

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2014: *Christ and His Law*
Lesson 11 “The Apostles *and the Law*”

Read for this week’s study

Rom. 3:31; 6:15; Acts 10:9–14; John 15:1–11; James 2:1–26; Heb. 3:7–19; Jude 5–7.

Memory Text

“Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Paul and the Law
- III. Peter and the Law
- IV. John and the Law
- V. James and the Law
- VI. Jude and the Law
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Daniel Duda

1. “With so much evidence for the continued validity of God’s law, why do so many Christians argue against it?” (Sabbath afternoon) Perhaps because most of the time we do not base our conclusions on evidence but upon our own models of interpretation? And because ideas have a life of their own, if a model has been in place for some time, most people sincerely believe that “this is what the Bible teaches.” This tendency towards accepting as true the “fallacy of an assumed premise” is a risk, a potential trap that affects all of us.
2. “This week we’ll look at the attitude of Christ’s apostles concerning the law, because surely if it were to have been nullified or modified after Christ’s death, the apostles would have known something about it.” (Saturday’s lesson) While this reasoning would carry some weight with [most] Protestants, it certainly would not impress the Catholics and the Orthodox, who believe that the witness of the church in early centuries cannot and should not be ignored. How would you argue for non-inclusion of tradition in the process of interpretation?
3. “The main reason why some claim that Paul started a ‘new’ religion is the misconception over his teaching about law and grace.” (Sunday’s lesson) It is easy to

- misunderstand Paul if one takes a dogmatic approach to the Scriptures, and especially if one is unaware of the historical biases and models that governed the interpretation for centuries. However, if one looks at how Paul arrived at his interpretation, it is clear that he is in harmony with the storyline of the Bible.
4. “The hope of the Christian is not found in the law but in Jesus Christ, who not only kept the law perfectly but through God’s miraculous power allows believers to share in His righteousness (Romans 8:3, 4). The Christian can now serve the law of God with a free conscience because Christ has taken away the law’s condemnation (Romans 7:25–8:2).” (Monday’s lesson) What is your reaction to these words?
 5. “Certainly, if the law had been changed in any way, Peter would have known.” “What does Acts 10:9–14 tell us about Peter’s adherence to the Jewish law after Jesus’ ascension? If Peter thought this way about laws concerning food, what can we imagine his view was on the perpetuity of the Ten Commandments?” (Monday’s lesson) Perhaps this approach is not the strongest argument. Peter was obviously wrong in applying the clean/unclean food laws to people. God taught him the new implications of Christ’s death for the new community that He was organizing.
 6. “In a powerful way, the incident in Acts 10 demonstrates that the earliest Christians fully identified with their Jewish roots.” (Monday’s lesson) Surely. And even in a more powerful way it shows that the church realized that it needed to go beyond those roots. However, there was no discontinuity as far as the law was concerned. See Peter’s use of Exodus 19:6 in 1 Peter 2:9.
 7. “When John, the beloved disciple, reminds Christians of their obligation to God, he uses the same language of love and unity that Jesus does in the Gospel. In fact, John understood that love has always been the essence of the law (for example, 2 John 6).” (Tuesday’s lesson) John also argues for continuity in understanding the law and the covenant.
 8. “What is the basic message of James 2:1–26? [...] Misunderstanding Paul’s teaching on the law, some argue that James and Paul are opposed to each other regarding the role of the law. The major point of contention is over the place of works in salvation.” (Wednesday’s lesson) Why do you think that Paul and James can be harmonized and are not contradicting each other?
 9. “Although Jude makes reference to neither law nor commandments, his entire letter is about fidelity to God and the consequences of transgressing His law.” (Thursday’s lesson) “For certain individuals who were marked out for condemnation long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a licence for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”(Jude 4) How do these words show the perpetuity of God’s law?
 10. “Why should the apostles teach repentance toward God?—Because the sinner is in trouble with the Father. He has transgressed the law; he must see his sin, and repent. What is his next work?—To look to Jesus, whose blood alone can cleanse from all sin. Faith in Christ is necessary; for there is no saving quality in law. The law

condemns, but it cannot pardon the transgressor. The sinner must depend on the merits of the blood of Christ.” (Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, August 5, 1886)
What does it mean that a sinner must “depend on the merits of the blood of Christ”?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Is James saying that you are saved by works without faith? Does he ever suggest that? Or is James saying you can only be saved by a genuine faith? And how do you know if it's genuine? Well, by the way you live. Doesn't Paul say exactly the same thing? I don't see any distinction between the two. For example, look at James 1:27, the definition of true religion:

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained, [or unspotted] from the world.

Would Paul agree with James 1:27? Would the prophets of the Old Testament agree? Do you remember Micah, and Amos, and Isaiah, and all those places we looked at on the way through? What kind of religion does God desire? You remember they offered sacrifice, and they offered Sabbath-keeping, and they crowded into the temple, and they sang lustily their songs. And God says, “What I want is integrity and humility.” How did Jesus divide the sheep from the goats? Does it even mention their faith, by the way? Not once. Would that leave out faith? Did Jesus say much about belief and faith and trust? A tremendous amount about it, and yet He said just as much about the way a person behaves.

Can God save those who do not trust Him? No matter how hard they work? No. There must be trust. But the man who says, “I trust You, but I don't have time to listen, and I don't intend to follow Your instructions, because if I were to follow Your instructions, that would be works.” That makes nonsense out of faith. “I trust You, but I'm not going to do what You say.” Try that on your doctor.

You say, “I'm very sick, and I trust you.”

And the doctor says, “Do the following.”

“Oh, no! It would only be faith if I can go to bed tonight and wake up well in the morning.”

Well, it doesn't come that easily, does it? It's a faith that works. Faith is a willingness to listen and to carry through with the instructions as best one can. Now it's true, our efforts may not be at all perfect, may be quite fumbling. But the trust must be complete. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – 1&2 Peter and James*, recorded

July, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links: <http://pkp.cc/pogia66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/pogia66> (Part 2)*

God said to the universe, “Job will not let me down.” And he didn’t. Now I think Job is typical of what God is waiting for. A group of people who can survive perhaps the loss of everything, even their health, disasters of all kinds, he even lost his family. And more than that, theologians came, and they were well-meaning theologians. In fact when they saw him they were so touched they couldn’t speak for seven days and seven nights. And then when they spoke they were wrong. Job survived not only physical disaster but theological error. And he said, “You brethren, I love you for coming, but you’re wrong.” And they went on and on, and finally he said, “Please, I wish you’d be quiet and let me just talk this over with God.” And he showed his confidence in God, even as they suggested he had no right to talk to God like that. And God intervened and said, “Job has said of me what is right. Pray for these three theologians. They think they’re right, and they’re wrong.” I think we have lots of concerned, loving theologians these days who are wrong—well-meaning to be sure—and this isn’t the end for them; pray for them. God says to Job, “Pray for your friends.” And I can imagine Job saying, “God, I thank You for these three men who came so far and cared so much. I just wish they knew You the way I do.”

So I believe we’re waiting for people who can survive and bear a witness. Yes, but just quickly, isn’t perfection suggestive of obedience to law, and that’s where the rub sometimes comes. All right, let’s go that route. Revelation 14:12, “The remnant keep the commandments of God.” Half way? No reservations—they keep the commandments of God. Well, doesn’t that sound legalistic to obey God’s commandments? No, look at them again. Moses said to keep the commandments is to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself, and you shall not hate your neighbor in your heart. That’s not Jesus, that’s Moses, in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. And Jesus only repeated it when He said the same thing. And Paul only repeated it when he said, “Love is the fulfilling of the law. He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled all law.”

So then, perfection is perfect obedience to the law of God, which means being perfectly loving. All right, what does it mean to love, since that has so many other connotations? And Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 13 because they really were confused about love in that church. A man had even married his father’s wife, you remember, which he said, even the heathen don’t do. There was immorality in the Corinthian church. So Paul said, “Let me tell you about love. Love is always patient, it’s always kind, it’s never arrogant, it’s never rude, it never insists on having its own way, it’s never even irritable.” To behave like that is to keep God’s commandments. Well, who wants to behave any other way than that? Besides, isn’t that the way a grown-up behaves? Therefore, to keep God’s commandments is to be grown-up, to be mature, to be perfect.

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation – Perfection, Requirement or Generous

Offer? Recorded December, 1983, San Diego, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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

Our works don't win our way into heaven and answer all the problems involved in our salvation. But our behavior, our love for each other and our love for God, our growing trustworthiness is the only natural response of an honest human being to the good news and to the truth about God.

No one can say, "I have faith in God", and then go out and act grossly day after day and misrepresent God. Paul is saying, "If you really trust God, if you really admire God for His wise, and orderly, and gracious ways, this will show." In fact, it's a law that we become like the one we worship and admire. In your pride in your heavenly Father, you'll want to be a trustworthy member of the family.

So James says, "You say you have faith and you behave disgracefully, your faith is worthless. If a man really admires God, it will show. The children will behave like their Heavenly Father." And Paul's argument is the same as James'. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 2, recorded October, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/3MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/4MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

As the Israelites were set as a light to the surrounding nations in the darkness of heathenism, so today every follower of Christ is to be as a light to those whose minds are darkened by sin. {ST, May 7, 1902 par. 14}

After Adam's sin and fall nothing was taken from the law of God. The principles of the ten commandments existed before the fall, and were of a character suited to the condition of a holy order of beings. After the fall, the principles of those precepts were not changed, but additional precepts were given to meet man in his fallen state (3SG 295). {1BC 1104.3}

The law of Jehovah dating back to creation, was comprised in the two great principles, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

These two great principles embrace the first four commandments, showing the duty of man to God, and the last six, showing the duty of man to his fellowman. The principles were more explicitly stated to man after the fall, and worded to meet the case of fallen intelligences. This

was necessary in consequence of the minds of men being blinded by transgression (ST April 15, 1875 [Reprinted in RH May 6, 1875]). {1BC 1104.4}

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is “alienated from the life of God.” Christ says, “All they that hate Me love death.” Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them. {DA 764.1}

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God’s goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe. {DA 764.2}

Satan’s rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin. The working out of Satan’s rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God’s government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments. {GC 499.1}