



# What Are Covenants?

## Lesson Overview

### 1. Set up a “Covenant”

Make an agreement with the students. Complete the activity at the end of class.

### 2. Watch a Video

Watch *Animated Explanation of ‘The Covenants’* (5min 45sec) at [bit.ly/CovenantGod](http://bit.ly/CovenantGod).

### 3. Discuss the Video

Discuss many ideas introduced in the video. pp.1-2

### 4. Activity *Optional*

Signs of the Covenant. p.3

## New Church Concept Is God Our Brother?

It is not allowable for people to call the Lord ‘brother’ for He is God even in respect to His Human, and God is not a brother, but the Father. The Lord is called brother by Christians who think Jesus was like any other human, when yet the Lord’s Human is Divine....” Kings formally represented the Lord as to Divine Truth...therefore the kings appointed over the sons of Israel called their subjects brothers, although...subjects were not permitted to call their king brother; much less should we call the Lord, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, brother. See *Apocalypse Explained* 746.10-11

## FaithBuilder 1 | Lesson 3 | The Lord

### Set up a “Covenant”

The word “covenant” comes from two words that mean “to come together.” It is an agreement that two or more people commit to. In the Word covenants are promises the Lord makes with His people. For example if the children of Israel obeyed the Lord they would prosper; if they disobeyed, they would perish. Today we think of covenants as binding legal agreements, or religious commitments such as the marriage covenant.

Set up a covenant for the duration of class, e.g. if you remain in your seat, or if you raise your hand and wait to be called on before speaking (for a noisy group), or if you try to answer questions (for a quiet group), I will give you \_\_\_\_\_ (a candy, chocolate, coins, etc.). Promises the Lord made with the children of Israel were with everyone. Decide whether rewards will be for the group, or for individuals. Finish the activity at the end of the lesson.

### Watch a Video

Watch *Animated Explanation of ‘The Covenants’* (5min 45sec, stopping at 5min 12sec) at [bitly.com/CovenantGod](http://bitly.com/CovenantGod). (Enter bitly link in the web browser bar at the top of your screen.)

This video makes some great points. A few ideas implied (but not explained) disagree with New Church teachings. These make interesting points for discussion and are addressed in the questions to encourage students to think about what they and what others believe.

### Discuss

*Choose questions to discuss.*

1. The narrator suggests God can be our Friend, our Father, our Teacher or our Partner. Which of these names resonate with you? Why? Do these names harmonize with New Church ideas of an all-powerful God? (See left sidebar.)
2. Which of the following best describes human partnership with God?
  - Side-by-side equals
  - Master and servant
  - Guide and follower
  - Parent and child
  - Teacher and student
3. Which act in the Bible is called “the fall?” (Adam and Eve; Genesis 3. The video calls it a “broken partnership.”) The video suggests people trying to create a world on their own terms led to injustice, corruption, tragedy and death. This idea is called “original sin”—Adam sinned; all abandoned partnership with God and are cursed. Do New Church teachings agree with this? Can we be cursed by another person’s actions? Does God punish for ever?

### Specific Churches

The church specifically is where the Word is, and where the Lord is known by it and Divine truths are revealed.... The church of the Lord is with all in the whole world who live in good according to their religious principles. All who live in good wherever they are, and acknowledge one God, are accepted by the Lord and come into heaven; since all who are in good acknowledge the Lord, because good is from the Lord, and the Lord is in good. Before the Lord the universal church on earth is as one human. *Heavenly Doctrine* 246

### Covenant

The essence of God's love consists of three things, namely, to love others outside of Himself, to desire to be one with them, and from Himself to make them blessed. See *True Christian Religion* 43

Loving the Lord in return and loving the neighbor as oneself brings about conjunction, and this makes up the very essence of a covenant. When there is conjunction, the Lord is present. See *Arcana Coelestia* 1038

All Divine truth proceeds from the Lord, and when this is received by people, they are joined together with the Lord. This conjunction is what is meant by "covenant." See *Apocalypse Explained* 701

### Jesus Is God

The Lord took on a Human in the world to provide Himself with a tool or means to reveal truth and to fight hell. See *True Christian Religion* 84

4. New Church teachings point to two "churches"—states of receiving and responding to the Lord. The Lord tries to come into covenant with all people. While those who have His Word can know and receive Him in a special way, it's not just *knowing* that brings us into relationship with Him. It's acknowledging Him and *doing* what is good. Does the Lord limit who He reveals Himself to? Can all go to heaven, or only those with the Word? (See *Specific Churches* on right.)
5. The video claims God made four covenant relationships in the Old testament: Noah, Abraham, Israel, and King David. What other incidents could be considered covenants? Did God make a covenant with Adam and Eve? What criteria help you decide whether something is a covenant or not?
6. Did the Lord make a covenant with Noah randomly—or was Noah different? (See Genesis 6:8-9.) Do you agree or disagree with the idea that God asked nothing of Noah? In what ways did Noah obey the Lord? (See Genesis 6:9-22.) Is a covenant possible if only one person makes a commitment?
7. In what ways did the children of Israel represent God to the world during Old Testament times?
8. King David led Israel to obey God's laws and do what was right early in his reign—but later on he broke the covenant. It appears that God rewarded him anyway. In what ways does doing evil (breaking covenant with God) come back to hurt us? Can sins be forgiven (and covenant restored) if we acknowledge them, stop doing them, and move forward in good directions?
9. Prophecies provide an essential link between the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament promises that a Messiah would come, and so Jews were expecting Him. The Lord cited these prophecies when asked who He was. Why was this important? What relationship existed between Jehovah in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament? How many people knew Jesus was God while He was in the world? Most people? A few people?
10. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6) How does knowing Jesus help us connect with God, the Father? Why is it important to think of God in Human form? What are the challenges of knowing and loving a God we cannot see?
11. Most Christians believe that a person must accept Jesus as a personal savior in order to be saved—to go to heaven. They believe Jesus comes to a person, who accepts Him, and from that time the person is saved. (You may have been asked, "Are you saved?") Do New Church teachings support this idea? Can we make a covenant with God in a moment? Or are we are saved in a way that involves making more than a verbal commitment?
12. What covenant renewal was the video pointing to at the end of the Bible, in Revelation? What do New Church teachings tell us about this new covenant?

He has shown you, people, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?  
Micah 6:8

## Signs of the Covenant

Covenants are often sealed with signs or tokens to help people remember them.

- Couples exchange rings as signs of their marriage commitment.
- God gave Noah a rainbow as a sign that there would never again be a flood that would destroy the earth. (Genesis 9)
- Joshua set up a stone under an oak tree to remind the children of Israel of their covenant to follow the Lord. (Joshua 24:26-27)

### Making a Covenant with the Lord

Special sacraments and worship services help us make covenants—sacred promises or contracts—with the Lord. These include baptisms, confirmations, weddings, home dedications and holy supper services. During an adult baptism service, a person answers the following questions:

- Do you acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ to be the one God of heaven and earth?
- Do you acknowledge that the Lord reveals Himself in the Sacred Scriptures and in the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Jerusalem?
- Do you acknowledge that evils are to be shunned as sins against Him, and that a life of good is to be learned and lived?

How is each of these questions part of a covenant with the Lord?

### Symbols of Commitment

1. What are some of the symbols people wear to symbolize their faith in the Lord?
2. What are the plusses or minuses about people using the sign of the cross as a necklace, lapel pin, brooch, bumper sticker, in church, etc.?
3. Which of the following signs and symbols best fits the New Church?

Alpha and Omega

Bride

Lamb

Lamb

Picture of the Lord

Open Word

7 lamp stands

Rainbow

2 tablets 10 Commandments

4. What kinds of things can serve as “witness stones” to help us remember our covenant with the Lord?