

DEEPER

Daily Bible Study

Adult Sabbath School Lesson
Podcast, Study Notes, and Teacher Helps

God and the Covenant

2019, Quarter 4, Lesson 8

Sabbath (November 16): God and the Covenant

It is very interesting to know that the word “covenant” in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word *berith*. *Berith* is derived from a root which means, "to cut," and hence a covenant is a "cutting or dividing," with reference to the cutting or dividing of animals and the contracting parties passing between them making it a covenant. Once that took place, the agreement or contract was sealed between two parties. In today's lesson, we'll see the story of Genesis 15, which illustrates the amazing concept of God and His covenant.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Genesis 15:1-6. What promises were given by God before He established the covenant with Abram? (The promise that his seed will be of his own flesh and that they would be multiplied as the stars in heaven.) What was Abram's response to the promise of the Lord? (He believed the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness.)
- Read Genesis 15:7-11. What else did the Lord promise Abram? (The inheritance of the land.) What did Abram ask for? (A type of sign that God would fulfill this promise.) What was the type of sign that the Lord agreed to do for him? (A covenant, a cutting or dividing of the animals, as He would walk between them if Abram believed and would patiently keep watch while waiting on the Lord.)
- Read Genesis 15:12-16. What else did the Lord tell Abram before he made the covenant effective? (He promised Abram's seed would live, would go to serve for 400 years and be strangers—or be separated—from the nation they would serve, and that they would come out of it at the appointed time with great blessings.)
- Read Genesis 15:17-21. What was the result of Abram's experience with the Lord? (The Lord made the covenant and passed between the divided animals signing His commitment to Abram.) Were there promises made by Abram in this covenant? (No, all the promises were made by the Lord.) What was Abram's part or effort? (To yield his will to the Lord, to trust in God's word and wait upon it.)

Sunday (November 17): The Idea of Covenant

The concept of covenant is central to understanding how God is dealing with human sin. In today's lesson we will take a “big picture” view of God's everlasting covenant of grace, and what that means for us today.

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Discussion Questions:

- Read Genesis 3:15. What is the covenant that God first makes with Adam and Eve, and, by extension, with the entire human race? (To send a Savior, to defeat Satan and sin, and to create enmity toward sin in human hearts.)
- Read the following statement from the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* regarding this covenant made by God in Eden, and discuss what it reveals about the purpose and function of God's grace:

As the Bible presents two laws, one changeless and eternal, the other provisional and temporary, so there are two covenants. The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the Fall there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. To all men this covenant offered pardon and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. It also promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God's law. Thus the patriarchs received the hope of salvation. {PP 370.2}

- Read Jeremiah 31:33 and Hebrews 10:16. What do these passages reveal about how God's covenant of grace is made effectual in our lives? (The Holy Spirit makes Christ's sacrifice effectual in our lives by writing the principles of God's law in our minds and hearts.)
- Read the following statements. What role does the seventh-day Sabbath play in God's everlasting covenant, and why?

To us as to Israel the Sabbath is given "for a perpetual covenant." To those who reverence His holy day the Sabbath is a sign that God recognizes them as His chosen people. It is a pledge that He will fulfill to them His covenant. Every soul who accepts the sign of God's government places himself under the divine, everlasting covenant. He fastens himself to the golden chain of obedience, every link of which is a promise. {6T 350.2}

The voice of God is heard from heaven, declaring the day and hour of Jesus' coming, and delivering the everlasting covenant to His people. Like peals of loudest thunder His words roll through the earth. The Israel of God stand listening, with their eyes fixed upward. Their countenances are lighted up with His glory, and shine as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked cannot look upon them. And when the blessing is pronounced on those who have honored God by keeping His Sabbath holy, there is a mighty shout of victory. {GC 640.2}

Monday (November 18): Covenants in History

Throughout the Bible, the Lord established covenants with individuals or representatives of His people. There are actually seven major covenants in the Bible and we need to know if there has been a reason why the Lord established these covenants. Are they different from each other, or are they a confirmation and progressive revelation of one single covenant? In today's lesson we'll look at a couple of the examples and look at how these covenants can give us a better understanding of what the Bible calls the Everlasting Covenant of the Lord.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Genesis 12:1-3. Who makes the promises in this covenant? (The Lord makes the promises.) What part does man, or Abram, play? (To accept the word of the Lord, to

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leave or separate from his own country, kindred, and household.) How is this covenant showing us a glimpse of the Everlasting Covenant? (Answers will vary.)

- Read 2 Samuel 7:8-16. Who makes the promises in this covenant? (The Lord makes the promises.) What type of promise is the Lord establishing? (That He will make the kingdom of David to be established forever.) What aspects of this covenant with David are applicable to us as God's people? (Answers will vary.)
- Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. What covenant is the Lord here making to His people? (The new covenant experience, to write His law in their hearts.) How is this "new" covenant giving us a better understanding of the plan of the Lord in redeeming us from sin? (Answers will vary.)

Tuesday (November 19): Covenantal Structure

Today's lesson study identifies six common elements that were included in ancient covenants such as the Hebrews would have been familiar with. These six parts included:

1. Preamble (Who God is)
2. Historical prologue (past relationship defined)
3. Stipulations or laws
4. Blessings and curses
5. Witnesses
6. Special provision or sign of the covenant

It is interesting to compare these six covenantal elements with basic themes found in the Three Angels' Messages in Revelation 14. A brief survey of this pivotal chapter in Revelation reveals that at the end of time (as always), God is seeking to extend His covenant of redemption and salvation to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6).

Discussion Questions:

Discuss how the various parts of the Bible's ancient covenants might be reflected in the Three Angels' Messages, and what that means for us today:

- Preamble (Revelation 14:7a) – God is Judge
- Historical prologue (Revelation 14:7b) – God is Judge because He is Creator
- Stipulations or laws (Revelation 14:7) – Fear God, give glory to Him, worship Him
- Blessings and curses (Revelation 14:9-11,13) – Curse on Babylon and those in it; curse (no rest) for those who receive the mark of the beast; blessing of rest for those that die in the Lord
- Witnesses (Revelation 14:12) – the saints are witnesses of God's faithfulness
- Special provision or sign of the covenant (Revelation 14:14) – Jesus Christ's second coming

While it is certainly true that the seventh-day Sabbath is a special sign of God's everlasting covenant, in a special sense the ultimate sign of that covenant will be at the Second Coming when Jesus Christ appears in the clouds of heaven to save His people. Consider the fascinating statements from the book *The Great Controversy*, pages 640-641:

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The voice of God is heard from heaven, declaring the day and hour of Jesus' coming, and delivering the everlasting covenant to His people. ...Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gave upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant (GC 640-641).

Wednesday (November 20): Pledges

Are pledges, solemn promises, and vows important? Can these pledges be kept, or should we, because of our human condition, not make any promises to the Lord? In today's lesson we will look at some of the biblical counsel that gives answers to these questions, and see why we might benefit from making pledges or solemn promises to the Lord.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Ecclesiastes 5:2-7. What are the elements in making a pledge or vow to the Lord? Are these guides for us in making promises, or should we not do any promise in order to avoid not keeping it? (Answers will vary.)
- Read Nehemiah 10:30-39. What were the four pledges that the people made to the Lord? (1. No mixed marriages, 2. True Sabbath observance, 3. Debt cancellation, and 4. Support of the temple and services.) Are these pledges that we should emulate today? Why or why not? (Answers will vary.)
- Read Exodus 34:12-16 and Deuteronomy 7:2-4. Why did God warn against making a "covenant" with unbelievers? (He knew that it would lead to idolatry and rebellion against God.) In what ways might this warning be applicable to our church today? (In short, yes!) How? (Answers will vary.) Discuss why the most common pledges made today are still the marriage vows, and yet how these pledges have become meaningless in many cases. How might this weakening of the marriage vows in today's society affect the commitments we make to the Lord, and what can we do to restore our respect for sacred pledges? (Answers will vary.)

Thursday (November 21): The Temple

Nehemiah 10:32-39 records an inspiring decision by the Hebrews in Jerusalem to re-commit themselves to the temple, its services, and the tithes and offerings necessary to maintain this focal point of Hebrew worship. Their commitment to the temple and their recognition of its importance to their national spiritual identity and mission contains many lessons for us today.

Discussion Questions:

- Read the statement below and discuss how the truth about the heavenly sanctuary solidified and gave identity to the early advent believers following the Great Disappointment. (Answers will vary, but the basic point of this statement is that the Bible truth pointing to Christ's ongoing work in heaven as humanity's High Priest, and the beginning of the final phase of that work in 1844, explained the disappointment when He

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didn't come back on October 22, 1844. Their understanding of prophecy hadn't been completely wrong, and God had been guiding them!)

Such were the momentous truths that opened before those who received the third angel's message. As they reviewed their experience from the first proclamation of the second advent to the passing of the time in 1844, they saw their disappointment explained, and hope and joy again animated their hearts. Light from the sanctuary illuminated the past, the present, and the future, and they knew that God had led them by his unerring providence. Now with new courage and firmer faith, they joined in giving the warning of the third angel. {4SP 283.1}

- Read the statements below and discuss the importance of the sanctuary doctrine for God's people today. (Again, answers will vary, but a few basic points should emerge from discussion: 1] a correct understanding of the sanctuary doctrine makes it possible for us to develop the quality of faith needed at this time in earth's history; 2] our study and understanding of this subject, and our relationship with Jesus Christ, must be developed personally; 3] understanding the sanctuary and its lessons will enable us to effectively defend—with the Holy Spirit's help, of course—our faith.)

The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill. Every individual has a soul to save or to lose. Each has a case pending at the bar of God. Each must meet the great Judge face to face. How important, then, that every mind contemplate often the solemn scene when the judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened, when, with Daniel, every individual must stand in his lot, at the end of the days. {GC 488.2}

The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ's work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin. It is of the utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects and be able to give an answer to everyone that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them. {GC 488.3}

Friday (November 22): Consecration

The word *consecration* is another form of expressing a dedication to the Lord or to be set apart for holy use. It is really the same concept as sanctification, which means to be made holy. In today's lesson we'll look at what the Lord has provided for us, and how that enables the experience of consecration.

Discussion Questions:

- Read Jeremiah 29:13. What promise is here given? (We shall find the Lord.) What is the requirement, or condition, to finding the Lord? (To search for Him with all of our heart.)
- Read Leviticus 26:40-42. How does this passage explain why the Lord is not found by many, and what are the conditions for the Lord to "remember" his covenant? (People are forgetful of the Lord and don't want to recognize their sin and iniquity. By living in known sin or rebellion, they separate themselves from God and the Lord cannot fulfill His covenant until there is a confession of sin, a sincere desire to repent, and an action of the will to return to the Lord).

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- Read Deuteronomy 4:29-31. What does it mean to seek the Lord with “all thy heart and all thy soul”? (Answers will vary.) What is the promise given in this passage to those who return to the Lord and are willing to be enabled to obey? (The Lord is a loving God, and will neither forsake, nor destroy, nor forget His covenant).
- Read the statement below and discuss how the power of the will is the part we play in order to put ourselves in submission to the Lord. Discuss how this total surrender is also required in order to receive God’s new covenant experience that writes His law in our hearts and minds:

Many are inquiring, “How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?” You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him. {SC 47.1}