

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2020: Education
Lesson 13 “Heaven, Education, and Eternal Learning”

Read for this week’s study

John 3:16; 1 John 5:13; 1 Timothy 1:16; 1 Corinthians 13:12; Zechariah 13:6.

Memory Text

“ ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him’ ” (1 Corinthians 2:9, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Fate of the Dead
- III. A New Existence
- IV. Then Shall We Know
- V. The School in the Hereafter
- VI. The Great Teacher
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week we’re going to look at what inspiration tells about the ultimate graduate school, a school that goes on forever and where we will be learning and growing throughout all eternity. In this school of the hereafter, we’ll learn things that, in this present world, we can’t even begin to imagine.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. If we cannot even imagine what life will be like in 20 years (and the implications of that for our schools), how can we educate for eternity? How do we prepare for something that is beyond our imagination? (Sunday’s lesson) What does the Bible have in mind when it speaks about eternal life (John 3:16; 4:14; 6:40, 54)?
3. What is “new” about the new existence of the redeemed (Revelation 21:1-6; 2 Peter 3:10-13)? (Monday’s lesson) What does it take to be part of this new existence?
4. What did Ellen White mean when she wrote, “Heaven is a school”? (DA 301; Tuesday’s & Wednesday’s lessons) What will we keep on learning throughout eternity? What is the purpose of being in heaven and on the new earth?

5. There is no question that the presence of Jesus as the “Great Teacher” makes “heaven” extraordinarily desirable (Thursday’s lesson). Will Jesus do all the teaching? (cf. Zechariah 13:6) During his earthly ministry Jesus was constantly trying to broaden the disciples’ horizons, and often contradicted the traditional interpretations taught by the religious authorities. What do you think will be the nature of his “teaching” throughout eternity? Will it be a glorified confirmation and/or validation of everything the redeemed believed? If not, will people accept what he has to say based on his authority? How do we arrive at meaning?
6. “Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ. The longer we are in the heaven of bliss, the more and still more of glory will be opened to us; and the more we know of God, the more intense will be our happiness.” (DA 331) How do you understand this?
7. If pedagogy tells us the most profound learning often comes from a community-based learning, what are the implications for our experience throughout eternity? What type of learning is most beneficial? If “everything you have ever believed is wrong”, what kind of support, guidance, and context will be needed to survive that type of a shocking experience?
8. Why is the Second Coming (an event) in Biblical Theology only one subset of the Day of the Lord (as a much broader concept)? What kind of people are not going to be saved? Is that somehow related to a lack of capability to learn and grow? What are the implications of the eternal learning environment for the type of community we want to be and model here and now?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

If God is not going to allow the closing events to occur until he has a generation like Job, mature enough and settled into the truth to pass through the time of trouble, here are some thoughts in that connection: I think we have assumed it takes a very, very long time to grow up from rebirth to maturity. I notice that when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he suggested that they could be grown up much sooner.

And in Hebrews, it was just a few years later that he said, “By now you should be teachers, but I see you are still babes in the truth.” I think that we could encourage people to believe they could grow up from rebirth to maturity much sooner, and it would be much more exciting. You know, when we’re baptized, we think, “I’ve launched myself on sixty-five years of slow sanctification.” I think, “No, why not grow up without delay as quickly as possible and be settled into the truth?” But then when we have an absolutely out-of-sight, forbidding conception of perfection, we think “well, I’m not going to make it anyway.”

The conception of perfection we find in the Bible is the conception of an individual who is so convinced of this truth about God, that if Satan should come as an angel of light, even present himself as Christ, and say God is arbitrary, vengeful, unforgiving and severe, a twelve-year-old might be able to say, "That's not true and I will not believe it." So I think we have made the difference too extended in there, and God can, under the accelerating, energizing events of the close of time, he can produce a generation of grown-up Jobs of all ages. {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>*

Isaiah 29:13 is a most significant verse about God. What was wrong with their worship? They were busy with their worship, and just as when Jesus came, they were never more religious. They tithed, they health-reformed, they kept their Sabbaths, they memorized the scriptures. But it wasn't doing them any good! Jesus quotes this later on in Isaiah 29:13: "The Lord said: 'Because this people draw near with their mouth.'" Remember he also says, "Who requires you to trample my courts?" They came, and Amos says they sang a lot. "They honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me." The heart is where a man does his thinking, his best thinking! Amos continues, "And their fear of me", and that is their reverence, their worship of me, "is but a commandment of men learned by rote." Unthinking, mechanical worship is an utter insult to our intelligent, gracious God. And it doesn't do us any good! It destroys us to simply do these things because we're supposed to. And if we Adventists, when we're asked why we do something or don't do it—if all we can say is, "Well, because God said so, and I believe it, and that's all there is to it," that's something learned by rote. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Isaiah, recorded January 1982, 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 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/33MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/34MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: Speaking of the millennium now, this thousand-year period, what are the saints, the redeemed—those who are saved—what are they doing? That's a long period of time.

Graham: Yes, I like to remember what Peter said, "With the Lord a thousand years is like a day." You could have translated that "a millennium is like a day, and a day is like a millennium." I don't think we need to worry about the time. I think that a thousand years with the Lord will seem like a day. But I think there are important things that have to happen during that time. The angels have had a chance during what we call the investigative judgment, though that's not a biblical term—this time when the family meets to consider candidates for the Kingdom, so

that our future neighbors and friends may be satisfied that it's safe to admit rebels like us. What about us? We've not seen that. I think during the Millennium those who have been adjudged safe to save will have their opportunity to ask questions, see the evidence, to find out why Mother isn't there. I would find that very sad. Well, I know he would be fair about it, that he would show me the evidence so I would be satisfied.

More than that, there's another very gripping thing that may need to happen during the Millennium. We will be preparing ourselves to face that awful scene when the wicked are resurrected and die in a fiery moment of destruction. We have to see that someday. Are we ready to see it and not become afraid of God? I think those of us who "grow up," who may be alive to see Christ come, we will have been so settled into the truth that we can see the seven last plagues and not become afraid of God. We might be ready to see this. But think of all the babes in the truth who have been saved from the foot of Mt. Sinai. Think of the thief on the cross. Think of all the others who have not had time and evidence to become confirmed in this.

Everyone must be ready for that awesome day when God may call to us, to everybody who will be inside the New Jerusalem that day, when God says, "Children, you know what's coming next. Do you want to come out to the wall and watch? Or do you want to hide in the basement somewhere? You know I'm about to give my rebellious children up, and untold numbers of them are going to die. And you know why I've waited so long." And so we stand, perhaps, and watch our God, as fire comes down from heaven and the glory of him who is love will consume all that is out of harmony. And we know, because we are convinced about this, that as the wicked die, God will be crying, "Why will you die? How can I give you up? How can I let you go?" He's no more angry with them than he was with his Son as he gave him up in Gethsemane and on Calvary.

And then when it's all over, God would turn to us and say, "How awful that was. But children, I have one last question to ask you all. Have I made you afraid? Because if I have, I've let it happen too soon, and I would have waited longer." But hopefully we will be so settled into the truth that we will be able to say to God, and maybe get a little closer and say, "It's all right, God. There was no other way." And then there is peace forever, in spite of that awful end. Are we ready to see that and not be made afraid? Because if it makes us afraid, then we'll serve him from fear, and the obedience of fear produces the character of a rebel, and God still has the seeds of sin in his universe and he has not won the war.

Lou: We are back where it began.

Graham: We are back at the very beginning. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #20 with Lou Venden, "At Peace With Our Heavenly Father" recorded June 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/20MMCAG>*

Now imagine living in a society where the life of every citizen can be described by the Ten Commandments and 1 Corinthians 13. No one ever kills, or hates, or lies, or steals. No one even wants to hurt anyone else. All regard each other with unfeigned love, trust and respect. There is no need for prisons, no police on every corner. Our wives and daughters can walk the streets alone at any hour. Everyone is perfectly safe and free. This is why God's law is called the royal law of liberty. God is not asking us to do anything that is not for our best good. He values nothing higher than our freedom. Think of the price he has paid to give us back our freedom once again. But there can be no freedom without order, and self-discipline, mutual love, and complete trustworthiness.

Sin is rebellious rejection of God's law. Sin is hating, lying, stealing, cheating. Sin is arrogant insistence on having one's own way. And sometimes very religious people do that with special skill. Sin is stubborn unwillingness to listen to the healing words of our Creator. Sin, in its essence, is a spirit of lawlessness. The only way God could admit rebels to his kingdom would be to turn heaven into a prison—to keep sinners in solitary confinement, lest they hurt and destroy each other.

But we can trust God never to give up freedom. In his son, he gave his life to keep the universe free. He has no plans to become a prison warden. He has promised his loyal people a universe free from sin. That means a home of unthreatened safety and peace. We can trust God to insist forever on obedience to the royal law of liberty. And this will not deprive us of our freedom. It guarantees our freedom for all eternity. God can admit to his kingdom only people who can be trusted with all the privileges of freedom.

This is why the plan of salvation offers more than just forgiveness. Heaven is not to be peopled with pardoned criminals, but with transformed saints. This is why Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to be converted. To have such a change of heart and life, that it would seem as if he had been born all over again. And Jesus explained that this marvelous experience of healing is the work of the Holy Spirit, the teacher of love and truth. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation – Facing the Judgment Unafraid, recorded May 3, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/3MMMISC>

So in imagination let's go to the cross, and watch Jesus die. Did he really die? The soldiers were surprised to find he was already dead. Crucifixion was a slow way of dying. Evidently something else had happened. Is it true that Jesus was dying the death of a sinner, to show us how the sinner really dies? Look at the next verse on our sheet, 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin." (RSV) He did die the death of a sinner. And what caused Jesus to die? As you watch him dying on the cross, is God killing his Son? Is he torturing his Son

to death? Is God pouring out his wrath on his Son; something the Bible so often pictures God doing toward sinners for whom there is no further hope?

Well, it all depends on the meaning of wrath. What is God's wrath? One of the clearest explanations in the whole Bible is in Romans 1. And I wish we could read at least the whole first chapter. But look at these few verses; Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth [and it is the truth about God in that whole section]. . . . Therefore, God gave them up For this reason God gave them up And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up. (RSV)

Three times it states in Romans 1 that God's wrath is simply his turning away, in loving disappointment, from those who do not want him anyway; thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequence of their own rebellious choice. Was Jesus given up? Look at Romans 4:25: “. . . Jesus our Lord, who was put to death [given up] for our trespasses.” (RSV)

There is nothing in the Greek that says he was put to death. It says what is in the brackets there. “Jesus our Lord, who was given up for our trespasses . . .” and it is exactly the same word as in Romans 1:24, 26, 28. And versions ought to leave them the same to show the point that Jesus died under the wrath of his Father. But look at the real meaning of God's wrath. And this was not new with Paul. It's all through the Old Testament; most dramatically in Hosea 11. Again, I wish we could read the whole chapter. Hosea 11, just verses 7 and 8: “My people are bent on turning away from me . . . but How, oh how can I give you up, Ephraim! How, oh how, can I hand you over Israel!” (*Phillips*)

Did Jesus understand that this is the experience he was passing through? Did Jesus know he was being given up as Hosea describes it? And Paul later in Romans 1 and 4? What did Jesus cry just before he died? “My God, my God, why are you beating me up? Why are you torturing me? Why are you killing me?” No! “Why have you given me up?” He knew.

We should have come earlier, though—to Gethsemane. For he began this awesome experience of demonstrating the truth about God's gracious but awful warning, that the wages of sin is death. We should have come to Gethsemane. And there Jesus fell to the ground dying. The angels were watching. Was God killing his Son in the Garden of Gethsemane, or did Jesus feel his unity with his Father breaking up? He began to feel the awesome loneliness of being given up. Had Jesus been left in the Garden of Gethsemane, and had died there, could you say that the Father had killed the Son? Now had he been a mere creature you wouldn't know; but the angels knew who Jesus was. They knew that he was God. And they knew the meaning of his words. I should have included the verse in John 10:18. Jesus said, “No one takes my life from me. No one can. I lay it down of myself. I have the power to lay it down and I have the power to take it up.” The angels knew that was the truth. And if Jesus died it was not because his Father

had killed him. The Father was giving him up and both of them suffered and the Father was crying, “How can I give you up?” The Son who had assumed humanity was the one who died.

And so two questions were answered in Gethsemane. Is death the result of sin? Indeed it is. Is it because God kills his wayward children? He did not lay a hand on his Son.

But there was a third question that needed to be answered. Why is it so important that we understand that God does not execute his sinful children? This had to be answered, too. And so an angel came to strengthen Jesus to go out to Calvary. And there, once again, he answered the first two questions. But he was also this time tortured and crucified. By whom? By the Father? Or by most devout group of Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reforming, Bible-quoting Adventists the world has ever known? They even said he had a devil before they tortured him to death. You see, they obeyed God from fear. Because, as the prophet had said so many times before, they did not really know God.

Look at John 19:31:

Then the Jewish authorities asked Pilate to allow them to break the legs of the men who had been crucified, and to take the bodies down from the crosses. They requested this because it was Friday, and they did not want the bodies to stay on the crosses on the Sabbath, since the coming Sabbath was especially holy. (GNT)

You see, they nailed their Savior to the cross and then rushed home to keep that Sabbath especially holy. To prove they were God’s true people. That’s the awful result of serving God from fear because you do not know the truth about God. The three questions were answered. Does sin result in death? Indeed, it does! But is it torture and execution at the hands of our gracious God? Indeed, it is not! But what’s so dangerous about misunderstanding this and serving God from fear? The service of fear produces the character of a rebel. And can even turn people who are dedicated to obedience into harsh rebels, and God’s worst enemies!

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #8, “The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence” recorded March 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of “the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.” Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin

should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. {DA 22.2}

It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence. This work began in the heavenly courts. There God gave to human beings an unmistakable evidence of the love with which He regarded them. He “so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. The gift of Christ reveals the Father’s heart. It testifies that, having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work. {9T 254.1}

The history of the great conflict between good and evil, from the time it first began in heaven to the final overthrow of rebellion and the total eradication of sin, is also a demonstration of God’s unchanging love. {FLB 59.5}

The gift of Christ reveals the Father’s heart. {FLB 59.6}

The salvation of the human race has ever been the object of the councils of heaven. The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has existed from all eternity, and is called the everlasting covenant. So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity. {FLB 76.4}

Having undertaken the work of man’s redemption, the Father would spare nothing, however dear, which was essential for the completion of His work. He would make opportunities for men; He would pour upon them His blessings; He would heap favor upon favor, gift upon gift, until the whole treasury of heaven was open to those whom He came to save. Having collected all the riches of the universe, and laid open all the resources of His divine nature, God gave them all for the use of man. They were His free gift. What an ocean of love is circulating, like a divine atmosphere, around the world! What manner of love is this, that the eternal God should adopt human nature in the person of His Son, and carry the same into the highest heaven! {TMK 19.2}

The living righteous are changed “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” At the voice of God they were glorified; now they are made immortal and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air. Angels “gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Little children are borne by holy angels to their mothers’ arms. Friends long separated by death are united, nevermore to part, and with songs of gladness ascend together to the City of God. {GC 645.1}

The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God’s grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only

ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, “and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.” And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,—Immanuel, “God with us.” {DA 26.3}

Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body. {Mar 363.6}

All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God’s children. With unutterable delight we shall enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings. We shall share the treasures gained through ages upon ages spent in contemplation of God’s handiwork. And the years of eternity, as they roll, will continue to bring more glorious revelations. “Exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20) will be, forever and forever, the impartation of the gifts of God. {Ed 307.5}

And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise. {GC 678.1}

God created the earth to be the abode of holy, happy beings. That purpose will be fulfilled when, renewed by the power of God and freed from sin and sorrow, it shall become the eternal home of the redeemed. {AH 540.3}

There we shall know even as also we are known. There the loves and sympathies that God has planted in the soul will find truest and sweetest exercise. The pure communion with holy beings, the harmonious social life with the blessed angels and with the faithful ones of all ages, the sacred fellowship that binds together “the whole family in heaven and earth”—all are among the experiences of the hereafter. {Ed 306.2}

And the education begun in this life will be continued in the life to come. Day by day the wonderful works of God, the evidences of His wisdom and power in creating and sustaining the universe, the infinite mystery of love and wisdom in the plan of redemption, will open to the

mind in new beauty. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9. Even in this life we may catch glimpses of His presence and may taste the joy of communion with Heaven, but the fullness of its joy and blessing will be reached in the hereafter. Eternity alone can reveal the glorious destiny to which man, restored to God’s image, may attain. {PP 602.1}

Our lifework here is a preparation for the life eternal. The education begun here will not be completed in this life; it will be going forward through all eternity—ever progressing, never completed. More and more fully will be revealed the wisdom and love of God in the plan of redemption. The Saviour, as He leads His children to the fountains of living waters, will impart rich stores of knowledge. And day by day the wonderful works of God, the evidences of His power in creating and sustaining the universe, will open before the mind in new beauty. In the light that shines from the throne, mysteries will disappear, and the soul will be filled with astonishment at the simplicity of the things that were never before comprehended. {MH 466.2}

Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now we know in part; but then we shall know even as also we are known. {MH 466.3}

Some among the redeemed will have laid hold of Christ in the last hours of life, and in heaven instruction will be given to those who, when they died, did not understand perfectly the plan of salvation. Christ will lead the redeemed ones beside the river of life, and will open to them that which while on this earth they could not understand.—Undated manuscript 150. {1SM 262.2}

The plan of redemption will not be fully understood, even when the ransomed see as they are seen and know as they are known; but through the eternal ages new truth will continually unfold to the wondering and delighted mind. {GC 651.1}

It will take the whole of eternity for man to understand the plan of redemption. It will open to him line upon line; here a little and there a little (MS 21, 1895). {6BC 1115.15}