

COVENANT OF ABRAM

SUMMARY

If the covenant of Melchizedek is the face of the coin, then covenant of Abram is the obverse side of the coin. The Melchizedek side of the coin has the sign of the bread and the wine, which speaks of the spiritual blessings of righteousness and peace with God which Abram received. It also speaks of the spiritual descendants of Abram. The Abram side of the coin has **the sign of the blood on the ground, which speaks of the earthly blessing of Abram, which is the Promised Land**. The sign of the blood on the ground also speaks of the price to be paid by the Seed of Abram to obtain all the blessings of Abram, spiritual and earthly. The value of the coin cannot be measured – safely guarded in the vault of God’s remembrance and sealed with his oath – Abram’s to own forever.

We encourage the reader to review our paper “Covenant of Melchizedek” before continuing here.

THE KEY IDEA

A covenant is NOT a contract (as we normally think).

A contract is an agreement between identified parties. A contract is a transaction.

A covenant is an agreement that changes the identity of the parties. A covenant is a transformation.

The concept of transforming one’s identity is novel to some. Western thinking has moved to the principle of inalienable human rights from birth regardless of age, gender or station in life. This has not always been the case. The foundation of Western civilization is Judeo-Christian belief as taught in the Bible. In the Bible rights and privileges are not the same for all people and vary depending on age, gender, and many other criteria. As we will see, the Bible shows it is possible to change one’s identity through covenant. As would be expected, changing one’s identity changes one’s rights, privileges, and station in life.

THE COVENANT OF ABRAM

Abram had rescued Lot by defeating the four mighty kings of the east and chasing them all the way past Damascus. In the victory Abram had obtained not only Lot but all the people and goods which the four kings of the east had taken away when they had defeated the five kings of the Valley of Siddim (the Salt Sea). At this point Abram had all the people and all the goods of the Valley of Siddim in his hands including the five kings themselves. **Abram could have established a kingdom of his own on earth by the might of his arm** and ruled over the Valley of Siddim or he could have sold all the people of the Valley of Siddim as slaves into the hands of another king and gained untold wealth. Abram did neither of those things. Abram released all the people and all the goods back into the hands of the five kings of the Valley of Siddim minus only a tenth of the goods which he offered to the King of Salem, Melchizedek, in recognition to God for the victory.

ABRAM REFUSES THE KING OF SODOM'S OFFER



1

The King of Sodom offered to take the people but give Abram the goods. Why did Abram refuse?

“I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of Heaven and Earth and I have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you not even a thread or the thong of a sandal so that you will never be able to say ‘I made Abram rich’.” (Genesis 14:22-23)

The Book of Hebrews explains further why Abram did not make himself a king or take all the goods:

“By faith Abraham, when called to go a place he would later receive as an inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country. **He was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**” (Hebrews 11:8-16)

And so Abram became the father of all who believe.

“Understand then that all who believe are children of Abraham.” (Galatians 3:7)

Abram believed God’s promise that he would incarnate himself, appear on earth as the Seed of the Woman, pay for the sin of Adam’s race by the sacrifice of his own righteous life, then based on that payment in his own blood ultimately restore the earth back to the condition it was in before Adam fell in the Garden of Eden and sin entered the world. **Abram had no interest to be a king of a fallen sinful earth – he wanted to be a partaker in the kingdom of God**, which begins as a spiritual kingdom, not of this world but in heaven, but which in the fullness of time will be manifest on the earth after it is cleansed and renewed.

¹ Source of image: bethelbooks.com

HOW DID ABRAM KNOW THE KINGDOM OF GOD WAS COMING?

The Book of Hebrews informs us that Abram was looking forward to a city with foundations whose builder and architect was God. How did Abram know the kingdom of God was coming? Abram came from Ur of the Chaldeans –a place filled with idol worship and false teaching. Abram’s father Terah was himself an idol worshipper (Joshua 24:2). Abram rejected idols and believed in one true God that is clear. But how did Abram come to understand all the fullness and richness of God’s promises concerning the Seed of the Woman and the coming of the kingdom of God?

“He [The LORD] took him [Abram] outside and said ‘**Look up at the heavens and count the stars – if indeed you can count them**’. Then he said to him ‘**So shall your Seed be**’. Abram believed the LORD and he reckoned him as righteous.” (Genesis 15:5)



The LORD showed Abram the stars and Abram believed the Seed promised in prophecy would come from him. Oh that people would understand God put prophetic truth in the stars! David knew that and declared:

“**The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands; Day after day they pour forth speech [prophecy] night after night they display knowledge.**” (Ps.19:1)

Speaking to Job, the Lord confirmed the constellations in the heavens tell of the kingdom of God, or dominion of God on the earth:

“**Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades³ Can you loosen the cords [the belt] of Orion?⁴
Can you bring the constellations⁵ forth in their seasons? Or let out Arcturus with his sons?⁶
Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you establish **dominion over the earth?**” (Job 38:31-33)**

² Source of image: dwellingintheword.wordpress.com

The Lord said to Abram “count the stars”. As a matter of fact, there are 48 constellations, or groups of stars in the sky. And, there are 4800 stars visible to the naked eye. The spiritual number 48 means “FATHER’S BLESSING” (48). (A full description of the meaning of spiritual numbers is available on our site).

Abram had no Bible to guide him into God’s truth. The first Scriptures were scribed by Moses over six hundred years after the covenant of Abram. The only truth available to Abram came through his visions and possibly through his knowledge from the stars. Ever since Noah there was common knowledge that the stars signs had pictures and the stars had names. This suggests the signs and star names were preserved by Noah from a more ancient source, likely from the patriarchs who taught Noah⁷. In Chaldea where Abram came from this knowledge had been twisted into the perversion of astrology and tied to worship of many gods. Abram rejected belief in many gods therefore he would have rejected the Chaldean interpretation of the knowledge in the stars. Without any godly teaching from his own father Abram must have meditated on the truth in the pictures of the constellations and the names of the stars in light of his faith in the one true God.⁸ As a shepherd watching his sheep by night the stars would have been before his eyes continually.

The LORD took Abram outside and told him to look up at the heavens and count stars. This may not be all the LORD revealed to Abram. As Abram was looking up at the stars the LORD may have revealed to him or reminded him of the plan of redemption portrayed in the signs of the Mazzaroth. While this was fresh in Abram’s mind, God added the extra piece of important information that the promised Seed of the Woman who would crush the head of the Serpent would be his Seed. Abram believed – meaning he accepted the entire sweep of prophecy revealed in the stars plus the promise that the Seed would be his own descendant.

To the modern reader the theory that the stars preserve prophetic truth might seem absurd. However, the evidence in ancient cultures from Babylon to Persia to Arabia and places beyond is of peoples who were glued to the stars. The existence of observatories and henges all over the world are a testament to the near universal belief in star knowledge. The last king of Babylon was so obsessed with observing stars that he neglected matters of state and that is one reason his kingdom fell. Right up to the time of Christ we read wise men came from the East to worship him because they were guided by star knowledge.

Abram, being a spiritual man, must surely have been aware of the signs and star names and the debate as to their interpretation of events in the world. **By directing Abram’s attention to the stars and connecting that to the prophecy of the Seed of the Woman, God himself confirmed the stars possess knowledge.**

³ A group of seven stars in the shape of a cross in the constellation Taurus, prophetic of the seven churches of Revelations (see our paper on “Taurus – The Times of the Gentiles”)

⁴ Orion is a decan constellation in the constellation of Taurus

⁵ Literally ‘Mazzaroth’ (what the Greeks would call the ‘Zodiac’ of 48 constellations)

⁶ Arcturus is a star in the Good Shepherd constellation, which is a decan constellation of Virgo. Some believe the ancient name of the Good Shepherd constellation was Arcturus, also the name of its chief star. (See our paper “Virgo – The Seed of the Woman”)

⁷ As evidence of this assertion we look to the uniformity of the star pictures and star names across ancient peoples in the Middle East. The level of similarity suggests the pictures and names had a common source. Noah and his three sons were the common connection of all ancient peoples.

⁸ Prophetic knowledge in the stars begins with the promise of the Seed of the Woman (Virgo) and continues all the way around the twelve signs to the defeat of the enemies of God and the coming of the Kingdom of God on Earth (Leo). (A description of the meaning of the constellations is provided on our site).

THE EXCHANGE THAT TOOK PLACE

On the surface the covenant of Abram looks one-sided:

- God promises Abram **“I AM your shield, your very great reward”** (Gen. 15:1);
- God promises Abram **“A son coming from your own body will be your heir”** (Gen. 15:4)
- God promises Abram – the Seed promised in the stars will be his Seed (Gen. 15:5)
- God promises the descendants of the Seed would be more numerous than the stars (Gen. 15:5)
- God promises Abram **“To your Seed I will give this land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates – the land of ten peoples: Kenites, Kenizzites, etc.”** (Gen. 15:18-21)

What does Abram exchange in return for these great and precious promises? We simply read:

“Abram believed the LORD and he counted him righteous” (Gen. 15:6)

Faith itself is not a work, it is the gift of God (Eph.2:8). So, Abram has done nothing to obtain these promises. This is the grace of God. **But we know in every covenant there is an exchange. How can this be?**

Abram has believed and is trusting God’s promises both for the redemption of earth when the kingdom of God comes in the far distant future and in his own life in the here and now (a son coming from your own body will be your heir). The mystery here is Abram is considered in this covenant to belong to it, but along with Abram all the other members of the kingdom of God who will believe after him also belong to it.

The parties to this covenant are more than simply the man Abram and God. The parties include the Seed of Abram who is still within his loins (so to speak) and all the spiritual descendants of the Seed of Abram. The Seed of Abram is one and the same as the Seed of the Woman who will crush the head of the Serpent. In other words the Seed of Abram, to whom the promises of God speak in this covenant, is the Messiah - Jesus of Nazareth. The spiritual descendants of the Messiah are the believers in Jesus.

The covenant is more correctly seen to be between the Seed of Abram and God. All who put faith in the Seed of Abram – including Abram before the Cross plus Christians after the Cross – are considered to be “in” the Seed of Abram and therefore participate in the promises to the Seed of Abram.

An illustration: Fifteen members of an office pool agree to buy a lottery ticket together. One of the members goes to the kiosk and buys the ticket and it comes out a winner. The person who bought the ticket owns the prize – or the promise of sums to be paid out – but all the members of the office pool share the promise of sums to be paid because the owner of the winning ticket is a representative of them all.

“So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham the man of faith” (Galatians 3:9)

“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29)

“...for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ.” (Gal. 3:27)

The way this covenant is entered into is through faith in the promise. **The exchange takes place between the Seed of Abram, Jesus of Nazareth, and God the Father.** We will show this in the next section.

THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT OF ABRAM

God said “I AM the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.” Abram asks “How will I know that I will gain possession of it?” (Gen. 15:7-8) Abram is looking for a sign, not merely a covenant sign he is looking for a miraculous sign, so that when he sees it he will know the promise is his.

This is what happens:

“So the LORD said to him ‘Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a small 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.” (Genesis 15:10-11)

“When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking fire pot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram” (Genesis 15:17-18)

A miraculous sign is provided: a blazing torch and a smoking fire pot appear and pass between the pieces.

The ceremony of cutting an animal in half and walking between the pieces was a standard practice for entering into a covenant between two parties. As the two men walked between the pieces, they were vowing that if they broke their covenant may the witness to the covenant, the LORD, make them as the dead bodies of the animals on the ground. See Jeremiah chapter 34 for a full explanation of how this works.

The fact that three animals were divided indicates that this is a strong covenant. The spiritual number three means ‘binding’, ‘strength’, or ‘God’. In the clearest possible way God is saying ‘I swear by myself’.

Abram did not walk between the pieces. The one carrying the smoking fire pot and the flaming torch passed through the pieces. This indicates that **the covenant is between the Seed of Abram** (the three sacrificial animals) **and God the Father. The Holy Spirit is the witness** (smoking fire pot and blazing torch). Abram and those who come to believe in the Seed of Abram (Christians after the Cross) participate because the Seed of Abram (Jesus of Nazareth) is our representative.

Illustration: The kings of two neighboring countries cut a covenant of peace. They separate a sacrificial animal and walk through the pieces. All the people of the two countries do not walk between the pieces. Only the kings of the two countries walk between the pieces. It is only necessary for the kings to walk between the pieces because they represent the peoples of their respective countries.

The promise of the covenant that is being entered into here is “To your Seed I will give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.” (Genesis 15:18-21)

The promise of the covenant is sealed with blood on the ground - on the very land God is promising.

How do we know that Abram participated in the covenant? When Abram cut the animals, and dragged their bloody carcasses a ways away, he marked a trail of blood on the ground. In the process of doing so three times, **the feet of Abram were soaked in the blood of the animals.** In all likelihood, in the process of slaughtering the three animals **not only the feet but the hands and the garments of Abram were also soaked in blood.**



WHO DOES THE PROMISED LAND BELONG TO?

As we have demonstrated, the covenant of Abram was between the Seed of Abram and God the Father. The promise of the covenant is regarding the inheritance of the Promised Land. So, who does the Promised Land belong to? The LORD said repeatedly even as far back as the first time Abram arrived in Canaan from Haran:

“To your Seed I will give this land” (Genesis 12:7)

The word ‘Seed’ is not plural, in other words God has not promised to give the Promised Land to all the descendants of Abram. The word ‘Seed’ is singular, meaning **God promised to give the Land to the Seed of Abram, the Son of God, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth**, born of a virgin, wholly God and wholly man. Paul makes the identity of the Seed of Abram perfectly clear (see Galatians 3:16).

Therefore, the Promised Land does not belong to Ishmael, the father of the Arabs, nor does it belong to Jacob, the father of the Israelites, nor does it belong to Judah, the father of the Jews. No, **the Promised Land belongs to the Messiah, the Seed of Abram.** As spiritual children of God through Christ, Christians are co-heirs with Christ (Galatians 3:29). Therefore, the Promised Land belongs to us! **The children of Israel were merely the tenants of the Promised Land (Leviticus 25:23). The Law was their tenancy agreement.**

When Christ returns to this earth at the end of the Great Tribulation, he will take possession of his land. We will return with Christ from heaven and we will enjoy our inheritance, our possession of the Land. Until that time, it is not for Christians to attempt to take back our land by force. The Land is our inheritance which we will receive in due time. As the Lord Jesus said:

“The meek will inherit the Land⁹” (Matt. 5:5)

Christians are called to have our eyes on Jesus. We are not to be mindful of dirt, the Promised Land, or any other worldly thing. Until Christ comes nation will battle nation for possession of this land and that land and other lands. We are not to be involved in those battles or disputes. We are to rest in the promise of Abram and wait until we inherit our possession.

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST

When Abram divided the sacrificial animals and walked back and forth between the pieces of each, to create room for the parties of the covenant to walk between the pieces, he created a trail of blood on the ground. In the process his hands, his garments, and his feet were soaked in the blood of the three sacrifices.

The Lord Jesus was flogged in Jerusalem until the back of his body was a pulpy plowed field of lashes and blood. A crown of thorns was placed on his head.

As Christ carried his cross from Jerusalem to a place outside the walls, Calvary, he left a trail of blood in the ground. As the blood from his back streamed down, the garment of Christ and the feet of Christ would have been soaked in blood. Thus, Abram walking between the pieces foreshadows Christ walking between the two places of his suffering: the place of the lashes and the place of the crucifixion.

What of the smoking fire pot and the flaming torch? We look to the account of the crucifixion:

“With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to the bottom.” (Mark 15:37-38)

At the death of Christ, the veil of the temple, which is symbolic of his body, was rent in twain.

The divine presence of the Spirit of God left the Most Holy Place in the Temple, passed through the rent veil, witnessed the trail of blood (i.e. this is what it means when the parties pass over the trail of blood) and proceeded to heaven. By crucifying Christ, the spiritual relationship between God and the Jews was set aside. The part of the covenant of Abram regarding his spiritual descendants, the believers in Jesus, was now in force. The Spirit of God, or the Holy Spirit, would on the day of Pentecost return to dwell in another temple, the bodies of the believers in Jesus.

Why two birds that were not cut? The dove and the small pigeon represent the witness of the Holy Spirit.

⁹ The Greek word ‘γη’ means ‘land’, as distinguished from sea, firm ground, and may also refer to a piece of land with fixed boundaries. The translation of this word to mean ‘earth’ is not appropriate as the earth contains sea and land. In the context of Matthew 5 Jesus is speaking to Jews, therefore his promise that the meek will inherit the land would be well understood, not meaning any land, but the land belonging to the faithful, the Promised Land.

THE COVENANT OF ABRAM

The covenant transformation:	<u>from one who doubts the promise</u> (How will I know?) to <u>one who knows he possesses</u> (feet and hands and garments soaked in the blood of the sacrifice)
Signs of the covenant:	<u>trail of blood</u> (blood of eternal sacrifice)
The new authority / role / position:	<u>possession of the Promised Land;</u>
The new responsibility:	<u>no work required</u> (faith itself being a gift of God)
The new privileges / rights:	<u>membership in the family of God</u> (by faith in the Seed of Abram, Jesus Christ)
The new destiny:	<u>to receive the inheritance</u> (resurrection from the dead and eventually to return to earth to enjoy the Promised Land)