

The God of the Covenant

by

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Leader's Guide

Lesson One—God's Covenant in Christ	5
Lesson Two—The LORD	10
Lesson Three—The Glory of the LORD	15
Lesson Four—The Righteousness of the LORD	21
Lesson Five—The Holiness of the LORD	26
Lesson Six—The Justice of the LORD	32

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Northwestern Publishing House
1250 N. 113th St., Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284
© 1998 by Northwestern Publishing House.
Published 1998
Printed in the United States of America
ISBN 978-0-8100-0809-0

To the Leader

The Gospel Series

These Bible studies focus on the gospel as it is taught in Scripture.

We find that Scripture is rich in the many ways it teaches the gospel message. The writers of the Old and New Testaments use a great variety of pictures, prophecies, parables, and propositional statements as they tell us about God's gracious acts.

We pray that through this series God's name be exalted and glorified and that he use these courses to help his people see "how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:18).

This course: The God of the Covenant

What kind of God do we worship? How has he revealed himself to us? Or, to put it another way, what is his name?

In the Old Testament, God revealed who he is through a series of wonderful words—words that present God as wanting nothing more than to bestow his love on all people. Sad to say, many of these words go unnoticed by Bible readers or, if they are noticed, they don't jump out and command the reader's attention as they should. Eyes see the words, but the force of these words does not reach the mind and heart.

When we look carefully at these key words in the Old Testament—these gospel words—we come to understand our God better. Understanding these words translates into everyday hope and peace.

The words chosen for this course are organized so that a picture of God emerges. They are not the only words that could have been chosen, nor is the way we have organized them the only way it could have been done. However, we have tried to keep the course simple and have not attempted a word study on all the ways each word is used in the Old Testament. Some of them are used in secular as well as sacred contexts. We have focused primarily on how these words were used to describe God. You will find some repetition as you teach these terms. This is to be expected. Each facet of a jewel is unique, but they are all still parts of one jewel. So also, each of these terms describes God in its own unique way, but they are all describing the same God.

The course is divided into six lessons. If you are not against beginning new lessons in the middle of a class session, there is easily enough material to expand to fit into eight or more lessons. Helpful resources are included on the computer disk. Feel free to print these out for your own use and to distribute to your class.

May the Lord use these lessons to help you and your class grow in faith and in a knowledge of the good things God has planned for us children of the new covenant.

Robert J. Koester

Using the computer disk included in this Bible study kit

Thank you for purchasing an NPH Bible study kit. The computer disk included with this Bible study offers resources to help you prepare to teach God's Word to his people.

What will I find on the disk?

Each disk contains two text files, GUIDES.TXT and RESOURCE.TXT, and two directories, GUIDES and RESOURCE.

Read the short text files first. The GUIDES.TXT file tells you what is in the GUIDES directory. It lists the various formats for the student's guide copy masters. The RESOURCE.TXT file tells you what is in the RESOURCE directory. It contains a list of articles and resource material you may find helpful in preparing to teach the course.

How do I open the text files?

There are no programs on this disk. In other words, there is nothing you need to install on your computer and run. These are simple files, such as a letter or sermon you might save on your hard drive. To use these files, simply open them as you would any other file.

Most word processors have a window in which you can navigate to various places to locate files. You will need to tell your word processor that you want to find a file on the drive in which you inserted the Bible study disk. This will usually be drive a: or b:. If you are using a Windows™ word processor, click on drive a: or b: in the Open File window. When you have selected the appropriate drive, it will list the files and directories that are on the Bible study disk.

What if no files or directories appear? Some word processors are set to show only files created by or for that program. You need to indicate that you want to see *all the files* on the disk. A pull-down menu in the Open File window gives you the options for the types of files you want the program to list. Choose "all files" or the equivalent. All the files and directories on your disk should appear. At this point you should be able to open the two text files. By navigating to the GUIDES and RESOURCE directories, you will be able to view the file names and open their contents as well.

How do I use the files in the GUIDES directory?

The GUIDES directory contains the student's guide copy masters. They are supplied so that you can adapt them to fit your teaching style and the makeup of your class.

NPH used Microsoft® Word version 6 to edit and print the student's guide copy masters. The GUIDES directory includes the actual files and document template we created. If you have Microsoft Word 6 or later, you will be able to use the file with the .DOC extension. The display on your computer screen will look exactly like the student's guide copy masters.

If you have WordPerfect 5.1 or later, use the appropriate .W51 file. If you have another word processor, use the file with the .TXT extension.

Technical information about the files in the GUIDES directory:

We have made every effort to provide you with the capability of adapting this Bible study to your needs. However, some degree of reformatting may be necessary to use these files on your computer.

Microsoft Word Users:

The Microsoft Word 6.0 file included on this disk can be used by both IBM and Macintosh systems. MS Word 6.0 is a cross-platform word processing program, and Macintosh computers can read this IBM PC formatted disk. The normal font of this file is Times. Systems not equipped with Times fonts may experience subtle differences in line or page breaks. Otherwise, no additional formatting should be necessary.

WordPerfect Users:

We have included WordPerfect files for WordPerfect versions 5.1, 6.0, and 7.0. These files were created in WordPerfect. WordPerfect 5.1 users may have to replace the Courier font in some headings.

ASCII Text File:

An ASCII text file contains only text. All formatting has been removed. This text will import into all word processing programs. Users can then apply formatting to the text according to their own preferences. The ASCII text file contains no headers and footers. You will have to create your own. Please note that each student's guide page should contain the permission notice as noted below.

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If you have any questions about using the disk, please call NPH at (414) 454-2102.

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SAMPLE

Lesson One

God's Covenant in Christ

ברית

The lesson

This lesson has two goals. The first goal is to introduce the course. This is done in the first section. The second goal is to introduce the word that forms the foundation for all the other words we will study in this course. In love, God did not let the world remain in sin and hopelessness. He made a covenant, or a promise, with Adam and Eve and their descendants. (The Hebrew is pronounced “bu-REETH”; the *u* is short.) He would send a Savior whose death on behalf of all people would give all access to God's pardon and mercy.

Worship

Everything begins with God's love. If God did not love the world he created, all of us would still be hiding from God as Adam and Eve did after they had sinned.

Responsive reading

A: All mankind fell in Adam's fall;

B: One common sin infects us all.

A: From one to all the curse descends,

B: And over all God's wrath impends.

A: I will put enmity between you and the woman,

B: Between your offspring and hers;

A: He will crush your head,

B: And you will strike his heel.

A: But Christ, the second Adam, came

B: To bear our sin and woe and shame,

A: To be our life, our light, our way,

B: Our only hope, our only stay.

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for your love. Without it we would have no hope. And thank you for revealing your love to us in Christ. May the covenant of love you made with Adam and Eve and all their descendants always be our reason for approaching you in prayer and being confident of eternal life.

Introduction

Approach

This section introduces the course. The leader may read the introductory paragraphs or have a class member read them. Or, he may paraphrase them and move quickly into the passages. Three passages follow the introductory paragraphs. They have been chosen to help the class members see how

important it is for their understanding of the Old Testament to grasp the meaning of a few key words.

The leader should guard against making the class members feel that their understanding of Scripture is below normal if they don't understand the passages. In fact, unless a class member has made a special study of these words, it is quite normal not to catch their full meaning. These passages are presented here simply to whet their appetites. These passages and many more will be treated in the lessons ahead.

How great is our God!

God's greatness is described in many ways in Scripture. He is described through vivid accounts of his mighty deeds. The prayers of many of God's people are recorded in Scripture, and his greatness is referred to in many of them. God himself speaks of and describes the great things he wants to do for his people.

That's what this course is about: words that describe the greatness of God. It is about words that contain beautiful pictures of the Lord who loves us. It's about the gospel, the good news, found in glowing terms in the Old Testament.

The more we understand these words, the better we will be able to understand the depth of God's love for us and the richer will be our understanding of the Old Testament.

The following passages are a few that we will study in this course. Discuss them. Note especially the underlined words. What thoughts do these words bring to mind?

- “God also said to Moses, ‘I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them’” (Exodus 6:2,3).

This passage comes from the well-known account of the calling of Moses. God is explaining to Moses who he is. But what does it mean that God was not known in previous ages as the LORD? We will learn about this in the next lesson.

- “He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake” (Psalm 23:3).

This well-known passage is from the Good Shepherd psalm. But what does it mean that God guides us in paths of righteousness? There will be a lesson devoted to the word righteousness.

- “But the LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness” (Isaiah 5:16).

This passage is difficult to understand. Four words—LORD, holy, justice, and righteousness—are all intertwined. Most people would not understand this passage without a study of the these four words.

May the Lord enable us to further plumb the depths of his love for us!

Where it all began

Approach

The purpose of this section is to discuss the Hebrew word *berith*. Berith means “covenant.” The Hebrews used this word in much the same way we do. It signified an agreement between two parties. A covenant could be a two-way agreement, like a contract. This is what God's law covenant given on Mount Sinai was. Or, it could be a one-way agreement, like a promise or a will. God made another covenant with mankind long before he set up his law covenant. This covenant was a one-way covenant, a covenant of grace and mercy. (This lesson will focus only on God's one-way covenant of mercy. God's law covenant with Israel will not be covered here.)