

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### Second Quarter 2020: *How to Interpret Scripture*

### Lesson 13 “Living by the Word of God”

#### Read for this week’s study

Philippians 2:12–16; Luke 4:4, 8, 10–12; Psalm 37:7; Psalm 46:10; Psalm 62:1, 2, 5;  
Colossians 3:16.

#### Memory Text

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22, NKJV).

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

- I. Introduction
- II. The Living Word of God and the Holy Spirit
- III. Learning From Jesus
- IV. Jesus Versus Scripture?
- V. Quiet Times With the Word of God
- VI. Memory and Song
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “The best method of studying the Bible is of no use if we are not determined to live by what we learn from Scripture. What is true for education in general is also true for studying the Bible in particular: you learn best not just by reading or hearing, but by practicing what you know. [...] This week, we will study what it means to live by the Word of God and under its divine authority.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. This quarter we were supposed to learn how to discover the meaning of the biblical text and apply it to our lives. As with any other meaningful and orderly activity, it involves several steps: 1) Understanding the text in its original situation (historical-cultural context) for the biblical audience 2) Understanding the gap we need to cross to our situation. 3) Formulating the bridging theological principle and comparing how it fits with the rest of the Bible storyline 4) Applying the principle in our contemporary society, both as individuals and as a community.
3. Without understanding these basic interpretative steps, it can be difficult to make sense of an ancient book, holy or inspired. It requires much thought, and digging and

searching for the meaning. There is a danger, however, to draw the conclusion from this that understanding the Bible could be reduced to a set of interpretive steps.

4. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in this process? (Sunday's lesson) How does the Holy Spirit "guide us into all truth" (John 16:13)? And if we have the Spirit, do we need to be concerned with the proper procedures or steps?
5. It is important to realize that the Spirit does not add new meaning to the biblical text, nor provides new information. Instead he helps the believers understand and apply the meaning that is already in the text (inspiration vs. illumination). Thus the Spirit's role is "Word's empowering presence". As Kevin Vanhoozer says: "The Spirit may blow where he wills, but not *what* he wills." The Spirit's role is not to author a new Bible (i.e. revealing new meaning through personal experience, religious tradition, or community consensus) which stand above the Spirit-inspired Word of God. It is to bring to us the meaning of the Scripture the Spirit already authored.
6. Spiritual maturity affects our ability to hear the voice of the Spirit in the Scriptures. When we are spiritually immature it is easy to misread, misunderstand, and misapply the Scriptures.
7. In what sense is Jesus our role model when it comes to interpreting the Scripture (Monday & Tuesday's lesson)? What is his role? Similarly, as the Spirit was never given to replace the Scripture, Jesus is not replacing the Old Testament with New. It takes both to see the significance and the role that Jesus plays in his community.
8. How does the Spirit use the devotional reading of the Bible and prayer to encourage and facilitate spiritual growth? How do we make sure we do not over intellectualize the process of understanding the Scripture and that the entire being is involved?
9. Traditionally, the Christian tradition used the following steps throughout the centuries to benefit from devotional times: Silence, Reading, Meditating, Praying, Reflecting. Notice the relationship between prayer, the Spirit, and understanding in Ephesians 3:17-19. All three contribute to growth in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!
10. What is the role of memorizing the Scripture and putting it into a song (Thursday's lesson)?
11. The task of interpretation is the journey not only of individuals, but of the whole community of believers. This is not simply an intellectual endeavor; it involves our entire being under the dynamic guidance of the Holy Spirit. If God has not finished his work yet, there is more light to be found in the Bible. It is when we are humbly willing to listen to what the Spirit has to teach us that understanding comes to us individually and as a community at every place and at every level.

## Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Yet Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for us (Mark 2:27). It was not to be a mere test of obedience, but rather to be a help. I believe that the great purpose of the Sabbath is to remind us of the truth that is the basis of our faith; the very truth that does set us free. In the first place, the Bible tells us in Exodus 20 and Exodus 31, that the Sabbath is designed to serve as a reminder that God created us; that we are his creatures. But to be more specific, according to Colossians 1:16, the one who created us was none other than Christ himself. The seventh-day Sabbath reminds us that the one who came to save us is also the one who made us in the beginning. The gentle Jesus who died on Calvary is also the supreme, all powerful creator of the universe. God did not send some subordinate person to die for us. The Creator came himself, one who is equal with God, for he is God. By keeping holy the seventh-day Sabbath, we acknowledge our faith in Jesus as not only our Savior, but also our Creator and our God.

A second way in which the seventh-day Sabbath serves to strengthen faith is mentioned in Exodus 31:13 and Exodus 20:12, 20. There we're told the Sabbath is designed to remind us that God is the one who sanctifies us. Our sanctification includes not just forgiveness, but the healing of the damage sin has done. It means the harmonious development of our physical, mental and spiritual powers, until the image of God, in which we were originally created, is perfectly restored. The observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is an acknowledgement that only the Creator can perform such a marvelous work of healing and transformation. Just as he created us in the beginning, so he has the power to re-create us now. Surely it is no less a miracle of creation to restore fallen human beings than it was to create them perfect in the beginning. No wonder David prayed as he did after his sad experience with Bathsheba, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Psalm 51:10.

Now some seek to accomplish this transformation by themselves by rigorous obedience, self-discipline and self-denial. The Sabbath comes each week to remind us that only by faith in our Creator can the healing work be done. It's strange that Sabbath-keeping should be thought to be a legalistic act; a denial of true faith. Actually, Sabbath-keeping done in the right spirit is a denial of legalism, a denial that we can save ourselves. It's an acknowledgment that only by faith in the one who created us in the beginning can we possibly be healed and re-created now. And what a perversion it is to suggest that seventh-day Sabbath keeping is legalism; except that we can turn it around that way—and it has been done.

A third way in which the Sabbath serves to remind us of the truth and strengthen our faith in God is mentioned in Hebrews chapter four. There the Sabbath is described as a type and a foretaste of the final rest and restoration to come. Just as God rested from his labors at the end of creation week so there remains a Sabbath-like rest; the Greek says a '*sabbatismos*'. You can almost hear the meaning of the word. "There remains there a Sabbath-like rest for the people of God. When the children of Israel marched into the land of Canaan, they failed to enter into

God's rest," the apostle says, "because of lack of faith. They possessed the Promised Land but they did not enjoy the Sabbath-like rest that faith brings." Just remember the book of Judges. Would you call that the Sabbath-like rest? That is not God's intention. "But those who maintain their faith in Christ may begin to enjoy this rest even in this life and they will enter into it fully when they are admitted to the heavenly Canaan and Eden is restored." So by keeping holy the seventh-day Sabbath, we acknowledge our anticipation of this Sabbath-like rest to come. We acknowledge our faith in the second coming of Christ and the re-creation of all things.

There are more of course, but these three focuses or purposes of the Sabbath answer the three great questions that have stood in the minds of thinking people—the three great quests of philosophy. Where have we come from? Why are we here? And where do we go after we die?

But mankind has paid a heavy price for neglecting the Sabbath, or substituting another day. For without the Sabbath to provide the answers to the three great questions of life, other solutions have been substituted. Where have we come from? Without the seventh-day Sabbath to remind us that in the beginning Christ created us, room has been left for the substitution of the theory of the evolutionary origin of the human race. Or as others say more scientifically, we don't know where we've come from. Why are we here? How do we attain to the greatest good in life? Without the seventh-day Sabbath to remind us that righteousness and salvation come by faith in Jesus Christ, room has been left for the substitution of the fundamental error of righteousness by works. Or as others have said more carelessly, we don't know why we're here. So let's eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die! And where do we go after we die? Without the seventh-day Sabbath to point forward to the second coming, to the rewards of faith and the results of sin, room has been left for the substitution of the belief in the natural immortality of the soul. Or as others prefer to say, we don't know where we go after we die. So again, let's eat, drink and be merry.

Incidentally, those three substitute answers; aren't they almost universally held? And not just in Christianity. Belief in the natural immortality of the soul is shared by almost everybody. The idea that salvation comes by works, Ellen White states that is the fundamental error of every false religious system, salvation by works. There are all kinds of substitute explanations as to where we came from that put God in a bad light, or that make of no effect the plan of salvation. But all three of these substitutions wipe out all the significance of the plan of salvation. This is why the seventh-day Sabbath is so vital a part of God's last message to the world. The main difference between the many religions in the world and true Christianity lies in the answers to these three great quests.

We also speak of the seventh-day Sabbath as being the seal of God and we all want to be sealed at the end. In what sense do you understand the seventh-day Sabbath to be the seal of God? In what sense could it be? Would it be possible to be observing the seventh-day Sabbath at the end and be on the wrong side in the Great Controversy? It's happened before. Is the mere

refraining from work from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown evidence that one has the seal of God?

If to be “sealed” means to be so settled into the truth about God, both intellectually and spiritually, that one cannot be moved, then obviously there have been many people who appeared to observe the seventh-day Sabbath who were not settled into the truth. In fact they had accepted the lie. The men who crucified Christ didn’t work from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown. Would you say they had the seal of God? So in what sense could the seventh-day Sabbath be the seal, do you think? The Sabbath really does sum up this truth about God. It answers the questions about life, and the questions about God; they go right together in a package, don’t they? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Faith, Righteousness and Salvation, #13 “Faith and the seventh-day Sabbath”, recorded April 1975, Lynwood, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*  
[http://pkp.cc/13MMFRS \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/13MMFRS) [http://pkp.cc/14MMFRS \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/14MMFRS)

Can truth be established by the show of power? Satan tries. He has to—because the truth isn’t with him. And in the absence of evidence he has to use other methods. He loves to use fire down from heaven, as the Bible says, and miracles and all kinds of other ways of seducing and intimidating us, and misleading and deceiving us.

But since the truth is with our heavenly Father, he never has to stoop to use such methods. That is one reason, I believe, that he is not visibly here. Because if he were to be here, even in humble form as his Son was when he came, our tendency would be to say, “God, if you’ve said it, we believe it, and that is all there is to it!” Recognizing who he is. And so even Jesus said, after just three and a half years the Gentle One says, “It’s better that I go now.” Especially since they now recognized that he was God; and now the disciples would stop thinking things through. They would simply run to him and ask him their questions; they would accept his answers on the authority of who he was. It seems like the right thing to do.

Yet in the great controversy God does not ask for that. So even gentle Jesus said, “It is better that I go, and I’ll send the Holy Spirit who will come as a still small voice. He’ll come to be a Teacher and a Guide to lead you into the truth. You won’t see him. He won’t intimidate you. He only works with evidence. Most particularly he’ll help you understand the Bible.” For God does speak to us. He does answer our questions. But he does it through what we call his Word. We talk to God, and he talks to us as we study the scriptures. That’s why I believe that really thoughtful study of the scriptures is a form of prayer. That’s conversing with God as with a friend. Now some people pray a great deal, but never hear God speak back because they never spend much time reading the Bible.

But if one reads the Bible and then responds to God, there is conversation as one thinks along, and says to God, "That's marvelous, what I've just read." This is conversation with God as with a friend, and that's the meaning of prayer. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4, "God's Way of Restoring Trust" 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/4MMCAG>*

### Further Study with Ellen White

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}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning. {DA 311.2}

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. Then the prevarications and accusations of him who had once been an exalted angel were seen in their true light. It was seen that his professedly spotless character was deceptive. His deeply laid scheme to exalt himself to supremacy was fully discerned. His falsehoods were apparent to all. God's authority was forever established. Truth triumphed over falsehood. {RC 60.3}

Not merely in the minds of a few finite creatures in this world, but in the minds of all the inhabitants of the heavenly universe, has the immutability of God's law been established. Satan's course against Christ was heralded to every world. When the issue was finally determined, every unfallen being expressed indignation at the rebellion. With one voice they extolled God as righteous, merciful, self-denying, just. . . . {RC 60.4}

The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. He may distress, but he cannot contaminate. He can cause agony, but not defilement. {FLB 327.6}

The Lord has not concealed from His followers the plan of the battle. He has presented before His people the great conflict, and He has given them words of encouragement. He charges

them not to enter into the battle without counting the cost, while He assures them that they do not fight alone, but that supernatural agencies will enable the weak, if they trust in Him, to become strong against the vast confederacy of evil arrayed against them. He points them to the universe of heaven, and assures them that holy beings are wrestling against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places. {UL 82.4}

[A]ngels are round about those who are willing to be taught in divine things; and in the time of great necessity they will bring to their remembrance the very truths which are needed. Thus “when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” {ML 28.4}

It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us intimidated and discouraged by the assaults of the serpent. “Be of good cheer,” He says; “I have overcome the world.” John 16:33. {DA 122.3}

The Bible shows us God in His high and holy place, not in a state of inactivity, not in silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy beings, all waiting to do His will. Through these messengers He is in active communication with every part of His dominion. By His Spirit He is everywhere present. Through the agency of His Spirit and His angels He ministers to the children of men. {MH 417.2}

He who took humanity upon Himself knows how to sympathize with the sufferings of humanity. Not only does Christ know every soul, and the peculiar needs and trials of that soul, but He knows all the circumstances that chafe and perplex the spirit. His hand is outstretched in pitying tenderness to every suffering child. Those who suffer most have most of His sympathy and pity. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and He desires us to lay our perplexities and troubles at His feet and leave them there. {MH 249.3}

In the whole Satanic force there is not power to overcome one soul who in simple trust casts himself on Christ. {COL 157.3}

The Old Testament sheds light upon the New, and the New upon the Old. Each is a revelation of the glory of God in Christ. Both present truths that will continually reveal new depths of meaning to the earnest seeker (*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 126-128). {LHU 306.7}

When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound humanity to Himself by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power save the choice of man himself. Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie—to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. Here is where we need to watch, to strive, to pray, that nothing may entice us to choose another master; for we are always free to do this. But let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, and He will preserve us. Looking unto Jesus, we are safe. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand.

In constantly beholding Him, we “are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:18. {SC 72.1}

Remember that underneath you are the everlasting arms. “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him” (Psalm 37:7). He is guiding you into a harbor of gracious experience. {HP 269.5}

In the secret place of prayer, where no eye but God’s can see, no ear but His can hear, we may pour out our most hidden desires and longings to the Father of infinite pity, and in the hush and silence of the soul that voice which never fails to answer the cry of human need will speak to our hearts. {Pr 182.6}

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. {Pr 8.4}

There is a mighty power in prayer. Our great adversary is constantly seeking to keep the troubled soul away from God. An appeal to Heaven by the humblest saint is more to be dreaded by Satan than the decrees of cabinets or the mandates of kings. {HP 82.5}

It is a part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask. {ML 15.5}

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

Through the ministry of the angels the Holy Spirit is enabled to work upon the mind and heart of the human agent and draw him to Christ. . . . But the Spirit of God does not interfere with the freedom of the human agent. The Holy Spirit is given to be a helper, so that man may cooperate with the Divine, and it is given to Him to draw the soul but never to force obedience. {TMK 57.2}

God had power to hold Adam back from touching the forbidden fruit; but had He done this, Satan would have been sustained in his charge against God’s arbitrary rule. Man would not have been a free moral agent, but a mere machine (RH June 4, 1901). {1BC 1084.2}

Christ does not drive but draws men unto Him. The only compulsion which He employs is the constraint of love. {MB 127.1}

Satan’s rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages—a perpetual testimony to the nature of sin and its terrible results. The working out of Satan’s rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God’s government is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 42, 43). {LHU 19.6}