

## Blood Covenant

**Genesis 17:7, “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to you and your descendants after you.”**

God pledges that He will be the Lord Almighty to Abraham and his descendants forever. This pledge is irrevocable and is the foundation stone of all other biblical promises. The “*covenant*” between God and His people is one of the most important theological truths of the Bible, yet most believers have very little understanding of this truth. The most striking thing about God’s covenant is that God is holy, all-knowing and all powerful; yet He consents to enter into covenants with people who are weak, sinful and imperfect.

COVENANT = A legal binding agreement between two people (or two groups of people) that involves specific promises on the part of each to the other - both parties binding themselves to fulfil specific obligations. The ancient Hebrew word “covenant” is derived from a root word meaning “to join together/shackle” but it often implies *betweenness*, emphasising the relational element that lies at the core of all Biblical covenants. Human covenants can be between equals or between a superior and an inferior, however, divine covenants are always of the latter type. Furthermore, a divine covenant mostly signifies an obligation undertaken by a single person. When God “cuts a covenant” with His people it is never conditional upon the observance on their part, even though a penalty may be attached to its non-observance.

A *divine covenant* implies much more than a contract, pledge or simple agreement.

All of human covenants have an end date (a time frame), while a divine covenant is a permanent perpetual arrangement. Another difference is that a contract generally involves only one part of a person, such as a skill or ability, while a divine covenant covers a person’s total being. A contract never extends to an unconditional “sharing” of what one has and what one intrinsically is.

By making a covenant with Abraham, God promised to bless his descendants and to make them His special people. Abraham in return was to remain faithful to God and to serve as a channel through which God’s blessings could flow to the rest of the world [**Genesis 12:1-3**]. Also, Abraham and the people of Israel were to “*love the Lord their God with all their heart, with all their soul and with all their strength*” [**Deut. 6:5**].

Note, all biblical covenants were performed by the slaying of one or more animals and the shedding of their blood, the importance of which is reflected in the Hebrew idiom “**cut a covenant**” [**Genesis 15:18**]. Turn with me to **Genesis 15** and let’s read **verses 5 to 10**...

Here God’s setting the stage for a “covenant-cutting” ceremony – to be performed almost exactly as was practised in ancient Near Eastern cultures. Biblical as well as major secular covenants were always established in blood. The animals to be offered were specially selected, cut in halves, and arranged in proper order with the pieces facing opposite each other. The covenant parties then passed between the halves indicating that they were irrevocably bound together in blood. The cutting in halves of the sacrifice symbolised the end of existing lives for the sake of establishing a new and better bond or agreement. Both parties pledged their very lives to the fulfilment of the arrangement they had just made.

In this instance, however, only God passed between the pieces, indicating that it was His covenant and He would assume full responsibility for its administration. Abram was simply a spectator in the wonderful exhibition of God’s “free” grace. Furthermore, because it was initiated by God Himself, it would reflect His life

and divine nature. Consequently, it became an everlasting blood-covenant that would effect each generation from that moment on. God's covenant is a relationship of love and loyalty between the Lord and His chosen people.

Note the life of every creature is in the blood. Therefore, the sacred nature of this bond was attested to by the shedding of "lifeblood." Notice also how each party, when passing between the halves (facing each other), were in fact passing through a veil of blood-soaked flesh.

**Hebrews 10:19,20 - "Having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh."**

The blood-bought ratification of the earlier covenants were a shadow of the "new covenant in Jesus' blood" [Luke 22:20]. Christ's blood was shed as the sign and the seal of our redemption – once for all, and for all time [Hebrews 10:5-19].

Christ's death ushered in the New Covenant under which we are justified by God's grace and mercy rather than our human and futile attempts to keep the law. And Jesus Himself is the Mediator of this better covenant between God and mankind [Hebrews 9:15]. A *mediator* in this instance is the one who makes a covenant lawful, legitimate and accessible. Jesus' sacrificial death served as the oath, or pledge, that God made to you and I to seal this *new covenant*. And this was validated by the shedding of Christ's blood and the separation of His flesh.

The *blood* was God's guarantee that the terms of the covenant would be fulfilled. He is determined to give us eternal life and fellowship with Himself, in spite of our unworthiness. Notice, the new agreement God made with mankind, based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, originated with the promise of the prophet Jeremiah that God would accomplish for us what the Old Covenant had failed to do [Jeremiah 31:31-34].

Under the New Covenant, God would write His Law on human hearts. This promised action suggested a new level of obedience, a new knowledge of the lord, and a new and complete forgiveness of sin. Read **Hebrews 10:14-18...**

Jesus Christ brought this promise (the new covenant) into being. In *Luke 22:20*, when Jesus ate the Passover meal at the Last Supper with His disciples, He spoke of the cup as "**the new covenant in My blood.**" This new arrangement, a better covenant established on far better promises [Hebrews 8:6], rests directly on the sacrificial work of Christ. The new covenant accomplished what the old covenant could not; total removal of sin and cleansing of the conscience [Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 10:2, 22].

The work of Jesus on the cross makes the old covenant "obsolete" and fulfils the promise God gave to the prophet Jeremiah... "**I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**" The most astounding thing for me is that God Himself has sovereignly chosen to be My God [My Father]! This is a personal and individual pledge – written in blood!

Now remember, the blood of Jesus:

[1] Ensured that the covenant was legally valid, binding and also accessible to you and I.

[2] Was a pledge that the "terms of the covenant" would be completely fulfilled.

[3] Was a solemn seal that made the covenant unchangeable and everlasting.

[4] Bound both parties to keep the terms of the covenant. We must love Him completely and God promises to bless us in the process.

[5] Is an assurance that no person would have to pay the penalty by death should they fail to keep their side of the agreement.

[6] Makes sure that there is no condemnation under the laws of the new covenant.

[7] Has sanctified us. We are set apart by God, to God and for God so that the covenant would be performed in an environment of righteousness.