

**Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes**  
**Second Quarter 2016: *The Book of Matthew***  
**Lesson 2 “The Ministry Begins”**

**Read for this week’s study**

Matthew 3:1–12; 2 Peter 1:19; Philippians 2:5–8; Matthew 4:1–12; Isaiah 9:1, 2; Matthew 4:17–22.

**Memory Text**

“ ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people’ ” (Matthew 4:19, NIV).

**Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide**

- I. Introduction
- II. John the Baptist and “Present Truth”
- III. The Contrast in the Wilderness
- IV. The Temptation
- V. The Land of Zebulun and Naphtali
- VI. The Call of the Fisherman
- VII. Further Study

**Questions and Notes for Consideration**

**Facilitator: Daniel Duda**

1. “This week, we will look at the beginning of Christ’s life and work here on earth, a life and work that alone can give full meaning to our own.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. What role does the story of John the Baptist play in Matthew 3? (See also Isaiah 40 and the significance of the road metaphor.) John baptized them in river Jordan. In what way is that significant and how is it connected with the preceding biblical story [of crossing the river Jordan]?
3. John’s message to religious leaders of the day shows that going through the motions [of baptism] is not sufficient. After the road and water, the next two key words of this narrative are fire and axe, the fire that would blaze and the axe that would chop down the tree. What is the significance of the fact that when Jesus finally came, His ministry was so different from what John imagined, that even John was puzzled by the outcome (11:2-6)? What is the implication for us when we are “sure” how God is going to act and respond? What are the implications for the message we preach as God’s last message for this world?

4. What is the significance of Jesus' encounter with Satan in the wilderness and the subsequent temptations – specifically for Matthew and generally for us? What about the fact that it was the *Spirit* that lead Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil (4:1)?
5. “Many of the Old Testament prophets railed against the sinfulness, the worldliness, and the evil of these northern tribes, who were eventually overrun by the Assyrians, who then scattered them around the then known world. In turn, Gentiles settled in Israel, and Galilee became a mixed population, a confused and dark place. [. . .] Where the need was so great, where people were deemed rude, backward, boorish—Jesus came and lived and ministered among them. However exalted He Himself might have been, we see the willingness of Jesus to humble Himself for the sake of others.” (Wednesday’s lesson) What would be the equivalent of the land of Zebulun and Naphtali today? How can we follow the example of Jesus and serve in those less attractive places?
6. However, when Matthew connects the ministry of Jesus with Isaiah 9:1-2, he also has something else in mind. As the previous chapter and the story of his temptations showed, Jesus cannot use his own status of Messiah to launch some kind of movement that would sweep him to power, privilege and glory. There were plenty of those attempts and movements around this time. But they are fighting darkness with darkness and both Israel and Jesus were called to bring *light* into the world. What is the significance of Jesus' call to repentance in this context (and how is it different from John's call)? What are the implications for us in fulfilling our mission in today's society?
7. In what sense is Jesus preaching a different story from the prevailing story of his culture and times? Today, how can we preach a different story rather than just a sanctified version of the prevalent [and destructive] stories which people are “preaching” and promoting around us?
8. “Here, in the forgotten land of Galilee, was a small fishing partnership run by four young men: two sets of brothers. These men apparently had a heart for God because for a while some of them followed John the Baptist. But, to their surprise, John the Baptist had pointed them in the direction of another young man from their own region.” (Thursday’s lesson) What is the significance of the call of these fishermen to discipleship? How does it relate to God's call to all of us?
9. Traditionally, a call to a holy vocation meant being a pastor or colporteur for males, or a nurse or teacher for females. But John Calvin persuasively argued that **any** vocation performed for God and his glory is a holy vocation. (Because of this, theology has often lost the best minds to other more attractive vocations!)
10. Why do millions of Christians in different walks of life and vocations choose to give up lifestyles and practices that look attractive and lucrative to the majority of society, in a commitment to maintain honesty, integrity, faith, hope and love?

11. What does it mean to be the disciple/follower of Jesus today in your walk of life, in your segment of society? Peter & Andrew, James & John had no idea where following Jesus would take them. Perhaps they would not have been quite so eager if they did. But the impact of their decision was immense and astounding!
12. In society today crowds are drawn by entertainment, sports, music, parties (and tragedies). What would it take – what could and should Jesus' followers be doing now that would have an impact on people? Today, how is Jesus calling those who are to become "fishers of men"?

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Repentance means changing our minds. Graciously God continues to grant us time and opportunity to consider the evidence. If we decide he can be trusted, and then go on trusting him enough to stay with him and let him heal the damage sin has done, the time will come when once again we can live in that glory.

Moses and Elijah were healed, or they could never have stood with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. On that memorable day, two former sinners stood in the unveiled glory of God. But when God unveils his glory in the end, all that is out of harmony will be consumed. On that awesome day, the saved and the lost alike will all be standing in the "devouring fire," "the everlasting flames," of God's glory.

Why are the lost the only ones consumed? There is nothing arbitrary about this. It has nothing to do with legal standing. God doesn't finally give the order, "Burn these, keep those!" The difference is simply in *us*. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 134. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter9.html>

Lou: Back to the prodigal son model and the question that comes out of that: Is it necessary to repent and to confess before one is forgiven?

Graham: Ah. The boy hardly started to speak when the father said, "I forgave you long ago." But the most stunning illustration of that is Jesus forgiving on the cross. There was no indication that the soldiers who were nailing Him to the cross were saying, "Please forgive us; please forgive us."

Lou: They didn't even ask.

Graham: They didn't even ask, and He says, "I forgive you anyway." (Luke 23:34) And that's the idea that God is forgiveness personified. But that does us no good unless we hear, unless we

accept, unless we are moved by His forgiveness to repent. We always have it the other way around, “If I repent, maybe He will forgive me.” No, when I learn of His forgiveness, that moves me to repentance—some of us, anyway. That’s the kindness of God leading us to repentance. Now this doesn’t leave out repentance. If I don’t respond to His gracious forgiveness—which would be in terms of changing my mind and confessing and saying, “I am sick, help me, what must I do to be well?” Then it doesn’t do me any good.

Lou: So the difference here is whether we set out by our repentance and confession to win God over to where . . .

Graham: If I make a good speech . . .

Lou: . . . maybe He would be willing to forgive us. And Him saying, “Well, all right, since you feel that badly about it,” and the father saying to the prodigal son, “Well if you have made all these promises, then maybe I’ll welcome you home.”

Graham: You see, on the serious level, again I want to be very reverent in saying it, if it requires that I bring the blood of His Son to God before God can say, “Well, now I can forgive you,” that denies the prodigal son story.

Lou: That’s true.

Graham: Yes, that’s sad. You don’t have to bring Him anything. But God sent His Son to die to answer all those questions and to draw us to Him, to handle all the emergencies in the great controversy, because He had forgiven us, but we didn’t know it. He sent the Son to make it clear. And the Son hanging on the cross said, “I forgive you. You don’t understand what you’re doing.” That’s incredible! That wins some to repentance. That won the thief. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #13 with Lou Venden, “How God Treats His Erring Children” 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/13MMCAG>*

I have heard servants sometimes charge that friends lack a keen sense of justice. They do not leave room in their understanding of God for just and essential punishment. Their God is simply too weak and kind. “You have a marshmallow God,” I heard one servant say.

The truth is precisely the opposite. Friend-believers have great concern about righteousness, which is the literal meaning of the Greek word often translated “justice.” The English word “justice” comes from the Latin translation of the Greek. (Latin, “justitia”)

Friends admire God’s righteousness and would love to be like him. And to do what is right is, of course, to do what is just. But servants tend to think of justice in terms of retribution and punishment.

“I find comfort in the thought that some day God will bring retribution on those who have hurt me so much,” I heard a believer say. “Now, I’m not asking for vengeance, you understand. I’m just asking for justice.” {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 109-110. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter8.html>

Someone came between because of the emergency. It’s not ideal. God would like to deal directly with us, face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. But because we don’t know God, and we’ve been afraid, God has given us these pictures. He’s given us a picture even of Jesus being our Judge. Doesn’t Jesus deal with this? He says, “You’re all comforted that I’m going to be your Judge because you were scared My Father was going to judge you, isn’t that right?” They said, “Oh, we’re so relieved you’re going to be our Judge.” Is that because the Father is not as gracious and forgiving as the Son, that we say we’re glad the Son is going to be our Judge? So before He went back to heaven, He said, “I’ve got to clear that up, too. Actually, if you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father. You would receive just as gracious judgment from my Father as from me. But I’d like to take you a step further. I’m not going to judge you anyway. Oh, there will be something that will judge you. The truth will judge you—the truth about my Father in the Great Controversy. The truth about the kind of person He is and what He wants of His children, and the way He governs the universe. That’s the truth. If you have loved that truth and it has led you to repentance and faith and trust, you will have stood humbly in Our Presence and said, ‘What must I do to be saved and healed?’ and We will have been able to save and heal you, and all will be well. But if you have turned down this truth about my Father and about me, you will not know us; you will not be Our friends; you will not trust Us enough to listen; We will not be able to heal you; and you will perish and We will cry.” And that’s the judgment. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 - Leviticus*, recorded October, 1981, 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 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/5MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/6MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

And the devil came with three temptations that had to have real persuasiveness in them, or its mockery. Then the devil takes Him up onto the pinnacle of the temple and says, “Throw Yourself down.” Isn’t that again saying, “Don’t you want to know if you enjoy God’s favor? Are you really the Son of God? Don’t you want another miracle?” He said, “No, I still don’t want a miracle.” And then he appeared in his real form as His old adversary, because now it was

important that he identify himself, because he was going to offer something. He said, "I'll give you this whole world if you'll do something." Was the offer worth anything?

COMMENT: It was an act of worship.

Well, that's the first part, where he says, "to worship me," which we need to concentrate on. I'm just wondering if the offer was worth anything. "I'll give you the whole world." Of course, what would he mean by giving the whole world? Did Jesus know in advance what a painful experience it was going to be to fight the devil every step of the way? Do you think the devil would mean it when he said, "Look, you can have this world and everybody in it. I'll never bother you again." I think he would. He doesn't want it. Would you want it, in the condition that it's in? Does he even want the people in it? Doesn't he only use people to make a point? What is it the devil wants more than anything else in the great controversy? In Ezekiel, in Isaiah, what is it that he's wanted? "I will be like the Most High. I will sit in the sides of the North." He has wanted worship, and the ultimate evidence of this is, he even asked his Creator to get down on His knees, the other Lucifer, the other Covering Cherub, the other Lightbearer, "Get down on your knees and worship me, and I mean it. I'll give you this whole world. I'll never bother you. You can have all those people. It'll make your work much easier. And if your goal is to just to win souls; if that's our goal, just to win lots and lots of souls, it will be much easier for you to do so." But He would have lost the important issue in the great controversy. That's the more important thing. And all the angels were watching. They knew what the devil has wanted all along, and a third of them have been worshipping him. And Jesus said, "Worship the creature rather than the Creator? Never!" And the devil left Him. And I think apart from the great controversy, that third temptation doesn't mean a whole lot. But in the setting of the great controversy, it was an offer; of course an unthinkable one, as you've suggested, to Christ. But to the devil, not really quite so unthinkable. If only he could have that one thing! In Revelation 13, when the devil completes his final campaign, what's the whole world doing, but worshipping him. At last he seems to succeed, except for a few, who at risk of life will not do so. So this thing isn't over yet. {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)

Lou: Now I missed some words in your presentation this evening that I've heard often associated with the subject, as one way to solve the questions created by Jesus' statement in the Sermon on the Mount: "Be ye perfect as your Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Words like "imputed," "Christ's righteousness imputed," or "the covering of Christ's righteousness," as though that was something that was placed over us and then God says, "You're perfect." As

though maybe God didn't understand what is underneath. Why didn't you use phrases like that?

Graham: We need to be familiar with them and to use them at the right time, but actually those words belong to the legal model—the emergency model—“that the righteousness of Christ is reckoned to us so that our account may look all right in the judgment,” and so on. And that's often attributed to the verse, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned, imputed unto him for righteousness.” The Greek word there actually can mean, “considered, recognized.”

In the trust-healing model, I would translate that verse: “Abraham trusted God, and God said, ‘That's good! That's what I want. If you trust me, all is well.’” All God ever asked of us is trust. And he trusted Him enough to become His firmest friend there, and Abraham really grew up and was not afraid of God, though reverent. Look at the relationship they had. That's the ideal. And one does not need to explain that in legal terms at all.

It's the same way with “covered.” Think what we've done with the word “covered” to suggest that I as a sinner—and we are all sinners—I stand in the presence of the Father, and He would be very angry with me and destructive toward me if I were not covered. So I am covered with something; and fortunately God does not have twenty/twenty vision. He doesn't know the truth. I know what's inside. The Lord knows what's inside. My guardian angel knows what's inside. And the devil is reminding them as the Accuser of the Brethren as to what's inside. But the Father looks and I'm perfect.

He knows better. God knows exactly what I'm like. What does that mean in the legal model? You can see how it could have an emergency comforting message for people who are afraid of God. Don't worry. God can't really see you the way you are. That's emergency talk.

In the trust-healing model, God looks at me and knows exactly what I'm like; but nevertheless, He treats me as if I had been as loyal as His own Son.

He treats me as if I had lived as righteously as Christ. I know I haven't and so does He. But that's how generous He is. Now, that's for real. And that's more marvelous than the other. So we could use those phrases, but when we do, if the audience is ready, we should explain in the healing model. That language has its place, but as I think you said once before, it's a way station on the way. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #14 with Lou Venden, “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>*

### Further Study with Ellen White

The deception of sin had reached its height. All the agencies for depraving the souls of men had been put in operation. The Son of God, looking upon the world, beheld suffering and misery. With pity He saw how men had become victims of satanic cruelty. He looked with compassion upon those who were being corrupted, murdered, and lost. They had chosen a ruler who chained them to his car as captives. Bewildered and deceived, they were moving on in gloomy procession toward eternal ruin,—to death in which is no hope of life, toward night to which comes no morning. Satanic agencies were incorporated with men. The bodies of human beings, made for the dwelling place of God, had become the habitation of demons. The senses, the nerves, the passions, the organs of men, were worked by supernatural agencies in the indulgence of the vilest lust. The very stamp of demons was impressed upon the countenances of men. Human faces reflected the expression of the legions of evil with which they were possessed. Such was the prospect upon which the world's Redeemer looked. What a spectacle for Infinite Purity to behold! {DA 36.3}

Sin had become a science, and vice was consecrated as a part of religion. Rebellion had struck its roots deep into the heart, and the hostility of man was most violent against heaven. It was demonstrated before the universe that, apart from God, humanity could not be uplifted. A new element of life and power must be imparted by Him who made the world. {DA 37.1}

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 government of God is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. "Come now, and let us reason together" is the Creator's invitation to the beings He has made. Isaiah 1:18. God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. He desires that man, the crowning work of His creative power, shall reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. {SC 43.4}

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. {SC 34.2}

The religion of Christ never degrades the receiver. It never makes him coarse or rough, discourteous or self-important, passionate or hardhearted. On the contrary, it refines the taste, sanctifies the judgment, and purifies and ennobles the thoughts, bringing them into captivity to Jesus Christ. {CT 365.1}

The victory is not won without much earnest prayer, without the humbling of self at every step. 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. The stronghold of Satan would not be broken. The will must be placed on the side of God's will. You are not able, of yourself, to bring your purposes and desires and inclinations into submission to the will of God; but if you are "willing to be made willing," God will accomplish the work for you, even "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:5. Then you will "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Philippians 2:12, 13. {MB 142.1}

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}

When Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted, He was led by the Spirit of God. He did not invite temptation. He went to the wilderness to be alone, to contemplate His mission and work. By fasting and prayer He was to brace Himself for the bloodstained path He must travel. But Satan knew that the Saviour had gone into the wilderness, and he thought this the best time to approach Him. {DA 114.2}

All the energies of apostasy were rallied against the Son of God. Christ was made the mark of every weapon of hell. {DA 116.3}

The words from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17), were still sounding in the ears of Satan. But he was determined to make Christ disbelieve this testimony. The word of God was Christ's assurance of His divine mission. He had come to live as a man among men, and it was the word that declared His connection with heaven. It was Satan's purpose to cause Him to doubt that word. If Christ's confidence in God could be shaken, Satan knew that the victory in the whole controversy would be his. He could overcome Jesus. He hoped that under the force of despondency and extreme hunger, Christ would lose faith in His Father, and work a miracle in His own behalf. Had He done this, the plan of salvation would have been broken. {DA 119.1}

Neither here nor at any subsequent time in His earthly life did He work a miracle in His own behalf. His wonderful works were all for the good of others. Though Jesus recognized Satan from the beginning, He was not provoked to enter into controversy with him. Strengthened with the memory of the voice from heaven, He rested in His Father's love. He would not parley with temptation. {DA 119.3}

Jesus met Satan with the words of Scripture. "It is written," He said. In every temptation the weapon of His warfare was the word of God. Satan demanded of Christ a miracle as a sign of His divinity. But that which is greater than all miracles, a firm reliance upon a "Thus saith the Lord," was a sign that could not be controverted. So long as Christ held to this position, the tempter could gain no advantage. {DA 120.1}

The Saviour is still carrying forward the same work as when He proffered the water of life to the woman of Samaria. Those who call themselves His followers may despise and shun the outcast ones; but no circumstance of birth or nationality, no condition of life, can turn away His love from the children of men. To every soul, however sinful, Jesus says, If thou hadst asked of Me, I would have given thee living water. {DA 194.1}

Heaven's plan of salvation is broad enough to embrace the whole world. God longs to breathe into prostrate humanity the breath of life. And He will not permit any soul to be disappointed who is sincere in his longing for something higher and nobler than anything the world can offer. Constantly He is sending His angels to those who, while surrounded by circumstances the most discouraging, pray in faith for some power higher than themselves to take possession of them and bring deliverance and peace. In various ways God will reveal Himself to them and will place them in touch with providences that will establish their confidence in the One who has given Himself a ransom for all, "that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." Psalm 78:7. {PK 377.1}

He who called the fisherman of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to

Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God. {DA 297.1}

We are to be laborers together with the heavenly angels in presenting Jesus to the world. With almost impatient eagerness the angels wait for our co-operation; for man must be the channel to communicate with man. And when we give ourselves to Christ in wholehearted devotion, angels rejoice that they may speak through our voices to reveal God's love. {DA 297.3}

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}