

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – An Everlasting Covenant – 17-23 April 2021

Christ, speaking as the Father's representative, said to Abraham: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17:7). Christ spoke to Abraham, but in the name of His Father. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). Jesus declares to us His Father's name (Hebrews 2:11-12). By declaring the name of God, Christ declares God Himself. And He does because He is "the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance" (Hebrews 1:3). Thus it is that God said of Him, "My Name is in Him" (Exodus 23:21). Jesus received the name "Emmanuel," which being interpreted is, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). His presence is God with us. He said to Philip "Believe Me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me" (John 14:5-11). "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell," even "all the fulness of the Godhead" (Colossians 1:19; 2:9). "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). Jesus said, "I do nothing of Myself; but as the Father hath taught Me" (John 8:28). Christ is the Son of the God of Abraham: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go" (Acts 3:13).

Ellen White puts light on the truth about Christ and God: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:19" {TMK 102.1}. "All through the pages of sacred history, where the dealings of God with His chosen people are recorded, there are burning traces of the great I AM.... In all these revelations of the divine presence, the glory of God was manifested through Christ. Not alone at the Saviour's advent, but through all the ages after the fall and the promise of redemption, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.' Christ was the foundation and center of the sacrificial system in both the patriarchal and the Jewish age. Since the sin of our first parents, there has been no direct communication between God and man. The Father has given the world into the hands of Christ, that through His mediatorial work He may redeem man, and vindicate the authority and holiness of the law of God. All the communion between heaven and the fallen race has been through Christ. It was the Son of God that gave to our first parents the promise of redemption. It was He who revealed Himself to the patriarchs. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses understood the gospel. They looked for salvation through man's Substitute and Surety...." {TMK 102.2}. As you can see, God the Father is the great I AM, it is His name. Since sin there has been no direct communication between God and man. Everything has to go through Christ, the mediator of the world. That is why Jesus is the Great I AM to us: "In Christ Jesus is a revelation of the glory of the Godhead. All that the human agent can know of God to the saving of the soul, is the measure of the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, to which he can attain; for Christ is he who represents the Father. The most wonderful truth to be grasped by men is the truth, 'Immanuel, God with us.' Christ is the wisdom of God. He is the great 'I AM' to the world" {ST, December 12, 1895 par. 5}.

In John 8:58, Jesus said to the Jews that "before Abraham was, I AM"; this is how Ellen White explain the verse: "With solemn dignity Jesus answered, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.' Silence fell upon the vast assembly. The name of God, given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean Rabbi. He had announced Himself to be the self-existent One, He who had been promised to Israel, 'whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.' Micah 5:2, margin" {DA 469.5}. "Again the priests and rabbis cried out against Jesus as a blasphemer. His claim to be one with God had before stirred them to take His life, and a few months later they plainly declared, 'For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God.' John 10:33. Because He was, and avowed Himself to be, the Son of God, they were bent on destroying Him" {DA 470.1}. Micah 5:2 is a prophecy about the Son of God, the King of Israel whose goings forth (origin)

is from the days of eternity (everlasting). By claiming the name of God, Jesus was claiming to be the promised Messiah, the Son of the most High God. The Jews understood that.

Sunday: Yahweh and the Abrahamic Covenant – It is only in the Abrahamic covenant that we find pardon. There was no pardon in the Sinai covenant. This is readily seen. (1) There is no hint of pardon in the covenant itself, as recorded in Exodus 19:5-8, or in the reiteration and ratification of it in Exodus 24:3-8. (2) In the sanctuary service there was no blood offered that could take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). There was therefore no chance for pardon in that covenant. All were under that covenant who lived while it endured. But that was not all. They were “beloved for the Father’s sake” (Romans 11:28). As children of Abraham, they were also under the Abrahamic covenant, of which their circumcision was the token (John 7:22; Genesis 17:9-14). This was a covenant of faith, already confirmed by the word and oath of the Lord, in Christ, the Seed, and it was not disannulled by any future arrangement (Galatians 3:15-17). All who were of faith were blessed with faithful Abraham (verses 6-9). Overlooking this plain fact, which indeed lies at the very foundation of gospel faith in the new covenant, which is but the development of the Abrahamic, some have ascribed salvation to the covenant at Horeb. But, according to Scripture, if salvation had been possible in that covenant, there was no need of the second (Hebrews 7:11; 10:1).

Monday: 'El-Shaddai – Time had passed, after Abraham had taken to listen to his wife to have a child, after Abraham had learned the lesson, God could lead him again. “And 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” (Genesis 17:1). El-Shaddai – that is, Almighty God, said to Abram, be ‘upright, or sincere’, as in 1 Chronicles 12:33,38, that is, be ‘single-hearted.’ God told Abraham to be sincere before Him, and not double-hearted. In saying “I am the Almighty God”, God would let him know that He was fully able to perform His promise, and that therefore he should trust Him with a perfect or an undivided heart.

Tuesday: From Abram to Abraham – “And Abram fell on his face; and God talked with him, saying, As for Me, behold, My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee” (Genesis 17:3-5). The name Abram signifies “Father of height.” Abram’s father was a heathen, the name may have had some reference to heathen worship. Now his name becomes Abraham, “Father of many peoples.” In the change of name in the cases of Abraham and Jacob, we have a hint of the new name which the Lord gives to all who are His (Revelation 2:17; 3:12). “And thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name” (Isaiah 62:2). This giving to Abraham a new name did not indicate any change in the promise, but was a token to Abraham that God meant what He said. His name should ever afterward be a reminder to him of the promise.

Wednesday: Covenant Stages – The so-called “stages” are intellectually interesting. Notice that it was an “everlasting covenant” that the Lord made with Abraham. It is the one everlasting covenant. This was simply the preaching of the everlasting Gospel of the kingdom, and the assuring to him of a part in its blessings. The promise to Abraham was a Gospel promise, and nothing else, and the covenant was the everlasting covenant, of which Christ is Mediator. Its scope is identical with that of the new covenant, in which God says, “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” (Hebrews 8:10). This appears plainly in the writings of Paul.

Thursday: Covenant Obligations – When we accept the covenant, we are forgiven and it empowers us to obey the perfect law. The fourth of Romans is devoted to Abraham and justification by faith. Paul takes Abraham as an illustration of the truth presented in the preceding chapter, that a man is made righteous by faith. The blessing that Abraham received is the blessing of sins forgiven, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ (see verses 6-9). So when we read in Genesis 12:2-3, that in Abraham all the families of the earth should be blessed, we know that the blessing referred to is the forgiveness of sins. This is positively proved by Acts 3:25-26: “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” In Christ we obey.