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Biblical Covenants

God's Covenant with Us



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To teach the difference between a Contract and a Covenant.
- To show the difference between a Hired Servant and the Good Shepherd.
- To motivate a walk of obedience in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

John 10:11-13 (Contract vs Covenant)



MEMORY VERSE

John 10:11, 13: I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep ... The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

Materials Needed: Container of germinated beans.



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

The Bible teaches that God made a ‘Covenant’ with us. The word ‘Covenant’ means “an agreement or contract.” So, in other words, God made an agreement with us to love us and take care of us. Today, we will learn in greater detail about God’s Covenant with us, which shows His great love for us.



ATTENTION GETTER

Prepare beforehand:

- Soak dried green beans in water (dried beans tend to germinate more easily than fresh beans).
- Place damp cotton wool in a container.
- Sprinkle the green bean seeds on the cotton wool and place the container in a place with sunlight.
- By day four, you will have small sprouted seedlings. Take this container to the class.

Activity: Plant Care Contract

Ask:

What is a contract?

(Allow the children to express their opinions)

Explain:

A contract is an agreement between two persons.

Today, I want to sign a formal contract with the volunteer who agrees to look after my little seedlings. Who will volunteer to take up this important responsibility?

(If everybody is eager to volunteer, then cast lots. Write their names on paper chits, and pick up one).

Ask the chosen volunteer to fill in the details of the contract, in his/her own handwriting. (The Contract is to be found in the Student Workbook). A sample of the wording is given below:

CONTRACT
ALL PEOPLES CHILDREN'S CHURCH

I promise I will: look after the seedlings

My teacher promises he/she will: give me a toffee if I look after them well

If I break my promise: I will buy toffees for the whole class next week

SIGNED: _____

ME

MY TEACHER

TODAY

Explain:

As you can see, a Contract is basically an Agreement.

It Involves a Requirement and Promise:

X (name of the chosen volunteer) is required to look after my seedlings for one week. She agreed to do so by signing the contract. Now she must remember to keep her promise. In return, I promise to reward her with a toffee.

It Involves a Reward:

If X keeps her promise and my plants look healthy next Sunday, I'll give her a toffee.

It Involves a Punishment:

If she neglects looking after the plants and they die by Sunday, then she must bring toffees for the whole class.

- When X signed the contract, it showed that she has agreed to all the three things mentioned in the contract: the promise to fulfill the requirement, the reward and the punishment.
- In the same way, when I signed the contract, it showed that I, the teacher, also agree to the three conditions in the contract.

God, too, made a 'contract' with human beings. He agreed to make us part of His family, if we agreed to follow Him and live for Him. However, we don't call his agreement with us a 'contract.' We call it a 'Covenant.' Today, we will find out WHY we use this special word to describe God's 'agreement' with us.



TEACHING CONTENT

Usually, when people sign contracts, they do it for personal gain. They hope that they will get some benefit out of it.

(For example, I signed the contract with X, because I needed help with my plants. And let's assume for the moment that X signed it, because she badly wanted the toffee).

As a result of this focus on "personal gain:"

- A person may refuse to fulfill his part of the contract, if the other person refuses to fulfill his part. (For example, if I tell X that I won't buy her the toffee, she may refuse to look after my plants).
- Likewise, most people will not bother to do their part if it's going to involve danger (For example, X may throw my plants out, if she finds out that my plants will attract snakes. She may not be willing to endanger her life just to look after my plants).

However, God's contract with us was very different from these human contracts that we may make!

God's Agreement with Adam and Eve

In the beginning, God made an agreement with Adam and Eve to bless them and take care of them. In return, they agreed to obey Him and not eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

Later, Adam and Eve broke their promise and ate the forbidden fruit. The punishment for this was supposed to be eternal death in hell, completely separated from God. But the

Lord decided to put their punishment on His own Son, Jesus ... just so that He could continue to love them and protect them!

As a result, Jesus came down to the earth as a human being. He allowed the Jewish leaders to hang Him on the Cross, so that He could take the sins of Adam and Eve on His own shoulders. Not only this, He also took the sins of the whole world upon His shoulders, including your sins and my sins!

As He hung on the Cross, carrying all our sins upon Him, God's judgment for sin came upon Him, and He died. In this way, innocent and holy Jesus took our punishment (the punishment which we should have received).

Contract vs Covenant

If God were making a normal contract with man, He would have said, "You people didn't keep your part of the contract, so I won't keep Mine either. You chose not to obey Me. So I'll choose not to take care of you. Rather, I'll let you suffer the punishment for your disobedience."

Instead God said, "Even though you broke the contract, I don't want you to suffer punishment. So I'll put the punishment on My own Son. He will suffer on your behalf."

This displays God's great love for us!

It's similar to my saying to X, "I won't give you any toffee for looking after my plants."

But let's assume that she replies, "I'll look after them even if you don't pay me," This will show that she truly loves the plants. She isn't watching over them just for a toffee. Rather

she's doing it because she cares deeply for the plants and wants to protect them.

Because God went beyond the requirements of the contract, to the extent of dying for us, we don't call His 'agreement' with us a mere 'contract.' Instead we use the term 'Covenant' to describe it.

In a contract, the person signing it, cares only about himself. But in a Covenant, he cares so deeply for the other individual that he is even willing to die for him.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

Read Aloud:

John 10:12-13: The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

Ask:

Do you think the hired servant signed a Contract or a Covenant? Why?

We can be sure that the hired servant signed a 'Contract' with "personal gain" in mind, because:

- First, he was NOT interested in the sheep. He was interested only in the salary.
- Second, he was interested in protecting himself, NOT the sheep.

Read Aloud:

John 10:11: I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Ask:

Do you think the Good Shepherd signed a Contract or a Covenant? Why?

We can be sure that the good shepherd signed a 'Covenant' because:

- He treated the sheep as his own.
- He was willing to even die protecting them.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, died for the sins of the whole world. Does this mean everybody is now a friend of God? Does this mean everybody will go to heaven?

We learnt today that an 'agreement' is made between two persons. Both persons have to agree to follow the conditions laid down in the 'agreement.'

God showed His readiness to make a Covenant-agreement with us, by sacrificing His Son on the Cross for us. But many people are not willing to be part of this 'Covenant.' They have different reasons for refusing:

- Some of them believe that God doesn't exist. So they refuse to fulfill the requirements of His Covenant.
- Some of them believe in other gods. They don't believe that the God of the Bible is the only true God. So they reject God's Covenant.
- Some enjoy living in sin. So they don't want to become part of God's Covenant and obey His teachings.
- And some don't even know that God has made a Covenant with us. They don't know that if they choose to be part of this Covenant, Jesus will take them to heaven after death.

None of these people can enjoy a personal friendship with God, because they have refused to become part of His Covenant. Even though God loves them deeply, because they have rejected His Covenant, they will go to hell after death.



APPLICATION

Today, you have learnt how deeply God loves you. He was willing to die on the Cross, to make you part of His family. What are you doing to express your gratitude to God?

This week, make a special effort to show God your love and gratitude, by obeying Him and living for Him.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If any of the children in your group have not yet entered into a Covenant-relationship with Jesus, show them how to do it:

1. Admit you are a sinner.

“All of us have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory”
(Romans 3:23).

2. Be willing to turn from sin (repent).

“... you can be sure that if you don’t turn back to God, every one of you will also die” **(Luke 13:5).**

3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you, was buried and rose from the dead.

“God loved the people of this world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who has faith in Him will have eternal life and never really die” **(John 3:16).**

4. Through prayer, invite Jesus into your life to become your Lord and Saviour.

“So you will be saved, if you honestly say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and if you believe with all your heart that God raised Him from death. God will accept you and save you, if you truly believe this and tell it to others” **(Romans 10:9-10).**

Lead the children in prayer as they recommit their lives to following God and fulfilling the requirements of obeying and loving Him. Also pray with those who’re making a commitment to follow Jesus for the first time.



Biblical Covenants

Nature of God's Covenant



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To show that God lovingly took the first step in reaching out to us.
- To explain the necessity of obeying the Terms laid down in God's Covenant.
- To assure that God fully intends to fulfill all the Covenant-promises He has made to us.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Genesis 6:18 and 15:18; Exodus 6:5-6 and 19:5; Deuteronomy 4:31 (Terms of the Covenant)



MEMORY VERSE

Exodus 19:5 says, "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession."



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Why do we call God's Agreement a 'Covenant' and not a 'Contract'?
- This week, how did you show your love to the Good Shepherd? (Give examples).
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (John 10:11, 13).



INTRODUCTION

Last week, we learnt that God has made a Covenant with us. He has made an agreement to protect and provide for everyone who becomes part of His Covenant. Today, we will find out what the Bible says about this Covenant. We will look at some of the words and phrases that the Bible uses to describe this Covenant. Hopefully this will give us a deeper insight into the Nature of God's Covenant with us.

Note to the Facilitator

There are **at least seven characteristics** that define the Nature of God's Covenant with us. This session discusses **only three** characteristics:

- God is faithful to His Covenant.
- God 'Establishes' His Covenant.
- God took the first step in initiating a Covenant with us.
- God expects us to obey the Terms laid down in His Covenant.

- God promises to remember the Terms laid down in His Covenant.

[The first two characteristics are discussed at the Primary Level (Stds 1-3)].



ATTENTION GETTER

Activity: Play Dough Figures

Give each child a small lump of play dough and ask them to create something attractive.

Ask:

How many of you know about Business Contracts?

Explain:

In a Business Contract, the buyer and seller make an agreement regarding the amount to be paid for the items that are being sold.

Let's assume for a moment that we're going to sell the figures that you have now created. Whom would you want to sell them to? And how much money would you ask for them?

Decide on the details, and then fill up the Business Contract in your Student Workbook:

- Whom do you want to make the contract with? (Who do you want the buyer to be? Your friend? The Indian Prime Minister? Sachin Tendulkar? Think BIG!).
- How much do you want them to pay for your creative art work? Rs.50? Rs.100? Rs.500?

BUSINESS CONTRACT

This agreement is made between:

Name: _____ (Name of the seller)
and

Name: _____ (Name of the buyer)

Both parties reached the following agreement:

The seller will supply the buyer with handcrafted Clay-figures _____

Quantity and Quality of items to be exchanged is as follows

The seller will supply '3' handcrafted Clay-figures, of superior quality, every month _____

Payment amount and Payment Terms

The buyer will pay Rs. _____ for each handcrafted Clay-figure, at the end of every month _____

Shipment and Delivery Method

The seller will send the handcrafted Clay-figures, by COURIER, to the residence of the buyer.

Termination of Services shall be undertaken under the following terms:

If the seller fails to supply '3' handcrafted Clay-figures, of superior quality, every month, his/her services will be terminated. _____

Signature of Seller: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature of Buyer: _____ **Date:** _____

Ask:

Let's assume that you wish to make a contract with Sachin Tendulkar. Do you think he would be interested in signing a contract with you?

(Yes/No)

What are some things you can do, to persuade him to sign up?

(Allow the children to express their opinions).

Observe:

Catching the attention of big people is not easy. Making them sign a contract with you is even more difficult!

This being the case, imagine how much more difficult it is to sign a contract with someone much bigger than the biggest person on earth!

People try to impress God through different methods:

- Some of them give large amounts of money to temples and churches.
- Some of them crawl on their knees up the steps of a cathedral, just to get God's favour.
- Some people even whip themselves until they start bleeding—just to impress God.

But God is not impressed because He doesn't need their money. And if they whip themselves, it doesn't help Him in anyway.

The only thing that impresses God is holiness, because God is perfectly holy. However, there is nobody on earth who is perfectly holy, like God.

How can unholy people ever impress God enough, to make Him sign a contract with them? It's impossible!!!

This is why God had to make the first move. He reached down first, and initiated a formal covenant with sinful humans, during the time of Noah.



TEACHING CONTENT

Last week, we looked at the agreement that God had with Adam and Eve in the beginning. We saw how they broke the agreement and sinned against God.

1. God took the First Step to initiate a Covenant with Humans:

As time passed by, people became more and more sinful. Finally, things reached a stage where God felt sorry to have created man. He had made them, hoping for a beautiful friendship. But they weren't interested in His friendship at all. The only thing that interested them was sinning. So, at this time, God decided to wipe out all human beings from the earth.

God initiated a Covenant with Noah (Genesis 6:18)

However, there was one family still left on the earth that loved God—Noah's family. God took the first step in reaching out to this family. He made a formal Covenant with them and promised to protect them.

God initiated a Covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3)

In the same way, God took the first step in reaching out to Abraham as well. He made a formal covenant with him, promising to bless him and his descendants.

God initiated a Covenant with the Israelites (Exodus 3:7-8)

Many years later, the Israelites were living as slaves in Egypt. They were worshipping idols just like the rest of the Egyptians (Joshua 24:14). In spite of this, God took pity on them when He saw their suffering. He took the first step in reaching out to them and rescuing them from Egypt. And He initiated a formal covenant with them, to take care of them.

God initiated a Covenant with David (1 Samuel 16:13)

David was just a simple shepherd. Nobody in his family thought he was important. But God loved him and took the first step in reaching out to him. The Lord made a formal Covenant with him, and promised to keep his descendants on the throne of Judah forevermore.

God initiated a Covenant with YOU (Revelation 3:20)

Each of you in this class is just a child. You're not world-famous figures. Yet God took the first step in reaching out to each of you. He sent someone to tell you about the salvation message of God. Maybe He sent a parent, or a Sunday School teacher, to tell you about the Gospel. Today, you're part of God's Covenant because the Lord took the first step in sending someone to share the salvation plan with you.

We're not holy enough or perfect enough to demand that God make a covenant with us. In spite of this, God takes the

first step again and again, to reach out to each person and offer them His covenant.

So we must be grateful for God's Covenant. We mustn't take it for granted, as though we're great enough to deserve it.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

2. God Expects Us to Obey the Terms Laid Down in His Covenant:

Exodus 19:5 says, "Now if you obey me fully and KEEP my covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession." How do we KEEP God's Covenant?

By obeying all the terms and conditions laid down in the Covenant.

Where are the terms and conditions of God's Covenant written down?

In the Bible. All the commandments laid down in the Bible form part of His Covenant with us.

How do we express our gratitude for being invited to be part of God's Covenant?

By obeying all the terms and conditions laid down in the Covenant, Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commands." Our obedience proves that we love Him.

3. God Promises to Remember the Terms Laid Down in His Covenant:

Exodus 6:5 says, “I have heard the groaning of the Israelites ... and I have remembered My Covenant.” Does this mean that God sometimes forgets His Covenant, and He needs to remember it all over again?

God had been watching over the Israelites constantly, just as He had promised Abraham He would do. And while watching over them, the Lord saw that they were worshipping idols in Egypt (Joshua 24:14). The punishment for idolatry is death; yet the Lord constantly reminded Himself of the Covenant-promises He had made to Abraham, to protect His descendants. Finally, when the time was right, God reminded Himself yet again of the Covenant-promises, and He initiated steps to deliver the Israelites.

In what sense does God REMEMBER the Covenant He has made with us? How does this help us?

God **remembers the promises WE MADE** to obey all of His commandments:

If we have broken our promise, He reminds Himself of His Covenant-promise to love us and be patient with us.

Deuteronomy 4:31 says, “For the Lord your God is a merciful God; He will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which He confirmed to them by oath.”

However, if we continue to live in sin, He reminds Himself of His Covenant-promise to deliver us and save us. So He may

bring some punishment into our lives, to force us to stop hurting ourselves by sinning again and again.

God also **remembers all the promises that HE MADE to us:**

He uses His wisdom and power to fulfill all of His promises in our lives. But He needs our cooperation in doing this. If we choose to live in sin and rebellion, our sinfulness may block out His blessings.



APPLICATION

Today, we have learnt three things about God's covenant with us:

- God took the first step in initiating a Covenant with us.
- God expects us to obey the Terms laid down in His Covenant.
- God promises to remember the Terms laid down in His Covenant.

This week, let us make a special effort to express our gratitude to this great God, who chose to make a Covenant of Love with imperfect people like us. As we have learnt today, the best way to prove our love to the Lord is by obeying the commandments laid down in His Word. Let us do this sincerely, and consequently see all of God's great Covenant-promises being fulfilled in our lives.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Biblical Covenants

The Blood Covenant



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain that a curse was invoked on those breaking a Covenant-agreement.
- To show how the Israelites brought God's curse upon themselves through disobedience.
- To teach that Jesus redeemed us by becoming a curse for us.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 21:22-23; Isaiah 53:4; Numbers 6:24-26; Hebrews 13:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21 (Jesus became a Curse for Us).



MEMORY VERSE

Galatians 3:13: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.”



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Who takes the first step in making the Covenant agreement? God or us?

(God initiates and invites us into the Covenant. Responding to the invitation is up to us).

- This week, how did you show obedience to the terms laid down in God’s Covenant? (Give examples).
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Exodus 19:5).



INTRODUCTION

For the last two weeks, we have been looking at God’s Covenant with us. Today, we will study one more detail of this Covenant ... about why the Bible calls it a “Blood Covenant.”

In olden times, a Blood Covenant was a very serious thing. The two partners entering the Covenant would cut an animal in two and pass between its halves. In essence, they were saying, “If I don’t keep my side of the Covenant, may I be killed just like these animals.”

Today, we will look at the significance of entering such a Covenant with the Lord.

Note to the Facilitator

There are at least 4 implications of entering into a Blood Covenant. In this session, we will be looking at just one of these:

- A Blood Covenant is made at the expense of life. So a Covenant made by blood signifies a Covenant that encompasses all of life.
- In OT Covenant-making, a curse was invoked (symbolized by the slaying of animals), signifying ‘so may it be done to him who breaks this covenant.’

The first implication was discussed at the Primary Level (Std 1-3). The remaining two will be covered at the Senior Level (Std 7-9).

Brief Overview of the Lesson:

- Why Covenant partners usually walked through the split halves of a sacrificed animal?
- Why God broke the tradition by walking through the split halves ‘alone?’
- Jesus took the curse for the breaking of the Old Testament Covenant.
- Jesus took our curse. So we receive His blessings today.



ATTENTION GETTER

Curses in the Bible

Ask the children to complete the “Match the Following” exercise included in the Workbook. The Bible passages given in the exercise will help them match the pairs correctly.

Explain:

As we can clearly see, a curse is a very dangerous thing.

- Hiel lost his sons because of the curse. It’s so painful to watch loved ones die!
- The Israelites lost all their crops and had nothing left to eat.
- Even today, many parts of the world are suffering from severe famine because of the original curse which Adam brought into the world.

Because curses are so powerful and effective, people are afraid of them. This is probably why people of olden times included curses in their Covenants. The two partners entering the covenant would cut an animal in two and pass between its halves. In essence, they were saying, “If I don’t keep my side of the covenant, may I be cursed and killed just like these animals.”

As a result, because of the fear of bringing a curse upon themselves and their loves ones, people were very careful not to break their covenant agreements.



TEACHING CONTENT

One night, God came to Abraham and offered to make a Covenant with him.

As mentioned above, it was customary in those days for the two parties to walk between the split halves of the sacrificed animal. However, God did it differently with Abraham.

Genesis 15:17-18 says, “When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a Covenant with Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I give this land ...’”

Only God passed through the two halves of the sacrificed animals. He didn’t ask Abraham to walk between them.

Ask the children to reflect and answer:

If two persons walk through the split halves of a sacrifice, and one of them breaks the covenant, whom will the curse be upon?

Upon the person who broke it.

Why would the curse come upon the person who broke the covenant?

Because he walked through the split halves to indicate, “If I don’t keep my side of the covenant, may I be cursed and killed just like these animals.”

Why do you think God did not ask Abraham to walk through the split halves?

God already knew that Abraham’s descendants would break the Covenant by disobeying the Lord. He was trying to show that He was willing to take their curse upon Himself.

Explain:

When an animal was sacrificed to finalize a Covenant-agreement, a curse was spoken over the animal. Then the animal was cut in half. If either party broke the covenant, the curse resting upon the sacrificed animal would then come upon the person who broke the covenant.

So, when Abraham’s descendants disobeyed God and broke the Covenant, the curse resting upon the sacrificed animals was supposed to come upon them. However, Jesus took their place by Himself becoming the cursed sacrifice.

This is why Galatians 3:13 says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us ... ”



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

Psalms 118:27 describes the animal sacrificed on the altar: “God is the Lord, and He has given us light; bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.”

Why do you think the animal was tied to the altar?

To stop the animal from running away.

If Jesus had not been nailed to the Cross, do you think He would have run away?

Jesus said in John 10:17-18, “The reason my Father loves Me is that I lay down My life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from My Father.”

Jesus had the authority to escape not just from the Cross, but from death itself, if He wished to. But He willingly chose to hang on the Cross so that He could “redeem us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us ... ”

Matthew 27:39-40 says, “Those who passed by hurled insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying, ‘You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the Cross, if you are the Son of God!’”

The people passing by were ordinary people like you and me. Why do you think they hated Jesus so much, and enjoyed making fun of Him?

Most of the people were familiar with the Scriptures.

They knew Deuteronomy 21:22-23 which explains, “If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole ... be sure to bury it that same day, because **anyone who is hung on a pole is under God’s curse.**”

So, according to Isaiah 53:4, many of the common people thought Jesus was being “**punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted**” (Isaiah 53:4).

They never dreamed that God would make His own Son a curse, just to redeem all of them from the curse!

They believed that He had done something wrong, and deserved punishment. So they poked fun at Him saying, “If you’re really innocent, why don’t you come down from the cross and prove it.”

However, even though Jesus was innocent, He silently continued to hang on the Cross—because he wanted to “redeem us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us ...”

According to Galatians 3:13, while Jesus was hanging on the Cross, He became a ‘CURSE’ for us. What kind of suffering, do you think, does a “cursed person” experience?

When God made His covenant with the Israelites, He spoke this blessing upon them:

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24–26).

When the Israelites broke the Covenant, the exact opposite of this blessing was supposed to happen to them. However, because this would be too horrible an experience for the people to bear, Jesus took the curse upon Himself.

The exact opposite of the blessing would read this way:

“May the Lord curse you and abandon you. May the Lord keep you in darkness and give you only judgment without grace. May the Lord turn His back upon you and remove His

peace from you forever” (adapted from “The Curse Motif of the Cross” by R.C. Sproul).

This terrible curse came upon Jesus while He was hanging on the Cross.

- The Lord cursed Him and abandoned Him.
- The Lord cut Him off from all blessing by covering Him with deep darkness.
- The Lord removed all protection from Him and gave Him full judgment, without even one little pinch of mercy or grace.
- The Lord took away all sense of peace from Him.

Already weak from all the whipping and torture, Jesus was unable to bear this sudden withdrawal of the Father—the one person who had always supported Him! Completely abandoned by everyone and in raw pain, Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

If Jesus had not become a curse for us, all of us would right now be in hell crying out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?” Jesus went through what we should go through. He did it for us!

This is why God promises today, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5) Jesus allowed Himself to be forsaken so that we would never, ever be forsaken.

If Jesus, who was wholly righteous, became a curse, then what did cursed people like us become?

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” We have been made righteous, so that we can live righteous and holy lives.



APPLICATION

All unrighteous, sinful people are cursed. They’re separated from God and cannot enjoy His friendship or blessings. However, Jesus became a curse so that we would be able to live righteous lives and stay close to God. So it is our duty to live holy and obedient lives.

Today, reflect on some of the areas in your life where you keep falling into disobedience. Make a fresh commitment to obey the Lord even in these areas. Don’t waste Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross by continuing to live in sin.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Biblical Covenants

Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain the concept of “Covenant Boundaries.”
- To teach that God’s Covenants benefited both the Israelites and the rest of the world.
- To reinforce that Covenant-Benefits can be enjoyed only when Covenant-Boundaries are observed.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Genesis 12:1; Exodus 19:5; Galatians 5:18; Philippians 2:13
(God’s Covenants to Israel)



MEMORY VERSE

Exodus 19:5: Now if you obey Me fully and keep My Covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession ...

Materials Needed: Pencils and Erasers**RECAP**

- What did we learn about last week?
- Why did the Father forsake Jesus while He was hanging on the Cross?
- Name some blessings that we received because Jesus became a curse for us.
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Galatians 3:13).

**INTRODUCTION**

We have learnt so far that God made an agreement with Adam and Eve to be their friend and provide for them. We saw how this agreement was broken, and how God himself took the initiative to reach out to us. As our Good Shepherd He became a curse for us, so that we could be blessed by becoming part of His family.

Today, we'll take a closer look at the formal Covenants that God made with Abraham and the Israelites.

Note to the Facilitator

There are **five covenants** mentioned in the Bible. In this session we will be studying only God's Covenant with Abraham and Moses.

- God's Covenant with Noah
- God's Covenant with Abraham

- God's Covenant with Moses

God's Covenant with Noah was discussed at the Primary Level (Std 1-3). The remaining Covenants will be discussed at the Senior Level (Std 6-9).

Brief Overview of the Lesson:

- Covenant Boundaries Explained
- Abraham and Israel meant to be an Example to the nations
- Do the 613 laws of the Mosaic Covenant apply to us today?



ATTENTION GETTER

Dragon Island

The Robinsons purchased Dragon Island and shifted to their new home. Upon arriving they discovered strange creatures living in certain parts of the island. Help this couple build an electrified boundary wall to protect themselves. Identify which areas are safe, and draw the outline for the boundary wall accordingly.

The Map of Dragon Island is found in the Student Workbook. A description of the animals is given, so that the children can identify which portions of the island are safe (***Each student must read on their own and decide which animals are dangerous, without help from the teacher.***)

The person who can draw the **widest** and **safest** boundary wall is the WINNER:

- **Wide boundaries:** Don't restrict the Robinsons to a narrow little compound. Help them occupy as much land as possible.
- **Safe boundaries:** Make sure that the boundary wall keeps out all the harmful creatures.

Ask:

- If the Robinsons paid for the whole island, why did they leave some portions outside their boundary wall? Why did they stay away from some parts of the island?

Because of the predatory animals. They didn't want to be attacked.

- What do you think will happen if the Robinsons go outside the boundary wall you have built for them?

They'll probably get killed.

Conclude:

A boundary wall blocks us from going beyond a certain limit. We can view this in one of two ways:

- We can complain that the wall is **restricting** our freedom, or,
- We can be grateful that the wall is **protecting** us from danger and **enhancing** our freedom.

God's Covenants usually act like boundary walls. They show us what are the safe limits, and they warn us of the danger lying beyond those limits.



TEACHING CONTENT

GOD'S COVENANT BOUNDARIES

Boundary for Adam and Eve

Ask:

In Genesis 2:16-17, God laid down a boundary for Adam and Eve. What was it?

Not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil.

Explain:

When God created Adam and Eve they only knew about good things. They had no idea about all the evil which existed in the minds of satan and the fallen angels.

Only if they disobeyed God and ate from the Tree of Knowledge, would they get to know what “evil and sin” were. But God did not want them to ever find out about these things, because evil and sin would destroy them. So God placed a restriction (a boundary) by asking them not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge.

When Adam and Eve crossed this boundary, they got to know all kinds of sin, and these sins brought them great suffering.

Covenant Boundary for Noah's Family

Ask:

In Genesis 6:18 and 7:7, God laid down a boundary for Noah's family. What was it?

To go into the ark and stay inside its boundaries.

Explain:

Just as in the case of Adam and Eve, God laid down boundaries for the good of Noah's family—to protect them from the flood. God's boundaries are always for our own good.

Covenant Boundary for Abraham

Ask:

In Genesis 12:1, God laid down a very difficult boundary for Abraham. What was it?

The boundary lines set by God for Abraham pushed him:

- Out of his home
- Out from among friends and relatives
- Completely out of his country

Explain:

God sets boundaries for two reasons:

- For our own personal good
- For the good of others

God took Abraham far away from his homeland so that He could bless him and make him into a great nation. So the boundaries were for Abraham's personal benefit.

However God was aiming at far more. He wanted Abraham's family to set an example for the rest of the world ... so that they too would worship the God of the Bible, and get blessed:

- All the people saw how God made Abraham rich and wealthy even though he was just a stranger wandering in a foreign land. After seeing this miracle, at least some of them must have felt tempted to start worshipping the God of the Bible.
- Again, they saw that when Lot took over the best land for himself, God prospered Abraham even though Lot had taken away the better land.
- Yet again, they saw Abraham defeating five kings and their armies, even though he had no army of his own. He and his servants were able to defeat five kings! This too was clear proof that Abraham's God was different from other gods.
- Finally, they saw Abraham having a child at the age of hundred! This must have convinced the people that nothing is impossible for the God of the Bible.

God wanted to show the world through Abraham, that those who obey His Covenant will enjoy great blessings and privileges.

Covenant Boundary for Israel

Ask:

In Exodus 19:5, God laid down a boundary for the Israelites.

What was it?

They were asked to keep God's Covenant by "obeying Him FULLY."

Explain:

As we saw already, God sets boundaries for two reasons:

- For our own personal good
- For the good of others

God promised the Israelites that if they obeyed Him fully, He would treat them like a “treasured possession.” He would give them special treatment, over and above all the other nations.

God did this not only for the benefit of the Israelites, but also for the benefit of the rest of the world. He wanted all the nations to observe the Israelites and learn from them.

- The nations began to hear reports of how a giant cloud rested over the Israelite Tabernacle. They heard how the cloud led the Israelites on their journey from day to day. This made them realize that the Israelite God was a loving person who liked to lead His people and watch over them.
- They saw the Israelites gaining one military victory after another (against the Canaanite King of Arad, against King Sihon and King Og, etc.). And they saw that when Balaam tried hard to put a curse upon the Israelites, only words of blessing came out of his mouth!!!
- They even heard that God stopped the raging waters of the Jordan, just to make it possible for the Israelites to cross over.

God wanted the nations to realize that He richly blesses the people who obey and keep His Covenant.

Terms of the Covenant Boundary:

According to the Covenant-agreement, the Lord would treat the Israelites as a “treasured possession” if they “FULLY obeyed” 613 Covenant laws.

Why do you think God gave them such a long list of laws? The 613 Covenant laws consisted of moral, ceremonial and civil laws, covering every aspect of life.

- There were 10 laws that clearly explained how God should be treated and worshipped.
- There were 13 laws that explained how to care for the poor and unfortunate people among them.
- There were six laws which taught how to behave towards helpless foreigners living in their land.
- There were 27 laws explaining what to eat and what not to eat!
- There were 14 laws to teach how to run a business in a godly manner.
- There were 19 laws that showed how to care for employees, servants and slaves.
- There were even laws on personal hygiene and sanitation!

These 613 laws showed the world what a blessed life a person could have if he obeyed and kept them. He’d be blessed in his business, in his personal relationships, in his health, and even in his wars!

The surrounding nations had no clue how to live. They sacrificed their babies in front of golden statues. They ate foods that made them sick with diseases. They indulged in cheating and business malpractices, which exposed their families to demonic attack. They were totally messed up, and Israel was given the important duty of setting an example for them.

Conclusion:

Based on all that we have seen today, we can probably label the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants as ‘Invitations.’

- They were invitations to a specific few, inviting them to follow God, trust Him, and live differently.
- They were also an invitation to those watching, inviting these people to join in, so that they too could enjoy the Covenant blessings.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

One of the 613 boundaries laid down in God’s Covenant to Israel was that people should not wear clothes with mixed fabric (Leviticus 19:19). Then why is it that Christians today wear polyester, nylon and spandex?

In Leviticus 19:19, God tried to show the Israelites the importance of “staying separate.” He introduced three simple

rules which would constantly remind them of the need to “stay separate.”

- He told them not to take two separate animals (eg., horse and donkey), and create a new animal such as the mule.
- He told them not to take two separate seeds (eg., rice and wheat), and create a new plant variety.
- And He told them not to weave wool and linen fabrics together, to create synthetic cloth like spandex.

Through these rules, the Lord was showing the importance of “staying separate.” He did not want the Israelites to mix with the idol-worshipping nations.

Today, we don’t need rules like this to remind us of spiritual values. We have the Holy Spirit living within us, and He teaches us what to do and what not to do.

This is exactly why Galatians 5:18 says, “... if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”

We don’t need to follow the Israelite Covenant laws anymore because we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, and He teaches us and leads us.

If we don’t need to follow the Israelite Covenant laws anymore, then why do Christians give tithes? Isn’t this a law of the Old Covenant?

God gave the Israelites 613 laws to show them how to live. One of these laws commanded, “Every tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd’s

rod —will be holy to the Lord (Leviticus 27:32). God showed them clearly that they must give one-tenth of their income to Him as an offering.

Today, Christians no longer need to be led by the Israelite Covenant laws. So they definitely don't need to tithe anymore.

However, according to Galatians 5:18, today Christians must be led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit expects us to give far more than a mere tithe.

- The Holy Spirit led New Testament believers to sell their property and give to those in need (Acts 4:33-35).
- He led the “extremely poor” Macedonian believers to give to the persecuted Jerusalem church “even beyond their ability” (2 Corinthians 8:3).
- He led the Corinthian believers to be “eagerly willing” to help the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:11).

In other words, today God expects us to obey the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to us in our hearts. And usually He asks us to do things far more difficult than the rules set down under the Israelite Covenant.

What is your personal opinion? Is it easier to obey the 613 laws of the Israelite Covenant? Or the leading of the Holy Spirit? Why?

The nations living in Moses' day had very loose laws. They exploited their slaves, brought false charges against the innocent and practiced very poor moral values. Seen in this

light, the laws given to the Israelites were very high and difficult to practice.

The 613 Laws were DIFFICULT to practice:

- The other nations could turn their impoverished people into slaves. Israelites, on the other hand, were expected to set their Hebrew slaves free in the Jubilee year. The slaves walked away scot free!
- The other nations would lend money at high rates of interest. But Israelites were supposed to lend money without charging any interest.
- The other nations could do a flourishing business on weekends. But the Israelites were not allowed to sell even vegetables on the Sabbath day!

These Israelite Covenant laws are definitely not easy to follow even today. Some of our parents have to attend office on Sunday, and miss out on church. We like to charge interest if we lend money to anybody. And we definitely enjoy eating shrimp even though it's forbidden under the Israelite Covenant. So, it seems like a huge relief to not follow the 613 commandments of that Covenant.

The requirements of the Holy Spirit are even MORE DIFFICULT to practice

But many Christians fail to realize that the demands made by the Holy Spirit are even more demanding than those made by the Old Covenant.

- The Israelite Covenant simply ordered us not to murder. But now, in New Testament times, the Holy Spirit reminds us that even hating a person is equal to murder.
- The Israelite Covenant simply ordered us to give one-tenth of our income to God. But now, the Holy Spirit prompts us to give away far more than one-tenth, whenever a fellow believer is in need.
- The Israelite Covenant simply ordered the people to “love their neighbour.” But now, the Holy Spirit urges us to even forgive and love our enemies.

So, the demands made by the Holy Spirit are much higher than those made by the 613 Covenant Laws.

The requirements of the Holy Spirit are LESS DIFFICULT to practise

However, we have a great advantage over the Israelites. The Israelites were unable to keep even the easier 613 laws. Psalms 78:10 says, “They did not keep God’s Covenant and refused to live by His law.”

But we have been granted the power to keep even the more difficult requirements of the Holy Spirit. Philippians 2:13 promises that “it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose.”

In other words, the Holy Spirit Himself gives us the ‘desire’ to love and obey the Lord. And then He gives us the ‘power’ to fulfill this desire. So we’re not like the helpless Israelites who had neither the desire nor the power to obey God under the Old Covenant.

Seen from this perspective, it's easier to obey the directions of the Holy Spirit, even though they're more demanding than the Israelite Covenant Laws.



APPLICATION

The Abrahamic Covenant required Abraham to give up his homeland and live as a stranger in a foreign country. What is God asking of you today?

- What is he asking you to give up?
- What things is he asking you to do?

Are you willing to obey the boundaries that God is laying down for you? Those who obey the Covenant Laws will also enjoy its benefits.

Make a decision today that you'll not be like the Israelites. The Mosaic Covenant was given to them so that they could become a "treasured possession." But the Israelites suffered one national disaster after the next because they failed to observe His Covenant boundaries FULLY.

Today, are you willing to "fully obey" the Holy Spirit and be led by Him?

Covenant benefits can be enjoyed only when Covenant Boundaries are followed fully!



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Biblical Covenants

Mosaic Covenant Vs New Covenant



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To show how the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant.
- To explain how the Tabernacle of the Old Covenant points towards Christ.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Hebrews 10:4; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 8:3-4; Hebrews 7:25
(The Superior New Covenant)



MEMORY VERSE

Hebrews 8:6: But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which He is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

Materials Needed:

- Pencils and erasers

**RECAP**

- What did we learn about last week?
- Why does God set boundaries for us with His rules and laws? Doesn't He want us to enjoy freedom?
- Why is it supposed to be easy to obey the requirements of the Holy Spirit?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Exodus 19:5).

**INTRODUCTION**

Over the last few weeks, we have been studying Bible Covenants in great detail. We saw how God Himself took the initiative to reach out to us when we sinned against Him. As our Good Shepherd, He became a curse for us, so that we could be blessed by becoming part of His family. We also studied the Mosaic Covenant in some detail, and learnt that we don't need to obey this Covenant any longer.

Today we'll take a closer look at WHY we don't need to follow the Mosaic Covenant. We will find out how the New Covenant is far superior to the Mosaic Covenant, and how it offers us better privileges.

Note to the Facilitator

Here is a brief overview of the Lesson:

- Earthly Tabernacle and the Heavenly Temple

- Why the Mosaic Covenant was given
- Why Jesus is a better High Priest



ATTENTION GETTER

Have you ever wondered why the main hall (living room/drawing room), in your house, is arranged a particular way?

- Do you have a coffee table? Where is it positioned? Why was it placed in that particular spot? Why not somewhere else in the room?
- What about the sofa set? How exactly have the sofas been positioned?
- Is there a carpet on the floor? Where has the carpet been positioned?

Take a few minutes to draw a blueprint of your 'main hall' at home (A sample blueprint has been included in the Student Workbook, to give you an idea of how to draw one).

After the Children finish drawing:

Ask:

Have you ever wondered why your parents have arranged the furniture a particular way? Why has a particular chair been pushed into the corner, or why is a specific sofa placed at a certain angle?

Explain:

We usually arrange the furniture a particular way, with some definite purpose in mind. For example, the TV set is usually positioned in front of the sofas ... not behind them. The goal

is that people should be able to view the TV while sitting comfortably on the sofas.

Ask:

Why do you think Moses arranged the items in the Tabernacle a particular way? Was it his wife's idea? Or did he hire an interior decorator to arrange the things?

The Bible says that God himself instructed which item should be placed where.

If God was the designer, why do you think He arranged all the items in the Tabernacle a certain way? The answer to this question is very interesting:

God was trying to show the Israelites a little bit of what His own throne-room, up in heaven, looks like! (Hebrews 8:5).



TEACHING CONTENT

Note: *The Student Workbook includes blueprints of both the Earthly Tabernacle and the Heavenly Temple. Refer to these blueprints, even as you teach the children on the superiority of the New Covenant.*

When God made a Covenant with Israel, He ordered them to also build a Tabernacle outside the Israelite Camp. The Lord explained in great detail the shape and dimensions of each item for the Tabernacle, and where each was to be positioned.

He wanted the instructions to be followed exactly, because this earthly Tabernacle would serve as an 'Exact Copy' of the original throne-room in heaven.

Hebrews 8:5: They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the Tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

THE EARTHLY TABERNACLE

Tabernacle Courtyard (Outdoors)

When the High Priest and people walked into the Tabernacle Courtyard, one of the first objects they encountered was the bronze altar (Point out the bronze altar on the Blueprint of the Earthly Tabernacle).

Bronze Altar

The High Priest made animal sacrifices on this altar, for the ‘covering’ of people’s sins. The people confessed their sins before God and asked him to ‘cover’ their sins with the blood of these sacrificed animals.

- Please observe that the people’s sins were only ‘covered’ (because the blood of animals cannot wash away people’s sins - Hebrews 10:4).

Hebrews 10:4: It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Bronze Sea (Brazen Sea/Molten Sea/Laver Sea)

After performing the animal sacrifices, the High Priest and people cleaned themselves at the bronze water tank.

After doing this, the people waited patiently in front of the main Tabernacle. They didn't have permission to go inside. Only the High Priest, and some specific priests, were allowed to enter into the main Tabernacle.

The main Tabernacle was divided into two parts. The inner portion was called "Holy of Holies." It represented the earthly dwelling place of God's presence, and nobody dared to enter this portion of the Tabernacle.

The outer portion was called "Holy Place," and it was here that the priests did their duties. Four objects could be seen in this front portion:

Inside the Tabernacle—Holy Place

The Inner Veil

After walking into the Tabernacle, the first object the priests noticed was the Inner Veil. This was a heavy curtain, four inches thick, separating the "Holy of Holies" from the "Holy Place." This curtain served as a boundary, stopping the priests from accidentally walking into the "Holy of Holies" and being destroyed by God's holiness.

God is perfectly holy and cannot tolerate even a small trace of sin. So the curtain separated God from all sinful humans, including human priests.

Golden Lampstand

The next object that one could see in the Holy Place was the Golden Lampstand. It was the priests' duty to keep the Lamps burning all the time, and make sure that the flame never went out.

This Lampstand represented Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, who would one day bring light into the sin-darkened hearts of people, through His Holy Spirit.

- Please observe that when the Covenant with the Israelites was established, Jesus had not yet come into the world. So, the Lampstand was representing a person who would come only in the future.

Golden Table of Bread

The next object to be seen in the Holy Place was the Golden Table. It was the priests' duty to place freshly baked bread on this table every day. This bread represented Jesus, who would come to the earth as the "Bread of Life," to give all of us eternal life.

- Notice that this too represented a person who would only come in the future, long after the Mosaic Covenant was established.

Golden Altar of Incense:

Another object that could be seen in the Holy Place was the Golden Incense Altar. It was the priests' duty to burn incense here daily. The incense was a symbol of the prayers and intercession of the people going up to God as a sweet fragrance.

- Please observe that God was able to answer the prayers of the people under the Mosaic Covenant only because of what Jesus would do on the Cross one day in the future.

Inside the Tabernacle—Holy of Holies

As we observed earlier, nobody dared to enter the Holy of Holies. However once a year, the High Priest was expected to go into the Holy of Holies, taking with him the blood of the atonement sacrifice, to present it before God.

The Ark

When the High Priest walked into the “Holy Of Holies,” he saw only one object there—the Ark. The Ark represented God’s willingness to live with the Israelites in their Camp. So, it represented His presence, and His mercy.

- The Ark of God’s Presence pointed ahead to the day when the Lord would literally come down to the earth to live among us, as one of us.

While studying the different items of the Tabernacle, you must have observed that every one of them represented either an item found in heaven, or a person or event that would happen only in the future.

Therefore, the Israelite Covenant (with its many instructions about the Tabernacle) began to be called the “Old Covenant.” It seemed to be pointing towards a New Covenant which would arrive when Jesus came.

THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE

Jesus died on the Cross and rose again, to establish a better covenant for us. Today we know this as the “New Covenant.” Under the New Covenant, Jesus took on the role of the High Priest. And He did a much better job than any human priest could have done.

No Bronze Altar in Heaven

You will notice that there is no bronze altar in heaven (Refer to the blueprint of the Heavenly Temple).

In the earthly Tabernacle, this is the place where animals were sacrificed. However, Jesus started a New Covenant by sacrificing Himself on the Cross. The bronze altar was replaced by the Cross. And the animal sacrifices were replaced by Jesus Himself!

Whereas the blood of animals could only ‘cover’ sins in those days, now the blood of Jesus washes away all our sins permanently.

1 John 1:7: ... the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.

Therefore Jesus established a better, more superior covenant through His sacrifice on the Cross.

Heavenly Sea

After sacrificing Himself on the Cross, Jesus walked into Heaven, stepping onto the Sea of crystal-glass which is positioned in front of God’s throne.

You will notice that the bronze water tank of the earthly Tabernacle is similar to this Heavenly Sea. Both of them were given the name ‘Sea.’ While the “earthly bronze sea” was used to clean people of their dirt, the Heavenly Sea represents the complete cleansing that Jesus brings.

Therefore, Jesus’ New Covenant is superior to the Old Mosaic Covenant.

No Table of Bread in Heaven:

This is the reason why we don't see a Table of Bread in Heaven. Instead we see the Lamb of God, who said that if we feed on His flesh and drink His blood, we will have eternal life. So, while the Old Covenant offered mere symbols, the New Covenant offers us the completed work of Jesus.

No Veil in Heaven

The next thing we notice is that there is no Veil in Heaven. The "Multitudes" of humans and the human Elders, all stand in the very presence of God without getting destroyed. You and I will be a part of this multitude one day. The only reason why we won't be destroyed in God's holy presence is because Jesus has permanently washed away all of our sins.

(To prove this truth, immediately after Jesus' crucifixion, the veil of the earthly Tabernacle was torn into two. Imagine the shock of the priests who were going about their duties that afternoon, when this incident happened.

Someone 'inside' the Holy of Holies had ripped apart the curtain. Did this mean that God would now come charging outside and rip all of them apart?

The priests must have run into the courtyard in great fear. However nobody died! God was simply showing the world that the wall of separation that separates sinful humans from God was dissolved!)

By ripping open the four-inch thick curtain, God declared that the New Covenant established by Jesus is superior to the Old Covenant given to the Israelites.

No Ark in Heaven:

In heaven, we see God Himself replacing the Ark. The Ark is no longer needed as a symbol of His presence, when we have the privilege of literally standing in His presence! This became possible only because the curtain dividing us from God was torn open through Jesus' sacrifice!

Altar of Incense in Heaven:

We see the Altar of Incense in Heaven as well.

Revelation 8:3-4: He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand.

The incense of the prayers of God's people, goes directly to God because the dividing curtain between God and us was torn open! In this sense, the New Covenant made answer to prayer possible for both the Old Covenant people as well as the New Covenant Christians of today.

Seven Lamps in Heaven

Finally, we observe that there are seven lamps in heaven, similar to the Golden Lampstand in the earthly Tabernacle. However, these heavenly lamps are not inanimate objects that need to be lighted by a human priest. They're in fact the sevenfold Spirit of God, and they go throughout the world to bring to completion all that is promised under the New Covenant.

Conclusion:

To conclude, if we had only the Old Covenant today, none of us would have any hope of making it to Heaven, to stand in God's presence. Almost everything in the Tabernacle of the Old Covenant pointed towards the need for a Saviour and for a New Covenant.

So we can say that while God **started His work through the Old Covenant**, this was **brought to completion only through the New Covenant**. This is why the Bible proclaims the New Covenant to be superior to the Old.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Note: All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.

Based on what we have learnt today, explain in what way Jesus is a better High Priest than the human High Priests of the Old Covenant.

The human High Priests were imperfect people. They had to offer sacrifices for their own sins and then offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. So even though they went into the Holy of Holies, once a year, to represent the people before God, their representation was not perfect. God continued to keep the dividing curtain closed.

On the other hand, Jesus was a perfect High Priest. Though He lived as a human among us, and was tempted by every sin just like us, He never ever sinned. Therefore, when Jesus

the High Priest, walked into Heaven and stood before God's throne, offering the blood from His own sacrificed body, God was fully satisfied.

He accepted Jesus' death as a perfect sacrifice and immediately tore open the dividing curtain that separated sinful humans from the Lord.

Today, Jesus the High Priest intercedes for us before God, so that we too can have victory over trials and temptations, just like Jesus did.

Hebrews 7:25: Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.

If the New Covenant is better than the Mosaic Covenant, why did God even bother with the Mosaic Covenant to Israel? Why didn't He directly send Jesus to establish the New Covenant?

Last class, we saw that the Lord gave the Israelites 613 laws under the Mosaic Covenant. These laws helped the people realize just how holy the Lord is, and how sinful they were.

The other nations offered a few sacrifices to their idols and then lived as they wished ... exploiting their slaves, indulging in business frauds, practicing immorality, etc. The Israelites were used to treating Yahweh in the same way.

But the 613 laws of the Mosaic Covenant finally made them realize that an UTTERLY HOLY God would NEVER tolerate even the slightest level of uncleanness! The Mosaic Covenant

proclaimed eternal hell upon every Israelite who broke even one of the laws.

The horrified Israelites slowly began to grasp that they had no hope of escaping hell unless someone came and miraculously saved them. Their hearts began to grow ready for the coming of the Saviour.

In this way, the Old Covenant served as preparation ground, for the establishment of the New Covenant.

The blood from the animal sacrifices 'covered' the sins of the people. It didn't wash away their sins. Does this mean that all the people of the Old Testament went to hell ... because Jesus had not yet sacrificed His life for them?

God is infinite and lives outside time. So Jesus' sacrifice was planned and prepared even before human beings were created ... even before time existed.

Revelation 13:8: ... the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

So the blood of Jesus washed away the sins of even the Old Testament people who made a commitment to honour and obey the Lord. This made it possible for them to enter heaven after death.



APPLICATION

Romans 6:6 says, “We know that the persons we used to be were nailed to the Cross with Jesus. This was done, so that our sinful bodies would *no longer be the slaves of sin.*”

God went to the drastic extreme of sacrificing Jesus on our behalf, to set us free!

- He has set us free from the consequences of every sin we have ever committed. He has forgiven us completely.
- Also, He has set us free from the power of sin (by giving us both the desire and the power to live for Him—Philippians 2:13).

This being the case, He expects us to **Continue Staying Free**. He doesn’t want us to go back into those very same sins, of which He has forgiven us at such a high cost.

So make a fresh commitment to permanently turn your back upon the sins that have controlled you again and again. Jesus has set us free so that we don’t have to be enslaved by these sins anymore.

Begin to enjoy the freedom that Jesus has obtained for you through the New Covenant.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Biblical Covenants

God's Covenant of Salt



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain why God calls His Covenant a “Covenant of Salt.”
- To encourage the children to make ‘salted offerings’ to the Lord.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

2 Chronicles 13:5; Leviticus 2:11, 13; Matthew 5:13 (Salt of the Covenant)



MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 5:13: You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Why did God tear open the Tabernacle Veil after the crucifixion of Jesus?
- Did you enjoy your freedom in Christ by overcoming any specific sins this week? Give examples.
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Hebrews 8:6).



INTRODUCTION

Over the last few weeks, we have seen how God established an unbreakable Blood-Covenant with us, by making Jesus a curse for us on the Cross. By establishing this New Covenant, He fulfilled the work which was started under the Old Covenant of Moses.

Today, we'll study about a special term that God uses to describe His Covenants. We'll find out why God calls His Covenants, "Covenants of Salt."

Note to the Facilitator

Here is a brief overview of the Lesson:

- What Salt signifies:
 - Eternal, enduring nature of Covenant
 - Purity of Covenant
 - Salt heals broken relationships

- Salt used to seal Bond of Friendship
- What God expects from us (Salted Offerings)
- How to be Salt of the Earth



ATTENTION GETTER

Prepare Beforehand:

Items to be taken to the class:

- 1 apple
- 1 knife
- 4 toothpicks
- 2 empty plastic cups
- 1 bowl and 1 spoon
- 1 cup of baking soda
- 1 cup of salt

Activity: Apple Mummy

- Ask a student to cut the apple, through the top, into four quarters.
- Give the quartered apple slices to four different children. Ask them to carve a face into each of the apple quarters using toothpicks.
- Put two of the apple slices in two dry plastic cups.
- Next, ask a student to thoroughly mix together the cup of baking soda and the cup of salt, in a bowl.

- Pour the baking soda/salt mixture over the apple-faces in the two cups, so that the apples are completely covered.
- The remaining two apple-faces can be taken home and stored in dry plastic cups, without covering them with any mixture.

Ask the four children to take their apple-faces home and store them in a warm, dry shelf. Two of the apple-faces are covered in the salt mixture, while the other two are uncovered. The plastic cups must not be disturbed the whole week. Instruct them to bring back all four apple-faces the next week.

Discuss:

One week from now, which of the apple-faces, do you think, will be in a better condition? The ones covered with the salt mixture? Or the exposed ones?

(Ask the children for their opinions).

Explain:

When something is preserved in salt, it lasts a very long time!

Some years ago, the bodies of seven persons were discovered in a salt mine (Chehrabad salt mine near Zanjan in northwestern Iran). Though these 7 men died 1700 years ago, they are still extremely well-preserved because their bodies were covered with salt! On the other hand, a body buried in a good coffin disintegrates in less than a year!

This should give you an idea of the eternal, enduring, and abiding nature of salt!

When we bring back the four apple-faces next week, we will discover that the salt-covered apple-faces are in a much better condition than the other two (Warn the children to bring the mixture-protected apple-faces as it is, without removing the salt covering. Exposure to outside air leads to rapid deterioration).



TEACHING CONTENT

Read Aloud:

2 Chronicles 13:5: Don't you know that the Lord, the God of Israel, has given the kingship of Israel to David and His descendants forever by a Covenant of salt?

- This verse refers to God's Covenant as a "Covenant of Salt."

God used this term for four reasons.

Reason 1

When we preserve things in salt, they last for a very long time.

- So God called His Covenant a "Covenant of Salt." He wanted the people to know that His Covenant would last forever. It wouldn't decay after a few hundred years.

Reason 2

Also, salt purifies things. For instance, in olden times, people rubbed a newborn baby with salt, to purify its skin. The salt destroyed all the germs on the skin of the baby.

- So God called His Covenant a “Covenant of Salt.” He wanted the people to know that His Covenant was pure and holy. We can trust God hundred percent because He will never secretly deceive or cheat us.

Reason 3

Salt heals—if you settled a dispute with your neighbour, then you would invite the person into your home to share a dish of salt. Each of you would lick your finger, dip it in the salt and then eat the salt together. This is the symbol of friendship that heals the rift.

- So God called His Covenant a “Covenant of Salt.” He wanted the people to know that He had forgiven them in spite of all their sins.
- Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Reason 4

Salt was also used to seal a bond of friendship forever. Brethren at an Israelite table would seal their friendship by the sharing of salt.

- So God called His Covenant a “Covenant of Salt.” God wanted to be sealed with us in an eternal covenant of friendship, seasoned with salt.

GOD has commanded SALT-FLAVOURED OFFERINGS

1. Abiding Long-term Commitments

Read Aloud:

Leviticus 2:13: Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the Covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings.

- God specifically ordered that every sacrifice or offering presented to Him, must contain salt in it. The people were strictly told not to offer anything without adding salt to it.

Why do you think God wanted everything to be salted? Was salt His favourite flavour?

As we saw earlier, salt symbolizes something that will last forever. So the Lord wanted the people to offer Him commitments that would last forever.

When we need something from God, it's easy to make promises. For instance, if I want to do well in my exams, I may say to the Lord, "God, if you help me get good marks, I'll be obedient to my parents." However, after the exams are finished, we tend to forget our promises and commitments.

God doesn't want us to make temporary promises like this. When God declared that "salt-flavoured" sacrifices and offerings were compulsory, He was essentially saying, "If you want to make any promise or commitment to me, let it be a long-term one that you'll always keep. I'm not interested in short-term promises that you plan on breaking; so don't even make them."

2. Pure Commitments

Read Aloud:

Leviticus 2:11: Every grain offering you bring to the Lord must be made without yeast, for you are not to burn any yeast or honey in a food offering presented to the Lord.

- God ordered that the grain offerings contain only salt (v.13). They were NOT to contain any yeast or honey.

Why do you think God wanted only salt? Why not yeast and honey too?

Yeast symbolized the sins of man, while salt symbolized purity. God was essentially saying that He doesn't want half-hearted commitments, where the person obeys God partially and follows his sinful desires partially. God wants a hundred percent pure commitment from us.

Similarly, honey was used by neighbouring nations in their offerings to idols, to bribe them. Honey was supposed to sweeten up the god in their favour, and make it turn a blind eye to the sins they were committing.

However, the Lord wants a hundred percent pure commitment from us—He cannot be bribed into accepting compromises.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.

God has Commanded Salt-flavoured Offerings

Read Aloud:

Matthew 5:13: You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

Explain:

According to this verse, we're supposed to offer ourselves as salted offerings while living on this earth. The same way salt purifies meat, we must purify the world.

Discuss:

What are some of the things involved in a "pure lifestyle?"

Discuss how purity can be practiced in different areas of life:

- Pure eyes/ears/hands (Music, Movies, TV, etc.).
- Pure habits (money-spending, time-spending, etc.).
- Pure friendships (avoiding wrong company).
- Pure character (making the right choices).

How can leading a pure life lead to purification of the world?

The world has become a terrible place:

- Today, we see parents murdering their own children.
- We see politicians bloated with corrupt wealth.
- We see youth proudly boasting and flaunting sinful practices.

But have you ever wondered why only some people are doing these things?

- Why aren't many more parents murdering their babies?
- Why aren't more government officials stealing money?
- Why aren't ALL youth into smoking and drugs?

Evil is still under control because of the presence of Christians in this world:

- Christians are praying against these things and God is answering.
- Christians are involved in changing their communities thorough reform programs.
- Honest Christians are working in the government, not allowing corruption to take over completely.

God is placing committed Christians in every part of society. Wherever they have been placed, these people are living for God, and acting like salt—purifying that place and keeping evil under control.

You too can be salt in your neighbourhood or school. The way you speak and behave, the choices you make, your prayers and the influence you exert, can change things in your own area.

Are you willing to be salt in your neighbourhood and school?

Is it really possible to be salt in your school or neighbourhood?

Will anybody listen to you? What is your personal opinion?

Why or Why not?

In Mark 2:17 Jesus said, "... It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

All the people of this world have become spiritually sick with a serious virus called 'sin.' It makes them live sinfully and the consequences of sin is punishment in hell.

Our duty is to show people how they can heal their sinful wounds. We must warn them that if they continue in their sins, they will go to hell. Jesus, on the other hand, is willing to wash away their sins and give them the ability to live a holy life.

When we tell people about Jesus, we act like salt being sprinkled on a wound. Salt makes the wound burn. The people we're telling about Jesus will feel guilty and convicted of their sinful condition. Some of them will not like to be told that they're sinful people. Some of them will not like to believe that Jesus is the only One who can help us live a holy life.

When salt is poured on the wounds of sick persons, some become angry. They don't like the burning sensation, and so they angrily brush away the salt. In the same way, some people will not like the truth we're teaching, and they'll brush us away rudely.

However, some will realize that the salt is good for them. They will realize that what we're saying is truthful and good. They will be willing to confess their sinfulness and turn to Jesus.

So, when you act as salt in your school or neighbourhood, condemning the sinfulness you see and pointing to Jesus as

the solution, some will brush you away rudely. But others will respond and be spiritually healed.

Your job is to effectively be ‘salt’ and share about Christ, irrespective of whether people reject you or respond to you.



APPLICATION

Reflect on the things you have learnt today.

- God has made a Covenant of Salt with you, which will last forever. You can always depend on Him.
- But can He depend on you? Are you giving Him salted long-term offerings?

Make some specific commitments today, so that you can genuinely be the “salt of the earth.”



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



Biblical Covenants

God's Covenant and My Daily Life



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To teach about Covenant Privileges and Responsibilities.
- To help students see themselves as God's own children, and behave as such.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Romans 8:14-15; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Matthew 7:9-11 (God's Covenant Children)



MEMORY VERSE

Romans 8:15: The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father."



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Why does God call His covenant a “Covenant of Salt?”
- Did you make any salted offerings to the Lord this week, through your words and deeds? Give examples.
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Matthew 5:13).



INTRODUCTION

Over the last six weeks, we have studied different aspects of Bible Covenants. Today, we’ll study how to apply God’s Covenant to our personal lives.

Note to the Facilitator

Here is a brief overview of the Lesson:

- Do we enjoy Covenant privileges with the Confidence of “a deeply-loved child?”
(Or do we enjoy them hesitantly like slaves)?
- Do we fulfill our Covenant responsibilities with the Devotion of a “loving child?”
(Or do we fulfill them grudgingly like paid servants)?



ATTENTION GETTER

Privileges and Responsibilities

Ask:

What do you think is the main difference between Living in a Hotel and Living at Home?

(Encourage the children to come up with different answers).

Note:

If the children are unable to think of anything, prompt them with questions like:

Who makes the beds in a hotel?

Who is supposed to do it at home?

Who sweeps and mops the floor in a hotel?

Who does it at home (when the maid doesn't turn up)?

When we order Room Service, who sets the table at the hotel?

Who is supposed to set the table at home?

Observe:

Some children tend to treat home like a hotel. They expect their parents to be waiters and cleaners, who'll wait on them and serve them.

But being a child doesn't involve just receiving a lot of love, service and gifts. It also involves chores and responsibilities.

Age-wise Chore List

Match the chores to the age-groups Which chores should a child take up at different ages?

| Age Groups: | Home Responsibilities |
|-------------|---|
| 4 - 5 yrs | Help prepare simple meals Helping with the laundry Purchasing the simpler groceries |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 6 – 8 yrs | Help with sweeping/mopping Water the plants Learn to wash dishes |
| 9 – 12 yrs | Help make the bed Pick up toys and books Dust furniture |
| 13 – 18 yrs | Help feed pets Help wipe up messes Clear and set the table |



TEACHING CONTENT

Ask:

- What are some privileges that we enjoy at home, as part of the family?
- What are some privileges that we enjoy as part of God's family?

(Give the children time to answer these two questions).

Why COVENANT PRIVILEGES are SPECIAL

Have you noticed that the privileges you enjoy at home are better and superior to those enjoyed by the servant-maid?

- Most probably at Christmas time, your parents give gifts to both you and the servant. But have you noticed that yours is given with much deeper love and much greater thoughtfulness? You are SPECIAL because you're their OWN CHILD. You're not a mere servant.

Similarly, God gives His Covenant Children the kind of special privileges that are reserved for family members.

He doesn't treat us like servants.

- Therefore Covenant-Privileges are SPECIAL!

Some PRIVILEGES We Enjoy as Part of God's Family

- He treats each of us as His best friend (John 15:15).
- He forgives and forgets, even when we confess the most terrible sins to Him (1 John 1:9)
- He protects us from harm and danger (Psalms 55:16).
- He answers our prayers and provides for us (Matthew 6:31-33).
- He heals us of all kinds of sicknesses (Exodus 15:26).
- He gives us good advice and guides us (Psalms 32:8).
- He prepares good plans for our future (Jeremiah 29:11).

Why COVENANT-RESPONSIBILITIES are SPECIAL

Have you noticed that you feel greater love and concern for your parents than a paid servant would?

- If you were preparing a Surprise Snack for your tired mother, you'd put in more love and effort into the snack than a servant who is merely cooking as part of her regular duties.

Similarly, God hopes that you'll serve Him out of a heart of love, rather than simply obey like servant who has no choice.

- A servant works to earn money; she may have no special concern for your family. Sometimes we treat God similarly. We obey Him to earn blessings, we have no

special love or concern for Him. This attitude dishonours God.

God wants us to fulfill our responsibilities with an attitude of love—not with the attitude of a servant looking for payment.

Some RESPONSIBILITIES we have as Part of God’s Family

The New Life

According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, God has made us into a new creation.

- So He expects us to behave ‘New’. Our thoughts, words and actions must be new and Christ-like. We must not behave like satan’s children anymore.

New Responsibilities towards God

- We must discipline ourselves to spend time with the Lord, in Bible Reading and Prayer.

New Responsibilities Morally

- We must give up old satanic habits like lying, hurting people with our anger, stealing, etc.

New Responsibilities to our Families

- God expects us to serve our family members by sincerely helping out with household chores.

New Responsibilities towards God’s Family

- We must be willing to help other Christians in whatever way we can.
- We must be a friend to those who are lonely.

New Responsibilities toward the Church

- We must be willing to volunteer at church and help out, if there is a need.
- We must be willing to give to the church from our pocket money.

New Responsibilities toward Non-Christians

- We must be willing to share the Gospel with non-Christians.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.

We looked at some of the privileges that we enjoy as God's Covenant Children. Why are many Christians living in poverty and sickness in spite of these great privileges?

It's very sad that many Christians are unaware of their special status in Christ. They don't see themselves as forgiven children whom God loves deeply. Rather, they think of themselves as sinful unwanted people whom God is somehow enduring.

However Romans 8:14-15 says, "... those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"

These verses clearly teach that we must not be afraid of God. We mustn't approach Him like terrified slaves who expect nothing good from their master. Rather we must approach Him the same way we would approach a loving parent, expecting our prayers to be fully answered.

Many Christians don't persist in prayer until God brings them out of poverty and sickness. They give up after a while, assuming that God doesn't care enough to help.

However, Jesus taught in Matthew 7:9-11, "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ... If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!"

So those who trust God and continue praying, without giving up, are able to obtain all the privileges reserved for them.

Why is it very important for us to behave like New Creations?

Once we become part of God's Covenant, by accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour, God gives us a new heart. We begin to desire to please God and live for Him.

However, when temptation comes, some of us ignore the desires of our new heart and go back to old sinful habits. When we do this, people get a very bad impression about the God we worship.

When Christians behave like satan's children, people who are watching get the impression that God is similar to satan.

So we must make an extra effort to live godly lives, so that people get an accurate idea of how holy and loving our Heavenly Father really is.

We must behave like a New Creation in our thoughts, words and conduct because we're representing the Lord on this earth.

What are some ways we can help other Christians who belong to God's family?

(Ask the children for practical suggestions).



APPLICATION

- Am I claiming all the privileges that are rightfully mine, under the Covenant? Or am I holding back in fear?
- Also, am I serving God to earn blessings—the same way a servant works to earn money? Or am I serving God out of love and respect—the kind that a child has for the parent?

Reflect on these two basic questions. It'll help you to approach your Covenant-privileges and responsibilities with the right attitude.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER



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