

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2014: *Christ and His Law*
Lesson 10 “Christ, *the Law and the Covenants*”

Read for this week’s study

Gen. 9:12–17, 17:2–12, Gal. 3:15–28, Deut. 9:9, Heb. 10:11–18, Heb. 9:15–28.

Memory Text

“For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant” (Hebrews 9:15, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Covenant Signs
- III. Covenant Promises
- IV. Tablet of the Covenant
- V. The Covenant and the Gospel
- VI. Covenant Benefits
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Jon Paulien

1. Why does the Bible speak so much about covenants? What does the concept of covenant tell us about God? (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. According to the lesson, what are the two basic kinds of covenants? Which of the two do you think is the most common in the Bible? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Genesis 9:12-17 and 17:2-12. What is the difference between the symbol of the covenant and the covenant itself in these passages? What are the similarities and differences between these two covenants? (Sunday’s lesson)
4. Read Galatians 3:15-28. According to Paul, what are the broader implications of the Abrahamic covenant? What impact does or should your covenant relationship with God have on your life? What kind of promises from God have been especially meaningful to you and what kind of response do you feel God would like from you in return? (Monday’s lesson)

5. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 10:11-18. In what ways do these texts uphold the everlasting nature of God's law in the New Covenant? What does it mean to have God's law written on the heart? (Tuesday's lesson)
6. Read Hebrews 9:15-28. In what ways is the gospel revealed in these verses? How do you feel about the last part of today's lesson, where it says: "God Himself, in the person of Jesus, bore in Himself the punishment for our sins in order to spare us that punishment, which we deserve. What does this tell us about the character of God, and why we can trust Him, no matter our circumstances?" (Wednesday's lesson)
7. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 1 John 5:11-13; Philippians 1:6 and John 5:24. According to these texts, what are the benefits of living in a covenant relationship with Jesus? (Thursday's lesson)
8. Read Ephesians 2:6. What does it mean to be sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus right now? (Thursday's lesson)
9. What do Exodus 31:16 and Isaiah 56:4-6 suggest about the importance of the Sabbath to the covenant? (Friday's lesson)
10. Many people believe that the Old Covenant was a covenant of works in contrast with the New Covenant, which is a covenant of grace. What do you think of this idea? What texts in the Bible would you point to that suggest the Old Covenant was a covenant of grace? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Just as a believer may be rejoicing in his freedom to worship God without fear, his eye may fall on this passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "For if we willfully persist in sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins remains: only a terrifying expectation of judgment and a fierce fire which will consume God's enemies" (Hebrews 10:26, 27, NEB).

As he reflects on the forbidding import of these words, the believer may pause to remind himself of the encouragement in the Epistle of John that the man who has accepted the truth can look forward to the day of judgment unafraid (1 John 4:16–19). With this reassurance he is ready to read further in the passage from Hebrews.

"If a man disregards the Law of Moses, he is put to death without pity on the evidence of two or three witnesses. Think how much more severe a penalty that man will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was consecrated, and affronted God's gracious Spirit! For we know who it is that has said, 'Justice is mine; I will repay'; and again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:28–31, NEB).

It seems apparent from these verses that the terrors of judgment are reserved for the sinner—particularly the one who chooses to persist in his sinning after knowing the truth. But we have

all sinned, and we continue to come short of God's ideal (see Romans 3:23). Is there any good news about the judgment?

In the first place, it helps to look at the Biblical description of sin. The same apostle who speaks of approaching the judgment without fear defines sin as "the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV). A more precise translation of John's Greek would be the one word *lawlessness*. As the *Revised Standard Version* puts it, "Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness."

Sin is not so much a failure to live up to this or that specified duty. It is rather a spirit of lawlessness, an attitude of rebelliousness, an unwillingness to listen to God or to heed his instructions.

But is it not true that in the day of judgment our behavior will be examined and will be measured by God's law? After reviewing the many wasted years of his life, Solomon came to this conclusion: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).

John was shown the scene of the judgment. "Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done" (Revelation 20:11, 12).

Paul reminded believers that "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.... So each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:10–12). And in the Epistle to the Hebrews we are advised not to forget that "there is nothing that can be hid from God; everything in all creation is exposed and lies open before his eyes. And it is to him that we must all give an account of ourselves" (Hebrews 4:13, GNT).

How much does God expect of us? Who will be judged safe to admit to his kingdom? James replies, "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty" (James 2:12). As the Good News Translation puts it, "Speak and act as people who will be judged by the law that sets us free."

This liberating law is clearly identified in James' Epistle. "You will be doing the right thing if you obey the law of the Kingdom, which is found in the scripture, 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' But if you treat people according to their outward appearance, you are guilty of sin, and the Law condemns you as a lawbreaker. Whoever breaks one commandment is guilty of breaking them all. For the same one who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not commit murder.' Even if you do not commit adultery, you have become a lawbreaker if you

commit murder” (verses 8–11, GNT). {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?* 113-115. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-11>

Near the end of the last century, archaeologists working in the Near East began discovering ancient papyrus documents which were records of business transactions, bills of sale, title deeds to property, guarantees. And the common term for these documents was none other than this Greek word translated “substance.”

This discovery made it possible to understand Hebrews 11:1 to mean that faith is, as it were, a transaction entered into, a covenant, an agreement between the believer and his God.

God has much to offer us: forgiveness, healing, eternal life. But he never asks his intelligent creatures to believe anything for which he does not provide adequate evidence, and it is evidence that appeals to the reason. God does not expect us to have faith in a stranger. Instead, he first reveals himself. Through his Son, through the Scriptures, through the world of nature around us, in so many ways, he seeks to make himself well known.

If in the light of this revelation, this ample evidence about God, we should choose to trust him, to love him, to accept his gifts and direction, then we have entered into that transaction with God which the New Testament calls faith.

“To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see.” This is the translation of Hebrews 11:1 in the 1976 American Bible Society’s *Good News Translation*.

The 1970 Catholic *New American Bible* translates similarly: “Faith is confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see.”

Long before the *King James Version*, William Tyndale, who was burned at the stake for daring to produce the first printed English New Testament, had the insight to offer this translation: “Fayth is a sure confidence of thynges which are hoped for, and a certayntie of thynges which are not sene.”

None of us has ever seen God. But this does not mean we cannot know him. “The only Son, who is the same as God and is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (John 1:18, GNT).

Faith, as I understand it, is a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well known. The better we know him, the better this relationship may be.

Faith implies an attitude toward God of love, trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in him, based on the more than adequate evidence revealed, to be willing

to believe whatever he says, to accept whatever he offers, and to do whatever he wishes—without reservation—for the rest of eternity.

Anyone who has such faith is perfectly safe to save. This is why faith is the only requirement for heaven.

A faith like this is far from blind. It is based soundly upon evidence. As Paul explains in Romans 10:17 (KJV), “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

The earlier manuscripts have the name “Christ” instead of “God.” Thus Goodspeed translates the same passage, “Faith comes from hearing what is told, and that hearing comes through the message about Christ.”

It adds meaning to this passage to read it in its larger setting in Paul’s letter to the Romans:

“Scripture says, ‘Everyone who has faith in him will be saved from shame’—everyone: there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich enough for the need of all who invoke him. For everyone, as it says again—‘everyone who invokes the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How could they invoke one in whom they had no faith? And how could they have faith in one they had never heard of? And how hear without someone to spread the news? And how could anyone spread the news without a commission to do so? And that is what Scripture affirms: ‘How welcome are the feet of the messengers of good news!’

“But not all have responded to the good news. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our message?’ We conclude that faith is awakened by the message, and the message that awakens it comes through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:11–17, NEB).

In Paul’s day there was little opportunity for a man to read this message for himself. If he wished to learn the truth about God, it was necessary for him to go to the synagogue or church and listen as the rare and costly manuscripts of the Bible were read out loud for all to hear.

This is why the introduction to Revelation says of John’s book, “This is his report concerning the message from God and the truth revealed by Jesus Christ. Happy is the one who reads this book, and happy are those who listen” (Revelation 1:2, 3, GNT).

In our own time, when Bibles are so readily available, Paul might have written instead, “Faith comes by studying the Word of God” or “Faith comes by reading the message about Christ.”

Those of us who have learned to read the Bible as an inspired account of God’s long and costly revelation of the truth find in its pages more than sufficient evidence for our faith. When God invites us to trust him, he is not asking us to take a chance, to risk a leap in the dark. Nor is he expecting us to accept mere claims or trust some inner feeling or some sign or miracle that Satan could counterfeit.

God is simply asking that we consider the evidence, so readily available, especially in his Word, and that we freely make up our minds whether or not we can regard him as worthy of our trust. {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 41-45. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002} <http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-05>

Not until the turn of the century did scholars really discover what this word means. As archeologists were digging in the sands of Egypt, looking for manuscripts primarily, they even found crocodiles sometimes, stuffed with manuscripts. Well, among these manuscripts they found some that were title deeds to property, business agreements made, covenants; and the title of these documents was this very word: *hupostasis*. And it dawned on some of them that what the apostle was saying here is that faith is, as it were, an agreement, a covenant. God has much to offer us. But first He presents Himself. Do we find Him worthy of our trust? Then He has many things He would like to do with us. And if we decide we can trust Him, and that we would like to do business with Him, (to speak of this in business terms) then that trusting relationship is faith.

So how should we translate it? Look at the next three: “Now faith is the title-deed of things hoped for. . . .” (*Montgomery*) That’s where it came from. It is the word for a title-deed. And the one who translated that is Mrs. Montgomery, one of the few women who has translated the Bible, in 1924. I’m surprised more women don’t use that version; it’s a good one.

“Now faith means that we are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see.” (*Moffatt*) Or, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (*NIV*) {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, session 3, “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>

Would you say, “I do what I do as a Christian, because God has told me to. And He has the power to reward and destroy.” And you say, well that might be all right for a little child, but that would be very legalistic for adults. Now give the adult version. You think, well, all right, I’ll do better this time: “I do what I do because God has told me to, and I love Him, and I want to please Him.” That’s why I don’t murder my mother-in-law. I understand He doesn’t like it. It wouldn’t bother me any. But I don’t want to upset Him, because if you don’t please Him, what might happen to you? And you’ve almost deteriorated back to number one. And when you say you obey someone for love, do you know of any greater obligation than love? Sometimes there is quite a tyranny to love when you say, “Do you love me? Then are you willing to do what I tell you?”

So number two may be a little better than number one, but maybe not. Does God want us to obey Him just because we feel grateful that He has been so good to us? We don't think His rules are really any good, but, I mean, He's been so good to us. Don't you think to please Him we ought to do the things He asks, whether it makes sense or not? If you were standing in your home and heard your children behind the door saying, "Let's be good, at least for the next week. It's one week to Christmas. So let's be good all week, because. . ." Can you remember doing that? There's even a song about it, isn't there, about Santa Claus coming? "You'd better watch out! You'd better be good! Santa Claus is coming to town." Supposing you heard your children behind the door saying, "Why don't we agree, so long as we're home, to do what our folks ask us to do? They've been good to us; they've been generous to us. Besides, they're getting old. Now, their rules don't make any sense, but that doesn't matter. Look, we owe it to them. Let's be loving and gracious, and let's do what they say so long as we're home." Would you feel confident about their future? When you're gone, what are they going to do? Or when they've left what are they going to do? Wouldn't you like to hear them saying something behind that door that would lead you to say, "Good! They'll do what's right even when I'm gone."

What would please God the most? Could you say, "I do what I do as a Christian because the longer I live, the more I'm finding it is right and sensible to do so. And I have great and increasing admiration and respect for the One who so commanded me in the days of my ignorance and immaturity, when the only reason why I did those good things or avoided those bad things was that *He told me to*. And He had the power to reward and destroy. Or I loved Him and wanted to please Him. At least it protected me. But I've come to the place now where more and more I am beginning to do what is right *because it is right*. And I haven't had to think, 'there's a command not to murder my mother-in-law,' for a whole year. And my mother-in-law has never been so safe!" You see if you have to check the Ten Commandments every morning not to murder your mother-in-law, your mother-in-law is walking on thin ice all the time. I think because God loves mothers-in-law and knows our tendencies, He had to say, "Thou shalt not murder thy mother-in-law." Shame on us that we required that!

What an awful moment in God's family when He had to gather His children around and say, "I want all the murdering and the hating to stop. And I want all the stealing, and the cheating, and the lying, and the immorality to stop. Please!" That means it was going on. There was a day when God didn't have to do that, and there is a day coming when He won't have to do it again. Do you remember the new covenant? It will all be written in our hearts, and we will do what is right because it is right. God will not have to lecture us a million years down the line and say, "I want all the murdering up here in heaven to stop." We won't have hated a soul for a million years. We will be doing what is right because it is right. Now if you heard your children behind the door saying, "Let's do what our folks want. I mean, you'll have to admit that everything

they've asked us to do makes such good sense, we ought to want to do it anyway." And you get the impression that even after you are dead and gone, your children will go on doing what is right because it is right. Because now they are maturing, and they have come to see.

When we say "God, the longer I live the more I find that everything You have ever asked me to do makes such good sense, that I ought to want to do it anyway. And now I tell You—that *is* what I want!" Leading to the day when we will stand in the presence of God and say, God, I agree with You. And I am pleased to do all these things that I used to do just because You told me to. I agree with You." And God can say, "At last you're free. You have learned the truth, and the truth set you free." And now the law is written in our hearts and we do what is right because it is right, and not because we are told to. But until we have reached that point, we need the law, and we need reward, and we need threats. We need all those things, don't we? But isn't that a condescension to our lawlessness and our immaturity and our ignorance? By the way, to complete that obedience number three, to balance it out, I would have to say that even though with the passing of time I'm finding more and more that everything God has asked us to do makes such good sense that I agree with Him; I would have to say that being still somewhat ignorant and immature, I'm willing to obey this trustworthy God when He instructs me to do something beyond my present understanding. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians, recorded May, 1982 Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*
<http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>

So what is the message of the cross? Evidently it's much more than the payment of a legal penalty so that somehow God can justly forgive you and me. The cross was needed by the loyal angels. And this truly suggests (and we'll do it in this series) that we ought to go back to the foot of the cross and join the universe, the family of the universe, in watching closely just how Jesus died. And then listening very carefully to how Jesus cried, and what He cried: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" What does that mean? And how does that suffering and death bring peace—once again—to God's family? I believe that in the great controversy, all Christian beliefs take on much broader significance. Particularly does the gospel take on a much larger meaning. You see, while we're still preoccupied with our own salvation, the gospel quite naturally might be understood as the good news about what God has done for me and for you.

But in the larger great controversy setting, the gospel is the truth about our gracious God; the truth that ends the war, and confirms the loyalty of the universe, and wins some of us back to repentance and to trust. I believe (more strongly than I believe anything) that the most important of all our beliefs is the truth about our God. God is not the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be—arbitrary, vengeful, and severe. He is instead precisely as His Son revealed Him to be. We believe the testimony of Jesus when He said, "If you have seen

Me, you have seen the Father.” God is just as loving and gracious as His Son; just as willing to forgive and heal. Could there be any better news than that? To me, that’s the everlasting good news that holds the loyalty of the universe. And wins us back, and will hold our loyalty and trust for the rest of eternity.

And this is the message we have the high privilege of sharing with people all over this planet, who may not know they are members of God’s family, but who deserve to know, and who deserve to hear this truth. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, session 1, “The Conflict In God’s Family” 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/1MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God’s law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses. {PP 364.2}

Jehovah revealed Himself, not alone in the awful majesty of the judge and lawgiver, but as the compassionate guardian of His people: “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” He whom they had already known as their Guide and Deliverer, who had brought them forth from Egypt, making a way for them through the sea, and overthrowing Pharaoh and his hosts, who had thus shown Himself to be above all the gods of Egypt—He it was who now spoke His law. {PP 305.1}

The terms of God’s covenant are, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.” These are the conditions of life. “This do,” Christ said, “and thou shalt live.” {7BC 932.2}

Christ’s death and resurrection completed His covenant. Before this time, it was revealed through types and shadows, which pointed to the great offering to be made by the world’s Redeemer, offered in promise for the sins of the world. Anciently believers were saved by the same Saviour as now, but it was a God veiled. They saw God’s mercy in figures. The promise given to Adam and Eve in Eden was the gospel to a fallen race. The promise was made that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, and it should bruise His heel. Christ’s

sacrifice is the glorious fulfillment of the whole Jewish economy. The Sun of Righteousness has risen. Christ our righteousness is shining in brightness upon us. {7BC 932.3}

The Elder Brother of our race is by the eternal throne. He looks upon every soul who is turning his face toward Him as the Saviour. He knows by experience what are the weaknesses of humanity, what are our wants, and where lies the strength of our temptations; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal. The Lord "tellethe the number of the stars;" and yet "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psalm 147:4, 3. "Come unto Me," is His invitation. Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer. The rest that Christ offers depends upon conditions, but these conditions are plainly specified. They are those with which all can comply. He tells us just how His rest is to be found. {DA 329.1}

"Take My yoke upon you," Jesus says. The yoke is an instrument of service. Cattle are yoked for labor, and the yoke is essential that they may labor effectually. By this illustration Christ teaches us that we are called to service as long as life shall last. We are to take upon us His yoke, that we may be co-workers with Him. {DA 329.2}

Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who will consent to enter into covenant relation with the God of heaven are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature. They are invited by the Saviour, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." Isaiah 27:5. The spirits of darkness will battle for the soul once under their dominion, but angels of God will contend for that soul with prevailing power. The Lord says, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? . . . Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children." Isaiah 49:24, 25. {DA 258.6}

As we gaze upon the beautiful sight, we may be joyful in God, assured that He Himself is looking upon this token of His covenant, and that as He looks upon it He remembers the children of earth, to whom it was given. Their afflictions, perils, and trials are not hidden from Him. We may rejoice in hope, for the bow of God's covenant is over us. He never will forget the children of His care. How difficult for the mind of finite man to take in the peculiar love and tenderness

of God, and His matchless condescension when He said, “I will look upon the bow in the cloud, and remember thee” (RH Feb. 26, 1880). {1BC 1091.7}

The law of God given from Sinai is a copy of the mind and will of the Infinite God. It is sacredly revered by the holy angels. Obedience to its requirements will perfect Christian character, and restore man, through Christ, to his condition before the Fall. The sins forbidden in the law could never find place in heaven. {OHC 138.5}

God has given us every facility, every grace. He has provided the riches of heaven’s treasure, and it is our privilege to draw continually from this capital. {AG 235.6}

But if the Abrahamic covenant contained the promise of redemption, why was another covenant formed at Sinai? In their bondage the people had to a great extent lost the knowledge of God and of the principles of the Abrahamic covenant. In delivering them from Egypt, God sought to reveal to them His power and His mercy, that they might be led to love and trust Him. He brought them down to the Red Sea—where, pursued by the Egyptians, escape seemed impossible—that they might realize their utter helplessness, their need of divine aid; and then He wrought deliverance for them. Thus they were filled with love and gratitude to God and with confidence in His power to help them. He had bound them to Himself as their deliverer from temporal bondage. {PP 371.2}

But there was a still greater truth to be impressed upon their minds. Living in the midst of idolatry and corruption, they had no true conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God’s law, and their need of a Saviour. All this they must be taught. {PP 371.3}