

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2015: *The Book of Luke*
Lesson 11 “The Kingdom of God”

Read for this week’s study

Luke 11:2; Luke 1:32, 33; 18:16–30; Luke 17:23, 24; Rev. 21:1–3; Luke 21:34–36.

Memory Text

“They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Characteristics of the Kingdom of God: Part 1
- III. Characteristics of the Kingdom of God: Part 2
- IV. The Kingdom of God: Already, Not Yet
- V. The Kingdom and the Second Coming of Christ
- VI. Witnesses
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Daniel Duda

1. “The kingdom of God is a major theme and a significant priority in the teachings of Jesus. The phrase occurs nearly 50 times in Matthew, 16 times in Mark, about 40 times in Luke, and three times in John. (...) The kingdom of God is an expression of what God had done in history for the human race as He deals with the problem of sin and brings the great controversy with Satan to an ultimate and decisive end. (...) This week we’ll focus on this theme, especially as it appears in Luke.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Why is the idea of God’ kingdom so crucial in the ministry and teaching of Jesus? Judging from the popular understanding of the gospel or fundamental beliefs, it does not play much prominence. Yet, if the whole ministry of Jesus can be summarized into one slogan, this would be it. What happens within history that skews our understanding of Jesus’ ministry and teaching?
3. “To say that this kingdom is God’s is not just saying the obvious but is rather affirming that the kingdom of God is neither a philosophic notion nor an ethical edifice. It is not a social gospel proclaiming bread and water for the hungry or equality and justice for the politically oppressed. It transcends all human goodness

and moral action and finds its locus in the sovereign activity of God in the incarnate Son, who came preaching the good news of the kingdom (Luke 4:42–44, Matthew 4:23–25).” (Sunday’s lesson) So what is the kingdom of God and why is it so significant?

4. How can we live in a way that reflects the reality of the kingdom of God? Most importantly, how can we reflect that reality in our own lives? What should be different about how we, as citizens of God’s kingdom, live now? (Sunday’s lesson)
5. “Entry into the kingdom of God is not dependent on one’s status or position, or one’s riches or the lack thereof. Luke, along with other Gospel writers, points out that one must come to Jesus with an attitude of uncompromised surrender, absolute dependency, and childlike trust; these are traits of those who have entered the kingdom of God. They must be willing to give up everything, if need be; for whatever they would not want to give up would be something that, in a sense, not only competes with Jesus but, in fact, wins. Jesus, and His claim on our life, on every aspect of our life, takes top priority.” (Monday’s lesson) It is interesting that the lesson speaks so much about how to get into the kingdom (entry requirements) and little (if at all) about the King, what kind of person He is. Why was it that the “pious” people of the day had a problem with Jesus, yet sinners welcomed His news about the coming kingdom?
6. “Jesus affirmed that through Him that day Isaiah’s Messianic prophecy of the kingdom and *its redeeming ministry had been inaugurated*. (...) Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom would come, Jesus answered them that the ‘kingdom of God is within you’ (Luke 17:21, NKJV). Other translations suggest that the kingdom is in your midst. That is to say, with the arrival of Jesus, the kingdom has already come, with its components to include healing the sick (Luke 9:11), preaching of the gospel (Luke 4:16–19), forgiving sins (Luke 7:48–50; 19:9, 10), and crushing the forces of evil (Luke 11:20). Thus, Jesus made the kingdom a present reality within the individual, transforming the person to be like Him.” (Tuesday’s lesson)
7. Why is the correct understanding of the present and future reality of Christ’s kingdom so crucial? What are the consequences of an unbalanced emphasis on either aspect?
8. “Jesus and the rest of the New Testament link that historical moment when the faithful will inherit the kingdom of glory to the second coming of Christ. The second coming of Christ is the final culmination of the good news that Jesus came to proclaim when He came the first time.” (Wednesday’s lesson) Why is the future dimension of God’s kingdom so important? Why is the “Day of the Lord” as a wider concept more useful than simply the “Second coming of Christ”? What is involved in the Day of the Lord?
9. The lesson ends with Acts 1:1-8 and being witnesses. What would any one of us have done if *WE* had been resurrected from the dead and vindicated as a Messiah? Empty all the sick beds in Israel? Not so for Jesus, it seems. Throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple to prove his divinity? No, He already faced this one before. Embark on

a journey to Rome to unseat Caesar as Lord of the world? No, that post was His anyway. The priority of Jesus was different and very striking. He spent much of those priceless forty days in Bible teaching, explaining the Scriptures to His followers, and making sure they understood the biblical storyline.

10. “These faithful followers of Jesus still had some big misconceptions about the nature of Christ’s work. And yet, the Lord was using them anyway. What message might there be for us about not needing to fully understand everything in order to still be used by God?” (Thursday’s lesson) How important is our understanding in the bigger scheme of things?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Because that means we’re willing to stand humbly in the presence of our God and ask “What must I do to be well, to be saved?” And He says, “You need a new heart and a right spirit.” And then we say, “Well then I’d be very happy to have one. Please give me one soon.” Hosea understood what God wanted: To have peace in the universe once again. And his whole book is so magnificent. Look at Hosea 6:6, 7:

It is true love that I have wanted, not sacrifice; the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings [and as you know about Hebrew parallelism, the second line simply reaffirms or enlarges the point in the first line. That shows that true knowledge of God, and love for God mean the same thing. That’s what He wants]. But they, like Adam have broken their agreement; again and again they have played me false. (Phillips)

They cheated. How much security can you have in the family when some of the children are playing false? Then you remember what Jesus said had to happen to Nicodemus before he would be safe to save. John 3:3: “Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’” (RSV)

“Born again” means a new heart and a right spirit. It’s exactly what David said in the fifty-first Psalm. Do you notice that Jesus didn’t say, “Unless you be forgiven?” “Except you be justified?” “Unless you have your legal standing adjusted, you cannot enter the kingdom”? He said, “Unless you be changed and become a trustworthy person, a teachable member of my family, you will not be safe to admit to the hereafter.”

Now how can one tell if he’s really been reborn, and has genuine trust and faith and all is well? This is a question which was much debated in early days, and is still debated to this day. It was much debated during the Reformation. And a leader in the early Christian church wrote a whole book to clear it up, a book that has troubled many saints: The book of James. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3, “All God Asks Is Trust” recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>*

Of all the things that must happen before Jesus comes, he especially emphasized one. “This Good News about the Kingdom will be preached through all the world for a witness to all mankind; and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14, GNT). You can trust God to wait until everyone has had a chance to make an enlightened choice. You can trust him not to ask anyone to pass through the final time of trouble without an opportunity to prepare.

God has always waited patiently for his children to make up their minds. He waited for centuries for the people of Israel to respond to the invitations and warnings of the prophetic messengers. Not until they had resisted so long that they were beyond even the Creator’s power to restore did God reluctantly give them up.

After the Israelites were taken off into Babylonian captivity, the writer of 2 Chronicles explained why God could no longer protect them: “The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people;... but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, till the wrath of the Lord rose against the people, till there was no remedy” (36:15, 16). {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 139. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-13>

Further Study with Ellen White

The works of Christ not only declared Him to be the Messiah, but showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established. To John was opened the same truth that had come to Elijah in the desert, when “a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire:” and after the fire, God spoke to the prophet by a still, small voice. 1 Kings 19:11, 12. So Jesus was to do His work, not by the overturning of thrones and kingdoms, not with pomp and outward display, but through speaking to the hearts of men by a life of mercy and self-sacrifice. {MH 36.1}

The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. It comes through the gentleness of the inspiration of His word, through the inward working of His Spirit, the fellowship of the soul with Him who is its life. The greatest manifestation of its power is seen in human nature brought to the perfection of the character of Christ. {MH 36.2}

This work of Christ was to confirm the beings of other worlds in their innocency 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. {RH, January 11, 1881 par. 3}

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}

The Teacher from heaven, no less a personage than the Son of God, came to earth to reveal the character of the Father to men, that they might worship him in spirit and in truth. Christ revealed to men the fact that the strictest adherence to ceremony and form would not save them; for the kingdom of God was spiritual in its nature. Christ came to the world to sow it with truth. He held the keys to all the treasures of wisdom, and was able to open doors to science, and to reveal undiscovered stores of knowledge, were it essential to salvation. He presented to men that which was exactly contrary to the representations of the enemy in regard to the character of God, and sought to impress upon men the paternal love of the Father, who “so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” He urged upon men the necessity of prayer, repentance, confession, and the abandonment of sin. He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love, not only those who loved them, but those who hated them, who treated them despitefully. In this he was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth. Those who accepted his teaching were under the guardian care of angels, who were commissioned to strengthen, to enlighten, that the truth might renew and sanctify the soul. {RH, November 17, 1891 par. 7}

Through creation and redemption, through nature and through Christ, the glories of the divine character are revealed. By the marvelous display of his love in giving “his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” the character of God is revealed to the intelligences of the universe. Through Christ our Heavenly Father is made known as the God of love. {ST, February 13, 1893 par. 5}

The only hope for the fallen race was found in becoming reconciled to God. Satan had so misrepresented God that man had no true conception of the divine character. Christ came to the world, and in carrying out the plan of salvation, revealed the fact that “God is love.” {ST, February 13, 1893 par. 9}

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}

Courage, fortitude, faith, and implicit trust in God's power to save are needed. These heavenly graces do not come in a moment; they are acquired by the experience of years. But every sincere and earnest seeker will become a partaker of the divine nature. His soul will be filled with intense longing to know the fullness of that love which passes knowledge. As he advances in the divine life, he will be better able to grasp the elevated, ennobling truths of the Word of God, until, by beholding, he becomes changed, and is enabled to reflect the likeness of his Redeemer. {FLB 120.4}

When leaven is introduced into meal, it penetrates to every part, till an entire change takes place. So it is with the work of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart. The truth received and believed introduces new rules, new principles of action into the life. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ. Those who thus receive the truth depend on Christ, and they receive more and still more strength, and greater and still greater light. Daily they expel from their hearts vanity, selfishness, self-righteousness. {TDG 48.2}

A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love—this is the subject for the soul's contemplation. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness. {SC 70.2}

Men are changed in accordance with what they contemplate. If commonplace thoughts and affairs take up the attention, the man will be commonplace. If he is too negligent to obtain anything but a superficial understanding of truth, he will not receive the rich blessings that God would be pleased to bestow upon him. It is the law of the mind that it will narrow or expand to the dimensions of the things with which it becomes familiar. {CT 460.3}

It is the will of God that each professing Christian shall perfect a character after the divine similitude. By studying the character of Christ revealed in the Bible, by practicing His virtues, the believer will be changed into the same likeness of goodness and mercy. {CT 249.1}

He who places himself unreservedly under the guidance of the Spirit of God, will find that his mind expands and develops. He obtains an education in the service of God which is not one-sided and deficient, developing a one-sided character, but one which results in symmetry and completeness. {1SM 338.2}