



# FEED MY SHEEP

PUBLISHED BY DR. JAMES W. BRUGGEMAN  
STONE KINGDOM MINISTRIES  
P. O. Box 5695  
ASHEVILLE, NC 28813 U.S.A.

See my blog at [www.Stone-Kingdom.net](http://www.Stone-Kingdom.net)

Issue #235

September 2018

## General characteristics of covenants *Part 7—The Covenants of the Bible*

In the last issue, we examined heathen and pagan rituals designed to supposedly curry favor with “the gods,” or a particular god among them. Let us now search the Scriptures to find the acceptable sacrifice that the one and only true God is looking for.

**Psalm 50:7** Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I *am* God, *even* thy God.

**8** I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, *to have been* continually before me.

In other words, God is saying, “I am not upset with you for doing the animal sacrifices, because after all, I am the one who told you to do them. But at some point, you are going to have to grow up and look beyond them to see what I am really looking for from you.”

At this point, God now speaks of the time when His people would realize that He really doesn’t want and certainly doesn’t need the animal sacrifices. Because He says here:

**9** I will take no bullock out of thy house, *nor* he goats out of thy folds.

**10** For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills.

**11** I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field *are* mine.

**12** If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof.

**13** Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

Stop there. What do you think the answer is? Does

the Almighty God of the Universe, the Creator of all things, really desire to drink the blood of goats? Of course not. Rather,...

**14** Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

**15** And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

And drop down to ...

**23** Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

So in Psalm 50, we learn that it’s really not about animal sacrifices. Furthermore, it says in ...

**Proverbs 21:3** To do justice and judgment *is* more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

At some point, we will do a thorough study of the entire system of offerings and sacrifices, the main concept being that they all pointed to Christ. So that after Christ, it is vain to offer animal or bloody sacrifices. As the apostle explains in...

**Romans 12:1** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

Clearly, then, God does not desire us to pierce or cut ourselves; to draw blood from ourselves—or others, or even animals—in order to show our dedication to Him, or to present as sacrifices to Him.

Instead, He desires that we present our bodies as a *living* sacrifice—not a body whose life is being poured out by letting the blood flow out. On the contrary, He desires us to preserve our bodies and our lives, and to bring forth fruit from the divine life that is within us: the fruits of kindness, joy, giving, forgiveness, understanding, peace, love, mercy, goodness, etc.

And you know what? Many times, bringing forth the fruit of forgiveness when someone has highly offended you is many times more difficult than scratching or cutting yourself and bringing forth blood. I say it is much more difficult, except...that when you have the grace of God by His Holy Spirit within you, then it becomes much easier.

We have studied many fruits of the Spirit already and I am thankful to our Father that I can see in many of you how Father is bringing forth these fruits abundantly and they are a sweet-smelling savor to Him. Paul cites an example of an acceptable Christian sacrifice when he wrote to the Christians in Philippi from his imprisonment in Rome.

**Philippians 4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.**

**16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.**

Paul is talking about his material needs and how these dear brothers and sisters were generous in support of him.

**17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.**

**18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent from you*, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.**

**19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**

At this juncture, let us review the material we have discussed to date in this study of the covenants of the Scriptures. We began by explaining the *importance* of the covenants. We discovered that unless we comprehend the covenants, we are going to be severely handicapped in making good sense of the Bible story and its meaning for us today.

Early on, we also did a brief overview, or survey, of Bible covenants. We noted that there are *many* covenants in the Scriptures. However, depending upon

which denomination or theologian you ask, they would say that there are perhaps six or seven or eight or even nine major covenants. We also gave some basic definitions of covenants.

Next, we turned our attention specifically to *blood* covenants and examined the importance of blood, both from a biblical perspective and from the perspective of how blood has figured into covenant rituals in all types of non-Christian cultures and societies from the remote past until this very day. Remember the story of Dr. David Livingstone and Mr. Henry Stanley and the blood covenants they made with various tribal leaders as they explored the heart of Africa back in the 1800s?

Towards the end of my last essay, I stated that since we have now set the stage by exposing you to some of the practices used in these blood covenant rituals, or blood-brotherhood rituals, that in the coming essays we will expand upon them and study them in the light of Scriptures.

We have seen, that perverted and added to, though they may have become, that there is still the central kernel of the original and authentic rites of blood covenanting still within them. It is *not* a matter of men graduating from savagery to civilization as Sir James Frazer believed, but rather a departing from and a *degeneration* from the original rites as God gave them to His people.

Indeed, *the life/the soul IS in the blood*. But the blood is not to be drunk. We are not to cause either our own or the blood of others to be poured out in sacrifice. We call that mutilation or, carried to the extreme, it is suicide or murder. And we know that God's law calls for the most extreme punishment on any who would do such a thing.

To this point, we have also seen some additional features of covenants which I have let pass without comment: features such as a common shared meal—well, we did briefly discuss the Lord's supper, but there is more, of course.

One set of features of covenants which we have not even begun to discuss yet are the *obligations* of those who become blood brothers or who make covenants. That is a very important aspect in our study of the covenants. Another central and key covenant is that of marriage. This union between husband and wife is formalized with a covenant and it is paramount in God's plan for man. We will have much more to say on that in the coming essays also.

Sadly, we have to admit that our once much-more-

Christian nation has now degenerated to the point where body piercing, tattooing, and the co-mingling of the blood of diverse peoples has become not only commonplace, but acceptable. Let it be our prayer that God might use these teachings to help return our people, and bring all people, to the one and only true God.

Presently then, let us begin with just a brief look at the obligations or commitments that men make to each other during blood brotherhood or blood covenant rituals. From there we will move on to examine more closely the characteristics of covenants between God and men. With all that as foundation, we will then commence our perusal of the major covenants, and with side trips (some of them I expect will be substantial) into certain *other* covenants which theologians generally ignore, but which *I* believe have great importance.

If you were to ask the average high school graduate—or even a college graduate today—what they know about the Scythian people, most would have no idea who you are talking about.

Many of my readers, on the other hand, and especially those on our CD ministry, know quite well that the Scythians were one of the names applied to our Caucasian ancestors as they lost the name *Israel* as our so-called “ten lost tribes” eventually migrated into Europe. You can find much more on this in some of Ray Capt’s books, in particular, the one called *Missing Links Discovered*. It is also dealt with in detail in Steven Collin’s book, *Parthia*. Both of those books are available from us.

So now that we know that the Scythians were actually some of the so-called “lost tribes of Israel,” that might add a little more interest to this quotation from H. Clay Trumbull’s book called *The Blood Covenant*. Dr. Trumbull himself, of course, had no idea of the true identity of the Scythians. That identity was not discovered until the ancient Assyrian clay cuneiform tablets were deciphered in the 1930s. Trumbull had written his book fifty years before the identity of the Scythians was known. And even today, that identity is not widely known because, as I said, what high school or college graduate can tell you *anything* about the Scythians. And so, concerning the obligations of those entering into blood covenant, here is Trumbull quoting one of the ancient classical writers:

“Lucian, the bright Greek thinker, who was born and trained in the East, writing in the middle of the second century of our era, is explicit as to the nature and method of this covenant as then practiced in the East. In his ‘Toxaris or Friendship,’ Mnesippus the

Greek, and Toxaris the Scythian, are discussing friendship. Toxaris declares: ‘It can easily be shown that Scythian friends are much more faithful than Greek friends; and that friendship is esteemed more highly among us than among you.’

“Then Toxaris goes on to say: ‘But first I wish to tell you in what manner we [in Scythia] make friends; not in our drinking bouts as you do, nor simply because a man is of the same age [as ourselves], or because he is our neighbor. But, on the contrary, when we see a good man, and one capable of great deeds, to him we all hasten, and (as you do in the case of marrying, so we think it right to do in the case of our friends) we court him, and we [who would be friends] do all things together, so that we may not offend against friendship, or seem worthy to be rejected.

And whenever one decides to be a friend, we [who would join in the covenant] make the greatest of all oaths, to live with one another, and to die, if need be, the one for the other.’ ” [All emphasis by italic or underlining mine—JWB]

Do you get the impression that *friendship* meant a whole lot more in that culture than it does in modern America? We will come back to that idea later. A little further on, Trumbull continues his survey of the classical writers with this excerpt from Herodotus.

“As far back, even, as the fifth century before Christ, we find an explicit description of this Oriental rite of blood-covenanting, in the writings of the Father of History. ‘Now the Scythians,’ says Herodotus, ‘make covenants in the following manner, with whomsoever they make them. Having poured out wine into a great earthen drinking bowl, they mingle with it the blood of those cutting covenant, striking the body with a small knife, or cutting it slightly with the sword. Thereafter, they dip into the bowl, sword, arrows, axe, and javelin. But while they are doing this, they utter many invokings [of curses upon a breach of this covenant]; and, afterwards, not only those who make the covenant, but those of their followers who are of the highest rank, drink off [the wine mingled with blood].’ ”

My emphasis there was upon the fact that covenants were accompanied by declarations of curses if either party broke the covenant. Finally, Trumbull presents his conclusion:

“Thus it is clear, that the rite of blood-brotherhood, or of blood-friendship, which is today a revered form of sacred covenanting in the unchangeable East, was recognized as an established custom

among the Oriental peoples twenty-three centuries ago."

Well, we have already seen, but we shall see from the Scriptures in even greater detail, that blood covenants went back in history even long before 2,300 years ago. So from all that we have quoted both here and in the immediately previous couple of issues of FMS, is it not clear that becoming a blood brother—a brother by blood covenant—was a **very** solemn ceremony? It was so very solemn because it initiated and symbolized the utterly serious and permanent commitment that was made between the covenanters—a commitment unto death in some cases. And is it not also clear in the latter half of Proverbs 18:24, that the friend referred to is a very special type of friend; namely, a blood-covenant friend? Let's read it:

Proverbs 18:24 ~~A man that hath friends must show himself friendly:~~ and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Notice, it does not say that each and every friend, or just any ol' friend sticks closer than a brother, but it says there is a friend, meaning a certain *type* of friend, who sticks closer than a brother. We will see a bit later just how close and faithful and loyal that type of friend really is.

The study of the covenants of the Bible is a huge undertaking and we can become bogged down in so many details that we lose sight of the overall plan and structure. Therefore, at this point, I am going to refer to an outline-chart which will serve as a template for a good portion of the remaining studies. The outline is called *General Characteristics and Features of Covenants*. It should be included elsewhere in this mailing of the FMS. I want to acknowledge the work of Conner and Malmin and their book called *The Covenants*. I have found much solid teaching in it, but then I have added to, deleted, and modified it as I saw fit for this purpose.

In the remaining space here, I will begin to touch briefly upon certain parts of the outline. There is no point in going over every detail since that is what we will do as we encounter each separate covenant. First, I call your attention to the note at the bottom of the chart that not every covenant will have every single one of these features. The first feature of a covenant points out the fact that a covenant involves at least two people or two parties.

We have already seen examples of human with human covenants. Remember Abraham and Abimelech? ...and later, Isaac and Abimelech? And when one head of state covenants with another head

of state, it is a covenant between *nations*. Does God have rules for His people, his Israel *nation*, when it comes to making covenants or treaties with other nations? He does indeed!

So numeral 1, letter c and d: covenants are also between God and a man, or God and a collection of men; i.e., a nation. Can you think of an example of these divine-human covenants? How about between God and one man? Answer: Abrahamic, Davidic.

What about between God and a nation, or a group of people? Our major focus in these studies will be upon the divine-human type. There is one exception to the idea that a covenant is always between two or more parties, and that is where God alone is party to the contract. But God is both one and He is all, so He can be seen as a single-party covenant-maker or as a multi-party covenant-maker.

Feature number 2 is the Words of the covenant. This can be promises made by one or both sides. There can also be various terms or conditions which must present or fulfilled as part of the covenant. The promises—the terms and conditions—are all spelled out in words. The covenant or contract can be very brief. It can fit on one sheet of paper. Or it can be book length. The Mosaic covenant was so long it is sometimes referred to as the "book of the covenant." Usually, covenants are accompanied by solemn oaths.

Feature number 3 is the blood of the covenant. We have seen how men have cut themselves and mingled their blood as part of a covenant ritual. In other cases, an animal is sacrificed, and in its extreme perversion and degeneration, human sacrifice is practiced. But if there is a sacrifice, then there must be one who offers the sacrifice and officiates at the ceremony. This could be the High Priest or for everyday sacrifices made in compliance with a covenant, it could be the lesser priests.

*(To be continued)*

**Feed My Sheep** is a part of the teaching ministry of Dr. James W. Bruggeman and it is sent out freely. However, we reserve the right to discontinue sending it at any time to any one. The donations and tithes of those who are blest, taught and fed by this publication make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Gifts can be sent to PO Box 5695, Asheville, NC 28813. Thank you.