

## THE BLOOD COVENANT

**I**n ancient times the blood covenant was common among almost all of the people of the middle east. It was a way of establishing a binding contract between two men. What we call the Old and New Testaments could easily be called the Old and New Covenants. The typical blood covenant contained nine parts, or steps. These steps are as follows,

1) The two people exchange coats or robes. To a Hebrew, the coat or robe represented the person himself; so when he offered the other person his robe, he was offering himself; even his very life itself.

2) They take off their belt and offer it to the other person. The belt, also called the girdle, was used to hold your sword, your knife, and other fighting instruments. In this way you were saying to the other person that you were offering him your protection. If someone attacks you, they also have me to deal with. Your battles are my battles.

3) "CUT THE COVENANT". In this part, an animal is killed and cut down the middle and the two halves are laid opposite each other. The two parties to the covenant pass between the two halves of the animal and are saying, "May God do so to me and more if I break this covenant. This is a blood covenant, and can not be broken.

4) Raise the right arm and cut the palm of the hand and clasp each other's hand and mingle your blood. This is saying to the other person, "We are becoming one with each other. To intermingle the blood is to intermingle the very life of both people.

5) Exchange names. Each one takes part of the others name and incorporates it into their own.

6) Make a scar or some identifying mark. The scar was the outward evidence of the covenant that others could see and know that the covenant was made. Some times they would rub the cut in the hand to make the scar, then anyone who wanted to fight you would know that he not only had to fight you but another as well.

7) Give terms of the covenant. Both parties to the covenant stand before a witness and list all of their assets and liabilities, because each one takes all of these upon the himself. You are saying, "Every thing I have is yours and everything you have is mine. If something happens to you, your covenant partner will see to it that your wife and children are taken care of.

8) Eat the memorial meal. A loaf of bread is broken in half. Each

feeds his half to the other saying, "This is my body, and I am now giving it to you." Then they take wine as a symbol of his blood and says, "This is my blood which is now your blood."

9) Plant a memorial tree. The two then plant a tree as a memorial to the covenant and sprinkle it with the blood of the animal that was killed for the covenant offering.

These nine steps do not have to take place in the same order that they are listed here. There are a lot of covenants listed in the Bible and there is not great detail about them because everyone is familiar with the procedure and the writer assumes that we know what was done.

In our Bible we have the old and new testament,(or covenant). The old covenant was made with Abram and we have a record of it in the Bible. We can look in on it starting in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis. In verse one we read; ***"After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, `Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.'"*** Here we see God offering His robe and belt to Abram. He offers to be his shield and His rewards. He cuts the covenant in Genesis 15:7-21 ***"And He said to him, `I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.' So He said to him, `Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old male goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon.' Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him." And God said to Abram, `Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions. And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in piece; you shall be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.' And it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with***

***Abram, saying, `To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates; the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.'"*** Here God is giving the terms of the covenant to Abram. But who are the ones passing between the pieces while Abram is in the deep sleep? I submit to you that it is the pre-incarnate Christ. In the Revelation 1:14-15 we see a description of Christ as follows, ***"And His head and His hair were white like wool, like snow, and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters,"*** Here we see Christ, a descendant of Abram, standing in for Abram in the covenant procession. In Genesis 17:4-5+15 we see the exchange of names as follows, ***"As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations....Then God said to Abraham, as for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name."*** In Hebrew, God was called YHWH. Here we see Him taking part of His name and combining it with that of Abram and Sarai. From that time on God was known as, "The God of Abraham". Next we see the making of a scar or symbol of the covenant. In Genesis 17:10-12 we see, ***"This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you; every male among you shall be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants."*** The scar of circumcision bears witness of the covenant. Abraham was tested when God told him to sacrifice his only son Isaac on a small mountain called mount Mariah near the town of Salem. Abraham passed the test. Two thousand years ago, the other party to the covenant was to sacrifice His only Son. The names had been changed by then; Salem was then called Jerusalem, and Mariah had been changed to Calvary, but the places were the same.

The new covenant took place in the same area of the world and contained some of the same players. God was there, of course, and Jesus; now incarnate, and the descendants of Abraham. This time Jesus was not only the representative of Abraham's descendants but He was also the offering; the Lamb that was slain. This time it was God's only Son and not Abraham's. Let us see how the new covenant was completed in Christ.

1) EXCHANGE COATS OR ROBES. We come to this covenant clothed in sin and unrighteousness. He comes clothed in holiness and righteousness. We put on His righteousness. II Corinthians 5:21, ***"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*** He takes our sins upon Him and we take His holiness for ours. What an exchange!

2) TAKE OFF BELT: He protects us and provides us with protection. Luke 10:19, ***"Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you."*** Ephesians 6:13-17 ***"Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, take up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."***

3) CUT THE COVENANT: Hebrews 10:14-18, ***"For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, `This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws upon their heart, and upon their mind I will write them, And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. Now where there is forgiveness for these things, there is no longer any offering for sin."*** Jesus was not only the one making the covenant, but he was also the sacrificial lamb.

4) RAISE RIGHT ARM & MIX BLOOD: Jesus was both man and God. He was holy and also human. As we have the shed blood of Jesus Christ applied to our hearts, His blood cleanses us from all sin and we are also made holy. Our lives are forever intermingled with His.

5) EXCHANGE NAMES: Jesus took on the name, "Son of Man" and we take on the name Christian. We are forever in the family of God.

6) MAKE A SCAR: Jesus has the scars of the nails in His hands and the feet and the spear in His side. We have the circumcision of the heart. Romans 2:29, ***"But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."***

7) GIVE THE COVENANT TERMS: Jesus gives the terms of the covenant in the whole Bible. It is our responsibility to know it so that we can live by it.

8) EAT MEMORIAL MEAL: I Corinthians 11: 23-26, ***"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."***

9) PLANT A MEMORIAL TREE: The cross that Jesus died on was the tree that the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on and it still is a memorial of His covenant with us to this day.

This is our covenant with the God of the universe. He will live up to His end and He expects us to live up to ours.

Paul Ziegler