

### Sabbath School Lesson #3 – The Everlasting Covenant – 9-15 October 2021

**C**hrist would have us know that the promise of God to Abraham is ours: “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). The patriarchs desired “a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:16). His promise: “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people” (8:10). The possession of God Himself – “heirs of God” (Romans 8:17) – is the essential part of the promise, it is the sum and substance of it. “I am ... thy exceeding great reward” (Genesis 15:1). Having God, we have all things; “having no hope and without God in the world” we are “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise” (Ephesians 2:12).

**Sunday: The Covenant and the Gospel** – The covenant to Abram was the gospel to him. “Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3). Now read what Paul says, “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Galatians 3:6-8). The gospel was preached to Abraham. It is the preaching of the cross of Christ. Paul says that Christ sent him “not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect;” and then he adds that “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:17-18). And this is but another way of saying that the cross of Christ is the gospel, for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Now since the preaching of the gospel is the preaching of the cross of Christ (and there is no salvation by any other means), and God preached the gospel to Abraham when He said, “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3), it is clear that in that promise the cross of Christ was made known to Abraham, and that promise made was one that could be gained only through the cross of Christ. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:13-14). Here we have it stated in the most explicit terms that the blessing of Abraham, which was to come on all the families of the earth, was to come only through the cross of Christ. When we see the gospel of the cross of Christ in the promises of God to Abraham, and continually remember that all the promises of God are in Christ, to be enjoyed only through His cross, and that consequently they are spiritual and eternal in their nature, then the study of the promises to Abraham will be a delight and a great blessing.

**Monday: The Covenant and Israel** – God called the Israelites out from Egypt, so that they might serve Him; and He made them the depositories of His holy law, in order that they might hold up the standard of truth to the surrounding nations. In numerous places we learn that provision was made that the strangers who wished to serve the Lord could become a part of Israel, and heirs of the promise equally with the descendants of Abraham. If the children of Israel had been true to their high calling, and had not departed from God, or, having departed and repented, had remained faithful, they would ever have continued as a nation. Jeremiah 17:19-25 indicates that in that case Jerusalem itself would have stood forever as the capital of the kingdom. What transformation it would have undergone to make it suitable for the eternal habitation of the saints, we cannot tell. On the other hand, the following judgment, if they should depart from God, was said by Jeremiah: “But if ye will not hearken unto Me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched” (Jeremiah 17:27).

**Tuesday: The Book of the Covenant** – Moses repeated the commandments of God to the children of Israel. The problem with Israel as is with us today is that we do not recognise the commandments of God as His promises to us. Now, let us test this in one representative case, that is all-inclusive. The ten commandments begin thus: “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:2-3). This commandment includes all the rest. Read now in the eighty-first Psalm, and you will see what God means when He says, “Thou shalt.” Read verses 8-10: “Hear, O My people, and I will testify unto thee; O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto Me, there shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” This is parallel to Isaiah 55:3: “Incline your ear, and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live.” In the Hebrew there is but one word for “hear” and “obey.” To *hear*, is to *obey*. That is because “the word of God is living and active.” It is self-fulfilling. Let it find a place in the mind, and it will manifest itself openly. When God says, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,” He does not mean that we must make Him our God; far from it. The effort to make God our God, can result in nothing else but the worshipping of a false god, – and a god no greater nor better than our own feeble human comprehension. God knows this, and so His promise is, “I will be their God.” So as we read Psalm 81:5-10 we see that when God said, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,” He meant simply this: “Listen to Me; meditate upon My words, and I will take upon Myself the responsibility of seeing that there are no strange gods found among you.” Suppose a father says to his son, ‘John, my boy, is that the best pair of boots you have? You must not wear them anymore.’ What do John do? Does he begin to worry or to cry, and say, ‘Father say that I must not and shall not wear these clothes anymore; what in the world shall I do? I am too young and weak to earn any others, and shall have to go naked. I think he is very hard in his command.’ Does he talk like that? – Not a bit of it. He has no other thought but that his father has promised him some new clothes, and he at once begin to rejoice. Even so it should be with us, when our Heavenly Father says to us, ‘Those old clothes of yours are too dirty and ragged (Isaiah 64:6); they are not fit to be seen; you shall not wear them anymore.’ Instead of complaining at the hardness of God’s commandments, we should rather greatly rejoice because of His promise to clothe us with the robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10).

**Wednesday: His Special People** – “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6). “The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people” (verse 7). “It is God’s purpose to manifest through His people the principles of His kingdom. That in life and character they may reveal these principles, He desires to separate them from the customs, habits, and practices of the world. He seeks to bring them nearer to Himself, that He may make known to them His will. His purpose for His people today is the same that He had for Israel when He brought them forth from Egypt. By beholding the goodness, the mercy, the justice, and the love of God revealed in His church, the world is to have a representation of His character. And when the law of God is thus exemplified in the life, even the world will recognize the superiority of those who love and fear and serve God above every other people in the world.” {CT 321.1}. “Seventh-day Adventists, above all people, should be patterns of piety, holy in heart and in conversation. To them have been entrusted the most solemn truths ever committed to mortals. Every endowment of grace and power and efficiency has been liberally provided. They look for the near return of Christ in the clouds of heaven. For them to give to the world the impression that their faith is not a dominating power in their lives is greatly to dishonor God” {CT 321.2}.

**Thursday: Other Images** – The image of family in Deuteronomy reflects the relationship between God and His people. The children of two families are recognised in the Bible as “children of Belial” (Judges 20:13), “children of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 14:1), “children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:3), “sons of God” (1 John 3:1); Of the unbelieving Jews, Christ said, “Ye are of your father, the devil” (John 8:44); but, praise God, the children of evil may through Jesus Christ become the sons and daughters of God (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; John 1:12).