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## Studies in Genesis - 12

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# Studies in Genesis

(Leaflet 12)

GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH

Genesis 8:20 — 9:17

AND

HIS OTHER UNCONDITIONAL COVENANTS WITH MAN

It is our purpose today to consider the four unconditional covenants of God with man, fundamental both to Old Testament and to New Testament truth. And among these great unconditional covenants is the one God made with Noah on that memorable day when Noah "went forth" out of the ark, and "buildded an altar unto the Lord." Indeed, it was at the place of the altar that "God blessed Noah and his sons," and spoke unto them His unconditional covenant of promised blessing.

In our study today of God's four unconditional covenants with man, we shall also consider briefly, by way of contrast, the Mosaic covenant, which was conditional, depending in part upon man's obedience. It was broken, and consequently passed away.

What we want to see from this lesson today is that salvation is all of grace, "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:9). And this all-important teaching we can not emphasize too much; for the Scriptures tell us plainly, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

These are the four unconditional covenants made by God with man: (1) His covenant with Noah concerning the world; (2) His covenant with Abram concerning the Land of Canaan; (3) His covenant with David concerning the throne; and (4) His "new covenant" established upon the basis of the shed blood of His "only begotten Son," our Saviour.

Upon these four great covenants all human history is based, from the time of Noah even unto eternity. To believe them is to believe God's infallible Word. To reject them is to spurn His Word and His Son, the only Saviour from sin.

### GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH

We closed our last lesson with the reading of Gen. 8:20, 21, the record of how "Noah builded an altar unto the Lord." It was Noah's first act upon leaving the ark. And it was at the place of the altar that God made His covenant with Noah. It is impossible to separate these two parts of this story; therefore, let us read again these remarkable closing words of chapter eight, verses 21, 22:

"And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

1. *The Seasons Promised.* In the beautiful words which we have just read we hear God's reassuring promise that "while the earth remaineth"; that is, until the prophecy of II Peter 3:7, 10-13 is fulfilled, when this old earth will be purified by fire—"while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

Those are remarkable words, whether reckless, godless man realizes it or not. They are a part of God's covenant with Noah; and they secure for us all the bounty of food and clothing, rain and sunshine, time to work by day and time to sleep by night. All temporal blessings are to be traced to these wonderful words.

So, my friends, when you get up tomorrow morning, remember that the sun is shining because God made a covenant with Noah. And the darkness that falls at the close of the day rests upon the same word of promise. When you eat an apple, thank God because it is included in His covenant



with Noah. And when you eat bread, remember that He promised Noah, saying, "Seed time and harvest . . . shall not cease."

How we should thank God for this! Yet one of the significant marks of the world today is that man is not thanking God. Often when I go into a restaurant for lunch, I sit for a moment watching the people, to note how many give thanks for the food they are about to eat. The number is very few indeed! In Romans Paul, speaking of this as one of the types of sin into which the world has fallen, says, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful . . . their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:21).

2. "*And God Blessed Noah and His Sons*" (9:1). In words like those which He spoke to Adam, the father of mankind, God said to Noah, the "new progenitor of the race," "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (9:1; compare 9:7; 1:28).

Since the day when God spoke similar words to Adam, man had sinned, had failed miserably. But now God was giving man another beginning, in a world purified by the waters of judgment. It was a new beginning based upon the sacrifice of the burnt offering—all of grace, and looking forward to Jesus, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

3. *Dominion over the Beasts of the Earth Was Given to Noah*. If we turn the pages of our Bible back to Gen. 1:28-30, we read again that Adam, in the Garden of Eden, was given dominion over the earth, including plant and animal life. But he was given "every green herb for meat"; he was not told to eat the flesh of animals.

Thus it came to pass that, when God created man, He gave him dominion over the animals, over everything that crawled on the earth, over everything that flew in the heavens, and over everything that swam in the sea. Man had dominion over them all. You will remember that the Lord Jesus had that power when He commanded the fish to bring money to Him to pay His taxes. (See Matt. 17:24-27.) Jesus was

a Man as God intended man should be—except, of course, that Jesus was also God. But long before God made His covenant with Noah, man was a fallen creature. Consequently, he lost his God-given dominion, and the animals were wild. Yet in order that man might be protected, God made the animals afraid of man. The insect you are so much afraid of, my friend, is more afraid of you than you are of it. Even a serpent is more afraid of you than you are of the serpent. And this is in fulfillment of God's covenant with Noah when He said:

“The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered” (9:2).

4. *Meat Was Given to Man for Food.* Up to this time, man lived only on herbs; but now because of man's more material state, as he went on in sin, becoming more earthly, God gave to man flesh to eat. But God made a certain restriction; for the flesh with the blood was not to be eaten by man. Note God's words to Noah:

“Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat” (9:3, 4).

Life is precious in God's sight, especially human life, and, above all, “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (I Peter 1:19). By faith in Him who was to come, Noah was redeemed. By faith in His shed blood all the saints of all the ages have been born again, made righteous in God's sight, justified in His holy eyes. Therefore, the blood is sacred to God. Therefore, He told Noah not to eat the flesh with the blood. Therefore, He told Moses also many years later:

“The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11).



To us who believe God's Word it is not strange that we shudder at the thought of eating any flesh with the blood, because, I verily believe, God has put that attitude in our hearts.

5. *Capital Punishment Instituted.* How precious human life is in the sight of God, may be seen from His covenant-words to Noah:

"And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (9:5, 6).

In these words, spoken to Noah after the flood, God instituted human government, with judicial power vested in man. Adam, in innocence, failed God; and God had to judge his sin by driving him out of Eden and sending the curse upon fallen man. Then God gave Adam a conscience; yet the course of history from Adam to Noah was a course of sin. There was no law. There was no reigning governor. The earth had no king, no kingdom, no magistrates, no written laws.

Cain killed his brother, and Lamech killed a man in self-defense. But there was no one to bring justice on the murderer. Up to the time when God destroyed the earth, men had nothing to hinder their going on in their own way except their conscience; and we know only too well how easily a man can mar his conscience.

Now after the flood God gave a covenant. God gave governmental power, the power of the judge. And that is why God said to Noah, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

There are those who insist that capital punishment is un-Christian; but they are ignorant of this fundamental, governmental law of God. It was instituted long before the Mosaic Law was given, and, therefore, was not annulled when the Mosaic Law was set aside at Calvary's Cross.

If from the beginning, everyone who dared to take another man's life, had had his own life forfeited, we should not have the history of murder as it is. God ordained capital punishment; but people today are clamoring for the removal of this governmental law, because they want to kill, yet do not want to take the consequences. As a result, in every newspaper in Los Angeles and Philadelphia and Chicago and New York and Paris and London, we have the account of murder. And the murders that are recorded in the Chicago papers are not different from the murders we have here in Los Angeles. They have their murders and we have ours.

Moreover, war is just wholesale murder! The world is going the way it is because it is throwing overboard God's Word.

What must our loving God think as He looks down upon the cruel, barbarous Battle of Flanders today? As we ourselves shudder at the satanic men who conceive and carry out such fiendish designs, we seem to catch a new significance in the startling words of Psalm 2:4; for no wonder "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" at the rebellious folly of God-dishonoring men like Adolf Hitler and his cohorts. "The Lord shall have them in derision," because they have turned their backs upon God and upon all His ways.

God's covenant with Noah, then, marks the establishing of judicial power. Here God gave the power of justice into the hand of a man. If a man does wrong, another man is exalted to a place of power where he can pass judgment on the offender. So we have the beginning of human justice and judgment, and undoubtedly the beginning of human government, the power of one man over another. Moreover, every king, president, attorney, or judge who refuses to execute God's governmental laws will be held responsible for the confusion, crime, and governmental collapses that we see on every hand.

God placed government in the world because to Him the life of man is sacred. In this connection, let us note again the significant words which follow this fundamental, governmental law of the Lord: ". . . for in the image of God made



he man." How steeped in sin is the man who can ruthlessly kill one who was "made in the image of God"!

6. *The Rainbow—The Token of God's Covenant with Noah.* Let us read carefully God's words to Noah and to his sons, recorded in Gen. 9:8-17, noting how often God says, "My covenant . . . which I make." Here are a few selections from this beautiful passage:

"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth" (verse 13).

That is the rainbow. You have all seen a rainbow, the token of God's covenant, promising that He will no more destroy the earth with a flood.

"And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it . . ." (verse 16).

Did you know that every time there is a rainbow, God is looking at it? He did not put it there for us. He lets us see it, but He put it there for Himself. That rainbow is God's reminder of His covenant with the earth.

"And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

That is the everlasting covenant. Now will you please turn to Isaiah 24:5? Remember that in Gen. 9:16 God said, "I will remember the everlasting covenant"; and note that He was referring to "the earth." But in Isaiah 25:5 we read:

"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant."

Man had a part in that covenant. But man has broken his part of it. And now God has given another covenant, "the everlasting covenant," established upon the shed blood of "our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20). And it is all of grace!



We shall consider this, the "new covenant," later in our lesson today; but we mention it here to remind ourselves of the goodness of our God. When man is faithless, "yet he abideth faithful."

### GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

The second great, unconditional covenant which God made with man was His covenant with Abram. It concerns Abram's "seed," the nation of Israel, and Abram's "land," which we call Palestine. This covenant, too, is all of grace.

There is a company of people in this world, now in unbelief; they are a nation, though they have no national life. They are a kingdom, though they do not know their King. They have a land, but they are not in possession of their land. That people is Israel. We call them Jews.

Now God holds a very special relationship to Israel nationally, not to the Jew individually more than to any other individual. The Jew today, as well as the Gentile, must accept the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour or be lost. But God holds a very close relationship to Israel as a nation. That nation must be regathered to her own land. God is held in bond to do something for Israel nationally. Therefore, Israel must become again a definite nation among the nations of the earth.

We shall have more to say about this important subject when we come to the twelfth chapter of Genesis. But for our purpose here, let us note briefly two or three verses in chapter fifteen, which speak plainly of God's unconditional covenant with Abram.

Even before Isaac and Jacob and Joseph were born, God was foretelling, to Abram, the four hundred years' bondage in Egypt; judgment upon the Egyptians; and Israel's deliverance from Egypt "with great substance" (15:13, 14).

God was looking across a space of four hundred years when He said that; but it is nothing with God to look down the ages or across the centuries, for there is no time with God. One day with Him is "as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Peter 3:8). Our God is the God of prophecy. God can look forward for centuries and proclaim

a thing; because, when that time comes, He can bring it to pass. No other being in the universe can do that, no archangel in the sky. Satan himself, with all his power, can not foretell something in the future and bring it to pass. But God can look into the future, down the centuries, and proclaim a thing. And this He did when He foretold the Egyptian bondage and Israel's deliverance therefrom.

And "in the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (15:18).

Now will you notice that God did not say, "I *will* give this land," but rather, "Unto thy seed *have* I given this land." Palestine, therefore, belongs to Abram and Abram's people. It is now under the sovereignty of England. It has been under the power of the Turk, but it does not belong to any of the Gentile nations. It belongs to Israel.

You know that you may own a thing and yet not possess it. I still own my umbrella, but I do not possess it. And in that sense somebody else has the sovereignty of Palestine, but it belongs to Abram and to his people. Thus God said to Abram, away back there two thousand years before Christ, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." That is, God gave to Israel not only what we call the Holy Land, but He gave them also the land from the Euphrates River, across that great desert, all the way from Babylon to the Mediterranean, and from the north of Palestine to the great river of Egypt, which is the Nile. This is a land that will accommodate fifteen millions of people. And Israel is yet to have what God has promised! This is God's unconditional covenant with Abraham, established when He promised to Israel a Saviour and a King, the Messiah—to come through the nation of Israel, in the land of promise.

In Gen. 17:7 we read yet further concerning this covenant of grace:

"And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an



everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

Here you will note that Abram's seed are brought into this covenant; and that neither Abram nor his seed had a thing to do but believe God. It was an unconditional covenant, all of grace. Abraham "believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23). God did not say, "Abram, if you are faithful to me, I will give you this land." Rather, God said, "Unto thy seed have I given this land."

My friends, this covenant seals the doom of all who attempt to destroy the nation of Israel. The anti-Semitic agitators might just as well attempt to blot out the sun as to try to destroy the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel will return to the land of Palestine as the Word of God has promised, and God's covenant with Abram will be fulfilled to the very letter. God can not break His covenant with Abraham!

#### THE CONDITIONAL COVENANT OF THE MOSAIC LAW

Before we consider the other great unconditional covenants, made by God with man, let us pause for a moment to think briefly of the conditional covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai. It is a covenant of works, not of grace.

We can not go into it fully here. But because so many of God's people stumble over the Law of Moses, limiting the grace of God, we need to be very clear on the teaching of the Scriptures concerning this covenant of works.

The nineteenth chapter of Exodus tells the story of how Israel presumptuously said to God, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (verse 8). It was a covenant that rested, for its performance, not upon God, but upon Israel's "We will do."

God let Israel have this Law of Moses, that Israel might see "the exceeding sinfulness of sin" and how far short she had come of God's holy standard. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20).

Read also such passages as Heb. 7:11 to see that God had

to send His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to offer Himself, one sacrifice, once for all; that salvation is all of grace, not of the deeds of the law:

“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?”

Under the Levitical priesthood “the people received the law,” by which perfection could not come.

“If that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord” (Heb. 8:7-9).

That was the covenant of the law. And are people today claiming the law? They say they have to have the law, that they cannot be saved without the law. People are saying, “Yes, we know about grace; but God gave the law too.” Yes, God did give the law, but let us read again Heb. 8:9:

“Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.”

In other words, Israel broke that covenant. My friends, the law is a broken covenant; and what good is the law if it is broken? What good is a covenant to you if God says, “If you do a certain thing, I will do a certain thing.” If you break your part of the covenant, then God’s part goes because God made the covenant that way. God gave the covenant to Isra-



el, saying, "Walk in the law; and if you walk in the law, you will have righteousness by the law." But Israel broke the law. Then God had to make "a new covenant" with Israel, and, indeed, with all men everywhere who will accept His Son, the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world. Let us turn to Heb. 8:10, 11 to see what God says about this "new covenant," into which He will one day bring Israel. It is "a better covenant . . . established upon better promises" than those made at Mount Sinai (Heb. 8:6). But let us read Heb. 8:10, 11:

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest."

The Mosaic Law is passed; and God is going to bring Israel back again. He is going to put His law in Israel's heart and write His Word down deep in their souls, and Israel will be a new nation. That will be the time, my friends, when Israel will be a blessing, when the whole earth will be blessed through them, for Israel will be born in a day.

Israel today is hated by the nations. "Only a Jew!" That is a taunt that has gone around the world. But the time will come when God will make the Jew the most acceptable man in every city on the face of the earth, when every nation will want the Jew. That will be during the millennium.

Now salvation is ever, only, the free gift of God, received by faith in His "only begotten Son" who died on the cross to save sinners, both Jew and Gentile. Thus the law shows us our need of a Saviour; Calvary's Cross shows us the only One who ever did or can keep perfectly God's holy law. He obeyed it absolutely, because He knew no sin. He was the holy Son of God. He kept the law for us; and by faith in His atoning blood, we are "accepted in the beloved" Son of God. He was our Substitute; for He paid the penalty of the broken law—for us.

Do you see? There is no room for boasting. There is no room for our own paltry works. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" in His holy eyes (Isa. 64:4). But thank God for His reassuring words to all who will approach Him in simple faith in the shed blood of Calvary's Lamb; for He says plainly:

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18).

### GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID

Not only did God covenant with Abraham to give Israel the Messiah and the land of Palestine; He also made a covenant with David that, through his house, should come the King to sit upon David's throne. And this, too, is an unconditional covenant—all of grace.

Turn to II Sam. 7:12-29, noting especially the words of verse 16:

"And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

Now that is the Davidic covenant. A Son is to sit on that throne, whose kingdom is to be established for ever. The throne of David is to be everlasting. The One who shall fulfill the Davidic covenant is the Lord Jesus Christ.

You will remember that in Luke 1:32, 33 the Angel Gabriel said to Mary concerning Jesus:

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

That promise has not yet been fulfilled, but it will be when the Lord returns to the earth.

Recently a very significant cartoon from the pen of Dr. E. J. Pace appeared in "*The Sunday School Times*," entitled "The Empty Throne." As the name suggests, the cartoon



portrayed an empty throne, for the Heir to that throne was rejected by the nation of Israel. When He came to be their King, they cried out saying, "We will not have this man to rule over us." And they thrust Him out of this world at the point of a spear. Consequently, the throne is vacant now. The King is seated at God's right hand, from whence He shall return as He has promised. Then He shall occupy the empty throne, because, as the Son of David, He is the legal Heir. Yes, the legal Heir!

In these covenants, which God made with Abraham and David, God promised the land and the people, the throne and the King. He promised Abram that He would give him a land, and that it should belong to Israel for ever. He promised Abram also that he would have a seed for ever. Then He took a man and made him king of that nation; and God said to this man, David: "I will establish thy throne for ever and ever. I will establish thy kingdom, and a Son to sit upon thy throne." These are the covenants that God made with Abram and with David.

The land—the people—the throne—the King! We know what that land is and who that nation is. We know also to whom the throne belongs. And, praise God, we know the King!

But not everybody knows what the throne is, and not everybody knows who the King is. Israel today has a King, but they do not know it. Israel has a throne, an eternal throne; and they do not know that. They are going back to the land. England is letting them go back. But they are going back in unbelief. God will give them the land. They are His people. There is a throne on earth without a king. There is a King in heaven without a throne. The throne on earth must be raised up, and the King that is in heaven must come back again to sit upon His throne. Then will God's unconditional covenants with Abraham and with David find their literal and complete fulfillment!

#### "A NEW COVENANT"

Because man failed to keep the covenant of the Mosaic Law, God has made "a new covenant" on the basis of the

shed blood of His Son, our Saviour, an unconditional covenant, all of grace. To it the Holy Spirit referred in that beautiful benediction of Heb. 13:20, 21:

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

God has made this "everlasting covenant" with all who believe in the finished work of Christ on the cross. "But," you ask, "what is my part in that covenant?" Turn to Rom. 3:24, 25 for your answer. There you read that you are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood . . ."

That is your part, my friend. Have you believed in the blood of Christ for salvation? If you have, God has bound Himself under an "everlasting covenant," that can never be broken, to save you eternally, just because you have faith in His blood. That is the blood covenant. Do you remember how Jesus said, when He instituted the Lord's Supper, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"? (See Matt. 26:28.) God asks you to believe in that blood. When you believe in it, that is your part of it. This, too, is an unconditional covenant, the only condition being that you believe what Christ has done. When you believe it, that is your part of it; and faith in the blood brings you into an everlasting covenant-relationship with God, which binds God to save you eternally.

Of course, Israel will be brought into the blood covenant, for all the blessings they shall receive under the new covenant that God will make with them will be on the ground of the shed blood of our Lord.

My friends, our covenant-keeping God will never break His unconditional covenants with man. He always keeps His Word! And, in these, frail humanity had no part. They are all of God's limitless grace.



His covenant with Noah shall stand "while the earth remaineth," even unto the day when there shall be the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13).

The covenant God made with Abram will be fulfilled when the Jew returns to the land of Palestine and repossesses that land. God is surely preparing them for such a day. There are eight hundred and fifty thousand Jews in that land; and if it were not for restricted immigration, it is estimated that within three years there would be three million Jews in that land. The covenant in its entirety will not be fulfilled until Christ comes to be their King.

The covenant made with David will be fulfilled at the same time. Then the long rejected King, even the Lord Jesus, will sit on David's throne. And "of his kingdom there shall be no end."

These are God's great, unconditional covenants concerning the earth, His people, their land, their throne, and their King. And our righteous God can and will keep these covenants because, in the person of His Son, He has established forever "the new covenant," "the everlasting covenant," made sure by His own precious blood. And it can not be broken!

Are you in this covenant, my friend? Are you trusting in the blood of Jesus to wash you "whiter than snow"? If you are, then you are eternally secure in Him; for He is the God of Noah and of Abraham and of David. His unconditional covenant can not be broken. What a wonderful God we have, and how great is His faithfulness!