jesus. They had since wondered at their own fears, and their unquestioning obedience to a single humble Man. They had felt that it was impossible for their undignified surrender to be repeated. Yet they were now more terrified than before, and in greater haste to obey His command. There were none who dared question His authority. Priests and traders fled from His presence, driving their cattle before them. {DA 591.1}

On the way from the temple they were met by a throng who came with their sick inquiring for the Great Healer. The report given by the fleeing people caused some of these to turn back. They feared to meet One so powerful, whose very look had driven the priests and rulers from His presence. But a large number pressed through the hurrying crowd, eager to reach Him who was their only hope. When the multitude fled from the temple, many had remained behind. These were now joined by the newcomers. Again the temple court was filled by the sick and the dying, and once more Jesus ministered to them. {DA 592.1}

After a season the priests and rulers ventured back to the temple. When the panic had abated, they were seized with anxiety to know what would be the next movement of Jesus. They expected Him to take the throne of David. Quietly returning to the temple, they heard the voices of men, women, and children praising God. Upon entering, they stood transfixed before the wonderful scene. They saw the sick healed, the blind restored to sight, and deaf receive their hearing, and the crippled leap for joy. The children were foremost in the rejoicing. Jesus had healed their maladies; He had clasped them in His arms, received their kisses of grateful affection, and some of them had fallen asleep upon His breast as He was teaching the people. Now with glad voices the children sounded His praise. They repeated the hosannas of the day

before, and waved palm branches triumphantly before the Saviour. The temple echoed and re-echoed with their acclamations, "Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just, and having salvation!" Psalm 118:26; Zechariah 9:9. "Hosanna to the Son of David!" {DA 592.2}

The sound of these happy, unrestrained voices was an offense to the rulers of the temple. They set about putting a stop to such demonstrations. They represented to the people that the house of God was desecrated by the feet of the children and the shouts of rejoicing. Finding that their words made no impression on the people, the rulers appealed to Christ: "Hearest Thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings

Thou hast perfected praise?" Prophecy had foretold that Christ should be proclaimed as king, and that word must be fulfilled. The priests and rulers of Israel refused to herald His glory, and God moved upon the children to be His witnesses. Had the voices of the children been silent, the very pillars of the temple would have sounded the Saviour's praise. {DA 592.3}

Additional Readings

I Asked for Wonder, Abraham Joshua Heschel

His Healing Love, Dick Winn