

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2014: *The Book of James*
Lesson 13 “The Everlasting Gospel”

Read for this week’s study

Heb. 4:2; Ps. 130:3, 4; Luke 15:11–32; Rom. 3:24–26; Heb. 10:1–4; Rev. 14:12.

Memory Text

“The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you’” (Jeremiah 31:3, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Gospel in the Old Testament
- III. The Gospel Made Flesh
- IV. The Gospel in Paul
- V. The “New” Covenant
- VI. The Climax of the Gospel
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Daniel Duda

1. “The gospel is the foundation of our last-day commission to preach ‘the everlasting gospel . . . to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people’ (*Revelation 14:6*). In this final week, we will focus on basic questions regarding ‘the everlasting gospel,’ which is salvation by faith, a belief taught all through the Bible, including James. By finishing the quarter with a look at how the gospel appears in the Bible, we can better see how James fits this larger picture of God’s plan of redemption.” (Sabbath afternoon) The lesson’s aim says that by the end of the quarter we need to see “the larger picture of God’s plan of redemption”.
2. “For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.” (*Hebrews 4:2, NIV 1984*) There is no hint [in this text] that there was any difference in the message itself. The problem, therefore, was not with *the message* but with the way it was *heard*. Today, too, different people can hear the same gospel message very differently. How crucial, then, that we surrender ourselves in utter faith to the teaching of the Word so that when the gospel is preached, we hear it correctly.” (Sunday’s lesson) How is surrender the solution for a right hearing and

- understanding of the gospel? Was Wesley more surrendered if he understood the gospel differently than Luther?
3. What is the Old Testament understanding of the 'gospel'? (Genesis 3:15; Exodus 19:4-6; Psalm 32:1-5; 130:3, 4; Isaiah 53:4-11; Jeremiah 31:31-34) How is it connected with God's story?
 4. "In short, forgiveness and the new birth are a package: justification *and* sanctification represent God's solution to the sin problem." (Sunday's lesson) Does it mean that if one cannot explain justification and sanctification, we do not understand God's solution to the sin problem? How does the fact that we can only think in models of interpretation help us?
 5. Monday's lesson gives the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) and the Pharisee and tax collector (Luke 18:9-17) as illustrations of the gospel. How do you understand these parables? How do they enlarge the Old Testament picture of God?
 6. How does the second story function in Luke's Gospel? In Luke 18:1-14, there are two parables: stories about the persistent widow and the tax collector. Both are about vindication: If even a rotten judge can be persuaded to do the right thing by someone who pesters him day and night, then of course God, who is Justice personified and who cares passionately about people will vindicate them, will see that justice is done. In the second parable, the Pharisee in the temple turned religion into a contest. In his "prayer" he tells God all about his own good points, thus exalting himself by denouncing the tax collector. Jesus reveals that the divine judge sees things differently. God knows who His true people are and that recognition does not depend on what their enemies think (17:20-37) or on particular observance of the minutia of the Jewish law (18:9-14). God sees genuine repentance, change of heart and casting oneself on the mercies of God and will ultimately vindicate all His people.
 7. "Jesus suffers as the real Passover Lamb, the death that should have been ours (*Matthew 26:28, NASB; compare Mark 10:45*). Thus, salvation is free to us because He, Jesus, paid the full price for it." (Monday's lesson) What are the advantages and disadvantages of seeing the process of salvation as payment for sins? In what sense did Jesus "pay" for our sins on the cross? While it is certainly profitable to know that Jesus paid the full price of sin (and nothing remains outstanding), does this approach deal with the larger issues that have been raised in God's universe-wide family?
 8. "Like many of his countrymen, Paul thought he was in good spiritual standing. But then he saw Jesus as 'the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me' (*Galatians 2:20, NASB*). Suddenly he saw himself not saved, but lost; not God's servant, but God's enemy; not righteous, but the chief of sinners. The scales fell from his eyes, in other words, in his reading of the Old Testament. God's revelation, to him personally and through the Scriptures, transformed his heart and changed his life forever." (Tuesday's lesson) How did Paul's reading of the Old Testament change after his conversion? How did Paul understand the gospel? Was it about how to get to Heaven once your sins are forgiven?

9. “Through Christ we have *redemption* (God has bought us back by paying for our sins), *justification* (we are cleared of guilt and cleansed by grace), and *forgiveness* (God accepts us back and ‘forgets’ our past sins). Amazingly, God, through the sacrifice of Christ, proves Himself to be just in justifying the ungodly who have put their faith in Jesus.” (Monday’s lesson) How does this deal with the objective and subjective aspects of salvation?
10. What is ‘new’ about the New Covenant? “Without faith, bringing [Old Testament] animal sacrifices was almost like making payment for sins.” (Wednesday’s lesson) Is it the nature of the blood (animals’ versus Christ’s blood) that makes the ‘new covenant’ better (Hebrews 8:1.2.6)?
11. “Gazing at Jesus instead, who ‘endured the cross, despising the shame,’ and ‘who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself’ (*Hebrews 12:2, 3, NKJV*) reveals the immeasurable cost of sin and the good news that the cost has been paid by Someone else ‘through the blood of the everlasting covenant’ (*13:20, NKJV*).” (Wednesday’s lesson) Why is it so important to emphasize that the cost has been paid? Is that the good news?
12. “This ‘new’ covenant transforms how we look at everything, such as the commandment to love one another.” (Wednesday’s lesson) Surely, but is the most important aspect of salvation to transform how we view our duty or our picture of God?
13. Thursday’s lesson quotes Revelation 10:7 as the climax of the gospel. “The gospel is the same from Genesis to Revelation. The law is the same. The covenant is the same. Jesus, Paul, and James all affirm that the gospel is the same one believed by Abraham (*John 8:56, Romans 4:13, James 2:21–23*). Some have difficulty with this assertion only because they define the gospel more narrowly than Scripture.” (Thursday’s lesson) Obviously, what is needed is a broader, wider way of seeing the gospel. What would that be? What makes God proudly announce at the end of ages looking at his sons and daughters, “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” (Revelation 14:12)?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

The good news is that God is not the kind of person Satan has made Him out to be: arbitrary, unforgiving and severe. On the contrary, He is the kind of person His own son made Him out to be. For living the life that He did, and treating sinners with such incredible respect and grace He said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” And the issue in the great controversy is over this, “What is God like?” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Galatians, part 1, 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/1MMGALATIANS66>*

One of the Lord's most memorable parables was about atonement—in the original sense of that word. Jesus told about a son who wasted his life and his share of his father's estate in riotous self-indulgence. Now penniless and starving, he found employment looking after swine.

As he languished there in the pigsty, he began to remember how good it had been at home and wondered if there might be any way to persuade his offended father to let him come back.

His thoughts might have been very different had he known that his father had long been looking down the road, hoping to catch a glimpse of his son coming home. Unfortunately, the son didn't know his father very well.

He began to think of ways to persuade his father to let him in when he arrived at the door. His father could well be very angry with him. Perhaps he should look for his mother first, and she could help persuade his father to forgive and let him have another chance.

And then there was all that money he'd wasted. He would have to find some way to make amends.

"I know what I'll do," the son decided. "I'll ask him to treat me as one of his hired servants." With that, he started out on his way home, practicing his speech as he went.

Had he looked up, he might have noticed his father still watching for him down that road. "But while he was still a long way off his father saw him, and his heart went out to him; he ran to meet him, flung his arms round him, and kissed him.

"The son said, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you; I am no longer fit to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Fetch a robe, the best we have, and put it on him . . . and let us celebrate with a feast. For this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.'" (Luke 15:20-24, REB)

At last the son had learned the truth about his father. He didn't even have to finish that speech. His father had forgiven him long before. But he had to come home to find that out. Now his father's forgiveness led him to real repentance.

As the prodigal stood there in his father's arms, he began to experience the original meaning of atonement.

Servants understand atonement as making amends.

Friends understand atonement as making friends. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 166-68. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter12.html>

That ring meant that he had full and equal authority in the family, which was very offensive to the older brother. For the older brother was quite a legalist, who thought that the longer you served, the more you should be rewarded. And the father said, "Haven't you enjoyed being with me all this time?" Suggesting that the greatest reward we ever have is to be with our heavenly Father, if we really like Him.

Did the father discuss the legal standing of his son at all? What's the only thing the prodigal son had to do to be saved? Just come home. That's absolutely all. Of course, if he hadn't come, what could the father do? Even though he didn't know his father that well, he knew enough to start home. And that's why I think many of us might start home from the foot of Sinai, or lots of places in between. All that counts is, be sure we start home.

And the boy came home, and found the truth about his father. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Luke, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/55MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/56MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Do any of you abstain from murder only because of the commandment that says "Thou shalt not commit murder"? If that commandment were not there, would you go right out and murder your mother-in-law? Would you do this? The only reason why you don't kill her is there's a commandment that says "thou shalt not", and you know what happens if you break the commandments and you don't want it to happen to you. And so the only reason why you don't kill that good lady is that God says you shouldn't and you don't want to displease Him. You could even say, "I love Him and want to please Him. I mean, I don't see anything wrong with killing my mother-in-law, but it upsets *Him*. And I don't want to displease Him; He's been so kind to me". If you were the mother-in-law, would you feel very secure, living next door to you for the rest of eternity, knowing that a lapse of memory and you could get killed by this son-in-law? There's no security in the statement "Thou shall not commit murder." It's not until it's written in our hearts, and the heart is where a man does his thinking, and it becomes *intelligent obedience*, the obedience of the agreement of free people, that it really has power. But then you don't need to write it on tables of stone. God says, "In the beginning I didn't want to write it on tables of stone, I wanted to write in on your hearts." And Jeremiah talks about it. He says, "It's been on the stone too long. It's time it was written on your heart. That's the new covenant; that it won't be on stone any longer, to be pinned to the wall perhaps, and memorized and repeated. But I want it where you do your thinking. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. And that's where I'd like my law." He says, "I finally succeeded with Paul," and he says, "I delight in the law in my inner man. I love it. It used to make me mad, but now," he says, "I know it's the only way to live." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation,

Galatians, part 4, 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/4MMGALATIANS66>*

As a matter of fact, as you think the commandments through. Do you remember when we were in Exodus, we considered this. What an awful moment in God's family, when He had to gather His children around and say, "I want all the murdering and the hating to stop. And I want all the stealing, and the cheating, and the lying, and the immorality to stop. Please!" That means it was going on. There was a day when God didn't have to do that, and there's a day coming when He won't have to do it again. You remember the new covenant? It'll all be written in our hearts, and we'll do what's right because it is right. God will not have to lecture us a million years down the line and say, "I want all the murdering up here in Heaven to stop." We won't have hated a soul for a million years. We'll be doing what's right because it is right. Now if you heard your children behind the door saying, "Let's do what our folks want. I mean, you'll have to admit that everything they've asked us to do makes such good sense, we ought to want to do it anyway." And you get the impression that even after you're dead and gone, your children will go on doing what's right because it is right. Because now they're maturing, and they've come to see.

Now, we're not that perfect as parents, so this doesn't quite work. But let's imagine it, for the moment. With God it does. When we say, "God, the longer I live the more I find that everything You've ever asked me to do makes such good sense, I ought to want to do it anyway. And now I tell You I do." Leading to the day when, sometime, we'll stand in the presence of God and say, "God, I agree with You. And I am pleased to do all these things that I used to do just because You told me to. I agree with You." And God can say, "At last you're free. You've learned the truth, and the truth set you free." And now the law is written in our hearts and we do what's right because it is right, and not because we're told to. But until we've reached that point, we need the law, and we need reward, and we need threats. We need all those things, don't we? But isn't that a condescension to our lawlessness and our immaturity and our ignorance?

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

Hopefully we Adventists have not come up with a new version of the gospel or we're out. It had better be the everlasting good news. If the gospel is the good news about God, the kind of person He is; He has always been that kind of person, He still is, and He always will be. If the good news is the truth about God then that truly qualifies as the everlasting good news. And the fact that God is this kind of a God will be the basis of our faith and freedom for eternity. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Revelation,

recorded August, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/79MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/80MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

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}

By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." John 3:16. {DA 25.3}

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 reveal, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. . . . {8T 265.5}

Christ revealed all of God that sinful human beings could bear without being destroyed. He is the divine Teacher, the Enlightener. Had God thought us in need of revelations other than those made through Christ and in His written word, He would have given them. {8T 266.1}

Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man. {8T 286.4}

Through Christ's redeeming work the government of God stands justified. The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love. Satan's charges are refuted, and his character unveiled. Rebellion can never again arise. Sin can never again enter the universe. Through eternal ages all are secure from apostasy. By love's self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union. {DA 26.2}

Looking upon man, God saw his desperate rebellion, and He devised a remedy. Christ was His gift to the world for man's reconciliation. The Son of God was appointed to come to this earth

to take humanity and by His own example to be a great educating power among men. His experience in man's behalf was to enable men to resist Satan's power. He came to mold character and to give mental power, to shed abroad the beams of true education, that the true aim of life might not be lost sight of. The sons of men had had a practical knowledge of evil; Christ came to the world to show them that He had planted for them the tree of life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. {CT 33.3}

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. {PP 68.2}

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. . . . But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. {DA 19.2}

Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. {ST, December 22, 1914 par. 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. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 6}

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of

God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, "I have manifested thy name." "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 9}

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}

God's work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power, to meet the wants of men in the different ages. Beginning with the first gospel promise, and coming down through the patriarchal and Jewish ages, and even to the present time, there has been a gradual unfolding of the purposes of God in the plan of redemption. The Saviour typified in the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law is the very same that is revealed in the gospel. The clouds that enveloped His divine form have rolled back; the mists and shades have disappeared; and Jesus, the world's Redeemer, stands revealed. He who proclaimed the law from Sinai, and delivered to Moses the precepts of the ritual law, is the same that spoke the Sermon on the Mount. The great principles of love to God, which He set forth as the foundation of the law and the prophets, are only a reiteration of what He had spoken through Moses to the Hebrew people: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Leviticus 19:18. The teacher is the same in both dispensations. God's claims are the same. The principles of His government are the same. For all proceed from Him "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1:17. {PP 373.2}

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters (Letter 406, 1906). {6BC 1074.2}

But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, "I will

put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” “He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 5:3; 2:4. Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience. {SC 60.2}

And the effort to bless others will react in blessings upon ourselves. This was the purpose of God in giving us a part to act in the plan of redemption. He has granted men the privilege of becoming partakers of the divine nature and, in their turn, of diffusing blessings to their fellow men. This is the highest honor, the greatest joy, that it is possible for God to bestow upon men. Those who thus become participants in labors of love are brought nearest to their Creator. {SC 79.1}

God might have committed the message of the gospel, and all the work of loving ministry, to the heavenly angels. He might have employed other means for accomplishing His purpose. But in His infinite love He chose to make us co-workers with Himself, with Christ and the angels, that we might share the blessing, the joy, the spiritual uplifting, which results from this unselfish ministry. {SC 79.2}