

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Third Quarter 2015: *Missionaries*
Lesson 13 “Must *the Whole World Hear?*”

Read for this week’s study

Acts 4:12; Psalm 87:4–6; John 10:16; Romans 2:12–16; John 14:6; Romans 1:18.

Memory Text

“Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen” (Romans 16:25–27, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. No Other Name Under Heaven
- III. How Much Must One Know?
- IV. Universalism and Pluralism
- V. Sinners in Need of Grace
- VI. The Mission Call
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. While we are most familiar with the Great Commission statement of Matthew 28:18-20, there are actually five “Great Commission” statements in the gospels and Acts (see also Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:5-8). What do all five of these statements have in common? What do the less-well-known statements add to Matthew 28? (Introduction)
2. Must the whole world hear the gospel in order to be saved? How will God deal with the billions of people throughout history who have not known or even heard about Him? Is there salvation outside of a personal knowledge of Jesus? If people can be saved without having heard the gospel, what is the point of risking life and limb in order to spread it to them? (Sabbath Afternoon)
3. Do Seventh-day Adventists believe that there is salvation outside the Christian faith? Do they believe that other Christians can be saved apart from keeping the Sabbath?

Find the SDA Fundamental Beliefs online and see what they have to say on this subject. (Sunday's lesson)

4. If the atonement involves an understanding of God's character, can a person be "saved" (come into a trusting relationship with God) without a personal knowledge of Jesus? Read Acts 4:12. How are we to understand this verse? (Sunday's lesson)
5. What light do the following texts shed on the idea that God acknowledges the intents and actions of those who do not know Him and can save them on the same basis as those who do know Him and also know about Him? Psalm 87:4-6; Malachi 1:11; John 10:16; Acts 14:17; 17:26-28; Romans 2:12-16. Why must we be careful not to judge the salvation of others, whether Christian or non-Christian? (Monday's lesson)
6. What do the words "universalism" and "pluralism" mean? According to the following texts are universalism and pluralism valid biblically? John 14:6; Revelation 20:14; 21:8; Daniel 12:2; John 3:18; Matthew 7:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:10. How would you respond to someone who argues that Christianity's claim to be the only true path to salvation is arrogant and exclusivist? Does exclusivism necessarily translate into arrogance? In not, why not? (Tuesday's lesson)
7. What does John 3:17 tell us about God? Does His amazing, self-sacrificing love mean that all will eventually be saved? What light do the following texts shed on this? Genesis 6:11-13; Romans 1:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:12; Revelation 22:15. What can each member of the church personally do to highlight the character of God in a secular world? (Wednesday's lesson)
8. Read 1 Corinthians 9:22-23. What important principle is Paul advocating here and how can we carry that out in everyday life? Do you agree with the lesson's listing of five shortcomings in the missionary enterprise that hinder its success? (Thursday's lesson)
9. How extensive was "the whole world" for the first Christians? Did they feel that Matthew 24:24 had already been fulfilled in the experience of the disciples? Colossians 1:23; Romans 16:25-27. (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Lou: I want to come back to a basic question that I've heard again and again, and I'm sure it will be in the minds of many of our hearers. How do you answer the question, "Must one obey God's law to be saved?" You said the law is not a threat to our freedom. But on the other hand, don't I have to obey it?

Graham: Maybe the safest way to approach that in a brief time is to consider the word "obedience." The Biblical word means "to hearken, to listen." The Greek word is "to listen humbly." As Micah said, "All God asks of us is that we walk humbly before our God." The thief

on the cross didn't have much time to live up to all the precepts of the many, many laws that had been used as God's emergency measures, but he certainly was humbly and gratefully and reverently willing to listen to the One in the middle. And he died willing to listen, sincerely, honestly willing to listen. He will arise in the same frame of mind. He has much to learn, but he'll be a good pupil. He'll be a good disciple. That means he's willing to listen, to accept instruction, to accept correction. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #12 with Lou Venden, "God's Law Is No Threat To Our Freedom" recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/12MMCAG>*

This long debate between faith, works and obedience has troubled saints through the years, but it could be so readily resolved if we looked at the Biblical word for obedience. This word obedience is *hupakoe*. The first part "hupa" means under. And the second part "akoe" means hearing. The word means literally, "listening under." *A humble willingness to listen*, and of course if we love and trust God we'll be willing to listen. It wouldn't make sense for us to *not* listen to one we love, trust and admire. Now could God's expectation of our willingness to listen be one hundred percent? Our performance may be weak. We may stumble as we leave our doctor's office. But a willingness to listen? Is it too much to say, "Don't cheat there. Let that be one hundred percent!" If it should seem that God is too demanding in asking for such a relationship, that He expects too much of us, it surely is encouraging to read about the heroes and heroines of faith celebrated in the same chapter of the same book that tells us what faith is. Look at Hebrews 11:31 and following:

By faith the prostitute Rahab escaped the doom of the unbelievers, because she had given the spies a kindly welcome. Need I say more? Time is too short for me to tell the stories of Gideon [who needed a wet fleece, and a dry one], Barak, Samson [look what he did], and Jephthah, David [look what he did], and Samuel and the prophets. . . . These also, one and all are commemorated for their faith. (NEB)

Is God too demanding? He even holds those people with all their weaknesses, with all their faults and sins; He holds them out to us as people, evidently, who were willing to listen, loved and trusted God and were waiting for Him to heal the damage done. And He puts them in Hebrews 11 for our encouragement. But surely no story is more encouraging than the story of the thief on the cross. What did he do, for Jesus to say those wonderful words in Luke 23:42-43, at the end of our Bible Reference Sheet? "And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, . . . 'You will be with me in Paradise.'" (RSV)

There was the thief hanging on the cross with a thief hanging on the other side and Jesus in the middle. And the two robbers were cursing and swearing and mocking Jesus, as were the

crowds. Something happened to the thief. He listened to Jesus saying, "Father, forgive them." And he listened to Jesus say, "John, please look after Mother when I'm gone." And maybe the thief had a mother, and that really touched him. But then that saying, "Father forgive them." Because over the head of Christ it said "The King of the Jews." And the thief thought to himself, "If Jesus ever really has a kingdom, and rules over a kingdom where the king says, 'I forgive you,' I'm a thief, I need to be forgiven. I wouldn't be safe in any other kingdom than a kingdom where the king says, 'I forgive you. I forgive you.'" And he said, "Jesus, if that's the kind of kingdom you're going to reign over, I'd like to live in it. Please, could you remember me?" And I think that was a little tentative. He didn't know how Jesus was going to respond. And then there came back the words that confirmed his trust. "Yes, I'd be pleased to remember you." And the thief died—with his tithe unpaid, and all kinds of things in his stomach. He never made restitution to anybody, wasn't baptized, never kept a Sabbath. But he'll be in the kingdom! Because after he died, the next moment of consciousness in the resurrection, the thief will come face to face with that same person in the middle. And Jesus will say to him, "You have a lot to learn." And the thief will say, "If you say so. That's alright with me."

I hope that if anything should happen to any of us on the way home tonight, that we would die God's trusting friend. Because if we do, we will arise the next moment of consciousness face to face with God. And we will not be afraid—because we know the truth. We trust Him, know Him, love Him, and all those other things. We've been set right. And if when we see Him face to face, and He should say to us, "You know, there's a great deal for you to learn," we would say, "We would be pleased to listen, because we trust you. We admire you. We want to be your friend." You see, faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well-known. And the better He is known, the better this relationship may be. Faith implies an attitude toward God of love, of trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in God based upon the more than adequate evidence revealed, to be willing to believe what He says; to accept what He offers. And to do what He wishes, without reservation; no cheating, for the rest of eternity. Anyone who has such faith would be perfectly safe to save. This is why faith is the only requirement for Heaven, and for salvation. {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>*

And when Paul got to the end of chapter 8, he sensed that some in his audience were quite offended. So he turned to them and said, "I sense that some of you don't like what I've said, that God is the kind of God that would save all who trust Him. I want to know (you people who object to this), are you suggesting you would run the universe better than God? Are you saying God cannot save all who trust Him? Let me tell you something: God is going to run this universe

precisely as He wishes. Just as the potter takes a lump of clay, and makes of the same clay a vessel for honor, and a vessel for dishonor, so God has the right—if He will exercise it—to run His universe any way He likes!”

Now some people will take that out of context and say, “God takes the material we are all made of and makes some to be saved and some to be lost. So, what’s the use of trying to know Him at all? Our destiny has already been determined.”

No, what Paul is saying there is that God has just as much authority as the potter—more so. He created this universe. He’s going to run it precisely as He wishes. And He won’t ever change. You can count on it. You say that sounds arbitrary? “No, I’ve been telling you in chapters 1-8 how He runs the universe. So infinitely gracious that He values nothing higher than our freedom, and will save all who trust Him, but doesn’t expect us to trust Him as a stranger, and so at infinite cost He has revealed the truth about Himself. And that’s what you don’t like, isn’t it, audience.” So he really is saying, “You impudent, irreverent people. How dare you tell God how to run His universe!”

How *does* He run the universe? Please read Romans 1-8. Infinitely graciously. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #1, “The Conflict In God’s Family” 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/1MMCAG>

Graham: I remember years ago a lady came up after a meeting, and she said, “I’d be willing to give up some of my freedom to have peace and security once again; to be safe. I wish God had not given me quite so much freedom.” Like today, to be safe on the plane from terrorists we’re willing to stand in line and go through those electronic devices.

Lou: And feel rather good about it. I want them to check rather carefully.

Graham: See, so we would rather give up our freedom in order to be safe. But on a universe-wide scale, to say to God, “I know you’ve paid a great price for freedom, but I’d rather not be that free.”

And God says, “Well, I’m sorry. That’s one thing that is not negotiable. I will keep my universe free, or your trust and love will mean nothing. To do what you’re saying; yes, I could save everybody—for example, if I turn my universe into a penitentiary.” See, if He would lock us up in solitary confinement so we couldn’t hurt each other, He could save everybody. But God says, “I refuse to be a prison warden for the rest of eternity. Forgive me; I would rather die than give up freedom.” And He has already died to show what freedom means to Him. I cannot ever say, “God, take some freedom back.”

Lou: Something you said reminds me of another question that I should ask. If God is all-powerful, why isn't He able—why isn't He willing to save everyone? You've spoken of this approach with the prison house sort of thing. But why can't God lovingly save everybody?

Graham: Well, if salvation just meant admitting us to the kingdom, (rather than what He wants) He could. He has the power to do that. He even has the power to put us all in terrorized subjection, and then have us grumbling within for the rest of eternity. What human father would want that of his family? No matter how powerful a father is, he cannot enforce love and trust in his family. You cannot terrorize your children into a happy home. It just doesn't work. They may behave as long as you're around because you scare them so, but once they've grown up and gone their own ways, they will do what they wish. So I think people who have families, or teachers of children, ought to be in a position to understand what God is trying to do. He is omnipotent, to be sure. But you cannot produce love and trust by force. It simply can't be done; hence the length of the experiment and the history, and the length of the scriptures.

Lou: So with the idea that God would let everyone in, we would create our own kind of hell by the way we would act, even though He would let us in.

Graham: And He refuses to preside over hell, if you put it that way, it's true. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #4 with Lou Venden, "God's Way Of Restoring Trust" recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>*

One view sees the plan of salvation and God's gracious provisions, such as the death of Christ on the cross, as being primarily offered to adjust our legal standing in the sight of God, because as sinners, we are guilty. And guilty as we are, justice and law demand that we be executed. And the only way to avoid being executed—and there are many, various explanations of execution; these are the various views of hell. We all have views of hell, the longer view, the medium view and the shorter view; there are many views of hell. But if God is the executioner, then we do well to be preoccupied with our legal standing. And unless we be forgiven, He will go ahead and do this to us; He must. Law and justice require it. And if He doesn't go through with this, the universe will conclude He is unjust. And if He's unjust, you wouldn't trust Him, and now you're getting over into the other view, which always amuses me, that if you pursue even the legal view logically to its conclusions you wind up with the other one.

But now in the larger view, which uses all sixty-six books and has no problems with Ellen White, it sees sin not as a legal problem. It sees sin as a very real problem that has had devastating consequences on us physically, mentally, spiritually, socially. Sin is a breach of trust, as Romans 14 says. Sin is treachery. Sin is what Lucifer did in the beginning, for which you could not have called him in before church counsel. I mean what had he done? Nothing! Except the most

devastating thing that can ever be done. Nearly destroyed the universe, that's what he did. That's how bad it was. And because of this distrust, and the consequential unwillingness to listen and allow God to look after us and heal the damage done, enormous damage has been done to sinners. *We're not in legal trouble, we're in trouble. We're not in danger of being executed, we're dying.* That's the difference. And I believe it makes all the difference in the world. I would not go to a doctor who would kill his patients for not cooperating. But if I'm dying, I need a doctor. And if I go and don't cooperate, I still may die. But my understanding is that in this larger view, this great controversy view, this sixty-six book view, we're all dying. And if God were to leave us alone, that's it.

But He hasn't. He's pursued us through the years, trying to win us back to trust. And of course, you don't expect people to trust without evidence. You don't make claims; you offer demonstrations; that's the content of the sixty-six books, God's demonstration of the kind of person He is. And the way He's handled this emergency is the greatest demonstration of all. As to, not how He treats His friends, but how He treats His enemies. How He treats the sick and the dying; how does He seek to win them back to trust? And some of us find that very wonderful. So the purpose of the plan of salvation is not to adjust our legal standing, but the purpose of the plan of salvation is to win us back to trust so He can heal us, which He can readily do, and it is to confirm the trust of the onlooking universe. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Questions People Are Asking About the Plan of Salvation, recorded April, 1983, Redlands, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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

Some folk use the Three Angels' Message to support the devil's description of God—that God says love and obey me, or I'll torture you in sulfurous flames for eternity. There's no way you can make that good news, seems to me. But could we explain it in another way? It seems to me there's no way we can make the Three Angels' Messages fit the good news unless we can explain a lot of things in those three messages. Now where do we find the explanation? Significantly, God did not give us those awesome summaries of His message to the world until He'd given us sixty-five books of preparation. So on the basis of all sixty-six, we need to look at the Three Angels' Messages and see if the Bible has not only explained, but demonstrated the meaning of these sometimes rather forbidding terms. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Three Angels' Messages, #1, recorded October, 1981, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/3MM3ANGELSM>

Further Study with Ellen White

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}

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 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}

The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of “the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.” Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. {DA 22.2}

If the curtain could be rolled back, and each one could discern the constant activities of the heavenly family to preserve the inhabitants of the earth from Satan’s seductive wiles, lest in their careless attitude they should be led astray through satanic strategy, they would lose a large degree of their self-confidence and self-assurance. They would see that the armies of heaven are in continual warfare with satanic agencies, to obtain victories in behalf of those who do not sense their danger, and who are passing on in unconscious indifference (MS 32, 1900). {6BC 1120.4}

Recommended Reading: *Steps to Christ* Chapter 1 – “God’s Love for Man”

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