

Covenant

Covenant Defined

Covenant is defined in Webster's dictionary as "a formal, solemn, and binding agreement." It may be written or verbal.

When a person confesses Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior he becomes an heir to the covenant of salvation. Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross to provide a means by which sinful man could come into union with a holy God. The steps to this union are believe, confess, repent, and be baptized.

Covenant

God, out of His great heart of love for mankind, provided an unblemished source of blood through which He offered covenant to man. History abounds with stories of primitive blood covenants. Blood covenants are entered into in Africa even today. The parties exchange robes (identifying with the other), exchange belts (representing strength), and exchange weapons (representing exchange of enemies). The parties take each other's name as their middle name. They exchange eldest sons. Everything each one has becomes available to the other. This loyalty, sworn in blood, extends down through the generations as human blood is mingled to seal the covenant. The covenant is regarded as indissoluble with awful curses inflicted on anyone breaking covenant. The primitive rite of blood covenanting was well known in Biblical times.

The believer's salvation traces back to the eternal covenant God made with Abraham and it reaches full expression in Jesus' blood sacrifice on Calvary. Genesis 17 records God promising Abraham that he

would be a father to many nations. God established an everlasting covenant with Abraham and the generations after him. We read in the genealogy in Matthew that Jesus Christ came from the family line of Abraham. Galatians 3:29 NIV states "*If you belong to Christ, than you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*" This scripture gives the Christian a legal right to the provisions of the Abrahamic covenant.

We individually enter covenant with God by accepting the blood sacrifice of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He willingly hung on the cross and bore all the sins of mankind – past, present, and future so that man could be free of the penalty of sins. We strive to fully understand and accept the truth that under covenant everything Jesus has is ours. Our response should be to offer our total self back to Him. **We become partners with the all-powerful God** – the source of all wisdom, the one who created the world and all that is in it. What an awesome privilege and honor! We should be moved to surrender at ever-deeper levels as we receive more revelation of our standing with a holy and righteous God. Jesus' blood provided the sacrifice for our **sins to be blotted out** as we confess them. Jesus' righteousness becomes our righteousness (II Corinthians 5:21). 1 Corinthians 6:20 confirms that we are not our own but that we are bought with a price. The Bible contains a number of covenants, some eternal, some fulfilled. The covenants still in effect are the Adamic (Genesis 3:14-19), Noahic (Genesis 8:20-9:17), Abrahamic (Genesis 15:18-20, 17:1-8), Palestinian (Deuteronomy 29-30:10), Davidic (11 Samuel 7:14-17) and the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 8:6-13) which is the covenant addressed in this writing.

God's Heart toward Man

It is beyond the full comprehension of the mind of man that the God of the universe desires close

fellowship with man. He longs to draw His creation to Himself in sweet fellowship. We see a picture of His heart towards mankind in Genesis as He walked in the garden and talked with the first man, Adam.

The Fall

Adam and Eve fell into Satan's trap when they disobeyed their creator by eating of the one tree He had forbidden. God is holy and cannot look on sin; therefore, a way had to be provided to restore man back to Himself.

Hebrews 9:22b NIV tells us "*without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*" All through the Old Testament animals were sacrificed to provide blood offerings to cover the sins of the people.

God knew at the foundation of the world there would be a need for a pure blood sacrifice. Blood was needed to provide for those in the line of Adam to be restored back to fellowship with their creator, God.

Eve listened to the adversary as Satan subtly caused her to doubt the goodness of her God. Adam, in turn, listened to Eve. Satan used a tactic that he still uses today – causing us to think God is keeping something good from us. He made Eve **forget all God had given her** and lured her into **focusing on the one thing she couldn't have**. So came the fall from unhindered fellowship with God.

A Covenant Boy

The story of David in I Samuel 17:36 f provides a very inspiring picture of a covenant boy. Circumcision marked him as being in covenant with God. When he taunted the giant he was in essence saying, "I am in covenant with God. You uncircumcised Philistine – how dare you come defy the armies of

the living God?" He was talking covenant! He went forth in covenant power. David won the victory not be-cause he was bigger or better but because he walked in covenant.

We know that we have a better covenant (Hebrews 7:22). Studying this victorious account of David call-ing on covenant power inspires and encourages us to stand boldly in our better covenant – the new covenant.

Peace

A benefit Christians often overlook is the peace made available to us by being in covenant with God. (Isaiah 54:10, John 14:27, 16:33 and Phillipians 4:6, 7). Scripture exhorts us to walk in peace and to let the peace of Christ reign in our hearts (Colossians 3:15). Understanding and learning to walk in this peace is a challenge that is well worth accepting.

Marriage Covenant

Christians should view the marriage vows between a man and woman as a covenant (Malachi 2:14). This, in itself, provides a challenging study. This union of a couple is the closest thing to a covenant that we have in our society.

Friendship Covenant

The deep friendship between Jonathan and David described in I Samuel 18:1-4 and 23:18 indicates they entered into a covenant with each other before the Lord. A friendship covenant is entered into by mutual consent. In my opinion a very important aspect should be a commitment to

Covenant

hold each other accountable for spiritual integrity and encouraging a life of service for the Lord. It is wise not to confuse friendship covenant with soulish friendships where you have to be together constantly and perhaps “play God” to the other person. In a healthy covenant relationship God is always first! We never step between our covenant partner and God by giving spiritual advice we have not prayerfully considered. We guard against an excessive dependence on each other. We encourage each other in seeking God’s answers in the challenges of life. There is a very fine line here, which requires praying for wisdom and discernment.

Heirs in Covenant

Romans 8:16a NIV declares *“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.”* Ask God to write on your heart the truth that everything Jesus has is yours and He is your Covenant partner. We are to praise Him, love Him, obey Him and stay focused on Him and His precepts. He will release power on our behalf as we call out to Him in prayer. God works with the prayers of his covenant partners to establish His will on earth. We pray in Jesus’ name in the authority the covenant made available to us through the power of the Holy Spirit. James Garlow states in his book, *The Covenant* “Every time God does something profoundly important on earth. He gets people like you and me to decree it and declare it in conformity with His authority. That’s why prayer is important. That’s why speaking His word is important.”

Remembering/Celebrating Covenant

Communion is a time set aside to remember,

appreciate, and celebrate the everlasting Covenant we have with God through the blood sacrifice of His son Jesus Christ. Jesus suffered agony on a cross on a lonely hill as He made provision for you and me and all of mankind to be brought back into right standing with our creator, God.

May the covenant privileges and benefits to which we are heirs be etched on our lives and our Christian expressions toward others as we walk in the world day by day. We are blessed to be called *“Sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”* Galatians 3:26.

The Bride of Christ

The believer expresses praise, joy or thanks with the word “Hallelujah” or “Alleluia” *“Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready.”* Revelation 19:6b-7 NIV We who become Christ’s bride through a salvation experience eagerly anticipate the fulfillment of that verse of scripture.



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Cover Art: Dennis Lipp