

## OVERVIEW OF THE BLOOD COVENANT

Before we enter into an overview of each covenant, I want to do a brief teaching on what a covenant is and how it is initiated. Typically covenants were entered into for one or more of the following reasons: **Business, Love/friendship, or Protection**. Business covenants were designed to protect the interests of both parties involved with trade or commerce. Covenants of love/friendship united families with special relationships and commitments to a shared well being. Covenants of protection were initiated to deter civil and military unrest in a region. Two tribes, for example, might initiate a covenant of protection promising to aid one another if they were attacked.

The covenants in the ancient world typically involved the shedding of blood, hence the blood covenant, which carried the most weight and significance. This covenant literally mingled the blood of two people, making them one. They might cut their palms and shake hands. They might cut their wrists and grip each other's forearm so the blood from the wrists would touch. They might cut their wrists and drip their blood into a cup mixed with red wine and then each drink from the common cup.

In the Old Covenant, God initiated a fourth means of establishing a blood covenant. He used the shed blood of an innocent animal instead of human blood. We will see this more fully developed when we learn of the Covenant with Moses and the Law, where God specifically establishes temple rituals and worship using animals (bulls, goats, sheep, etc.) in a sacrificial system. Typically there were eight steps to initiating a blood covenant.

### **Common Steps to cutting a Blood Covenant**

**Step One.** Once two people, or two tribes, willingly chose to enter into a blood covenant there was an **exchange of garments** or clothing. Normally tribes or families had a particular dress that was uniquely connected to their people. The significance of this exchange was to declare: All I have and all I possess are yours if you need it. God graciously helped us change our clothes. We gave Him our *filthy rags* for *His robes of Righteousness*.

**Step Two.** There was an **exchange of weapons** (a sword, bow, armor, knife, etc). In exchanging weapons you were committing your military resources for the well-being of your covenant partner. Unspoken, but clearly implied, was a willingness to fight to the death for your blood brother. For Christians we have been given the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God as the weapon for our

warfare. God gave us His power in the Holy Spirit to walk as overcomers in the battle being waged against us.

**Step Three.** Here we see an **exchange of names**. Abram became Abraham, Sari became Sarah. In blood covenants names were exchanged and each participant would add a part of the name of the other tribe to their own. This was a type of power of attorney. Tribe A could actually speak on behalf of their covenant partner, tribe B, with full authority of the covenant. For Christians, we have the Name of Jesus. We have been given the privilege, as His children, to pray in His Name, heal in His Name, and cast out demons in His Name. We have been given a new name – child of God. We have been adopted into His family.

**Step Four Cutting or shedding of blood.** Blood represents life. The mingling of two people's blood brings a unique union and bonding together as one. As I mentioned above, God initiated the Old Covenant with the shed blood of innocent animals. When Israel sinned they needed to make atonement to satisfy the demands of justice. The guilty person presented an innocent animal whose blood was shed, paying the price for the transgression and the transgressor. God replaced this sacrificial system and initiated the New Covenant with the shed blood of Jesus on the cross to make atonement for the sins of the whole world and to pay the price for our transgressions. The Lord's Supper is the place where we become one with Christ. As we break bread and drink of the cup we receive the life of Jesus.

**Step Five.** First seen in the covenant with Abraham, **animals were split in half** and laid on the ground with space in between the two parts. In this passage from Genesis we see Abraham walking between the halved animals in a figure eight. The figure eight pattern is similar to the symbol for infinity – never ending; which for us as Christians signifies the eternal nature of the covenant. In other words, an EVERLASTING covenant.

**Step Six. Blessings and curses.** When a covenant was established there were blessings for keeping the covenant and curses for breaking the covenant. In the covenant with Moses we read *Deuteronomy 28*, Moses clearly articulated the blessings for obedience and the consequences of disobedience. The blessings were to motivate covenant partners to enjoy the covenant relationship they had established. The curses were established to deter violating the covenant and destroying the relationship.

In blood covenants the blessings normally fell into a number of very specific areas.

- If I am attacked by an enemy you will come and help me.
- If you are attacked, I will come to your aid.
- If I suffer disaster (crop failure, flood, etc.) you will help provide for me.
- If you suffer disaster I will provide for you.
- If I have something you need, I will freely give it to you; if you have something I need, you will freely give it to me.

In the covenant God established with Abraham it was stated this way,

*I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you (Genesis 12:3).*

**Step Seven.** The establishment of a **memorial**. This was an outward and visible sign of the covenant commitment. One might plant a tree as a memorial. Sometimes they would build a monument of stone. The point of the memorial was to be a constant reminder of the covenant. The memorial that God established for us in the New Covenant, as a constant reminder of His covenant with us, is the CROSS. The old rugged cross planted on Calvary's hill is forever the memorial symbol by which all Christians are reminded of God's eternal love for the human race.

**Step Eight: A memorial meal.** A special meal binding the two people(s) together involved the sharing of bread and wine. This meal might be celebrated annually or at various times throughout the year. The point of the meal was to symbolize the unity and oneness of the two people(s). In the Old Covenant the memorial meal was established as the Passover, to be a constant reminder of God's power in delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt. In the New Covenant, Jesus redefined the Passover and established the Holy Eucharist. He identified the bread as His body and the wine as His blood and commanded us to partake of the meal to receive His life into our lives and to remind us of what He did.

## **Covenant Review**

- Garment Exchange                      Sinful rags for holy garments
- Weapons Exchange                      Human effort for the Holy Spirit and the Word of God
- Name Exchange                         Name in the book of life, known to God, Name of Jesus
- Cutting of Blood                         Innocent animal to the blood of Jesus
- Split Animals                             Infinity, everlasting, eternal covenant
- Blessings and Curses                    Law of the Old Testament to Grace, and Forgiveness, NT
- Memorial                                 Old Rugged Cross
- Memorial Meal                          Passover to Lord's Supper

## **THE SEVEN MAJOR COVENANTS IN THE BIBLE:**

1. The Covenant of Creation – Ephesians 1:3-17
2. The Adamic Covenant – Genesis 3:14-22
3. The Covenant with Noah - Genesis 9:9-15
4. The Abrahamic Covenant – Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 15:12-20
5. The Covenant with Moses and the Law – Exodus 20; Duet 28
6. The Davidic Covenant – 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Jer 33:21; Luke 1:31-33; Rev 22:16
7. The New Covenant – Matthew 26:26-30

## THE GREAT EXCHANGE

The Cross of Christ was the place of The Great Exchange. Everything we deserved regarding the consequences of our sins-- judgment before God's righteous throne, wrath that was due, and punishment that was just-- was placed on Jesus.

<u>Humanity</u>	<u>Jesus</u>
Guilty	Innocent
Unrighteous	Righteous
Profane	Holy
Sinful	Sinless
Disobedient	Obedient
Unfaithful	Faithful
Self-Willed	Surrendered
Prideful	Humble
Greedy	Giving and Generous
Hateful	Loving
Unforgiving	Forgiving
Vengeful	Merciful
Violent	Peaceful
Dishonest	Truthful
Immoral	Pure

Jesus took our place on the cross.

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| • We deserved to be punished.               | He was punished in our place.         |
| • We deserved to die.                       | He died in our place.                 |
| • We deserved the consequences for our sin. | He took the consequences for our sin. |
| • We deserved to go to hell.                | He went to hell for us.               |

Because of Jesus we can now benefit from all that He has accomplished for us at Calvary. We can enter into the **Great Exchange**