



## Jeremiah 4Q 2015 Lesson 11

### The Covenant

#### SABBATH

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Read memory text: “ ‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.’ ” Jeremiah 31:31

What is this talking about? What is a covenant? What was the covenant made with Abraham?

A few months ago I was in California recording a TV interview with Mike Tucker for the Lifestyle Magazine TV show, and one of our friends and online class members, Luann Serafine, was also there. While we were talking at lunch, the covenant between God and Abraham came up and Mike mentioned that it was a Suzerain covenant, and when Luann got home she emailed me her notes on this, which I have included in the lesson notes:

Mike Tucker briefly introduced the topic of ‘covenant’ versus ‘contractual agreement’ in reference to the passage found in Gen 15: 17-21, a passage that has given me a greater insight, and appreciation for the depth of intimacy that God desires to enter into with us.

It’s been awhile since I have read my notes on this passage but I pulled them out this morning to look at them again...and thought perhaps you might enjoy them as well.

#### Passing Between The Halves (Gen 15:17-21)

There are no adequate modern parallels to the broad-ranging meanings of the term “covenant” as used in the Bible. The closest parallel probably resides in marriage, where a public gathering solemnizes an agreement between two people.

The type of covenant presented in the Bible is most often between two parties. The superior party was known as the *suzerain*; the inferior party as the *vassal*. Both the suzerain and vassal had specific responsibilities. Primarily in ancient societies the suzerain provided protection for the vassal, while the vassal supported the suzerain with taxes and was loyal in time of war.

The Lord and Abram joined themselves in a suzerain and vassal covenant (Gen 15:18). Like similar ancient Near Eastern covenants they held a public ceremony to ratify their relationship. The sacrifice of animals and a meal (15: 9, 10) were typical components of covenant ceremonies, as were the promises of both parties. Abram’s part of this agreement was to



“believe” in the Lord (15:6), which meant to worship no other gods. The Lord promised Abram to make his descendants as numerous as the stars (15:5) and provide a homeland for them (15:18).

Two differences between ancient Near Eastern covenants and the Gen 15 covenant are striking. Usually the list of the vassal’s duties and responsibilities was much larger than that of the suzerain’s. In fact, a covenant, including the duties of the vassal, was *imposed on the vassal by the suzerain*. In the Gen 15 covenant almost nothing is said about Abram’s responsibilities. The focus is on what the Lord promised to Abram, not what Abram promised the Lord, as long as Abram kept the Lord *cherished in his heart*.

In the second difference it was usually the vassal who cut the animals in two parts and walked between them (15:10, 17). The ritual symbolically demonstrated what would happen to the vassal if the covenant was broken. The “burning torch” passing between the pieces of flesh in the Gen 15 covenant (15:17) was obviously a representation of the Lord. The symbolism of Him passing between the cut sacrifices implies that He would die before He would allow His covenant with Abram to fail. [This is beautiful].

Interestingly, Mike did not contrast the ancient Near Eastern covenant construction with the covenant design described by God in Genesis 15. As I was thinking about it, these two constructs appear as possibly one more example of the *relational experience* between imposed-law-contract of relationship versus God’s love-design for intimacy with us.

What is a covenant? An agreement, a contract—in the case of God’s covenant with humanity—what is it?

Read first two paragraphs in Sabbath’s lesson, “Although the Bible...” All covenants are expressions of the covenant of grace—what does this mean? It is John 3:16—God so loved the world that he gave...

God committed Himself to reverse what Adam did to the species human and restore this creation back to its original condition, and He has invited every human being to be part of that restoration!

What is conveyed in the idea of faithfulness and obedience?

What is Biblical faithfulness? Heart loyalty, devotion! Thus Rahab chose loyalty to God, but still lied...



What is obedience in the Biblical sense?

In the New Testament the Greek word for obedience, obey, to obey is: **πακοή** [*hupakoe* /hoop·ak·o·ay/

And it has two halves—the first half is where we get hypo, as in hypoglycemia, or hypotension, or hypodermic and means low, or under, and the last half is where we get acoustics and acoustical, and means to listen or hear. And thus the Biblical meaning of obedience is a humble willingness to listen, learn, comprehend and hear was God is teaching.

This is why Jesus said repeatedly, things like, hearing though they do not hear, or let him who has ears, hear. So people say things today like, “Do you hear me?” “Are you listening?”

So what does it mean to be obedient in God’s kingdom? It is about performance, or about heart motivation?

Why is this our responsibility in the covenant?

- What is the war between God and Satan over? God’s character and trustworthiness
- Where is the battlefield? Our minds and hearts (2Cor 10:3-5)
- What are the weapons of Satan? Lies, coercion, selfish desires
- What are the weapons of God? Truth, freedom, and love
- What is it that determines righteousness—behavior or heart?
- As the heart is healed do the behaviors change?
- But what is the key to changing the heart? Trust in God, and what is the key to trusting God? The truth, and what is the key to understanding and assimilating truth? A humble willingness to listen and learn!

Thus our responsibility in the covenant with God is to listen, think, really hear what God is saying to us!

If we really hear God, we are won to trust and in trust we open the heart to Him and the Spirit comes and heals and renews us to be like Jesus!

## **SUNDAY**

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Read first paragraph, “We look at how bad the world...” What else would God do but bear with us?



The lesson seems to be suggesting that God might do something else but bear with us, what?

They cite the example of the flood, but what is significant different about the time of the Flood and today?

At the time of the Flood Jesus had not yet come, the Remedy for human salvation had not been achieved, Satan was working to actually prevent God from fulfilling His plan to save this creation. Thus the Flood was not punishment for sin, but an act of mercy to keep open the avenue for the Messiah to come. Remember, at the time of the Flood there was only one righteous man on the entire planet—the avenue through which Jesus would come was almost closed!

This idea of using power to inflict punishment for sin is part of Satan's lies about God and it has deeply infected Christianity. God is waiting for a people to reject this lie and tell the truth about Him.

Listen to these two quotations by one of the founders of the SDA church on the struggle heavenly beings had, in Old Testament times, over recognizing God's character and methods, particularly on the use of force:

Before Christ's first advent, the sin of refusing to conform to God's law had become widespread. Apparently Satan's power was growing; his warfare against heaven was becoming more and more determined. **A crisis had been reached. With intense interest God's movements were watched by the heavenly angels. Would He come forth from His place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity? Would He send fire or flood to destroy them? All heaven waited the bidding of their Commander to pour out the vials of wrath upon a rebellious world.** One word from Him, one sign, and the world would have been destroyed. **The worlds unfallen would have said, "Amen.** Thou art righteous, O God, because Thou hast exterminated rebellion." {ST, August 27, 1902 par. 4}

For centuries God looked with patience and forbearance upon the cruel treatment given to his ambassadors, at his holy law prostrate, despised, trampled underfoot. He swept away the inhabitants of the Noachian world with a flood. But when the earth was again peopled, men drew away from God, and renewed their hostility to him, manifesting bold defiance. Those whom God rescued from Egyptian bondage followed in the footsteps of those who had preceded them. Cause was followed by effect; the earth was being corrupted.



**A crisis had arrived in the government of God.** The earth was filled with transgression... **All heaven was prepared at the word of God to move to the help of his elect. One word from him, and the bolts of heaven would have fallen upon the earth, filling it with fire and flame. God had but to speak, and there would have been thunderings and lightnings and earthquakes and destruction.**

**The heavenly intelligences were prepared for a fearful manifestation of Almighty power.** Every move was watched with intense anxiety. The exercise of justice was expected. **The angels looked for God to punish the inhabitants of the earth. But "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."** "I will send my beloved Son," he said. "It may be they will reverence him." **Amazing grace! Christ came not to condemn the world, but to save the world. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."**

**The heavenly universe was amazed at God's patience and love.** To save fallen humanity the Son of God took humanity upon himself... {RH, July 17, 1900 par. 6}

What does God want? Our love and trust—can love and trust be obtained by coercion and exercise of punishing power? Why Not?

Because of God's law—God's law is design law, one of those laws is the law of liberty. Whenever you violate liberty and coerce or threaten another, love is damaged and eventually destroyed and rebellion is instilled in the heart. Interestingly, those who teach God does act this way claim it is because the law requires justice and justice requires punishment, but in so doing they reveal they have accepted Satan's lies about God's law and they don't even comprehend God's law. Look at the evidence from history:

Look at what happened every time God did use power in history:

- Flood—tower of Babel—why, because they didn't believe God existed, or they didn't trust Him?
- Egypt and Sinai—and what were they doing 40 days later?
- Mt. Carmel—and what is the history after that?
- Did God ever get love and trust by use of force and punishing power?
- Zech 4:6 "Not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit says the Lord."



Levels 1-4 of moral development: see through the lens of imposed laws, the laws that sinful beings make and thus they falsely teach and believe that justice requires God to punish.

Levels 5-7: see through the lens of love and Design law and realize deviations from God's law are destructive to all who deviate, because such deviations are violations of the very basis upon which life is constructed to operate.

If you see a sick person, psychotic, deranged, out of control, violent, cutting themselves, threatening others—what do you want for that person, especially if you love them? This is level 5 and above, all of us are sin-sick of heart and mind, with various stages of infection and derangement of our faculties. Those who are being healed and come to see reality through the lens of God's design law, develop compassion and love for those still struggling in sinfulness. But those, who have not grown past level four, see deviations from God's design as crimes that require infliction of punishment, and thus they perpetuate the lies of Satan and obstruct God from completing His plan of salvation on earth!

The second paragraph is about God's covenant with Noah, lets read that in Genesis 9:9-17:

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: <sup>9</sup> **"I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you** <sup>10</sup> **and with every living creature** that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—**every living creature on earth.** <sup>11</sup> I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."

<sup>12</sup> And God said, "This is the sign of the **covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you**, a covenant for all generations to come: <sup>13</sup> **I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.** <sup>14</sup> Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, <sup>15</sup> **I will remember** my covenant between **me and you and all living creatures of every kind.** Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. <sup>16</sup> Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."

<sup>17</sup> So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."

What kind of covenant is this? Is this covenant different than the covenant God made with Adam? No! This is the covenant of grace—notice that God is not requiring or asking for something in return from Noah's descendants, nor from the birds, or animals, or the earth itself. God is saying, "The earth is mine. It is now infected with Satan's principles, but I will fix it, heal it, cleanse it and restore the earth



back to my original design. This is my promise. This is what I will do! Now, Noah, this promise is made to you and your descendants.”

Why? Because they were the only humans on earth and it is by reality, fact, necessity, that only Noah’s descendants from that point forward will be participants in God’s promises and work of healing and restoration.

Any thoughts about the Rainbow? What does it mean that God says He will see it and remember? Would God forget without the rainbow? Or is it spoken this way for people at level 4 and below, to comfort them? Like a parent speaking to a child?

## **MONDAY**

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Read second paragraph, “Through Abraham’s seed...” What does it mean that Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness?

The bottom pink section says, “Dwell upon the great truth that your hope of salvation comes only from the righteousness of Jesus credited to you by faith.”

It is true that our hope of salvation is only because of Jesus’ righteousness—so lets make that absolutely clear. We are not suggesting salvation can be achieved in any other way than through Jesus and His righteousness.

However, what I am suggesting is that Satan has perverted the true meaning of what Jesus accomplished. Satan has twisted the truth about Jesus and His righteousness, how? By warping it through human imposed law constructs—this is what Daniel 7 warned about, what Paul in Thessalonians warned about, the man of sin who would twist everything and seek to change God’s law.

When we see God and His government working like human governments with imposed laws, then we falsely believe the righteousness of Christ is a legal payment, applied in a legal fashion, in a heavenly courtroom to legal records and that justification is getting ourselves legally accounted or credited as righteous “even though we are not.” This distorted view cheats people out of the actual healing and transformation of mind/heart/character that God wants for them.

In other words, having accepted the false legal idea of justification people fail to experience genuine justification—the justification Abraham did—which is genuine transformation of heart toward God!



This has been true throughout all human history. David, in Ps 51 wrote:

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. (vs 10,11)

Jesus said the same thing to Nicodemus. Jesus didn't say, "Unless a man be legally pardoned" or "Unless a man have my righteousness credited to his account in heaven." Jesus said, "Unless a man is born again" i.e. receives a new heart and right spirit, receives my righteousness into his mind to actually be righteous.

Thus Strong's New Testament lexicon, when describing the very word in Romans 4:5 and Galatians 3:6 that is translated "credited" or "accounted" as righteousness says:

This word deals with reality. If I "logizomai" or reckon that my bank book has \$25 in it, it has \$25 in it. Otherwise I am deceiving myself. This word refers to facts not suppositions.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Abraham, whose natural heart was enmity to God, experienced a change of heart where his heart was "set right" or "put right" or justified with God back into a state of genuine trust, and only AFTER this was he recognized, accounted or declared righteous, because he was actually right in heart with God again.

This is what we are to be teaching people and penal substitution theology, which dominates Christianity, is an infection of thought that has paralyzed the church and prevents the church from preparing the world for Christ's return. It is time we throw it out and come back to the truth about God!

## **TUESDAY**

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Read first paragraph, "Moses and some..." What is being depicted here?

Moses goes into God's very presence; the others do not, why?

What is the role Israel is to play in the Great Controversy and plan of salvation?

- Through this family Jesus will come

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<sup>1</sup> Strong, J. (2001). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.



- Be teachers to teach the truth about God and His plan to save
- Be the storehouse of truth, Scripture etc.

What method was God using with Israel to have them teach? Object lesson, acting out a mini-drama, the various people of the nation were all assigned roles, and all played a part. They were actors in a drama—theater. Understanding this makes everything much more easy to understand:

- Moses represents Christ in His pre-incarnate state—thus Moses goes into God’s presence on the Mount, which symbolizes Jesus going into God’s presence to plan the plan of salvation before his incarnation
- The lamb represents Jesus during His incarnation
- Aaron represents Jesus after His ascension
- Nadab and Abihu represent the priesthood of believers who follow the directions of Jesus their heavenly High Priest
- The 70 elders represent the inhabitants of the world who are in need of salvation
- The all saw God from a distance, symbolizing how God has continued to reveal himself throughout human history to all people, whether in the church or not in the church
  - At Sinai the people were frightened but Moses was not—whenever God reveals himself in unveiled glory human beings still in sin, whether believers or not, respond with fear. But Jesus is there (symbolized by Moses) to reassure us there is no need to be afraid
  - God spoke to ancient Israel in various ways and speaks to us today in various ways (written word, nature, providence, people, dreams)

Understanding ancient Israel were actors in a drama helps explains so much—like Uzzah—have you ever wondered why Uzzah died when touching the ark, but the Philistines didn’t? It is straightforward, Uzzah was in the play, the Philistines were not.

The ark is symbolic of the universe perfectly restored to unity and oneness with God, sinlessness. Uzzah’s role is that of a sinner in need of healing; what happens when unhealed sinners come into God’s unveiled glory? Thus, what happened to Uzzah was demonstrative, educational. It did not determine Uzzah’s ultimate eternal destiny, it simply accurately acted out the role in which Uzzah was acting.

The lesson asks us to read Hebrews 4:2: “For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.”



Then read last paragraph, “Only by faith...” What is faith? It is trust—trusting God with your life and future outcomes.

What does faithful obedience look like?

Who was obedient to Christ, the Roman centurion who said Christ didn’t need to come to his house to heal his servant, but just say the word, yet who never observed a Sabbath (the law), or the Pharisees who crucified Christ and kept the Sabbath (the law) rigorously?

What law is a faithful person loyal to?

Did those who crucified Christ think they were being faithful law keepers? What was their error? They accepted Satan’s view of law, imposed rules that require punishment for breaking!

The lesson suggests the common misperception about the law and covenant is failure to take into account the context in which Paul is writing—I think the bigger failure is in misunderstanding the nature of God’s law itself.

## WEDNESDAY

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The lesson discusses the new covenant, thoughts? Notice all the covenants are communications from God of what He would do. Whenever there was some responsibility for human beings, it is always the responsibility that design law, reality requires!

- Covenant with Adam was what God would do, He would send a Savior—Adam responsibility—to believe or trust that God would do it
- Covenant with Noah is what God would do, He would not destroy the world with a flood again—humanity’s responsibility—believe it to be true
- Covenant with Abraham is what God would do, He would make a great nation from Abraham’s descendants and the Messiah would come through his children—Abraham’s responsibility—to trust God would do it
- New Covenant is also what God will do, He will reveal truth, destroy sin and Satan and restore His perfect design law in those who trust Him, ultimately healing His universe—our responsibility—to trust Him, and thus follow His prescription!

Read third paragraph, “The same law...” What is being written on our hearts? Is it a list of rules? No it is not a code of conduct, but the law of love, the very protocols upon which life works, God’s character!



Thus the 10 Commandments are not a list of rules to be obeyed, but a description of how we function when God has His Spirit living in our hearts.

Notice how God describes this through Ezekiel:

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that **I am going to do these things**, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. <sup>23</sup> **I will show the holiness of my great name**, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.

<sup>24</sup> “ ‘For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. <sup>25</sup> I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> **I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws...**Ezek 36:22-36

## THURSDAY

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Read second paragraph, “The broken body of Christ...” What link do you see in the communion service that links Old and New Testament together?

When one takes communion, one partakes of juice/wine and bread, which is symbolic of what? Bread—body and wine—blood, but what is this symbolic of? When Jesus said in John 6 unless a person eats his flesh and drinks his blood they have no part with him, to what was he referring? We know Jesus wasn’t talking cannibalism, but was Jesus suggesting the communion service? What is the reality to which the symbols point that we must partake?

Jesus is also know as the Word, John 1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Have you ever heard the expression “devouring a book?” What does it mean to devour a book? So what does it mean to eat the body of Jesus? To devour the truth He embodies! He is truth, we must ingest the truth as Jesus revealed it into our minds and hearts. When we ingest the truth then we are



won to trust and open the heart to receive the blood transfusion. The blood is symbolic of the life of Jesus. We become partakers of the divine nature! In other words, we receive the character of Jesus; this is how we partake the body and blood.

This idea that the shed blood of Jesus pays some legal penalty is false! It is a lie! It leads people to accept a false legal solution that leaves them dead in sin.

The truth is that the blood of Jesus, i.e. his life, his perfect character, sets us right in our hearts and minds with God, it at-ones us, or restores us to unity with God as we become partakers of the divine nature!

## **FRIDAY**

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Read and discuss questions 1 and 3



## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

**Welcome Gary Jones!** Gary is a retired non-commissioned officer in the Canadian Army who has moved to Chattanooga in order to be a volunteer team manager for Come and Reason Ministries. He is currently looking for a space that our Ministry can lease to serve as a storage and distribution hub for our materials. Once this is established he will be reaching out and working to promote this message here and abroad. Our Ministry now has a phone number: **(423) 661-4734**, and Gary will be manning that number.

*The God-Shaped Brain* is now available in Korean and is available at this website: [http://book.naver.com/bookdb/book\\_detail.nhn?bid=9519886](http://book.naver.com/bookdb/book_detail.nhn?bid=9519886)

*The Remedy – Dr. Jennings’ New Testament Paraphrase*– ALL GLITCHES NOW FIXED in the IOS Version! So please UPDATE to latest version.

**The Journal of the Watcher is now available as a movie in itunes for everyone without ios or android, you can now get it in itunes.**

**January 8-9, 2016:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Carmichael SDA church in Sacramento, California.

**January 29-30, 2016:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at The Haven Church in St. Helena, CA.

**February 20, 2016: Class will meet at Hamilton Community Church due to the Courthouse being unavailable.**

**March 11-12, 2016:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at the Village Church, College Place, WA.

**April 1-2, 2016:** Dr. Jennings will be speaking at Spring Branch Hispanic SDA church, Houston, TX.