

Introduction:

- *"So the Lord made a covenant with Abram that day..."* (Genesis 15:18, NLT)
 - It was a blood covenant that God made with Abraham that day.
 - Most of the covenants the God made with His people involved the shedding of blood.
- *"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."* (Matthew 26:28, NKJV)
 - It was a blood covenant that Jesus declared was the New Covenant He was making!
 - Heb 9:22 without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin.
- My heart tonight is to encourage us with some understanding of covenant. I think many people are scared of covenants because they are afraid of breaking them. IE. HOAs

I. What Is A Covenant

- A. To understand the covenants that God has made with His people through years we have to go back to Genesis and begin to follow the activity of God as these covenants were being made.
 1. A covenant is basically a binding agreement between two people or parties. It is a binding agreement that is not to be taken lightly. Food for thought: Imagine God putting Himself in a binding agreement with us. The thought is really quite interesting, encouraging and very kind.
 - a) A covenant is not an "IF" you do this "THEN" I will do that scenario.
 - b) A covenant in the strict biblical sense is not a joint obligation but rather a commitment one makes to another. A covenant is a relationship wherein the party making the covenant binds himself to fulfill certain conditions.
 2. A huge difference between God's covenant and mans is that it God's covenant with man is not a mutual agreement worked out between the two.
 - a) We are recipients, not contributors; we are not expected to offer ideas to the agreement;
 - b) we are called to accept it as offered, to keep it as demanded, and to receive the results that God, by oath, assures will not be withheld.
 3. Another difference: covenants with God usually do not involve any human obligation. The covenants are made by God for man's benefit!!! They declare His goodness to His creation! We can't forget that God is always for us and working on our behalf.
 4. Covenants were meant to bring people together in peace, in friendship, in unity. Their lives were to be mingled, a part of each others. That is why so many hedonistic covenants involved the drinking of each others blood. *"But anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise that person at the last day."* (John 6:54, NLT) Ie. Of course Jesus is referring to Passover wine. As we study covenant it is important to keep in mind the goodness of God towards us. Passover is the mingling of relationship between God and man.
- B. The parts of a covenant:
 1. The parties involved- the people involved.
 2. The promises made - the thing that is assured.
 3. The obligation established- involves the maintenance and fulfilling of the covenant.

4. The ratification carried out - what makes it official
5. The fulfillment - the carrying out of the covenantal promise.

II. Covenants In The Word

A. Covenant with Adam. There were two made with man.

1. The beginning in Eden. *"Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.""* (Genesis 2:15-17, NKJV)
 - a) Covenant is not used in this passage but it is used in: *"But like Adam, you broke my covenant and betrayed my trust."* (Hosea 6:7, NLT)
 - b) It is a divine covenant because God sets all the terms.
 - c) The parts:
 - (1) It is between God and man.
 - (2) It carries the promise of continuing life. (Tree of Life is accessible.) True life is found outside of man in God. It is covenant life!
 - (3) The obligation is to not eat of the tree in the middle of the Garden. Obedience! But let's note here: man is not working to get life. He is already alive in God.
 - (4) Since God made it He will fulfill it. God is backing it up.
 - (5) All man has to do is to live, is not eat the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
2. The second covenant with Adam comes after the fall. Gen 3:14-19
 - a) God covers them with skins of animals. Something had to die.
 - b) The shedding of blood to cover their shame.
 - c) The good news is that God does not abandon covenant. Man may be faithless but God is faithful! The thread of life continues in His promise of a serpent crusher, the inroad to Life!
 - d) God's covenant of grace is foreshadowed in God's words!

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B. Covenant with Noah - Following the flood.

1. *""Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.""* (Genesis 9:9-11, ESV)
 - a) Observation:
 - (1) The wickedness of man is great.
 - (2) God's patience is exhausted.
 - (3) God does not give up on man! Even in judgment a pathway to life is being built.
 - b) Note again God's words,
 - (1) This is an unconditional covenant.
 - (2) "My covenant..." Two times he says, "I establish my covenant with you."
 - (3) Noah is 'like Adam' He comes out of a boat and is in a new world. With the same command given to Adam, "be fruitful and multiply" Gen 9:1,7
 - (4) Like Adam he leads his family into sin by his choices.

- (5) Noah was not without sin but he did find favor Gen 6:8
- c) The parts:
- (1) Between God and Noah and his descendants and all living creatures.
Generational.
 - (2) Promise of never destroying earth with water again. The promise is based on God's faithfulness and that alone. There is no "condition" under which God will renege on His promise. Just as circumcision was a reminder of His covenant with the Jewish people the rainbow is the sign of the Noahic covenant.
 - (a) In the rainbow we should always be reminded of God's faithfulness and His amazing grace.
 - (b) We should also be reminded that our God is a holy and righteous God who has a holy hatred for sin and who will not allow sin to go unpunished forever.
 - (c) Also, just as God provided a way for Noah and his family to be saved in the ark, He also has provided a way for us to be saved through Jesus Christ
 - (3) No obligation to this covenant. God binds himself to maintain the covenant. Man has to do nothing. God's goodness is revealed once again in who He is. God seals the covenant with a sign—a rainbow, to remind man of God's promise.
 - (a) Man in return is not to murder.
 - (b) He is not to eat meat with blood. Blood is being valued because the blood has life in it.
 - (4) God will fulfill it.
 - (5) All man has to do is just stay alive.
2. This covenant is a blessing to the whole human race.
- a) But we also must remember that under the boat was the sea of humanity perishing into eternity separate from God.
 - b) So we see both the mercy and heart of God towards us in both righteousness that saves and righteousness that separates or judges. Gen 6:8 Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Note: God is binding himself to Noah, his family and all creation.
- C. Covenant with Abraham - this covenant is unique in that when God appeared to him to make a covenant...Abraham knew what it meant. God was coming into a covenant of strong friendship with him! This is why Abraham is called a friend of God. (*"and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God."* (James 2:23, ESV); *"But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;"* (Isaiah 41:8, ESV); *And did you not give this land forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham?* (2 Chron 20:7 NLT) Abraham is the only person called friend of God in the OT.
1. Abraham's faith and obedience draws God to him. *So Abraham went* Gen 12:4 and *by faith he obey* Heb 11:8
 2. With this background God makes a covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:18) and promises him land and many descendants in return. All he has to do is walk and obey.
 3. This covenant was to bring the Israelite nation into being as a covenant people.
 4. The parts:

- a) The covenant is between God and Abraham, and the generations to come.
 - (1) It is an unconditional covenant as illustrated by the events of Gen 15 where God passed between the sacrifices. Abraham was asleep and did not participate.
 - (2) Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness. This foreshadows what was to come in Christ.
 - b) The promise of a son, descendants, land and spiritual blessing.
 - c) The ratification of the promise was God's own heavy dreadful presence upon Abraham while he slept and the fire of God passed between the sacrifices.
 - d) The obligation was circumcision. *"You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you."* (Genesis 17:11, NLT)
 - e) The mark of God upon Abraham and his descendants. Again, the shedding of blood. This circumcision is brought to completion with the circumcision of the heart.
 - f) The fulfillment foreshadows the coming of Christ and men receiving the word of God (righteousness by faith) in the son of God.
 - g) The Heb word 'Heemeen' means to trust God in the way of unqualified commitment of yourself to God. He was a true "friend of God".
 - (1) Gen 22:16 God swore by His own name! In other words, "If this fails, you own me."
 - (2) At this point everything God has is Abrahams and everything Abraham has is Gods.
 - (3) He is a covenant keeping God!
 - h) We don't become heirs of Abraham's promises by working for God but by being confident that God works for us.
- D. Covenant with Moses
 - E. Covenant with David
 - F. The New Covenant