

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2014: *The Teachings of Jesus*

Lesson 1 “Our Loving Heavenly Father”

Read for this week’s study

Matthew 7:9–11; John 14:8–10; Luke 15:11–24; Matthew 6:25–34; Hebrews 9:14.

Memory Text

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him” (1 John 3:1, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Our Father in Heaven
- III. Revealed by the Son
- IV. The Love of Our Heavenly Father
- V. The Compassionate Care of our Heavenly Father
- VI. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Jon Paulien

1. Why are there four gospels instead of just one? Are there any parallels between the four different quadrants of the brain and the characteristics of each of the four gospels? (Introduction)
2. The New Testament draws analogies with ancient concepts of fatherhood and adoption (you may want to do an online search for more information than the lesson provides). What can these ancient analogies tell us about God? What does it mean to you personally to address God as a heavenly Father? (Sabbath afternoon)
3. The lesson for this week suggests that the concept of fatherhood invites us to approach God with the confidence of a child. At the same time, the fact that God is transcendent in Heaven reminds us to worship Him with reverence. “To emphasize one of these aspects at the expense of the other would lead us to a distorted concept of God.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? (Sunday’s lesson)

4. How is it possible to know a God that you cannot see, hear or touch? (Monday's lesson)
5. According to Jeremiah 9:23-24, what are the three most important things to know about God? Is Jeremiah the final word on the subject or are there some crucial things he leaves out? (Monday's lesson)
6. Read John 14:7-10. What do you think prevented the disciples from seeing the Father in Jesus? What lesson should we take from their lack of comprehension? (Monday's lesson)
7. Read the familiar story of the prodigal son once more (Luke 15:11-24). Make a list of the evidences in the story regarding the character of the father. What does the role of the father in this story tell us about God? (Tuesday's lesson)
8. Read Matthew 6:25-34. What evidences in this passage would encourage the reader to place his or her trust in God? (Wednesday's lesson)
9. If God "so loves the world" (John 3:16-17) why is there so much suffering? (Wednesday's lesson)
10. What difference does it make that the godhead is a trinity? Summarize the role of each member of the trinity in the following texts: Luke 1:26-35; Luke 3:21-22; Hebrews 9:14. (Thursday's lesson)
11. Many people have had bad experiences with an earthly father. As a result they have had difficulty loving and trusting God as a heavenly Father. How would you help such a person discover that our God is a loving and trustworthy kind of Father? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Serious questions about God often arise in a great medical center like this. Why is it that God sometimes does not heal his trusting friends, even though we ask Him to? I believe that God, as we know Him, might well say to us, "Trust me. I can't explain it to you just now. I hope you trust me enough to be willing to wait for the day when I can make it plain to you. I hope you have found enough evidence and enough reason for trusting me. Besides, you know I would never allow you to be tried and tested more than you are able to bear." You remember, later Paul gave that explanation in 1 Corinthians 10:13.

"God can be depended on not to let you be tried beyond your strength." (Goodspeed)

Then, God might go on to say, "You also know, that in all things, I work for your good among those of you who love Me and let Me do it." So Paul said in Romans 8:28: "We know that in all things God works for good. [That's the correct way to translate that verse. It is not, 'Don't worry, everything's going to be all right'. The word God should be early in the verse.] We know that in all things God works for good, [it isn't just good luck,] with those who love him" (GNB)

But then, if we trusted God enough, even respected and revered Him enough to take the time to listen, we might hear God provoke the questions Himself. You think about how God stirred His friend Abraham as He was on His way down to Sodom and Gomorrah to consume those cities. He said, "I wouldn't do this without first telling my friend, Abraham." Then, you remember Abraham's reply, and how he dared to reason with his God. Look at Genesis 18:23, 25. This is just a part of the whole conversation.

"Then Abraham drew near, and said, 'Wilt thou indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked? Far be that from thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?'" (RSV)

Have you ever dared say that to God? Was God offended? No, look at James 2:23, next on the list.

"Abraham was called God's friend." (GNB) {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, session 15, "Talking To God As A Friend" 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/15MMCAG>*

The most important of all Seventh-day Adventist beliefs is the one that brings joy and assurance to Christians everywhere, the truth about our Heavenly Father that was confirmed at such cost by the life and the death of His Son. We believe that God is not the kind of Person His enemies have made Him out to be, arbitrary, unforgiving and severe. We accept the testimony of Jesus when He said, "If you have seen me you have seen the Father." God is just as loving and trustworthy as His Son, just as willing to forgive and heal. Though infinite in majesty and power, our Creator is an equally gracious Person who values nothing higher than the freedom, the dignity, and the individuality of His intelligent creatures, that their love, their faith, their willingness to listen and obey may be freely given. This is the truth revealed through all the books of Scripture. This is the everlasting good news that wins the trust and admiration of God's loyal children throughout the universe. And like Abraham and Moses, the ones God spoke of as His trusted friends, we want to speak well and truly of our Heavenly Father. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from written material, "What We Believe".}

So I have found for myself that the greatest aid has been to think of the whole picture of what has gone wrong in the universe, and what has gone wrong for me, because I'm caught up in this thing, and it's had a devastating effect. And it isn't only forgiveness that's necessary, is it? A whole lot of things need to be changed. But the first thing is for us to be won back to trust in God as our gracious Heavenly Father, as the father of the prodigal son, and to realize He's not a legalistic God who has to be won over by all sorts of legal endeavors. You know, the prodigal son arrived home promising to do all kinds of things, didn't he? And the father said, "You don't

need to mention any of that. Let's get on to the dinner." He was so happy to see him come home. There was no need to promise all those things. He had come home. And he really wanted to be home. And he was willing to be accepted on any basis as long as he could be let in the house again and live with the family. And that's where it all starts, providing that we're convinced that God is trustworthy and so approachable and so gracious.

You see, the truth about God, the good news about God, is what tells us that He is a gracious God, and that He's not a legalistic God. And obviously then, my own legalistic efforts to please Him, and to win His favor, and maybe persuade Him to forgive me, like the prodigal son saying I'll do this and that and I'll be just a hired servant and make restitution, and so on. If I do that, could you forgive me? Could you take me back? What is that saying about God? And the father of the prodigal son said, "You don't have to do anything. Just stay here. I want you here. Just don't leave again." When we try legalistically to satisfy God, we are suggesting that we have a legalistic God, rather than a gracious God. So the same truth that wins us back to trust is the truth that ought to terminate any legalistic attempts to earn God's favor. It's an insult to God to say, "I suppose I ought to do the following in order to win your favor." We don't have to do anything. He has regarded us graciously all the time we've been gone. And the father of the prodigal son was looking down that long road for years and years, while his son wasn't even thinking about him. The father wanted him to come home. So if we have accepted the good news that ought to be the end of legalism, because the remedy for legalism is the elimination of a legalistic God. The essence of legalism is the worship of a legalistic God, and the remedy is the truth about God, the gospel. Obviously we are not "set right", and we can leave that as broad as possible. To be forgiven, how reassuring. But to be healed and made right, how absolutely necessary. So let's include all of that in this term "righteousness", being set right, being justified. Obviously we are not set right by trying to make amends. We begin to be set right from the moment we respond to the good news with trust and a willingness to listen. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Galatians, part 3, recorded February, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/3MMGALATIANS66>*

Recommended Listening: Conversations About God session 13 "How God Treats His Erring Children" is available at: <http://pkp.cc/13MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Therefore he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,—as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,—that he might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan has striven so to confuse the minds of those whom he has deceived that they would put God out of their thoughts. He would then obliterate the divine image in man, and impress upon the soul his own likeness; he would imbue men with his own spirit, and make them captives according to his will. {RH, February 15, 1912 par. 2}

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}

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service. {GC 493.2}

Satan has ascribed to God all the evils to which the flesh is heir. He has represented him as a God who delights in the sufferings of his creatures, who is revengeful and implacable. It was Satan who originated the doctrine of eternal torment as a punishment for sin, because in this way he could lead men into infidelity and rebellion, distract souls, and dethrone the human reason. {RH, November 17, 1891 par. 5}

Heaven, looking down, and seeing the delusions into which men were led, knew that a divine Instructor must come to earth. Men in ignorance and moral darkness must have light, spiritual light; for the world knew not God, and he must be revealed to their understanding. Truth looked down from heaven, and saw not the reflection of her image; for dense clouds of moral darkness and gloom enveloped the world, and the Lord Jesus alone was able to roll back the clouds; for he was the light of the world. By his presence he could dissipate the gloomy shadow that Satan had cast between man and God. Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. Through the accumulated misrepresentations of the enemy, many were so deceived that they worshiped a false god, clothed with the attributes of the satanic character. {RH, November 17, 1891 par. 6}

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to manifest, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. {MH 419.4}

The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary. He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes. That men might have salvation he came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 6}

The Father was revealed in Christ as altogether a different being from that which Satan had represented him to be. . . .The men of his own nation, the leaders of the people, were so ensnared by the deceptions of Satan that the plan of redemption for a fallen race seemed to their minds indistinct and unexplainable. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 7}

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. {DA 22.1}

The reason why it seems so difficult to win souls for Christ, is that Satan is continually engaged in misrepresenting the character of God to the human mind. Christ came to reveal the Father to the world in his true character, that the false conceptions which men entertained of the divine character might be swept away. {RH, May 31, 1892 par. 9}

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. {RH, April 5, 1887 par. 10}

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour's life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and

through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings,—all are enlisted in behalf of man's redemption. {SC 21.2}

Many are the ways in which God is seeking to make Himself known to us and bring us into communion with Him. Nature speaks to our senses without ceasing. The open heart will be impressed with the love and glory of God as revealed through the works of His hands. The listening ear can hear and understand the communications of God through the things of nature. The green fields, the lofty trees, the buds and flowers, the passing cloud, the falling rain, the babbling brook, the glories of the heavens, speak to our hearts, and invite us to become acquainted with Him who made them all. {SC 85.1}

Satan in heaven had hated Christ for His position in the courts of God. He hated Him the more when he himself was dethroned. He hated Him who pledged Himself to redeem a race of sinners. Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss. {DA 49.1}

The heart of the human father yearns over his son. He looks into the face of his little child, and trembles at the thought of life's peril. He longs to shield his dear one from Satan's power, to hold him back from temptation and conflict. To meet a bitterer conflict and a more fearful risk, God gave His only-begotten Son, that the path of life might be made sure for our little ones. {DA 49.2}

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}

It is Satan's constant study to keep the minds of men occupied with those things which will prevent them from obtaining the knowledge of God. He seeks to keep them dwelling upon what will darken the understanding and discourage the soul. We are in a world of sin and corruption, surrounded by influences that tend to allure or dishearten the followers of Christ. The Saviour said: "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Many fix their eyes upon the terrible wickedness existing around them, the apostasy and weakness on every side, and they talk of these things until their hearts are filled with sadness and doubt. They keep uppermost before the mind the masterly working of the archdeceiver and dwell upon the discouraging features of their experience, while they seem to lose sight of the heavenly Father's power and His matchless love. All this is as Satan would have it. It is a mistake to think of the enemy of righteousness as clothed with so great power, when we dwell so little upon the love of God and His might. We must talk of the mightiness of Christ. We are utterly

powerless to rescue ourselves from the grasp of Satan; but God has appointed a way of escape. The Son of the Highest has strength to fight the battle for us, and “through Him that loved us” we may come off “more than conquerors.” {5T 740.2}

Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, “Love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts. {DA 641.3}

Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice,—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men. {SC 10.3}

Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, “Love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts. {DA 641.3}

The life of Christ was a life charged with a divine message of the love of God, and He longed intensely to impart this love to others in rich measure. Compassion beamed from His countenance, and His conduct was characterized by grace, humility, truth, and love. Every member of His church militant must manifest the same qualities, if He would join the church triumphant. {FE 179.3}

There is nothing, save the selfish heart of man, that lives unto itself. {DA 20.2}

The angels of glory find their joy in giving,—giving love and tireless watchcare to souls that are fallen and unholy. Heavenly beings woo the hearts of men; they bring to this dark world light from the courts above; by gentle and patient ministry they move upon the human spirit, to bring the lost into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know. {DA 21.1}