

## COVENANT

The topic of covenant has unfolded into so much more than I have previously understood so we have decided to make it a little mini series. It will encompass several newsletters so that I can better share the full scope of what Holy Spirit is teaching me.

Someone recently wrote to tell me that all my enemies have been defeated and I was my own worst enemy. I have thought long and hard about that and put it into my spiritual thought process to let it cogitate. I did not answer the email as I had to ponder the idea. After much thought, I have come up with an answer that may not be all that pleasant.

Yes, all our enemies are defeated. The very moment God cut the covenant with Abram, all the enemies of the children of Israel were defeated by the promise of God. Even the fate of the Amorites was sealed before a single child of Abraham was born. It was part of the covenant God cut, putting His own life on the line 400 years before any of those enemies or those Israelites were even born.

All their enemies were defeated the moment the covenant was cut. They were, in essence, their own worst enemies when they entered the Promised Land and saw themselves as grasshoppers in their own eyes. Even though they had the promise of their enemy's defeat, they physically had to go in and take care of them personally. I am taking care of my enemies personally, allowing God to reveal the darkest corners of my soul in the scrutiny of His light so that freedom can reign supreme in my life. Until every corner is flooded with His light and by His blood, I am my own worst enemy because in some areas of my life I still am a cohort of the enemy that plagues me.

We are all in this situation, but I find by freely admitting it, everything is exposed that needs to be overcome. If there was no responsibility on our part, then indeed, life would have been back to Eden 4550 years ago when God first cut covenant with Abraham...or at least 2000 years ago when Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sin.

Before Isaac was even born, Abraham had to cut his part of the covenant with the Lord through circumcision of his own flesh and the flesh of every male, child and adult, in his tribe.

We have entered into covenant with the Lord, first through His cutting His own flesh and life. But we too, like Abraham, have to cut covenant with Him. We must circumcise our very own flesh, not just the males in our tribe, but every man, woman and child. We must circumcise our heart to enter into covenant with the Lord.

I hope to show you exactly how to do that.

Covenant plays a vital role in our life. A role that, like a lot of ancient Godly understanding, has lost meaning in our society. It is because of this covenant that we are indeed alive.

There are several covenants in the Bible. Some say there are 8 covenants. But I defer to only the covenants made with blood.

We are going to look first at the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 12, 13 and 17.

The Abrahamic covenant was for a peculiar people. The Mosaic covenant was for a priestly nation and built on the Abrahamic covenant. And the new covenant of the cross was to bring all peoples into the previously established covenant relationship with the Lord, as well as to build on the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant.

El Shaddai initiated the covenant with Abram. He called Abram out from the land of Ur, which was the land of Baal's fire. Jewish tradition holds that Abram was thrown into that fire like Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego. Abram was born in the city of Ur in the year 1948 from Creation. When he was born, Seth and Nimrod were still alive. He was the 10<sup>th</sup> generation from Noah and the 20<sup>th</sup> generation from Adam. Just as an interesting aside, Israel was also established in the year 1948 from Christ's, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam's, birth.

10 is the number of testimony and 20 is the number of redemption.

- There are 10 generations from Adam to Noah and 20 generations from Noah to Abram.
- There are 14 generations from Abraham to David; 14 generations from David until the Babylonian captivity; 14 generations from Babylon to Jesus... $14 \times 3 = 42$  total from Abraham to Jesus.
- 10 is the number of testimony; 20 is the number of redemption;
- 14 is the number of salvation;
- 3 is the number of Divine Completion and the Resurrection;
- 42 is the number of redemption and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ.
- The entire story of the covenant between God and His people is told in the generations of Jesus.

Abram was the son of Terach, an idol merchant, but from childhood he questioned his father's faith and sought out truth. He came to believe that the entire universe was the work of a single Creator and began to teach this to others. Jewish tradition says that Abram knew Seth and was taught by him.

One day, while left alone to mind the store, he smashed all the idols with a hammer except the largest one, putting the hammer in the hand of that idol. When his father returned and asked what happened, Abram said, "The idols got into a fight, and the big one smashed all the other ones." His father said, "Don't be ridiculous. These idols have no life or power. They can't do anything." Abram replied, "Then why do you worship them?"

Eventually, the one true Creator that Abram had worshipped called to him, and made him an offer: if Abram would leave his home and his family, then Yahweh would make him a great nation and bless him. Abram accepted this offer, and the b'rit (covenant) between Yahweh and the Jewish people was established. (Genesis 12).

The idea of b'rit is fundamental to traditional Judaism: "We have a covenant, a contract, with Yahweh, which involves rights and obligations on both sides. We have certain obligations to Yahweh, and Yahweh has certain obligations to us." The terms of this b'rit became more explicit over time, right through till the Giving of the Torah. Abram was subjected to ten tests of faith to prove his worthiness for this covenant. Leaving his home was just one of these trials.

Abram, raised a city-dweller, adopted a nomadic lifestyle, traveling through what should now be the land of Israel for many years. Yahweh promised this land to Abram's descendants. Abram is referred to as a Hebrew (Ivri), possibly because he was descended from Eber (Genesis 11) or possibly because he came from the "other side" (eber) of the Euphrates River.

The Abrahamic Three-Fold Covenant was foundational to all other Biblical Covenants between Yahweh and His people:

- The promise of land: Israel's possession of the Promised Land — Deuteronomy 30:1-10
- The promise of kingly descendants in the Davidic Covenant through which the Messiah is promised — 2 Samuel 7:12-16
- The promise that all nations would be blessed through Abraham is fulfilled in the New Covenant in Christ — Jeremiah 31:31-40; Luke 22:17-20

To see the solemnity of covenant, let's look at the covenant between David and Jonathan. They both understood covenant.

Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit (became one in spirit - NIV) to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself (literally, as his own soul). Saul did not let him return to his father's house from that day. Then Jonathan made a covenant (cut a covenant *Karath beriyth*) with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt. So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. (1 Samuel 18:1-4 NASB)

*Beriyth* (B'rit) refers to a contract made by passing between pieces of cut flesh and *Karath* means to cut or make a covenant. Covenant was the most solemn, binding, intimate contract known in the ancient world and was held in high regard by all ancient societies, in stark contrast to our modern society.

The first thing Jonathan and David did to perform their new covenant was to commit one to another in love. This is not homosexual love but a deep Godly love. The second thing they did was to exchange robes. David, in essence, took on the identity of Jonathan. Jonathan took off his kingly robes and put them over the shepherd boy's shoulders. The shepherd boy in turn, put his robes on the prince.

Another story in the Bible demonstrating the depth of covenant is found in Luke 15:11-32, the story of the prodigal son. Now, the father already had a covenant with his son through the blood shed at the boy's birth.

First, the father had compassion on the son. He called his name from afar, running out to meet him. The father fell on his son's neck and kissed him, welcoming him home. Then he took the best robe in the house and laid it on his son's shoulders, reinstating him to the family. His son was no longer identified with the pigs he fed for so long, but was given his rightful identity as son in the house of his father. He put the ring of authority upon his son's finger. He then put new sandals, the best sandals in the house, on his son's feet, redeeming him from his lost life. And then he killed a fatted calf to seal the renewed covenant with his son.

During Abram's covenant, he was instructed to bring a heifer, a goat, a ram, each 3 years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon. (Genesis 15:9) Abraham then cut the heifer, goat and ram in half, arranging

the halves facing each other. The birds he left whole. It is interesting that as soon as he had arranged the animal halves, the birds of prey came to eat and carry away the blood bonds of the covenant. The enemy will try to the very last minute to destroy what God is doing, but it was Abraham, not God who drove the birds of prey away. We have to defend what God is doing in our lives, by taking an active part in the warfare.

- Heifer: 3 years old represents Christ's 3 year ministry; untrained to the yoke and used as a peace offering. This represents someone who has not been subjected to the slavery of the cursed earth system under Lucifer
- Goat: 3-year old goat represents complete provision or wealth... hair is used for tents; skins for clothes; milk for live food ie cheese and drink; flesh for food. Complete sustenance of life given by the Father
- Ram: 3-year old ram represents kingship; used metaphorically for princes and chiefs – position of the Godhead complete
- Dove: represents loyalty; wild and migratory; the first bird let out of the ark because it would always return to its mate; symbol of the Holy Spirit
- Young Pigeon: represents the willingness and ease of giving Himself up as a sacrifice; they are easily caught, give themselves up without a fight

There are other similarities as well. Abram was put into a deep sleep representing the entire population of both Jews and Gentiles who were asleep spiritually as Jesus was crucified. Right after the sacrifice was laid out, the birds of prey surrounded the sacrifice to carry it off. The represents the whole of the fallen host surrounding the crucifixion to celebrate their perceived victory. Abraham was surrounded by terror as the darkness came, just as the noonday darkness brought fear and terror to those around the crucifixion.

Add to this, that Jesus left behind Him His sandals and His robe which was gambled for by the guards, who were Gentiles. He was naked as mankind is. He wore our identity of sin and shame and gave us His identity, the robe of righteousness and His sandals, for our redemption according to Jewish custom (the only thing Jesus owned were the clothes on His back and the shoes on His feet). In the book of Ruth you can see this custom as Boaz redeemed Ruth at the city gates with his sandal.

God CUT a covenant with Abram, now called Abraham. He walked between the two halves of the beasts. He was saying by this action that He should cease to exist if He should fail to keep His covenant with Abraham. It was that solemn. The actual words are "what should be done to Him (God) is the same thing as was done to these animals", His life and existence would be forfeit if He should break the covenant.

How solemnly He takes a covenant when we rarely think of our responsibilities in this covenant.

He walked between the halves of the animals as a burning pot of fire because after the sacrifice, the two covenant partners, as is shown with Jonathan and David, cut their palms and rubbed ashes into the wound, making the mark of the covenant forever visible. It could never again be hidden.

It is interesting to note that the wounds of Jesus were not seen after His resurrection...except for the wounds on His hands and the wound on His side. He was no longer the unrecognizable man resulting from the beating He endured, but restored whole with the everlasting covenant marks on His hands.

## ***Lets compare these covenant pictures to the recorded points of the cruxifixion.***

The crown was put on His head redeeming us back into royalty from the curse of poverty hanging over our heads in the earth cursed system.

His hands were permanently scarred showing the marks of the New Covenant that ratifies us to the original covenant of Abraham – Jew and Gentile alike.

His side was pierced because we are His bride and Adam's bride was taken from the rib of his side (Eve was the first to disobey after Adam added to the word of God given him).

His feet were pierced to purify the walk we took leaving the provision of God in the Garden, stepping out onto cursed earth soil.

His back, legs, and arms were whipped to redeem our bodies from disease, infections, injuries, and genetically changed DNA.

But what is more, ultimately more, is that when we eat and drink of the bread and wine in what we call the Lord's Supper, we replay cutting of that covenant over and over again. And we should take the bread and wine very seriously because we not only enter into covenant with the Lord, but with ALL His body as well. When we partake of the covenant, we are showing everyone in heaven and earth that we willingly, knowingly and understandingly enter into covenant with the God of Creation as well as all of His creation, that is, everyone in His body.

Yes, the very same people we judge and criticize on Sundays are the very people we are in covenant with. So what does it mean to be in covenant?

First, let's examine what a covenant is...we dare not enter into covenant lightly with anyone.

- A covenant is a legal and binding commitment between 2 or more people
- It is a pledge of total loyalty
- In a covenant you are permanently identifying yourself with the other person
- Covenant is a commitment that goes beyond any other commitment
- Covenant is more sacred than life itself
- When you cut a covenant you are literally giving your life to the other person(s) and pledging to put their needs above your own

Genesis 12:6- He believed in ADONAI, and he credited it to him as righteousness. Then he said to him, "I am ADONAI, who brought you out from Ur-Kasdim to give you this land as your possession." He replied, "ADONAI, God, how am I to know that I will possess it?" He answered him, "Bring me a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a dove and a young pigeon." He brought him all these, cut the animals in two and placed the pieces opposite each other; but he didn't cut the birds in half. Birds of prey swooped down on the carcasses, but Avram drove them away. As the sun was about to set, a deep sleep fell on Avram; horror and great darkness came over him. ADONAI said to Avram, "Know this for certain: your descendants will be foreigners in a land that is not theirs. They will be slaves and held in

oppression there four hundred years. But I will also judge that nation, the one that makes them slaves. Afterwards, they will leave with many possessions. As for you, you will join your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. Only in the fourth generation will your descendants come back here, because only then will the Emori be ripe for punishment.” After the sun had set and there was thick darkness, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch appeared, which passed between these animal parts. That day ADONAI made a covenant with Avram: “I have given this land to your descendants— from the Vadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River—the territory of the Keni, the K’nizi, the Kadmoni, the Hitti, the P’rizi, the Refa’im, the Emori, the Kena’ani, the Girgashi and the Y’vusi.”

The Abrahamic Covenant was made with Abraham and his offspring defining God’s commitment to them as His people.

1. Abraham will be very fruitful, with nations and kings as his descendents
2. The covenant is of everlasting duration, between not only God and Abraham, but God and all of Abraham’s descendents
3. God promises to be Abraham’s God and the God of all his descendents
4. The whole land of Canaan will be an everlasting possession to Abraham and his descendents

But we are told why Abraham could not possess the land at the time. The cup of the Amorites was not yet full. There was time for them to repent...over 400 years. But even though God knew they would not repent, He gave them that allotment of time. That is how gracious He is with each one of us.

Israel was given land, descendants, blessing and redemption. At that moment, God put His life on the line for the people He had chosen.

Considering how seriously God takes covenants, how can anyone say that the Jewish people are no longer God’s people, that they have forfeited that position? The covenant is on God’s part, not theirs.

The word "covenant" is the Hebrew noun *b<sup>e</sup>rit*. Between nations it is a "treaty, alliance of friendship." Between individuals it is "a pledge or agreement, with obligation between a monarch and subjects: a constitution." Between God and man it is "a covenant accompanied by signs, sacrifices, and a solemn oath that sealed the relationship with promises of blessing for keeping the covenant and curses for breaking it." In our study, the covenant is between God and an individual (and his offspring). When the Biblical account moves to the Exodus, God makes a covenant with his people, on the pattern of the suzerain-vassal treaty found in the ancient Near East.

Abraham’s part of the covenant is found in Genesis 17.

He was to keep the covenant just as we are.

Abraham was to walk before God blameless. And he was to carry on his body the sign of circumcision, the sign of the covenant with God.

I have given this a tremendous amount of thought and prayer. My mind has catapulted from one situation to another in my life where I have not walked blamelessly before the Lord. Yes, yes, I have repented and been forgiven for my sins. But what was brought before me was sin that I had not previously considered as sin. In every case, what the Lord brought before me was attitude.

Abraham and the Hebrew people were to circumcise their flesh. It was a mark that would easily identify every male as a Hebrew. It was unmistakable. During times of Jewish persecution, it was an easy matter to resolve any identity in question. They were ordered to bare their flesh to be identified one way or another. There was no way a Jewish male could ever hide his affiliation with the Lord when naked before his accusers. It is interesting to note the degree to which God committed to covenant relationship. Except for the original males with Abraham, there has not been a personal choice. Not only was it performed on an 8 day old infant with no choice in the matter, but many parents have circumcised their child out of family tradition and cultural ritual, instead of commitment to Yahweh. It was, and still is, the parental responsibility to teach the child in the ways of God. And yet, forever, He stands by His commitment to His people.

As the new covenant church, instead of a physical mark, we are to circumcise our hearts. We are to be identifiable by our lives... by our countenance, by our attitudes, by our behavior, by our choices and actions. We should stand out in righteousness, known and recognized as God's people at all times.

I have prayed about this for weeks. "Circumcise our heart". What does it mean, what does it look like? I know all the Christianese words used to explain it, but it leaves me questioning, needing a real answer. Too often we hide behind Christianese because it is easier than looking too closely.

I ask that you bear with me and not take offence with this discussion, and I apologize for any discomfort I may cause, but I must go where I am led.

During a circumcision the foreskin is removed. The only difference this causes is the requirement for more or less attention to hygiene. A man must take care to clean his foreskin to prevent infection.

We are to circumcise our heart. My friend said it was symbolic of cutting off the flesh. But what does that really mean? Again, it is a nice, neat Christianese term which means nothing to me.

But, in vision I saw the work required to keep his foreskin clean. It was self-work. When the foreskin is removed, there is no more self-work. To circumcise our heart means to cut off self-works which are dead works, not unlike an infection, in that both are outside influences not of God. Our works infect our life.

The difference between a circumcised heart and an uncircumcised heart is the amount of work one has to do to keep oneself clean. It is the difference between what we do and what we allow God to do.

But when we circumcise our heart we are open to do the works of God just as Jesus did. If we are not doing the works of God – those works He tells us to do – then we have not circumcised our heart...we have only pretended to keep covenant.

I spend a good deal of my time, day and night, thinking about God, dwelling on God, and on the visions that He gives me. And yet, I still do the works of my own hands. I have never really looked at what it means to circumcise my heart.

Many Christians spend their time denying their flesh because they believe our flesh is evil. If our flesh were evil, why did God give us flesh? He created us to be who we are. He created our dreams and hopes, our passions and loves, our desires and needs. He supplied all our needs before He even created

us. He created our passions and gave us our desires. In fact, if you struggle to know your “calling”, look at the true desire you have in your heart. Is your desire towards other people? Is your desire to help? Do you love animals? They are part of God’s creation as well. Are you in business? There is always a need for financial support. What is in your hand? Use it for Kingdom purposes. Your calling is to build the Kingdom, in whatever capacity you have been given.

The desire of my heart, the passion of my complete being is to learn, research and study. It consumes me and my ultimate satisfaction in life is to find answers to questions that are put into my heart.

Abraham and his people were to walk blamelessly before the Lord. Then Moses was given 613 laws for the children of Israel to understand the concept of blameless. And Jesus, did not destroy the law, but defined it further – it involved not only our deeds, but our attitude. It is fine to get angry but it is not fine to keep that anger, harboring it, allowing it to grow until it becomes a sin.

It is fine to love someone, but it is not fine to pervert that love, creating an unnatural love driving someone into a sin of stalking or pedophilia.

God gave us our emotions and passions. They are not the sin...it is what we do with them that is the sin.

We are to circumcise our heart so that we stand out from the crowd of unsaved people. But too many of us have not done this. We look no different than the world around us. We live as if we have no responsibilities in this covenant Jesus gave His life to cut.

I have heard it said during marriage counseling that “whatever you do in the bedroom is alright. You can even use handcuffs as long as you honor each other.” Run, don’t walk, from ministry who looks like the world.

Even our churches have become no different than the world. Where is the circumcision of heart?

Jesus counted the cost. It cost Him His life. He made the covenant exchange. He gave His body and His life for us. He provided the covenant sacrifice. He gave Himself. He bears on His body the covenant marks. The nail prints in His hands and the wound in His side. He invites us to reaffirm the covenant with a covenant meal.

This is His grace and His mercy.

How many of us have partaken of “Lord’s Supper” with little thought except of our own sins. But Paul tells us that we do so not discerning the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:29)

Could it be possible that we do not discern our covenant with His whole body? We not only have a covenant with God, but when we partake of the Lord’s Supper, which symbolically remembers the covenant He cut with His body (people), we are actually cutting a covenant with the people of God. His body became the sacrifice for His body.

But instead, we partake of the Lord’s Supper without circumcising our hearts, walk away and continue to attack the very body of Christ we are part of.

Jesus did not do away with the Law. He fulfilled the Law and gave us an even more demanding law. This law not only covered our deeds, but it covered the motives of our hearts. Now, not only was murder unlawful, but even bearing a grudge was sinful. Committing adultery was always unlawful, but now even thinking of someone in that way is considered sinful. He brought a law that circumcised our hearts.

I was trying to write everything I saw and felt in my heart in this one newsletter and it was causing me great distress because this topic is so very large. Covenant is at the very essence of God, so I will continue breaking this down for however long it takes.

I am not sure I can convey the seriousness that overwhelms me when talking about covenant. This is a critical concept we must grasp as a people. Covenant is the very root of our salvation. It is sobering and worthy to be pondered to great depths. Are we really saved if we are not in covenant with the Lord? It is a question that begs an answer. Is this the deal breaker for getting into heaven (Matthew 7:21-24)?

This is the fast of the Lord as found in Isaiah 58:

- 1) unbind the chains of injustice
- 2) undo the bands of a yoke
- 3) set free those who have been crushed, bruised, broken or shattered
- 4) share your food with the hungry
- 5) bring the homeless poor into your house
- 6) when you see the naked, cover them
- 7) meet the needs of your brethren because you are family
- 8) cease from strife and self-centeredness.

There are 8 things in the fast that is acceptable to the Lord. 8 is the number of new life. And if one does the works of this acceptable fast, great are their rewards. Check it out!

- 1) Your light shall break forth like the dawn
- 2) Your recovery (healing) shall spring up speedily
- 3) Righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall stand guard behind you
- 4) You shall call and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help and He shall say, "Here am I!"
- 5) The Lord will continually guide you
- 6) The Lord will satisfy your needs
- 7) The Lord will renew your strength
- 8) You will be like a well-watered garden
- 9) You shall be called "Rebuilder of broken walls"
- 10) You shall find your joy in the Lord
- 11) He shall bring you up to the good places of the land and feed you with the heritage of Jacob

This is a fast from self-works...a circumcision of heart.

The Abrahamic covenant was circumcision of the body – our natural reaction.  
The Mosaic covenant was circumcision of the soul – the way we do things.  
The New covenant is a circumcision of the heart – the way we think of things.

We are now in the age of renewing our minds, the way we think, so that we can be of one mind with Christ. He is our head. His thoughts are to be our thoughts.

Father God, I am weary of my own works. I am weary of constantly putting my hand to things and not get the desired result. Lord, the labor, the struggle, the yoke of the burden that I constantly seem to place myself into...Lord, I am weary and at the end of myself. Lord, circumcise my heart and let me take upon me Your yoke that is easy. Lord, refresh me with Your Holy Spirit; revive me with Your breath. I am a war-torn saint weary of the battle of life because I have not been living according to Kingdom rules, which is to let You do the work and accept Your sacrifice, but instead doing it in my own understanding. Lord, raise me up and make me whole. Heal my broken heart and circumcise it so that You shall know me in that day I stand before You. In Jesus' most precious and holy name, amen.

God bless you all  
Jessica and Susan