

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2021: *The Promise: God's Everlasting Covenant*

Lesson 7 "Covenant at Sinai"

Read for this week's study

Deuteronomy 1:29–31; Hosea 11:1; Revelation 5:9; Deuteronomy 29:10–13; Exodus 19:5, 6; Romans 6:1, 2; Revelation 14:12; Romans 10:3.

Memory Text

" 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself' " (Exodus 19:4, RSV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. On Eagles' Wings
- III. The Pattern of Salvation
- IV. The Sinai Covenant
- V. God and Israel
- VI. Promises, Promises (*Exodus 19:8*)
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. "It was the privilege of ancient Israel, as it is our own, to drink deeply from the wells of salvation. Israel's deliverance from centuries of slavery and oppression was a marvelous exhibition of divine grace. Likewise, divine grace is involved in our own emancipation from sin." (Sabbath afternoon)
2. What metaphors does God use to illustrate the exodus of Israel from Egypt to Sinai? (Sunday's lesson)
3. What pattern of salvation does the Exodus establish? "The word 'redeem' in Exodus 6:6 refers to a member of a family buying back or ransoming another member of the family, especially when that member was in slavery for debt or about to go into slavery. Israel apparently had no earthly relative to redeem her, but God was now Israel's relative, her kinsman redeemer." (Monday's lesson)

4. What does it mean when God said He has to “come down” to see the situation of Israel and rescue them? (Exodus 3:8) What does it tell us about how God interacts throughout human history (John 1:14)?
5. What is the significance of the Sinai covenant? “This covenant plays a vital role in the plan of salvation. It is the fourth covenant listed in the Bible (preceded the ones with Adam, Noah, and Abraham), and in it God reveals Himself more fully than before, particularly as the entire sanctuary ritual is established. Thus, the sanctuary becomes the means by which He shows the people the plan of salvation that they were to reveal to the world.” (Tuesday’s lesson)
6. How does God reveal the partnership aspect of the covenant? “In these verses the Lord is proposing His covenant with the children of Israel. Though in one sense the Lord has called them, that calling is not automatically bestowed upon them without their choice. They had to cooperate. Even their deliverance from Egypt involved their cooperation: If they did not do what the Lord said (such as putting the blood on the doorposts), they would not have been delivered. It was that simple.” (Wednesday’s lesson)
7. How does the concept “if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me” (Exodus 19:5-6) relate to the concept of salvation by grace? Are they complementary, mutually exclusive or something else?
8. How does the subsequent story of Israel help us illustrate the nature of their response, “We will do everything the Lord has said” (Exodus 19:8)? “The problem, of course, was not their attempt to obey (the covenant demanded that they obey); the problem was the kind of ‘obedience’ they rendered, which wasn’t really obedience at all, as the subsequent history of the nation showed.” (Thursday’s lesson)
9. What are the major lessons from the Sinai covenant? Why is it significant in the biblical storyline? What are some lessons that stand out to you?
10. Note that the actual inheritance of the Promised Land is not placed in any doubt. The focus is not on what Abraham’s descendants must do in order to inherit the land (promised in Genesis 15), but rather on how they must conduct themselves within the land as the special nation that God intended them to be (Exodus 19:5-6; 22:22, 26).
11. Israel’s distinctiveness was a prerequisite for retaining the possession of their territorial inheritance. Expulsion from the Promised Land would in turn jeopardize the fulfillment of God’s ultimate objective, the blessing of all nations through Abraham’s royal ‘seed’.
12. Just as the covenant with Noah guaranteed the preservation of life, in particular human life on earth, so the Sinaitic covenant guaranteed the preservation of Israel, Abraham’s national posterity, in the land until the arrival of Abraham’s ultimate seed and covenant heir – the son of David (Galatians 3:19).

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

As he experienced this separation from his Father, “so great was this agony, that his physical pain was hardly felt. With amazement angels witnessed the Savior’s despairing agony.” Note the words, agony, fear, consternation. He was really tempted to doubt all that he’d been teaching. He even wondered if he’d rise again.”

Maybe he was tempted to believe this legal explanation that the second death is, you die and stay dead forever. And if he was going to pay the price for sin, he would have to die, and stay dead forever. He would never rise again. But he didn’t come to pay that penalty. He came to answer the questions, and as soon as he had answered them (he did wait over Sabbath, to add more meanings to the Sabbath, so that every Sabbath we’d remember the questions he’d answered on Friday) he arose a great while before it was day, and he hastened to heaven. And he said to Mary, “Don’t detain me! I have to hasten to heaven.” And he appeared before his Father, and the angels, and he said, “Was it enough?” To pay the price of sin? “No,” they could have said, “You’re supposed to stay dead for eternity. You hurry back! We’ll not let anybody know you were out.” They never said such a thing! They said, “It is more than enough. You’ve cleared up all our questions. You’ve confirmed our trust without fear for eternity.” And he came back down to see if the twelve had gotten the message, and they were all in a deep depression. It took him a long time to revive them.

And to this present day, do we really accept what he came to reveal at such infinite cost, that he does not wish to be served from fear. The Father will no more kill us at the end of the millennium than he killed his Son—which leads some to believe that he did kill his Son as he will kill the wicked at the end. How have you worked this out yourself? How did Jesus resolve these questions on the cross? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Luke*, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/55MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/56MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

It cost heaven an infinite price to bring us the Good News and confirm it with evidence that would stand for eternity. No wonder Paul was moved to speak so strongly in its defense. Just like the loyal angels, Paul was jealous for the character of God. To him it was unthinkable that some of his fellow ministers would, in effect, lend their support to Satan’s charges by attributing even the slightest trace of arbitrariness to our gracious God.

It was this same perversion of the Good News that stirred Jesus most deeply. He was gentle with the worst of sinners—with Simon in his dastardly treatment of the woman who anointed Christ’s feet; with the woman taken in adultery; even with his betrayer, Judas. But when some of the religious leaders, respected teachers of the people, denied the Good News and echoed

Satan's lies about God, Christ uttered those awful words, "You are of your father the devil" (John 8:44).

There was no disagreement between Jesus and those teachers as to the existence of God, or the story of Creation, or the authority of the Ten Commandments, or which day was the Sabbath. Their disagreement was about the character of God. Jesus came to bring them the Good News, a picture of God that would enable them to go on doing many of the same things but for a different reason—a reason that would make it possible for them to be obedient and free at the same time. But they killed him rather than change their view of God—then hastened home to keep another Sabbath.

There is nothing more diabolic than to suppress and pervert the Good News about God. And this can be done even while apparently presenting Christian doctrine. As God is represented in some pulpits, the doctrine of the Second Coming is certainly not good news. The prospect of spending eternity with such a deity would be forbidding.

There are explanations of the death of Christ and of his intercession in our behalf that put God in a most unfavorable light, less gracious and understanding than his Son. Such subjects as sin, the law, the destruction of the wicked, the requirements for salvation, are sometimes presented in such a way—including the voice and manner of the preacher—as to leave the people with precisely the picture of God that Satan has been urging. {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 33-34. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-04>

Obviously Jesus did not die to win his Father. And how clear Paul is on this. Look quickly at the remaining verses. Second Corinthians 5:19: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." (RSV) Nowhere ever does the Bible suggest that God had to be reconciled to us. Never once! But God paid the price to reconcile us to himself! Nor did Jesus die to pay some mere legal penalty. He died to reveal the truth about God and the falsity of Satan's charges. And even the angels had to learn this. Look at Colossians 1:20: ". . . and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace," not war, but, "making peace by the blood of his cross." (RSV)

As Jesus said in the next verse, John 12:32: "When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw everyone to me." (GNB) Not all men, everyone in the whole family of the universe. You see, viewed in the larger setting of the Great Controversy. The way in which Jesus suffered and died is the greatest revelation of the truth about God and his government that the universe will ever see or ever need. Correctly understood, the message of the cross is final defeat for the

adversary. No wonder Satan has worked so hard to obscure and misrepresent and even pervert the meaning of the cross.

But to some of us, the cross is great good news. Yes, it is true that sinners will die, but we have no need to be afraid of God; and he died to prove it. And this message has great power to win to repentance and to trust. Paul was so proud of this good news. Look at his understanding of it in the last verses. 1 Corinthians 1:17, 18:

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel [what is the gospel, the good news, about?], and not with eloquent wisdom lest the cross of Christ [that's the gospel] be emptied of its power [his good news has great power]. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (RSV)

Now compare with that Romans 1:16, that very famous righteousness by faith verse:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel [this good news]: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith . . . [wherein lies the power?] for in it [something is revealed] the righteousness of God is revealed. (RSV)

The good news is that God is not the unrighteous kind of person his enemies have made him out to be. And it's so wonderful to see all through the Bible that even before the cross God had good friends who trusted him always to do the right thing, the merciful thing, and they were proud to know him and proud to speak about him to others. Look at Jeremiah 9:24:

Let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight, declares the Lord. (NIV)

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #8, "The Most Costly And Convincing Evidence" recorded March 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>*

It's interesting that the Sabbath is the one so readily misunderstood, yet the one that has the greatest meanings, it seems to me, because the Sabbath comes along to remind us of all the occasions when God cleared these matters up, like in creation week. Look at all he said about himself during creation week, unselfishly sharing his creative power with us in endowing us with the ability to create little people in our own image. That was one of the most eloquent things he did. Giving us freedom there in the Garden. Allowing Satan to approach them, but protecting Adam and Eve from being overwhelmed by their wily foe. Then later on when we lost our freedom, he rescued us from Egyptian bondage, and said, "Now keep the Sabbath to remember the Exodus, when I set you free."

And then crucifixion week, when the most important answers were given on crucifixion Friday, and the next day was Sabbath. He could have gone to heaven Friday afternoon. He didn't. According to the law, he rested on the Sabbath. But he couldn't wait long afterwards. He arose a great while before it was day and went to heaven, to hear the angels say, "We understand now. You are not the least bit arbitrary. We understand all this business of law. It is no threat to our freedom whatever. And that for you to exercise your almighty power to bring unity is not the best way. The way you've chosen to do it is the best way." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Ephesians and Colossians, recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/67MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/68MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

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}

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}

As the wheellike complications were under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of this earth. {PK 536.1}

God has angels whose whole work is to draw those who shall be heirs of salvation. Whenever one takes a step toward Jesus, Jesus is taking steps toward him. The angels' work is to keep back the powers of Satan (MS 17, 1893). {7BC 922.5}

The Pharisees had taught that none but the Jewish nation would be saved, and they treated all other nationalities with contempt. But Jesus attracted the attention of those that the Pharisees despised, and He treated them with consideration and courtesy. . . . {LHU 212.3}

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

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

And while Christ opens heaven to man, the life which He imparts opens the heart of man to heaven. Sin not only shuts us away from God, but destroys in the human soul both the desire and the capacity for knowing Him. All this work of evil it is Christ's mission to undo. The faculties of the soul, paralyzed by sin, the darkened mind, the perverted will, He has power to invigorate and to restore. He opens to us the riches of the universe, and by Him the power to discern and to appropriate these treasures is imparted. {Ed 28.3}

The Teacher from heaven, no less a personage than the Son of God, came to earth to reveal the character of the Father to men, that they might worship him in spirit and in truth. Christ revealed to men the fact that the strictest adherence to ceremony and form would not save them; for the kingdom of God was spiritual in its nature. Christ came to the world to sow it with truth. He held the keys to all the treasures of wisdom, and was able to open doors to science, and to reveal undiscovered stores of knowledge, were it essential to salvation. He presented to men that which was exactly contrary to the representations of the enemy in regard to the character of God, and sought to impress upon men the paternal love of the Father, who "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He urged upon men the necessity of prayer, repentance, confession, and the abandonment of sin. He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love, not only those who loved them, but those who hated them, who treated them despitefully. In this he was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth. Those who accepted his teaching were under the guardian care of angels, who were commissioned to strengthen, to enlighten, that the truth might renew and sanctify the soul. {RH, November 17, 1891 par. 7}

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, "I have manifested thy name." "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God

announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 9}

Christ revealed all of God that sinful human beings could bear without being destroyed. He is the divine Teacher, the Enlightener. Had God thought us in need of revelations other than those made through Christ and in His written word, He would have given them. {8T 266.1}

The Sun of Righteousness did not burst upon the world in splendor, to dazzle the senses with His glory. It is written of Christ, "His going forth is prepared as the morning." Hosea 6:3. Quietly and gently the daylight breaks upon the earth, dispelling the shadow of darkness, and waking the world to life. So did the Sun of Righteousness arise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. {DA 261.3}

Jesus took the nature of humanity, in order to reveal to man a pure, unselfish love, to teach us how to love one another. {5BC 1126.1}

Christ had not exchanged His divinity for humanity; but He had clothed His divinity in humanity (RH Oct. 29, 1895). {5BC 1128.3}

Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed. . . . In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father. {TMK 338.4}

Accustomed as they had been in Egypt to material representations of the Deity, and these of the most degrading nature, it was difficult for them to conceive of the existence or the character of the Unseen One. In pity for their weakness, God gave them a symbol of His presence. "Let them make Me a sanctuary," He said; "that I may dwell among them." Exodus 25:8. {Ed 35.1}

Christ came to this earth in human form that He might stand as the Captain of our salvation, so that we should not be overcome by Satan's power. And when the enemy has seemed to be gaining a signal victory over righteousness, God has been working in mercy and power to counteract his designs. {TDG 308.4}

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. {RH, February 15, 1912 par. 4}

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-

ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters (Letter 406, 1906). {6BC 1074.2}

The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression. {6BC 1110.4}

Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which, through the grace of Christ, the soul becomes a conquering power. {MH 62.2}

Amid the perplexities that will press upon the soul, there is only One who can help us out of all our difficulties, and relieve all our disquietude. We are to cast all our care upon Jesus, and bear in mind that He is present, and is directing us to commune with Him. We are to keep our minds stayed upon God; and in our weakness, He will be our strength; in our ignorance, He will be our wisdom; in our frailty, He will be our enduring might. {SD 27.2}

Genuine faith is followed by love, and love by obedience. All the powers and passions of the converted man are brought under the control of Christ. His Spirit is a renewing power, transforming to the divine image all who will receive it. {5T 219.4}

Jesus does not call on us to follow Him, and then forsake us. If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us. His voice, clear and distinct, is heard, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." [John 14:6.] "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." [Psalm 72:12.] {GW 263.1}

Every human being is the object of loving interest to Him who gave His life that He might bring men back to God. Souls guilty and helpless, liable to be destroyed by the arts and snares of Satan, are cared for as a shepherd cares for the sheep of his flock. {MH 162.1}