

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2022: *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews*

Lesson 1 “The Letter to the Hebrews and to Us”

Read for this week’s study

Hebrews 2:3, 4; 1 Peter 4:14, 16; Hebrews 13:1–9, 13; 1 Kings 19:1–18; Hebrews 3:12–14; Numbers 13.

Memory Text

“For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:36, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. A Glorious Beginning
- III. The Struggle
- IV. Malaise
- V. Press Together
- VI. These Last Days
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The author of Hebrews referred to the book as a “word of exhortation” (Hebrews 13:22), which is another way of saying a sermon. “Exhortation” (Greek: *paraklêseôs*) can be both positive and negative. In a positive sense it means encouragement. In a negative sense it means rebuke. The sermon was addressed to believers who were experiencing persecution (Hebrews 10:32-34) and financial difficulties (13:5-6). Many had begun to question their faith (3:12-13). So the primary message of the sermon was encouragement to endure difficulty (10:36), or to put the book’s message in contemporary terms, “Hang in there.” (Sabbath afternoon’s lesson)
2. The book of Hebrews paints a fascinating portrait of Jesus. He is the Ruler of the universe (Hebrews 1:5-14), who won the right to rule through His death, by which he conquered the devil (2:14-16). He is the exalted High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary (7:26 – 8:5), is the perfect, once-for-all sacrifice, effective for everyone forever (10:1-14), and the mediator of a new covenant (8:6-13). In the person of

Jesus all three dimensions of the redemption story intersect. At the personal level He is the author and perfecter of faith (12:1-4). At the corporate level, He is the New Joshua for a New Israel (Hebrews 3 and 4). At the universal level, He establishes a heavenly kingdom that cannot be shaken (12:22-28). (Introduction to the Quarter)

3. Read Hebrews 2:3-4. What was the experience of the recipients of this sermon when they were first converted? Why is it good at times to remember how things were when God first brought you to Him? What are some ways that we can keep our spiritual past fresh in our minds? (Sunday's lesson)
4. Read Hebrews 10:32-34 and 13:3. What was the experience of the audience of Hebrews after their conversion? Why do people so frequently react negatively when someone accepts Christ? See Hebrews 11:24-26 and 1 Peter 4:14, 16 for other biblical examples. Everyone suffers, what does it mean to suffer for Christ's sake? How much of the suffering Christians experience is for Christ's sake and how much is the result of our own bad choices? (Monday's Lesson)
5. What were some of the challenges the audience of Hebrews faced? Hebrews 2:18; 3:12-13; 4:15; 10:25; 12:3, 12-13; 13:1-9. How was their experience similar to that of Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-4)? Read 1 Kings 19:5-18. What did God do to restore Elijah's faith? What did the author of Hebrews advise the believers to do about their situation? Hebrews 2:1; 3:12-14; 5:11 – 6:3; 10:19-25. (Tuesday's and Wednesday's Lessons)
6. What message regarding time do all of the following have in common? Hebrews 1:2; 9:26-28; 10:25, 36-38; 12:25-28. Considering the biblical view on the state of the dead, would it be appropriate to say that every generation since New Testament times has lived in the "last days"? (Thursday's Lesson)
7. Is it possible to be "different" because of one's Christian commitments, yet not be accused of separation from and disregard for others? If your answer is "yes" how do you think one could do that? (Friday's Lesson)
8. As noted in part 1 of this lesson, the word "exhortation" in the Bible can refer to either reproof or encouragement. How should one go about reproving someone who is discouraged? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Well, first of all, who wrote Hebrews? As you know, the authorship has long been questioned. It marks you as a very conservative person to say Paul. Perhaps a reflection of the long debate about who wrote it is the fact that Hebrews is at the end of the fourteen letters. We must have observed the order of letters, from Romans down to Philemon, no significance whatever, from the longest to the shortest. No greater significance than that. But Hebrews is long enough to be

next door to Corinthians, isn't it? But this reflects the fact that many early Christians were not sure who had written Hebrews.

Does the theology sound like Paul, having come from his letters, would you say?—the last, especially? But they say that the language, in many spots, is not like Paul, but it is more like Luke. Well, that should be no problem to us. Luke was with Paul, right to the very end. So I like to think that the theology is Paul, and perhaps the writing is Luke; and perhaps Luke wrote with some freedom, even. A little of his idiom may be in there. Supposing we don't know. Would it diminish the authority and the meaning of the Book of Hebrews, anyway? So let's not worry about that. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Hebrews, recorded July 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/73MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/74MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Let's look over the general contents first. In Hebrews 1 and 2 there's emphasis on the fact that the one who came was really God. Though, as chapter 2 says, since he was seeking to communicate with human beings, he became like one of us. But let us not overlook the fact that the one who came was really God. Then, in Hebrews 3 and 4, there's mention of this Sabbath-like rest that is available to us, that comes by faith. And mention is made of the fact that though the Jews had been instructed at Sinai, and led through the wilderness, and given the sacrificial system, and though they entered the land of Canaan, they did not enter into this Sabbath-like rest, which still remains for us.

Then, in Hebrews 5 through 10 is the description of the position and the ministry of Christ as the High Priest in heaven. There's mention of a new order of priesthood, Melchizedek, although he was mentioned in the Old Testament. An order of priesthood that's not based on your genealogy, and your descent from Aaron, but rather the order of the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace. The main point seeming to be, in here, that we ought to make a comparison to what went on in the earthly sanctuary and what is going on in the heavenly sanctuary, which is much more significant; though, what is the purpose of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary? We come to chapter 11, and it's all about faith, and following that is a description of brotherly love, and other forms of godly living. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Hebrews, recorded July 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/73MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/74MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: It's a popular phrase, isn't it? "I'm a born-again Christian." What does that mean?

Graham: Nicodemus even asked what it meant. And Jesus said, "That should be pretty clear, if you've read the fifty-first Psalm and other places." To be changed from a rebel to someone who can be trusted, to be changed from a stubborn person (who is unwilling to listen), to someone who loves, trusts, and admires God and doesn't want to miss a single word—that is like being born all over again. And that's why Jesus used such a dramatic picture.

Now, that's also the meaning of being converted. You know, you turn around and go the other way like a convertible changes its top on a car. So, to be converted means to *turn around and go the other way*. Now I'm stubborn and rebellious—now I'm humbly willing to listen, to love, trust, and admire. And one picture of this change is being born again. I think that Jesus was chiding Nicodemus for being a little slow to pick up something that he should have known.

Lou: He should have known by experience?

Graham: I think so. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3 with Lou Venden, "All God Asks Is Trust" recorded January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*
<http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>

Lou: In our Bible Reference Sheet you referred to Romans 7 and 8 and this struggle that goes on. What is this struggle? When is it? Is it before conversion, or is it after conversion?

Graham: I've often wished instead of a verse there had been room for a whole chapter on our Bible Reference Sheet. "Oh, the good that I would do, I don't do; and all the evil that I don't want to do, is what I do. I delight in the law of God in my inner man, but in my body I feel its other law." People say, "That couldn't be a converted person." And yet if he delights in the law of God, he sounds like a converted person. The answer I like to give is this: if you are struggling before conversion, if you are struggling during conversion, if you are struggling after conversion, if you are ever struggling, then look to Jesus Christ. It doesn't really matter. I think it's an unnecessary squabble as to when the struggle occurs. Whenever you are struggling, before, during, or after conversion, thanks be to God for Jesus Christ our Lord. I refuse to be drawn into an argument about this. {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>

Let's look at Elijah, a man who was translated to heaven without seeing death. A man so honored by God, that when Jesus was on this earth and almost overwhelmed with his loneliness. His closest associates, if they followed him at all, were not following him for the right reason. And two individuals were sent from heaven to encourage their Creator, the Son of God. And one was Elijah and the other Moses. And what an honor! Could you imagine yourself encouraging the Son of God under any circumstances? And these two were sent down to do it.

How do you understand Elijah being such an extraordinary person? And why do you think he was translated and not others who were good men under difficult circumstances? Is it that he lived in extraordinarily bad times, and yet had so much trust and faith in God, that it said something to the universe that God could have someone who was that trustworthy at such a difficult time?

Is it apparent, though, that Elijah had much to learn as the years went by? And it's interesting to note the things that he learned that were most significant. Take, for example, that story on Mt. Carmel. Now obviously he was on God's side. He risked his life. A minority of one under those circumstances! And here were all the priests of Baal gashing themselves and so on. And Elijah stands up before that whole crowd and does what's recorded. Absolutely magnificent, isn't it? And then fire comes down from heaven and consumes the sacrifice, and even the altar itself, and laps up the water around it. Elijah enjoyed great confirmation from heaven right then. And when the fire went out, he became depressed and scared, and he ran for his life; even ran from a woman; from Queen Jezebel. Doesn't sound like the man who stood on Mt. Carmel, does it? And he hid in a cave. Now this is near the end of his life, and God comes to him there to teach him something, I believe, of very great consequence. He learned this before he was translated to heaven without seeing death.

What do you think of that record in 1 Kings 19:9? You know, the events surrounding this flight of his, and how the Lord fed him on the way. Why is that included in the record that God would do this and feed his fleeing prophet? Well you remember when Jairus' daughter was resurrected; they all rushed out of the room so happy to tell the news. The scriptures say that Jesus called after them and said, "Wait a minute, this little girl is hungry. Somebody get her something to eat." Now, doesn't that say something about God? The little details here. He fed Elijah.

But now in 19:9:

He came to a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he [that is, God] said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And he said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

You remember, God had to tell him that he wasn't the only one; there were others. But how do you think God feels about a person who's jealous for God? Isn't God jealous for our reputations? And his friends are jealous for his. Didn't Abraham show jealousy for God's reputation? And Moses? And the whole book of Job. Job's defending God, not himself, all through that book.

As witness, look at God's comment at the end, "Job has said of me what is right." He was jealous for God's reputation. This is where Elijah really was a friend, you see. But now he's depressed, because all the fire's gone out. So long as there was fire coming down from heaven, he was in good courage. Clearly the Lord was with him.

But God said, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD" [so you see, he knew God was coming]. And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD [and Elijah was saying, "Ah, now the Lord is really approaching; now you're talking, God."], but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake [and Elijah would think, "Ah, the footprints of the Lord; he's approaching"], but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire [and a fiery preacher like Elijah, he knew the Lord was in the fire], but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire a still small voice.

What do you have in your version for that? Some of them are very colorful. "A still, small voice"; "The breath of a light whisper." Oh, that couldn't be much quieter, could it? That's *Moffatt*. You don't often see *Moffatt* anymore. It was one of my dad's favorites. It's too bad, a man as competent as *Moffatt*; he did the whole Bible, not just the New or the Old; he did it all. He's very dramatic. Any other translation of what it was Elijah heard? "A murmuring sound." One thing for sure, it was quiet. Something very gentle and soft.

And when Elijah heard it [one version has, "The sound of a small silence", when he heard that], he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And he said again, "I have been very jealous for the LORD" [and the Lord spoke to him].

Why would this story be in here? Does it say anything of great consequence to us about God? Personally, I think this is a real key to so much of scripture. At Mt. Sinai, did God come as wind, earthquake, fire, or a still, small voice? Well, there was wind and earthquake and fire, but no still, small voice because there was only one person at the foot of the mountain who could hear the still, small voice. God's friend there who said, "There is no need to be afraid." And you remember, God said, "To a prophet I'll speak in visions and dreams, but not so to my friend Moses, for to him I will speak face to face, as a man speaks to his friend."

Have you ever stood talking with a friend face to face and have him shout at you? Is there any need? That's somebody who might be angry with you. That's not a friend. In fact, the wonderful thing about a close friend is you could both sit there and not say much, and communication occurs. And this is what God wants the most. But if we're hard of hearing, he can't talk that softly. And I think Elijah had learned through the years that talking softly wasn't very effective, and he had become a man of wind and earthquake and fire himself. And he needed to learn this before he was taken up to heaven and come face to face with God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – 1&2 Kings, 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/17MMPOGIA66> (1 Kings - Part 1)

<http://pkp.cc/18MMPOGIA66> (1 Kings - Part 2)

<http://pkp.cc/19MMPOGIA66> (2 Kings - Part 1)

<http://pkp.cc/20MMPOGIA66> (2 Kings - Part 2)

So the main thing is, more important than knowing when the end comes, is to trust God. And if I should die tonight, I want to die his trusting child, because then I will arise his trusting child. I'll have no complaints. We'll all have lots of questions. We might even say, "I kind of wanted to live through that." I think Paul did. Remember there, Paul said, "I'm torn between staying with you to help you and my desire to depart and be with the Lord." He didn't believe in the immortality of the soul. He knew that as a Roman citizen, when his head was cut off with that sharp sword, the next instant of consciousness he'd be face to face with the one he'd been preaching about with such pride. So he had no complaints. So the end is really very, very near. Especially in a medical center like this we see folk come to the end of their lives all the time, and sometimes it's particularly sad. We have good news for them: "You fall asleep tonight; you will wake up the next moment from a dreamless sleep face to face with the Lord." That's how near it is. But I believe the big event is also near. {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>*

Further Study with Ellen White

When the mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite, the effect on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. In such communion is found the highest education. It is God's own method of development. "Acquaint now thyself with Him" (Job 22:21), is His message to mankind. {AA 126.1}

A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted. Christ said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8. Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest. If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts. {SC 57.2}

By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His purity. It is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character, and the child of wrath becomes the child of God. He passes from death unto life; he becomes spiritual and discerns spiritual things. The wisdom of God enlightens his mind, and he beholds wondrous things out of His law. As a man is converted by the truth, the work of transformation of character goes on. He has an increased measure of understanding. In becoming a man of obedience to God, he has the mind of Christ, and the will of God becomes his will. {1SM 338.1}

Received into the heart, the leaven of truth will regulate the desires, purify the thoughts, and sweeten the disposition. It quickens the faculties of the mind and the energies of the soul. It enlarges the capacity for feeling, for loving. {COL 101.1}

Those who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are not left as orphans, to bear the trials of life alone. He receives them as members of the heavenly family; He bids them call His Father their Father. They are His "little ones," dear to the heart of God, bound to Him by the most tender and abiding ties. He has toward them an exceeding tenderness, as far surpassing what our father or mother has felt toward us in our helplessness as the divine is above the human. {DA 327.2}

We need to understand better than we do the mission of the angels. It would be well to remember that every true child of God has the co-operation of heavenly beings. Invisible armies of light and power attend the meek and lowly ones who believe and claim the promises of God. Cherubim and seraphim, and angels that excel in strength, stand at God's right hand, "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Hebrews 1:14. {AA 154.2}

For our sake Jesus emptied Himself of His glory; He clothed His divinity with humanity that He might touch humanity, that His personal presence might be among us, that we might know that He was acquainted with all our trials, and sympathized with our grief, that every son and daughter of Adam might understand that Jesus is the friend of sinners (ST April 18, 1892). {7BC 927.1}

Taking humanity upon Him, Christ came to be one with humanity, and at the same time to reveal our heavenly Father to sinful human beings. He who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning, He who was the express image of the invisible God, was alone able to reveal the character of the Deity to mankind. He was in all things made like unto His brethren. He became flesh even as we are. He was hungry and thirsty and weary. He was sustained by food and refreshed by sleep. He shared the lot of men; yet He was the blameless Son of God. He was a stranger and sojourner on the earth—in the world, but not of the world; tempted and tried as men and women today are tempted and tried, yet living a life free from sin. Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man. {MH 422.2}

He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, will carry forward His work. He will thwart the purposes of wicked men and will bring to confusion the counsels of those who plot mischief against His people. He who is the King, the Lord of hosts, sitteth between the cherubim, and amidst the strife and tumult of nations He guards His children still. When the strongholds of kings shall be overthrown, when the arrows of wrath shall strike through the hearts of His enemies, His people will be safe in His hands. {PK 176.1}

We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and his teaching in our past history. {RH, October 12, 1905 par. 22}

It is not the will of God that His people should be weighed down with care. But our Lord does not deceive us. He does not say to us, "Do not fear; there are no dangers in your path." He knows there are trials and dangers, and He deals with us plainly. He does not propose to take His people out of a world of sin and evil, but He points them to a never-failing refuge. . . . {TMK 225.2}

Those who love and fear God may be surrounded with a multitude of cares, and yet not falter or make crooked paths for their feet. God takes care of you in the place where it is your duty to be. {CH 424.1}

Christ's words, so comforting and cheering to those that listened to them, are for us today. As a faithful shepherd knows and cares for his sheep, so Christ cares for His children. He knows the trials and difficulties surrounding each one. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd," declares Isaiah: "he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom." Christ knows His sheep intimately, and the suffering and helpless are objects of His special care. . . . {TMK 51.3}

The God of heaven is constantly at work. It is by His power that vegetation is caused to flourish, that every leaf appears and every flower blooms. Every drop of rain or flake of snow, every spire of grass, every leaf and flower and shrub, testifies of God. These little things so common around us teach the lesson that nothing is beneath the notice of the infinite God, nothing is too small for His attention. {8T 260.1}

The Lord will not disappoint any who put their trust in Him. He will be first and last and best in everything to us. He will be a present help in every time of need. In these last days of service we shall ... be held, and led, and protected, by the power of Christ. {RY 112.1}

God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. {MH 479.2}

The work of Christ is to redeem, to restore, to seek and to save that which was lost. If we are connected with Christ, we also are partakers of the divine nature and are to be laborers together with God. We are to bind up the bruised and wounded soul; and if a brother or a sister has erred, we are not to join with the enemy in destroying and ruining, but to work with Christ to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. {HP 291.2}

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,—God's thought made audible. In His prayer for His disciples He says, "I have declared unto them Thy name,"—"merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,"—"that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which "seeketh not her own" has its source in

the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto. {DA 19.2}

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. {DA 22.1}