

## **A Biblical Covenant**

(This is a study that I did several years ago. Unfortunately, I don't know where the information came from (other than God). I would love to give credit where credit is due, but I don't know who it came through. I pray you are as blessed with this study as I was.)

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The Bible is divided into two divisions: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word testament comes from a Latin word, *testamentum*. The more proper name for these two divisions would be "covenant." The Bible is really the story of an Old Covenant and a New Covenant.

The word covenant means a binding agreement between two parties. By definition, it is an agreement to "cut a covenant by the shedding of blood and walking between pieces of flesh." So the two divisions in the Bible are about an Old Blood Covenant and a New Blood Covenant.

A blood covenant between two parties is the closest, the most enduring, the most solemn and the most sacred of all contracts. It absolutely cannot be broken. When you enter into a blood covenant with someone, you promise to give them your life, your love and your protection forever...till death do you part. Marriage is a blood covenant. People don't honor marriage as a blood covenant, but God says it is. As a matter of fact, the reason we wear a wedding ring on the third finger of our left hand is because man believed that this finger had a nerve leading to the heart. And since the heart is the central part of the body that keeps the blood circulating, it became the symbol of life.

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When two Hebrew males entered into a blood covenant, they went through a very specific ceremony. There are a total of 9 steps involved in this.

1. The first thing they did was to take off their coat or robe. To a Hebrew a person's robe represents the person. By taking off my robe and giving it to you, I'm symbolically saying, "I'm giving you all of myself. My total being and my life, I pledge to you." Then the other party would do the same.
2. Next they would take off their belt. To us that holds up our pants, but to them their belt holds their armor together. That consisted of a knife, bow, arrows and sword. Symbolically this represents giving all my strength and pledging all my support and protection. As they would exchange their belts, they would say, "Here is my strength and all my ability to fight. If anybody attacks you, they are also attacking me. Your battles are my battles and mine are yours. I will fight with you. I will help defend you and protect you."
3. Then they would actually "cut the covenant." They did this by taking an animal and splitting it down the middle. They would lay the split parts to each side of the parties involved. With their backs to each other they would walk through the bloody halves and come back to a stop facing each other. In doing this they were saying two things. First, they are saying that they were dying to themselves, giving up the rights to their own lives and beginning a new walk with their covenant partner unto death. In the covenant, each half of the dead animal represents the two parties. Second, the blood covenant is the most solemn pact. Each party points down to the bloody animal that is split in two and they say, "God do so to me and more if I ever try to break this covenant. Just split me right down the middle and feed me to the vultures because I tried to break the most sacred of all compacts."
4. The fourth step was raising their right arms and mixing their own blood. They would cut their right palms and bring them together.

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They would then say, "As our blood intermingles, we believe our lives are intermingling and becoming one life." This was said because blood is our life and to intermingle blood is to intermingle life. This symbolized putting off our old nature and putting on the nature of our blood covenant partner. It symbolized the two becoming one.

5. The fifth step is to exchange names. As they would stand with their blood intermingling, they would exchange names.
6. The sixth step was making a scar, which is the result of the cutting of their palms to intermingle their blood. The scar was a permanent testimony to the covenant. It will bear witness to the covenant they made and served as a seal as to the covenant they made.
7. Next comes the terms of the covenant. They would stand before witnesses and give the terms. They would say, "All my assets are yours. All my money, all my property and all my possessions are yours. If you need any of them, you don't even have to ask. Just come and get it. What's mine is yours and what's yours is mine. And if I die, all my children are yours by adoption and you are responsible for my family." But at the same time, they also get each others liabilities. If either ever gets in trouble financially, they don't come and ask for money, they come and ask, "Where's our money purse?"
8. After all of this, they ate a memorial meal. The memorial meal is to complete the covenant union. In place of the animal and blood, they would share bread and wine. In the Bible, wine is called the blood of the grapes and it represents our own life blood. The bread represents our flesh. They would take a loaf of bread and break it two and feed it to each other saying, "This is symbolic of my body and I'm now putting it in you." Then they serve each other wine and say, "This is symbolic of my life blood which is now your blood." Symbolically, they were in each other and they were one together with a new nature.

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9. The final step was to plant a memorial. This was a memorial to the covenant. It is a reminder. They did this by planting a tree that they sprinkled with the blood of the animal killed at the beginning of the covenant. The blood sprinkled tree and the scar would always be testimony to their covenant.

Let's look at an Old Testament example of a covenant and how it played out. Turn to 1 Sam 18:1-9

18:1 After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. 2 From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. 3 And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 4 Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

5 Whatever Saul sent him to do, David did it so successfully that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the people, and Saul's officers as well.

6 When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. 7 As they danced, they sang:

7 "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

8 Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?"

9 And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David. NIV

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First, we have David. David loves Saul. He has Saul's best interest at heart. David could have killed Saul on several occasions, but he kept forgiving him. David wants to show love to Saul, but Saul won't let him.

Then there's Saul. Saul, on the other hand, is just the opposite of David. David is just the opposite of what Saul makes him out to be.

Jonathan, Saul's son, entered into a blood covenant with David. Jonathan is always trying to bring peace between Saul and David.

Years later when Jonathan marries, he has a son named Mephibosheth. Turn to 2 Sam 4:4

4 (Jonathan son of Saul had a son who was lame in both feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became crippled. His name was Mephibosheth.) NIV Mephibosheth was five when Saul and Jonathan were killed. Mephibosheth doesn't know he is in covenant with the king through his father, Jonathan.

Meanwhile, David reigns as king. See 2 Sam 9:1

David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" NIV  
David wants to show kindness to any of Jonathan's family because of the covenant he made with Jonathan. Continue with 2 Sam 9:6-13

6 When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor.

David said, "Mephibosheth!"

"Your servant," he replied.

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7 "Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table."

8 Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?"

9 Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. 10 You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops, so that your master's grandson may be provided for. And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table." (Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.)

11 Then Ziba said to the king, "Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons.

12 Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica, and all the members of Ziba's household were servants of Mephibosheth. 13 And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king's table, and he was crippled in both feet. NIV

In essence, David says to Mephibosheth, "you don't understand. I know you don't deserve it. I know you don't merit it. And there is nothing you can do to earn or make up for your thoughts and actions against me. You could serve me a thousand years and never make it up. But this has nothing to do with you. I'm doing this because I have sworn by my own blood and entered into an everlasting covenant with your father, Jonathan. Here are the terms of the covenant: I will restore all your land. I will bless you. I'll forgive your past wrongs against me. My house is your house and you will

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live here at the palace. I'll be a father to you and adopt you as my own son. This scar is the testimony and witness to my covenant with you." Mephibosheth now has to make a choice either to enter into the covenant with David or go back into the desert.

Doesn't sound like much of a choice. Let's look at the big picture. The man he has hated all of his life he must now love with all of his life. He must now become one with the man he ran away from and of whom he was afraid. He must swallow his pride and humble himself. He must admit he was wrong and turn his back on all his old ways of thinking about David. And his old friends will ridicule him, make fun of him, and call him a weakling for giving in to David. It's now his choice, his free will. David can't force the covenant on him.

We know the story and he chose to stay with David. Immediately all the things David promised took place. Mephibosheth's land was restored. He was blessed with the blessings of a child of the king. All his past wrongs against David were forgiven. He joined David in a covenant meal, ate regularly at the king's table and lived at the king's palace. The descendants of Mephibosheth were blessed also because they too were in covenant and no one could harm them.

Let's now look at the New Covenant. All creatures put together don't equal the Creator. So if God became man, while at the same time, remaining God, He could stand in for all creation. He could represent all mankind. All humanity would be in Him. He could take the place of every person who ever lived. And being equal to God, even though a man, He could enter into covenant with Himself on behalf of all humanity.

Enter Yeshua! Turn to 1 Peter 1:18-20

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of

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life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. NIV

And we were there when the covenant was cut because, as our Creator, we were in Him.

And in God's own time, as He remembered the covenant that He made with Himself from the beginning, He came to the earth as one of us. He was born of the seed of a woman, a virgin. He was born of the seed of woman, not man, so that the blood flowing through His veins would be uncontaminated by sin.

He didn't carry that deadly blood disease passed on by Adam called the sin nature. As God, He was perfectly holy and righteous. And He prepared for Himself a body. It was a body that would not know sin; therefore, the blood in that body was spotless and without blemish. So the pre-existing, eternal, Messiah, the Son of God, exchanged names with us and because Yeshua, the Son of Man, the representative of all mankind. He called Himself the Son of Man to identify Himself with all mankind. For 33 years He lived a perfect life in order to be the once and for all perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Whether we recognize it or not, Yeshua cut a covenant with us. During the covenant ceremony, Jesus gathers His disciples together to participate in the covenant meal of bread and wine. After the meal Jesus went out and left a memorial to the covenant. He planted a tree. And He poured out blood on it. But it wasn't the blood of bulls and goats; it was His own blood. And it wasn't a little knick in His wrist. It was all His blood poured out at the foot of the cross, the blood-stained tree that stands forever as a memorial to the covenant.

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The “Lamb of God” slain from the foundations of the world cut covenant for all mankind. And we were there. We were crucified with Him, because like Mephibosheth, we were in Him as our Creator. He took on our robe of self-righteousness which is like filthy rags. He took on our nature. He took on all our liabilities which are the sins of all mankind. They were all placed on Him. All of our spiritual leprosy, that deadly blood disease we carry, was put on Him and He who knew no sin became sin for us.

It was necessary for God to do this because the sin nature within each of us separates us from God. All of us have sinned and come short of God’s glory. The penalty for our sin is death. We all know this to be true which is why we are afraid of God. Jesus took all of this on Himself at the cross.

Jesus remembers this covenant. He sends His Holy Spirit to invite us to His table. Instead of living like a child of the king, we’ve been living like a runaway slave. But now the Holy Spirit is wooing us and convicting us. He’s bringing you to God, and just as we think we’re about to get it, just as we think the big heavenly club is about to come down on us, God says, “Don’t be afraid. I’ve asked you to come so I can be kind to you because of the covenant I made with Myself on your behalf. I’ve been looking for you because I want to bless you.”

We, like Mephibosheth, must choose. God tells us that He understands that we don’t deserve it. He knows there is nothing we can ever do to make up for our thoughts and actions against Him. But it has nothing to do with us deserving it. God tells us that He is doing this because He swore by His own blood and entered into an everlasting covenant and we were there.

God says, “And here are the terms of the covenant. I’ll take all your liabilities, all your sins, on Myself and become sin for you. I’ll forgive

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your iniquities and remember them no more. I'll take all your self-righteousness and give you My own righteousness which is pure and holy and acceptable to Me."

"You clothe me with your robe of sin and I'll clothe you with My garment of salvation and My robe or righteousness which is My pure life blood poured out on the cross for you. I'll impute it to you and count you as righteous. We'll exchange natures. For I'll put My Spirit within you and bless you with all spiritual blessings. You'll partake of My own nature by the intermingling of our blood."

"You can become part of me and I'll live in your heart. My house will be your house. You can feast at My table. I'll be a Father to you and adopt you as My own son. You will reign with Me for a thousand years and have eternal life with Me. This is My free gift to you to show you that I love you."

Look at the following verses:

Jer 31:31-34

31 "The time is coming," declares the LORD,  
"when I will make a new covenant  
with the house of Israel  
and with the house of Judah.

32 It will not be like the covenant  
I made with their forefathers  
when I took them by the hand  
to lead them out of Egypt,  
because they broke my covenant,  
though I was a husband to them,"  
declares the LORD.

33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel  
after that time," declares the LORD.  
"I will put my law in their minds  
and write it on their hearts.

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I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.  
34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor,  
or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,'  
because they will all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest,"  
declares the LORD.  
"For I will forgive their wickedness  
and will remember their sins no more." NIV

Ezek 11:19-20

19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. 20 Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. NIV

Ezek 36:25-28

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. 28 You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. NIV

Heb 8:8-12

8 But God found fault with the people and said:

"The time is coming, declares the Lord,  
when I will make a new covenant  
with the house of Israel

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and with the house of Judah.

9 It will not be like the covenant  
I made with their forefathers  
when I took them by the hand  
to lead them out of Egypt,  
because they did not remain faithful to my covenant,  
and I turned away from them,  
declares the Lord.

10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel  
after that time, declares the Lord.

I will put my laws in their minds  
and write them on their hearts.  
I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.

11 No longer will a man teach his neighbor,  
or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'  
because they will all know me,  
from the least of them to the greatest.

12 For I will forgive their wickedness  
and will remember their sins no more." NIV

Rev 20:4

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. NIV

Rev 22:1-5

1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the

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Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. NIV

We are now in the same position as we found Mephibosheth. We must choose to accept or reject the covenant offer. We either enter into the Covenant through Yeshua or go back into the desert. Yeshua says that if we enter into the covenant, we will be known as His friend and we'll even exchange names. Now we'll be called Christians.

Turn to John 6:53-58

53 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. NIV Yeshua further explains that these words He is speaking are spiritual words of spiritual things for divine human inter-union is spiritual. Look at John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. NIV

God is Spirit and to worship Him we must worship Him in spirit. Look at John 4:24

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"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." NASB

We must be born again spiritually. Turn to John 3:1-7

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; 2 this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' NASB

Then there is the scar. Look at John 20:22

And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. NIV

The Holy Spirit is the seal that bears witness and testifies to the covenant. He is the constant reminder, the guarantee that we are in covenant with God through the blood of Yeshua. So when Satan, the enemy, comes against the Christian, we show him our scar...the power of the Holy Spirit. Greater is He who is in us (the Holy Spirit) than he (Satan) that is in the world. (1 Jn 4:4) And when Satan sees our scar, he will flee from us because he knows he has already been whipped by our blood covenant brother, Yeshua. Christians have the authority to go into the world in "The Name" through the power of the Holy Spirit.

With this background, let's look at the Covenant God struck with Abraham in Gen 15. God progressively continues to reveal His covenant with man that He, God, laid from the foundations of the

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world. And before He actually comes to earth to cut the covenant Himself as a man, He reveals it most clearly through Abraham. Read Gen 15:1, 8-18

15:1 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

"Do not be afraid, Abram.  
I am your shield,  
your very great reward."  
NIV

8 But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"

9 So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."

10 Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. 11 Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

12 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. 13 Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. 15 You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. 16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

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17 When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. 18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—NIV

God says to Abram that He is Abram's shield and great reward. With this statement, God is taking the initiative by offering His robe and His belt to Abram. Now God doesn't have a physical robe that He exchanges with Abram. But since the robe represents the person, God simply offers Himself. In effect, God says, "Abram, here is Myself. I offer you Me. I am your reward. All that I am, I give to you. I am holy; I give you My holiness. I am righteous; I give you My righteousness. I give you My life, pledging to lay it down on your behalf if you will accept this covenant and enter into it with Me."

Then God says, "Abram, I am your shield. I don't offer you a shield: I am your shield. I will protect you and fight your battles for you. I will be your strength. If anyone attacks you, they are really attacking Me. Your battles are Mine. Put Me on as your full armor. And when you go into battle, I'll fight for you. You just stand aside and let Me do it."

Then God requests that Abram gather up some clean animals, i.e., animals that God has declared as "clean" or acceptable to Him. They would serve as substitutionary sacrifices leading up to the ultimate sacrifice. By splitting and animals down the middle and dividing the halves, Abram knows that God is making a covenant with him.

Notice Gen 15:11. Here we see Abram trying to help God out. As the bloody halves of the animals lay there separated, fowls swoop down and try to devour the carcasses. These fowls are considered unclean by God and they attempt to eat the clean sacrifice ordained by God as acceptable to Him.

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Look at Matt 13:4

and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. NASU

Matt 13:19

"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. NASU

Jesus says Satan, the evil one, is like the unclean fowl that swoops down to snatch away the seeds of the gospel to keep people from believing. The fowls in Genesis represent Satan swooping down to break up this covenant before it is completed by snatching away the acceptable sacrifice before it can be offered. So we see Abram trying to help God out by shooing them away.

Finally, God says to Abram, "Look, you really don't understand. If I'm going to establish a covenant with man; I'm going to have to do it all if it's going to be done at all. If you are involved in this in any way, it's going to be messed up. If you try to work, if you try to be righteous, if you try to help in any way, this covenant will be polluted with you. And then it won't be acceptable to Me. I'm the only one who can make a covenant with Me. I'm going to swear by Myself to this covenant. And to make sure you don't try to help Me out anymore, I'm going to put you to sleep through the whole ceremony. And when it's over, I'll wake you up."

Then Abram saw passing between the bloody animals, someone taking his place. Someone was walking where he should have been walking. Someone was saying, "dying to myself. I'm giving up the rights to my own life. I'm beginning a new walk with my covenant partner unto death."

Look at the description of Jesus in Matt 17:2

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There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. NIV  
and Rev 1:14-15

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. NIV

Abram saw Jesus walking in his place. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, in his pre-existing glory, cut covenant with God the Father and stood in for Abram. He is the only one who could stand in for Abram. And all of Abram's unborn seed were included in the covenant because they were in Abram.

Then in Gen 17, God awakens Abram to seal the covenant. The seal, as we discussed before, is the scar given as the testimony to the covenant. The scar would bear witness to the covenant. The scar that sealed and testified to this covenant was circumcision. It was the token of the everlasting covenant. Abram would bear in his flesh, the evidence that he had entered into blood covenant with God through Jesus.

Then according to covenant ritual, God and Abram changed names. God, who is called YHWH in Hebrew, took the "H" out of His own name and put it in Abram's name. So Abram's name was changed to Abraham. Likewise, Sara's name is changed to Sarah. God took on Abraham's name and became known as the God of Abraham. And now that the covenant is cut, they are known as friends. Abraham is to be known as the friend of God. See James 2:23

And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. NIV

Now look at Gen 18:11

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Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. NIV  
We see that if Abraham and Sarah are to have a son, it will definitely have to be a supernatural birth. Abraham comes to the persuasion that God is bound to the covenant and can't break it. So He has to deliver. Furthermore, since He is God, He's also capable of delivering. So a son is born to Abraham through Sarah and he's called Isaac. God is living up to His part of the covenant.

But now we recall that Abraham slept through the covenant. God did it all. Abraham had nothing to do with it. God is proving Himself faithful so now it's time to test Abraham's faithfulness to the covenant. Remember that when a covenant is cut, each party completely surrenders himself in loving trust to the other party. He must be willing to give his total being, his total life, his total heart to the one he is in covenant with. It is a dying to one's self and a surrender of yourself to the one you are in covenant with. The blood covenant is not a mere intellectual understanding between Abraham and God, or you and God.

There is only one way to find out Abraham's commitment to the covenant. That way is to test Abraham with that which is most dear to him, his son Isaac. In offering his son, Abraham would prove in the most supreme way that he loved God and would be faithful to the covenant. This event is described for us in Gen 22. In Gen 22:8 Abraham makes a truly amazing statement. Gen 22:8

And Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." NASB

In the Hebrew it says that God Himself will be the sacrifice. Isaac asked his father Abraham where the lamb for the offering was and Abraham said that God would provide *Himself* as the burnt offering. From this statement we understand that Abraham believed that God would provide a substitute sacrifice on his behalf. Abraham believed God and because of his belief, God counted him as righteous. And

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because Abraham believed these things in his heart, God gave Abraham His (God's) own robe of righteousness. Because of Abraham's faith, God was his shield, his protection. The righteousness of God was imputed or counted to Abraham's behalf because he believed.

The Living Bible translates Rom 9:8 as follows: "

...not all of Abraham's children are the children of God, but only those who believe the promise of salvation He made to Abraham."

God ask us to believe the same thing He asked Abraham to believe. He asks us to believe that Jesus, the Son of God, has entered into a covenant with God the Father on our behalf. We are separated from God by our sin and there's no way we can shoo away the fowls ourselves; meaning, there's nothing we can do to reconcile ourselves to God. There is no good work we can do to earn our way into the covenant. We can't help God out with our own righteousness. In fact, the only way we can come into the covenant is to confess helplessness before God and accept the One who walked in our place as Abraham did.

First, we're asked to believe in a supernatural birth. As with Abraham, God would bring His only begotten Son into the world in the flesh, supernaturally. He would be born of a virgin...the seed of a woman, thus not inheriting man's sin nature passed down from Adam.

God promised Abraham that in his seed, all nations of the earth would be blessed. And now it's time for God to prove His fidelity to the covenant with Abraham and Abraham's seed.

When we, like Isaac, turn to God and ask, "Where is the sacrifice? Who will take my place and be my sin substitute? Who will pay the penalty for me?"

## **A Biblical Covenant**

The answer comes back, "God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering. Jesus is the Lamb of God." But where Isaac was not worthy and needed a substitute for himself, Jesus is worthy. All the fullness of God dwelled in Him bodily. God truly did provide Himself for us. We are asked to believe that God sent His only Son to sacrifice Himself as a sin substitute.

Next, we are asked to believe that after Jesus was in the grave for three days, God the Father resurrected Him to be the first-born of the covenant children of God, and many would come thereafter through Jesus. We even change our name and are called Christians.

Seven weeks after the substitutionary sacrifice, the Holy Spirit comes to begin His work of seeking the bride for Jesus.

When we believe what Abraham believed, the righteousness of Jesus is imputed or counted to us. We put on the robe of the Lord Jesus and His righteousness. We are the righteousness of God in Jesus. Through faith in Him, He becomes our shield and the full armor of our salvation. He is our exceedingly great reward.

We become children of God by faith in Jesus; not evidenced by a circumcision of the flesh, but a circumcision of the heart. This happens when Jesus puts His Spirit within us. When Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly," (Jn 10:10 KJV) He was talking about His life living in us through the person of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we can do all things through Jesus who strengthens us (Phil 4:13). This is the promised land of rest God has made available to us. All who will may walk in this land by entering into the blood covenant with God through Jesus.