

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2014: *The Book of James*
Lesson 9 “One Lawgiver and Judge”

Read for this week’s study

James 4:11–17; Acts 17:11; Heb. 4:15, 16; Luke 12:13–21; Eccl. 2:15–19; Titus 2:14.

Memory Text

“There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?”
(James 4:12).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Judgment or Discernment?
- III. The Lawgiver Is Judge
- IV. Planning Ahead
- V. A Mist
- VI. Knowing *and Doing* What Is Good
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week’s lesson begins with a look at the law but then leads into some important words about a form of arrogance and self-dependence that we might not be aware of but which we are warned about as being sin, a violation of God’s law. In fact, we’re given here, in James, another way of looking at sin.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “At a deeper level, our view of the law depends on the degree of respect we have for the wisdom of the lawgivers and the fairness of their laws.” (Sabbath afternoon)
Why and how is our attitude toward the law connected with our picture of God?
3. What does it mean to be sitting in judgment of the law (4:11)? Any time when someone says (to themselves or others) that an action which would be wrong for ‘ordinary mortals’ is all right for them, using the rationale that they are somehow set apart and different, is puffed up with a gross form of pride and they are heading for a disaster. James say they are ‘judging the law’ instead of trying to do what the law says.
4. To take such a stand is not just foolish and arrogant; it is a thrust to usurp the very role of God himself (v. 12). This is blasphemy (John 10:33). There is only one lawgiver

and only one judge and that is God. However, we are supposed to show discernment: Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 6:1-5; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Philippians 1:9; Galatians 6:1; 1 John 4:1. How can we know if we have crossed the line from being spiritually discerning to being judgmental about God's law?

5. "As both Lawgiver and Savior, Christ is uniquely qualified to be our Judge.' Either reward or punishment, we will face only one or the other. What's your only hope of reward?" (Monday's lesson) What happens with our understanding of sin, salvation and God, if you look at them in terms of punishment and reward? How do you reconcile the idea that salvation is by grace yet we are judged by works?
6. Warning against the temptation to put yourself in the place of God, verses 13-16 highlight that danger in relation to one's future plans. One temptation is to assume that our plans will succeed because God is on our side! "The problem is not in what the people want to do but in their attitude about it. How can we be careful not to get caught up in that same attitude, even subconsciously?" (Tuesday's lesson)
7. Humility (applying what was said in verses 6 & 10) is teaching us to take each day (week, month, year, decade) as a gift from God and do all the planning that needs to be done. Some in medieval times added the letters DV (Latin for *Deo volente*, 'God willing') as a caution and reminder.
8. If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. (4:17) Not to do what you know you should do is actually to sin! It is not enough to avoid the obvious acts of sin. Once you learn the humility to accept God's royal law and to live by it, to accept God's sovereign involvement in our lives and to live within that, you will see more clearly the positive things to which you are being called. This may be major life decisions or small acts of kindness for a neighbor or a stranger. To ignore the call or pretend you have not heard the nudge is another act of pride, setting yourself up in the place of God.
9. "Jesus even compared doing God's will to eating: 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work' (*John 4:34, NKJV*). Just as there are limits to how much we can eat at one sitting, so there are limits to how much we can do. As we work for the Lord, we will be encouraged to do more and will pray for a greater willingness to be used in every possible way." (Thursday's lesson) If you are an overly sensitive soul, you might experience a continual anguish of heart-searching: am I being disobedient or doing enough? How do you make sure that you periodically do some serious heart-searching, yet do not put yourself in the middle of the picture, focusing all the attention on 'me and my state of mind and heart' rather than on God and serving your neighbor?

There is nothing as therapeutic for putting your own internal worries into perspective as helping someone else in their trouble!

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

This separation between the Old and the New Testaments is very regrettable. And personally I don't see any break whatsoever between the two. Christ came to say, "I haven't come to do away with the Old Testament; I've come to fulfill it, to explain it, to tell you what it's all about." And His explanations, almost all of them are quotations from the Old Testament. What it means to fulfill the law, that what God wants is love and faith and trust and trustworthiness, runs all through the Old Testament. We have never been under law in our relationship with God. We are under grace. The law has never been a way of being saved.

But that leads Paul to ask the question, "Why then the law at all?" If all God has ever wanted is that we be won back to trust Him, if the struggle for righteousness and salvation by works of law has always been fruitless for us sinners—why then the law? And in Galatians, you remember he says, "It was added because of transgressions, to be our custodian, our schoolmaster" the *King James* says, "our guardian to bring us to Christ." And once we've come to Christ if we stay with Him, we are no longer under this custodian. And as you remember, Jones and Waggoner said that our traditional view that it is the ceremonial law which terminates once we have come to Christ is wrong. That leads to the assumption that you can be righteous by works of obedience to the Ten Commandments but not to the ceremonial law. They said that the struggle for righteousness by works of obedience to any law is fruitless. And the law that was added to bring us to Christ includes every law that God ever gave. Everything was designed for our best good, to win us back to trust and faith and to restore the damage done.

And so you remember the struggle at the Minneapolis General Conference on this subject. It is spelled out in detail in *Selected Messages Book One*, and since we will do more when we get to Galatians, just a little of this now. Ellen White says:

I'm asked concerning this law in Galatians that was added because of transgressions to be our guardian to bring us to Christ. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of Ten Commandments.

Later she says after quoting the same verse, "[Galatians 3:24] the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law."

Just the opposite of the view in those days, because "The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

He is not doing away with the law. We sinners need it, it was added to help us and we are still sinners and we still need it. And someday when we don't need it, it will be because our lives are in perfect harmony with it; it isn't that we have done away with it. And then she goes on to say that:

An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, [that is, the purpose of God's laws, the Ten Commandments, the ceremonial law, the purpose of everything God has ever asked us to do,] An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and accept this, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren Waggoner and Jones. [And how the devil was delighted that we were unwilling to accept this explanation.] By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them." [Think of that, the Latter Rain held off because we wouldn't accept this truth.] The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, [we can't even finish the work until we are straight on this point.] The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted. . . .

That would suggest, then, that a correct understanding of God's use of law lies at the foundation of our understanding the light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory. Because a misunderstanding of God's use of law can lead one to support Satan's charges that God is arbitrary, unforgiving and severe. No wonder Ellen White said so much about understanding the place of the law in the good news. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 10, recorded December, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/19MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/20MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

I think the first thing to do there is to note what was nailed to the cross. The *King James* says "the handwriting or ordinances," and that's taken to be the Law. Now actually that word "handwriting," I'll pronounce it to show you I know it's there. *Cheirographon*. "Cheir" is hand and "graphon" is handwriting. That's a very technical term for an agreement, for a bond. It's the sentence that stood against us that was nailed to the cross. But to suggest that the Sabbath was nailed to the cross suggests that the Sabbath was against us, because it says that "when this handwriting was nailed to the cross, it is what was contrary to us, against us." He took it out of the way because it is bad. Now nowhere in the Bible is the Sabbath pictured as against us, contrary to us. It was given to help us. Did Jesus say, "The Sabbath was made for you, and in a moment I'm going to nail it to the cross because it's been against you?"

He says it's *for* you. So they've been nailing the wrong thing to the cross. Rather, when He died He took care of the sin problem. He took care of the sentence, or whatever word you want to use there. "Therefore let no one judge you in these legal matters."

And I think when it says “Don’t let anyone judge you with respect to the Sabbath, either,” He said, “You’re right. Don’t you go around condemning people who disagree with you on the Sabbath.”

Sometimes we say, “That’s ceremonial sabbaths. Don’t criticize people when they disagree on the ceremonial. But when they disagree with you on the seventh day, you can go condemn them all you want to.”

You can’t condemn anybody for anything. That’s not our business. The same as in Romans 14. Paul says, “One man esteems all days alike. Another man esteems one day above another.” And I’m about to come in and imprison some of you who don’t agree with me? No! He says, “Let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind. And who are you to criticize another?” I include the seventh-day Sabbath in that. We are in *no* position *ever* to criticize or condemn anybody else who disagrees over this matter of the Sabbath. No. Paul says, “We shall each give account of ourselves to God.”

So going back to Colossians, something that was *against* us was nailed to the cross. And once we understand how God has handled this sin, distrust, rebellion problem, then we don’t go around condemning other people. But in my own heart I’m very much persuaded that the Sabbath is for me. I wouldn’t want to waste it. I hope I can make it look good to other people so they won’t waste it. And we present it as a gift, not an obligation. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, session 10, “The Reminder of the Evidence” recorded March, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/10MMCAG>

You remember in John 3 and John 12 Jesus says, “I don’t condemn anybody. I didn’t come to judge you. Oh there is something that will judge you in the last day. I won’t be the one. The truth that I brought to you, it will judge you. If you like the truth, if you like the message about healing and salvation, and you trust me enough to accept it and follow it, all will be well. If you reject the light you reject the truth and the plan of healing. I won’t condemn you then, but you will die, and I’ll grieve as I give you up for the last time.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 14, recorded January, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/27MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/28MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Now Paul goes on to say, “It’s not the fault of the law that I’m a sinner. We know [verse 14] that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal sold under sin. I don’t even understand my own actions, for I do not do what I want, [see, he’s admitted that the law describes the way he would like to live.] But I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good.

[That's logical, isn't it?] So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me." There he is splitting people up again, but it's just for illustration. You really can't chop a person up, can you, and say, "I'm not responsible, sin did it, I didn't." Have you ever had one of your children stand in front of you and say, "Daddy, it's not my fault, the devil made me do it." Of course Adam said, "Eve made me do it." We can't blame anybody else—if we did it, we did it.

But Paul is trying to illustrate the conflict that exists, as it were, within a person who really agrees that what the law describes is the ideal. He would *love* to live that way and yet finds himself violating, being unloving, rebellious, irritable. But he says at least, "If I do what I do not want I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it but sin which dwells within me, for I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh." And there is his contrast between the new spiritual babe and the old man that he calls the flesh.

"I can *will* what is right but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil that I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want it is no longer I that do it, because I don't want to do it, but sin which dwells within me. So I find it to be a law, a principal, that when I want to do right evil lies close at hand." And what Christian can't agree how true that is! "For I delight in the law of God, I really do," he says, and he has already expressed it in verses preceding. And this is the man who wrote 1 Corinthians 13 and said that that kind of love is the fulfilling of the law. The most beautiful description of love in the whole Bible is written by this man who struggled. He does delight in the law of God. What kind of a man could write 1 Corinthians 13?

He says, "I delight in that, in the law of God, in my inmost self. But I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind." Now this is not Ten Commandments here, these are principals and forces at work, "making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members."

He hasn't come up with a new picture here. Isn't this the new man and the old man struggling? The convictions of the new man who gladly buried his old man in baptism and said, "I would like now to live a better life. I would like to live as Christ lived." But almost immediately one succumbs to temptation and disgrace. This happens so often in life that finally one might cry as Paul did, "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this" how do you translate this? My version says "body of death." I like "doomed body", but there are many meanings. He answers, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin."

When is this struggle? Is it before a man is converted? And when he is converted and justified, he from then on has peace not only with God, but with himself? Or is this the struggle that continues after one is converted—the struggle surely every Christian has experienced? Or is it perhaps the struggle of a person in the experience of conversion, an experience that might be

repeated every time one comes face to face with new truth, and you have to make up your mind again. Am I willing to do it or not? What have you decided? You know how this has been debated through the years. In the *Commentary* there are a couple of pages in which I tried to express the different interpretations that have been placed, and that I believe could be placed on this passage. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 7, recorded November, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/13MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/14MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Someone “came between” because of the emergency. It’s not ideal. God would like to deal directly with us, face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. But because we don’t know God, and we’ve been afraid, God has given us these pictures. He’s given us a picture even of Jesus being our Judge. Doesn’t Jesus deal with this? He says, “You’re all comforted that I’m going to be your Judge. Because you were scared My Father was going to judge you, isn’t that right?” They said, “Oh, we’re so relieved You’re going to be our Judge.” Is that because the Father is not as gracious and forgiving as the Son, that we say we’re glad the Son’s going to be our Judge? So before He went back to Heaven, He said, “I’ve got to clear that up, too. Actually, if you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father. You would receive just as gracious judgment from My Father as from Me. But I’d like to take you a step further. I’m not going to judge you anyway.” “Oh, there’ll be something that will judge you. The truth will judge you. The truth about My Father in the Great Controversy. The truth about the kind of person He is and what He wants of His children, and the way He governs the universe. That’s the truth. If you have loved that truth and it has led you to repentance and faith and trust, you will have stood humbly in Our Presence and said, ‘What must I do to be saved and healed?’ and We will have been able to save and heal you, and all will be well. But if you have turned down this truth about My Father and about Me, you will not know us; you will not be Our friends; you will not trust Us enough to listen; We will not be able to heal you; and you will perish and We will cry.” And that’s the judgment. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Leviticus, recorded October, 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/5MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/6MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

There is in the Saviour’s words another lesson, a lesson of wonderful forbearance and tender love. As the tares have their roots closely intertwined with those of the good grain, so false

brethren in the church may be closely linked with true disciples. The real character of these pretended believers is not fully manifested. Were they to be separated from the church, others might be caused to stumble, who but for this would have remained steadfast. {COL 72.1}

The teaching of this parable is illustrated in God's own dealing with men and angels. Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not fully discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy Satan. Had He done so, the holy angels would not have perceived the justice and love of God. A doubt of God's goodness would have been as evil seed that would yield the bitter fruit of sin and woe. Therefore the author of evil was spared, fully to develop his character. Through long ages God has borne the anguish of beholding the work of evil, He has given the infinite Gift of Calvary, rather than leave any to be deceived by the misrepresentations of the wicked one; for the tares could not be plucked up without danger of uprooting the precious grain. And shall we not be as forbearing toward our fellow men as the Lord of heaven and earth is toward Satan? {COL 72.2}

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

The effort to earn salvation by one's own works inevitably leads men to pile up human exactions as a barrier against sin. For, seeing that they fail to keep the law, they will devise rules and regulations of their own to force themselves to obey. All this turns the mind away from God to self. His love dies out of the heart, and with it perishes love for his fellow men. A system of human invention, with its multitudinous exactions, will lead its advocates to judge all who come short of the prescribed human standard. The atmosphere of selfish and narrow criticism stifles the noble and generous emotions, and causes men to become self-centered judges and petty spies. {MB 123.1}

The Pharisees were of this class. They came forth from their religious services, not humbled with a sense of their own weakness, not grateful for the great privileges that God had given them. They came forth filled with spiritual pride, and their theme was, "Myself, my feelings, my knowledge, my ways." Their own attainments became the standard by which they judged others. Putting on the robes of self-dignity, they mounted the judgment seat to criticize and condemn. {MB 123.2}

The people partook largely of the same spirit, intruding upon the province of conscience and judging one another in matters that lay between the soul and God. It was in reference to this spirit and practice that Jesus said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." That is, do not set yourself up as a standard. Do not make your opinions, your views of duty, your interpretations of Scripture, a criterion for others and in your heart condemn them if they do not come up to

your ideal. Do not criticize others, conjecturing as to their motives and passing judgment upon them. {MB 123.3}

“God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.” John 3:17. Looking upon men in their suffering and degradation, Christ perceived ground for hope where appeared only despair and ruin. Wherever there existed a sense of need, there He saw opportunity for uplifting. Souls tempted, defeated, feeling themselves lost, ready to perish, He met, not with denunciation, but with blessing. {Ed 79.2}

The Son of God came to the world as a restorer. He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Every word He uttered was spirit and life. He spoke with authority, conscious of His power to bless humanity, and deliver the captives bound by Satan; conscious also that by His presence He could bring to the world fullness of joy. He longed to help every oppressed and suffering member of the human family, and show that it was His prerogative to bless, not to condemn. {LHU 37.2}

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 11 (1892). {1MCP 250.1}

Having undertaken the work of man’s redemption, the Father would spare nothing, however dear, which was essential for the completion of His work. He would make opportunities for men; He would pour upon them His blessings; He would heap favor upon favor, gift upon gift, until the whole treasury of heaven was open to those whom He came to save. Having collected all the riches of the universe, and laid open all the resources of His divine nature, God gave them all for the use of man. They were His free gift. What an ocean of love is circulating, like a divine atmosphere, around the world! What manner of love is this, that the eternal God should adopt human nature in the person of His Son, and carry the same into the highest heaven! {TMK 19.2}

All the heavenly intelligences were watching with intense interest the warfare that was going on upon the earth—the earth that Satan claimed as his dominion. Every moment was big with eternal realities. How would the conflict end? The angels looked for the justice of God to be revealed, His anger to be aroused against the prince of darkness and his sympathizers. But lo, mercy prevailed. When the Son of God might have come to the world to condemn, He came as righteousness and peace, to save not merely the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but all the world—every son and daughter of Adam who would believe on Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. What an exhibition of the love of Jehovah! This is love without a parallel. {TMK 19.3}