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Genesis 14-15

*"God is a Covenant God"*

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Covenant is a major theme in the Bible, and there's no doubt that God is not only a covenant God but also a covenant keeper. The word covenant appears 272 times in the Old Testament, and 20 times in the New Testament. [Genesis 15:18](#) isn't the first time the word covenant is found in the Bible, however, it is the first time there is a covenant ceremony. Covenant is important to understand, not only because it's the way God related to specific individuals in the Bible, but because covenant also expresses the way the God relates to the human race.

### Human Covenant

1. A human covenant is one made by people with people.
2. Examples of a human covenant include:
  - a. Laban and Jacob - [Genesis 31](#)
  - b. Jonathan and David - [1 Samuel 20](#)
  - c. Ezra and the Israelites - [Ezra 10](#)

### Divine Covenant

3. A Divine covenant is one made by God with people.
4. A Divine Covenant is "a pact or promise, made by God with people, that expresses his divine love, mercy, and grace."
5. A covenant is best understood when you see God as Father.

- a. [Jeremiah 31:33](#) - *"I will be your God and you will be my people."*
6. Bible scholars differ on exactly how many covenants appear in the Old Testament, but most agree that there are at least five major Old Testament covenants:
    - a. Adam - [Genesis 1-2](#) and [Hosea 6:7](#)
    - b. Noah - [Genesis 6-9](#)
    - c. Abraham - [Genesis 15-17](#)
    - d. Moses - [Exodus 19-24](#)
    - e. David - [2 Samuel 7, 23](#)
  7. The first time the actual word "covenant" appears in the Bible is [Genesis 6:18](#), when God made a covenant with Noah.
    - a. In principle God made a covenant before that with Adam, but the actual word doesn't appear until the account of God with Noah.
  8. The Hebrew word for "covenant" is *beriyth*, which means, "to cut."
    - a. Most covenants between God and men involved some type of cutting or blood sacrifice.

### The Covenant

9. God announces the covenant before The Flood.
  - a. [Genesis 6:18](#) - *"But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark - you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you."*
10. God establishes the covenant after The Flood.
  - a. [Genesis 9:11](#) - *"I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."*
11. God seals the covenant with a sign.
  - a. [Genesis 9:13](#) - *"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth."*
12. There are three parts to any covenant:
  - a. The Parties
  - b. The Promises (terms)
  - c. The Sign
13. The covenant with Noah:
  - a. The Parties - God and Noah, who represented the human race.

- b. The Promises - God unilaterally and unconditionally promised never to destroy the world by a flood again.
- c. The Sign - A rainbow.

### God's Covenant With Abraham

- 14. The covenant with Abraham is pretty dramatic, considering the matter of passing between the halves of animals.
  - a. God told Abraham to get some specific animals, cut them in half and then arrange them on opposite sides with a path in the middle.
- 15. Because the word "*covenant*" means, "to cut," and typically, when people would make a covenant, they would do just this and walk between the parts saying, "May it be done to me what has happened to these animals if I don't fulfill my vow."
- 16. What's interesting to note in this account is that God is the one who walks between the pieces, not Abraham.
  - a. **Genesis 15:17** - "*When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.*"
  - b. What this means is that this was a unilateral covenant, and Abram was not required to do anything to make the covenant, because God initiated it when he pursued Abram, and it was God alone who made all the promises.
  - c. Abraham simply had to exercise faith to join it, which is seen in a well-known verse, which says, "*Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*" (**Genesis 15:6**)
- 17. God's promises to Abram include:
  - a. A people (The Jews)
  - b. A place (Land)
    - i. **Genesis 15:18** indicates the promise includes land that would have covered about 300,000 square miles!
    - ii. Sadly, the Israelites never possessed the all of the land God promised them.
    - iii. Today, Israel only occupies about 8,100 square miles, which is less than 3% of the original promise to Abraham's offspring.
- 18. The sign of the covenant is circumcision.
  - a. God told Abraham to circumcise himself and all of the males in his household.

- b. Circumcision would be a sign that Abraham believed God.
19. Why circumcision?
- a. It was to be a reminder that they were to put no confidence in the flesh, because the work of God is a divine thing
  - b. It was to be a reminder that they belonged to God.
    - i. The knife was to be put to the place of reproduction so that they would always remember they were the children of God's promise and they were to reproduce children after God.

### Why Is The Covenant Important Today?

20. The Bible is divided into the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, which we commonly refer to as the Old Testament and the New Testament.
21. [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#), describes the account of God's message through the prophet Jeremiah regarding initiating a new covenant with humanity.
- a. *" 'The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord. 'This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,'" declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."*
  - b. The writer of the book of Hebrews quotes this passage, and in [Hebrews 9:15](#) adds: *"For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance..."*
  - c. In [Luke 22:20](#), we learn why Jesus took the Passover cup and said, *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."*
22. God made a New Covenant with mankind through Jesus Christ, but just like the covenants of old, God initiated it when he pursued us with it, and made wonderful promises to us.
- a. God promises the forgiveness of sins.
  - b. God promises eternal life, so we can go to heaven when we die.
23. God offered his son, Jesus, as the blood sacrifice and the "cutting" of the covenant.

24. In a sense, the Father walked through the broken and bloody body of Jesus to establish his covenant, so that all we have to do is to enter the covenant by faith.

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Genesis 15](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. What are some examples of a human covenant?
4. Review the examples in the Bible listed in #2a - #2c above.
5. Describe your personal understanding of the Lord's Covenant regarding his promise to demonstrate his "divine love, mercy, and grace" in your life.
6. Review the major covenants found in the Bible in #6a - #6e above.
7. Read and discuss [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#), [Hebrews 9:15](#) and [Luke 22:20](#).
8. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: thank the Lord for his love, mercy and grace; thank the Lord that all we need to do to receive the promises of The Covenant is to believe by faith, because he initiated it, established it and signed it with his blood.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).