

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2016: *Rebellion and Redemption*
Lesson 5 “The Controversy Continues”

Read for this week’s study

1 Samuel 17:43–51; 2 Samuel 11:1–17; 1 Kings 18:21–39; 2 Kings 19:21–34; Esther 3:8–11; Nehemiah 1.

Memory Text

“And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king’s words that he had spoken to me. So they said, ‘Let us rise up and build.’ Then they set their hands to this good work” (Nehemiah 2:18, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. David, Goliath, and Bathsheba
- III. To Turn Their Hearts
- IV. Words of Defiance
- V. Death Decree
- VI. Nehemiah
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

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FROM GLORY TO ASHES, FROM STARS TO DUST

A. Saul & David (1 Samuel 26:17-21)

- 1. The choice of Saul as Israel’s first king was God’s. How did Saul fail God?
- 2. In the beginning Saul loved David. Why did he later hate him so much?
- 3. On at least two occasions David spared the life of his enemy. Was it really wise on his part to do that?
- 4. Saul summarized his life in 5 words: “I have played the fool!” Compare these words with the words that summarize the life of the Apostle Paul: “I have kept the faith!”

B. David & the Philistines (1 Samuel 17:41-47)

- 1. Later in his life David would find refuge among the Philistines. Why did he want to fight Goliath?

2. David sounds so confident that he will be a winner. Where did he get this type of confidence?
3. There are “Goliaths” today who challenge the power of God. How should we fight them?
4. Goliath was from Gath, so was Ittai the Gittite (2 Samuel 15:19-22). How faithful was Ittai to David and his God?

C. Elijah & Elisha (1 Kings 19:14-18)

1. Elijah is portrayed as a strong man of God during a difficult period of history. Why were those times so perilous for the faithful people in Israel?
2. Elijah on Mount Carmel and Elijah in the cave. If the second story was not in the Bible, what would the reader miss?
3. God told Elijah to retire and to appoint Elisha to be his successor. What did the two men have in common? Compare their ways of relating to other people.

D. Esther (Esther 4:12-16)

1. No copy, not even a fragment of Esther’s book was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Any guess why?
2. Divine presence and action is not always explicit and obvious. What parts of Esther’s book seem to demonstrate this?
3. Esther’s words “if I perish, I perish!” have become famous. Do you see in them a deeper meaning in the context of the History of Salvation?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Of course, the emergency is the breakdown of this trust and trustworthiness that we have discussed before. The stubborn and suspicious unwillingness to listen has made it so hard for God to heal the damage done. The damaging consequences of this breakdown of trust in the family are very clearly portrayed all through Scripture and through history. We see it in society all around us. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #11, “God’s Emergency Measures” 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/11MMCAG>*

Isn’t it marvelous that someday you are to be perfect! Which is it, a promise or a command? Some of you are familiar with words in *Desire of Ages*, “this promise is also a command.” What insight that shows into the meaning of the verse. Now if it is a command, isn’t it terrifying? We have to be perfect. Well, it would be terrifying if we didn’t know the one who has asked us to be perfect. That is the subject of all sixty-six books and the subject of our conversations these

last few weeks. How many illustrations could be cited from Scripture to reassure us about the one who said we must be, or will be perfect?

Let me just pick just two, the cases of David and Solomon in 1 Kings 9, the next passage on the Bible Reference Sheet. I wish I could have quoted all the references to this. It runs over several pages in the Bible. 1 Kings 9:4, 5, then 11:4, 6. God speaking to Solomon:

If you walk before me [Solomon], as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness [do you remember David's life? This is God describing David. He walked before me with integrity of heart and uprightness. If you'll do that, Solomon]; I will establish your royal throne. [But sadly] When Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods [and they're listed—he even passed his children through the fire to Molech; Solomon did that]. And his heart [Solomon's heart] was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father [do you remember David's life? His heart was wholly true to God!]. Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done. (RSV)

Can you imagine our having to deal with David's problems in this church, in church council and church board meeting? We would have had to censure him and disfellowship him periodically. God says to Solomon, you haven't followed me with all your heart, as your father David did. What do you think of a God who would describe David that way?

What about Solomon? He did what David never did. David never left God to go after other gods. Solomon did. He went after the most disgusting of the gods, as some of the versions translate it. Yet, at the end of his life he came to his senses and God took him back. Did he become a second-class member of the family from then on? God said to Solomon, "Write me another book in the Bible." And he wrote Ecclesiastes after living such a life. What kinds of people write books in the Bible? Holy people. Look at the next passage, 2 Peter 1:21: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (KJV)

How could God describe Solomon who had passed his children through the fire to that abominable god, Molech—how could he describe Solomon as one of the holy men of God? That doesn't speak too well of Solomon or too well of David, but what do you think about our God? We like to cite the promise that he will treat us as if we had never sinned. These are not promises; these are facts. This is evidence. This is demonstration. God demonstrated in his treatment of David and Solomon that he really will treat us as if we had always been his loyal children. And there are many other examples in the Bible. That is the kind of God who wants us to be perfect. Do we have any need to be afraid of him? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #14, "God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/14MMCAG>*

Let's go back to Mt. Carmel and Elijah, and the fire that comes down and licks up the stone and the water and the whole business.

Graham: Now that's a classic case because it's so dramatic, consuming everything. I remember as a boy thinking of the stones burning and the water being lapped up. It's significant, though, that when all the excitement dies down, Elijah was depressed. That sort of thing doesn't last, doesn't have holding power. And so he ran away and hid in a cave. But his spirits rose when he felt the earthquake and he heard the wind and he saw the fire, and he thought God was approaching. And it's so significant that the Bible says God was not in the wind, he was not in the earthquake, and he was not in the fire. And then there came the sound of a small silence, "the still small voice." Versions have very colorful ways of translating that, the sound of a very small silence. And Elijah was informed that that was God. God is willing to use these dramatic means when the circumstances call for it. But when he has a friend (and he wanted Elijah to grow up and be more his friend), no more wind, earthquake, and fire, just the still, small voice of truth. And I'm impressed that soon after that Elijah was ready to be translated to Heaven. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #7, "The Question of Authority" 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/7MMCAG>*

The graciousness of God is shown particularly in his looking after us when we certainly don't deserve it at all. And I think in the book of Esther we have a marvelous demonstration of God going to these complicated lengths to look after the people who didn't have enough faith to go home. And he looks very good in the book of Esther.

Now, to the Jew it had a special meaning. The Feast of Purim, the Feast of Lots, which is celebrated to this day, goes back to the book of Esther. Remember near the end is mentioned that word P-u-r, the plural P-u-r-i-m, when they cast lots? And so the book of Esther is important historically even to the modern Jew. This is where that feast came from. But when you come to that feast, what is it they celebrated? Wasn't it the two days when they killed so many of their enemies? How do you like that part of the story? They were given permission to protect themselves, and they couldn't kill enough the first day, so they asked for permission to kill some more the second day. They didn't ask for more time to give Bible studies. They asked for more time to kill their enemies. Well, it sounds familiar, doesn't it? When Joshua was running out of daylight, he said, "Lord, I need more light." To share the light with these folk? No, to kill them. How did you react to that part of the story at the end, all that killing? Does that say anything to us about God?

Well, someone has already mentioned, were they supposed to be there in the first place? So they were in a difficult and complicated situation of their own making. Number one, should

they have gone to Babylon in the first place? Why did God give them up to Babylonian captivity? Wasn't it because of hundreds of years of stubbornly resisting the messages of the prophets that we read at the end of 2 Chronicles? So number one, they shouldn't have been there in the first place. Number two, should they have *still* been there? No, the seventy years were up. They should have gone home. On two counts they shouldn't have been there. So truly that predicament was of their own making, and yet God came to help them. But when we're in a predicament of our own making, God may have to stoop very low to meet us where we are and employ methods that are far short of the ideal.

It's very plain in Scripture God would rather we not fight at all. He'd rather take care of us. Of course, if they had felt that way all along, they never would have left Palestine in the first place. Or when God says, "Come home, the seventy years are up," they would have gone.

We've made it difficult for God. But even when it's difficult for God, like when they insisted on having a king; that caused complications, didn't it? But God helped them under the monarchy. When they insisted on eating the food of Egypt, he helped them. That's why we got the list of clean and unclean meats. But it wasn't the ideal. He was meeting them where they were. When they wanted divorce, he gave them divorce laws. And they misunderstood this and said, "Good, God approves of divorce." Jesus said, "Don't misunderstand God's willingness to meet us where we are. We were given divorce laws," he said to the Jews, "I gave you divorce laws because of the stiffness of your necks and the hardness of your hearts." So we do need to read Esther as an emergency situation, and God meeting them where they were. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 –Esther & Job, recorded March, 1982, 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 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/25MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/26MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

But at the end of the seventy years, when they had an opportunity to come home, how many came? Well, you read Ezra and Nehemiah. Not that many cared to come. But the few who did, set out, at first, to rebuild the temple and rebuild Jerusalem; but they ran into a great deal of opposition and difficulty, as you recall, and they became discouraged. Meanwhile, back in Mesopotamia, do you remember the situation there? There was a death decree to destroy the Jews. And there's a marvelous book that describes how God looked after the Jews who didn't have enough faith or interest to go home at the end of the seventy years. And God looks good in the Book of Esther.

But meanwhile, back in Palestine, to encourage the people, these two men, Haggai and Zechariah, join with Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, to stimulate the people to get on with the building. But you remember, even after that, there was great apostasy, and all that

intermarriage. And so Ezra and Nehemiah came and worked with them. Remember all the violation of the Sabbath that was going on, that Nehemiah had to try to straighten out in various disciplinary ways. But then there was a great revival under the ministry of Ezra, when he read the Bible to them, in the form that it was in in those days. So eventually they had the temple erected; they had the walls built; and they established the Scriptures as their supreme authority. And yet, look what happened in the years that followed. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 - Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, recorded 1982, 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 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/49MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/50MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He “will abundantly pardon,” He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:7-9. God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10. And again he says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.” Psalm 103:12. {MB 114.1}

God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, will quicken all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfill the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. Through a connection with Christ he will have clearer and broader views. His discernment will be more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. He who longs to be of service to Christ is so quickened by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God. {DA 251.1}

It is the Spirit that causes to shine into darkened minds the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness; that makes men’s hearts burn within them with an awakened realization of the

truths of eternity; that presents before the mind the great standard of righteousness, and convinces of sin; that inspires faith in Him who alone can save from sin; that works to transform character by withdrawing the affections of men from those things which are temporal and perishable, and fixing them upon the eternal inheritance. The Spirit recreates, refines, and sanctifies human beings, fitting them to become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. {GW 286.3}

Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will; and if by persistent transgression the will itself is wholly bent on evil, and we do not desire to be set free, if we will not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:7, 8. {SC 34.2}

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan’s control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

The Lord will not compel men to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God; He sets before the human agent good and evil, and makes plain what will be the sure result of following one course or the other. Christ invites us, saying, “Follow Me.” But we are never forced to walk in His footsteps. If we do walk in His footsteps, it is the result of deliberate choice. As we see the life and character of Christ, strong desire is awakened to be like Him in character; and we follow on to know the Lord, and to know His goings forth are prepared as the morning. We then begin to realize that “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”—R. & H., March 31, 1896. {CS 138.1}

The Lord God through Christ holds out His hand all the day long in invitations to the needy. He will receive all. He welcomes all. He rejects none. It is His glory to pardon the chief of sinners. He will take the prey from the mighty, He will deliver the captive, He will pluck the brand from the burning. He will lower the golden chain of His mercy to the greatest depths of human wretchedness and guilt and lift up the debased soul contaminated with sin. But man must will to come, and cooperate in the work of saving his soul by availing himself of opportunities given him of God. The Lord forces no one. {TMK 235.2}

God never compels the obedience of man. He leaves all free to choose whom they will serve. {PK 510.4}