

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2021: *Isaiah*: “Comfort My People”

Lesson 1 “Crisis of Identity”

Read for this week’s study

Isaiah 1:1–9; Isaiah 1:10–17; Isaiah 1:18; Isaiah 1:19–31; Isaiah 5:1–7.

Memory Text

“ ‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the LORD, ‘though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool’ ” (Isaiah 1:18, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Hear, O Heavens! (*Isa. 1:1–9*)
- III. Rotten Ritualism (*Isa. 1:10–17*)
- IV. The Argument of Forgiveness (*Isa. 1:18*)
- V. To Eat or Be Eaten (*Isa. 1:19–31*)
- VI. Ominous Love Song (*Isa. 5:1–7*)
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. In terms of literary power, Isaiah is one of the great works of human history. It is filled with evocative word plays and Hebrew alliterations. Virtually the entire book is written in Hebrew poetry; a poetry, not of rhyme, but of rhythm and parallel ideas. Isaiah arose at a crisis moment in the history of God’s OT people. The rising power of Assyria threatened to dismantle the Israel project forever, in which case the “fullness of time” (Galatians 4:4) would never come. As with the Flood, God’s whole mission with the human race was in jeopardy. (Series Introduction)
2. Read Isaiah 1:2-3. Where do people find a sense of identity? How did Israel lose its sense of identity? What is the role of the covenant metaphor in God’s relationship with Israel? (Sabbath afternoon)
3. Read Isaiah 1:1. How is the author and the larger context of the book introduced here? The larger context mentioned here is covered also in 2 Kings 15-20 and 2 Chronicles 26-32. Read Isaiah 1:2-3 again. What is the purpose of God calling heaven

- and earth to listen when neither one can hear? Read Isaiah 1:4-9. Summarize the sins of Judah and the consequences of those sins as listed in the passage. How would you understand the remnant concept toward the end of the passage? (Sunday's lesson)
4. Read Isaiah 1:10. Why do you think Isaiah was using the imagery of Sodom and Gomorrah? What point would God be trying to make here? Read Isaiah 1:11-15. Why does God reject the worship that His people were offering Him? Read Isaiah 1:16-17. What is the Lord commanding His people to do here? What message can we take away from this for ourselves today? (Monday's lesson)
 5. Read Isaiah 1:18. In the context of the verses that follow, what do you think God is saying? Read Isaiah 44:22. How does this text provide an argument for the people to change their ways? (Tuesday's and Sabbath's lessons)
 6. Read Isaiah 1:19-31. What theme in this passage can be found all through the Bible? Compare this text to Deuteronomy 30:19-20. Why are there only two options? Why is there no middle ground? (Wednesday's lesson)
 7. Read Isaiah 5:1-7. What is the meaning of this parable/love song? What does the Lord mean when He says in verse 4: "What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?" How does dwelling on the cross give us assurance of salvation? How does it motivate us to repent and change our ways? (Thursday's lesson)
 8. When Isaiah uses the phrase, "wash yourselves," what does that mean? See also Philippians 2:12-13. (Friday's lesson)
 9. How did Jesus adapt or expand the love song of the vineyard? Read Matthew 21:33-45, Mark 12:1-12, Luke 20:9-19. What lessons does the story have for us? (Friday's lesson)
 10. What is the relationship between the forgiveness God offers and the transformation He accomplishes in our lives? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

This is only consistent with the way God has treated angels and men ever since the great controversy began. He has always waited patiently for his children to make up their own minds. Think of how many centuries he waited for Israel to respond to the information brought by the prophetic messengers that he sent one after the other. And not until the children of Israel had resisted the truth so long that they were beyond even the Creator's power to restore, did he finally and reluctantly give them up. But after the Israelites had been taken off to Babylonian captivity, God inspired the writer of 2 Chronicles to explain why he could no longer protect them, why he had to let them go. Look at 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16:

The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people [grossly as many of them were misbehaving, as you know from the biblical record]; but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, till the wrath of the Lord [and we know that means his sadly giving people up, from Romans and Hosea and elsewhere], till the wrath of the Lord rose against the people, till there was no remedy. (RSV)

It was not an arbitrary decision. He simply could not do anything more for them. He had to let them go into the discipline of captivity. Fortunately, it was not the final awful destruction at the end of the world. But it still was discipline. And though God seemed to have abandoned them, he went with them, didn't he? He blessed Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, Esther, Mordecai, Ezekiel. Think of the distinguished saints that grew up there in Babylonian captivity. But by and large, God could not work through his people as a nation at that time. He had to give them up into the discipline of captivity. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #19, "How Soon Will The Conflict Be Over?" 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/19MMCAG>

And then, one thing that occupies so much space in Deuteronomy, the blessings and the cursings. We will have occasion to discuss these again. Are there not chapters that say if you're good you'll be blessed, if you're bad, you'll be punished? If you're good, you'll be prospered, if you're bad, you'll be poor.

And this was the theology of the three friends who came to Job, for Job was known as the most prosperous man in the area. If you are prosperous it's because you are blessed. If you are blessed, it's because you're good. So, obviously Job had been a very good man. But when he lost his family and his belongings and his health, he obviously had been very bad, because when you are bad you are not blessed, and when you are not blessed you lose your prosperity. So they had it all worked out very simply. They came to Job and said "We don't know what you've done, but we've never seen so wealthy a man now so poor, and you've even lost your health. You've lost everything. You must have done something very, very wicked. Confess it. It says in Deuteronomy if you will confess and come back God will bless you again and you will regain your prosperity." And Job said, "I think you've misunderstood it all. I don't know why this has happened, but you are wrong." "Why," they said, "we've got all the texts in Deuteronomy to prove it!" Of course, Deuteronomy hadn't been written yet. But this was the idea they had, and the whole book of Job discusses this.

Well, doesn't that influence us to this present time? How about in the days of Christ? Jesus said it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to be

saved. His own disciples said, “Well, if a rich man cannot be saved, who can?” Because you see, if you’re rich, you’re blessed. You’re blessed because you’re good. So if you’re rich, you’re good. Then if a rich man cannot be saved, that means if a good man cannot be saved; how can a poor man be saved?—because if you’re poor, it’s because you’re not blessed, and you’re not blessed because you’re bad.

See, they had it all neatly worked out beautifully, just as we sometimes work it out. You see, when the locusts go through, the neighbor’s field, you know he hasn’t paid his tithe or something like that. Or if a family has an accident, you know there’s an Achan in the camp. We’re so quick to figure it out. What are we to understand from this, the blessings and the cursings? God is talking to his children there. “Be good and I will reward you. Be bad and I’ll have to spank you.” Haven’t you done that to your children?

But there comes a time when we have to grow up. The book of Job is not a bedtime story, and I have great confidence in bedtime stories. Bedtime stories are for children. In the bedtime story, when a family runs out of food and they pray, they’ve hardly said “Amen,” when someone is knocking on the door with a food basket. That’s happened over and over in wonderful ways, as you know. When a family runs out of food and they pray, and they say “Amen”, and nobody knocks on the door, but they still trust God, that’s for grownups. And that’s the book of Job.

God is looking for grownups in these last days. For is it not possible that during the time of trouble we will lose many things as Job did? We may even lose our health. And yet, covered with boils, with no evidence whatever, according to the theology of the day that God approved him, Job remained God’s friend. God could hardly wait at the end to interrupt and say, “Job, you’ve done magnificently; you’ve said of me what is right.” And in these last days, very difficult ones, not a time for children but for grownups like Job, we must come to the place where we don’t look for these reassurances that a child has to have all the time. No wet fleeces and dry ones. Maybe apparently deserted like Job, and yet remain loyal to the very end.

I think that’s why God waits. We were discussing what he’s waiting for. He’s waiting for a group of people so settled into this truth about him, based on all this evidence that we are going through, that even when Satan comes as Christ they will not be deceived. They really know what God is like and would stake their lives on it. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Deuteronomy*, recorded November 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/9MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/10MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Suppose you had to keep rat poison. (We're having a lot of trouble with rats now.) So you had to keep rat poison in your house, and you have a young son. And if he touches it and then eats it, he could be very sick, even die. So you say, "Son, don't touch that rat poison. I'm going to put it on the highest shelf, the high and locked cupboard." A little later you hear a crash in the garage, and you run out, and there's your son lying on the floor. He's taken the rat poison and he's dying. Would it do any good to say, "Son, I forgive you, I forgive you!" He would just die forgiven, that's all. It wouldn't keep him from dying. Nor would it do any good to say, "Son, I don't want you to die, so let me drink the rat poison." And you both die. The boy doesn't need forgiveness. He needs an antidote. He needs healing.

But God didn't wait for that. God has said, "You really don't take me seriously, do you, that sin is like a poison and will lead to your death? Let me take the poison." And Jesus dies. And we, like the son, say, "Dad, it's real, isn't it! And nobody's killing you. Sin is really a poison, and you are dying. I will take you seriously from here on."

The beauty is that God then was able to take his life back and come out living. I've made my point. There's still no legal requirement in that. There's an awesome truth to be revealed. There's nothing arbitrary in this thing. God does not want us to poison ourselves. We need healing. Better heed the warning. The results of sin is death, and don't do this thing. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #12, "God's Law is no Threat to Our Freedom" 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/12MMCAG>

One view sees the plan of salvation and God's gracious provisions, such as the death of Christ on the cross, as being primarily offered to adjust our legal standing in the sight of God, because as sinners, we are guilty. And guilty as we are, justice and law demand that we be executed. And the only way to avoid being executed—and there are many, various explanations of execution; these are the various views of hell. We all have views of hell, the longer view, the medium view and the shorter view; there are many views of hell. But if God is the executioner, then we do well to be preoccupied with our legal standing. And unless we be forgiven, he will go ahead and do this to us; he must. Law and justice require it. And if he doesn't go through with this, the universe will conclude he is unjust. And if he's unjust, you wouldn't trust him, and now you're getting over into the other view, which always amuses me, that if you pursue even the legal view logically to its conclusions you wind up with the other one.

But now in the larger view, which uses all sixty-six books and has no problems with Ellen White at all, it sees sin not as a legal problem. It sees sin as a very real problem that has had devastating consequences on us physically, mentally, spiritually, socially. Sin is a breach of trust, as Romans 14 says. Sin is treachery. Sin is what Lucifer did in the beginning, for which you could

not have called him in before church counsel. I mean, what had he done? Nothing! Except the most devastating thing that can ever be done. Nearly destroyed the universe, that's what he did.

That's how bad it was. And because of this distrust, and the consequential unwillingness to listen and allow God to look after us and heal the damage done, enormous damage has been done to sinners. **We're not in legal trouble, we're in trouble. We're not in danger of being executed, we're dying. That's the difference.** And I believe it makes all the difference in the world. I would not go to a doctor who would kill his patients for not cooperating. But if I'm dying, I need a doctor. And if I go and don't cooperate, I still may die. But my understanding is—that in this larger view, this great controversy view, this sixty-six book view—we're all dying. And if God were to leave us alone, that's it.

But he hasn't. He's pursued us through the years, trying to win us back to trust. And of course, you don't expect people to trust without evidence. You don't make claims; you offer demonstrations; that's the content of the sixty-six books, God's demonstration of the kind of person he is. And the way he's handled this emergency is the greatest demonstration of all. As to, not how he treats his friends, but how he treats his enemies. How he treats the sick and the dying; how does he seek to win them back to trust? And some of us find that very wonderful.

So the purpose of the plan of salvation is not to adjust our legal standing, but the purpose of the plan of salvation is to win us back to trust so he can heal us, which he can readily do, and it is to confirm the trust of the onlooking universe.

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Questions People Are Asking About the Plan of Salvation, recorded April 1983, Redlands, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMQUESTP> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMQUESTP> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

God desires to heal us, to set us free. But since this requires an entire transformation, a renewing of our whole nature, we must yield ourselves wholly to Him. . . . {SC 43.2}

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}

He will receive all. He welcomes all. He rejects none. It is His glory to pardon the chief of sinners. He will take the prey from the mighty, He will deliver the captive, He will pluck the brand from the burning. He will lower the golden chain of His mercy to the greatest depths of human wretchedness and guilt and lift up the debased soul contaminated with sin. But man must will to come, and cooperate in the work of saving his soul by availing himself of opportunities given him of God. The Lord forces no one. {TMK 235.2}

In his restless youth the prodigal looked upon his father as stern and severe. How different his conception of him now! So those who are deceived by Satan look upon God as hard and exacting. They regard Him as watching to denounce and condemn, as unwilling to receive the sinner so long as there is a legal excuse for not helping him. His law they regard as a restriction upon men's happiness, a burdensome yoke from which they are glad to escape. But he whose eyes have been opened by the love of Christ will behold God as full of compassion. He does not appear as a tyrannical, relentless being, but as a father longing to embrace his repenting son. The sinner will exclaim with the Psalmist, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Psalm 103:13. {COL 204.2}

The plan of redemption is not merely a way of escape from the penalty of transgression, but through it the sinner is forgiven his sins, and will be finally received into heaven—not as a forgiven culprit pardoned and released from captivity, yet looked upon with suspicion and not admitted to friendship and trust; but welcomed as a child, and taken back into fullest confidence. {7BC 950.6}

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}

God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. {FLB 129.2}

The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means that sin is taken away, and that the vacuum is filled with the Spirit. It means that the mind is divinely illumined, that the heart is emptied of self, and filled with the presence of Christ. {OHC 154.5}

It is God's glory to encircle sinful, repentant human beings in the arms of His love, to bind up their wounds, to cleanse them from sin, and to clothe them with the garments of salvation. {PK 668.3}

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}

But when we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure. {COL 363.1}

But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, "I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 5:3; 2:4. Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is

faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience. {SC 60.2}

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service. {PP 34.3}

In calling them to His service, God offers them freedom. Obedience to God is liberty from the thralldom of sin, deliverance from human passion and impulse. {TM 247.1}

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}

The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man's sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. Our Saviour is always ready to hear and answer the prayer of the contrite heart, and grace and peace are multiplied to His faithful ones. Gladly He grants them the blessings they need in their struggle against the evils that beset them. {AA 532.2}

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}

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}

Through the Jewish nation it was God's purpose to impart rich blessings to all peoples. Through Israel the way was to be prepared for the diffusion of His light to the whole world. The nations of the world, through following corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. Yet in His

mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man.

{COL 286.1}

God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejectors of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. Every ray of light rejected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest. The Spirit of God, persistently resisted, is at last withdrawn from the sinner, and then there is left no power to control the evil passions of the soul, and no protection from the malice and enmity of Satan.

{GC 36.1}

No soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. "Man turns from God, not God from him." Our heavenly Father follows us with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. The responsibility rests with the sinner. By resisting the Spirit of God today, he prepares the way for a second resistance of light when it comes with mightier power. Thus he passes on from one stage of resistance to another, until at last the light will fail to impress, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God. Then even "the light that is in thee" has become darkness. The very truth we do know has become so perverted as to increase the blindness of the soul. {MB 93.1}

No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent (RH June 29, 1897). {5BC 1093.2}

God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself. Everyone who stifles the admonitions of conscience is sowing the seeds of unbelief, and these will produce a sure harvest. {FLB 155.4}

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world as the unwearied servant of man's necessity. He "took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses," that He might minister to every need of humanity. Matthew 8:17. The burden of disease and wretchedness and sin He came to remove. It was His mission to bring to men complete restoration; He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character. {MH 17.1}

Through the gospel, souls that are degraded and enslaved by Satan are to be redeemed to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. God's purpose is not merely to deliver from the suffering that is the inevitable result of sin, but to save from sin itself. The soul, corrupted and deformed, is to be purified, transformed, that it may be clothed in "the beauty of the Lord our God," "conformed to the image of His Son." "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.” Psalm 90:17; Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 2:9. Eternity alone can reveal the glorious destiny to which man, restored to God’s image, may attain. {MB 60.3}

Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. {FLB 142.2}

The Lord Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace. He is effecting transformations so amazing that Satan, with all his triumphant boasting, with all his confederacy of evil united against God and the laws of His government, stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions. They are to him an incomprehensible mystery. The angels of God, seraphim and cherubim, the powers commissioned to cooperate with human agencies, look on with astonishment and joy, that fallen men, once children of wrath, are through the training of Christ developing characters after the divine similitude, to be sons and daughters of God, to act an important part in the occupations and pleasures of heaven. {FLB 142.3}

But the work of human redemption is not all that is accomplished by the cross. The love of God is manifested to the universe. The prince of this world is cast out. The accusations which Satan has brought against God are refuted. The reproach which he has cast upon heaven is forever removed. Angels as well as men are drawn to the Redeemer. “I, if I be lifted up from the earth,” He said, “will draw all unto Me.” {DA 626.1}