

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Second Quarter 2021: *The Promise: God's Everlasting Covenant*
Lesson 2 "Covenant Primer"

Read for this week's study

Genesis 9:15; Isaiah 54:9; Genesis 12:1–3, Galatians 3:6–9, 29; Exodus 6:1–8; Jeremiah 31:33, 34.

Memory Text

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Exodus 19:5).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Covenant Basics
- III. Covenant With Noah
- IV. The Abram Covenant
- V. The Covenant With Moses
- VI. The New Covenant (*Jeremiah 31:31–33*)
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Exodus 19:5. This text certainly makes it sound as if obedience is a condition for God's favor. How would you read this text in light of the New Testament gospel? (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
2. What does the word "covenant" mean? What was the purpose of ancient covenants? If there is only one true covenant (the everlasting covenant), why are there so many different covenants in the Old Testament? The book of Hebrews says that animal sacrifices are not capable of taking away sin (Hebrews 10:1-4). What was the true purpose of the sacrifices? How did Old Testament saints get right with God? (Sunday's Lesson)
3. According to Genesis 6:17-18, what did God obligate Himself to do for Noah and his family? What covenant obligations were Noah and his family to fulfill in return? In what way does this arrangement remind you of the gospel? (Monday's Lesson)

4. Read Genesis 12:1-3. What specific promises to Abram did God commit to? How do these promises relate to the three relationships outlined in Genesis 1? Read Galatians 3:6-9. How would all the families of the earth end up being blessed by Abraham? How does Genesis 15:6 articulate the gospel already in Abraham's day? (Tuesday's Lesson)
5. Read Exodus 6:1-8. What covenant was God talking about here? What role was the Exodus to play in the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham? (Wednesday's Lesson)
6. Read Jeremiah 31:33-34. Compare it with Exodus 6:7, which details part of the covenant God made with Israel. What is the key element that comes through here? What does God want from His people? What does it mean that the law is written on our hearts? How does a law written on peoples' hearts differ from a law written on stone? How does the Jeremiah passage anticipate John 17:3? (Thursday's Lesson)
7. Why is the personal, relational aspect of the covenant so important? In other words, you can have a legally binding agreement, a "covenant" with someone, without any close, personal relationship. How is that kind of relationship different from what God wants in His covenant relationship with His people? What are the limits of the covenant metaphor? (Friday's Lesson)
8. In what ways is marriage a good analogy for the covenant God desires to have with His people? In what ways does the marriage analogy fall short in describing God's covenant with humanity? How would you apply a text like Psalm 40:8 to marriage? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

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.

{Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 41-42. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-05>

How about the Flood? Did the Flood lead people to deny the existence and power of God? No. When they built Babel, was it because they didn't believe in God? Was it because they didn't believe he had the power to destroy? Or was it because they **did** believe in God, and they did believe he had the power to destroy? Now, they didn't think he could be trusted when he said, "I'll never drown you again." That's why they built that tower. Isn't that what it says?

You see, they really believed in God, his existence and his power. That's why to believe that doesn't say which side you're on. The devils believe that, too. In fact, they had such confidence that God could destroy, they built that tower as tall as they did. You see, the exercise of power and force may only make rebels worse. But it might for a moment gain the attention of those who are sinners indeed, but would love to hear what you would have to say, if they'd be quiet. And *God* wins people every once in a while, during those quiet moments. But the devil must mock him for failure to be able to clear up the problems on this earth by the exercise of power.

But the Great Controversy is not over who has the power, is it? It's over who is telling the truth. God has been accused of the abuse of divine power, and I'm sure Satan accused him of abusing his power in the time of the Flood: "See what he'll do; obey him, or he'll drown you!" The inhabitants of Babylon believed that: "Believe God, or he'll drown you!" Well, they didn't want to obey him, so they built the tall tower so they could escape the next flood when it came!

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Exodus*, recorded October 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/3MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/4MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

What's the main thing that is mentioned of Abraham? Abraham trusted God, and God said, "That's what I'm looking for."

Sometimes we read that as a sort of accounting procedure. "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him in the ledger as righteousness." No, in the Great Controversy, my understanding would be, every once in awhile there has arisen an individual on this planet; and they are not all men, there are women mentioned, who really trusted God. Trusted in him enough to listen, and God did wonderful things with those people, and their conversations are on record. Moses was another; Job was another. And God says to the family, makes mention of it in scripture, "There's a friend with whom I can speak face-to-face as a man speaks with his friend." And there's one thing mentioned of every one of them—the word "trust" or "faith" or "belief." All God has ever asked of us is trust. Sin is a breach of trust. The remedy is to win us back to trust. And do we see much evidence in Genesis as a basis for trust? I think it starts right

away, in the seven days of creation week. And every weekend as Sabbath rolls around, we are reminded of the evidence that begins on page one, that God is respectful of our freedom, infinitely generous. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Esther & Job, recorded January 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/25MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/26MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Jeremiah was looking for somebody as an example of people who were willing to listen. And he picked up these individuals who were willing to obey their human father. But the people as a whole would not obey God. Now, what is it that God wants us to listen to and understand? In the seventh chapter, he says, “When I brought you out of Egypt, I didn’t talk about sacrifices and offerings. I just said, let me be your God, and you be my people; you listen to me. I’ll lead you through the wilderness, and set you up in the Promised Land, a holy, healthy, happy people. And all will be well.” But Hebrews says, “They went not in because of lack of trust.” And you know the record.

Is this really what God wants, and not the performance of all the rites and rituals and ceremonies and everything that he indeed gave, but which was added? Was it added because they went backwards and were so stubborn? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations, recorded February 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/35MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/36MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Now put with that Jeremiah 31:31; the provisions of the new covenant, the only thing God has really wanted all along from the very beginning:

“Behold, the days are coming [these would be days when they would be good shepherds who would give knowledge and understanding.], says the LORD, when I will make a new agreement [or covenant] with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of

Israel after those days, says the LORD: [this is what I really want] I will put my law within them. I will write it upon their hearts.”

Where a man does his thinking. This is intelligent obedience. This is doing what’s right because we agree it is right. This is where it was among the angels. Remember, we’re told that it came to the angels as something unthought-of that there should be any law, because it was on their hearts. They thought this way. You didn’t have to tell an angel to stop murdering; he didn’t want to anyway. This was all added because of transgression. “I will write it upon their hearts; and,” as a result, notice, “and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

But isn’t that what he said when he first brought them out of Egypt? So the first thing he said was, “Ideally now, you be my people; I’ll be your God. That will take care of everything. Trust me.” God can save and heal all who trust him. But they didn’t. So he had to use other measures. But this is what he really wants. And notice what goes with it. When we really understand what God wants, we also understand what God is like:

“And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord” [And what about their sins?]. I’ll forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.”

I’ll treat them as if they had always been my loyal children. That’s all that God has ever wanted. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations*, recorded February 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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Further Study with Ellen White

Man gains everything by obeying the covenant-keeping God. God’s attributes are imparted to man, enabling him to exercise mercy and compassion. God’s covenant assures us of His unchangeable character. {7BC 932.2}

Men had well-nigh lost the knowledge of the true God. Their minds were darkened by idolatry. For the divine statutes, which are “holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12), men were endeavoring to substitute laws in harmony with the purposes of their own cruel, selfish hearts. Yet God in His mercy 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. {PK 15.2}

Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. The scribes and Pharisees desired to make a local and a national benefit of all the gifts of heaven and to exclude the rest of God's family in the world. But Christ came to break down every wall of partition. He came to show that His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth. {9T 190.4}

The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God. No question of policy influenced His movements. He made no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. That which appealed to His heart was a soul thirsting for the waters of life. {9T 191.1}

In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around. {AA 551.2}

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. {DA 668.3}

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}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. {5T 738.4}

Christ, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of His divinity and came to live as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their Creator. Since sin brought separation between man and his Maker, no man has seen God at any time, except as He is manifested through Christ. {MH 419.1}

Man's need for a divine teacher was known in heaven. The pity and sympathy of God were aroused in behalf of human beings, fallen and bound to Satan's chariot car; and when the fullness of time was come, He sent forth His Son. The One appointed in the councils of heaven came to this earth as man's instructor. The rich benevolence of God gave Him to our world, and to meet the necessities of human nature He took humanity upon Himself. To the astonishment of the heavenly host the eternal Word came to this world as a helpless babe. Fully prepared, He left the royal courts and mysteriously allied Himself with fallen human beings. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14. {CT 259.2}

Christ's favorite theme was the paternal character and abundant love of God. This knowledge of God was Christ's own gift to men, and this gift He has committed to His people to be communicated by them to the world. {6T 55.1}

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Therefore he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself—as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving—that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. . . . {HP 8.2}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, a God of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. By the world's Redeemer the thick darkness with which Satan had enshrouded the throne of the Deity was swept away, and the Father was again manifest to men as the Light of life. . . . {HP 8.3}