

## Sabbath School Lesson #8 – Covenant at Sinai – 16-22 August 2025

**C**hrist would have us keep the covenant of the LORD. “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 19:4-6). Notice, when the people came to Sinai, God referred them to the covenant He had already done, and then said, “if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine” (verse 5). To what covenant did He refer? – Evidently to the one already in existence, His covenant with Abraham. If they would simply keep God’s covenant, that is, God’s promise, – keep the faith, – they would be a peculiar treasure unto God, for God, as the possessor of all the earth, was able to do with them all that He had promised. The fact that they in their self-sufficiency rashly took the whole responsibility upon themselves, does not prove that God led them into making that covenant, but the contrary.

**Sunday: At Mount Sinai** – Read Exodus 19:1-8; after Moses told the people what God had said, how did the people respond? They responded by making a covenant of works. But the covenant of God with Abraham was not by works, but by faith. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). The history of Abraham makes very emphatic the fact that salvation is wholly of God, and not by the power of man. “Power belongeth unto God” (Psalm 62:11); and the Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). Only God can fulfil His promises. They got nothing by their own; everything was a gift from God. He led them, and He protected them. This is the truth that had been made most prominent in the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt. God introduced Himself to them as: “The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:15); He charged Moses to let them know that He was about to deliver them in fulfilment of His covenant with Abraham (Exodus 6:4-8).

The Covenant with Abraham was, as we have seen, a Covenant of faith, and Israel could keep it simply by keeping the faith. God did not ask Israel to enter into another covenant with Him, but only to accept His covenant of peace, which He had long before given to their fathers. The proper response of the people therefore would have been, ‘Amen, even so, O Lord, let it be done unto us according to Thy will.’ On the contrary they said, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do,” and they repeated their promise, with additional emphasis, even after they had heard the law spoken. It was the same self-confidence that led their descendants to say to Christ, “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” (John 6:28). Think of mortal men presuming to be able to do God’s work! Christ answered, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent” (verse 29). Even so it was in the desert of Sinai, when the law was given and the covenant made – assuming they could work out the works of God showed lack of appreciation of His greatness and holiness.

It is only when men are ignorant of God’s righteousness, that they go about to establish their own righteousness, and refuse to submit themselves to the righteousness of God (see Romans 10:3). The Sinai promises were good for nothing, because Israel had not the power to fulfil them. The Old covenant, therefore, which was based on Israel’s promise was utterly worthless, so far as giving them life was concerned. But God did not give Israel up, “for He said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie: so He was their Saviour” (Isaiah 63:8). He knew that they were moved by impulse in making that promise, and that they did not realise what it meant. They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. He had brought them out of the land of Egypt, that He might teach them to know Him, and He did not give them up simply because they were so slow to learn the lesson. He had borne with Abraham when he thought that he could work out God’s plans, and He had been very patient with Jacob when he was so ignorant as to suppose that God’s promised inheritance could be gained by sharp bargains and fraud. He bore with their children’s ignorance and lack of faith, in order that He might afterwards bring them to the faith. Believe and Live now!

**Monday: Preparing for the Gift** – Read Exodus 19:9-25; what lesson do we learn from the command that the people were to wash their clothes preparatory to meeting the Lord? Cleanliness is godly. When the Lord was about to come down upon Mount Sinai, to proclaim the ten commandments in the assembly of the people, He gave them certain directions, among which was this: “Let them wash their clothes.” That is a commandment of the Lord, and is as important as any other. When the Israelites were washing their clothes, they were serving the Lord just as well as when they were standing in the congregation listening to the proclamation of His law. Cleanliness is as essential now as it was then. Therefore when the God-fearing woman is washing the clothes of herself and family she is serving the Lord just as truly as when she sits with her family in those same clean garments and sings and prays. Let those who are doing honest work that naturally falls to them, remember that they can do it “to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:22, 24).

**Tuesday: The Gift of the Decalogue** – In Exodus 20:1-17, Romans 13:10; how is God’s Ten Commandments a reflection of love? No man can love his neighbour unless he loves God, because love is of God; and nobody can love God without loving his brother. Love is one. It cannot be forced, for use of force is sure death to love. It must flow spontaneously. The law of God is love. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Galatians 5:14). “Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:8, 10). When God spoke His law, it was because “He loved the people” (Deuteronomy 33:2-3). It is clear from the Scriptures that the law of God is love, even the love of God. But God Himself is love. He does not merely have love, but love is the very life of God. Therefore the law of God is His life. And this brings us to the words of Jesus: “For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting; whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak” (John 12:49-50). The commandment of God is life eternal, and to know God is life eternal (John 17:3), showing that the commandment of God is His own life. We know one only as we know his life. So, we know God only by knowing His life, and His life is eternal life; but His commandment is life eternal, because His commandment is His life. In other words, the life of God is the law for man.

**Wednesday: Different Functions of God’s Law** – Read James 1:23-25; what is this telling us about the law? “Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” That is, it makes no difference how much a man knows; his knowledge will not justify him. People who have had great advantages are very prone to look with contempt upon those who have been less favoured, and to feel pride because of their own superior knowledge, forgetting that their superior knowledge only makes their own shortcomings the more marked. The man who knows much and does wrong is obviously more blameworthy than the one who knows only little. “Take heed how ye hear” (Luke 8:18).

**Thursday: The Law as God’s Promise for Us** – Read Romans 3:20-24; what is the connection between the promises made to Abraham and the law of God. As He gave to Abraham, what God requires of us He gives. God’s law is His promise – it must necessarily be such, because God knows that men have no power to fulfil His law. When He says, “Thou shalt not,” we may take it as His assurance that if we but trust Him He will preserve us from the sin against which He warns us. God’s law is fulfilled in us through Christ who is “able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24). It is not you who are to do that, which the Lord pleases, but the word of God, “it shall accomplish that which I please” (Isaiah 55:11). You are not to read the word of God and say, ‘I will do that,’ but open your heart to “the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13) and “let the word of Christ dwell in you” (Colossians 3:16) that it may accomplish the will of God in you.