

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2016: *Rebellion and Redemption*
Lesson 9 “The Great Controversy *and the Early Church*”

Read for this week’s study

Acts 1:6–8, 2:5–12, Genesis 11:1–9, Acts 4:1–30, 7:54, 10:12–29.

Memory Text

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Beginning of a New Beginning
- III. Pentecost
- IV. Facing the Sadducees
- V. The Stoning of Stephen
- VI. Changing Attitudes
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. According to Acts 4:12-13 there is one thing that makes all the difference in the cosmic conflict. What is the “one thing?” How would you express that one thing in terms that make sense in today’s world? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. The lesson opens with the following sentence: “The greatest barrier Jesus faced with His followers was their preconceived opinions.” How did the Early Church in Acts seek to deal with that issue? Does prejudice exist in most religions today? Does it exist in the Adventist church? How can we recognize the prejudices that we ourselves hold? How can we overcome our own pre-conceived opinions today? What kind of thoughts and feelings prevent us from dealing with damaging preconceived opinions? (Sabbath afternoon)
3. One of the major instances of preconceived opinions in the Bible is found in Acts 1:6-8. What were the disciples expecting would happen soon? What did Jesus mean by “times and seasons?” Is it possible for a “larger view” of reality to get in the way of truths that God wants us to learn? (Sunday’s lesson)

4. Read Acts 1:14. How did the disciple's relation to each other differ from what it was before (Matthew 20:20-24)? What can we learn from their change in attitude? What was the source of that change and is it available to us? (Sunday's lesson)
5. The lesson connects the experience of Pentecost with the actions of the Spirit in Genesis 1:2. How would you understand this connection and what does it have to do with the larger view of the cosmic conflict? See also Revelation 13:13-14. (Monday's lesson)
6. Read Acts 2:5-12. What is the significance of what happened in these texts? Compare that with what happened in Genesis 11:1-9. (Monday's lesson)
7. Read Acts 4:1-30. How is the cosmic conflict theme manifested in this story? Where is Satan working in this passage and what is God doing to counter him? What does all this tell us about God? (Tuesday's lesson)
8. In Acts 7:2-53 Stephen gave a powerful speech to the council that was accusing him. Verse 54 indicates that that the hearers felt strong conviction (compare with Acts 2:37). Yet their response to that conviction was very different than what occurred in Acts 2. How were the two situations different and what can we learn from that? (Wednesday's lesson)
9. Read Acts 10:12-29. What was Peter's reaction when he was told to eat "unclean" food? What did the vision mean? Why do you think God communicated with Peter in this way? What was the outcome of this vision (see Acts 11 and 15)? (Thursday's lesson)
10. How can one know when the Holy Spirit is working in one's life? How are true manifestations of the Spirit different from the temptations of Satan? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

God proposes to set right and to keep right all that has gone wrong. This requires first that He win us back to trust and a willingness to listen. And then the healing can come of the damage done. You see, mere forgiveness only would not repair all the damage that has been caused by this breakdown of trust and trustworthiness and would not secure the universe and keep it safe for all eternity. We could say that Heaven will not be peopled with pardoned criminals—but with trusting and trustworthy saints who have new hearts and right spirits, as David prayed.

Granting all that, what if we are not willing to listen? What if we are not listening to God's generous offer? What about those who have been so influenced by Satan's lies that they have turned away to other gods, or to no gods at all? Or, much more seriously, what about those who have been so influenced by Satan's lies that they seek to worship the true God, but they worship Him as arbitrary, vengeful, and severe? And so offer Him the obedience that springs

from fear, with all the dire consequences that come from that. And then how about all the people who live between those two extremes? How can God reach all of them?

It is no wonder that in the Biblical record we see God in many and various ways trying to reach us where we are in this emergency, speaking a language that we can understand, leading us no faster than we are able to follow. And running grave risks of being misunderstood as He has sought to gain our attention and hold it long enough to tell us the truth about Himself. When we have been hard of hearing, God has surely raised His voice, as on Sinai. When we were irreverent, He shook the ground beneath our feet. He even sent she-bears in the days of Elisha. He brought fire down on Mt. Carmel. So many of the stories in the Bible illustrate God's willingness to run the risk of being misunderstood—to lead us to that reverence that is the beginning of wisdom. Then, when we were tempted to take sin lightly and underestimate the serious consequences of sin, the One who sees the little sparrow fall, instituted that whole system of sacrifices and ceremonies that required the death of thousands of His creatures. When we were tempted to accept Satan's lie that sin does not lead to death, God sent His Son to die that death and so to demonstrate the truth. {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>*

Further Study with Ellen White

His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan's influence those who have been deluded by his deceptions, and places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. {PK 369.3}

Wherever hearts are open to receive the truth, Christ is ready to instruct them. {DA 194.2}

In His wisdom the Lord brings those who are seeking for truth into touch with fellow beings who know the truth. It is the plan of Heaven that those who have received light shall impart it to those in darkness. Humanity, drawing its efficiency from the great Source of wisdom, is made the instrumentality, the working agency, through which the gospel exercises its transforming power on mind and heart. {AA 134.3}

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}

It was taught by the Jews that before God's love is extended to the sinner, he must first repent. In their view, repentance is a work by which men earn the favor of Heaven. And it was this thought that led the Pharisees to exclaim in astonishment and anger. "This man receiveth sinners." According to their ideas He should permit none to approach Him but those who had repented. But in the parable of the lost sheep, Christ teaches that salvation does not come through our seeking after God but through God's seeking after us. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way." Romans 3:11, 12. We do not repent in order that God may love us, but He reveals to us His love in order that we may repent. {COL 189.1}

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought. Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen. Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act, men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions. {Ed 17.2}

It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light, and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought, and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help, we are to form our opinions for ourselves, as we are to answer for ourselves before God. {GC88 598.2}

The Holy Spirit will not compel men to take a certain course of action. We are free moral agents; and when sufficient evidence has been given us as to our duty it is left with us to decide our course. {RH, July 17, 1888 par. 4}

Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. {MB 142.1}

The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by

revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression. {1SM 235.1}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}