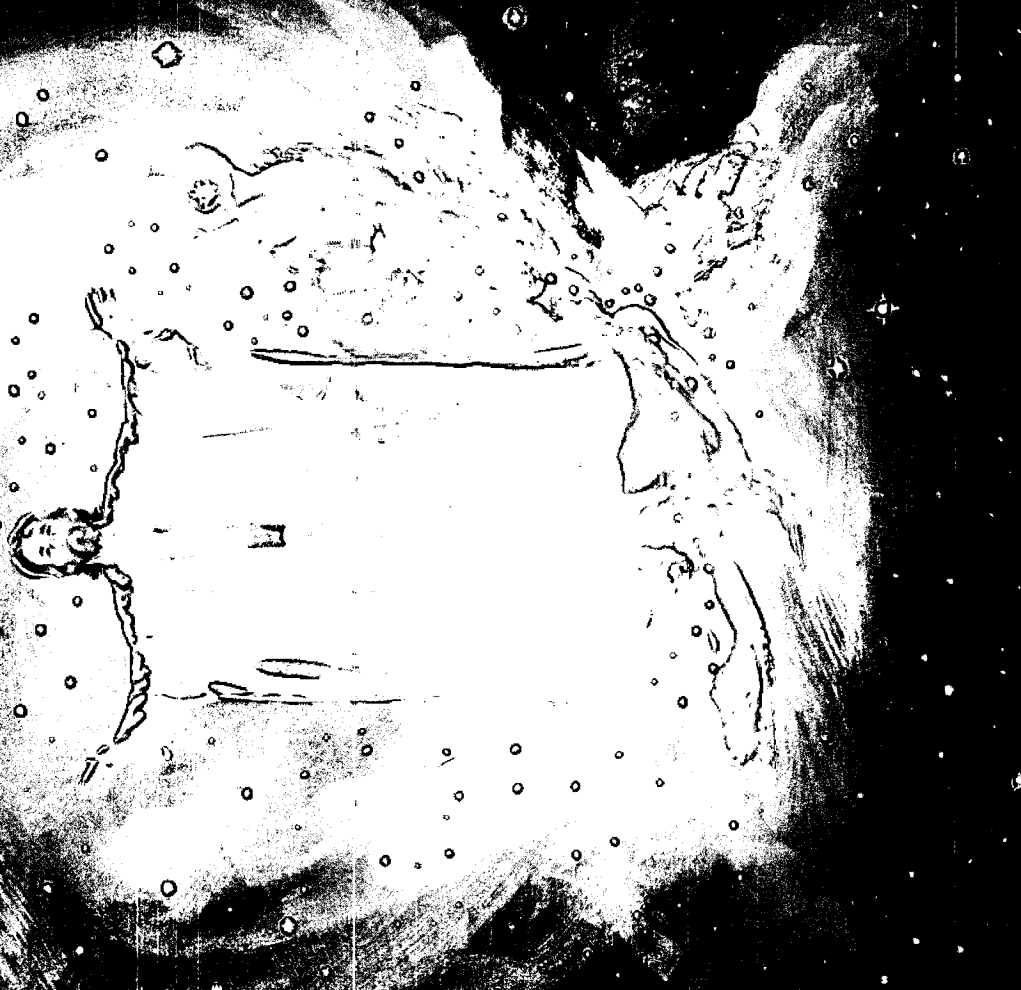


Adult Sabbath School Lessons

October—December 1982

GOD'S GREAT GIFT

The Everlasting Covenant



**Why Hide
the Light
?**

Share It -



G. Schumann

Start a Branch Sabbath School

AFRICA



INDIAN OCEAN DIVISION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Dear Sabbath School Member:

The Special Project Offering of the present quarter is designated for the development of the Adventist University of Central Africa. This institution, located on approximately 200 acres of rich volcanic soil, lies near Gisenyi, Rwanda and about 5 miles from the Zaire border. Within an area of several hundred square miles surrounding the college there are estimated to be 160,000 baptized Seventh-day Adventists.

Some may conceivably question the need of another Adventist University. For those who do, permit me to give the following explanation: Of the 34 countries and islands comprising the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, 26 employ French as their official language. Consequently this Division has the largest French-speaking membership in the Denomination. However, startling as it may be, there is not one Francophone college offering a four-year degree program in the entire Division. Is there a need? YES. And it is urgent even critical!

As conditions now exist our youth are unable to prepare themselves adequately for future leadership roles in the Lord's work. The long term stability, growth, and spiritual vitality of our members depend heavily on well-prepared national pastors, teachers and administrators.

The Scriptures in Romans 10:14 ask: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" How shall they hear without a preacher? The question could be paraphrased: "How shall the message be proclaimed in the Francophone areas of Africa without a school to train workers?" The response depends on us.

With great expectation, hundreds of youth and 230,000 Francophone members are seeking your support in the Special Project Offering for this quarter.

What joy it will be to hear multitudes exclaim: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things." This will happen because of your interest, prayers and support.

Most cordially yours,

R. J. Kloosterhuis
President

RJK/sm

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God's Great Gift— The Everlasting Covenant

A CHALLENGE FROM CHINA! In a recent word from China, David Lin pictures the angels combing that vast land for workers to enter God's harvest field. "During the days of the Gang of Four," he reports, "the Christians in a small town in Anhue province" dared not meet openly. "Only a couple of old women got up at 2:00 a.m. to climb a hill and pray." When religious liberty was restored to the nation they rejoiced, but lacked a preacher. A group of women prayed for the conversion of men. The husband of one was courteous and hospitable and finally "joined them in prayer and singing. But he secretly prayed that the Lord would not let his friends see him in the company of so many 'superstitious old women.' So he started out on the road to heaven as a bashful Christian."

This quarter we are starting out on a very wonderful but difficult set of lessons. They deal with God's great and precious promises as presented in His everlasting covenant or agreement. In the rest of David Lin's story (shared with one of his former teachers) we shall be able to see how willing God is to extend His boundless grace and love to individuals in China today. That same grace is for every soul on earth, of course.

Could the dedication of each of us to the study of God's Word match that of the two sisters who climbed the hill in the small hours in order to pray, we would joyously grapple with and feast upon the great themes set before us.

This series of lessons may be the most complete Sabbath School study of God's promises in the covenants since the 1888 era. In many parts of the world field there seems to be a new hunger among God's people for the deeper things of the Word. At camp meetings the Bible-study hours are among the best attended.

Seventh-day Adventists have long been under attack regarding the way we have understood and taught the place of the old and new (everlasting) covenants in salvation. Charges of legalism, Pharisaism, and attempting salvation by works have been linked to our covenant understanding. People have wanted to say we have left the cross and gone back to Sinai!

The Word actually reveals many covenants made by God with His people at different times and in different settings. There were covenants with Adam, Noah, Abram, Moses, Israel, and David, just to mention the best-known. Then there was and is the new or everlasting covenant blanketing the entire period of God's grace to sinful man. If we will be persevering in our study, we will find a marvelous unity running through all the covenants. And we will see they were all of grace with good works of obedience as the blessed result or counterpart.

Watch for the rest of David Lin's story in these lessons. God's grace is still at work in China and everywhere else! Pray for China and for your own participation in the covenant of God's grace.

—The Editor

God Seeking Man

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

With these majestic opening words the Bible introduces God—the Creator and the soon-to-be Redeemer—as the One who created the world and its heavenly spheres. From the beginning the Creator formed a close communion between Himself and man, the crowning work of His creation. Man was made only and completely in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). This made possible a deep, yet open God-man relationship. It provided a kind of communion that was designed to deepen and grow with time. Yet man would need to make a free choice to live and prosper in that deep relationship with his Creator. For this reason God provided a test of man’s choice in the form of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16, 17).

Man’s decision to yield to the temptation of the evil one lowered him. God’s image in man was thus marred—almost wiped out. This did not cause the Creator to turn from the man who had turned his back upon God. Man was now in desperate need. God’s yearning call, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9, RSV), was the Creator’s call of humankind into a redeeming relationship with Himself. Creation goes before redemption, yet both belong together from the beginning.

Sin broke the original relationship between God and man—the closest possible fellowship that can be conceived. In His great grace He who had created that relationship then broke through the barrier made by sin and Satan. God came seeking His children to reestablish the fellowship. At the very moment of grief and guilt, shame, trouble, and separation, God’s love reached across the gulf made by man’s sin to bring him back to his Creator’s loving arms. This divine seeking continues even to the present time. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Part 1 GOD—THE CREATOR

What is the clear teaching of the Word of God about God as Creator?

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

Holy Scripture opens with the simple, yet profound fact that God is the Creator. The Bible does not attempt to *prove* that God is Creator; it *reveals* that He is Creator. It reveals that He is a good Creator: “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31, RSV). God’s creatorship and God’s goodness go together.

Note some of the key statements of Scripture about God as Creator. Isa. 40:28; John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:2, 10.

Throughout the Bible the Creator is presented as the three-in-one God. The Creator is the everlasting God and Lord. By Jesus Christ all things—heaven and earth and all that is in them—were created. (Consider Rev. 10:1, 6; Col. 1:16-20.) It is by the Word that the world was made; “without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3).

The biblical presentation of God as Creator is a special presentation of God Himself. God reveals and declares Himself the First and the Last, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel, the God and Father of Jesus Christ, the Alpha and Omega. This same God, the God of history and the God of salvation, is also the God of Creation. As God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—He is separated and marked off from creation, because He is Creator and all else is creation and creature. God is never Himself a part of creation (as pantheism claims). The true Creator God is not arrived at by philosophy or reason, because any conclusion reached is still only man’s view of God and not God Himself. It is from Him, from His revelation embodied in the Bible, that we learn the truth about Him as Creator and enter into His creative and redemptive purposes for us.

What does it mean for me to know that God is the good Creator? How does it affect my life? my witness for Christ?

“Only in allegiance to the living God, the Creator of all and the Ruler over all, can man find rest and peace.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 97.

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 44-51.

Part 2 MAN—THE CROWN OF CREATION

What origin for humankind alone is revealed in the beginning of the book of Genesis? What does it reveal about God? about man?

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’ . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:26, 27, RSV).

In the biblical Creation story, “man”—a basic word referring to humankind—is represented as the crowning work of Creation. The following are key facts regarding the creation of man:

1. The creation of man followed counsel or deliberation within the Godhead. This is expressed in the plural of the clause, “Let us make man” (Gen. 1:26). No other part of the creative act is so presented in the account. Man’s lofty place in creation is thus established.

2. Man is the only earthly creature that God created in His own image and after His own likeness. The phrase “image of God” carries within it the thought that man’s external form and appearance, his character, and his mental, spiritual, and moral capacities reflect the divine.

3. By stating that man is made “after our likeness,” God’s Word still places a basic distance between God and man. Man is not created to be another god or the god over the earth. God is Creator and man is creature. But he is not a creature on the level of an animal—not even a superior animal. Man is a creature in God’s likeness. At the same time he is not God.

4. Male and female share their creation in the image of God. In their creation there is *no* suggestion of a lack of equality between man and woman. God made both equal from the start and placed them together in a special relationship to Himself. Neither was seen as superior or inferior to the other. They shared their relationship to God and vital communion with Him.

5. Man as the “image of God” is a new order of being. A most meaningful relationship was opened thus between the Creator and human beings. This God-man relationship was God’s amazing gift to humankind. It was to exist and grow throughout the ages.

How can I experience a growing relationship with my Creator?

In spite of sin’s steady breaking down of both the character of man and the world of God’s creating, the pre-sin state of each gives the redeemed a constant picture of that life to which God is calling them back. (See Gen. 6:5; Rom. 8:18, 19, 22-32.)

Further Study: *Education*, pp. 17, 20.

Who opened the direct communion between God and man?

“God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’ . . . And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed . . . for food’ ” (Gen. 1:28, 29, RSV).

“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15, RSV).

These are the first texts in Scripture to speak of God’s efforts to open communion with man. They reveal that God takes the first steps. This is true both before sin and suffering entered the scene and broke down the first God-man relationship and also— even more intensely so—later when Satan’s deception of man had brought separation from God. The marvelous picture of God in both the Old Testament and the New is that He was and remains the One who opens and keeps a vital relationship with man. Without it life and existence for man would suffer a great void, ending in total extinction.

According to the texts cited above, in what ways has the Creator opened communion between Himself and man?

God opened communion by (1) generous blessing and (2) gracious oral instruction. Before God spoke to Adam and Eve, He “blessed them.” Divine blessing is a free, undeserved gift of God which involves well-being and prosperity, a wholeness rooted in God and experienced in everyday life.

The second act of communion involves the following:

1. The charge to be fruitful and multiply so as to populate the earth.
2. The mandate to subdue the earth so as to govern it responsibly.
3. The instruction to have dominion over the animal world. (See Gen. 1:28.)
4. The counsel as to what foods to eat (verse 29).

“Before the entrance of sin, Adam enjoyed open communion with his Maker.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

Since the kind and caring God is the One who seeks humankind, how can I respond to this expression of love by the Father and Jesus Christ today?

Further Study: *Steps to Christ*, “The Privilege of Prayer,” pp. 93-104.

Part 4 TESTING OF THE RELATIONSHIP

What instruction did God give regarding a test of man's loving response to the seeking God?

"Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen. 2:17, RSV).

The deep, unbroken, and unchanged fellowship of God and man could never be complete or continuing if created man and woman had no free and real choice in the matter. By their choice Adam and Eve "could obey and live, or disobey and perish."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 53. This choice was presented in God's instruction about a tree—just one tree—from which the first pair must not eat.

What could this test show about man's standing with and attitude toward God?

The test could or would show these things:

1. That man's relationship to God was one of free choice by beings who could understand right and wrong.

2. That man was not to be a superman, but that he should function in complete dependence upon the One in whose image he had been made.

3. Whether man would strive to be equal with God and forsake his given place of being the image of God.

4. That man's relationship with God could (and can) be effective and lasting only if man freely chooses to hold on to that first relationship. To reject it would be to claim independence from God, to seek to become like God, to be an equal, to indicate that man really has no need of God. The result of choosing to break this relationship would be to know evil, to experience alienation, loneliness, and all the pain of separation of a life apart from God.

What choice or choices can I make today to maintain my vital and effective God-man relationship? (See *Education*, p. 289.)

In David Lin's China story (see p. 5) the need for a preacher remained. There was none for 20 miles around. Earlier the women had tried to draw "a backslidden brother" to the Lord and to "be their preacher." But his sins seemed too great. He was sure he was lost. As Lin says: "We can imagine how in the councils of heaven this lifeless branch, long severed from the parent stock, was nevertheless given careful consideration. Could it be grafted again into the True Vine?" Could it?

How did humankind fall into sin, and what does it indicate about their relationship with God?

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Gen. 3:6, 7).

Our first parents failed the test of love, faith, and obedience. There probably was nothing wrong or different with the test tree itself. What was wrong was that they listened to someone other than God. The woman listened to the serpent which was used as Satan’s medium (2 Cor. 11:3, 14), and the man listened to his wife. Sin broke the blessed God-man relationship and brought an end to open communion with God.

God, by word and deed, had brought about a loving relationship. But man, in deafness and disobedience, destroyed it. So man’s disregard of the divine precept, “You shall not eat” (Gen. 2:17, RSV), illustrates that sin is the act of disobeying God’s word. This act was more than an act of rebellion. It showed man beginning to see himself as a rival, if not as an equal, of God. He was already dimming the distinction between God and His creatures. Man rejected God’s supreme dominion by doubting that the God-man relationship of Creation was truly designed for his own good and happiness.

In what ways did sin change man’s several relationships? Gen. 3:7, 10-13.

Genesis 3 touches upon changes of relationship resulting from man’s sin:

1. The relationship between man and woman is marred and is illustrated in the sewing together of fig leaves. (See *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 231.)

2. The relationship between man and the created world is marred by fear, alienation, and death. (Compare Rom. 8:19-23; 2 Peter 3:13.)

3. The relationship between God and man is broken. It changes from open fellowship with God to fleeing in fear from God’s face. (See Gen. 3:8-10.) Fellowship and communion are replaced by alienation and separation. Only God can bring about restoration.

Contrast the biblical picture of man as one fallen from a lofty place in God’s creation and in need of redemption with the evolutionary picture of slow, evolutionary development.

Part 6 THE WAY BACK

What searching question did God put to man after he had fallen into sin?

“The Lord God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ ” (Gen. 3:9, RSV).

The Creator had first opened the God-man relationship by speaking with man (Gen. 1:28-30; 2:16, 17), revealing to him his standing before God and the world. Through sin our first parents had fallen from their lofty place. “Sin has marred and well-nigh obliterated the image of God in man.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 595. But God took the first steps toward offering them a way back.

The marvelous story of God’s love, unfolded in His Word time and again, shows that He was and remains the source of redemption. When man had turned away from God, God in His bountiful mercy turned to him again. As man is in hiding from God in fear, guilt, and shame, with marks of sin within and upon him, God approaches him with love. “Where are you?” No one in this world can escape that question.

This question “Where are you?” was not designed to be a curse, a condemnation, or a judgment. Notice that only the serpent and the ground are cursed (Gen. 3:14, 17, 19). The question, rather, was to draw fallen and guilt-stricken man back to God. “God’s first word to fallen man has all the marks of grace. It is a question, since to help him He must draw rather than drive him out of hiding.”—F. Derek Kidner, *Genesis, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), p. 70.

What great divine promise puts the plan of redemption into effect? Gen. 3:15.

God’s surprising word of prophetic hope speaks of a divinely ordained hostility (“I will put enmity”) between the serpent (Satan) and the woman, between “his” seed and “her” seed. This climaxes in the victorious appearance of a “he”—a representative offspring of the woman’s seed who delivers a deadly blow to the head of Satan while the deceiver would only be able to bruise the Messiah’s heel.

In their utter helplessness, Adam and Eve were to gain hope from this messianic promise—hope that would transform their existence because it was God-given and God-supported. This hope of the Messiah and of final victory lifted the gloom into which sinning had placed them. It gave promise of a renewed relationship with God, one of grace and mercy, forgiveness and salvation.

God—Constantly Offering His Covenant

“I will trade you for my people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Ex. 6:7, RSV).

One of the richest thoughts in the Bible is found in the idea of covenant. It expresses deepest communion, intimate relationship, and closest fellowship. Many see it as the central idea in the whole Bible and the one that ties everything else together.

The broad reach of the covenant idea is shown in the 287 usages of the term “covenant” (Hebrew *berît*) in no less than 27 books in the Old Testament. *But its presence virtually everywhere may be seen even where the term itself does not appear.* The situation is no different in the New Testament. The equivalent term (Greek *diathêkē*) appears 33 times, 7 of which are in Old Testament passages quoted in the New. *Again the idea underlies all New Testament writings where the (new) covenant and the kingdom of God ideas are linked together.*

The covenant idea is summed up in the promise, “I will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Jer. 7:23). This promise also expresses the fact that it is God who repeatedly and constantly offers covenants between Himself and human beings, including His people.

The covenanting God has proclaimed Himself “the Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (Ex. 34:6, 7, NASB). His twice-repeated “lovingkindness” (NASB) or “steadfast love” (RSV) comes from the Hebrew term *chesed*. When used of God, this word expresses most fully His forgiving, delivering, and enduring love for undeserving mankind. The greatness of His covenantal “steadfast love” is seen in these ways:

1. His refusal to give up His people or individuals, even when they rejected Him.
2. His refusal therefore to set aside the divine responsibility which He took upon Himself in offering the covenants and in electing people to benefit from them. Can anyone fathom such love?

Part 1
COVENANT
LANGUAGE

What meaning is attached in Scripture to the word “covenant” when it deals with God’s promises of close friendship with mankind?

“I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly” (Gen. 17:2, RSV).

“He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant” (Heb. 9:15, RSV).

The standard expression in the Old Testament for establishing a covenant between God and man is the phrase “to make a covenant” (Gen. 15:18; Ex. 24:8; Deut. 4:23; 5:2; Jer. 11:10; Eze. 34:25; etc.)—literally in Hebrew “to cut a covenant.” This phrase appears in the Old Testament no less than 80 times, whereas the general term “covenant” itself appears 287 times. The ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, translated it in most cases (270 times) with “covenant,” and at times “testament” or “last will.”

The origin of the Hebrew term *berît*, customarily translated “covenant,” is not clear and does not need to concern us because its meanings can be discovered through the ways the Scriptures use it.

In the Bible the word *berît* describes two major relations:

1. *A relationship between human parties, whether equals or not.* (It can also cover the familiar term “contract,” “bond,” “alliance,” or “treaty.” Often, this kind of “covenant” is of little religious importance.)

2. *The covenantal relationship between God and man.* This is the more frequent and more significant usage of the term. In this sense it appears for the covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David and for the new covenant. In these instances the “covenant” is offered by God and arranges and makes possible a relationship between God and man. God, as superior Lord, graciously discloses, confirms, and fulfills the covenant promises. To benefit from the divine covenant gifts, man has to accept freely the continuing relationship. At the same time he seeks to obey the divine obligations (“commandments,” “statutes,” and “laws”—Gen. 26:5). This, however, is through the assisting and enabling grace of God.

There is no close parallel to the divine covenant in the many Near Eastern treaty documents. Some, going back over 2000 years into Old Testament times, may shed some light on our study, but we will be cautious in our use of them.

What is the relationship between God’s call to man to be saved and the divine covenants? (See Deut. 7:6-8.)

God—Constantly Offering His Covenant

2 Monday
October 4

Part 2 COVENANT WITH NOAH

In what words does the Lord speak directly and for the first time of a covenant?

“I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you” (Gen. 6:18, RSV).

Yesterday we learned meanings for the noun “covenant” (*berit*). Here the term is met for the first time in the Bible. God is speaking to Noah. The divine decision to destroy the results of the Genesis Creation has just been made known. The reason for it has been the massive and continuing spread of sin, resulting in the corrupt world of Noah’s day. While God’s judgment is to come in a worldwide Flood, He is not yet forsaking the world He had created. He therefore will continue to offer the covenant relationship first set into operation after the Fall. Thus God announced to the righteous Noah, “I will establish my covenant with you.” The divine “I” who offers the covenant is Himself the ground of Noah’s security. God established the covenant; it is *His* covenant (“my covenant”). Man is to benefit. Indeed, salvation is from the Lord. (Compare Jonah 2:9.)

In what ways did God make covenant offers again after the Flood? Gen. 8:15, 16; 9:1, 8-10.

When it was safe, God instructed Noah and his family to leave the ark (Gen. 8:15). Then He repeated the promise of growing families (Gen. 9:1). In the third word to Noah, God announced: “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you” (Gen. 9:9, 10, RSV). God takes the steps toward man for his well-being in a world where wrong human choices have led to bitter failure.

And so in our China story: “The bashful Christian and his wife were praying that the Lord would rejuvenate this fruitless twig and make a preacher out of him. This young couple had heard the elderly sisters talk of this man who many years ago used to hold a Bible in his hands and preach the gospel.” Could he possibly be brought back under the covenant promises of God’s grace?

Further Study: *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 62-71.

God—Constantly Offering His Covenant

2 Tuesday
October 5

Part 3 THE COVENANT WITH ABRAM

What words of promise are part of Abram's call and thus offer God's covenant to him?

"The Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves'" (Gen. 12:1-3, RSV).

In this first recorded divine revelation to Abram, God promised to enter into a close and lasting relationship with him even before any language is used that speaks about covenant making. (See Gen. 15:4-21; 17:1-14.) The direct references to the covenant which God would "make" or "cut," 15:18, "give" 17:2, "establish" 17:7, 19, 21, or "swear" 22:16 would come later. For the moment, God offers a divine-human relationship of great significance.

The repeated "I will" in today's Scripture portion suggests something of the depth and greatness of God's offer and promise to Abram. Abram receives but a single, though testing, command, "Go forth." He obeyed by faith (Heb. 11:8), but not in order to bring about the promised blessings. His obedience was the response of his faith to the loving relationship which God had established. "Abraham's unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126. Although there can be no covenant fellowship and no blessing without obedience, that obedience is faith's response to what God has already done. Obedience is not the means of earning fellowship with God nor of gaining blessings promised by Him.

Was God's covenant with Abram a continuation of His covenant with Adam, or was it something totally new? (Compare Gen. 3:15; 22:18; and Gal. 3:8, 16; see *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 370.)

On what basis are you counted righteous? Is it on the basis of your obedience or on the basis of your faith in Christ's gift of salvation?

"There is not a point that needs to be dwelt upon more earnestly, repeated more frequently, or established more firmly in the minds of all than the impossibility of fallen man meriting anything by his own best good works. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone."—Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, p. 19.

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 132-138.

God—Constantly Offering His Covenant

2 Wednesday
October 6

Part 4 COVENANT WITH MOSES

How was God's initiative expressed for His people enslaved in Egyptian bondage?

"I will take you for my people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (Ex. 6:7, RSV).

For several centuries the descendants of Jacob had lived in Egyptian bondage, losing "the knowledge of God and of the principles of the Abrahamic covenant."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 371. In His loving-kindness God did not leave them to themselves. The earlier relationship between God and man is now set up again. The Lord says to His chosen people: "I will take you for my people, and I will be your God" (Ex. 6:7, RSV). (Compare Deut. 29:12, 13.)

That God would take a people from Egyptian idolatry and corruption and set them free from degrading slavery rests in the deep mystery of His love, mercy, and grace (Deut. 4:37; 7:7-9; 10:15). No human reasoning could have expected this mystery to be revealed by God.

What secret is revealed regarding the source of the covenant made by God with Israel on Mount Sinai? Deut. 4:37; 10:15.

The source of the covenant relationship lies in the love of God alone. Deliverance from Egyptian bondage was brought about by God's mighty power. (See Exodus 5 through 12.) This loving miracle took place before the offer of the covenant and the call for Israel's response in obedience and love. The covenant of God with Israel was an act of His loving-kindness. This love had been shown earlier in the covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (See Ex. 2:25; Deut. 4:37; 10:15; 14:2; Amos 3:2.)

Upon what does present prosperity in faith and life depend?

The young couple in our China story wondered if the Lord would not revive the backslidden brother and give them a preacher. "Anyhow, this case, hopeless as it was, appeared to be the only possible solution to their problem. So our bashful Christian and his wife agreed to pray earnestly for this 'lost' preacher whom they knew only from hearsay."

Further Study: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 569-571.

**Part 5
THE COVENANT
WITH DAVID**

How does the psalmist emphasize that it was God who offered the covenant to David?

“Thou hast said, ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant:
‘I will establish your descendants for ever,
and build your throne for all generations’ ”
(Ps. 89:3, 4, RSV).

The psalmist expresses in a fourfold way that God took the step of entering into a covenant relationship with David. Each item begins with the “I” of God, followed by divine action:

1. “I have made a covenant.”
2. “I have sworn.”
3. “I will establish your descendants.”
4. “I will . . . build your throne.”

The first two “I” statements speak about covenant making while the latter two contain covenant promises.

Note how, in the story of God’s covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7:1-17, God takes the first steps. These steps are neither purchased by man nor influenced by man’s desires or ambitions. They are brought about by the outworking of God’s plan of salvation and result from His loving-kindness and mercy (Ps. 89:33, 34).

What marvelous promise about the “seed” of David did God make? 2 Sam. 7:12.

The promise “I will set up thy seed after thee” was rich in meaning. We remember the “seed” first mentioned in the promise to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15. There, as a singular noun, it foretold the many descendants, the multiple offspring, and the One Person—the single Offspring who was to come in order to crush Satan’s head. The reappearance of “seed” in the promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:7; etc.), Isaac (26:1-5), and Jacob (32:12; 35:12) is a striking link in the chain that brings us to the prediction that the Lord will raise up David’s “seed.” This “seed” of David came first in the person of Solomon, who could not build his kingdom forever. (See 2 Sam. 7:16.) But the “seed” was finally manifested in the full reality of Jesus Christ, who in His resurrection established His kingdom forever. (See Acts 2:30-32.)

In reading 2 Samuel 7:12-17, contemplate how God has brought about the fulfillment of these promises and how they benefit your life here and now.

**Part 6
THE NEW
COVENANT**

What prediction does the Old Testament contain concerning a new covenant? Jer. 31:31, 33.

This is the only time where the Old Testament refers in so many words to the “new covenant.” This Old Testament passage led the Alexandrian church father Origen (who lived about A.D. 185-254) to give to the last 27 books of the Bible the title *New Testament*.

Among the items that link it with earlier covenants is the fact that this “new covenant” is also offered by God: “I will make a new covenant” (verse 31). This feature assures us that the divine fellowship that was part of God’s design through His previous covenants was to become a reality in the new covenant: I “will be their God, and they shall be my people” (verse 33).

In what ways did God make clear that it was He who first moved to establish those covenants of which the new is the climax? See the following texts.

God uses repeated action terms as He enters into gracious covenant relationships with man: “I will establish my covenant with you” (Gen. 6:18; 9:11, RSV), “between me and you” (Gen. 17:7, RSV). “I will grant my covenant” (Gen. 17:2 [literal translation]; compare Num. 25:12). And, of course, the predominant and literal “I make [“cut”] a covenant” (Ex. 34:10). (See also Joshua 24:25; Isa. 61:8; etc.)

“Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the covenant was made that all who were obedient, all who should through the abundant grace provided, become holy in character, and without blame before God, by appropriating that grace, should be children of God.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 403.

By what means can obedience follow acceptance of God’s covenant? Jer. 31:33, 34.

“The covenant of grace . . . offered pardon, and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 370. (Emphasis supplied.)

“Through the measure of His [Christ’s] grace furnished to the human agent, not one need miss heaven. . . . This is made the very foundation of the new covenant of the gospel.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 211, 212. (Emphasis supplied.)

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 656-659.

Flood, Covenant, and Man's Future

“Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark” (Gen. 7:23, RSV).

God's covenant with man had already been included within His promise to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15 and was reflected in His promises to Cain (Gen. 4:15). But the covenant idea was not put into actual words (as we noted last week) until it appeared in God's address to Noah before the Flood: “I will establish my covenant with you” (Gen. 6:18, RSV). Then Noah was instructed that he and his future family (See Gen. 5:32; *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 254) were to enter the ark he was to construct.

This covenant with Noah in the age before the Deluge is part of God's design, an aspect of His plan of salvation, to save Noah in the age of universal evil that was to be judged by a Flood. Here meet divine judgment and mercy, doom and hope, grief and joy.

Noah and those that were with him in the ark were the remnant of that age (Gen. 7:23). They are known as the faithful and loyal ones (Gen. 6:8, 9; 7:1)—the faithful remnant that survived the Flood.

God established His postdiluvian (after the Flood) covenant with Noah, his family, and every living creature. (See Gen. 9:1-17.) The blessings of this covenant were not limited to Noah and his age. Its reach is universal and is pledged for all life and “all future generations” (verse 12). The covenant sign in the form of the rainbow is not a sign over which man has control. It is a symbol of the covenant between God and the earth (verse 13) and speaks of God's faithfulness and blessing. It is to bring to God's remembrance, humanly speaking, His covenant promise that never again shall waters become a flood to destroy all flesh (verse 15). This “everlasting covenant” (verse 16) benefits all mankind. Despite the fact that “the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth” (Gen. 8:21), the Lord's unending mercy will be experienced by all. It is expected that this bountiful, divine love will bring about a love response from man. God desires that all men shall share close communion and fellowship with Himself. Without such communion and fellowship in the covenant relationship, life was and is without present meaning or final purpose.

Part 1 THE SPREAD OF SIN

What depth had been reached by the destructive work of sin that began with the Fall?

“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5).

The divine opinion at the end of God's Creation was that all “was very good” (Gen. 1:31). Then sin entered the world and began its work of corruption. God's orderly creation was not only marred by sin, but rebellion reached terrible proportions by Noah's day. As in our day, the spread of sin is depicted in Genesis 4:1 through 6:4 as an ever-growing avalanche, a continually widening chasm between God and man. There was a downward trend from disobedience (Gen. 3:1-7) to murder (4:8), to reckless killing and titanic lust (4:23, 24), to total corruption and violence (6:1-4).

God's evaluation of man in Noah's day was that “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). The word “imagination” used here, means “design,” “purpose,” or “intent.” The “heart” is the seat of the thinking and reasoning powers in man and usually refers to the mind with all its faculties. God's report on man was shocking. “Every” purpose, intent, and design of the thoughts of man's inner life was only wicked continually. The intensity of this human wickedness is expressed with devastating force in the words “every,” “only,” “continually.” It is hardly possible to state more emphatically the wickedness of which the human heart is capable.

What was God's reaction to man's full-blown Flood-time wickedness? Gen. 6:6.

Two human terms describe God's inner reaction:

1. God “repented” (KJV) or “was sorry” (RSV, NASB) for having made man.

2. He was “grieved.” “His heart was filled with pain” (NIV).

The grief in God's heart contrasts with what goes on in the human heart. God's heart experiences deep, inner pain and hurt from man's wickedness. God is not a static, abstract, unconcerned idea, or an inflexible principle. God is a being whose heart is pained and grieved by man's sin. He is open to the impact of human sin upon His being.

What grief and pain may my sin and disobedience have caused in the heart of God today?

Further Study: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 431, 543.

**Part 2
HUMAN SIN
AND DIVINE
JUDGMENT**

What was the Lord's decision in view of the utter disarray caused by the spread and intensity of sin? Gen. 6:7, 12, 13.

The Lord determined that the massive and continuing spread of sin must be checked. The kind of wickedness that totally perverted the imagination of man's thought called for strong action. Upon a world fully given over to evil, God resolved to bring worldwide judgment in the form of a destructive flood that would wipe out "all flesh." The expression "all flesh" includes "man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air." Man had led in filling the earth with "violence," or "wrong."

Ever since the discovery of a flood story in the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic in 1872, claims have been made of a connection between the biblical Flood story and the ones from the ancient, secular world. Today it is clear that only on the surface is the biblical Flood account similar to the one in the Gilgamesh Epic. The biblical narrative has a basically different point of view. The Flood comes not on account of inner fighting among a host of gods, but as the true God's judgment upon the wickedness on earth. Thus the biblical reason for a flood has a moral basis. This stands in stark contrast to the reasons given in pagan flood stories where the Flood came by a sudden whim of the gods.

Consider the evidence in the Flood that God did not destroy the righteous with the wicked. Gen. 6:8, 9.

Three major characteristics of Noah's life were in vivid contrast to the evil, violence, and corruption of his generation:

1. Noah was a "righteous man" (verse 9, RSV, NASB, NIV, etc.). His righteousness consisted in his total giving of himself to the Lord. A "righteous person" in the Old Testament stands in a relationship of faith, trust, and confidence in God with its resulting obedience to Him.

2. Noah was "blameless" (verse 9, RSV, NASB, NIV, etc.) in his time. His blamelessness was not a state of absolute perfection or sinlessness. Indeed, sins marked his experience (Gen. 9:20-29). But he gave himself to God amidst universal apostasy in the Flood crisis.

3. Noah "walked with God" (verse 9, RSV, NASB, NIV, etc.). He is the last member of the antediluvian age and the first of the postdiluvian age to walk with God. As such he is an example of the remnant of faith that will survive the world's end (Heb. 11:7).

What is my personal response to the belief that it is possible to live with Noah's kind of dedication in our time?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 308-310.

With what words does God announce His covenant with Noah?

**Part 3
PRE-FLOOD
COVENANT
WITH NOAH**

“With thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee” (Gen. 6:18).

This brief statement includes the principal persons of the biblical covenant that God makes with man; namely, the two partners to the covenant: God and man. Here God makes a covenant with Noah.

We also find the covenant requirement in the form of a divine commandment: “You shall enter the ark” (NASB). Obviously, the covenant idea here is far removed from that of a human type of compact, contract, alliance, or agreement between God and Noah. It is God’s covenant (“my covenant”); and Noah and his family, from whom mankind springs forth after the Flood, gain from it.

In establishing this covenant with the one who, with his family, is to survive the Flood, God dispenses His bountiful grace. Man’s security in the present and his assurance of salvation in the future arise out of God’s grace and His action. This covenant makes provision for the future of mankind.

The fact that Scripture here employs the expression “I will establish” calls for brief consideration. A study of the word “establish” in comparison with the standard form for making a covenant, for example, “cut a covenant,” leads us to suggest that this verbal form carries the idea of “maintain” or “confirm.” (Compare Deut. 9:5; 27:26; 2 Sam. 7:25; 2 Kings 23:3, 24; etc.) Thus God’s establishment of His covenant is here a maintaining of a commitment to which He had pledged Himself earlier. In this sense God’s covenant with Noah in Genesis 6:18 may be seen as a renewal of a covenant with Adam to which the Bible points (Gen. 3:15).

What does the instruction, “You shall enter the ark,” reveal about man’s obedience?

The renewed commitment of God to Noah in establishing a covenant with him before the Flood called for a response of faith on the part of the one to be helped by the covenant. He is to enter into the ark that sits on land. It was the ultimate test of faith and obedience. But the test was passed when Noah with his family entered the ark (Gen. 7:13).

What may be tests of faith today in a world of corruption and wickedness? How can I remain in an intimate covenant relationship with my Lord?

Part 4
POST-FLOOD
COVENANT
WITH NOAH

With whom did God establish His covenant after the Flood?

“Behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth” (Gen. 9:9, 10).

This is the first and only covenant in the Bible that is universal in scope, for it not only embraces Noah and his offspring or descendants after him but every living creature on land and in the air.

This broad scope, that includes man, animals, and birds, demonstrates that some aspects of God's grace are not dependent upon understanding obedience on the part of the beneficiaries. It also demonstrates that God's love goes beyond love for man and includes all His creatures.

The covenant of Genesis 9:8-17 is at times described as an unconditional covenant, because it does not mention any specific conditions or obligations for man to fulfill. Whether the instructions in verses 1-7 are to be thought of as covenant obligations is not totally clear. In any case it may be assumed that obligations are a part of this covenant as they are of any other.

What is the covenant provision that God pronounces? Gen. 9:11.

“This ‘covenant’ contained but one provision and assumed the form of a divine promise. Regions might be devastated and animals and men swept away by the hundreds or thousands, but never again would there be a universal destruction of earth by a flood.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 264, 265.

Who will experience God's covenant love in the end when the world will again be destroyed? (See Ps. 91:7-9; Matt. 24:36-51.)

In David Lin's story, the young couple had never met the one-time preacher, “nor did they know where he lived. They simply prayed in faith that this man might be restored to the Lord's service. They prayed for him for four days, and on the fourth day an old woman stood at their door and asked their names. Upon receiving an answer, she said, ‘At last I've found you! My husband has been weeping for three days, trying to find the Christian believers in our town. He has repented and wants to come back to the Lord.’ ”

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 110.

Part 5
GOD'S
COVENANT
SIGN

What was and is the sign of the covenant with Noah?

“And God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth’ ” (Gen. 9:12, 13, RSV).

The Bible knows of three covenants that have definite covenant signs. The covenant with Noah after the Flood has the sign of the rainbow in the clouds, produced by the refraction and the reflection of the sun's light through the ball-shaped raindrops on which the rays fall. The Abrahamic covenant has circumcision as its sign (Gen. 17:11). The Sinaitic (Mosaic) covenant came to have the Sabbath of Creation as its covenant sign (Ex. 31:13, 16, 17; Eze. 20:12, 20)).

Signs have important functions in the Bible. Signs, by nature, point to something beyond themselves; they are a pledge or guarantee; they may impart knowledge, serve for protection, produce faith, bring to remembrance, and confirm. Most of these aspects are present in the sign of the rainbow. In contrast to the other two covenant signs, the rainbow is not a covenant obligation which is to be performed by those who benefit from the covenant of God with His people. The rainbow is an external, physical sign in the clouds that serves as a reminder to the Lord of His covenant (Gen. 9:15, 16) that never again shall water become a flood to destroy all flesh. Thus it both reminds us of the covenant and confirms that it serves for man's protection. The rainbow also serves as a remembrance that God once destroyed man in his wickedness by a Flood; it also guarantees that when clouds bring rain humankind need not fear another worldwide flood. It imparts the knowledge that God has kept and will keep His promise not to bring again a flood to destroy the whole earth. Man also with Noah experiences the gracious relationship of the covenant in the stability of the orders of nature. God's faithfulness to His promise calls upon man to be faithful to God.

“This symbol [the rainbow] in the clouds is to confirm the belief of all, and establish their confidence in God, for it is a token of divine mercy and goodness to man; that although God has been provoked to destroy the earth by the Flood, yet His mercy still encompasseth the earth. God says when He looketh upon the bow in the cloud He will remember. He would not have us understand that He would ever forget, but He speaks to man in his own language, that man may better understand Him.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 71.

What does the rainbow mean to you?

Part 6 REMNANT OF FAITH

In what words are Noah and his family described as a surviving remnant?

“He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the air; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark” (Gen. 7:23, RSV).

It is of major interest to remnant-conscious Seventh-day Adventists that the first stated mention of a remnant in the Bible is found in this text. The word translated “was left” is a term that comes from a word whose different root forms are used many times for the remnant idea in the Old Testament. (See Gen. 45:7; 47:18; Ex. 8:31; Deut. 3:11; Isa. 4:3; 10:19, 20; 11:11, 16; 17:6; etc.)

Genesis 1 through 3 makes it obvious that creation by God does not rule out the possibility of destruction. Though created “good,” both creature and creation are open to corruption and evil. Through the fall of man this possibility became a reality. By Noah’s time sin had reached such proportions, both in extent and intensity, that God decreed the total destruction of the world by a Flood.

At that time, the Creator of the world became the Judge of the world. The nearing worldwide judgment raised the question whether all life on earth—even human life—would be wiped out by the announced Flood. If not, who would be the surviving remnant? The threat of an end to the life that was found only in God raised the awesome question: Would human life continue? Once again we find that the answer to the life-and-death question that is beyond human wisdom is found in God. In mercy He acted to save Noah and his family. By His deed of grace a righteous and faithful remnant was saved. Here again it was revealed that God’s ultimate purpose is to save. Even in the global Flood which was a destructive judgment of proportions beyond our understanding, God’s will and design was to save.

We have seen also that Noah’s salvation was linked to God’s covenant with him (Gen. 6:18)—a covenant that grew out of God’s action. The surviving remnant is part of God’s plan of salvation. It is clearly part of the Bible’s picture of salvation. (See Gen. 6:9; 7:1.) Again, it will be such a remnant of faith and trust in God that will survive the final events of the present age. This remnant stands in a right relationship with God. It is perfect in its sphere, and it walks with God. (Compare Rev. 12:17.)

What does the book of Revelation tell you about the last faithful remnant? See the remnant of the woman (12:17) suffering persecution by the beast (13:11-18) but being delivered by the Rider (19:21).

Covenant With Abraham— Design for Salvation

“I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you” (Gen. 17:7, RSV).

God’s design in making a covenant of an everlasting nature with Abraham and his offspring was and is “to be God to you.” God’s will to save is central to the covenant with Abraham. The main fact of that saving purpose—and the effect of God’s grace—is that the covenant LORD (Yahweh, more accurately than Jehovah) will be the God of Abraham and his seed.

The idea of the covenant as a relationship between God and Abraham and his seed demonstrates that Yahweh desires (Gen. 15:7)—as when Adam sinned—to be a saving God. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 370.)

The covenant with Abraham is one of grace and salvation offered by God out of His free love. (See Gen. 12:1-3; 15:7; 17:1, 2, 7.) This God presented Himself again and again as Yahweh. “I am thy shield” (15:1), and “Almighty God” (17:1). This self-identifying God promised to make (Gen. 15:18; 17:2) and establish (Gen. 17:7) a covenant for the benefit of Abraham and his offspring after him. Like the covenant with Noah after the Flood, this one is also an “everlasting covenant” (Gen. 17:7). The covenant partners are Abram—who in view of God’s saving design is renamed Abraham—and his descendants in the line of the promised son Isaac (Gen. 17:21).

Those called to the blessings of the promises can either keep God’s covenant (Gen. 17:9, 10) or break it (verse 14). This shows that this covenant does not yield its rich promises and blessings to all humans, unless they consent. The intensely spiritual nature of the covenant relationship in which God is to be “their God” (verse 8) contains obligations that grow out of this divine-human communion. The keeping of the covenant is not designed to earn anything, but it is the result of the gifts of God in promises and blessings. Keeping the covenant is man’s faith response to God’s enabling grace and love.

Covenant With Abraham— Design for Salvation

4 Sunday
October 17

Part 1 YAHWEH AND THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

How did God introduce Himself to Abraham after the waiting into old age had brought him no son?

“I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it” (Gen. 15:7).

We are introduced to God’s covenant name “Yahweh.” This divine address to Abraham is a basic and vital part of the Abrahamic covenant which God made in three stages (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-14) over a period of 24 years (12:4; 17:1).

When the Hebrew language was written without vowels, the name “Yahweh” was written with four letters *YHWH*, to which later Hebrew scribes (called Masoretes) added the vowels of the word ‘*Adonai*, or simply ‘*Adon*, meaning “Lord,” so that a reader would read “Lord” whenever *YHWH* occurred. It appears 6828 times in the Old Testament. The purpose of this rule was to avoid a profaning of God’s sacred name. Still later translators did not know of this rule and mistakenly rendered *YHWH*—now supplied with the vowel points from ‘*Adonai*—as “Jehovah,” which is a combination of the consonants of one name and the vowels of another. Today it is generally agreed that the best pronunciation of the four letters (tetragrammaton) of the divine name *YHWH* is Yahweh.

Yahweh is the proper or personal name of God, whereas “Elohim,” normally translated “God,” is the descriptive or class name for God. The identification of Yahweh as the One who brought Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans, in Genesis 15:7, refers back to the announcement of God’s covenant with Abraham reported in Genesis 12:1-3. In the first place, God wants Abraham to know His name, because those who know the name of God (Ps. 9:10; 91:14) know His identity, personal nature, and character. Thus they may trust and hope in Him. God wants His followers to know Him as a personal being and not as an abstract deity.

The sure and exact meaning of the name “Yahweh” cannot be easily established. Entire books have been written on the subject. Yet on the basis of Exodus 3:14, the name “Yahweh” is explained by God Himself as “I AM WHO I AM” (RSV, NASB). Here is expressed the reality of God’s unconditioned existence, while His rule over past, present, and future is also suggested. He is the God in whom is the right and power for Creation and salvation.

What, if any, difference does it make to you to know God’s personal name—to know Him as a real being with a definite identity, purpose, and character?

Further Study: Acts 7:1-8.

Covenant With Abraham— Design for Salvation

4 Monday
October 18

Part 2 MIGHTY GOD

What name did God use of Himself at the closing stage of making covenants with Abraham?

“When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1).

Yahweh, who had appeared to Abraham several times before in various situations (Gen. 12:1, 7; 13:14; 15:1, 7, 18) presents Himself to him now as “Almighty God.” “This name of God, *'El-Shaddai*, is found only in the books of Genesis and Job, 6 times in the former and 31 times in the latter.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 320.

The name “Almighty God” consists of *'El*—the basic name for God among the Semites and for the most part used as having the same meaning as Yahweh (compare Num. 23:8, 21; Ps. 16:1, 2; 85:8; Isa. 42:5)—and *Shaddai*, the exact origin and meaning of which is not entirely certain. The translation “Almighty” (KJV, RSV, NASB) seems most nearly correct. (Compare Isa. 13:6; Joel 1:15.) The emphasis on “might” over against the frailty of man, who is hard-pressed and in need of reassurance, fits the experience of Abraham.

When God began to establish His covenant with Abraham almost a quarter century before, He repeatedly promised Abraham a child. After 10 years had passed, Abraham took things into his own hands, married Hagar, and fathered Ishmael. Almost 15 years later, when Abraham had reached the advanced age of 99, God reaffirmed His covenant and announced that it should be established with the birth of a son—Isaac, to be exact—to be born within a year (Gen. 17:21). At this crucial point God introduced Himself as the “Almighty God” for whom nothing was or is impossible.

Frail men and women today, wavering in faith, may be fully assured when they are hard-pressed by circumstances beyond their control that the covenant God is truly an “Almighty God.”

“Imagine the rejoicing [among the little group of believers in Lin’s story] as the sisters and the one lone brother met to welcome this fallen preacher back to the Lord’s fold. They asked him to preach, so he opened the Word of God and tried to speak. But hardly had he said a few words than he began to choke and sob. Every time he opened his mouth, tears would roll down his cheeks. For he could not forget how long he had left his Lord and how graciously He had forgiven him.”

Covenant With Abraham— Design for Salvation

4 Tuesday
October 19

Part 3 COVENANT RECIPIENT- PARTNER

To whom did God make covenant promises whose benefits were to extend far into the future?

“On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates’ ” (Gen. 15:18, RSV).

God’s choice of Abram was not based on inheritance or natural talents which called for a reward. Abram was, however, “faithful among the faithless, uncorrupted by the prevailing apostasy.” “He steadfastly adhered to the worship of the one true God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 125. Although Abram was faithful in his father’s house, (see Joshua 24:2), this faithfulness must not be seen as a merit that earned him the right to be chosen by God. God’s choice is always grounded in divine love, grace, and mercy. (See Deut. 7:6-11.) The biblical record of Abram’s experiences reveals a number of actions unworthy of one to whom God granted the honor of becoming a partner in His covenant. (See Gen. 12:10-20; 16:1-16; 20:1-18.). Yet Abraham’s pilgrimage as God’s covenant partner reveals a continuing growth and advancement that reached heights of faith virtually unequaled in human history. (See Gen. 12:1-4; 18:22, 33; 22:1-14.)

Why did Abram receive a new name at the conclusion of a later covenant-making conversation? Gen. 17:4, 5.

Names were of great importance in the ancient world, and the giving of names was not taken lightly. Frequently significant religious meaning was associated with the giving of personal names in the Old Testament. For example, the change of a name may have matched a change of character (Gen. 32:28; 2 Sam. 12:24, 25; etc.), or it may have indicated a change of relationship (Gen. 41:45; 2 Kings 23:34; 24:17; Dan. 1:7).

Abram is the first of several persons whose name God changed. Abram means “Father is exalted.” The Lord changed his name to Abraham, “Father of a multitude,” indicating that the new covenant relationship is sealed and the divine promise is certain. “I have made you the father of a multitude of nations” (Gen. 17:5, RSV).

What does it mean to you personally to be a partner in God’s covenant and to be one of the “inheritors of the covenant promises”? (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 476.)

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 135-137.

Covenant With Abraham— Design for Salvation

4 Wednesday
October 20

Part 4 MAKING THE COVENANT

“Now the Lord said to Abram,
“ ‘Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you;
And I will make you a great nation” (Gen. 12:1, 2, NASB).

The first stage of the covenant combines divine right to propose, to command, and to promise. The divine approach expresses God’s gracious election of Abram to be the first major figure of His special covenant of grace. The divine command involves the test of total trust in God and in His guidance. “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go” (Heb. 11:8, RSV). The divine promise in Genesis 12:1-3, 7 includes the whole human race, all families and nations and all periods in time. From the beginning, the covenant with Abraham makes provision for the salvation of the whole of humankind. (See Gen. 12:3; 18:18; Rom. 4:13-17; Gal. 3:6-9.)

What was the next stage in the covenant-making process? Gen. 15:7-21.

Here we find divine initiative or right to propose (verse 7) and to command (verse 9); followed by man’s obedience (verses 10, 11); divine promise (verses 13-15); and moving on to a high point in the covenant-making ritual (verse 17). An appearance of the Lord passed between the cut and carefully arranged pieces of animals. In this solemn ritual, the Lord bound Himself in promise to Abram and his future offspring of faith. “The Lord condescended to enter into a covenant with His servant, employing such forms as were customary among men for the ratification of a solemn engagement.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 137.

What took place at the third and final stage of divine covenant making with Abraham? Gen. 17:1-14.

Two additional aspects stand out in this final stage of the covenant-making process: (1) The change of Abram’s name, which indicates the changed status of Abraham before God. As man of God and father of the faithful, he, by his seed, would bless the whole world. (2) The rite of circumcision of the flesh, which is a sign of God’s everlasting covenant. “By this rite they [Abraham’s descendants] were pledged to fulfill, on their part, the conditions of the covenant made with Abraham.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 138.

Covenant With Abram— Design for Salvation

4 Thursday
October 21

Part 5 KEEPING THE COVENANT

“God said to Abraham, ‘As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.’”

“Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant” (Gen. 17:9, 14, RSV).

God calls upon Abraham and his descendants to “keep” His covenant. The word “keep” is the same term used for the keeping of the later covenants. All of them contain obligations or laws that need to be kept. The same term “keep” appears about 50 times in Deuteronomy for the keeping of commandments (Deut. 4:2; etc.). Various parts of the Scriptures refer to the keeping of the weekly Sabbath as well as certain feasts.

Use of the word for “break” (Hebrew *pārar*) at the end of God’s covenant making shows that the Abrahamic covenant can indeed also be “broken.” It is worthy of note that this term appears frequently (22 times) and is the one most used for the idea of breaking a covenant. (Compare Lev. 26:15; Deut. 31:16, 20; Isa. 24:5; Jer. 11:10; 31:32; Eze. 16:59; 44:7; etc.) Evidently God’s covenant with Abraham can be kept or broken by those who stand or are yet to stand within this covenant. As far as the human partners in this covenant are concerned, its promises are based on conditions.

How was Abraham to keep the covenant? How would God fulfill the covenant promises? Gen. 18:19; 22:16-18; 26:1-5.

In His grace, God had chosen (“known”—compare Amos 3:2; Hosea 13:4) Abraham as His instrument to instruct his offspring. God’s fulfillment of His covenant promises was linked to Abraham’s willingness to do righteously. Genesis 18:19 demonstrates how grace and law are related. It opens with *grace* (“I know him”) and is followed by *law* which demands a faith response (“command”; “keep the way, . . . do justice and judgment”) (“righteousness and justice,” RSV) through which God’s covenant *grace* may eventually reach its goal (“that the LORD may bring . . . what he has promised,” RSV). Abraham’s faith response is manifested in obedience. This was shown especially in the willingness to sacrifice Isaac through whom the covenant promises were to be carried out (Gen. 22:16-18). Abraham is the model of the person who is justified by faith (Gen. 15:6) and also demonstrates that this faith produces obedience to God’s law (Gen. 26:5).

In your own experience, how do you harmonize God’s free grace and the obligation to accept and keep the covenant He offers?

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 140-142; *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 195.

**Part 6
CIRCUMCISION
—COVENANT
SIGN**

“This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee. Every man child among you shall be circumcised” (Gen. 17:10).

Abraham was given specific instruction regarding who should be circumcised and thus become a part of the covenant and its people or community. God appointed circumcision as His “sign of the covenant between me and you” (Gen. 17:11, RSV).

As a covenant sign, circumcision “was destined: (1) to distinguish the seed of Abraham from the Gentiles (Eph. 2:11), (2) to perpetuate the memory of Jehovah’s covenant (Gen. 17:11), (3) to foster the cultivation of moral purity (Deut. 10:16), (4) to represent righteousness by faith (Rom. 4:11), (5) to symbolize circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:29), and (6) to foreshadow the Christian rite of baptism (Col. 2:11, 12).”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 322, 323.

Is circumcision still a valid covenant sign for Christians today? If not, why not? Rom. 2:28, 29; Col. 2:11, 12.

The New Testament position on circumcision leaves no doubt. Paul explains that “real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal” (Rom. 2:29, RSV). The New Testament insists that for the Christian believer neither physical circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything (1 Cor. 7:19), but only “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6, RSV), “a new creation” (Gal. 6:15), “keeping the commandments of God” (1 Cor. 7:19).

The external sign of circumcision as a physical rite faded into insignificance, but the spiritual sense of symbolizing a covenant relationship remained valid and is even intensified in that “the circumcision of Christ” is “putting off the body of flesh” (Col. 2:11, RSV)—a putting away of self and human weakness. This spiritual circumcision, “made without hands” (verse 11), is manifested in baptism (verse 12).

What do you understand the circumcision of the heart to consist of, and by whom is it accomplished?

“It is God that circumcises the heart. The whole work is the Lord’s from the beginning to the end.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 392.

“True circumcision is the worship of Christ in spirit and truth, not in forms and ceremonies, with hypocritical pretense.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 399.

Further Study: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 189-192.



October 24-30
Adult Lesson

5

Covenant Promises to Abraham

“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20).

These are the closing words of Christ’s great gospel commission. They tell us again that the three-in-one God of the Bible is the God of promise. Just as the risen One is about to return to heaven, He Himself promises His followers His continuing presence. From the first promise in the Garden of Eden—a promise of a Saviour to come (Gen. 3:15)—to the last promise in the Bible—a promise that Jesus Christ will come again (Rev. 22:20)—all divine promises come together in the promise of God to bring salvation.

While still separated from Christ, the Gentiles were “foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But in Christ Jesus those who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:12, 13, NIV). They “are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:19, 20, NIV).

The promise theme weaves its way through the Bible, standing out like a scarlet thread. Some have claimed that the promise theme is the one and only theme that unites the first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses. Others have suggested that it is the key theme of the entire Bible. Even if these claims cannot be fully upheld, it is certain that to the helpless the promises of God are like leaves from the tree of life. “Make the promises of God your own. Then when test and trial come, these promises will be to you glad springs of heavenly comfort.”—*My Life Today*, p. 28.

The most profound promises, of course, are the covenant promises. Among them are those associated with the covenant with Abraham. God promised His constant presence; He promised to be a “shield” (Gen. 15:1); He gave a promise of the Messiah to come through the seed of Abraham; He promised to make Abraham a great and mighty nation; He promised to make the name of Abraham great; He promised to give him and his offspring a land of their own; and He also promised to bless the families of earth through him.

**Part 1
GOD OF
COVENANT
PROMISE**

What description of Himself does God employ when He appears to Abram in a vision?

“Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great” (Gen. 15:1, RSV).

In a previous lesson we studied how God presented Himself as Yahweh (Gen. 12:1; 15:7)—His personal name used to point to the covenant God. We also noted the name “Almighty God” (Gen. 17:1), by which He pointed to His might and power in the fulfillment of the divine promises.

In our text of the day God addresses Abraham with a greeting of encouragement: “Fear not.” This was appropriate, for Abraham had given evidence of human weakness, because “his mind was so oppressed by forebodings that he could not now grasp the promise with unquestioning confidence as heretofore. . . . And how was the covenant promise to be realized, while the gift of a son was withheld?”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 136. While he struggled with the natural fears of the human heart (and thought to adopt Eliezer as his heir—see Gen. 15:2, 3), and with believing God’s promises, God came to Abraham in a vision and presented Himself with this statement: “I am your shield.”

God’s self-presentation with the words “your shield” shows in the pronoun “your” the personal and intimate interest of God in the affairs of the one whose faith is wavering. The designation of God as “shield” appears here for the first time in the Bible and is the only time it is employed by God in giving a revelation of Himself. Later on it is used by individuals to speak about God. (See Deut. 33:29; Ps. 18:2, 30; 84:11; 144:2.) Thus God is the believer’s “shield,” that is, a protection. The “shield” or protection aspect of the nature of God is not in this instance a physical protection in war or misfortune but a protection or guarantee of the promise of God which was to be fulfilled through Abraham and his future seed.

As we think of the Lord as the “shield” of repentant sinners, we go back to David Lin’s recent story from China. “Every time [the penitent preacher] opened his mouth, tears would roll down his cheeks. For he could not forget how long he had left his Lord and how graciously He had forgiven him. But his tearful, stammering words comprised a living example and illustration of the ‘humble and contrite heart’ which God will not despise.”

**Part 2
COVENANT
PROMISE OF
DIVINE
PRESENCE**

What promise of covenant communion did God make to Jacob?

“Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, . . . for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you” (Gen. 28:15, RSV).

God appeared as in person to His servants in visions, in dreams, and other special ways on specific occasions. However, beyond these special and almost rare manifestations of God during the long centuries of the history of salvation, there is the promise of God’s continuing presence, “I am [will be] with you.”

This promise of God’s continuing presence and intimate companionship weaves itself throughout the Old Testament and into the New as a red thread. It presents the covenant Lord not merely as one who appears on special occasions in mighty self-manifestations, but it presents Him primarily and uniquely as a God who is constantly and actively present with His servants and His people as a guiding, leading, and accompanying Lord. This divine presence reaches forward in messianic hope to the coming of One called “Immanuel,” “God with us” (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23), who in turn promises: “I am with you alway” (Matt. 28:20).

Notice two New Testament examples of the continuing theme of the presence of the God of promises. John 17:24; Acts 18:10.

Jesus’ high-priestly prayer expresses the Lord’s desire that those who are given to Jesus “may be with me where I am” (John 17:24). This wish expresses the ultimate goal of the divine promise of being with the saved. But until this goal of a total and completely undisturbed communion in the full, unveiled presence of God can be realized, the promise “I will be with you” remains a determining factor in the believer’s life (Acts 18:10). It enables him to be a Christian and to proclaim the gospel.

What repetition of the promise does the Risen One leave with His followers before His ascension? Matt. 28:20.

The community of faith is the community of the presence of God, and thus it is called to be an evangelizing church which has a worldwide task to announce that the promised Seed through whom all the families of the earth will be blessed has come once and will come again.

What does the experience of Jesus’ continuing presence in my life and activities really mean to me?

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 166, 825, 830, 831.

**Part 3
COVENANT
PROMISE FOR
ALL FAMILIES**

What marvelous messianic promise given to Abraham was repeated to Jacob?

“I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3).

In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” Gen. 28:14).

This is no narrow promise of limited scope. This promise runs counter to any limited grouping or narrow nationalistic expectation. The horizon of this promise is expansive, its dimensions are universal. The scope of the blessing is all-inclusive; its benefits are unrestricted in every respect: “In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3).

Some modern translations render the words “be blessed” in Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 26:4; and 28:14 as “bless themselves.” Without attempting to discuss the ins and outs of Hebrew verbal forms, we may suggest that there are solid grounds for keeping the translations “will be blessed” as expressing what the texts wish to state.

The word “seed” also translated as “offspring” or “descendants,” is a singular noun in the Hebrew text which may refer to an individual or a group, depending on the setting. The blessing that comes to all the families of the earth through the promised “seed” finds its complete fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Note how the New Testament points to the fulfillment of this promise in Jesus Christ. Acts 3:25, 26; Gal. 3:8, 16.

The apostle Peter in his second sermon applies Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18 to God’s servant. The apostle Paul builds a forceful argument upon the word “seed” in Galatians 3:8, 16 and applies it to Christ. Paul made it clear that the physical descent from Abraham was no guarantee of the spiritual relationship, which is by faith. This high point is reached in Galatians 3:29: “If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (RSV).

David Lin’s penitent preacher in the great country of China became a powerful witness to the covenant-keeping and prayer-answering God. His tearful witness “had a wonderful effect in winning souls to Christ, and whole families were converted by this 67-year-old weeping preacher.” The covenant promises know no limitation in this whole world and may far outreach our knowledge of their effect.

**Part 4
COVENANT
PROMISE OF A
GREAT NATION**

What did God promise regarding the making of a nation, and where and how was it to be fulfilled?

“I will make of you a great nation” (Gen. 12:2, RSV).

“Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation” (Gen. 18:18, NASB).

“I will there [Egypt] make of you a great nation” (Gen. 46:3, RSV).

When Abraham was without descendants or even a son, the covenant God not only promised both (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:16, 19, 20; etc.), but also promised to make Abraham a great and mighty nation. This promise did not find fulfillment in the days of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God repeated it to Jacob with the added information that it would be fulfilled in Egypt. God brings about His will in His own way and in His own time.

In what ways is the fulfillment of the same promise later recounted and referred to? Deut. 26:5; Ex. 19:5, 6.

When Jacob and his family were “few in number”—namely, 70 people (see Gen. 46:27)—they moved down to Egypt. From that small beginning and as foreigners, the descendants of Jacob became a powerful and populous nation (Deut. 26:5). In Egypt, Israel did not have land or hope of obtaining any. Yet in God’s miraculous ways they had become a “nation.”

In size they were a “nation” in Egypt, but as a religious community under covenant with God, they did not become a “nation” until they entered this covenant relationship with Yahweh at Mount Sinai. From that point they were to function as “a holy nation,” set apart to worship and serve the Lord.

To be called “a holy nation,” Israel was not to feel superior, but to be reminded of these facts:

1. Their gracious election by God.
2. His activity in establishing them as a nation.
3. Their responsibility to fulfill their God-given task in the world.

Thus Israel did not actually owe its existence as a nation to political wisdom or to territorial expansion. Rather, it was based upon God’s promisory actions in history. As a result, she should glorify God, serve Him, and bring blessings to neighboring Gentile nations and to the world at large.

In view of 1 Peter 2:9, what does it mean to you to belong to “an holy nation”?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 105.

**Part 5
COVENANT
PROMISE OF A
GREAT NAME**

What was God's design in His promise concerning Abraham's name?

"I will bless you, and make your name great" (Gen. 12:2, RSV).

The human attempt to make a "name"—to gain reputation, fame, renown, and so on—is the constantly repeated story of human history. Even in the Bible we learn that David won a name for himself through his military undertakings (1 Sam. 18:30; 2 Sam. 8:13). In Proverbs 22:1 and Ecclesiastes 7:1, "name" by itself means a good reputation, which is of supreme worth. To have a "great name" means something extraordinary.

The builders of the Tower of Babel sought "renown," "glory," and "fame" through the magnitude of their work. They said to themselves, "Let us make a name for ourselves" (Gen. 11:4, RSV). But they failed miserably in their driving ambition. The contrast to Abraham is stark. He was called out from the land of his fathers, out of a situation where a name had meaning and standing. But in the divine promise, "I will bless you, and make your name great" (Gen. 12:2), the covenant God Himself pledges to donate to one man, on His own grounds, what others so selfishly sought and failed to attain. In His grace God does what no person of faith can do for himself or herself.

What is the source of true greatness in a name? (Compare Gen. 5:2 with today's text.)

"True greatness was to result from compliance with God's commands and cooperation with His divine purpose."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 293.

"Abraham could not explain the leadings of Providence; he had not realized his expectations; but he held fast the promise, 'I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.' . . .

"The Lord in His providence had brought this trial [famine in Canaan] upon Abraham to teach him lessons of submission, patience, and faith—lessons that were to be placed on record for the benefit of all who should afterward be called to endure affliction. God leads His children by a way that they know not, but He does not forget or cast off those who put their trust in Him."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 129.

Is your name made great through the activity of God in your life and your constant trust in Him?

Further Study: *Christ's Object Lessons*, "The Lord's Vineyard," pp. 286, 287.

**Part 6
COVENANT
PROMISE OF
A LAND**

What promise regarding a land did God give to Abraham, who was called out from his own country?

“Go from your country . . . to the land that I will show you” (Gen. 12:1, RSV).

God’s call to Abraham to move from “your country [land]” to “the land that I will show you” suggests that he was being tested. Would he respond in faith that would show itself in obedience to God’s command?

“It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. . . . But he did not hesitate to obey the call. He had no question to ask concerning the land of promise. . . . God had spoken, and His servant must obey; the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126.

How and when was the promise of the inheritance of the land repeated by God? Gen. 12:7; 26:2-5; 35:12.

When Abraham had entered Canaan, the Lord appeared to him and made it clear that while he was to sojourn in the land it would be given to his seed (Gen. 12:7). This promise was repeated after he and Lot had separated (13:14, 15, 17), at the covenant ratification ceremony (15:13, 16, 18), and in the final phase of covenant making (17:8). It was later given as a promise to Isaac (26:2-5) and Jacob (28:13, 15; 35:12). Some 400 years later (Gen. 15:13, 16), in fulfillment of the promise, the Lord announced to Moses that He would bring Israel up out of the land of Egypt into a good land, flowing milk and honey (Ex. 3:8, 17; 6:8). To Joshua, the promise was repeated (Joshua 1:3), and in David’s day it was largely but not completely fulfilled. (See Gen. 15:18-21; 2 Sam. 8:1-14; 1 Chron. 19:1-19; 1 Kings 4:21.)

In what ways is the promise of the land to be fulfilled to the people of faith? Heb. 11:13-16.

The people described in these verses were living by faith. Even though they died not having received the land promised them, they were looking for a better land—a heavenly one. Thus Palestine and Jerusalem are still not the true home for those who are living by faith, and for this reason they are described as aliens and strangers on earth. The true land for all men and women of faith is a heavenly one, just as the city of the faithful is not the earthly Jerusalem, but the heavenly one.

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 188; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 170.



The True Israel of God

“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV).

A key question today is the identity of “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). When people hear the name “Israel,” various ideas may come to mind. Bible students may think of the Old Testament people of God. Others may think of the state of Israel which was founded in 1948. Others believe the Israel of God will be a people that will exist on earth for a thousand-year reign.

The question remains: What is the true “Israel of God”? Is it made up of blood descendants of Abraham? those who hold citizenship in the state of Israel today? Jews or Christians? Is it made up of the church?

This week’s study seeks to answer these questions on the basis of the evidence provided in Scripture. Obviously it will not be possible to study the 2514 usages of the word “Israel” in the Old Testament or the 68 times it appears in the New Testament. We need not look at Israel as a personal name for Jacob or as the title of the northern kingdom when Israel was divided. We are, however, anxious to learn what the true Israel of God was in the Old Testament period of time.

God ultimately had to declare to Israel: “You are not my people and I am not your God” (Hosea 1:9, RSV). Instead of being “sons of the living God” (Hosea 1:10; compare Ex. 4:22, 23; Deut. 14:1; 32:5, 19, 20; Isa. 43:6; 45:11; Jer. 3:14, 19, 22), they turned into sons or children that had forsaken the Lord (Jer. 5:7), “children of harlotry” (Hosea 2:4), and rebellious sons (Eze. 20:21). God could no longer claim them as the true Israel. But within the apostate nation of Israel there was a faithful and holy remnant (Isa. 6:13; 4:3; 10:20-22; etc.) that God would save. In time, this faithful remnant of Israel formed the beginnings of the New Testament church. (See Gal. 3:29, 7). Men of faith are the spiritual sons of Abraham. (Compare verses 9, 14.)

**Part 1
ISRAEL
BECOMES
A NATION**

What does God reveal about His election of Israel?

“You are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth” (Deut. 7:6, RSV).

The election of Israel as a “holy people” (compare Deut. 14:2; 28:9, 10)—as God’s treasured possession—was grounded in action taken by the Lord. The picture of Israel as a “holy people” did not reveal any merit of theirs, but resulted rather from divine choice. God had separated them or cut them off from other peoples with their pagan practices. This is suggested by the original meaning of “holy” (Hebrew, *qados*).

What was God’s purpose for making ancient Israel His covenant people? Ex. 19:6.

The definite way in which God describes His purpose for Israel must not escape our attention. The divine words, “And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6, RSV), clearly stress that the physical Israel of old—the Israel which was the offspring of the patriarchal line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—was not called into existence merely as another secular nation.

The essential factor was that Israel was to be a “kingdom of priests” and a “holy nation.” The expression “kingdom of priests” was neither a synonym for “holy nation” nor could it be reduced to the idea of royal priests or priest-kings. The words “kingdom of priests” reveal that Israel as a covenant people was not to be simply one among many earthly states, but as God’s priestly kingdom Israel was to do service among and for the nations of the world as priests who serve within a society.

The expression “holy nation” continues to emphasize this special call of Israel. The idea of being “holy” does not mean a better-than-thou status. Rather, it indicates that Israel was to be set apart from other nations for sacred purposes. Israel was to belong to God and was to reveal the covenant relationship with God in the total quality of her life and existence. When she failed to do this, Israel was not the true Israel of God but simply a political-national people.

If Israel of old was to live and act as God’s representative in service to the world, how do I live and act as a member of God’s spiritual Israel today? (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 607.)

Further Study: Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 1080, 1081.

Part 2
THE LAND
OF ISRAEL

“The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you” (Gen. 35:12, RSV).

As we saw in last week’s study, the promise that a land would be given to God’s people, Israel, was first given to Abraham, then repeated to Isaac and Jacob. Joseph’s deathbed words repeated this promise (Gen. 50:24).

God informed Abraham that “four hundred years” would pass before the seed of Abraham would take possession of the land (Gen. 15:13, 16). Fulfillment of the promise began in the days of Moses and Joshua. Moses repeated the divine command: “Behold, I have set the land before you; go in and take possession of the land” (Deut. 1:8, RSV).

What was the territorial extent of the Promised Land? Gen. 15:18-21; Deut. 11:24; Joshua 1:4.

The land promised to Abraham included the territory bounded by the Euphrates River on the northeast, the “entrance of Hamath” to the north, the “great sea” (Mediterranean) on the west, the “river of Egypt” (Nile) on the south, and the wilderness on the east. The extent of the land promised to Moses (Ex. 23:31, was almost the same.

What effect did Israel’s loyalty to God have upon her receiving and keeping the Promised Land? Num. 14:22, 23; 32:11; Deut. 28:58, 63.

God had clearly warned, “If in spite of this, you do not obey Me, . . . I will make the land desolate. . . . You, however, I will scatter among the nations” (Lev. 26:27-33, NASB). Disobedience by Israel would bring loss of the Promised Land. God never made an unconditional promise that the land would be given to Israel and that it would be their possession forever.

Are there any unconditional promises? How far can man frustrate God’s promises? (Consider Jer. 18:7-10; Jonah 3:10; Eze. 18:21-32.)

“It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 67.

“Not by any temporary failure of Israel, however, was the plan of the ages for the redemption of mankind to be frustrated.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 705, 706.

Further Study: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 17-22.

Part 3 ISRAEL AND THE COVENANT

How did Israel respond to God's covenant and its promises?

“Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but every one walked in the stubbornness of his evil heart. Therefore I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not” (Jer. 11:8, RSV).

The story of ancient Israel—from their founding as a nation at Sinai, when God entered into a loving covenant relationship with them (Ex. 19:1-8; 24:1-11)—was one of stubborn disobedience. Instead of being a dedicated and separated “kingdom of priests” and “holy nation,” they became a “people laden with iniquity” (Isa. 1:4, RSV). Time and again God sent His prophets to plead with them to return to their high calling, but the people “deeply corrupted themselves” (Hosea 9:9, RSV) and were bent on turning away from God (Hosea 11:7; Amos 3:1, 2; Eze. 16:2, 3; 23:1-49).

What would God do in the face of continuous disobedience?
2 Chron. 7:19, 20.

God's marvelous promises could only become real if Israel would be faithful. “This shall come to pass, if you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God” (Zech. 6:15, RSV). But if they were disobedient, God could not bless them. Not only would God withhold His blessings, but, in harmony with the covenant terms, He would pluck them up from the Promised Land and scatter them among the nations in hope that they would learn faithfulness and obedience. God did not desire to punish His people (Hosea 11:8, 9), but their continued unfaithfulness left Him with no other choice.

Even after Israel's exile to heathen lands, those who returned did not live up to God's plan for them. Of the Christ, it is written: “He came to his own home, and his own people received him not” (John 1:11, RSV).

What does the failure of ancient Israel to show God's love for the world tell you about your part in God's plan? (See Eph. 6:10-18.)

“We must know that Jesus is indeed ours; that His Spirit is purifying and refining our hearts. If the followers of Christ had genuine faith, with meekness and love, what a work they might accomplish! What fruit would be seen to the glory of God!”—*My Life Today*, p. 13.

Further Study: *Christ's Object Lessons*, “A Great Gulf Fixed,” pp. 268-270.

Part 4
THE REMNANT
AS TRUE
ISRAEL

What difference did God see between the faithful remnant of Israel and the political-national Israel of Old Testament times?

“I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth” (Zeph. 3:12, 13).

Although God’s plan for ancient Israel as a political-national entity was spoiled by the nation’s long history of disobedience and unfaithfulness, it was never completely frustrated. Within national, unfaithful Israel there were faithful Israelites—for example, Elijah and the 7000 who would not bow their knees to Baal (1 Kings 19:14, 18).

Many of the Old Testament prophets speak of this faithful remnant which God would gather unto Himself. Such a remnant of Israel would have accepted the Lord’s rulership (Micah 4:6, 7; compare 2:12, 13). They were a “holy seed” (Isa. 6:13), a holy remnant; they were “recorded for life” (Isa. 4:3). This faithful remnant was a religious body not a national one, with a “new heart” and a “new spirit,” and would live on the basis of the “new covenant” (Jer. 31:31-34).

The purpose of God in creating and preserving a faithful remnant from national-political Israel was to make them the carriers of the promises of God. He would also use them as divinely appointed instruments for declaring “my glory among the nations” (Isa. 66:19, RSV), universally among “all nations and tongues” (verse 18). By this means others would join the faithful to “worship the king, the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 14:16, RSV). Thus the faithful remnant was made up of those within the apostate nation of Israel who were true to Yahweh. The Old Testament looked forward to the development of a true spiritual Israel that would include faithful descendants of Abraham and faithful believers drawn from the Gentile nations.

What does the New Testament say regarding the true Israel? Rom. 9:4-8; Eph. 2:11-19; Gal. 6:15, 16.

As we have noted, the New Testament uses the word “Israel” in 68 places. In three of these “Israel” clearly refers to the church. Blood descent from Abraham alone was never in itself a guarantee of membership in the true Israel. As Paul showed from the Old Testament, “not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel” (Rom. 9:6, RSV). Rather, the true Israel is “a remnant, chosen by grace” (Rom. 11:5, RSV). It is “a new creation” (Gal. 6:15).

Further Study: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 367-378.

Part 5 HEIRS OF THE PROMISE

To whom do all God's promises belong, and who are the heirs according to promise?

“Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring.”

“If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal. 3:16, 29, RSV).

The sustained argument of Paul in the third chapter of Galatians is that people are saved by faith and that it is “men of faith who are the sons of Abraham” (verse 7, RSV). The promise of salvation belongs to men and women of faith (verse 9) and not just to those who claim blood descent from Abraham. Some Jewish Christians in Paul's time claimed that Gentiles were to share in the promised blessing made to Abraham provided that they would worship the Lord and submit to circumcision. Paul, however, insists that Scripture foresaw their share in the blessings promised to Abraham's offspring through faith in Christ Jesus (verses 28, 29).

“As a son of Abraham, Christ became, in a special sense, heir to the covenant promises. . . . By baptism we acquire kinship to Christ, and through Him acquire the right to participate in the promises made to Abraham.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 962.

In what way will the promise to Abraham concerning the possession of a land or the earth be fulfilled to the believing heirs of the promise? Rom. 4:13; 1 Peter 1:3-5.

“The gift to Abraham and his seed included not merely the land of Canaan, but the whole earth. So says the apostle, ‘The promise, that he should be the *heir of the world*, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.’ Romans 4:13. And the Bible plainly teaches that the promises made to Abraham are to be fulfilled through Christ. . . . [Believers become] heirs to ‘an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away’ [1 Peter 1:4]—the earth freed from the curse of sin.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 170. This promise will be literally fulfilled when the saints will live on the new earth forever and ever with Christ (Dan. 7:27).

Contrast being a temporary resident of Palestine with being a permanent resident of the new earth.

Further Study: *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 957-963.

Part 6 TITLES OF THE CHURCH

What titles does Peter apply to the church, and what do they tell of the church's standing in God's sight?

“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9, 10, NIV).

The apostle Peter here declares that the privileges and responsibilities which God wanted literal, physical Israel to accept have been given to the community of Christian believers. They are not a national group with distinct lineal descent from Abraham or anyone else. They are a people called out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people to constitute one true, spiritual Israel throughout the world. Thus Peter assigns to the true people of God four titles that were once assigned to literal Israel.

The expression “chosen people” (or “chosen generation,” “chosen race”) echoes 1 Peter 1:1, 2 and reflects Isaiah 43:20. It emphasizes divine election and expresses the destiny of the church. The title “royal priesthood” is drawn from Exodus 19:6, where Israel is said to function in God's plan as a “kingdom of priests” or a “priestly kingdom.” Israel had forfeited its status as a priestly kingdom, and now the Israel of faith—the church—is assigned this place. The community of believers is now to offer to God “spiritual sacrifices” (1 Peter 2:5, RSV) and “living sacrifices” (Rom. 12:1) in total dedication to the service of God. The designation “a holy nation” is also drawn from Exodus 19:6. It indicates that the true Israel of God in the form of the church is set apart from the world to represent Him on earth. The fourth title, “a people belonging to God” (“a peculiar people,” KJV), makes clear that God through Christ has called a people; He considers them in a special sense His own possession. Literal Israel had been the object of God's special affection, and this affection is now transferred to the faithful church. All the titles of privilege from Israel of old are assigned to the new Israel of faith, spiritual Israel, true Israel—the church, made up of different races, nations, and peoples, including faithful descendants of Abraham. The unity grounded in Jesus Christ and manifested in the church as God's race, nation, and people transcends all other barriers and distinctions—whether ethnic, social, economic, political, or otherwise.

What is the meaning of the calling that God has bestowed on the church? 1 Peter 2:5, 6.

Further Study: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 715-721.

The Sinai Covenant— 1: Redemption and Covenant

“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine” (Ex. 19:4, 5, RSV).

The covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai (usually named the Sinai or Mosaic covenant) plays a vital role in the plan of salvation. Although it is the fourth covenant (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses), each of the earlier ones continued to offer God’s blessings. Each covenant is essentially a continuation, enlargement, and application of God’s basic covenant containing the design and goal of the redemption of mankind. In the Sinai covenant, God reveals Himself more fully than ever before, giving the meaning of His saving name, declaring His laws, and establishing a form of worship with sacrifices that could keep His people in covenant relationship with Him if they fell into disobedience. The animal sacrifices—actually offered in simple form from Eden—pointed to the perfect Sacrifice to come. The Sinai covenant is thus a turning point for Israel and for humanity as a whole.

The biblical evidence regarding the Sinai covenant is clear: Redemption comes before covenant. God’s address to Israel at Sinai consists of (1) the statement of what He has done to deliver them (Ex. 19:4) and (2) the resulting invitation for them to enter into a covenant with Him (verses 5, 6). The purpose of the covenant is to have Israel experience the covenant blessings in their fullness as His special people and to be a demonstration to the world of what it means to have God as supreme Ruler and King.

The Sinai covenant was *not* a covenant of works that could achieve righteousness or justification by human endeavor in keeping the law. Although designed to convince Israel of sins and helplessness before the law, it, like the Abrahamic covenant, is a covenant of grace. Yet it demands obedience as did the covenants made with Adam and Abram before. “This covenant is of just as much force today as it was when the Lord made it with ancient Israel.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1103.

The Sinai Covenant—1: Redemption and Covenant

7 Sunday
November 7

Part 1 YAHWEH—GOD OF THE SINAI COVENANT

What kind of God takes the steps to make the covenant with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai?

“I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Ex. 6:7, NASB).

The God of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the LORD, or more specifically—as we learned earlier—Yahweh. He also makes His covenant with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, a people redeemed by Him from Egyptian bondage and slavery. Thus the divine Initiator of the Sinai covenant with Israel was the same God who made the covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Adam.

What does the book of Exodus reveal about the God who offers Himself in covenant with Israel? Ex. 3:13-15; 6:2, 3.

In the stunning burning-bush experience (Ex. 3:1-17), Moses received his call to be the divine instrument in negotiating Israel's release from Egyptian slavery. Within this setting Moses asked God what he should answer when Israel would ask, “What is his [God's] name?” (verse 13). The purpose of the question, according to the Hebrew text, was not to find out God's title in terms of a name. No, it was asking about the powers, qualities, abilities, and character of God. The answer that follows shows us exactly what the question was seeking, namely, the *meaning* of His name: “I AM WHO I AM” (verse 14, RSV).

Another vital aspect of the nature and character of God was later revealed to Moses in Exodus 6:2-8. Although in the past the name of Yahweh had been well known and God had revealed Himself under that name, an aspect of the character of God *in addition* to the one expressed in “Almighty God” (*El Shaddai*) was to be revealed: “I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by My name, LORD [Yahweh], I did not make Myself known to them” (Ex. 6:3, NASB). Thus *the new* aspect of the character of God and its significance is that He will reveal Himself in redemption, in setting Israel free from bondage, in making Israel His special covenant people, and in providing the means for them to remain as His covenant people.

What does it mean to me to know the character of God as the Initiator and Accomplisher of redemption from sin's slavery?

Further Study: Ex. 7:8 to 11:10—the ten plagues of Egypt.

The Sinai Covenant—1: Redemption and Covenant

7 Monday
November 8

Part 2 ISRAEL— LOVED, CHOSEN, AND REDEEMED

“Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength, to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today” (Deut. 4:37, 38, NIV).

The magnificent theme of God’s redemption—a theme of liberating His people from real slavery and bondage—is associated with divine love and divine election. Love, election, and redemption are gifts of God totally undeserved by His people.

What is stated about God’s love for Israel? Deut. 7:6-11.

God’s love for Israel as His people was not an emotional or intellectual showing of special favor. It was His universal saving and redeeming love and work for all humankind. So the Exodus from Egypt is frequently referred to as an act of love: “Thou hast led in thy steadfast love [Hebrew, *chesed*] the people whom thou hast redeemed” (Ex. 15:13, RSV). “Yea, he loved [Hebrew, *chabab*] his people” (Deut. 33:3, RSV). It was said of Israel that “the Lord loves you” (Deut. 7:8, RSV) as well as the stranger in your midst (Deut. 10:18). Considering the magnitude of the whole earth that is God’s, Israel could only marvel at God’s love for her but never take pride in it (Deut. 10:14, 15).

How is God’s choice of ancient Israel explained? Deut. 4:37; 7:6-8.

What emphasis was placed on Israel’s redemption before God entered into a covenant with her? Ex. 6:6-8.

The relationship between covenant and redemption cannot be denied. Redemption comes before covenant. God told Moses to say to the people: “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself” (Ex. 19:4, RSV). The point is that God had already saved or redeemed Israel. He had liberated her from Egyptian bondage as an act of free grace.

The fact that Israel as a people had been supremely loved, sovereignly chosen, and miraculously redeemed and that God did this in carrying out the Abrahamic covenant (Ex. 2:24; 3:16; 6:4-8) shows that the covenant made with Israel at Sinai and the one made with Abraham are almost the same. Both have the same spiritual relationship at their center. (See Ex. 6:7, RSV.)

Further Study: Psalm 105:8-15, 42.

The Sinai Covenant—1: Redemption and Covenant

7 Tuesday
November 9

Part 3 ISRAEL— PARTNER IN GOD'S COVENANT

What proposal did God make regarding the covenant between Himself and Israel?

“If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples” (Ex. 19:5, RSV).

As noted several times already, the covenant with Israel followed God's gracious redemptive acts and holds the golden key to the only way of salvation.

A brief outline of Exodus 19 through 24, which contains the Sinai covenant, shows the sequence and relationship of events:

1. Israel's arrival and encampment at Sinai (19:1, 2).
2. God's proposal of a covenant with Israel (19:3-6).
3. Israel's response in acceptance of the covenant (19:7, 8).
4. Preparations for formally receiving the covenant (19:9-25).
5. Proclamation of the Ten Commandments (20:1-17).
6. Moses as covenant mediator (20:18-21).
7. Covenant principles spelled out (20:22 to 23:33).
8. Ratification of the covenant (24:1-18).

It is evident that God desired to make Israel the recipient of a beneficent covenant.

Why was a covenant between God and the people of Israel a necessity? Deut. 29:10-13.

Now that the Israelites had been redeemed by God's mighty acts in history—by divine grace—they had to decide the nature and direction of their future. Should they strike out alone? Would they conquer in their own strength? Should they decide to return to the “security” of Egypt as some suggested? Or should they pledge allegiance to the saving God, Yahweh? It was one thing to be set free from slavery; it was quite another thing to remain free spiritually, physically, and otherwise.

For Israel to remain free from a life of sin—represented by their Egyptian bondage—called for a covenant with the God of their salvation. The covenant between God and Israel was designed to make possible the deepest relationship between Himself and His people. This God-man relationship was to give them security, protection, and blessing in every sphere of life. They were to respond in faith to this gracious offer and be obedient. Obedience was to result from what God had done, and it was to be the response of faith.

Have you been striving alone in your spiritual life? Or have you found power and security in the Lord?

Further Study: Ex. 19:1-24:18.

The Sinai Covenant—1: Redemption and Covenant

7 Wednesday
November 10

Part 4 GOD'S PLAN FOR ISRAEL

What benefits and duties were in God's plan for Israel as His covenant people?

"If you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5, 6, NIV). (See also Lev. 19:2.)

Three major ideas are presented in these vital verses:

1. *Israel is a "treasured possession"* (NIV), "own possession" (RSV), "peculiar treasure" (KJV). These translations attempt to render into English a technical Hebrew term repeatedly used of Israel as a choice or treasured possession. In contrast to a possession that could not be moved—such as areas of land—Israel became God's movable treasure or possession. Israel is God's personally-gained and privately-treasured possession, set aside for a marked purpose. (See Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18, 19.) "Treasured possession" thus implies special value and special relationship.

2. *Israel is a "kingdom of priests."* (This is the literal meaning of the Hebrew expression *mamleket kōhanim*.) God's plan included making Israel mediators of His grace to the nations of the earth. Israel was to function as a kingdom of priests to bring blessings to the nations of the world and to minister to their needs. Since this original purpose was not realized by ancient Israel, it is to be realized in the priesthood of all believers in the church. (See 1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10.) Each of us is so called today.

3. *Israel is a "holy nation."* In Exodus 19:6, Israel is called a "holy nation," although more often a "holy people" (Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19; 28:9). The call of Israel to be a "holy nation" rested upon God's separating them from the nations. They were to be primarily a religious unity. God is holy, so His people are to be holy. In Deuteronomy 26:19 the Lord declared "that you [Israel] will be a people holy to the Lord your God, as he promised" (NIV). Obedience to God's commandments is the result and not the condition of being a "holy people." Holiness here is not something to be achieved but something received and reflected in a daily life of faith obedience.

Do you live right in order to become holy, or were you counted right so that God could make you holy?

Further Study: Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 908.

The Sinai Covenant—1: Redemption and Covenant

7 Thursday
November 11

Part 5 ISRAEL'S RESPONSE TO GOD'S COVENANT

“All the people answered together and said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do’ ” (Ex. 19:8, RSV). (See also 24:3.)

In these two texts Israel's answer was favorable, promising to do all the words that God had spoken. God would want no other response. Yet the reason for and the aim of the response make a world of difference. The difference in this response relates to the following:

1. Whether Israel would attempt to do what God had spoken in her own strength and with the expectation that she would merit thereby the covenant blessings.

2. Whether Israel would obey the covenant obligations by faith through the enabling grace mercifully provided by the Lord and thus experience the covenant blessings as gifts freely bestowed by God.

The former response was one of legalism in which God's covenant was turned into a covenant of works with human effort seeking to earn salvation. The latter response was nonlegalistic because it understood correctly that God's covenant with Israel intended to call forth heartfelt gratitude for God's redeeming act. Thus it was to be a covenant of grace, an extension of the covenants made in Eden with Adam and later also given to Abraham.

Which means did Israel choose by which to gain righteousness? Rom. 9:31, 32.

The apostle Paul made it abundantly clear that Israel pursued righteousness legalistically, attempting to achieve perfect fulfillment of the law in her own merit and strength.

“God brought them to Sinai; He manifested His glory; He gave them His law, with the promise of great blessings on condition of obedience: [Ex. 19:5, 6 quoted]. The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts, and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God's law; and they readily entered into covenant with God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 371, 372.

How will I seek to be saved today?

“Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth ‘the fruits of the Spirit.’ . . . Having the Spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He walked.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372.

Further Study: Rom. 3:31; 5:1; 8:3, 4.

The Sinai Covenant—1: Redemption and Covenant

7 Friday
November 12

Part 6 THE SINAI COVENANT RATIFIED

By what ceremony or ritual was the Sinai covenant ratified? Ex. 24:5-8. (See RSV.)

Bible scholars are not united on the meaning of the ritual described in the reference above. Ellen G. White explains: "Bravely did the Israelites speak the words promising obedience to the Lord, after hearing His covenant read in the audience of the people. They said, 'All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.' Then the people were set apart and sealed to God. A sacrifice was offered to the Lord. A portion of the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled upon the altar. This signified that the people had consecrated themselves—body, mind, and soul—to God. A portion was sprinkled upon the people. This signified that through the sprinkled blood of Christ, God graciously accepted them as His special treasure. Thus the Israelites entered into a solemn covenant with God."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1107.

The sprinkling of blood in the covenant ratification ceremony symbolizes the sealing of the covenant relationship between God and His people. The blood of the slain sacrifices was to make atonement for sin and to bring reconciliation and unity between God and Israel. The sacrificial blood dashed against the altar (the latter representing God) and upon the people of Israel made atonement for their sins (compare Lev. 17:11), thereby removing in a figurative sense the barrier of separation that sin had placed between God and people. It made possible intimate covenant fellowship. The blood sprinkling set a seal upon the covenant between God and people in the sense that the covenant was set into operation. In short, the covenant ratification ceremony involved both sacrifice and blood sprinkling. It set into operation the following:

1. Forgiveness and sealing.
2. Consecration and reconciliation.
3. Fellowship and communion.

How does Jesus Christ speak of the blood sprinkling of the Sinai covenant, and what ultimate meaning does He place upon it? Matt. 26:27, 28.

Christ Himself, on the cross, was not only the Mediator of the covenant (like Moses), but also the true Sacrifice that made the "new" covenant sure. His blood was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. In Christ the barriers between God and man were removed, and each true believer can experience complete fellowship and intimate communion with his Lord.

Further Study: Heb. 9:18-28.



The Sinai Covenant— 2: Covenant and Law

“Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.”

“If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the Lord your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your forefathers” (Deut. 7:9, 12, NIV).

The covenant was God’s chosen means of keeping a love relationship between Himself and human beings. This relationship, in turn, was governed by God’s law, which is an expression of His nature and character. The law was the guide to life within the covenant, but not the means provided to gain life or redemption. As always in Scripture, God’s saving actions come before covenant and law.

The covenant, with its divine law, provided the means for an ever-deepening and ever-widening experience of spiritual, mental, and physical growth within the redeemed state.

Many Bible students have claimed that God offered to Israel a covenant of works—a covenant through or in which man’s salvation or righteousness was gained by human works and achievement. However, such was not the case. God offered Israel a covenant of grace where righteousness was by faith in God’s saving acts—a faith that was itself active in good works.

God’s introduction of Himself in the opening words of the Decalogue was to remind Israel of the God of deliverance. It was to place the relationship between God and His people in the setting of divine and unmerited redemption. This was now the setting and basis for the act of lawgiving. Thus the Decalogue and the application of its principles in all other laws (Exodus 21 through 23) governed the relationships in the covenant of love.

The covenant of God with His people Israel contained various requirements on the basis of which the intimate covenant relationship was governed and could be continued. God intended that a love response built upon faith should provide the underlying reason for choosing to be obedient. (Compare Deut. 6:5; Ps. 18:1; Jer. 2:2.)

The Sinai Covenant—2: Covenant and Law

8 Sunday
November 14

Part 1 GOD'S LOVE IN ISRAEL'S ELECTION

What reasons were given for God's calling of Israel? Deut. 7:7, 8.

Israel had no merit of her own that could be put forward as worthy of God's love and His choice of her as His people. As in the case of any believer—regardless of race, wealth, or learning—the divine mystery of grace provided Israel's calling.

The basic cause for Israel's election lay in the mystery of divine love and grace. Israel was few in numbers. As a group of enslaved tribes, she was weak; and in terms of culture and religion she was mixed, weak, and without much influence.

Yahweh (the Lord), however, engaged in great saving acts in behalf of a poor, oppressed group in bondage to the pharaoh in Egypt. The reasons underlying Israel's selection were twofold:

1. God's abundant love.
2. God's loyalty to His covenant oath.

On the basis of that love, God had called Abraham and his descendants and made a covenant with them. (See Gen. 12:1-3; 15:7-21; 17:1-21.) God renewed His covenant to Abraham's descendants by swearing an oath to fulfill His covenant promise (Gen. 26:3).

The result of such divine actions and God's faithfulness to His covenant and its oath is redemption. Note the contrast between God's "mighty hand" (Ex. 3:19) and the "hand of Pharaoh" (2 Kings 17:7). The latter's "hand," the strongest and most powerful among the nations at that time, was no match for Yahweh's "mighty hand." The powers of world empires or kingdoms today cannot thwart the divine work of redemption. Yahweh is faithful to His covenant and loyal to His promises no matter how dark the outlook. The powers of the world are unable to hold Him back from fulfilling His saving work.

What does the New Testament say about the election of the believer and the believer's new status? 2 Peter 1:10, 11; Rom. 11:5, 6.

Each believer is chosen by God as a sheer act of grace and love on His part. God, in Christ, came to men and women enslaved in sin and darkness and liberated them. They are transferred into the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom there is redemption and forgiveness of sin.

What does God's unfathomable election love mean to you? How does it aid you in your relationships with those not of your religious experience? (See *Steps to Christ*, p. 22.)

Further Study: 1 Cor. 1:27, 28; James 2:5; Rev. 17:14.

The Sinai Covenant—2: Covenant and Law

8 Monday
November 15

Part 2 CALLING, COVENANT, AND LAW

“I am the LORD your God. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. You shall do my ordinances and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God” (Lev. 18:2-4, RSV).

Calling (or election), covenant, and law belong together. The divine election of Abraham and his descendants came before the covenant as the covenant came before the law. There can be no true covenant relationship between the Redeemer God and His redeemed people without norms, obligations, or requirements—in short, the law. By it the relationship can be upheld and continued.

Even though in a formal way the covenant was prior to the giving of the law, the law is vitally related to the covenant. It was indeed an actual and necessary part of the covenant. In this sense covenant and law or covenant and commandment belong together. The law given on Mount Sinai with its additional instructions and explanatory applications was God’s gift to Israel, revealing God’s will and character as the setting for the people’s relationship with their God and with one another. As such, the giving of the law was just as much an act of grace as calling, deliverance from slavery, and the making of the covenant to which it belongs. The law thus becomes the guide and control of all relationships within the covenant, namely, the God-man relationships and the interhuman relationships on the broadest scale. The law sets the bounds of the covenant relationship. It gives meaning, direction, and limits to guide faith in its loving covenant response.

In what way are “covenant” and “law” related to each other in Scripture? Deut. 4:13; 6:17; Hosea 8:1.

In Moses’ address to Israel he noted that at Mount Sinai the Lord “declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the ten commandments” (Deut. 4:13, RSV). Here the covenant is shown to be equal to the Decalogue. In other instances various expressions such as “law” (*tôrāh*, Ps. 78:10; Isa. 24:5; Hosea 8:1), “statutes” (or “ordinance”) (*chuuqim*, *chuuqōth*, Ps. 50:16; 2 Kings 17:15; Isa. 24:5), “testimonies” (Ps. 25:10; 132:12, 2 Kings 17:15), “commandments” (*piqqudim*, Ps. 103:18), and “word” of the Lord (*imrah*, Deut. 33:9)—in the sense of “commandment”—are found parallel to or in closest association with (if not having the same meaning as) the word “covenant” (*berith*). Evidently “the words of this covenant” (Jer. 11:3, 6, 8) are the words of God’s law, statutes, testimonies, and commandments.

The Sinai Covenant—2: Covenant and Law

8 Tuesday
November 16

Part 3 LAW WITHIN THE COVENANT

What is the meaning of “law” within the covenant? Deut. 4:13, 14. (See RSV.)

The word “law” (*tôrāh*) appears frequently in the Old Testament (220 times). But it must not be taken to mean “law” (Latin *lex*) in the old Roman sense of the law of the empire or in the Greek sense of *nomos*—that which had become a standard or custom. The Hebrew term *tôrāh* comes from the verb *hôrāh* (from the root *jārāh*) meaning “to point out,” “to teach,” “to instruct.” Accordingly, the noun *tôrāh* means in its broadest sense “teaching” or “instruction.” In this sense it is the “law” or “instruction” which God put before Israel in terms of the “statutes and ordinances” (Deut. 4:14, RSV) or “the testimonies, the statutes, and the ordinances” (verse 45)—the laws, decrees, and ordinances that were to regulate the life of Israel. The term “*tôrāh*” could be that comprehensive kind of “instruction” that included the moral and ethical, civil and social, sacrificial and worship, hygienic and health laws. In a narrow sense *tôrāh* can mean the Ten Commandments, also called “the words of the covenant” (Ex. 34:28, RSV). Its words contain the details and principles that were to govern the God-man and man-man relationships of the covenant people.

The work of the “law” within the covenant—namely, law inclusive of the Decalogue and the statutes, ordinances, and testimonies given by God—is to provide the guides to the new life for the human covenant partner. It introduces the member of the covenant to the will of God, whom one comes to know in the fullest sense through the obedience of faith to His commandments and other expressions of His will.

The *part played by the law* within the living reality of the covenant relationship showed that Israel could not follow the ways of the nations. She could not live by natural law, plain human needs and desires, or even social, political, and economic necessities. Rather, Israel could continue as God’s holy nation, priestly kingdom, and special treasure only through uncompromising obedience to the revealed will of the covenant-making God in all areas of the life of the people.

The *purpose of the law* is to guide to covenant loyalty and covenant blessing. Israel was not to sacrifice this sacred guide for the desires of human nature, nor a political system of their own, nor political-military adventurism, nor a harsh understanding of social and religious life.

What is the difference between “law” as a means of gaining salvation and “law” as the gracious expression of God’s will that leads to a wholesome and blessed relationship with Him?

Further Study: Deut. 4:6-8; Ps. 19:7-14.

The Sinai Covenant—2: Covenant and Law

8 Wednesday
November 17

Part 4 CONDITIONS OF THE COVENANT—1

What language suggests God's covenant with His people depends on some conditions? Ex. 19:5. (See RSV.)

That little "if" has extraordinary significance. It indicates that the Sinai covenant contained conditions. Some students of the Bible have suggested that the Sinai covenant is the first and only such covenant in Scripture. They say that the earlier covenant with Abram contained no conditions and involved no obligations. In other words, according to these voices, the Abrahamic covenant was unconditional and therefore binding upon God Himself. They would claim that God provided promises without obligations. As such, it would have been a covenant of grace, while they see the Sinai covenant as a covenant of works. They claim that Sinai offers salvation by works and is based upon human performance and merits. We have seen in our earlier study this quarter that Scripture does not support such an interpretation of the Abrahamic and Sinai covenants.

What obligations did the Abrahamic covenant place upon Abram and his descendants? Gen. 17:9, 14; 18:19; 22:16-18; 26:4, 5.

These passages show clearly that Abram and his descendants were to live in a covenant relationship in which man was justified by faith (Gen. 15:6). This faith relationship manifested itself or resulted in obedience: "Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5, RSV). In other words, "the covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God's law."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 370. Thus the Abrahamic covenant was not unconditional and onesided in nature, in the sense that the fulfillment of the promises depended solely upon God without regard to the actions of the human covenant partner.

In what ways did God call for the obedience of Israel? Deut. 4:40; 5:16; 12:28.

The response to God's covenant with Israel was to be complete obedience to the covenant obligations. Israel was to "keep the commandments of the Lord your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him" (Deut. 8:6, RSV). Out of gratitude to the Lord, Israel was to "love" Him and to "hold fast" to Him. Blessings were to follow in the wake of obedience. Although blessings were conditional upon obedience, they could not be earned by a legalistic keeping of the law.

Are the principles of complete obedience to God's covenant still applicable? (See *Prophets and Kings*, p. 570.)

Further Study: Deut. 26:16-19.

The Sinai Covenant—2: Covenant and Law

8 Thursday
November 18

Part 5 CONDITIONS OF THE COVENANT—2

What was the relationship of the “if” (conditional) statements and the command to walk in God’s ways that Israel might live?

“If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season.”

“But if you will not hearken to me, and will not do all these commandments, . . . but break my covenant, I will do this to you: I will appoint over you sudden terror” (Lev. 26:3, 4, 14-16, RSV). (See also Deut. 5:33.)

The “if” statements are clearly conditional, involving obligations. The obligatory nature of the Sinai covenant was not a new ground for establishing a relationship between God and Israel. It was not a covenant of works in which man could earn his salvation by obedience to God’s will. The conditional aspect of the Sinai covenant was identical with the intent of the conditional statements of the Abrahamic covenant (see Gen. 17:9, 14; 18:19; 22:16-18; 26:4, 5), which was a covenant of grace.

The “if” statements (see Ex. 19:5; Lev. 26:3-45; Deut. 11:13-17; 28:1-68) can be misinterpreted and misunderstood, in a legalistic sense. By some they are made to mean that physical and eternal life are guaranteed upon obedience—no matter what the inner attitude of the heart. That was not the intent of the “if” statements. A mechanical legalism was not intended. What was intended was a true covenant relationship with God involving heart and mind. Normally we now call this a relationship of faith in God’s grace. It results in obedience.

The passage in Deuteronomy 5:33 which enjoined a walking in all of God’s way “that you may live” (RSV) can also be misapplied and misconstrued. The phrase “that you may live” has been understood to mean “in order that you may live,” as though walking in all of God’s ways would earn eternal life. The Hebrew for the word “that” may be better taken in the sense of a result. Israel was to walk in all of God’s ways *with the result* that she might truly live here and now and beyond. In the latter sense the Israelite was enjoined to keep God’s law, thus continuing in the intimacy of the covenant relationship by the power of God’s enabling grace. The result was the experience of authentic living here and of life eternal. Obedience, in the only truly biblical sense, was and is one that stems from faith. (See Rom. 1:5; 16:26.)

Do you keep God’s law “in order to” gain life, or do you keep God’s law supported by His enabling power, showing an obedience stemming from faith?

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 535.

The Sinai Covenant—2: Covenant and Law

8 Friday
November 19

Part 6 OBEDIENCE, LIFE, AND BLESSING

“So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord” (Lev. 18:5, NASB). (See Deut. 28:1, 2, RSV).

The principle is clear that obedience to God’s voice and commandment is followed by blessing and life. It is equally clear that the setting of the blessings and the curses upon Israel affected all nations. The Lord would set her “high above all the nations of the earth” (Deut. 28:1, RSV).

In essence there are but two ways by which humans attempt to gain salvation. One way is salvation by works, or righteousness supposedly gained by keeping the law. The other is salvation by faith, or righteousness received by faith. Is the principle of receiving blessing, in the text cited above, one of human merit in which man’s obedience to the law earns the blessing? Or is the blessing that will come upon the doer of the law a gift of God’s grace?

What understanding does Paul offer concerning “righteousness by law” and “righteousness by faith”? Rom. 9:30 to 10:8.

Paul shows that Israel tried to obtain “righteousness by law,” in a mistaken human effort to establish righteousness by man’s legalistic obedience. This was not what the Old Testament taught. Paul is contrasting Israel’s failure to receive the divine way of “righteousness by faith” with their human attempt at “righteousness by law,” which is actually a legalistic misuse and misunderstanding of law. Paul was showing that the righteousness set forth by the law of Moses, which is “holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12), was righteousness by faith “to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4).

“The problem is resolved by recognizing that righteousness by faith has always been God’s method for saving man and that the giving of the law through Moses was an integral part of this plan. . . . Consequently it is quite unreasonable to assume that Moses was ignorant of the proper relationship between the law and the gospel and that whenever he spoke so strongly of obedience to God’s commandments he was commending righteousness by law rather than by faith.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 597. Paul exposes the legalistic perversion of the law. He uses the words of Moses himself in Leviticus 18:5 to remind the legalists that while righteousness comes by faith, it is a faith that shows itself in obedience. Such obedience man is not able to render unaided, without becoming acceptable through the merits of Jesus or without receiving God’s enabling grace.

Further Study: *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 595-597.



Sabbath—Covenant Sign and Seal

“You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you” (Ex. 31:13, RSV).

It is well for Seventh-day Adventists to review their relationship to the observance of the Sabbath. It is to be observed as an external and visible sign of a relationship with God. It is to function as a sign of remembering and of knowledge. It is also a sign of recognition and sanctification. The Sabbath sign stresses the continuing soundness of God’s “everlasting covenant.” It can demonstrate week after week that the vital and intimate relationship between God and His people is being maintained.

The Sabbath is a sign of the believer’s basic position in the presence of God. The believer is accepting God’s personal invitation for him to share an appointment in fellowship. Sabbath celebration provides freedom and liberation from work, competition, and the tensions of everyday life. It brings rest and renewal. It provides special time for communion with God. In its wake it brings physical, mental, and spiritual regeneration.

The Sabbath is also the seal of God. As such, it identifies Yahweh, the Lord of the Sabbath, as the Creator of “heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (Ex. 20:11, RSV), and thereby defines His authority and ownership. The Creator has made the Sabbath His seal, which identifies Him as Creator and also as Re-creator (Ex. 20:2; 31:13).

The Sabbath is indeed a covenant sign in the here and now that reaches forward to an ultimate future when the plan of salvation is completed. Then total, unlimited freedom and final redemption will be experienced. The marvelous redeeming and sanctifying qualities within the Sabbath itself direct us from God’s “very good” creation in the beginning to a most glorious future of unhindered communion and unlimited oneness with the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Sabbath, linking the first Creation (Gen. 2:2, 3) with the new creation (Isa. 66:22, 23), is the sign or guarantee of a new heaven and a new earth for all the redeemed to enjoy forever and ever.

**Part 1
POINT OF
ORIGIN**

In what setting did the Sabbath have its beginning? Gen. 2:2, 3. (See NASB.)

Both Old Testament (Gen. 2:2, 3; Ex. 20:11; 31:17) and New (Mark 2:27; Heb. 4:1-11; compare John 5:17) affirm that the seventh-day Sabbath had its origin in Eden. Although Genesis 2:2, 3 does not identify the “seventh day” as the Sabbath (this identification comes first in Exodus 16:26, 29), it is clearly suggested in the phrase “he rested on the seventh day.” The word “rested” (Heb. *shabat*) is related to the noun “Sabbath” (Heb. *shabbat*). “The word ‘sabbath’ is not employed [in Gen. 2:2, 3], but it is certain that the author meant to assert that God blessed and hallowed the seventh day as the Sabbath.”—G. S. Waterman, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, p. 182. Evidently Genesis 2:2, 3 teaches the divine origin and institution of the Sabbath as a day of blessing for all mankind.

In the text for today, what does God’s act of resting on the first Sabbath of this world tell us about His action?

Although some commentators have suggested that God Himself needed physical rest after Creation, the true purpose for God’s resting was to provide a divine example for man. Man is also to work for six days and then to rest on the seventh-day Sabbath. The well-known theologian Karl Barth suggested appealingly that God’s resting at the end of Creation was a part of the “covenant of grace,” in which man was invited “to rest with Him . . . to participate in God’s rest.”—Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, part 1, p. 98. God in His love called the man and the woman on the day after their creation to fellowship in rest, to establish intimate communion with Him in whose image they had been made. That fellowship and communion was to last forever. Since the fall of humankind, it has offered a weekly high point of one’s life with the Saviour.

What were some aspects of God’s acts in sanctifying and blessing the Sabbath at Creation? See text for today.

God’s sanctifying or making the Sabbath holy was not a magic quality placed in every seventh day. Rather, it was God’s act of setting this day apart from all other days for the fullest enjoyment of the sanctifying presence and work of the Creator. God’s holiness, the Sabbath’s holiness, and the holiness of God’s people are all intertwined. God’s people are to “observe my Sabbaths,” because “I am the Lord, who makes you holy” (Ex. 31:13, NIV).

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 47, 48.

**Part 2
TAUGHT
IN THE
WILDERNESS**

In what manner did God teach to an Israel liberated from Egyptian bondage the blessing of keeping the Sabbath? Ex. 16:26-30.

The miraculous gift of the manna (Ex. 16:4-30) was the occasion for teaching the perpetual gift of the Sabbath:

1. Only a regular portion of manna could be used each day, but on the sixth day a double portion was to be gathered.

2. No manna was given on the Sabbath.

3. The extra portion needed for the Sabbath was preserved from the sixth day unspoiled, while the manna would not keep on any other day—a repeated cycle of miracles.

The narrative of Exodus 16 demonstrates that the Sabbath was taught to Israel before the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. (Compare Ex. 16:1; 19:1.) The incidental manner in which the Sabbath is introduced and the comment of the Lord on proving “whether they will walk in my law or not” (Ex. 16:4, RSV) imply that the Sabbath was previously known. “In fact, the equation of the Sabbath with the seventh day, the statement that the Lord gave the Israelites the Sabbath, and the record that the people, at God’s command, rested on the seventh day, all point unmistakably to the primeval [at Creation] institution of the Sabbath.”—G. F. Waterman, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, p. 184.

What do you learn about the Sabbath in Exodus 16:

1. The sixth is a day of preparation (verses 22, 29).
2. The day after the sixth is the Sabbath (verses 22, 23).
3. The Sabbath is the seventh day (verse 26).
4. The Sabbath is a gift from the Lord (verse 29).
5. The Sabbath is “a day of solemn rest” (verse 23, 30, RSV).
6. The Sabbath is “holy” (verse 23).
7. The Sabbath is a day of rest (verse 30).
8. The Sabbath is not a day of fasting, but one for which God has provided sustenance (verse 29).
9. The Sabbath is a day in which loyalty to God is tested (verses 4, 27).
10. The Sabbath is a day commanded to be kept by God’s law (verse 28).
11. Six days are provided for work, but the seventh-day Sabbath is “to the Lord” (verse 25).
12. The noun “sabbath” occurs for the first time in Scripture (verse 23).

Would I have stood the test of the Sabbath in the wilderness?

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 295-297.

**Part 3
MADE A
COVENANT
SIGN**

“The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested” (Ex. 31:16, 17, NIV).

Four times the Sabbath was designated as “sign” (Ex. 31:13, 17; Eze. 20:12, 20). A “sign” is not a symbol in the sense of a thing that naturally typifies, represents, or recalls something by its similar qualities or by association in fact or in thought. The meaning of a “sign” (Heb. *oth*) is manifold. In particular, a “sign” functions as an outward mark or object or condition intended to convey a distinctive message. (See Gen. 4:15; Joshua 4:6.) The Sabbath was a covenant sign “between me and you throughout your generations” (Ex. 31:13).

By comparison with the Sabbath sign, what was the “sign” of the covenant with Noah? Gen. 9:12-17.

The rainbow is an external, physical sign in the clouds which reminds and confirms that God is keeping His covenant to protect all flesh from a worldwide flood of waters. It also serves as a reminder to man that wickedness will be punished. God’s faithfulness to His promise calls for man’s faithfulness to the God who fixed the sacredness of the laws that govern the natural world for man’s benefit.

What parallel elements to the Sabbath sign, if any, were in the “sign” of the Abrahamic covenant? Gen. 17:11.

Circumcision was the external sign that made the male descendants of Abraham an entity separated from their Gentile neighbors. It was to perpetuate the covenant of God with the descendants of Abraham. It was to foster their spiritual relationship with God; it was to depict circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:16; Rom. 2:29); it was to represent a spiritual relationship based on faith-righteousness working through love (Rom. 4:11; Gal. 5:6).

What importance has the Sabbath for you as a sign between you and your God?

Today, in some parts of the world, the Sabbath presents little hardship by loss of work or persecution. That may swiftly change. But is the Sabbath a precious season of fellowship with God? Are our lives marked by such a “sign”?

Further Study: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 178-182.

Part 4
SIGN OF
SANCTIFICATION

“You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you” (Ex. 31:13, RSV).

An exceptionally rich Sabbath passage is Exodus 31:12-17, which follows right after the Lord’s directions for the building of the sanctuary and the ordering of its services (Ex. 25:1 to 31:11). It connects Sabbath and sanctuary (compare Lev. 19:30) and specifies details not revealed before.

The “sign” aspect of the Sabbath is totally new—a visible, external, and “eternal” sign between God and His people.

What emphasis underlies the Sabbath as a “sign” to God’s people that they “may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you”?

Two new ideas are joined together:

1. The Sabbath as a *sign of knowledge*.
2. The Sabbath as a *sign of sanctification*.

Consider the sign aspect related to knowledge. The Hebrew understanding of knowledge includes intellectual, relational, and emotional aspects. “To know” did not simply mean to know a fact, particularly when a person was involved. It also meant to have a meaningful relationship with the one known. Thus “to know the Lord” meant to be in the right relationship with Him—to “serve” Him (1 Chron. 28:9), to “fear” him (Isa. 11:2; Ps. 119:79; Prov. 1:7), to “believe” Him (Isa. 43:10), to “trust” Him (Ps. 9:10), to “seek” Him (Ps. 9:10), and to “call on” His name (Jer. 10:25; Ps. 79:6).

Thus the Sabbath is a sign that imparts to the believer the knowledge that the Lord (Yahweh) as covenant God is also his or her God.

In addition the Sabbath has significance as a sign of sanctification. It signifies that the Lord “sanctifies” His people (compare Lev. 20:8; 21:8; 22:32, RSV; Eze. 37:28) by making them His “holy” people (Ex. 19:6; Lev. 19:2, 3; Deut. 7:6).

The sanctification process is as much the work of God’s redemptive love as is the saving and redeeming work of God. Righteousness (justification) and sanctification are both activities of God: “I, the Lord, sanctify you.” Thus the Sabbath is a sign that imparts the knowledge of God as Sanctifier. “The Sabbath given to the world as the sign of God as the Creator is also the sign of Him as the Sanctifier.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 350.

Do you treasure the Sabbath as a sign of God’s sanctifying power in your life? What might increase its influence on your life? How might such an increase affect your witness to others?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 349-351.

Part 5
SIGN
FOR MAN

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8).

The Sabbath was and is a sign for man to “remember.” The introductory injunction “remember” brings together past, present, and future. The backward-looking aspect focuses on the distant past, namely, the fiat Creation which climaxed in the institution of the Sabbath as a weekly day of rest and special communion with God.

The immediate purpose of the remembering involves action in the present. Thus, to “remember” means “to keep” or to “observe” (see Deut. 5:12) the Sabbath in the present.

The forward-looking aspect of remembering the Sabbath is also emphasized. The person who remembers the keeping of the Sabbath has a promising, rich, and meaningful future with the Lord of the Sabbath. He remains in the covenant relationship because he remains in the Lord.

In remembering Creation and Creator, God’s people also remember God’s gracious acts of salvation. Creation and re-creation belong together. The former made the latter possible. The Sabbath is a sign that communicates to man that God is the Creator of the world and the Creator of man’s salvation.

What other aspects of the Sabbath as a sign for man come into view? Ex. 31:13.

The Sabbath is a sign of God’s covenant community, a sign “between me and you.” As such, the Sabbath is a sign or mark of separation that communicates to people of other religions that a unique covenant relationship exists between God and His people. It separates God’s people from the rest of mankind. In this sense it functions also as a sign of recognition. As Cain was recognized by the sign that God put on him, so God’s people are recognized by the Sabbath that keeps them separated unto Him for service to the world.

What does it mean to me that the Sabbath is a sign for man?

“By keeping His Sabbath holy we are to show that we are His people. His Word declares the Sabbath to be a sign by which to distinguish the commandment-keeping people. . . . Those who keep the law of God will be one with Him in the great controversy commenced in heaven between Satan and God.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 160.

Further Study: Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 949, 981.

Part 6
SEAL OF GOD

“In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath and made it holy” (Ex. 20:11, NASB).

The Ten Commandments define comprehensively and fundamentally the divine-human and human-human relationships. The commandment at the center of the Decalogue is the Sabbath commandment. It identifies the Lord of the Sabbath in a special way and indicates His sphere of authority and ownership. Note these two aspects: (1) the identity of the Deity—Yahweh (LORD), who is the Creator (Ex. 20:11; 31:17) who thus holds a unique place; (2) the sphere of His ownership and authority—“the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them” (Ex. 20:11, NASB; compare 31:17). In these two aspects, the Sabbath commandment has the characteristics that are typical of seals of international ancient Near Eastern treaty documents. These seals are typically in the center of the treaty documents and also contain (1) the identity of deity (usually a pagan god) and (2) the sphere of ownership and authority (usually a limited geographical area).

The Sabbath functions as a “sign” (Ex. 31:13, 17) and as the seal of the relationship between God and His own covenant people. This has great meaning for us as Christians, because in keeping the seventh-day Sabbath as did our Lord at the end of Creation Week, we acknowledge Him as Creator and Re-creator (Redeemer and Sanctifier). We also acknowledge God’s ownership and authority over all creation including ourselves.

What will finally signal the difference between the bearers of the seal of God and those bearing the mark of the beast? Rev. 13:15-17; 14:9, 10.

“The sanctification of the Spirit signalizes the difference between those who have the seal of God and those who keep a spurious rest day.

“When the test comes, it will be clearly shown what the mark of the beast is. It is the keeping of Sunday. . . .

“God has designated the seventh day as His Sabbath [Ex. 31:13, 17, 16 quoted].

“Thus the distinction is drawn between the loyal and the disloyal. Those who desire to have the seal of God in their foreheads must keep the Sabbath of the fourth commandment.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 980, 981.

Further Study: Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 968-970.



November 28 to December 4
Adult Lesson

10

The New Covenant

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah” (Jer. 31:31, RSV).

The more familiar theme of the “new covenant” holds great significance for the New Testament believer. The remarkable promise of the “new covenant” is first given as a term in Jeremiah 31:31-34. The kernel and essence of the “new covenant” is the moral law of God. This same law is the moral law of the old covenant.

“The law of God was the basis of this [new] covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God’s law.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 371.

The “new covenant” is not something completely different from the “old covenant” made with Israel on Mount Sinai. According to Jeremiah 31:31-34, the following facts apply to both covenants:

1. The same covenanting God (“I will make”).
2. The same moral law (“my law”).
3. The same promise of divine fellowship (I “will be [your] God”).
4. The same promise of making a covenanted people (you “shall be my people”).
5. The same forgiveness of sins (“I will forgive their iniquity”).

These items common to both covenants show that the “new covenant” is a “renewed covenant.” It is a completion of the old covenant. In its substance it brings the “first” covenant to fulfillment.

The differences between the old and new covenants are not differences of purpose. They are differences of degree. “Under the new covenant, the conditions by which eternal life may be gained are the same as under the old—perfect obedience.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 931. This is not calling for obedience achieved by human effort, but obedience made possible by faith in the all-sufficient merits of Jesus and by His enabling power provided through divine grace. He brings into the life the grace of God in Christ.

Part 1
ITS
ANNOUNCEMENT

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new 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” (Jer. 31:31, 32, RSV).

At the time when the southern kingdom of Judah was about to come to an end and its people were about to go into Babylonian captivity, God announced through His prophet Jeremiah the “new covenant.” The newness of this covenant is first mentioned in the Bible in our text for today. However, when the 10-tribe northern kingdom of Israel was about to come to its end (some 150 years before the time of Jeremiah), the *idea* of a new covenant was mentioned for the first time by Hosea (Hosea 2:18-20).

At the moments in history when God’s plans for His covenant people were hampered by their rebellion and unbelief, He sent prophets to proclaim that the covenant history with His faithful had not come to an end. (See Eze. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26 where the “new heart” or “new spirit” brings to mind the “new covenant.”) Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and also Isaiah speak about the “new covenant.”

What views of the “new covenant” are present in the book of Isaiah? Isa. 42:6, 7; 54:10; 59:21.

Through Isaiah, God speaks of the covenant in ways that suggest the “new covenant.” He says of the coming Servant-Messiah, “I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness” (Isa. 42:6, 7, RSV). The Servant-Messiah wraps the future covenant within Himself. (See Isa. 49:8.) The divine Spirit will always be with His covenant people (Isa. 59:21). God offers the “covenant of . . . peace” (Isa. 54:10) and salvation.

What kind of heart opens to the “new covenant”?

The Lord will provide “a heart to know that I am the Lord” (Jer. 24:7, RSV), and “one heart and one way” (Jer. 32:39, RSV). He will “take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh” (Eze. 11:19, RSV), and will give “a new heart” and “a new spirit” (Eze. 36:26, RSV). He also says, “I will put My Spirit within you” (verse 27, NASB). This work of God is the foundation of the new covenant.

Further Study: Heb. 9:15; 10:15-18; 12:24.

Part 2 **With whom would God make the new covenant? Jer. 31:31, 33.**
; PARTNERS **(See RSV.)**

It is clearly announced that the new covenant is to be made with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" or simply "the house of Israel." By some, this has been taken to mean that the "new covenant" is for the ancient nation of Israel and for no one else. But this can hardly be the case. The Lord first offered the "new covenant" to His people whom He had elected and with whom He had made a covenant at Mount Sinai. Israel failed to take advantage of the method of faith that results in the obedience of faith. This failure is at the heart of the revelations of God to Moses.

A characteristic of the "new covenant" is the writing of the law within the heart. "I will write it upon their hearts" (Jer. 31:33, RSV). This writing of the law (God's will, character, and revelation) within is not forced upon any member of Israel. God will work the law inwardly, making it a part of the total person and his will, subject only to the individual's choice. God will not and never has forced His law into the heart of anyone.

The mark of the "new covenant" community is not family descent from Abraham, but acceptance of God's wish to write His law inwardly. This act of God makes the law a part of the total will of the believer so that the believer may obey by faith. In turn, having the law written upon the heart makes any new covenant person a member of spiritual Israel. (See Gal. 3:28, 29.)

What does the New Testament have to say about those who belong to and are experiencing the "new covenant"? Eph. 2:11-22.

In the New Testament the Jews, responding to the election of grace, received Jesus Christ and His gospel. For a time they were the heart of the church (Matt. 18:15-20), thus continuing as God's people—the "remnant, chosen by grace" (Rom. 11:5, RSV). Faithless Jews, on the other hand, were described as "hardened" (verse 7, RSV), thus not constituting the true Israel.

Gentiles, who formerly did not believe, accepted the gospel and were grafted into God's true people made up of believers no matter to what people or race they belonged (verses 13-24). So the Gentiles "at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise" (Eph. 2:12, RSV) were brought near in the blood of Christ. (See verse 19, RSV.) Christ is mediating the "new covenant" (Heb. 9:15, RSV). for *all* believers.

Have I allowed the law to be written within my heart?

Further Study: Rom. 11:17-24.

Part 3 ITS NATURE

Study Jeremiah 31:31-34 to discover the nature of the new covenant and its various parts.

Among the several elements, the following call for careful consideration:

1. *God takes first step.* From the beginning to end, Jeremiah 31:31-34 stresses God's initiative. Hence the words "I will make" announce God's saving action in the future. This new covenant promise concludes with words which describe final and total forgiveness: "I will forgive" and "I will remember their sin no more."

2. *Human response.* God's new covenant promise does not make human response unnecessary. Neither is the new covenant in Jeremiah kept unbroken without regard to the law of God. The lasting nature of the new covenant comes from the Lord Himself. He will work a change in the human heart by His enabling grace, making it possible for the believer to fulfill the law. (See Jer. 24:7.)

3. *"My law."* An element shared with the earlier covenants—with Adam, Abraham, and particularly with Israel at Mount Sinai—is God's law. Here called "my law" (Jer. 31:33), it was written on tablets of stone in the Sinai covenant (Ex. 24:12; 31:18; 34:1, 28) and was even called "the covenant" (1 Kings 8:21). This law of God is neither faulty nor done away with. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 329.) But this divine law is not to remain external; it will be written by God "upon their hearts" through His Spirit. Thus the law becomes the shaping part of the believer's will until the human will and the divine law conform to each other perfectly.

4. *Purpose of covenanting.* God does not speak of a new law but of a new covenant. The law, as the standard of a godly way of life, gives expression to this new covenant relationship by this formula: "I . . . will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). (See also 7:23; 32:38.) Thus was the Sinai covenant relationship described. (See Ex. 6:7; Deut. 26:16-19; Lev. 26:12.) The Sinai relationship which was so short lived is to be renewed, restored, and made permanent.

5. *Results of covenanting.* Among the results of the new covenant experiences are the following:

- a. A new covenant community, a spiritual Israel made up of those who allow God to implant His law within them.
- b. A renewed, profound, and lasting relationship with the covenanting Lord, the God of true salvation.
- c. The gratifying blessing of forgiveness which brings peace to mind and soul. (See Jer. 31:34.)

Have I entered and do I daily experience the new covenant relationship?

Part 4
S NEWNESS

What is actually “new” in the “new covenant”? 1 Cor. 11:25, RSV; Heb. 8:8.

“I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers” (Jer. 31:31, 32, RSV).

While the designation “new covenant” is found only in Jeremiah 31:31 in the Old Testament, it appears as “new covenant” in Luke 22:20 (RSV); 1 Corinthians 11:25 (RSV); 2 Corinthians 3:6 (RSV); Hebrews 8:8 (Greek *diathēkē kainē*), 13; 9:15 (RSV); and Hebrews 12:24 (Greek *diathēkē neas*). In our language, the opposite of “new” is “old.” But we must allow the Bible to tell us its meaning of “new.” In Jeremiah 31:31 it translates the Hebrew term *chādāsāh*, which in the Old Testament frequently means (1) “to renew” or “to restore” and (2) something “new” which was not present in the same way or quality before. In this sense the “new covenant” is a “renewed” or “restored” covenant or simply a “renewed covenant” which may have characteristics not present in the same way or quality before.

The New Testament terms for “new” are the Greek *kainos* and *neos* respectively. Sometimes each carries a different meaning from the other: *neos* is said to be something brand-new, whereas *kainos* refers to what is new in nature or better in quality than the former. Without stressing this distinction unduly, the “new covenant” would be new in time and, in some sense, better than the former. In short, the “new covenant” is a “renewed covenant” which has superior benefits for man. The newness of the “new covenant” is also expressed as being a “better” (Heb. 8:6), a “second” (Heb. 8:7), or an “eternal covenant” (Heb. 13:20, RSV).

What does the apostle Paul teach about the newness of the new covenant? Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6, RSV.

Paul stressed time and again the impossibility of the legalistic way of claiming that salvation can be gained by fulfilling the law. He showed, rather, that the new covenant is a covenant of the Spirit in which the believer serves in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. In the new covenant “the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6, RSV), because God will write the law within the believer through His Spirit. (See also Jer. 31:33.) Thus law keeping is the result of the new life and salvation but not the means to gain salvation.

Do you experience every day the newness of the new covenant written in your heart by the Holy Spirit?

**Part 5
ITS MEDIATOR**

Who is the perfect and all-sufficient mediator of the new covenant? Heb. 9:15. (See RSV.)

In the heart of the letter to the Hebrews there is a section in chapters 8:1 to 10:25 in which the new covenant is the center of discussion. Within this new covenant setting, Jesus Christ is described as the "mediator of a new covenant."

Jesus Christ is our heavenly Mediator of a superior covenant. He fulfilled the type of the Old Testament in two ways:

1. He is *the Sacrifice* upon which the new covenant is based and whose blood ratifies it. Christ's own blood shed at Calvary ratified or made actual the new covenant and made the Sinai covenant and its mediatorial system "old" in point of time. "The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is called the 'second,' or 'new,' covenant, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first [or old] covenant."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 371. (See also Ex. 24:1-8.)

2. He is, like Moses, *the Mediator* of the covenant. This involves redemption "from the transgressions under the first covenant" (Heb. 9:15, RSV). So the sacrifices of the Sinai covenant were types pointing forward to Christ's death on the cross. They found their meaning in the sacrificial, substitutionary death of Christ. His mediatorialship also effects the redemption of all believers under the new covenant.

**What is the New Testament description of Christ as Mediator?
1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24.**

Paul depicts Moses as the "mediator" (Greek *mesitēs*) of the law (Gal. 3:19), but in 1 Tim. 2:5 the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, is designated as the "one mediator (*mesitēs*) between God and men" (RSV). The term "mediator" is one of the great New Testament titles of Jesus. A mediator is a person who functions as a go-between or peace-arranger, bringing together two estranged parties. Thus Jesus Christ is the only heavenly "mediator" between us and God.

Jesus Christ, our Mediator, stands good for our debts to God. In the new covenant sanctuary in heaven, He engages in a better ministry (Heb. 8:6) of a "better covenant" (verse 6, RSV), providing a "new and living way" (Heb. 10:20, RSV) through which we can with confidence "draw near to the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16, RSV). His ongoing mediation in the heavenly sanctuary is so perfect and of such a superior nature that as "mediator" He is the surety and guarantee of our salvation. (See Heb. 7:22.)

Further Study: Heb. 9:11-28; 6:17.

What characteristics cause the new covenant to be superior to the old covenant? Heb. 8:6, 7. (See RSV.)

The "new covenant" is a continuation of the Edenic-Abrahamic-Sinaitic (Mosaic) covenants. There is in them all an essential unity and continuity. The new covenant is the renewal of the old covenant with features that render the new covenant superior:

1. *Superiority of the law written in the heart.* Under the old covenant—we will be obedient—the law was written on tablets of stone (Ex. 24:12; 31:18; 34:1, 28), the intent of which was to become implanted in man. In the new, eternal covenant—I will make—the same law (which clearly means that the law has no fault) is to be written on the hearts of believers to cause God's will to spread through the believer's will.

2. *Superiority of obedience.* The trouble with the old covenant in Moses' day and later was not with the covenant-making God, with the moral law, or with God's promises of a redeemer, but with the people who "did not continue in my covenant" (Heb. 8:9, RSV) and "which [covenant] they broke" (Jer. 31:32, RSV). The demand for obedience remains the same in both old and new covenants; but in the new, obedience through faith is made possible by the grace of the Christ who has come.

3. *Superiority of Christ's heavenly high priesthood.* The levitical priests were weak men, sinful and mortal, serving in an earthly tabernacle, a copy only of the true sanctuary in heaven. (See Heb. 7:23, 27, 28; 8:2, 4, 5; 9:1.) Their sacrifices were animal sacrifices, the blood of which could not itself take away sins (Heb. 10:1-4). The sacrifices had to be brought repeatedly (10:11). Christ's high priesthood is superior because He is very God of very God (Heb. 1:3), a "once for all" sacrifice (Heb. 10:10-14, RSV) obtaining eternal redemption for us (Heb. 1:3; 10:12, 13; 12:2), ministering the benefits of His blood in the real, original sanctuary in heaven (Heb. 9:12), thus providing access to the very presence of God (Heb. 10:19-24).

4. *Superiority of forgiveness.* God's forgiveness was experienced by the penitent in the period of the Sinai covenant (Ex. 34:6, 7; Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 19:22; Ps. 103:12; Isa. 38:17; 43:25; Neh. 9:17). But the forgiveness was a looking forward to the forgiveness secured by the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:15), "shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). In the old covenant, sin was forgiven in view of Christ's coming death on the cross. To this the sacrifices pointed. But in the new covenant, forgiveness is bestowed on the basis of what our Lord accomplished on the cross.

Am I living today on the basis of the old covenant, or is my life conducted under the blessings of the new covenant?



December 5-11
Adult Lesson

11

New Covenant Ministries

“Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15, RSV).

When God established the covenant relationship with man after the first sin, He also gave him the system of substitute animal sacrifices. The Sinai covenant with Israel likewise gave instruction in the ways the Israelite could rid himself of sin through the offering of sacrifices. Thus he could be forgiven and restored to covenant relationship with his God. So it was that the old covenant had a sanctuary, a priesthood, and daily and yearly sacrifices and services.

The new covenant—made secure by Christ’s blood—also has a sanctuary. It is the “real” sanctuary in heaven (Heb. 8:2, 5; 9:8, 11) of which the earthly was but the “copy and shadow” (Heb. 8:5, RSV). This heavenly sanctuary was anointed by Christ (Dan. 9:24). The new covenant also has a priesthood, namely, the priesthood and high priesthood of Jesus Christ. Where there is a sanctuary and a priesthood, there are also ministries—the subject of this lesson.

The letter to the Hebrews gives primary and basic evidence about Jesus Christ as “a minister in the sanctuary and true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord” (Heb. 8:2, RSV). The total biblical testimony gives a picture of Christ’s two-phase ministry in the two parts of the heavenly sanctuary. (It paralleled the two-part ministry in the earthly.) This ministry began with Christ’s ascension. It shows what Christ gained for us on the cross. These benefits are applied in His priestly and high-priestly ministries in the heavenly sanctuary. An understanding of Christ’s work makes it possible for us (1) to enter into a richer relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ; (2) to proclaim Christ’s complete gospel of the cross and resurrection in the past and the mediatorial, judicial, and cleansing ministries in the present; (3) to bring people into the total light of the plan of redemption including the cleansing of the sanctuary, followed by the second advent; (4) to create awareness of the importance of God’s judgment hour; and (5) thus to prepare a people to meet our precious Lord in the clouds of heaven soon.

Part 1
SANCTUARY
DWELLING
PLACE

“Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst”
(Ex. 25:8, RSV).

The purpose of the sanctuary was that God might “tabernacle” with His covenant people. Every step in the process of the making of the covenant (Ex. 19:1-6; 24:1-11) and in the giving of the law (Ex. 20:1-17) was a guarantee of the reality of the presence of the Holy God.

What pattern did God provide for the physical structure of His dwelling place? Ex. 25:40.

Here the word “pattern” refers to a scale “model” or “copy”—in other words, a miniature presentation of the heavenly sanctuary. Thus the wilderness sanctuary was the result of a heavenly vision (Num. 8:4) and is a “copy and shadow” (Heb. 8:5, RSV) of the reality of the heavenly sanctuary. Since the earthly sanctuary is but a “shadow,” the reality is in heaven. The “shadow” on earth reflects the true, physical reality—the two-part sanctuary in heaven—which casts the shadow. (See also Ex. 25:40; 26:30; 27:8; and *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4b, p. 5.)

To what extent does the Old Testament support the concept of a real heavenly sanctuary? Ps. 11:4; 18:6; 29:9; 60:6 (see RSV); 68:35 (see RSV); 96:6; 102:19; Micah 1:2, 3; Hab. 2:20; Jonah 2:7.

There is abundant evidence that God’s “true” sanctuary (Heb. 8:2) is in heaven. This is where God’s sanctuary/house/temple is located. But God chose to have a miniature model on earth as a type (Heb. 8:5) of the heavenly reality.

Why does God wish to dwell in the sanctuary in the midst of His people? Lev. 26:11, 12.

The verb describing God’s “dwelling” or “tabernacling” in the midst of Israel is quite different from the usual Hebrew term for “living” at a place. God “lives” or makes His habitation in heaven (see Ps. 2:4; 123:1; 132:13) but “dwells” among His earthly people in His earthly sanctuary or abode in the sense that His glory, filling the sanctuary, is with His people. The purpose of this “dwelling” is to carry out the covenant pledge: “I . . . will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Lev. 26:12, RSV). In the worship of God in the sanctuary, the covenant people realize their new freedom to “walk erect” (Lev. 26:13, RSV).

Further Study: Heb. 8:1-5; 9:1-11.

**Part 2
SIN AND
SACRIFICE**

“In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb. 9:22, NIV).

The divinely appointed way for the Old Testament sinner to rid himself of sin and guilt was through animal sacrifices. The Israelite sacrificial offerings are detailed in Leviticus 1 through 7. Careful attention was paid to the use and disposal of the blood in the various kinds of sacrifices. Indeed, the role of blood in sacrificial rituals is one of the unifying features in the Israelite sacrifices.

The person who had sinned—and thus had broken the covenant relationship and the law which regulated it—could be restored to full fellowship with God and man by bringing an animal sacrifice as a substitute. Sacrifices, with their rites, were the God-appointed means to bring about cleansing from sin and guilt. They were instituted to cleanse the sinner, transferring individual sin and guilt by blood sprinkling to the sanctuary, and reinstating communion and full covenantal fellowship of the penitent with the personal God who remained the saving Lord.

What prophetic significance was there in the animal sacrifice? Isa. 53:4-12; Heb. 10:4.

The Old Testament animal sacrifices were the divinely ordained means for ridding the sinner of sin and guilt. They changed the sinner’s status from that of guilty and worthy of death to that of forgiven and reestablished in the covenantal God-man relationship. But there was a sense in which the animal sacrifices were prophetic in nature. No animal, after all, was an adequate substitute in atoning for man’s sin and guilt. (For glimpses of this, see Isaiah 53; Hosea 6:6; Ps. 50:8-15; 51:17-19.) The author of Hebrews states it in his own language: “It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4, RSV). Thus an animal sacrifice was meant to be a looking forward to the coming of the divine-human Servant of God, who would die a substitutionary death for the sins of the world.

All too often the deeper significance of the sacrifices was forgotten. Heathen practices in the worship of gods began to be attached to Israel’s worship of Yahweh. Sacrifices were sometimes offered in vast quantities as though the numbers had merit. (See Isa. 1:10-14; Micah 6:6, 7.)

Was the animal sacrifice in Old Testament times a truly adequate means of restoring the relationship with God which sin had broken?

Further Study: Ex. 29:10-21; Lev. 4:1-23.

Part 3
MB OF GOD

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29, RSV).

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is one of the major themes of the New Testament. He is spoken of as the Lamb of God slain as a substitute for sinners. Paul describes Jesus as the “paschal [Pass-over] lamb” that has been “sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7, RSV). Indeed, Jesus Christ “gave himself up for us” as a “sacrifice to God” (Eph. 5:2, RSV), “like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:19, RSV). He “offered for all time a single sacrifice for sin” (Heb. 10:12, RSV).

What expressions in the New Testament reveal that Christ’s sacrificial death was substitutionary? Gal. 1:4; 3:13; Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15.

The idea that Christ’s death on the cross was substitutionary is no longer accepted by large numbers of interpreters. The reasons for this denial vary. Yet the substitutionary aspects of Christ’s death cannot easily be denied. The New Testament consistently emphasizes that Christ, who was Himself “without sin” (Heb. 4:15), died “for” sin and was crucified for men. Christ “gave himself for our sins” (Gal. 1:4); He “was put to death for our trespasses” (Rom. 4:25, RSV); He “died for our sins according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3). These several passages surely demonstrate that Christ’s death on the cross was substitutionary. He died in our place; He substituted Himself for us; He died the death, paying the penalty for our sins, thereby providing life and fellowship with Him, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit.

What benefits come to you from the substitutionary death of Christ?

“Christ’s death and resurrection completed His covenant. Before this time, it was revealed through types and shadows, which pointed to the great offering to be made by the world’s redeemer, offered in promise for the sins of the world. . . .

“ . . . When as a sinless offering Christ bowed His head and died, when by the Almighty’s unseen hand the veil of the temple was rent in twain, a new and living way was opened. All can now approach God through the merits of Christ. . . . Liberty is given to all to go directly to God through a personal Saviour.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 932.

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 78, “Calvary.”

**Part 4
PLACE OF
MINISTRY**

Where is Christ, our heavenly High Priest, engaged in ministry now? Heb. 8:1, 2. (See NASB.)

The author of Hebrews indicated that Jesus Christ had taken His place at God's right hand to minister in the heavenly sanctuary which is here called the "true tabernacle." The adjective "true" used in the Greek text means "real" as opposed to "apparent"—a reality and not simply an idea or a metaphor. The New English Bible reads "real sanctuary."

The letter to the Hebrews informs us that in the upper heavens (4:14; 7:26; 8:1; 9:24; 12:25, 26), which are far above the earth and the heavens that will be shaken by God (1:10-12; 11:12 [sky]; 12:26), there is the reality of the heavenly Jerusalem (11:10; 12:22; 13:14) and the "real" sanctuary (8:2, 5; 9:8, 11). True to its earthly copy, it has two compartments (8:2, 5; 9:8, 11, 12, 23, 24; 10:19)—or two arenas—and contains the throne of God (4:16; 8:1; 12:2).

What does the book of Revelation teach about the reality of the heavenly sanctuary? Rev. 11:19; 14:17; 15:5.

Revelation does not support the idea that all of heaven is the sanctuary. Rather, it distinguishes between heaven as heaven and the sanctuary/temple within heaven. Notice Revelation 11:19. The Greek text reads literally: "The temple of God, the one which is in heaven, was opened." The same distinction appears in Revelation 13:17 and 15:5. Certainly no earthly structure or copy could compare to the vastness of the two-division (two-arena) heavenly sanctuary. There God's throne is placed (Rev. 7:15), the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies (Rev. 11:19), and the golden altar of incense in the holy place (Rev. 8:3-5).

In the biblical types, what relationship exists between the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries? Heb. 8:1-5; 9:8, 11.

As there was an earthly sanctuary, priesthood, and ministry under the old covenant, so there is a heavenly sanctuary, Christ's priesthood, and His ministry under the new. Hebrews 8:1-5 speaks of this vertical, heavenly-earthly, original-copy type. Hebrews 9:1-5 describes the structure of the earthly sanctuary with holy and holy of holies; verses 6 and 7 describe services. Hebrews 9:8, RSV, uses the expression "outer tent" (including both the holy place and the holy of holies) and the expression "sanctuary" (Greek *ta hagia*) of the whole heavenly sanctuary with its two divisions. (The KJV uses the terms "first tabernacle" and "holiest of all.") The "greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands)" in verse 11 (RSV) refers to the heavenly two-division sanctuary.

**Part 5
HEAVENLY
MINISTRY-1**

How is our Lord described as functioning in His heavenly sanctuary ministry? Heb. 7:15, 16, 26, 27.

The New Testament presents Jesus Christ as heavenly "priest" as well as "high priest." Each calls for brief consideration.

The designation "priest" for Christ appears three times (Heb. 7:15; 8:4; 10:21). Christ is presented as royal priest (Heb. 7:15, 16) after the order of Melchisedec. In that position He fulfills the priestly service in behalf of believers in His antitypical ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

The typology of Christ as "high priest" is seen in Hebrews where He is nine times designated by the title "high priest" (Heb. 2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 5:5, 10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11). His work is seen in antitypical fulfillment of the Levitical priesthood. Christ's appointment as heavenly "high priest" came as a result of a divine call or designation (Heb. 5:10) and not through physical inheritance or self-appointment. The nature of Christ's high priesthood is vastly superior to the Levitical because of His "indestructible life" (Heb. 7:16, RSV); the everlasting nature of His ministry (Heb. 6:20; 7:17, 24); His continuous intercession (Heb. 7:25) based on His perfect self-sacrifice (Heb. 7:27) provided "once for all" (Heb. 7:27, RSV; 9:12, 26; Rom. 6:10; 1 Peter 3:18).

Christ's "once for all" sacrifice for man on the cross rendered the entire limited Levitical system unnecessary. His substitutionary death fulfilled the meaning of all sacrifices in the Levitical system. Christ as heavenly Priest and High Priest applies to believers the benefits and merits of His own sacrificial death in the two phases of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. This two-phase ministry corresponds to the two-division heavenly sanctuary.

"As Christ's ministration was to consist of two great divisions, each occupying a period of time and having a distinctive place in the heavenly sanctuary, so the typical ministry consisted of two divisions, the daily and the yearly service, and to each a department of the tabernacle was devoted."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 357.

The superior qualities of this heavenly ministry of Christ provides "access" to God (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 1 Peter 3:18) and satisfies precisely the needs of the believer. It is all-sufficient, perfect, and superior.

What other designations are used in the New Testament for Christ's heavenly ministry? 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15; Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1.

Part 6
HEAVENLY
MINISTRY—2

In what ways is Christ's second-phase heavenly ministry foretold in the Old Testament? Dan. 7:9, 10, 13, 14; 8:14.

The judgment scene in Daniel 7 is set within the time of the end—after the 1260-year domination of the little horn power over the people of God—and before the latter receive the kingdom of God. (See Dan. 7:21, 22.) Daniel 8:13, 14 expands upon the vision of Daniel 7 and indicates the time for the “cleansing” of the heavenly sanctuary. It commences when the 2300 years are concluded in A.D. 1844. (See Dan. 9:24-27 for the beginning of the 2300 years in the 457 B.C. decree of Artaxerxes.)

The term “sanctuary” in Daniel 8:14 is *qodeš*, the very term used in the Day of Atonement chapter, Leviticus 16. (See verses 2, 3, 16, 17, 20, 23, 27.) In Leviticus the cleansing is that of the old covenant, but in Daniel 8:14 it is that of the new covenant which was anointed after Christ's death and ascension. (See Dan. 9:24, last phrase.)

For the activity in the heavenly sanctuary Daniel used the word *nisdaq*, a rare form used only here in the Old Testament. It has been translated “cleansed” from the earliest version (Septuagint, Theodotian, Vulgate [Latin], Syriac, etc.) onward. “Cleansed” is part of its connotation (see parallels between Hebrew terms for “cleanse,” “purify” and related forms of *nisdaq* such as *sadaq*, “righteous,” “just,” “justified,” etc., in Job 4:17; 17:9; 25:4; Ps. 51:7; Prov. 20:7-9), but it includes the ideas of “setting right” or “restoring” as well as “justifying” and “vindicating.”

Thus Christ's “cleansing” heavenly ministry that began in 1844 involves a blotting out of sin; the “setting right” or “restoring” involves gaining proper recognition of the purpose of this last phase of the heavenly ministry; the “justifying” involves that phase of judgment activity in which decision is rendered about those who will be raised to life and those to be rescued at the second coming (see Dan. 12:1-3). The vindication involves the clearing of the saints (and demonstrating the justice of all God's ways) before the universe (see Dan. 7:9, 10) and their being accounted worthy of God's kingdom.

How does the typology in Hebrews contribute to an understanding of Christ's second-phase heavenly activity? Heb. 9:12, 23, 24.

As the earthly priests entered the sanctuary with blood during the daily and yearly services, so Jesus Christ entered the sanctuary in heaven with His “own blood” once for all (Heb. 9:12). As the earthly sanctuary of the old covenant was cleansed, so the heavenly sanctuary of the new covenant is to be cleansed “with better sacrifices than these” (Heb. 9:23, RSV).



Covenant, Faith, and Righteousness

“As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and began asking Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ ” (Mark 10:17, NASB).

The searching question that comes to every person at some stage in life is this: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” It was asked by the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30) and has been asked time and again. The passport to “eternal life”—according to the prevailing opinion of Judaism at the time the question was addressed to Jesus—was taken to be righteousness earned by works and merited through law keeping. This rich young ruler had kept the law, in a formal sense at least, and no doubt he kept the rabbinic requirements as well. Yet there was within him gnawing uncertainty about salvation. When Jesus told the searching young man, “Keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:17) and received the reply that he had done so, Jesus pointed out that he did not *love* other human beings as much as he loved himself. (See verses 19-22.)

The rich young man had, by his strength and upbringing, observed the letter of the law but not its spirit. Thus he “had not kept the commandments at all. He should have accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour and taken hold of His righteousness. Then, as he had the righteousness of Christ, he could keep the law of God.”—Elen G. White, *Faith and Works*, pp. 70, 71.

In this lesson we attempt to recognize anew that God once made a covenant in which animal sacrifices pointed forward to the great Sacrifice, Jesus Christ (John 1:29, 36). God’s covenant promise calls forth faith, and genuine faith is reckoned as righteousness (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3-8). The nature of this faith and God’s act of reckoning it as righteousness indicate that we can of ourselves add nothing to our salvation. Yet saving faith in Christ’s merits is not a faith that is empty of works. Works are a result of true faith. While the matter is settled that the merits of fallen man in his good works can never procure eternal life, the fact is equally obvious that the law of God will be lovingly kept in the strength and enabling power of the Divine Redeemer.

**Part 1
OLD COVENANT
AND
SACRIFICES**

What instruction was given so that the person who had sinned and thus had broken the covenant relation with God could regain a right standing with God?

“If any one of the common people sins unwittingly in doing any one of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, and is guilty, . . . he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed” (Lev. 4:27, 28, RSV).

In the period before the cross, God had in His love established the institution of bringing animal sacrifices for reestablishing the God-man relationship when broken by man’s sin. Since the ultimate result of sin is the death of the sinner (compare Gen. 2:16, 17)—as the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23)—the animal sacrificed by the sinner served as his substitute (Num. 15:27-29; Isa. 53:6-10; compare Gen. 22:9-14).

Every sacrifice offered assisted in changing the standing of the guilty one. By the acts of the laying on of hands and confessing the sin(s) (Lev. 1:4; 5:5), the act of killing, and the subsequent priestly application of blood—cleansing came to the sinner. His sin and guilt were transferred, as it were, to the sanctuary. But the rites themselves did not cleanse or redeem, for “it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4, RSV). The old covenant sacrifices were pointing forward to the only adequate Sacrifice, the Son of God.

Under the old covenant, if animal sacrifices were faithfully offered in perfect obedience, did the sinner gain forgiveness and right standing with God by God’s grace or by man’s own merit?

It has been suggested time and again that in Old Testament times—at least under the system established for Israel at Sinai—salvation and eternal life were earned and merited by perfect obedience. Likewise it has been suggested that animal sacrifices automatically brought with them forgiveness, blessings, and life.

The truth is that the Old Testament way of salvation under the Mosaic covenant is no different from the New Testament way of salvation. Accordingly, there is no way of salvation that is “of law” under the Mosaic covenant, while another is “of grace” under the new covenant. Whether in the Old or New Testament, faith is not simply joined by good works—as if there were a righteousness to be gained by combined faith and works—but faith is the mainspring or source for “good works.” This “obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26, RSV) renders meaningless all works calculated to merit life, blessing, and salvation from God.

Further Study: Rom. 3:21-27; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 372, 373.

**Part 2
COVENANT
AND THE
SACRIFICE**

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29, RSV).

When John the Baptist cried out, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” and later declared again, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36), he was surely speaking of Jesus Christ as *the* sacrificial Lamb in whom all the sacrificial types of the Old Testament find their meaning and fulfillment. Indeed, Jesus is “the Lamb that was slain” (Rev. 5:12).

What does the apostle Peter affirm about Christ’s achievement on the cross? 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

When Peter speaks about Christ’s atoning death on the cross, the “ransom” or price idea to which he refers brings to mind the ancient practice of the manumission of a slave. A price for his ransom was deposited at a shrine of a god, who supposedly returned it to the master of the slave. Many slaves saved enough money to buy their freedom, but a kinsman or friend could provide the money to redeem the slave from the owner. Christ ransomed us from slavery to sin, but not with money. He did it with His “precious blood,” His substitutionary and voluntary death on Calvary “like that of a lamb without blemish or without spot.”

What does Christ say about giving His life for man? Mark 10:45.

Jesus Christ had very clearly stated the purpose of His coming, namely, “to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Thus Paul speaks of Christ as the One “who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6). So every one is “bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20; compare 2 Peter 2:1)—that price is the sufferings and death of Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Thus the New Testament emphasizes these facts:

1. The costliness of the divine Sacrifice (“precious blood,” not perishable money, 1 Peter 1:19).

2. The perfect nature of the Sacrifice (“without blemish or spot,” 1 Peter 1:19, RSV).

3. The superior ransom-redemption power (“blood of Christ,” not animal blood, Heb. 9:14) that marks this Sacrifice as all-sufficient. Christ’s sacrifice of Himself was “once for all” (Heb. 9:26, RSV).

What can works performed to achieve merit in God’s sight add to the accomplishments of the sacrifice of Christ?

Further Study: Isaiah 53.

**Part 3
COVENANT
AND FAITH**

“He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6).

This is one of the most profound statements about faith in all the Bible. The patriarch Abraham wondered about the divine promise concerning offspring. He was quite willing to substitute the head servant of his household for an authentic son. But the Lord insisted that one born from his own loins should be his heir, despite the inability of Abraham and Sarah to produce a child naturally. In response to the particular promise that one could come forth from his own body, Abraham “believed in the Lord.”

What is it exactly that causes faith to be reckoned for righteousness?

The context of Genesis 15:6 reveals that Abraham’s faith was demonstrated in total trust or unconditional confidence in the Lord and His promise. While from a physical and natural point of view the patriarch had every reason to despair, Abraham put his total trust in God to act in his behalf. Evidently faith was not a source of merit to Abraham; neither was it an intellectual assent to a fixed body of truth. Faith was and is wholehearted trust and confidence in the Lord and His promises.

What is the contextual setting of this faith experience? Gen. 12:1 through 15:5.

From his call at age 75, Abraham lived in a covenantal relationship with God (Gen. 12:4). This relationship was one of a life of obedience, even though there was the report of serious lapses (for example, Gen. 12:10-20). During that life of overall obedience—which never functions as the way to achieve a right standing with God—Abraham was declared righteous. It was as a consequence of faith that God reckoned Abraham as righteous. The reason for Abraham’s “justification” was not his good works or any merits on his part, but simply that he “believed” or had faith in the Lord and His promise.

Would I have believed in the Lord and His promise had I been in Abraham’s place? Or do I trust in my good deeds to have right standing with God?

“Justification is wholly of grace and not procured by any works that fallen man can do.”—Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, p. 20.

Further Study: Gal. 3:6-10.

In what way is God's beneficent covenant associated with the righteousness that is reckoned to Abraham? Gen. 15:18.

The narrative of Genesis 15 affirms that the Lord made a covenant with Abraham on the day that he put his full trust and total confidence in his Lord. In an earlier lesson we investigated the covenant which God made with Abraham in three stages (Gen. 12:1-3; chapter 15; 17:1-14) over a period of more than two decades. God took the initiative in covenant making. He expected faithfulness from Abraham. Abraham obeyed (Gen. 12:4, "Abram departed"). But this obedience was not a merit reckoned as righteousness. His faith was accounted as righteousness. In Abraham's faith response to the Lord and His promises there was no work that would merit him anything.

How does Paul refer to the faith that the Lord reckoned to Abraham for righteousness? Rom. 4:1-5, 9-12, 18-22; Gal. 3:6.

In these passages the apostle Paul takes his key words—"it is reckoned," "faith," "he believed," etc.—from the Greek version of Genesis 15:6.

Abraham, the acknowledged father of all Israel, both of the flesh and of the Spirit, believed God. The blessing of all who will be saved hinges on this truth. If we may put words together, "law-righteousness"—or we may say "works-righteousness" (if there were such a thing in God's sight)—is based on performance; it is grounded in "meritorious works." "Faith-righteousness," on the other hand, is not a reward that God gives for faithful service. It is the acknowledgment of the utter inadequacy of one's own righteousness and the affirming that "no man living is righteous" (Ps. 143:2, RSV) by keeping the law (Gal. 2:15, 16). "Faith-righteousness" is to trust wholeheartedly in God, to take one's stand on God's revelation and promise. The righteousness that comes from God (Rom. 10:3) does not rest on "works of law" but on trust, confidence, and faith in God.

What can my works add to that which the Lord has already accomplished for my salvation?

"The only way in which he [the sinner] can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner's account. Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son. This is how faith is accounted righteousness."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 367.

**Part 5
FAITH****RECKONED AS
RIGHTEOUSNESS**

What does “counted” or “reckoned” in Genesis 15:6 mean? Rom. 4:3-5. (Note how different translations render Genesis 15:6.)

Various translations have rendered the Hebrew term “counted” (Hebrew *hasab*) according to the KJV either with “reckoned” (ARV, RSV, NASB, etc.) or “credited” (NAB, NIV) or “accounted” (Modern Language Bible).

The same term is employed in other texts in the books of Moses. A person or a thing is “reckoned” or “regarded” as something which that person or thing is not. For instance in Genesis 31:15, Rachel and Leah affirm that their father “reckons” (or “regards” or “counts”) them as strangers, although they are his daughters. The title of the Levite is “reckoned” (or “regarded” or “counted”) as though it were the corn of the threshing floor, although it is obviously not the corn (Num. 18:27, 30).

How is the idea of reckoning expressed in the context of sacrifices? Lev. 7:18; 17:1-4.

The KJV uses the word “imputed” to translate *hasab*.

If a particular sacrifice (“peace offering”) is not eaten by the third day, its value is lost, and it shall not be “reckoned” (Lev. 7:18, NASB; Hebrew *hasab*) to the benefit of the offerer. Leviticus 7:18 speaks of a situation in which a sacrifice is “reckoned” to the benefit of the sinner (compare Lev. 17:1-4, NASB) who then stands before God in righteousness. God is accounting the sinner as righteous, although he himself is actually unrighteous.

What insight on “faith reckoned as righteousness” is gained from the way “reckoning” was used in sacrificial law?

In the God-ordained sacrificial law, the declaration that the sacrifice is “reckoned” (or “accounted,” etc.) to the sinner follows the act of sacrifice. In Genesis 15:6 (RSV) it is not a sacrifice that is “reckoned” as righteousness, but an act of faith in response to God’s initiative through His promise. Thus the divine act of being “reckoned” as righteous is based on faith evoked (or called out) by God’s promise.

Is faith a virtue or merit on my part by which salvation is achieved?

“Faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners; not that there is any virtue in faith whereby salvation is merited, but because faith can lay hold of the merits of Christ, the remedy for sin.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 366, 367.

Part 6
FAITH THAT
WORKS

What distinction is made between a living and a dead faith?

“Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, ‘You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works’ (James 2:17, 18, NASB).

Living faith is followed by good works. True faith results in works. Real faith reveals its fruit in works. Thus faith and works are closely related, and their proper source must be acknowledged.

Both justification and sanctification are accomplished through faith. “When through repentance and faith we accept Christ as our Saviour, the Lord pardons our sins and remits the penalty prescribed for the transgression of the law. The sinner then stands before God as a just person; he is taken into favor with Heaven and through the Spirit has fellowship with the Father and the Son.

“Then there is yet another work to be accomplished, and this is of a progressive nature. The soul is to be sanctified through the truth. And this also is accomplished through faith. For it is only by the grace of Christ, which we receive through faith, that the character can be transformed.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 191.

How does Paul describe this living faith? Rom. 1:5; 16:26.

Paul stressed the principle of “the obedience of faith.” Paul’s concept of “the obedience of faith” is a “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6, RSV) or a faith that “expresses itself in love” (literal rendering of Gal. 5:6). Neither Paul nor Jesus Himself considered obedience to be an optional feature of Christian life: “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15, NASB; compare John 15:10; Matt. 19:17). “The faith that justifies always produces first true repentance, and then good works, which are the fruit of that faith. There is no saving faith that does not produce good fruit.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 195.

Are the “good works” done out of love for Jesus credited to you for salvation?

“Our acceptance with God is sure only through His beloved Son, and good works are but the result of the working of His sin-pardoning love. They are no credit to us, and we have nothing accorded to us for our good works by which we may claim a part in the salvation of our souls. . . . He [the believer] cannot present his good works as a plea for the salvation of his soul.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 199.

The New Covenant Life

“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Life, real life, is much more than mere physical existence. The great quest for the meaning of life at its fullest has taken many different forms over long centuries of contemplation and study. It has been a religious, philosophical, and scientific quest. Yet there is still no agreement on the definition of life. In fact, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1980 ed.) states flatly, “There is no generally accepted definition of life.”—Volume 10, p. 893. While this is the case, it is a fact that all known life on planet Earth ends in death. Thus human beings from time immemorial have attempted to ensure the continuation of a person’s life and to achieve the richest and fullest life in the here and now.

All human quest for life is doomed to failure unless man avails himself of the divine revelation graciously provided by God in His Word. In the first coming of Jesus Christ, and in His pronouncement, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10), are summed up the divine answer to the human quest for life—life at its fullest and best.

In His divine goodness, God even chose to provide life by entering into a new covenantal relationship with humankind after they had estranged and alienated themselves from God through their rebellious act of sin. As always in salvation, God took the first steps for giving life meaning and purpose. Life, the truly abundant life, is to be had only in covenantal fellowship and communion with the Lord. (If this has been said many times this quarter, it is because nothing more vital can be said.) This was secured in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of life in the here and now and in the future.

Our lesson this last week of the quarter explores some highlights of the life within, through the grace of God provided under the new covenant. We concentrate on both the new life granted in the present world and the new, immortal life in the future when we can see our Lord face-to-face. The fullness of the new life now involves the privilege of sharing it with our fellow human beings everywhere.

Part 1
COVENANT
SALVATION

What exclusive claim about salvation is made in one of Peter's sermons?

“There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12, NASB).

First Jesus stated His uniqueness as Saviour (John 3:36; 14:6), and now Peter, under inspiration of the Holy Ghost, confirms that in Jesus Christ is salvation and that outside of Him there is none. Jesus Christ is the grand focal point of salvation.

According to the Bible, man is saved neither by wisdom or right knowledge (as claimed by the teaching of Gnosticism), nor by merit or right action (as claimed by legalism and Judaism), nor by mystical absorption into deity (as claimed by pagan and nonpagan mysticism), but by the decisive act of God in the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ. Thus the title “Saviour,” which is a name of God in the Old Testament (Ps. 106:21; Isa. 43:3; Jer. 14:8; Hosea 13:4; etc.), is applied to Jesus Christ in the New Testament (Luke 2:11; John 4:42; 2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:4; 2 Peter 1:11; 1 John 4:14).

How do the apostles emphasize another aspect of our salvation? Rom. 13:11; 5:9 (compare 8:24); 1 Peter 1:5.

When Paul writes, “For now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed” (Rom. 13:11, NASB), he expresses the conviction that the historical events of salvation—accomplished by Christ's birth (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6, 7), life, death, and resurrection (Rom. 4:25; 5:10; 2 Cor. 4:10, 11; etc.) in the past—have linked to us a future dimension of salvation. Our present experience of salvation is also a foretaste of the salvation that is yet to come on “the last day” (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; compare 1 Thess. 5:1, 2, 4; 2 Thess. 2:1-4), the “day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5), when He shall come in the clouds of heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

Do I believe that I have been saved by Jesus Christ? If I, by daily surrender, remain in the state of salvation, what can separate me from salvation when my Lord appears “a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb. 9:28, RSV)?

Further Study: 1 Peter 1:2-5, 9; Rev. 21:1 to 22:5.

Part 2
NEW COVENANT
LIFE

“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb. 9:14, NASB).

A significant salvation argument in the letter to the Hebrews is the superiority of the blood of Christ shed on Calvary’s cross and applied to the believer. Whereas the blood of goats and bulls sanctifies “for the cleansing of the flesh” (Heb. 9:13, NASB), the blood of Christ has the power to “cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (verse 14, NASB). Christ’s blood removes the defilement of the conscience which has been polluted by “dead works.”

Read Hebrews 6:1 and James 2:17, 26. What do you think are the “dead works” from which we are cleansed or set free?

The inspired writers argue forcefully that a Christian moves on to maturity in the Christian life. This involves “repentance from dead works” (Heb. 6:1). Faith is spoken of as dead when it does not result in deeds or activity that are faith produced (James 2:17, 26). “Dead works” is the negative aspect in contrast with the positive one expressed in Hebrews 6:1 as “faith toward God.” “Dead works” in Hebrews 6:1 and 9:14 are not sins leading to death, but human works of intended obedience which lack the element that would make them “faith works.” In this sense “dead works” are “works of law” which describe a way of life characterized by legalism and a way of seeking salvation outside the plan of God in Scripture.

What is the object of the cleansing of the believer’s conscience? Heb. 9:14.

Cleansing under the new covenant is not the end but the means of the new life of the believer. “The object of purification is service. Men and women are redeemed for service.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 454. Thus the object of the gift of a cleansed conscience which restores to full fellowship in the new covenant is the provision of power for energetic service to Him who alone lives and gives life. Those who serve the “living God” bring forth “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17).

Is Christ’s cleansing of my conscience an end in itself, or does it enable me to give evidence in service for my Lord?

Further Study: 1 Thess. 12:9; Acts 20:19; Col. 3:24.

Part 3
COVENANT
NEW HEART

What was the new covenant promise regarding the heart?

“After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:33).

The “stony” heart (Eze. 11:19; 36:26) which may also be “uncircumcised” (Eze. 44:7), is the central agency by which man thinks, purposes, and understands. Man’s attitude, as depicted by his behavior, springs forth from it. The heart is in need of a new creation and cleansing (Ps. 51:10; Jer. 24:7; Eze. 18:31).

It is the pure in heart that shall see God (Matt. 5:8). The promise of the new covenant is to have God write His law in our hearts. This acceptance of the law of God, of being governed by His will, results in His being our God. Thus we shall be His people.

How does Christ dwell in our hearts? Eph. 3:17.

Faith is the means by which Christ dwells in our hearts. Christ is not an occasional visitor in the believer’s heart, but by faith Christ’s constant and abiding presence makes a living, covenantal relationship the lasting reality of each believer’s life.

What is the experience of those in whose heart Christ dwells? Col. 3:15; 2 Cor. 4:6; Rom. 5:5.

It is one of God’s great acts to have His light shine “in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6, NASB). “The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom. 5:5, NASB). In addition to the light of the knowledge of God’s glory that shines into our hearts and the love of God which is poured into our hearts, “the peace of Christ” rules within us (Col. 3:15).

What is needed to maintain the new covenant heart with God’s law, light, and love dwelling in it?

There can be no continuing relationship with Christ in a heart that does not always recognize its natural defilement. This recognition leads to a continuing dependence upon the merits of Jesus. This in turn opens the heart’s door to the Heavenly Merchantman, who has in His hands everything the helpless soul can ever need. (See Rev. 3:18-20.)

Further Study: *Steps to Christ*, “Rejoicing in the Lord,” pp. 115-126.

**Part 4
NEW COVENANT
AND ETERNAL
LIFE****What is the answer to man's quest for eternal life?**

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26, NIV).

There are two dimensions or aspects to eternal life. The *present* dimension is to bring the believer to a present experience of the abundant life (John 10:10; compare 6:33, 35, 63). This eternal life is resident in Jesus Christ (John 5:26; compare 4:10, 14; 11:25; 14:6), and it assures the one who partakes and continues to partake of Jesus that he "shall live for ever" (John 6:51). Those who follow Jesus receive eternal life now and shall never perish (John 10:28).

The *future* dimension of eternal life involves the resurrection of the body (John 5:28, 29; 6:39, 40, 44, 51-56). This means that the resurrection is clearly a future event and experience and not a platonic concept of God's eternal today. The life characterized as spiritual and not of the flesh (compare Rom. 7:12-14; Eph. 6:12) is a life that has part in the bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:44-53; Phil. 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18) at the second coming of Christ (1 Cor. 15:19-23; Col. 3:4).

What will take place when Jesus Christ returns in the clouds of heaven? 1 Cor. 15:52; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 Thess. 4:15, 16.

When Christ returns, the dead in Christ will rise immortal, and the living followers of Christ will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. Both the dead and the living who are Christ's will possess the same kind of resurrection body. Immortality begins at that time for God's people.

"Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave,—not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours. Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388.

What is the difference between eternal life and the immortality received when Christ comes? Can the future immortality be had without the life in Christ now?

Further Study: 1 Cor. 15:50; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; Rom. 8:11.

Part 5
NEW
COVENANT
ADVENT
HOPE

“Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28).

The second coming of Christ is a prominent theme throughout the New Testament. It is variously designated as “the day of the Lord” (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10), “the day of Christ” (2 Thess. 2:2), “the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6), “the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12), “that day” (Matt. 7:22; 2 Thess. 1:10), or “the last day” (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48).

The return of Jesus Christ is to complete His work of salvation. The believer does not fear the return of His Lord, but he is urged to prepare for His coming (Matt. 24:44; 25:1-13; Luke 12:40; Phil. 3:17-21; Jude 21). It is a challenge to personal purity (2 Peter 3:11, 12; 1 John 3:2, 3). The second coming is a “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13) because of the things the returning Saviour will do (1 Cor. 15:19-23; Phil. 3:20, 21).

What does the New Testament teach about the nature of Christ’s return? Matt. 24:36; 1 Thess. 4:16; 5:1-3; 2 Thess. 1:7.

The second coming of our Lord is preceded by definitely predicted signs (Matt. 24:14; 2 Thess. 2:1-4; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3:3, 4). It is an event visible to the human eye (Luke 17:23, 24; Rev. 1:7) and not a secret situation. It will be accompanied by the sound of the trumpet (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). It will be in glory and in great power (Matt. 24:30; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7); yet it will be unexpected (Matt. 24:44). Although the exact time and hour have not been revealed (Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:7; 2 Peter 3:10), signs of the times in the political (Matt. 24:6, 7; 1 Thess. 5:2, 3), social (2 Tim. 3:1-5), economic (James 5:1-8), and natural (Matt. 24:29, 30) spheres give enough pointers for the perceptive person to know that it is near.

Is my life-style reflecting my belief in the imminent return of Jesus Christ? Or have I reinterpreted the second coming of Christ?

Be aware that nineteenth- and twentieth-century liberal theology discards the reality of a second coming of Christ as an erroneous feature of the message of the early church. Other modern theologies reinterpret the hope of the second coming as a personal, spiritual experience, or in other terms acceptable to the modern mind. Yet the Bible teaches forcefully the sure hope of Christ’s second coming as an imminent event.

Further Study: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 635-645.

**Part 6
NEW COVENANT
AND THE GREAT
COMMISSION**

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:19, 20).

The blessings and benefits of the new covenant are not for a small group of people only. The new covenant is universal in scope, without any limitation as to race, nationality, sex, or culture. It is for this reason that the Risen One has called upon His followers—and that means everyone who has answered the call into the new covenant life—to make known to the whole world the good news of the redeeming, saving, and sanctifying Lord and His divine gifts.

Notice the elements of this great commission:

1. “Go.” The followers of Jesus are to be active in bringing the good news to those who have not yet heard it in its fullness.

2. “Teach all nations.” Literally, “make disciples of all nations.” This breaks all barriers, for the gospel is to be “preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations” (Matt. 24:14).

3. “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” The object and content of the teaching are clearly defined. The teaching is to be all-inclusive as expressed by the words “all things.” The teaching is that which Christ commanded. It is to reflect the totality of the new covenant way of life. Those who are taught are “to observe” what they are taught. This “observing” requirement shows that intellectual assent is not enough. The true Christian “observes” or lives the new way of life. Thus the “man . . . in Christ” is “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17; compare Rom. 6:4). He bears the fruit of the new life (Gal. 5:22, 23; compare Gal. 6:8; Eph. 5:9) and in the power of the risen Lord performs the will of God (Eph. 6:6). He lives for Christ (Rom. 6:11, 13; 2 Cor. 5:15).

4. “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” The baptism involves death to the old life and the beginning of the “newness of life.” (Compare Romans 6.) The act of baptism is to take place in the name of the Three Persons of the Godhead.

5. “I am with you alway.” This is the marvelous covenant promise of the constant presence of Christ. This is the final word of assurance this quarter. We who are Christ’s are never alone. In the height of our joy and in the depth of our sorrow, Jesus Christ is with His own.

How can I effectively share the good news in life, words, and deeds?

Lesson for 1st quarter '83

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the first quarter of 1983 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "Christ's All-Atoning Sacrifice."

First Lesson

ETERNAL SACRIFICE

Memory Text, 1 Peter 1:18-20

1. *Eternal Christ (Isa. 9:6)*
2. *Eternal Service (Deut. 6:4)*
3. *Satan's Rebellion (Eze. 28:17)*
4. *Man's Rebellion (Gen. 3:6)*
5. *Eternal Love (Jer. 31:3)*
6. *Focus of the Week*

Second Lesson

SACRIFICE FORESHADOWED

Memory Text, Rev. 13:8

1. *In Eden (Gen. 3:7)*
2. *At the Flood (Gen. 7:1)*
3. *In the Passover (1Cor. 5:7)*
4. *In the Exodus (Ps. 77:19)*
5. *In David's Sin (Ps. 51:10)*
6. *Focus of the Week (Heb. 12:2)*

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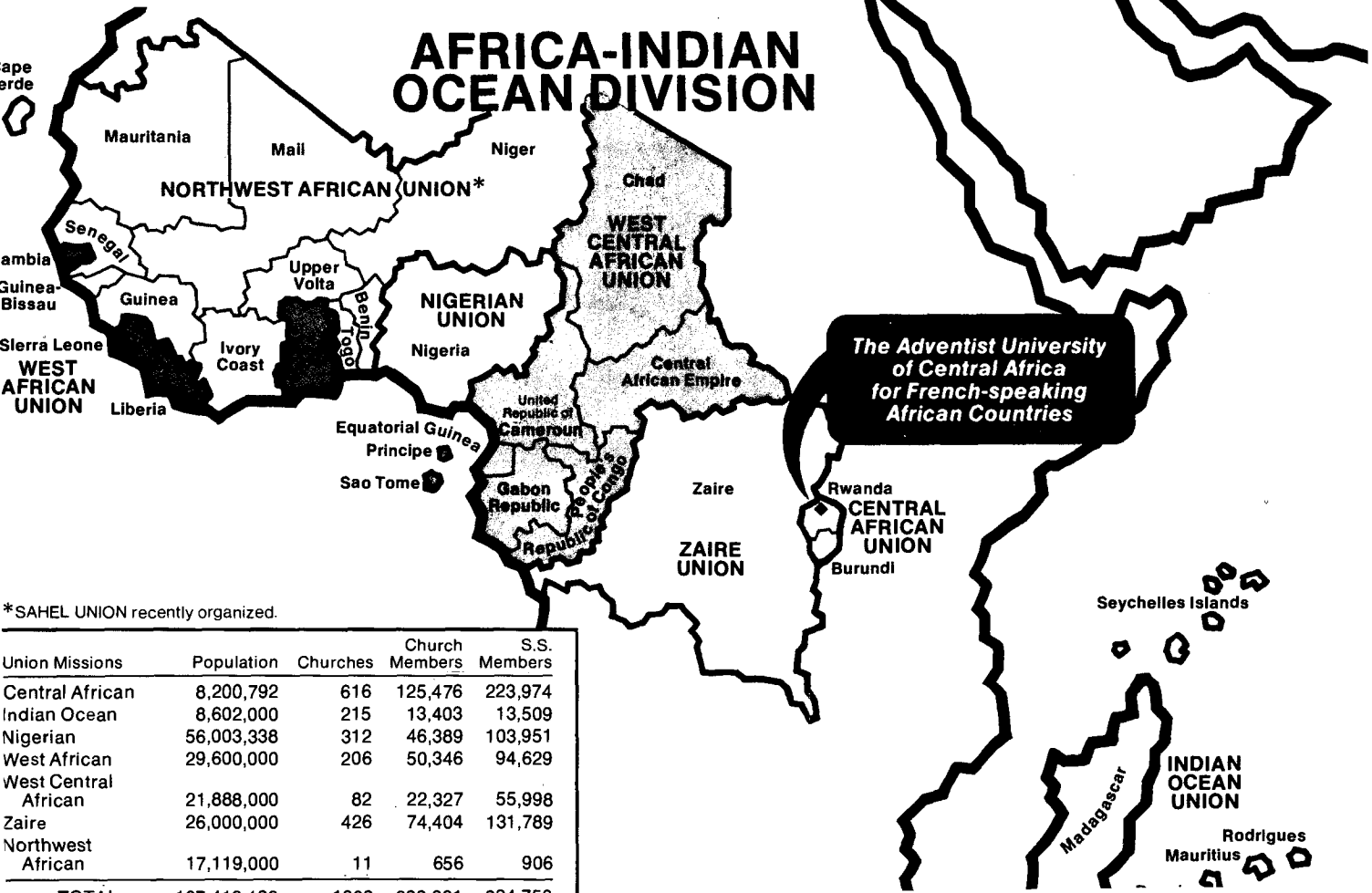
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West Central African	21,888,000	82	22,327	55,998
Zaire	26,000,000	426	74,404	131,789
Northwest African	17,119,000	11	656	906