

**Introduction:**

- This is three in a series of messages on Covenant.
  - Our first one was about why covenant seems foggy to us in the West. I.e. Visibility.
  - Last week we started exploring covenant looking at terms basic understanding, etc. The focus was this point: Covenant creates a bonding for life. We determined that there are two major covenants found in the Word: One, the Old Covenant cut with Abraham and the New Covenant cut with Christ.
  - We briefly looked at God's covenant with Abraham.
- A key scripture to our study is: *"The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant."* (Psalm 25:14, ESV)
- Tonight I want to start with recognizing covenant and covenant terms. When you are able to recognize covenant and covenant terms the Bible comes alive with fresh significant revelation.

**I. Recognizing Covenant**

- A. Covenant Language is all through the Bible. We have become so familiar with it that we are not alerted to it or we take it for granted. I.e. The old illustration, "Momma why do you cut the turkey in half to bake it? That is what grandma did. Grandma, why did you cut the turkey in half? Because it wouldn't fit in the oven, otherwise. So familiarity with covenant will cause us to lose the "why?" of covenant. I am talking about recognizing covenant.
1. Language is what makes a people group able to communicate with one another. It also serves as a barrier when that language is not understood. I.e. Bable.
    - a) As long as we speak the same language we can communicate. Unless, you are speaking something in my language that I do not understand. I.e. Trigonometry.
    - b) If we do not speak the same language or understand what is meant by the language, we have a barrier.
  2. Therefore, if we speak the same language and we understand the terms, communication is taking place—we are communicating. If we do not understand the terms of covenant then we will not receive benefits of what is being supplied. Nor will we be able to interact with our covenant partner.
- B. Recognizing covenant terms. What are the words that are used to communicate covenant in the Bible?
1. Covenant, oath, swear, sacrifice, blood, priest, law, blessings and curses, mercy, loving kindness, faithful, inheritance, generations, exchange.
  2. Like I said last week when I used terms related to football anyone who knows football would realize I am talking football. I.e. You may recognize the terms associate them to football but never understand the game. You may recognize the terms associated with covenant but not understand how to operate in it.
  3. What I want you to do as you read the scripture is to recognize when the writer is

using covenant terms. When he does, he is speaking from a covenant perspective.

4. Many of these terms actually describe the process of cutting covenant. Therefore when the NT writers uses them we have to be sharp to catch and not just read over them. Ie. Eph 1. Briefly look for covenant terms in this passage. Also Heb 6-10.

## II. Understanding what covenant means. The Blood Covenant, Garlow, pp. 25.

- A. Covenant means to 'cut' to bind together in obligation. Not with ink, but with blood.
  1. It is a very encompassing agreement between two parties that is carefully outlined and agreed to.
  2. It is an agreement between two parties that bind them together with specific obligations.
  3. A covenant was for life and the generations to follow.
  4. Entered into on the basis of strengths and weakness that complement one another.
  5. "A tangible expression of love and trust."
  6. A relationship based on blood being shed to enact the seriousness of covenant.
  7. There is no such thing as a casual covenant. This covenant is based on 'hesed' love, (kindness or loving kindness) **which is the active pursuit of wanting to bless ones covenant partner.**\*\*\*\* Here is an 'hesed' filled OT passage! *"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."* (Lamentations 3:22-24, ESV)
- B. Understanding terms.
  1. When looking for terms that identify a covenant partner look for these terms and phrases:
    - a) In, with, together with, joined to. They are most often spoken sometimes implied.
    - b) Ie. Eph 2:4-10
  2. Ceremonial words:
    - a) Blessings, curses, oath, vows, swearing, treaty, testament.
    - b) Ie. see Dt 28
    - c) One of the blessings inherent in the covenant relationship is that we are partners with powerful and fearsome Almighty God!
  3. Remember
    - a) In the West this is the mental exercise of recalling.
    - b) But the word in Heb means: "to do the past event" and not just think about it. It meant to recreate the past event bringing it into the present moment by re-enacting. Ie. Similar to a couple renewing wedding vows.

### III. Stages of Covenant

- A. Covenant involves ceremony. And ceremony marks the occasion and causes the agreements to be remembered and have validity.
  - 1. A study of anthropology reveals that most histories of ancient people groups reflect covenant in some form or another that is practiced.
  - 2. Through cutting covenant, God demonstrates His love for all people and His desire to have fellowship with them.
  - 3. Covenant was a language that all ancients understood.
- B. Stages of cutting covenant.
  - 1. Representative - every covenant was cut between two individuals or through their representative. Representative had to be of same line as main party.
    - a) When using a representative, it can be said that all of the people he represents are "In him."
    - b) This individual serves as the guarantee for the covenant promises.
  - 2. Terms - specific responsibilities are laid out in full view of each tribe.
    - a) They are written out or documented.
    - b) All for the purpose of remembrance.
  - 3. Blood Sacrifice - each covenant required the sacrifice of an animal or the shedding of blood. Thus - 'to cut the covenant.' You don't make covenant you cut covenant.
    - a) "The blood symbolized an entering into a type of death to self and passing through to a new life of union together with a new covenant partner." Garlow, p.33.
  - 4. Walk of death – covenant partners face each other and walk between the sacrifice pieces. They walk in a figure 8 thus signifying infinity.
  - 5. Mark on the body
    - a) Covenant partners cut themselves in their wrist and shake hands called the striking of the hands. The wound would leave a mark.
    - b) When you greeted one another you raised your hand and showed your mark. Is. 49:16 God says, "*I have engraved you on the palm of my hands.*"
  - 6. Oaths and vows.
    - a) Vows are made to keep the oath.
    - b) Blessings for keeping covenant are spoken as well as curses for breaking the oath.
    - c) A God/god was called upon to back it up.
  - 7. A meal is shared.
  - 8. Memorials are established.
    - a) Noah - rainbow.
    - b) Moses had the mountain of cursing (Ebal) and the mountain of blessing (Gerazim).

- c) Joshua - had men bring stones from the river when they crossed over.
- 9. Powerful exchanges:
  - a) Robe - identity
  - b) Belts - strength, enemies.
  - c) Names -
    - (1) Abram to AbraHam - puts God's name in the middle of Abraham's new name. Same with Sarah. God becomes know as 'God of Abraham.'
- 10. Exchange of oldest male child. This was the ultimate part of covenant!
  - a) Gen 22:1-2 Take now your son, Isaac.
  - b) Jesus was God's Son given.

**Conclusion:**

- Covenant is creating a bonding together of life. It is not a contract. It is far stronger.
- It is found all through the Bible we just have to learn to recognize it.