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The Everlasting Covenant – A Short Scripture Study in Genesis 15

An Old Covenant Foreshadow of The Best News Ever!

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Dearly beloved of God, we are ambassadors of the Gospel (the Good News). In these last days, our clear understanding of this news is critical! So, why is it **the best news ever**?! And why is it important to understand it? Because “it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...”¹

Dr. Dwight Pryor wrote, “Our salvation began when the High and Holy One made an everlasting covenant with Abraham.” Chills of awe ran through me as I read these words in a recent email sent by *The Center for Judaic-Christian Studies*. I went back in my mind to what I had learned in Genesis 15 years ago. I would like to take *you* back there to share a nugget that confirms the true nature of the Gospel!

The writings of the Old Testament foreshadow, clarify, and confirm the Gospel in vibrant stories understood only in the context of the ancient near east culture. When we dive deeply into these ancient writings to understand this culture which is so very different from our own and so breathtakingly beautiful, we find ourselves immersed in a world of bright colors we have never seen. Like snorkeling, it is as if we have been submerged into an exploration surrounded by fluorescent fish and vegetative life of every kind! So, let’s explore Genesis 15!

Genesis 15

Ten generations after Noah in about 2166 to 1991 BC, Noah’s descendent Abram travelled from Ur of the Chaldeans to the land of Canaan with his father, wife, and nephew.² After this, God called Abram out to a completely new land to make him a great nation that would reflect His love to all the nations.³ There, at the Oaks of Mamre in Hebron, God made a covenant with Abram (meaning *exalted father*) whom He later called Abraham (meaning *father of a multitude*).⁴

Covenants were serious in this ancient culture. The two parties would cut various animals in two and walk together between the cut halves. This ceremony, called *cutting a covenant*, symbolized the death (or cutting) that would come to the one who broke the covenant.

Using this custom familiar to Abraham, God *cut a covenant* with him. He asked Abram to bring Him a heifer, a female goat, and a ram (all three years old) and cut them in two, along with a turtledove and pigeon that were not cut. However, God and Abram did not walk through the cut pieces together. Instead, Abram fell into a deep sleep as the sun went down.

As Abram slept, God spoke to him in a dream about the future enslavement and deliverance of his descendants. And then, a flaming torch appeared and passed through the cut animal pieces. “On that day, Yahweh made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I have given this land...’”⁵

God and Abram did not cut a covenant. God alone passed through the cut pieces and sealed the covenant. Therefore, if the covenant was not kept, only God would die. Only His blood would be shed.

Abraham’s descendants, through His future son Isaac, were continually disloyal despite His kindness and faithfulness. Ezekiel 16 is a stark account of the enormity His kindness and of Israel’s disloyalty. But

through the prophets, God promised a future New Covenant in which He would write His Law on their hearts.⁶ To cut this New Covenant, He gave His life as a sacrifice and covering for sin. To **all** who receive His Gift of forgiveness, He gives eternal life *and* the indwelling Breath of God, the Holy Spirit.⁷

Just as with the old covenant, the new covenant is not based on our performance. It is based on His love and faithfulness. The difference with the new covenant is that He has given us a new heart. He has removed our wicked hearts and replaced them with fresh new ones full of the Holy Spirit, giving us the ability and motivation to live in His love. When we struggle, we pray toward this truth.

The Bible uses words to describe our state when God cut a covenant with us through His sacrifice. Abraham's state was a *deep sleep*. But what about us? Where were we? The Bible says that God cut a covenant with us when we were helpless, ungodly, sinners, enemies, alienated, hostile, and dead. You can see in the following verses that you had no part in the cutting of this covenant:

- “For while we were still **helpless**, at the right time, Messiah died for the **ungodly**.” (Romans 5:6)
- “God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet **sinners**, Messiah died for us.” (Romans 5:8)
- “For if while we were **enemies** we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” (Romans 5:10)
- “Although you were formerly **alienated** and **hostile** in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death to present you before Him holy and blameless...” (Colossian 1:21-22)
- “And when you were **dead** in your transgressions... He made you alive...” (Colossians 2:13)⁸

What did Abraham do to be a part of God's covenant? He believed.⁹

What do we do to be apart of God's New Covenant? We believe.

- We receive His immeasurable Gift of salvation!
- We freely and joyfully access all His treasures as sons and daughters of the Most High God!
- We rely on His Spirit within us to follow in Yeshua's (Jesus) footsteps. We don't strive. We trust that His Spirit is living and working through us because we are His!

Is this not **the best news ever**!

Titus 3:4-7

But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit Whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Messiah our Savior so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life!

Father, thank You, praise You for giving Your life to procure and seal a covenant of love with me! I am speechless! I am in awe of Your grace! I am forever folded into Your love!

¹ Romans 1:16

² Genesis 11:31

³ Genesis 12:1-3

⁴ Genesis 17:4-5

⁵ Genesis 15

⁶ Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-26; Joel 2:28. Also, see my study *The Great Transition, The New Covenant Given*.

⁷ John 1:12-14

⁸ For further study, see Hebrews 8, Romans 8:2-4, John 15:16a, Titus 3:4-7, and the rest of the Bible :)

⁹ Genesis 16:6; Romans 4:3