

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

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

Lesson 9 "Covenant Sign"

Read for this week's study

Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:11; Exodus 16; Hebrews 4:1–4; Exodus 31:12–17; Deuteronomy 5:14.

Memory Text

"Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant" (Exodus 31:16).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Origins
- III. Sabbath Before Sinai
- IV. Covenant Sign
- V. Sign of Sanctification
- VI. Remembering the Sabbath
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. "With unceasing regularity, and with no exceptions, the Sabbath silently hurls over the horizon and into every crack and cranny of our lives. It reminds us that every crack and cranny belong to our Maker, the One who put us here, the One who 'in the beginning' created the heavens and the earth, an act that remains the irrefutable foundation of all Christian belief and of which the seventh-day Sabbath—is the irrefutable, unobtrusive and unyielding sign. This week we look at this sign in the context of the Sinai covenant." (Sabbath afternoon)
2. When is the word 'sign' used for the first time in the Bible? What is the significance and purpose of it? How does it function? (See Genesis 4:15; 1:14)
3. There are different ways to describe a relationship with God. We can think of God as our Friend, our Father, our Master, or our Teacher. But the Bible also describes God as someone who sees humanity as His partner. The Bible talks about this partnership of working alongside someone to accomplish a goal together and calls it a

'covenant'. The purpose is to somehow use this covenant relationship to renew God's partnership with everybody, all of humanity.

4. There are four explicit times in the Old Testament where we are told that God initiates a covenant relationship: with Noah, Abraham, the nation of Israel, and King David. (The Adamic covenant and the Priestly covenant with Aaron are implied, but not explicitly mentioned as such.)
5. What is the sign in the covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:12, 13, 17)? What is the role and purpose of this sign? Do you see any connection of Genesis 9:12, 13 with 1:14? Who is the intended recipient of this sign? How do you understand Genesis 9:12-17?
6. When God makes a covenant with Noah, he is saying, "I know that humans will continue to be evil, but despite that I am not going to destroy them by water again. Instead, the earth will be a reliable place for us to work together." In this first explicit covenant, God is promising to be faithful even though he knows humans will not be.
7. The next covenant is with Abraham. God chooses him, promises to give him a large family, lots of land where his household can flourish and develop into a tribe and a nation. Through this covenant God intended to bless all the families of the world through this one family.
8. What is the sign in this covenant and what role and purpose does it play (Genesis 17:11)? How is it connected with Genesis 4:15 & 9:13?
9. When this one tribe becomes 12 tribes and Egypt becomes a new Babylon, who wants to enslave them so that they do not see themselves as a nation? God turns Pharaoh's evil back on him and he is swallowed up by death. After this great deliverance, the Israelites sing a song about how God is their warrior who liberated them from evil and oppression. They refer to this moment as "The Day". The day they were rescued from a corrupt human system. The Israelites are supposed to celebrate the day of their liberation with the symbolic meal of a sacrificial lamb. It is called "Passover".
10. Which brings us to the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant. What is the sign there and how does it function? (Exodus 12:13, 14; 31:12-17) How is it connected with the previous storyline? (see also Sunday's lesson) How does Sabbath function when it is mentioned the first time by name (Exodus 16; Monday's lesson)?
11. What does it mean that the Sabbath is a sign of redemption (Tuesday's lesson)? How is Sabbath a sign of sanctification? ("That you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you" Exodus 31:13; Wednesday's lesson)
12. While the Israelites are on their way to the Promised Land, they find themselves in the wilderness. Life is a struggle; it is easy to get lost and forget the liberating experience of "The Day". They are not in the land of rest yet. But while they are on their way, God invites them, there in the wilderness, to start living as if they are in the Promised Land, to practice the future reality of rest. To take a whole day to live as if the ultimate rest has already come. To enjoy God's good world and be a blessing to others. What is the implication and application for us today?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Graham: The sealing is mentioned first in Revelation, then the mark of the beast. And I think the mark of the beast, really a symbol of loyalty to the opposition, should be compared with the symbol of loyalty to God. I believe that to receive the seal of God is to be so settled into the truth both intellectually and spiritually that one cannot be moved. I believe that to receive the “mark of the beast” is to be so settled into the lie, and there are scriptures that talk about the Lie, preferring Satan’s lies to the truth, you’ve substituted his lies for the truth. I believe to receive the mark of the beast is to be so settled into Satan’s false picture of God that not even the Spirit of God could move us. We cannot be moved. So in essence, the seal or the mark represents an inner decision and commitment for eternity with respect to God.

Lou: Well, are you suggesting then that the seal of God—and for those of us who have roots in Seventh-day Adventism, for example, the seal of God has been tied very closely to the Sabbath.

Graham: All my life.

Lou: In fact, I probably have referred to the Sabbath as the seal of God in itself. But I hear you making a distinction there.

Graham: One has to stop and realize that the people who crucified Christ kept the seventh-day Sabbath scrupulously, very, very carefully. Did they have the seal of God? They certainly were not settled into the truth about God. When Jesus brought the truth about God, they said he had a devil, and they killed him to silence his witness. On the other hand though, you remember the evening we talked about how the Sabbath sums up the good news about our God, I believe that knowing, meaningful, intelligent, thoughtful observers of the seventh day as a reminder of all these great demonstrations of the truth about our God, could be an outward expression of an inward conviction and a settling into this truth about our God. The seventh-day Sabbath beautifully fits this mark of identification of those who are committed to the truth about God.

Lou: So it has something to do with very deep understanding and experience.

Graham: Yes. That’s why you can see, when the chips are down, I mean, when the issues in the Great Controversy are clearly seen, it’s conceivable that the preference for a substitute Sabbath could suggest preference for, even faith in, the substitute for the Son of God; the one who said, “I will be like the Most High.” The one who said to Christ, “Worship me.” But not until then.

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #18 with Lou Venden, “God Waits for His Children to Grow Up” recorded June 1984, Loma Linda, California}

To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:

<http://pkp.cc/18MMCAG>

Right behavior and the truth about God always go together, for most significant reasons. But you notice how they're always associated here. When people are very religious but have a wrong picture of God, it may totally pervert what it is they're doing, and even their Sabbath keeping could become a curse to them rather than a blessing; a burden and a wall between them and other people in the world. And Ephesians and Colossians talk about eliminating that artificial wall. The Sabbath was never supposed to be a barrier. The Sabbath should remind us that we're all members of the same family. Isn't that true? Every seventh-day Sabbath we should realize that everybody on this planet trace their lineage back to the same beginning. The Sabbath is the great leveler, the great unifier in the whole human race. The Sabbath was never meant to be a barrier. But when it becomes a sign that we are the *one* true people, it can become more a barrier. Even something we wear with a false kind of a pride. We have to watch that with great care. I think Sabbath keeping, without a true picture of God, may do us more harm than good.

Evidence of that? Once again, the people who crucified Christ rushed home to get ready to keep a seventh-day Sabbath holy. Seems insane. That's because they didn't have a true picture of God. Jesus said, "If only you knew my Father, you would have recognized me and you wouldn't be trying to kill me." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Genesis*, 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/1MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Isn't it significant that after all the answers during creation week, the next day was a rest day, for reflection and celebration? And after all the answers given during crucifixion week, the next day was a rest day, a day for reflection, for remembering, for celebration. To me, that's the whole purpose of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is designed to remind us of the truth about God that is the basis of our trust. It's not a test of obedience. It's not a burden; it's been made one. It was given to man. Remember Mark 2:27? "And he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of man is lord even of the Sabbath.'" The Sabbath was made for us, to help us, because more than at any other time we need to be reminded of the truth that was not claimed, but revealed and demonstrated during creation week, and during crucifixion week.

Incidentally, was that first Sabbath our seventh day? It was our second day. Sometimes we say we should worship every seventh day because it's built into our system that we need to rest every seventh day. If that's a good argument, then on which day should we rest? Which is our

seventh day? Thursday! I don't know anybody who chooses Thursday. Friday yes, Saturday yes, Sunday yes. But this would start a whole new movement. If we're supposed to rest on the seventh day, our seventh day is Thursday. God's seventh day, with the universe watching, their seventh day, earth time, is the one that follows all those revealing events of creation week. That's when God and the universe celebrated. And then God says, "I want you to do the same from here on, not to be a burden and a test of obedience; you need this. The controversy is on; you need to be reminded once a week of the evidence I have presented, and there will be much more coming." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Isaiah, 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/33MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/34MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Take "to know God." What's the difference between really knowing God and really trusting him? Look for example, at John 17:3: "And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (RSV) As we discussed last time, in the Bible to really *know* someone is to love him, trust him, admire him, to be his friend. That word is even used for the intimacy between a husband and his wife. To really know God is to trust him, to love him and admire him. I can hear God saying, "If only my children really trusted me. If they only really knew me. If they only really loved me. If they were only willing to listen, and let me help them. If they would only turn around and come back and stay with me, and choose to stay forever, I could perfectly heal all the damage done. Everything would be right again. And we could keep it right forever." Now that's the whole list, if you want to put it in simple terms.

I often hear God saying in the Bible, "How I wish my children could be my friends once again. And they could see me as being their friend. And then all would be well." Can you name anything that would be left out if we, once again, really were God's loving, trusting, admiring friends? Is there anything he couldn't do if we honestly regarded him that way?

Now the Bible describes one such friend. And what an honor in the Bible to be so listed. Moses was such a friend. And he's described in Exodus 33:11, 17. Let's look at just a little of it:

The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. . . . And the Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." (NIV)

You see how being a friend is the same as being known? And I think trust is being loved, and all those other things. Now surely such trust, and such friendship with our God is no "leap in the dark," as some people describe faith. Does God ask us to gamble when we trust him? Has God

left us in the dark? Surely we have been warned that it is not safe to trust someone we do not know. And God doesn't ask us to trust him as a stranger. Romans 10:17 is another key text we all know so well. Where does this trust come from? "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ." (RSV) Or some manuscripts say "the word of God." And it's the same in effect, isn't it? "Faith comes from what is heard," because they didn't have copies of the Bible, or Bible Reference Sheets the way we do. They had to go and listen as the scriptures were read. And as they listened they heard the truth. They heard the evidence. And some were won to repentance and to trust, particularly when they heard the truth revealed by the Son of God himself. {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>

Lou: You have said a great deal about trust this evening. I can hear a person saying something like this, "When are we going to get on to the really important ideas of justification and sanctification, expiation, propitiation, atonement, substitution and so forth. Haven't we spent long enough on trust?"

Graham: I think we have been talking about justification, but we've given it another name. We'll even use those names, because they are an important part of our history. And when we talk to our friends for whom those *are* the words, then we should use them if we are going to communicate at all. But I'd rather use the words the Bible uses. And some would say, "Well, aren't those the words the Bible uses?" No. It's going to be interesting to arrive in the Kingdom and settle all debates by going up to Paul and saying, "Give us the last word, Paul. What did you mean by justification?"

"Could I hear that one more time?" he'll say.

"Yes. Justification. You know, your favorite word."

"Well, I never used it."

"How about sanctification?"

"No."

"Propitiation? You mean you used none of those terms? Expiation?"

Paul never used one of them. Neither did Jesus or anybody else in the Bible. You see, they are largely Latin words that came from a period when Latin was largely used for theology. A good many of the words, a good share of the heavier words, have Latin derivation. Some come from Greek. Look at *Sola Scriptura*. That's pure Latin. Why do we keep using it? Why not "the Bible only." Or the word that I used previously, the *Christomonistic principle*. That's Greek. *Christos*

(Christ) and *monos* (only). Why not say the “Christ alone” principle? So I would rather use simple terms as we go through; but having discussed the whole plan of salvation and its transforming experience, we’ll sprinkle these terms through if you like, so you can see where they fit. But Jesus described the whole truth about his Father and how we could be saved without ever using one of those words. Jesus spoke Aramaic.

Lou: I wonder if the words become a sort of shorthand? But the danger of that is we think we understand what we are talking about when we may have loaded the word with meaning that really isn’t fair to the scripture.

Graham: That’s the hazard. It’s well to go back to the beginning, and we’ll try to do that. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3 with Lou Venden, “All God Asks Is Trust” recorded January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

The Sabbath is a sign of creative and redeeming power; it points to God as the source of life and knowledge; it recalls man’s primeval glory, and thus witnesses to God’s purpose to re-create us in His own image. {Ed 250.1}

The Sabbath and the family were alike instituted in Eden, and in God’s purpose they are indissolubly linked together. On this day more than on any other, it is possible for us to live the life of Eden. . . . {Ed 250.2}

So long as the heavens and the earth endure, the Sabbath will continue as a sign of the Creator’s power. And when Eden shall bloom on earth again, God’s holy rest day will be honored by all beneath the sun. “From one sabbath to another” the inhabitants of the glorified new earth shall go up “to worship before me, saith the Lord.” {SD 59.5}

God is merciful. His requirements are reasonable, in accordance with the goodness and benevolence of His character. The object of the Sabbath was that all mankind might be benefited. Man was not made to fit the Sabbath; for the Sabbath was made after the creation of man, to meet his necessities. After God had made the world in six days, He rested and sanctified and blessed the day upon which He rested from all His work which He had created and made. He set apart that special day for man to rest from his labor, that, as he should look upon the earth beneath and the heavens above, he might reflect that God made all these in six days and rested upon the seventh; and that, as he should behold the tangible proofs of God’s infinite wisdom, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker. {2T 582.3}

What is the “rest” promised?—It is the consciousness that God is true, that He never disappoints the one who comes to Him. His pardon is full and free, and His acceptance means rest to the soul, rest in His love. {OHC 97.7}

The Sabbath is a pledge given by God to man—a sign of the relation existing between the Creator and His created beings. {3SM 256.1}

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace. {1T 340.2}

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

Sanctification means habitual communion with God. There is nothing so great and powerful as God’s love for those who are His children. {HP 129.5}

The followers of Christ are to become like Him—by the grace of God to form characters in harmony with the principles of His holy law. This is Bible sanctification. {AG 20.6}

The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man’s sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. Our Saviour is always ready to hear and answer the prayer of the contrite heart, and grace and peace are multiplied to His faithful ones. Gladly He grants them the blessings they need in their struggle against the evils that beset them. {AA 532.2}

Our sanctification is God’s object in all His dealing with us. He has chosen us from eternity that we may be holy. Christ gave Himself for our redemption, that through our faith in His power to save from sin, we might be made complete in Him. {3SM 202.2}