

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2017: “Feed My Sheep”: 1 and 2 Peter

Lesson 3 “A Royal Priesthood”

Read for this week’s study

1 Peter 2:1–3; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 2:4–8; Isaiah 28:16; Exodus 19:3–6; 1 Peter 2:5, 9, 10.

Memory Text

“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Living as a Christian
- III. The Living Stone
- IV. God’s Covenant People
- V. A Royal Priesthood
- VI. Proclaiming the Praises
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. In this week’s passage (2:1-10), Peter employs four pictures which emphasize the importance of unity and harmony: we are newborn children in the same family (1:22-2:3); we are living stones in the same building (2:4-8); we are royal priests in the same temple (2:5,9); we are chosen citizens of the same nation (2:9-10).
2. The image of the first section is a baby that has recently been born and now needs to feed, to grow and to learn to live within the family. Becoming a Christian is about the new life within us, first the birth, then being nourished and sustained, and growing to maturity. The last stage is marked with the discovery that there are good ways (1:22) and bad ways (2:1) of relating to those around you—and with that wisdom comes the opportunity of learning to choose the first and renounce the second. The key is a true, strong and vital relationship with the Lord: “Taste and see that the Lord is gracious.” (Psalm 34:8) Then like a newborn baby that has tasted its mother’s milk, we will want more and go on thirsting, and refusing, like a sensible baby, to be satisfied with anything less. “Taste and see that the Lord is gracious” – the picture of God is crucial!

3. The second image is that of living stones in the same building (2:4-8). For the first century Jews the great hope of Israel was that the true God, Yahweh, would return to Jerusalem (Zion), coming to live forever in the Temple – once it had been properly rebuilt so as to be a suitable residence for him. There was a long tradition of speaking about the temple being built on the ‘rock’, on the ‘cornerstone’.
4. Secondly, the word for ‘stone’ (*eben*) in Hebrew is very similar to the word for ‘son’ (*ben*) (see Mark 12:1-12 cf. Psalm 118:22). In 2 Samuel 7:12-14 God promised David that his son would build the temple in Jerusalem. *This* son of David would actually be the son of God himself. Isaiah (28:16) adds that this royal son (*ben*) of God will build on the proper stone (*eben*). Thus for Peter, Jesus is the ‘stone’, and the new temple is already being built upon him.
5. Psalm 118:22 talks about the stone that the builders rejected because it didn’t seem to fit. When they got to the top of the corner wall, they found that the discarded stone was the cornerstone. Peter reminds his readers that Jesus was rejected by his own people, because he did not fulfill their expectations, their picture of the coming Messiah. But God has shown him to be the most important stone in the whole building.
6. Why is this important? Peter is writing to scattered communities who need assurance that they, too, are part of this new Temple. God no longer lives in a Temple in Jerusalem, but in the ‘spiritual house’ which, made up of ‘living stones’ is being ‘built’ all over the world. God wants to fill the whole world with his glory (Numbers 14:21; Psalm 72:19). God establishes a people around the world who already make up a ‘house’ for him to live in – even those in ‘*diaspora*’.
7. This brings us to the third picture – Peter applies to this scattered group of Jesus’ followers the terms from Ex 19:3-6 which belonged to the nation of Israel: ‘holy priesthood’, offering ‘spiritual sacrifices’, ‘chosen race, the royal priesthood’. They are presented with the opportunity to show the world what the true God had done!
8. Highlighting this point takes us to the fourth picture. In 2:10 Peter refers to a passage from Hosea 2:23 which speaks about the people who were ‘not a people’ but now are ‘God’s people’. The people who had not received mercy now have received mercy. These truths were spoken before of ethnic Israel. Peter believed that all God’s promises to Israel had been fulfilled in the Messiah, in Jesus himself. Therefore, all who belonged to Jesus had now been brought into that ‘people of God’, the true temple. The true God is now living in them. The temple is being rebuilt not in Jerusalem, but all around the world.
9. And that is true even of us today. As we become firmly anchored in the truth about who Jesus is and who we are as his followers, we will be able to live more fully in the light the rest of Peter’s letter urges us to choose. What a privilege and a responsibility!

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Look at 2:9, about our being God's peculiar people: "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, ..."

I don't have the troublesome word 'peculiar' in this translation. As a boy, I remember going through a little period of not liking the idea that I was supposed to be 'peculiar', to be a saint. What boy wants to be odd? It's just that I misunderstood the word 'peculiar'. Peculiar does not mean 'odd'. It means that it is distinctively, particularly yours. And the Greek word means even more than that. Something that is peculiarly yours is your special possession. It's something that you have made your own. The verb means to go and get something and make it your own. And God says, "I have gone and got you, and made you my own. You are my own special possession. You are my peculiar people." And he doesn't mean, "You are surely a collector's item, because I never saw such odd people in the history of the universe." No. Rare, maybe. But not in the whole universe. Aren't the loyal in the majority, as the picture comes through Scripture? The minority rebelled. But on a universe-wide scale, the majority have chosen to stay loyal. So it shouldn't be that rare. It is on this planet. The word means, in God's sight we are his special possession. The 'apple of his eye', in the Old Testament. Anyone have a version that's a problem there? 'Peculiar'? It's not a bad word. It is a good word.

It almost seems some people cultivate peculiarity, as if there were something saintly about daring to look odd. Do you remember Ellen White's advice on dress? Rather than looking conspicuously saintly, just don't look conspicuous at all, was the idea. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – 1&2 Peter and James, recorded July, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/75MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/76MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

God's work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power, to meet the wants of men in the different ages. Beginning with the first gospel promise, and coming down through the patriarchal and Jewish ages, and even to the present time, there has been a gradual unfolding of the purposes of God in the plan of redemption. The Saviour typified in the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law is the very same that is revealed in the gospel. The clouds that enveloped His divine form have rolled back; the mists and shades have disappeared; and Jesus, the world's Redeemer, stands revealed. He who proclaimed the law from Sinai, and delivered to Moses the precepts of the ritual law, is the same that spoke the Sermon on the Mount. The great principles of love to God, which He set forth as the foundation of the law and the prophets, are only a reiteration of what

He had spoken through Moses to the Hebrew people: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Leviticus 19:18. The teacher is the same in both dispensations. God's claims are the same. The principles of His government are the same. For all proceed from Him "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1:17. {PP 373.2}

To His children today the Lord declares, "Be strong, . . . and work: for I am with you." The Christian always has a strong helper in the Lord. The way of the Lord's helping we may not know; but this we do know: He will never fail those who put their trust in Him. Could Christians realize how many times the Lord has ordered their way, that the purposes of the enemy concerning them might not be accomplished, they would not stumble along complainingly. Their faith would be stayed on God, and no trial would have power to move them. They would acknowledge Him as their wisdom and efficiency, and He would bring to pass that which He desires to work out through them. {PK 576.1}

The law of love is the foundation of God's government, and the service of love the only service acceptable to Heaven. God has granted freedom of will to all, endowed men with capacity to appreciate His character, and therefore with ability to love Him and to choose His service. So long as created beings worshiped God they were in harmony throughout the universe. While love to God was supreme, love to others abounded. As there was no transgression of the law, which is the transcript of God's character, no note of discord jarred the celestial harmonies. {TMK 366.2}

Christ's church is to be a blessing, and its members are to be blessed as they bless others. The object of God in choosing a people before all the world was not only that He might adopt them as His sons and daughters, but that through them He might confer on the world the benefits of divine illumination. When the Lord chose Abraham it was not simply to be the special friend of God, but to be a medium of the precious and peculiar privileges the Lord desired to bestow upon the nations. He was to be a light amid the moral darkness of his surroundings. {RC 205.2}

Whenever God blesses His children with light and truth, it is not only that they may have the gift of eternal life, but that those around them may also be spiritually enlightened. . . . "Ye are the salt of the earth." And when God makes His children salt, it is not only for their own preservation, but that they may be agents in preserving others. {RC 205.3}

The religion of Christ is not a selfish religion. It is not to be kept under lock and key, but it is to be an influence of power going forth from every genuine Christian to enlighten those that sit in darkness. Every soul connected with a true Christian will be made better thereby. We are to be God's light bearers, reflecting the steady beams of heaven upon others. {RC 205.4}

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}

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 only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. "The truth shall make you free;" and Christ is the truth. Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one's self,—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is "the law of liberty." James 2:12. {DA 466.5}

Satan is constantly urging men to accept his principles. Thus he seeks to counterwork the work of God. He is constantly representing the chosen people of God as a deluded people. He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power he is constantly using against those who work righteousness. The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan's charges by showing the result of obedience to right principles. {6T 11.2}

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}

Prayer is heaven's ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, "Ye shall receive." {AA 564.1}

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. {MB 109.2}

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us. {DA 668.3}

As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we will take hold of the Strong for strength. But we are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else. If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised. Whatever was given to Christ—the "all things" to supply the need of fallen men—was given to Him as the head and representative of humanity. And "whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." 1 John 3:22. {DA 668.4}

Though He was a Jew, Christ mingled with the Samaritans, setting at naught the Pharisaic customs of His nation. In face of their prejudices, He accepted the hospitality of this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate with them at their tables, partaking of the food prepared and served by their hands—and taught in their streets, and treated them with the utmost kindness and courtesy. {3SM 238.2}

Jesus sat as an honored guest at the table of the publicans, by His sympathy and social kindness showing that He recognized the dignity of humanity; and men longed to become

worthy of His confidence. Upon their thirsty souls His words fell with blessed, life-giving power. New impulses were awakened, and the possibility of a new life opened to these outcasts of society. {3SM 238.3}

There is no caste with God. He ignores everything of the kind. All souls are of value with Him. Laboring for the salvation of the soul is employment worthy of the highest honor. It matters not what may be the form of our labor, or among what class, whether high or low. In God's sight these distinctions will not affect its true worth. The sincere, earnest, contrite soul, however ignorant, is precious in the sight of the Lord. He places His own signet upon men, judging, not by their rank, not by their wealth, not by their intellectual greatness, but by their oneness with Christ. The unlearned, the outcast, the slave, if he has made the most of his opportunities and privileges, if he has cherished the light given him of God, has done all that is required. The world may call him ignorant, but God calls him wise and good, and thus his name stands registered in the books of heaven. God will fit him up to do Him honor, not only in heaven, but on the earth.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 332. (1915) {Ev 566.1}

Wherever there is an impulse of love and sympathy, wherever the heart reaches out to bless and uplift others, there is revealed the working of God's Holy Spirit. In the depths of heathenism, men who have had no knowledge of the written law of God, who have never even heard the name of Christ, have been kind to His servants, protecting them at the risk of their own lives. Their acts show the working of a divine power. The Holy Spirit has implanted the grace of Christ in the heart of the savage, quickening his sympathies contrary to his nature, contrary to his education. The "Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9), is shining in his soul; and this light, if heeded, will guide his feet to the kingdom of God. {COL 385.1}

The glory of heaven is in lifting up the fallen, comforting the distressed. And wherever Christ abides in human hearts, He will be revealed in the same way. Wherever it acts, the religion of Christ will bless. Wherever it works, there is brightness. {COL 386.1}

During His earthly ministry Christ began to break down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and to preach salvation to all mankind. Though He was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of the Jews with regard to this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate at their tables, and taught in their streets. {AA 19.2}

The Saviour longed to unfold to His disciples the truth regarding the breaking down of the "middle wall of partition" between Israel and the other nations—the truth that "the Gentiles should be fellow heirs" with the Jews and "partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." Ephesians 2:14; 3:6. This truth was revealed in part at the time when He rewarded the faith of the centurion at Capernaum, and also when He preached the gospel to the inhabitants of Sychar. Still more plainly was it revealed on the occasion of His visit to Phoenicia, when He

healed the daughter of the Canaanite woman. These experiences helped the disciples to understand that among those whom many regarded as unworthy of salvation, there were souls hungering for the light of truth. {AA 19.3}

The opinion is held by many that God placed a separating wall between the Hebrews and the outside world; that His care and love, withdrawn to a great extent from the rest of mankind, were centered upon Israel. But God did not design that His people should build up a wall of partition between themselves and their fellow men. The heart of Infinite Love was reaching out toward all the inhabitants of the earth. Though they had rejected Him, He was constantly seeking to reveal Himself to them and make them partakers of His love and grace. His blessing was granted to the chosen people, that they might bless others. {PP 368.1}