

God's Covenant with Abram

Handout for Lesson 6

Genesis 15

Covenant

- The fundamental difference between a covenant and any other agreement was the relationship established between the covenant makers.
- There were specific promises made with benefits for keeping the covenant and penalties if it was broken.
- Covenanting parties viewed each other as friends who were bound together permanently.
- To be in covenant was to be in relationship.

Cutting a Covenant

After the terms of the covenant were agreed upon, a ceremony was held to “cut the covenant”.

Preparation

- The location for the ceremony required two hills sloped together with a ditch between them.
- One or more animals were required for a blood sacrifice.
- Of the two parties, the lesser party was required to get the animal or animals.
- The covenant animals were “cut” from nose to tail and each half was placed opposite the other on the two hills.
- The blood of the animals ran into the ditch between the hills forming a path of blood.

The Ceremony

- Both parties took off their sandals.
- The greater party walked first, barefoot through the blood.
- The lesser party walked second, also barefoot through the blood.

The Commitment

- “If I fail to keep my part of this covenant, then you may do this to me.” This was a graphic picture of the commitment, my life for my failure to keep the covenant.

The “Cutting” of the Abrahamic Covenant

“So the LORD said to him (Abram), ‘Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon’. 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. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

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 for four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.’

When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram." Genesis 15:9-18

What the Abrahamic Covenant 'Said'.

- God's desire was to have a relationship eternally with a people who persistently rejected Him.
- God was willing to prove His devotion to the relationship by offering His own life.
- God was willing to pay the price for any covenant failure on the part of the human being with whom He was in relationship with.

On that day, God sealed the death warrant for His Son, Jesus.

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that **everyone who believes in Him** will not perish but have eternal life."* John 3:16

Jesus Christ, Son of God, and the Abrahamic Covenant

"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body given (cut) for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you." Luke 22:19, 20

*"The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is broken (cut) for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the **new covenant in My blood**; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."* 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

The Lord's Supper, Communion, the Eucharist

When we partake of Communion, we are acknowledging that we too are part of God's Covenant. What we are saying is "Thank you for keeping Your promise!"

When the time was right, God sent His Son to fulfill the promise made when He walked the blood path in front of Abram. His promise that in Abram, the entire world would be blessed has been fulfilled in Jesus' death. God, through His Son Jesus Christ has mended that relationship. And His salvation is available to anyone, in any nation, who will come to Him.

Next time you partake of Communion, take time to thank God for keeping His promise to Abram so that you and I can have a personal relationship with Him.

In Christ, God fulfilled the promise He made to the Hebrews of giving His own life to seal the covenant He had made with them. For this reason, Jesus could say, *"Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the Law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to fulfill them. I assure you, until heaven and earth disappear, even the smallest detail of God's Law will remain until its purpose is achieved."* Matthew 5:17, 18

God's choice of the covenant to describe His relationship with His people highlights the degree of His love for us. Not only does the great sovereign Creator of heaven and earth descend to be in relationship with sinful human beings, but He offers His own life to provide escape for covenant breakers. Understanding what a covenant was in the ancient Near Eastern culture made relationship with God an indescribable gift to those who believed in Him.

It should be no less for us!

Jesus Returns To Claim What Is Rightfully His Own

John the apostle saw this vision, *"I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice He judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns. He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself. **He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood**, and His name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty (El Shaddai). On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."*

Revelation 19:11-16