

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2015: *Jeremiah*
Lesson 11 “The Covenant”

Read for this week’s study

Genesis 9:1–17, 12:1–3; Galatians 3:6–9, 15–18; Exodus 24; Jeremiah 31:31–34; 1 Corinthians 11:24–26.

Memory Text

“‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah’” (Jeremiah 31:31, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. God’s Covenant With All Humanity
- III. The Covenant With Abraham
- IV. The Covenant at Sinai
- V. The New Covenant: Part 1
- VI. The New Covenant: Part 2
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Zdravko Stefanović

Book of Hope (Jeremiah 30-33)

1. Everlasting love

The section of the book that speaks of a renewal of the covenant begins where it all began: LOVE. Is poetic style more suited to expressing feelings of love? Describe in your own words the key terms found in the beginning of chapter 31.

What is implied in the title “Virgin Israel?” Why was Zion the ultimate destination of people’s journey from exile? Is “Virgin Israel” the same as God’s “firstborn son” Ephraim? Comment on Father Goriot’s words to his ungrateful daughters in Balzac’s timeless novel: “When I became a father I understood God.”

2. Mother Rachel’s sobbing

As the captives were passing by Ramah near Bethlehem, the prophet could figuratively hear Mother Rachel sobbing. What is the meaning of the words “your

work will be rewarded?” How realistic was it for Jeremiah to dream of Israel’s confession and repentance? Was it culturally acceptable in ancient times that a woman initiates a love relationship?

3. The relationship renewed

In the middle of a visionary experience, the prophet is awakened and finds that his dream was pleasant. Should the so-called new covenant be considered as completely new? Why is it that the first covenant failed? What are some of the common elements between the two covenants? How are they different from each other? Explain the expression “they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.”

The end of chapter 31 reads like an absolute and unconditional prediction. Would you agree? Notice the end of the last verse in this chapter. Is it true that after the Babylonian destruction Jerusalem was never again uprooted or demolished? What can this teach us about the nature of prophetic predictions?

4. Jesus and His love relationship

Jesus also talked about a renewed covenant between Himself and His followers. Do you think He had this text from Jeremiah on His mind? What are some similarities between His promises and the ones from Jeremiah? Are there important differences?

Similarities between Jesus and Jeremiah (cf. Matthew 16:14) extend to their influence after their deaths. Comment on these two quotations: “Jeremiah would lose this lifelong battle. But posthumously, he would win the war... Here Jeremiah is looking into the future. He sees Jerusalem a thousand years after his time, when it becomes the center of world religions. One could argue that the first part of this prophecy [3:17], has been fulfilled, namely Jerusalem has become the city not only of the Hebrew prophets, but also the place where Christianity was born, and where Islam’s founder went up to heaven. The second part, ‘And they will no longer follow the stubbornness of their evil heart,’ is yet to happen.” (Schreiber, 10, 60)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

“Substance.” This is a word we don’t often use in English. Hypostasis comes from the Greek *hupostasis*. That doesn’t help much to know that faith is a *hupostasis*, does it? But does it help to know that faith is a substance? The Greek word *hupostasis*, not to go into it too much, means “that which stands under,” and that’s where “sub” “stance” came from, which is very good Latin but not very good English.

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. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #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>*

The Devil is an Adventist, you know, and it scares him. He knows God is coming soon, and it terrifies him to think of it. So there's a faith that God is *not* looking for. But that is the kind of faith that a show of power may unfortunately produce. It is not enough. And for a dramatic illustration of how power can be misunderstood, look at the story in Genesis 9 and 11. You remember that after the Flood, "God said to Noah and his sons, 'I promise that never again will all living things be destroyed by a flood.'" What a demonstration of God's power the Flood was. Did it win people? Was everyone so convinced by that display of power that no one ever distrusted Him again? God went on to Noah, "As a sign of this everlasting covenant which I am making with you and with all living things, I am putting my bow in the clouds."

"At first, the people of the whole world had only one language. . . And they said to one another . . . 'Now let's build a city with a tower that reaches the sky.'" (GNB)

Now these inhabitants of Babel, did they believe in God? Did they believe in His power? Did they believe He had the power to drown the whole world in a flood? Did they believe His promise that He would never do it again? And so they built the tower. They didn't build the tower because they didn't believe in God, but because they did believe in God and it scared them that He has so much power. So perhaps we need not spend so much time discussing God's power, unless we don't believe that He has it. The great controversy is not over power, but over who is telling the truth. God has been accused of the abuse of power and of a failure to tell the truth. Such charges cannot be met by force. To resort to force would only worsen the matter, as if to suggest, "I don't have evidence, so now I must intimidate you with power." And so God chose the only way— the long and painful, and costly and apparently weak way as some regard it—of teaching, of explanation, of demonstration. {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>*

As you read through Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, if someone were to ask you, “Does it appear that God has been very successful to date,” how would you reply? What has He accomplished so far? He made the promise to Abraham that through his descendants all the nations of the world would be blessed, and in a few years, his descendants are in Egyptian bondage. Years later, God brings them out and tries to take them to Canaan, there to establish them a holy, happy, healthy people, to be His evangelists to the world. Well, we have finally arrived in the Promised Land in these three books. How much evangelism do you see going on? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, recorded 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/11MMPOGIA66> (Pt 1 Joshua & Judges)

<http://pkp.cc/12MMPOGIA66> (Pt 2 Joshua & Judges)

<http://pkp.cc/13MMPOGIA66> (Pt 1 Ruth & 1 Samuel)

<http://pkp.cc/14MMPOGIA66> (Pt 2 Ruth & 1 Samuel)

I think the case of Abraham is maybe the best test case in all Scripture for this. God talks about Abraham being His friend, and how they could talk. It’s mentioned many places in Scripture. Now, how candidly could they talk? When God said, “I’m on my way to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, but I must tell my friend Abraham first.” Abraham was shocked and said, “God, as I know you, you wouldn’t destroy those cities if there were fifty righteous there, or forty, or thirty. God, I don’t want to sound irreverent, but should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?” They had a very open, candid relationship in talking like that. So when this same God said to Abraham, “Take your son, your only son, the son of the promise, the one that I have said will be the father of all these nations, take him and sacrifice him.” And Abraham had to think that through. “Am I hallucinating? Am I dreaming?” You remember, Samuel responded three times. He was careful. And finally Abraham was convinced that it was God, and he aroused Isaac. He didn’t tell him about this. It was too much for the boy, though he was quite grown up. Nor did he tell Sarah, even though she is listed in Hebrews 11 as a heroine of faith, he didn’t want to test her too much. He knew how much she loved Isaac. So he carried this whole thing alone for three days and three nights to the place of sacrifice.

But did he say, “Well, I have it on my bumper sticker: God has said it, I believe it, that’s all there is to it”, and he slept quietly every night? No, he thought this thing through. “How could God

ask me to kill my son? How could He ask me to kill the son of the promise? I mean, that would go against everything He's said, and that doesn't make sense, and my God has always made sense." And so, as Hebrews says, he thought this through, and he thought of some options God might have. He knew God would work things out in a manner that would be consistent with what He had said before. And he came to the conclusion that God would either resurrect his son or He would provide a substitute, which is what God chose to do.

So from what I judge, that story is not blind faith. It's that Abraham knew God so well, and he trusted God so much, that when God asked him to do something that was beyond his understanding at the moment, he said, "God, I'm convinced it's you speaking, so I'm on my way. But may I reverently ask you why?" He did that for Sodom and Gomorrah. He asked Him, "Why would you ask me to do this?" And he thought and he thought about it. And his conclusion was right. That wasn't blind faith. That was the trust of someone who knew God very well, so I'd like to put it on the other side. People use that for blind faith. I'd say that's enlightened trust, because of the relationship they had. So I think that's a vote for enlightened trust, rather than the bumper sticker. What do you think? Would that be so? {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> (Part 1- 1 Kings)

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

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

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

Think of Sinai, for example. God comes down to speak to His people on that mountain, and He thunders. There is lightning, and there's earthquake. The people are terrified. God said to Moses, "Build a fence around the mountain. Don't let those people come too close. If anyone comes near the fence he is to be stoned or shot. If anyone breaks through the fence, I'll burst forth upon him and consume him." And the people stood there so terrified, they said to Moses, "Don't let God speak to us, lest we die."

Now we sing "Nearer, Still Nearer" and "Speak to Me LORD", but not at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Was that some other God? Or was that the Son of God, speaking to the people in that manner on Mt. Sinai?

Well, we have to recreate the historical setting. How were they behaving at the foot of the mountain? They were grumbling, and complaining, and irreverent. And the only way God could get their attention—and hold it long enough to say some more of the truth about Himself—was

to run the risk of terrifying them. And you know that forty days later, when the thunders died away, they were dancing drunk and irreverent around the golden calf. Evidently God had to raise His voice that loud because of the circumstances prevailing at the time. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #6, "Evaluating the Evidence" 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/6MMCAG>*

Do any of you abstain from murder only because of the commandment that says "Thou shalt not commit murder"? If that commandment were not there, would you go right out and murder your mother-in-law? Would you do this? The only reason why you don't kill her is there's a commandment that says "thou shalt not", and you know what happens if you break the commandments and you don't want it to happen to you. And so the only reason why you don't kill that good lady is that God says you shouldn't and you don't want to displease Him. You could even say I love Him and want to please Him. I mean, I don't see anything wrong with killing my mother-in-law, but it upsets **Him**. And I don't want to displease Him; He's been so kind to me. If you were the mother-in-law, would you feel very secure, living next door to you for the rest of eternity, knowing that a lapse of memory and you could get killed by this son-in-law? There's no security in the statement "Thou shall not commit murder." It's not until it's written in our hearts, and the heart is where a man does his thinking, and it becomes **intelligent obedience**, the obedience of the agreement of free people, that it really has power. But then you don't need to write it on tables of stone. God says, "In the beginning I didn't want to write it on tables of stone, I wanted to write in on your hearts." And Jeremiah talks about it. He says, "It's been on the stone too long. It's time it was written on your heart. That's the new covenant; that it won't be on stone any longer, to be pinned to the wall perhaps, and memorized and repeated. But I want it where you do your thinking. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. And that's where I'd like my law." He says, "I finally succeeded with Paul, and he says 'I delight in the law in my inner man. I love it. It used to make me mad, but now' he says, 'I know it's the only way to live.'" {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Galatians, #4, recorded February, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/4MMGALATIANS66>*

Do you remember when we were in Exodus, we considered this? 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's a day coming when He won't have to do it again. You remember the new covenant? It will all be written in our hearts, and we'll do what's 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’ll be doing what’s 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’re dead and gone, your children will go on doing what’s right because it is right, because now they’re maturing, and they’ve come to see. {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>

“Isn’t there a danger that all this emphasis on friendship with a friendly God will undermine proper reverence?” The question came from a pastor at a church conference I attended recently, and I have heard others express the same concern.

The question surely deserves to be taken seriously, for many seem to find it difficult to revere God as both infinite Creator and gentle Friend. As the people demonstrated at the foot of Sinai, when the fear is gone, when there is no display of majesty and power, reverence seems to fade away. So long as the lightning flashed and the ground shook beneath their feet, the Israelites were prepared to promise God anything. Some might regard such trembling submission as “proper reverence.” But not many days after the thunder had died away, the people were dancing wildly around a gold image of a calf!

As long as Jesus miraculously fed the crowds, healed the sick, and raised the dead, the people were ready to worship him and crown him king. But when he answered his enemies with such gentleness, when he treated sinners with such patience and respect, when he explained that his kingdom would not be set up by force, when on Calvary he humbly submitted to so much abuse, most of his followers either left or scoffed at his claim to be the Son of God.

Judas was one of those who mistook graciousness for weakness. When Jesus knelt to wash his feet, Judas despised him for his humility. The god Judas could respect would never degrade himself in such a manner.

Which inspires you to greater reverence: the terrifying manifestation of God’s power on Mount Sinai or the picture of the great Creator quietly weeping on the Mount of Olives? If the story of Sinai and the story of Olivet have led us to see God as both majestic King and gracious Friend, then we have learned how to worship God with the kind of reverence he desires—reverence without fear, the reverence of friends.

Such friends can have a clearer understanding of God’s ways, for he is able to speak to them more plainly. Unlike merely submissive servants, they are eager to know more about the one

they admire. Jealous for God's reputation—as friends should be—they have shown they can be trusted with information others might misunderstand or even abuse.

To them God can reveal his gentleness, without danger of their despising it as weakness. He can tell them that he values nothing higher than their freedom, without danger of lessening their respect for discipline and order. He can show that he is forgiveness personified, without danger that they will take sin less seriously. He can assure them there is no need to be afraid, without danger of diminishing their reverence and awe.

Jesus minced no words in warning of the hazards of sharing such precious information with those who are not ready or able to receive it, or who may even find it offensive. As he neared the end of his marvelous depiction of God in the Sermon on the Mount, he solemnly advised, "Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you." If this should seem too strongly stated, the treatment Jesus received during the next three years proved the truthfulness of his warning. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 71-72. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.} <http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter6.html>

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}

Moses wrote these judgments and statutes from the mouth of God while he was with him in the mount. If the people of God had obeyed the principles of the ten commandments, there would have been no need of the specific directions given to Moses, which he wrote in a book, relative to their duty to God and to one another. The definite directions which the Lord gave to Moses in regard to the duty of his people to one another, and to the stranger, are the principles of the ten commandments simplified and given in a definite manner, that they need not err. {1SP 265.1}

To His children today the Lord declares, "Be strong, . . . and work: for I am with you." The Christian always has a strong helper in the Lord. The way of the Lord's helping we may not know; but this we do know: He will never fail those who put their trust in Him. Could Christians

realize how many times the Lord has ordered their way, that the purposes of the enemy concerning them might not be accomplished, they would not stumble along complainingly. Their faith would be stayed on God, and no trial would have power to move them. They would acknowledge Him as their wisdom and efficiency, and He would bring to pass that which He desires to work out through them. {PK 576.1}

God's work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power, to meet the wants of men in the different ages. Beginning with the first gospel promise, and coming down through the patriarchal and Jewish ages, and even to the present time, there has been a gradual unfolding of the purposes of God in the plan of redemption. The Saviour typified in the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law is the very same that is revealed in the gospel. The clouds that enveloped His divine form have rolled back; the mists and shades have disappeared; and Jesus, the world's Redeemer, stands revealed. He who proclaimed the law from Sinai, and delivered to Moses the precepts of the ritual law, is the same that spoke the Sermon on the Mount. The great principles of love to God, which He set forth as the foundation of the law and the prophets, are only a reiteration of what He had spoken through Moses to the Hebrew people: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Leviticus 19:18. The teacher is the same in both dispensations. God's claims are the same. The principles of His government are the same. For all proceed from Him "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1:17. {PP 373.2}

The covenant of grace is not a new truth, for it existed in the mind of God from all eternity. This is why it is called the everlasting covenant. {FLB 77.5}

Through the plan of salvation a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. {TMK 366.4}

Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. {TMK 366.5}

We are not to think of God only as a judge and to forget Him as our loving Father. Nothing can do our souls greater harm than this, for our whole spiritual life will be molded by our conceptions of God's character. . . . {TMK 262.2}