

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2019: *The Book of Revelation*

Lesson 3 God's People *in* Cities

Read for this week's study

Revelation 2:8–11, 3:7–11, 2:12–17, 14:12, 2:18–29, 3:1–6, 3:14–22; Isaiah 61:10.

Memory Text

“ ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches’ ” (Revelation 3:22, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Christ's Messages to Smyrna and Philadelphia
- III. Christ's Message to Pergamum
- IV. Christ's Message to Thyatira
- V. Christ's Message to Sardis
- VI. Christians in Laodicea
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Compare Jesus' self-introduction to each of the seven churches with everything that is said about Him in chapter one. What are the implications of the fact that each church gets a partial and different picture of Jesus? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. The lesson pairs the second (Smyrna) and sixth (Philadelphia) of the seven churches because the messages to both are relatively positive. The message to Pergamum (third) and Sardis (fifth) are both relatively negative. The message to Thyatira (fourth) is twice as long as the others. This has led some scholars to see a seven-branched candlestick as the model for structuring the seven churches. What would such an arrangement imply regarding the meaning of the letters to the seven churches? (Sunday's lesson)
3. Read Revelation 2:8-11. What was the situation of Smyrna? What warning does Jesus give to the church about what it would face in the future? Read Revelation 3:7-13. How does the way Jesus presents Himself relate to the situation of Philadelphia? What does the "little strength" statement say about the condition of the church? What promises does this church receive? (Sunday's lesson)

4. Read Revelation 2:12-15. How does Jesus present Himself to Pergamum? What was His appraisal of the church's spiritual condition? Read Revelation 2:16-17. What does Jesus urge the church to do in order to help them improve their spiritual condition? What promises is this church given? (Monday's lesson)
5. Read Revelation 2:18-29. How does Jesus introduce Himself to Thyatira? What are the positive characteristics of the church and what are its more troubling issues? Is it OK to kill some children (Revelation 2:23) in order to educate the rest of the church? How would you apply the message of verse 25 to your life today? (Tuesday's lesson)
6. Read Revelation 3:1-6 along with Matthew 24:42-44 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1-8. What three things does Jesus urge Sardis to do as a cure for its spiritual condition? How does Jesus' warning relate to the historical background of the city? (Wednesday's lesson)
7. Read Revelation 3:14-17 along with Hosea 12:8. Are there parallels between the historical characteristics of the city and Christ's appraisal of this church? Read Revelation 3:18-22. What do gold, white garments and eye salve symbolize (use a concordance or Bible margin to find parallel texts)? Since Seventh-day Adventists often see this passage as applying directly to themselves, what should this text say to them? (Thursday's lesson)
8. Count the number of promises at the end of each of the seven churches. Do you see any pattern in these promises and what might those patterns teach us? (Friday's lesson)
9. What does the fact that so many Christians in ancient cities remained loyal to the gospel tell us about being Christian in the city today? What does it mean to be "in the world" but not "of the world" today? (Friday's lesson)
10. Many Protestant Christians see in the letters to the seven churches a prophecy of Christian history. Google "seven churches as a prophecy of Christian history" to review a number of outlines for how people make these connections. What can or should we learn from such historical applications? Why do you think more and more people today seem to ignore these? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

When those early Christians read about the seven churches, there were people from the seven churches in the audience. And there's mention of this church. And folk would look around and say, "That's right. Brother Jones is from that one." And they'd mention this church, and they'd say, "Ah, Sister Smith is from that one." And they'd realize they were all included by the time they got to the Laodicean message. There were people from all seven of those churches in the audience that read the book of Revelation. And they knew it was an honest report. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Larger View, #3, recorded October, 1982,

Monterey, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/3MMLVIEW>*

So there then follows in Revelation 2 and 3, messages to the seven churches. Periods to come? Or the churches right there and then? Wouldn't they assume this was talking about them? I think that is far more important than working out the periods. Look at the condition represented by each of these. And we can identify ourselves. See, we think we are down in the Laodicean period. Does that mean that everybody now has to be a Laodicean? Could you be a Philadelphian in the Laodicean period? Does this mean that everybody who lived in Pergamus was like that? Not necessarily, it's that it was the prevalent state of mind in those particular places. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Acts, recorded August, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/79MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/80MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

He uses an interesting word, “wretched man that I am.” The Greek is *talaipōros*, wretched. It only occurs one other place in the New Testament, very interesting for us; it's in the Laodicean message. When you see us as God's chosen people in the last days keeping the Sabbath, paying tithe, practicing health reform, reading our Bibles, just like the Jews in Paul's day, we're just like them. And very busy, the messenger says, “I know your works”, but evidently doing it in the wrong way. And yet saying, “We're rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”. Whoever complained of having too much income, too much food? So this isn't material wealth. This is such things as the passage then goes on to say, “We lack faith, love, righteousness and spiritual insight.” In other words, the Laodicean says, “I am rich in faith, love, righteousness, and spiritual insight.”

How about Romans chapter 2? The description of God's Sabbath-keeping people in those days, a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, schooled in the law, a corrector of the foolish, don't we claim to be such? But a caution is the legalism of Paul's day led those who really wanted to do what was right, but hadn't found the right way, to a condition of wretchedness. One of the word's literal meanings is: worn out from hard work, trying so hard but it doesn't work. In a way the legalist who's really trying hard deserves respect and sympathy. He's working his head off to do what's right but in the wrong way, doing the right thing for the wrong reason; volunteering, you know, to an extra night of ingathering. I mean, often they're the backbone of church, these folk who are doing the right thing for the wrong reason. One should be very kind toward such because it isn't going to work, hard as they try. And if they're conscientious they'll cry, “Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from all these bad habits?”

In the Laodicean message it says we claim to have faith, righteousness, love and spiritual insight. Instead we are wretched. That is, worn out from hard work, the exhaustion of a legalist who isn't succeeding. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 7, recorded November, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/13MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/14MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Paul speaks of the unity that exists among those who know and love the same God. So that's what binds people together: the unity inherent in our faith and our knowledge of the Son of God. And John says the same thing. People who know God recognize this in each other, and they listen. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – 1, 2, 3 John and Jude, recorded August 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/77MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/78MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

When Christ ascended to heaven, the sense of His presence was still with His followers. It was a personal presence, full of love and light. . . . {FLB 62.5}

Henceforth through the Spirit, Christ was to abide continually in the hearts of the children. Their union with Him was closer than when He was personally with them. The light, and love, and power of the indwelling Christ shone out through them, so that men, beholding, "marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Acts 4:13. All that Christ was to the disciples, He desires to be to His children today. {FLB 62.6}

Never feel that Christ is far away. He is always near. His loving presence surrounds you. {FLB 62.8}

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}

The gospel invitation is not to be narrowed down, and presented only to a select few, who, we suppose, will do us honor if they accept it. The message is to be given to all. Wherever hearts are open to receive the truth, Christ is ready to instruct them. He reveals to them the Father, and the worship acceptable to Him who reads the heart. For such He uses no parables. To them, as to the woman at the well, He says, "I that speak unto thee am He." {DA 194.2}

Those who are seeking to be faithful to God may be denied many of the privileges of the world; their way may be hedged up and their work hindered by the enemies of truth; but there is no power that can close the door of communication between God and their souls. The Christian himself may close this door by indulgence in sin, or by rejection of heaven's light. He may turn away his ears from hearing the message of truth, and in this way sever the connection between God and his soul.... Every day we have the precious privilege of connecting ourselves with Christ, who has set before us an open door. All heaven is at our command. If we are obedient children of God, we may draw daily supplies of grace. Whatever temptations, trials, or persecutions may come upon us, we need not be discouraged. Neither man nor Satan can close the door which Christ has opened for us. {OHC 128.3}

Whenever tempted, we have this open door to behold. No power can hide from us the light of the glory which shines from the threshold of heaven along the whole length of the ladder we are to climb; for the Lord has given us strength in His strength, courage in His courage, light in His light. When the powers of darkness are overcome, when the light of the glory of God floods the world, we shall see and understand more clearly than we do today. If we only realized that the glory of God is round about us, that heaven is nearer earth than we suppose, we should have a heaven in our homes while preparing for the heaven above. {OHC 128.4}

Abundant provision has been made that those who will seek God with the whole heart may find Him a present help in every time of trouble. Help has been laid on One that is mighty. Christ has promised, I will be your helper. {OHC 107.4}

Amidst great discouragement, Nehemiah made God his trust, his sure defense. And He who was the support of His servant then has been the dependence of His people in every age. In every crisis His people may confidently declare, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:31. However craftily the plots of Satan and his agents may be laid, God can detect them, and bring to nought all their counsels. The response of faith today will be the response made by Nehemiah, "Our God shall fight for us;" for God is in the work, and no man can prevent its ultimate success. {PK 645.2}

Let all who are afflicted or unjustly used, cry to God. Turn away from those whose hearts are as steel, and make your requests known to your Maker. Never is one repulsed who comes to Him with a contrite heart. Not one sincere prayer is lost. Amid the anthems of the celestial choir, God hears the cries of the weakest human being. We pour out our heart's desire in our closets, we breathe a prayer as we walk by the way, and our words reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. They may be inaudible to any human ear, but they cannot die away into silence, nor can they be lost through the activities of business that are going on. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the confusion of the multitude, to the heavenly courts. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard. {COL 174.1}

Jesus declares that the Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. The Holy Spirit understands man's every necessity. He will bestow upon the earnest seeker that for which he hungers and thirsts. The blessings that God has to bestow are unlimited. We cannot comprehend their height and depth and breadth. All heaven is at the command of those who, realizing their lack of wisdom, come directly to the source of wisdom. To such ones God gives liberally and upbraids not. But let them ask in faith, nothing wavering. . . . The one who receives wisdom from on high is the one who holds fast to the promise, the one who feels his need, and will not be turned aside. . . . {HP 294.4}

The enemy can never take out of the hand of Christ the one who is simply trusting in His promises. If the soul is trusting and working obediently, the mind is susceptible to divine impressions, and the light of God shines in, enlightening the understanding. {SD 351.4}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. The living God has given in His holy law a transcript of His character. The greatest Teacher the world has ever known is Jesus Christ; and what is the standard He has given for all who believe in Him? "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:48. As God is perfect in His high sphere of action, so man may be perfect in his human sphere. {CT 365.2}

The ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness. There is opened before us a path of continual advancement. We have an object to reach, a standard to gain, which includes everything good and pure and noble and elevated. There should be continual striving and constant progress onward and upward toward perfection of character. . . . {CT 365.3}

Without the divine working, man can do no good thing. God calls every man to repentance, yet man cannot even repent unless the Holy Spirit works upon his heart. But the Lord wants no man to wait until he thinks he has repented before he takes steps toward Jesus. The Saviour is continually drawing men to repentance; they need only to submit to be drawn, and their hearts will be melted in penitence. {CT 365.4}

The lost coin, in the Saviour's parable, though lying in the dirt and rubbish, was a piece of silver still. Its owner sought it because it was of value. So every soul, however degraded by sin, is in God's sight accounted precious. As the coin bore the image and superscription of the reigning power, so man at his creation bore the image and superscription of God. Though now marred and dim through the influence of sin, the traces of this inscription remain upon every soul. God desires to recover that soul and to retrace upon it His own image in righteousness and holiness. {MH 163.1}

The love of God still yearns over the one who has chosen to separate from Him, and He sets in operation influences to bring him back to the Father's house. The prodigal son in his wretchedness "came to himself." The deceptive power that Satan had exercised over him was

broken. He saw that his suffering was the result of his own folly, and he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father." Miserable as he was, the prodigal found hope in the conviction of his father's love. It was that love which was drawing him toward home. So it is the assurance of God's love that constrains the sinner to return to God. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Romans 2:4. A golden chain, the mercy and compassion of divine love, is passed around every imperiled soul. The Lord declares, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:3. {COL 202.1}

Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ are the fruits of the renewing power of the grace of the Spirit. Repentance represents the process by which the soul seeks to reflect the image of Christ to the world. {ML 49.3}

Christ gives them the breath of His own Spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through cooperation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence. {ML 49.4}

As the Lord co-operated with Daniel and his fellows, so He will co-operate with all who strive to do His will. And by the impartation of His Spirit He will strengthen every true purpose, every noble resolution. Those who walk in the path of obedience will encounter many hindrances. Strong, subtle influences may bind them to the world; but the Lord is able to render futile every agency that works for the defeat of His chosen ones; in His strength they may overcome every temptation, conquer every difficulty. {PK 487.1}

The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son, bring out in distinct lines God's pitying love for those who are straying from Him. Although they have turned away from God, He does not leave them in their misery. He is full of kindness and tender pity toward all who are exposed to the temptations of the artful foe. {COL 198.1}

The same divine mind that is working upon the things of nature is speaking to the hearts of men and creating an inexpressible craving for something they have not. The things of the world cannot satisfy their longing. The Spirit of God is pleading with them to seek for those things that alone can give peace and rest—the grace of Christ, the joy of holiness. Through influences seen and unseen, our Saviour is constantly at work to attract the minds of men from the unsatisfying pleasures of sin to the infinite blessings that may be theirs in Him. To all these souls, who are vainly seeking to drink from the broken cisterns of this world, the divine message is addressed, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17. {SC 28.1}