

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2021: *Present Truth in Deuteronomy*
Lesson 3 “The Everlasting Covenant”

Read for this week’s study

Genesis 12:1–3; Romans 4:1–5; Exodus 2:24; Deuteronomy 5:1–21; Deuteronomy 26:16–19; Deuteronomy 8:5; Matthew 28:10.

Memory Text

“ ‘And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you’ ” (Genesis 17:7, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Covenant and the Gospel
- III. The Covenant and Israel
- IV. The Book of the Covenant
- V. His Special People
- VI. Other Images
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. This series of studies in Deuteronomy does not take a chapter-by-chapter approach to the book. Instead, it takes a thematic approach, treating a number of different themes in the book. The theme for this week’s study is the covenant. This is such an important theme that the entire book is modeled after ancient covenants, particularly the kinds of covenants drawn up by the Hittites, an ancient people living at the center of the nation we call Turkey today. (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. Read Revelation 14:6 and Genesis 17:7. The first speaks of the everlasting gospel and the latter speaks of the everlasting covenant. What is the difference between the two? What is the core meaning of covenant and how does that relate to the gospel? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
3. Read Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 15:5-18. What was the covenant promise made to Abram and later Abraham? How does Paul suggest the gospel was revealed in that covenant promise? Romans 4:1-5. How does Romans 4 build on Romans 3:23-28?

- What is the relationship between law and gospel? What role should the law of God play in the lives of those who have been saved by grace? (Sunday's Lesson)
4. Read Deuteronomy 9:5 and 9:25-27. How is the reality of the covenant promises manifested in these verses? Read Exodus 2:24. What is said here that helps show how the covenantal promises work? (Monday's Lesson)
 5. Read Deuteronomy 5:1-21. How does this passage put the covenant at the center of the book of Deuteronomy? What is the role of Deuteronomy 5:3 in the chapter as a whole? (Tuesday's Lesson)
 6. Read Deuteronomy 26:16-19. How is the covenant relationship between God and Israel summed up in these verses? Why is the idea of a "this day" covenant commitment to God relevant today? (Wednesday's Lesson)
 7. Read Deuteronomy 8:5, 32:6, 32:9, and 32:18-20. What kind of imagery is used here and how does it help us understand the kind of relationship God wants with us today? (Thursday's Lesson)
 8. "The spirit of bondage is engendered by seeking to live in accordance with legal religion, through striving to fulfill the claims of the law in our own strength." 6 SDABC 1077. How can a genuine appreciation for the biblical theme of covenant avoid the "spirit of bondage"? (Friday's Lesson)
 9. "Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by Satan. They had clasped Their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race." DA 834. What implications does this statement have for the meaning of covenant in Deuteronomy? (Friday's Lesson)
 10. Why do you think so many Christians say that the gospel nullifies the need to keep the Ten Commandments? (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.

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. {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>

Then comes Revelation 14, God's last pleading with his children, the three final messages of warning and invitation that are the subject of our conversation this evening. Knowing what has gone before, one is not so surprised to find the fearsome words of warning in the second and third angel's messages. But we should always note when we read these three, that the first angel comes with good news. He comes with the everlasting gospel. And as you know, gospel means good news. Notice that he doesn't come with new information. God's last appeal is not something new. It is not something additional. It is the everlasting good news. For this good news has always been the truth. It will always remain the truth. It will always remain the basis of our faith and trust, and freedom for eternity. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #16, "God's Last Pleading with His Children" recorded May 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>

Let's imagine we say, "God, the longer I live the more I find that everything you've ever asked me to do makes such good sense; I ought to want to do it anyway. And now I tell you—I *do want to.*" Leading to the day when sometime, we'll 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've learned the truth, and the truth set you free." And now the law is written in our hearts and we do what's right because it is right, and not because we're told to. But until we've 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? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians*, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>

If God is the gracious Person we believe Him to be, why does He make such extensive use of law?

If this really is a free universe, and God can accept only love and faith that are freely given, why does He have so much to say about law?

Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30, RSV.

But Jesus also had much to say about the continuing authority of God's law and the benefits that come to those who are willing to keep all His commandments. He emphasized this from the beginning of His public ministry, as in the Sermon on the Mount.

"For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:18, 19, RSV.

Jesus was still emphasizing obedience at the end of His ministry. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments," He urged His disciples in the upper room. And on the way out to the Garden of Gethsemane He added, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love." "You are My friends if you do what I command you." John 14:15; 15:10, 14, RSV.

What kind of friendship is it that demands obedience? How does "keep My commandments" fit with "the truth will set you free"?

I believe that one's understanding of God's use of law has much to do with one's conception of God Himself and hence the quality of one's relationship with Him.

Some fourteen hundred years after the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, Jesus came to live among the people who had been entrusted with this revelation of God's will. He found a people who were much preoccupied with God's law and obedience to its every detail.

Jesus never had to tell them not to set up any graven image. They had shunned idolatry since learning their lesson in Babylonian captivity.

Nor did He have to tell them which day was the Sabbath, or that in it they should not do any work. They saw it as their highest duty to keep all ten of the Ten Commandments.

Nor did Jesus have to urge them to pay tithe. They even tithed such small items as mint, dill, and cumin. See Matthew 23:23, RSV.

Or to obey the Old Testament laws of hygiene. They were careful to strain the gnat from a drink, lest they swallow a forbidden insect. See Matthew 23:24; Deuteronomy 14:19.

Or to read the Scriptures. They searched them diligently to find eternal life. See John 5:39, 40, RSV.

Or to be careful in their association with unbelievers. They even performed certain cleansing rituals on returning from the market, and shrank from eating with the Gentiles. See Mark 7:1-5; Galatians 2:11, 12.

They could say with the rich young ruler, “We have obeyed all these laws since our youth.” See Luke 18:18-21.

In the face of such rigor and devotion, one might have thought the Lord would be pleased. But all heaven watched the extraordinary scene of people claiming to love the law while hating the Lawgiver.

Jesus ventured to suggest that they were obeying for the wrong reason and as a result were not really obeying at all; that their picture of God was in error; that if they knew the truth about God, they would obey for a different reason—a reason that would make it possible for them to be obedient and free at the same time. {Maxwell, A. Graham. *I Want to be Free*, 26-27. Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1970}

Further Study with Ellen White

It was for the purpose of bringing the best gifts of Heaven to all the peoples of earth that God called Abraham out from his idolatrous kindred and bade him dwell in the land of Canaan. “I will make of thee a great nation,” He said, “and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.” Genesis 12:2. . . . {PK 15.1}

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}

Never was there such an evangelist as Christ. He was the Majesty of heaven, but He humbled Himself to take our nature, that He might meet men where they were. To all people, rich and poor, free and bond, Christ, the Messenger of the covenant, brought the tidings of salvation. His fame as the Great Healer spread throughout Palestine. The sick came to the places through which He would pass, that they might call on Him for help. Hither, too, came many anxious to hear His words and to receive a touch of His hand. Thus He went from city to city, from town to

town, preaching the gospel and healing the sick—the King of glory in the lowly garb of humanity. {MH 22.1}

Many hold faith as an opinion. But saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power. {GW 261.1}

When the Christian takes his baptismal vow, divine help is pledged to him. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit stand ready to work in his behalf. God places at his command the resources of heaven, that he may be an overcomer. His own power is small; but God is omnipotent, and God is his helper. Daily he is to make known his wants at the throne of grace. By faith and trust, by availing himself of the resources provided, he can be more than a conqueror. {OHC 157.5}

When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit. {ML 250.6}

By beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character. He conforms to the image of Christ, until in spiritual growth he attains unto the measure of the full stature in Christ Jesus. Thus Christ makes an end of the curse of sin, and sets the believing soul free from its action and effect. {1SM 395.1}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. . . . {DA 311.2}

To give glory to God is to reveal His character in our own, and thus make Him known. And in whatever way we make known the Father or the Son, we glorify God (MS 16, 1890). {7BC 979.4}

The salvation of the human race has ever been the object of the councils of heaven. The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has existed from all eternity, and is called the everlasting covenant. So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity. . . . {AG 130.2}

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. {PK 576.1}

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}

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}

Satan is ever at work endeavoring to pervert what God has spoken, to blind the mind and darken the understanding, and thus lead men into sin. This is why the Lord is so explicit, making His requirements so very plain that none need err. God is constantly seeking to draw men close under His protection, that Satan may not practice his cruel, deceptive power upon them. He has condescended to speak to them with His own voice, to write with His own hand the living oracles. And these blessed words, all instinct with life and luminous with truth, are committed to men as a perfect guide. {PP 503.3}

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. {1SM 235.1}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}

So far from making arbitrary requirements, God's law is given to men as a hedge, a shield. Whoever accepts its principles is preserved from evil. Fidelity to God involves fidelity to man. Thus the law guards the rights, the individuality, of every human being. It restrains the superior from oppression, and the subordinate from disobedience. It ensures man's well-being, both for

this world and for the world to come. To the obedient it is the pledge of eternal life, for it expresses the principles that endure forever. {Ed 76.4}

God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Where Christ is even among the humble few, this is Christ's church, for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church. {UL 315.5}

The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of "the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal." Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. {DA 22.2}

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}

Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet. {MH 481.2}

In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, have faith in God. He is working out His will, doing all things well in behalf of His people. The strength of those who love and serve Him will be renewed day by day. {MH 482.1}

Christ's first work on earth after His resurrection was to convince His disciples of His undiminished love and tender regard for them. To give them proof that He was their living Saviour, that He had broken the fetters of the tomb, and could no longer be held by the enemy death; to reveal that He had the same heart of love as when He was with them as their beloved Teacher, He appeared to them again and again. He would draw the bonds of love still closer around them. Go tell My brethren, He said, that they meet Me in Galilee. {DA 793.4}

But adoption into the family of God makes us children, not slaves. When the love of Christ enters the heart we strive to imitate the character of Christ. . . . The more we study the life of

Christ with a heart to learn, the more Christlike we become. Into the heart of every true doer of the Word the Holy Spirit infuses clear understanding. {TMK 118.5}

Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts. {AG 54.6}

The enemy can never take out of the hand of Christ the one who is simply trusting in His promises. If the soul is trusting and working obediently, the mind is susceptible to divine impressions, and the light of God shines in, enlightening the understanding. What privileges we have in Christ Jesus! {SD 351.4}

Those who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are not left as orphans, to bear the trials of life alone. He receives them as members of the heavenly family; He bids them call His Father their Father. They are His "little ones," dear to the heart of God, bound to Him by the most tender and abiding ties. He has toward them an exceeding tenderness, as far surpassing what our father or mother has felt toward us in our helplessness as the divine is above the human. {DA 327.2}

All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. {ML 365.4}

God regards us as His children. He has redeemed us out of the careless world and has chosen us to become members of the royal family, sons and daughters of the heavenly King. He invites us to trust in Him with a trust deeper and stronger than that of a child in his earthly father. Parents love their children, but the love of God is larger, broader, deeper, than human love can possibly be. It is immeasurable. Then if earthly parents know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more shall our Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? {COL 142.1}