

THE BLOOD COVENANT

By Russ Tatro

LIVING WORD MISSIONS

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Chapter 1 - The Most Important Concept In The Bible

I believe Matthew 26:28 is the pivotal statement of the entire Bible. "This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

The most important fact or key issue of our Christianity is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

We sing about the blood. We talk about the blood. What was the uniqueness about Jesus' blood that He could boldly stand up and say, "Because of my blood the remission or forgiveness of sin shall be brought forth"? There was something different about his blood. We sing about it; we talk about it; but most Christians really don't know.

We need to understand our Christianity. And in this book, The Blood Covenant, we will not only make the declaration that He died on the cross but we'll show you why. We'll not only say His blood forgives us of sins but we'll show you how it forgives you of sin. We'll not only say it will heal your body, we'll show you how it does that — from the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Jesus said His blood is the blood of the new ... what? New Testament; New Covenant. There are many different things that happened in the Bible that most people do not even know why they transpired. Why did they circumcise children in the Old Testament? Why did they sacrifice animals in the Old Testament? Why, when Joshua came across the River Jordan, did God have them stop and circumcise all the men? All of this is in relationship to the blood covenant.

There is one essential fact I want you to realize. Our Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the original languages it actually says "covenants": old covenant, new covenant; old contract, new contract; last will and testament; new will and testament. When somebody is going to die they make out their what? They make out their last will and testament. The same terminology is used. It's a legally binding contract.

This Bible is a legal binding contract. Sent by God for mankind. Who wrote the Bible? Men wrote it inspired by God. And so it's been given in two contracts - an old contract and a new contract. Of course, the new covenant is not wiping out the old. It fulfills it. Jesus said, "I've not come to wipe it out I've come to fulfill it. None of it shall pass away it shall be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17). It's like a man who's written his last will and then when he's 20 years older he updates it. He doesn't wipe it out but he fulfills it and he adds more to it. This is what we have in the form of the Bible. Initiated by God as a contract.

Now, the word "covenant" (when it's used in the Bible) actually means, "to cut" or to draw blood. The old covenant established in the Old Testament was established between God and Abraham — established with blood. The new covenant was established between God and man through Jesus Christ — also through blood.

There are many different types of contracts, agreements, or covenants.

One type of contract is my word. It's verbal. I tell you I'm going to come here at one o'clock. I've made a contract, a verbal contract, with you that I would be here. If I

come at ten after one, are you going to put me in jail? No. Why? It's a verbal contract.

Another contract is where I may say to you, "listen, I want to buy something from you; your car." Then I sign a paper stating that I am going to pay you this much for your car, and then you give me your car, and I give you the money. Is that a more serious contract? It's a written contract.

Actually this is how the handshake came about. You would make an agreement: I'll buy this. Then you would give me your hand. And that was an agreement. They wouldn't write it down; they wouldn't get real technical. They would slap hands. Actually it was the slapping. They would slap hands and then it turned into a handshake. Many years ago a man's handshake was as good as a written contract. If you gave your word or your handshake, you agreed to a contract. Nowadays it doesn't seem to work that way. So we require a stronger, more binding contract — a written contract.

A notarized contract is even stronger. If I want to buy a piece of land from you, I meet you, four witnesses, and a notary to create the contract. Then the notary comes and he puts his stamp on the paper and it becomes an official paper. Then if I break the contract you are able to go to the judge and you say "look at this paper; here's my proof." That is a more serious contract – a notarized contract sealed or stamped.

But there's another contract that's even stronger than that. It's called a blood contract. For example, a man comes from another tribe, and maybe for reasons of protection against a warring faction or some other crisis going on, I want to have protection, and I want to be in a partnership with him. We enter into a blood covenant. Maybe we'll cut each other's wrists and we'll seal it together. Is this a strong contract? Yes. A blood contract is the strongest there is. Is this stronger than just my word? Is this stronger than a written contract? Certainly. It's in all cultures in the world. It's not just in Africa. All the cultures of the world agree that the strongest contract is a blood covenant.

The Bible, the Old Testament was a blood contract. It's not an insignificant thing. Yet many people treat this book like it's some small, insignificant thing. It's not.

There are a number of reasons to enter into a blood covenant. Maybe I am weak and you are strong. Maybe I want your protection for my family. Maybe I'm wealthy and your not so wealthy but you're strong. And then my wealth becomes some of your wealth. In a blood covenant if you have trouble that means I have trouble. That which is yours is mine. And if you break the blood covenant what is the consequence? In many tribes if you break it your own people will track you down and kill you. That's what a blood covenant is. It possesses strength and seriousness for protection, for resources, for assistance, for relationship. It's not a small matter when you enter into a blood covenant with somebody.

Now we're going to show you how it works in the Old Testament and in the New Testament dealing with God and man. Many people have not seen this in the Bible and they've taken the Bible lightly. But this is a very serious book. The Bible is a blood covenant book. It's something that God has initiated with man to help us. But if you will not interact with God... There's a serious consequence when you won't enter into a blood covenant with one who's greater than you who wants to enter into a blood covenant with you. What is the consequence if you'll not enter into a blood covenant

with God through the blood of Jesus Christ? The consequence is spiritual separation from God - eternal separation from God. It's not a small thing.

If the President of the United States came to visit you, would you be blessed? He is probably one of the most powerful men in the world — whether you realize it or not, or whether you like him or not. He's one of the most powerful men in the world. He has armies; he has airplanes; he has great power and resources available to him. Would you want to become a friend with him? Would you like to sit by him? Would you like to talk to him? He's one of the most powerful men in the world, one who is shaping the world picture. And he's going to come visit you. I certainly would like to talk to him. I'd say, "Hello, Mr. President, I would like to be a friend to you. I would like to get to know you. I would like for him to get to know me.

Many times people want to get around big powerful people — just for what they can get. Now if I get around the president, maybe some of his money or blessings will fall on me. And I will get to enjoy the benefits of his power and influence. People like to get around big people usually so they can obtain some of the benefits and the privileges and the blessings that they have. Most people would like to be around influential people, powerful people because it feels good and they know that they are protected. They're safe for some reason. If I'm with the president and all those bodyguards, I'm not too afraid.

Now, what if instead of you having to reach out to the President of the U.S he came and said to you, "I want to be your friend." That's better. And he said, "Today I want to be around you. I want to spend time with you." You wouldn't have to pray too much about it. No, you would like that. The big, big man wants to be around me.

You see, this is exactly what God, the creator of the universe, did. I don't reach out to him just to see what I can get. He's more powerful than the President of the U.S. He's got more resources and everything available than the President of the U.S. and I don't reach out to him just to see what I can get.

God sent Jesus and saw me and said, "I love you. I want to be your friend. I want to be around you. I want to have a relationship with you. I want to protect you. I want to help you. I want to give to you." This wasn't my idea. The Creator of the whole universe loves me so much that He wants to be around me. He wants to protect me. He wants to talk with me. He wants to sit down and fellowship with me. And not just in a small way but in the form of a blood contract – a blood covenant.

What does this mean? It means the resources of heaven now become my resources. It means the power of God becomes available to me. That's the sort of covenant that we have with God and yet so many people don't know that is available for them. They say, "Oh, that old book, I don't have time. I got to go do all my small, small things and I don't have time for this God business. I don't have time, I've got to go play this and play that." And they're doing all these other little worthless things of life and here's God wanting a relationship with them. Revealing it in a written contract established thru a blood covenant.

Let's take a look at some of the different ways that you enter into a covenant. One way, you exchange garments. As a missionary working and living in Africa I have

preached in villages in Liberia, West Africa and when I would be done they would present me with a shirt, a gown, and a cap. It was a form of a covenant. Many times when entering into a blood covenant garments are exchanged. What was the garment that was exchanged with us through Jesus Christ? He put on us a robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). We've exchanged our old filthy robe of sin for a robe of righteousness.

Number two is the exchanging of weapons. Many times in a tribal situation you would exchange weapons. I would give you my bow; you would give me your spear. That was a common practice when you entered into a covenant. What weapons did we exchange with Jesus? When we entered into a blood covenant with him we received spiritual armor the sword of the spirit. Eph.6.

Number three. When you enter into a blood covenant you exchange names. It's the same thing in marriage, the covenant of marriage: the woman takes the husband's name. Many times she maintains her maiden name in the middle. Ann Joan Smith. It's a covenant. Exchanging of names. We have the example where Abram's name was changed to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah. And God referred to himself as the God of Abraham (Gen. 17:5).

Number four, the cutting of blood. The strongest form of covenant is when you and I actually draw our own blood. Sometimes it's mixed at the wrist or at the hand. Sometimes it's drunk. It's cut and then it's drunk. They drink it with wine or they drink it in a mixture. When I was a child I had a friend and we cut our hands and mixed them and we became blood brothers.

The fifth way of entering into a covenant was by the splitting of animals. Very common when you have a blood covenant established there would be animals involved. Sacrificing of animals - animals given as a gift. We have the example of Abraham with splitting animals (Gen. 15).

Number six, there will be a place where there's a pronouncement of blessing and cursing. Blessing if you fulfill the blood covenant, cursing if you violate it (Deut. 28) - again Abraham with God.

Number seven, a memorial. Planting trees or the putting up of rocks – a marking of a place. Creating a circle and designating a memorial place where you entered into some form of blood covenant (Josh. 4).

Number eight, a covenant meal. A time and place when you and your partner can sit down and acknowledge or affirm the covenants that you have established. People that were not there when it happened can keep it as a memorial, a covenant meal, affirming what thing happened years ago. Do we do that in the church? What's it called? The Last Supper; Communion - our covenant meal (Matthew 26:20).

Many times when those who practice blood covenant will draw blood they will rub ash or some other substance into the cut to make it visible. Different African tribes do this to identify themselves. I remember a man from Nigeria that I met, and as soon as I started talking with him I asked what tribe he was from? He told me. I told him I could tell. He wanted to know how. By the scars on his face, I could see how they marked him. That's a tribal thing. Many times when they enter into a blood covenant, instead of just drawing the blood they will rub something into it that it will raise the skin, and it will

be obvious what has happened. It's a permanent sign, a permanent identifier of their tribe. We have the Old Testament example of male circumcision as a sign of the covenant (Gen. 17:10).

Not all eight facets of covenant are required for it to be a blood covenant. Usually two or three are all that are needed. But these are the practices involved in covenanting, contracting, legally joining yourself together, with some sort of required response in your relationship. My wife and I got married. We exchanged names. We exchanged rings. We do a lot of these different practices and we became one in relationship. We have a responsibility to each other.

Our Blood Covenant With God

Why was it necessary for God to establish a blood covenant with man?

In Genesis 1, verse 26 God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Who's "our" refer to? Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He's already talking about the Trinity. "Let us make him in our image, after our likeness." "Three in one." And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

So God had created man in his image, and had given spiritual authority and dominion over the earth to man, to Adam. Everything was good. Adam didn't have to go and beg the cows to come in. He didn't have to go and try to get the wolves to come in. He had authority over them. He said come and they came. God had authority and he'd given it to Adam. But Adam sinned. Now when he sinned what did he do? He gave away the spiritual authority God had given him. Adam was supposed to be submitting in obedience to God, but Adam became disobedient and he submitted himself unto Satan.

It's like this. If I give Joe the keys to my car and I say "It's mine but I give it to you to do with as you please. But it's still mine." Now, if Joe gave them to another person and said, "My brother, here's your new car. For \$500 it's yours." Then I come along and say, "You have my car. Give my car back." He's says, "No way. I paid Joe \$500 for that car. He sold it to me and we came into an agreement." Do I have the right to take my car from him? No, I don't. Whose car is it? His. Why? I gave Joe the authority to do with it as he chose, and he sold it.

That's exactly what happened with Adam. God gave him the authority and he gave it away. God told Adam not to eat of the Tree of Life (Gen. 2:17). Adam disobeyed; he sinned. He rebelled. He submitted his will to Satan. That's why God does not have the right to take Satan and just throw him out of the earth. Many people say why doesn't God just put Satan in hell. He did not have the right. God has restricted himself. Someone will say, "Oh, God can do anything." No, he can't. God can't lie. Can God lie? Can God sin? God is a God of justice. God is a holy God. Because Adam sinned he gave his authority away legally. God had to find a legal way to bring justice back into the

earth, to legally redeem back to Himself sinful man who had given away his authority to Satan. That's exactly what he had to do and that's why he had to do it. Why? Adam chose to sin. He disobeyed; he rebelled against God's authority — the very authority that was given to him by God.

Well then why did God give us choice? If God hadn't given man choice Adam wouldn't have sinned, and we wouldn't have all these problems. Why does God let man choose to go to hell if he wants to? God wants pure love from his people. The only way there can be pure love is if there's choice.

Let me give you an example. I have a daughter. I love her so much. But what would happen if I controlled her and I made all her decisions for her and I forced her to love me? Would she not have the right to say, "Daddy, you forced me but I really don't love you"? The only way you can have pure love is if there is choice to love. If there is choice to choose to love there has to be choice to reject. It's the same thing for you and me. God doesn't want your money. God doesn't need your talent. The only thing God wants is your love and the only way you can have pure love is through freedom of choice. You have a choice to accept God and love Jesus or you have a choice to embrace the god of this world and go and resist God and be destroyed in the ways of world. But it's still your choice because God wants your love. There has to be freedom of choice to have true love. Otherwise it's just manipulation. Otherwise my daughter could say, "Daddy, I never did love you. You forced me. You are not a father of justice."

That's why it was necessary for God to redeem man back legally. He had given free choice to Adam, and Adam, exercising that free choice, had given away his authority. God could not just step in and take it all back without trampling on man's free choice — something that God himself gave Adam as a means to love him.

So God started a redemptive plan to bring salvation back to man legally. As a God of justice, he had no other option.

We all know the story about the fall, about how Satan in the form of a serpent deceived the woman. She ate the fruit and gave it to Adam. That's how Adam surrendered his authority. But when God confronted them, and had to enforce the consequences of their choices, he set in motion a plan to redeem man at the same time.

Genesis chapter 3 gives us the clue of what God is going to do. Verse 14: "And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." In other words, God told him: "You crawl on your belly and you will bruise his heel but he shall crush your head." Who is the woman's seed that will crush his head? We see this same title being used by Paul later in the New Testament referring to Jesus (Gal. 3). God had to send his son to the earth as the Second Adam to take back — legally — what the first Adam had given away. A man caused the fall — a man had to redeem mankind from the effects of that fall. That's Jesus: the God-man.

God Could Work With Abram

So because of Adam's sin, Satan became god of this world even though God had created the world (1 Cor. 4:4). But God wanted to bring man legal redemptive justice into the earth. So he picked a man by the name of Abram.

Turn to Genesis chapter 12. "And the Lord said unto Abram, get out of your country and from your kindred and from your father's house unto a land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless them that bless you and curse them that curse you. And in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The ultimate redemption was to come through Jesus, and it is through Abram's lineage that Jesus was born. But God chose a man to begin the process. Now, it still would have been illegal for God to override the one to whom the authority had been transferred, so God entered into a covenant with Abram legally — legally they defeated the devil together.

Verse four: "So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken." First thing to notice here is that he was obedient. "And Lot went with him and Abram was 75 years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarah his wife and Lot, his brother's son, and all their substance they had gathered and the souls went with them. And they passed through land of Shechem under the plain of Moreh and the Canaanites were in the land. And the Lord appeared unto Abram and said: Unto your seed will I give this land."

Turn over to Genesis chapter 15. "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision saying: Fear not Abram. I'm your shield and exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God what will you give me seeing I go childless. And the steward of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. And Abram said, Behold to me thou hast given no seed. No one born in my house is heir. And behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him abroad and said look now towards heaven and tell the stars that you can number them, so shall your seed be. He believed the Lord. And the Lord counted it to him for righteousness."

So here God chose Abram and said I'm going to bless you. So God started working with the man and the man was obedient. The man believed God. So God said, "Now I have somebody that I can working with because he believes me. He chooses not to serve Satan. He's choosing to serve me." Every man has his own will. So if this man wants to believe God he has that choice. Is that not justice? Certainly it is. So you can see where it's beginning to happen, where God begins to reestablish his covenant through justice, through a legal process - agreement, free choice, faith.

He continues on. He said unto him, "I am the Lord that brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to inherit it." And he said: Okay, God. I believe you. But how shall I know that I am going to inherit it? God said: I'm going to show you; I'm going to show you how you can know. Verse nine: "He said take a heifer three-years old, and a she-goat three-years old, and a ram three-years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon." Well what's he going to do with these? He took unto all of these and divided them in the middle. They cut them. "And they laid each piece one to another. But the birds they divided not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses

Abram drove them away. And when the sun was going down a deep sleep fell on Abram. And the great darkness fell upon him. And God said unto Abram, know for sure."

Now what was God doing. Why did he have Abram cut up these animals? He was establishing a covenant with him. Up to this point Abram was believing God but Abram wanted a surety. You know what a surety is? He wanted a contract, a surety, to know that he knew that he knew that God would fulfill his part. You see, he believed God but he wanted to know beyond a shadow of a doubt God would do his part. And so God said "I'll prove it to you," and he had him cut these animals. He was entering into a blood covenant. Abram knew about blood covenant. He knew that was no small thing. He knew that that meant the resources of his covenant partner were his resources. The abilities of his covenant partner were his abilities, and he knew that God had enough ability.

Let's continue to look at this. He said, "Abram you'll know of a surety your seed shall be a stranger in a land that's not theirs and shall serve them and they shall afflict them 400 years." Where's that? Egypt. "And also that nation whom they shall serve I will judge. Afterwards shall they come out with a great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace. Thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And it came to pass when the sun went down it was dark, and a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between all of these pieces."

Isn't that what the scriptures said? Well what was that? A burning furnace, a smoking lamp. Abram and God had just had a discussion. Abram had cut all these pieces of these animals. And it says all of a sudden a smoking furnace and a burning lamp did what? Passed between the pieces. Exodus 19 verse 18 makes reference to God being a smoking furnace, a smoking fire. Psalm 119:105 makes reference to it. Also Revelation 21:23 speaks about Jesus being a burning lamp.

So here's what happened. God found somebody that loved him. God found somebody that would be obedient to him. God found somebody that had faith in what God had said. And God said I'm going to prove to you I will do my part. God had the animals cut to show you the seriousness of this contract. And then God the father and Jesus the son in his pre-incarnate state came down and sealed a blood covenant with man. See man couldn't do it. He couldn't save himself. God was initiating it. But Jesus had to be a part of it because ultimately he was going to be the savior in the covenant between God and man as the God man.

Now some people say, "well that's speculation, brother Russ. I really don't know that that was the blood covenant between God and man." But it's real easy. I'll show it to you in verse 18. What does verse 18 say? "In the same day the Lord made a covenant. With who? There it is. God made a covenant with Abram. The strongest most powerful covenant there is; a blood covenant. Who initiated it? God did. God said "I'll show you, Abram: you watch." And God initiated it. The Lord made a covenant with Abram: Unto you I've given a land from the river here, here, and here, and from chapter 16 he continues to talk about having children and his own seed.

In chapter 17 he continues to do the same thing. In verse two he says, "I will make my covenant between me and thee." Abram fell on his face and God talked. He

said, "as for me my covenant is with you. You shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall you be called Abram but your name shall be Abraham. For a father of many nations have I made thee. I will establish my covenant between me and thee." Verse 9, "you shall keep my covenant." Verse 10, "this is my covenant." Verse 11, "this is a covenant." Verse 13, "and my covenant...." Verse 14, "my covenant." Are you getting the picture? Verse 21, "by my covenant I will establish with Isaac." All through these chapters God is talking about a blood covenant between God and man.

This is a fundamental principle. You have to understand that the foundation of the Old Testament is this blood covenant. Take a look back at chapter 17. He says in chapter 17 verse 7, "I will establish my covenant between you and me and thee and your seed." He said — verse 10 — "this is my covenant which you shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee. Every man child among you shall be circumcised." Why? "And you shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin and it shall be a token of the covenant between you and me." Verse 13. "He that is born in your house and he that is bought with my money must be circumcised. And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an every lasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of the foreskin is not circumcised shall be cut off from his people."

You see, God entered into a blood covenant and there was a drawing of blood. The circumcising of the male child was man's way of drawing blood. You know what circumcision is? Where the flesh is cut in the male child. It's a drawing of blood. And it was God's way of having man do his part with that which God had done for him.

When you're in a covenant relationship, that which your covenant partner is willing to do you must be willing to do. If he's willing to die for me I must be willing to die for him. If he's willing to protect me I must be willing to protect him. If he's willing to supply provision for me I must be willing to supply provision for him. That does not mean I have to do it but I must be willing to do it. If the need does not arise I don't do it. But if it comes up, then I will do it. God entered into a blood covenant with man. He expected man to honor that blood covenant through the drawing of blood of their children, through male circumcision.

I was talking with somebody recently and they were asking me about some of the different tribal practices in Africa. They asked, How do we know if it's wrong? I said, Go into the deepest part of these groups, in any secret society. Anybody involved in witchcraft. You go to the deepest part. They always involve the sacrifice of human beings. Always. Always. That's not God's way. Jesus was the sacrifice. He paid the price. We don't have to sacrifice our children. When you sacrifice children you sacrifice human beings, and you're sacrificing them to the devil.

If we are covenant partners, and if you're going to sacrifice for me, I have to be willing to sacrifice for you. In God's covenant with Abram God knew he was going to sacrifice his only son, Jesus Christ. Didn't he? Did God know that? Did he know that Jesus was going to be the savior of mankind? Of course. And God knew he was willing to sacrifice Jesus Christ. You see, God had to work with Abram and keep him as a covenant partner. He had to continue to walk by faith, had to continue to believe God.

Look over in Genesis chapter 22: "And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt..." — in Hebrew it actually says "test" — "... God tested Abraham and

said: Abraham. He said: I'm here. Take your son, your only son Isaac whom you love and go into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of." Verse ten. "And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son." God was testing Abram. He had to know whether Abram was really a blood covenant partner with him. God knew he was willing and going to sacrifice his own son. The only way there could be legal justice is if my blood covenant partner was willing to sacrifice his own son. Abraham must be willing to sacrifice his own son if he was going to be a blood covenant partner with God who was going to sacrifice his own son. And that's the only reason it was done. God had to know that he was truly a covenant partner. That it wasn't a one-sided deal - that both were 100% committed to each other.

But Abraham said: "I'm willing to do it. I'm willing to do it. God you want me to. I'm willing to do it." And he was willing to do it, and God stopped him and said, "I don't need the sacrifice of your son; I just needed to know that you were willing to sacrifice him. And because I know you're willing, we truly continue to remain covenant partners." Abraham's faith was what God wanted.

Another example: Sodom and Gomorrah. The scripture says that God said, "why should I hold back from Abraham that which I'm going to do." Who was Abraham that God should tell him about the destruction of a city. He was his covenant partner. They were in blood covenant. He said: "I'm not going to hold it back from my partner." It's not a small thing. God was going to kill Moses because he wouldn't put his child into a blood covenant with him (Ex. 4:19). It's not a small thing. The children of Israel were 40 years in the wilderness, and 40 years in the wilderness they never circumcised their male children (Josh. 5:2). What a rebellious bunch. They knew what it meant to do it and they knew what it meant not to do it. "We don't want anything to do with you, God." Do you know that there are people today who will not enter into covenant with God from their hearts? They'll not let that work happen in their heart through the blood of Jesus Christ. And they are doing the exact same thing.

I was in a church in Africa and after I spoke I was asked, "Brother Russ, what do you think about our practice where we go down to the cemetery and talk to the dead?" I mean they are asking me straightforward questions. "You're a teacher of the Bible tell us what you think about that." I said, "Well my practice is never to speak against culture. If you want to wear certain clothing you can wear it. You want to have certain type of names or you want to have choir robes or don't have choir robes, culturally that's up to you." I said, "BUT..." "But when your practice contradicts the Word of God then we must address it from the Word of God." And we're going to look at all these practices. We must examine what we believe. We must understand what we're doing. There are serious ramifications.

I really believe this is the foundation of our Christianity. As you grasp and understand the blood covenant you will be strengthened as a Christian. You will know that you know that you know that you know. In Liberia they had an expression: "I put my head on the chopping block." They have that in Sierra Leone, too. It means that I would die for what I believe because I know that I know that I know that I know what I believe in.

That's what the blood covenant is all about: that which gives us absolute assurance of what we have and who we are through the blood covenant established by God between himself and mankind by the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 2 - The Basis For Our Authority

Adam sinned and what happened? He gave the authority away. Second Corinthians chapter 4, verse 3. "If our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them." Who did he say was the god of this world? He's talking about Satan. They call him what? They call him the God of this world. Well how could he be god of this world? I thought God was God. But Satan is god of this world. How did he get to become god of this world? He got it through Adam sinning, and submitting and surrendering unto him.

Luke chapter 4, verse 5. "And the devil taking Jesus up to a high mountain, showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Jesus: All this power will I give you, and the glory of all these nations for they have been delivered unto me and to whom so ever I will give it. If thou therefore will worship me all shall be yours." And we know Jesus' response. Verse 7: "Get thee behind me Satan. For it is written thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve." But listen. This is called what? A temptation. Jesus was tempted. Satan said all the kingdoms of the world are his. They've been delivered to him. If this were not true then that would not have even been a temptation to Jesus.

If you come up to me and say, "My friend, if you do this and this, I'll give you a million dollars." But I know that you don't even have a million dollars, that's no temptation to me. Now if you come up to me and I know you have a million dollars then that might be a temptation. Satan was tempting Jesus with something he really did have. He said, "The power of all these kingdoms has been delivered to me." Who delivered it to him? Adam. It had to have been true or it would not have even been a temptation to Jesus. But Jesus knew that. He didn't say, "Satan you're a liar. The kingdoms aren't yours." Jesus dealt with him about worshipping God. He said get thee behind me. So Satan is god of this world system (1 Cor. 4:4).

God had to initiate a plan where he could redeem mankind back to himself legally. God did not have the right to grab the devil by the shirt and throw him into hell because Adam had legally given him the authority in the earth. So God chose a man. Abram. And we showed you the blood covenant God established with him.

We talked about Isaac: Abram taking Isaac up to be tested, to be sacrificed. Did God want Abram to sacrifice Isaac? He wanted him to be what? He wanted him to be willing to. He must have been willing to as a covenant partner. But he did not want the sacrifice, he wanted his willingness to do it. Why? Because God knew that he was going to sacrifice his only son. And his covenant partner had to be willing to do what God was going to do. We talked about Sodom and Gomorrah. How God asked, "Am I going to hide this thing from my covenant partner Abram?" No. And he revealed it to him.

Circumcision: The Cutting Of Blood

Genesis 17, verse 10. "This is my covenant which you shall keep. Between me and you and thy seed after thee. Every male child among you shall be circumcised and ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of ... what? ... of the

covenant." Now why did God require that of Abraham? Because they were blood covenant partners.

Continuing... "It shall be a token of the covenant between me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you. Every man child in your generations. He that's born in the house or bought with money of any stranger which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house and he that is bought with thy money must needs be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an ever lasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people." Why? Broken covenant.

Now this was established with whom? Abraham. He's the father of the faith. Why? Because he dared to believe God and be obedient to God. God found someone that he could work with.

Turn if you would to Exodus. We're going to take this vein of understanding of the blood covenant through the Old Testament. Exodus chapter 4, verse 24. "It came to pass by the way in the inn the Lord met Moses and sought to kill him." Exodus 4:19. "And the Lord said unto Moses..." "And Moses took his wife..." "And the Lord said unto Moses..." "... and thou shalt say unto Pharaoh..." "And I say unto thee let thy son go and it came to pass by the way in the inn the Lord met him — he's talking about Moses — and sought to kill him, Moses." Why? Verse 25. "Then Zipporah, who was Moses's wife, took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son. And cast it at Moses's feet. And said "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me."

Moses had married Zipporah. They had not circumcised their son. Verse 26. "So he (God) let him (Moses) go. Then she said a bloody husband thou art." Why? Because of the circumcision. You see she was not out of the ancestral background that Moses was. It appears as we look through scripture his first wife had passed on. This was his second wife. She was not of the tribes that were in Egypt. And it appears that there was probably a family dispute about circumcising this boy. Perhaps she did not want to circumcise him. How do we know that? Because she did it here very reluctantly. And she makes comment with it: You're a bloody husband. You caused this thing to happen. My poor little baby. Now he's bleeding like this. We had to circumcise him. You're a bloody husband to me because of this circumcision. But what was the consequence between Moses with God for not circumcising him? Death. Verse 24: "The Lord met him and sought to kill him." Why would God kill Moses? For breaking the covenant. They were blood covenant partners. And Moses was choosing to break that covenant. He was esteeming his covenant of marriage and his wife more highly than his covenant with God.

It's the same thing today. If you won't enter into blood covenant with God through the blood of Jesus Christ, you will die spiritual death. People play with Christianity. Well I go to church. I'm all right. Brother if you have not accepted Jesus Christ into your heart, if you've not embraced him from your heart, if you're not born again by the spirit of God even though you go to church, you're not all right. Even if you are the Bishop, you're not all right. Many play with religion. Well he's a big man in the church. And he comes every Sunday and he wears all the clothes and he does this, and this, and this but if he's not accepted Jesus Christ into his heart, if he's not embraced him here on

earth, if he's not been touched by the Spirit of God he is not under the blood covenant through Jesus Christ and when it comes time to die he will depart and he will go with the god of this world, who is Satan, and spend eternity in hell.

Joshua chapter five. Verse 1. "It came to pass when all the kings of the Ammonites which were on the side of the Jordan westward and all the kings of the Canaanites which were by the sea heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan. At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives and circumcise again the children of Israel a second time."

Here we are, Joshua's taking the children of Israel into the promise land. After 40 years in the wilderness they cross the Jordan River; they just now enter in, and there is Jericho. It's time for war, it's time to enter the promise land and God says to circumcise one and a half to two million people. I think I would have said, "God I think you made a mistake. I mean we got a big battle here, and we just came through the river and I mean you want us to circumcise all of our men? Are you sure about this?" That's what's happening here. He says, "Make you sharp knives and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time." So Joshua obeyed. "He made sharp knives and he circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness after they came out of Egypt. Now all the people that came out were circumcised. But all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came out of Egypt them they had not circumcised."

You know the story. All the people that were over 20 years of age did what? Died in the wilderness in those 40 years. But anybody that was 20 and under lived. Those are the ones that Joshua brought into the promise land. But when all of those children and all of those adults had children they never circumcised them. They were a rebellious bunch. They knew what they were doing. They chose not to enter their children into circumcision. They chose not to enter their children into a blood covenant with God. They were slapping at God and saying, "We know you established a blood covenant with Abraham but we don't want nothing to do with it. We're not putting our children into covenant with you." They deserved to die in the wilderness. You can see why God would get angry. He called them "this rebellious bunch, this stiff necked bunch of people." "These hard-hearted people." He even said, "Moses, get out of the way; I'm going to destroy them."

The Necessity Of Blood

Why does there have to be a blood sacrifice? Why was there animal sacrifices, or blood sacrifices? Why does there have to be this blood involved? God is holy. And God is a God of justice. He cannot allow, or permit sin to be in his presence because he is holy. Turn to Hebrews chapter 9 and let's see why there had to be a blood sacrifice. Verse 20. "This is the blood of the testament (or covenant) which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. Why? Can we understand it? We hear the statement. We know the statement. There has to be bloodshed. But why? Turn if you would to the book of Leviticus, chapter

17, verse 11. "For the life of the flesh is ... in the blood. And I have given blood to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls. For it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul."

Life is positive. Death is negative. Life as God has ordained it. Life is where? Life is in the blood. If you take my blood out I die. Who established it that way? I didn't. You didn't. God did. But God's word says life is in the blood. Keeping in remembrance that God is holy, and God is a God of justice.

Romans chapter 6, verse 23 says, "For the wages of sin is death. But the gift of God eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord." The scripture tells us the wages for sin is what? So you've got sin, negative, death. Now wages are something you deserve. If you work for your boss at the bank at the end of the month, if he's a nice guy, he should give you your wages. No, you deserve them. Whether he's a nice guy or a bad guy or a good guy or a hard guy, it doesn't matter. At the end of the month you deserve your wages. You have earned them. They are rightfully yours. The wage is what you deserve. What you earn for sin is death. People who sin deserve death. Spiritual death. Separation from a holy God. Why? Because God is holy. God is a God of justice. God cannot permit sin to come into his presence. He must protect his holiness.

You who have sin in your life, if you've not accepted Jesus Christ, should God allow you into heaven? No. God is holy. God is a God of justice. He can't permit you in there. I am glad he won't permit you in there, because I'm going to be there. And I don't want that sin around me. Because when I get to that place it's going to be holy. God will keep it holy. It will be maintained holy forever and ever and ever. No more of this fallen stuff of sin and fallen nature and the devil and all this garbage. It will be pure and holy up there. And thank God, he is going to keep it that way. So people who sin separate themselves from God. "Death" here is not talking about physical death. We are talking about spiritual death. What is spiritual death? Spiritual death is separation from God.

The wages of sin, what you deserve, to a holy God, for your sin, your evil, is separation from God. Sin, negative, death. What is the only thing that can counteract negative? Positive. What is the only thing that can counteract death? Life. What is the only thing that can counteract sin? . Blood. Only life can counteract it. Life is where? In the blood.

This is the reason you have blood sacrifices in the Old Testament. Those blood sacrifices are made for what purpose? For the covering over of sin. And this is why: life over death. Blood to cancel out sin.

In the Old Testament, the old covenant, they sacrificed animal's blood. The high priests went into the holy of holies once a year. And what did he take in? The blood of animals. For what purpose? For whose sins? The children of Israel. For the forgiveness of their sins. And did God accept that sacrifice? Yes, he did. Here's the key. Entering their children into circumcision was how the father placed them under the blood sacrifice as a covenant partner.

In the old covenant that was sufficient for God. God looked at it and said, "I will accept that right now. But there will be a time when I will not accept that. There will be a time when I will send a perfect sacrifice." In the old covenant God accepted it until we

came into the new covenant. Now you read all through the Old Testament and you see blood sacrifices. All through the Old Testament you see the word "covenant." You see all through the Old Testament where they circumcised the male children.

Matthew Ch.1. Matthew was written for the Jews. (The four gospels are written to four different types of people. Matthew was written to the Jewish people. Mark was written to the Romans. Luke was written for the Greeks. John was written to the entire world. When you study the book you will see that it's written to that type of people. It's very clear.) But Matthew was written primarily for the Jews. Who was the first man? Adam. But look what it says here in Matthew chapter 1. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ. The son of David, the son of...." It doesn't say Adam. "Abraham beget Isaac. Isaac beget Jacob. Jacob beget Judas..." He's talking about the lineage of Jesus Christ: from the time of Jesus going backwards. And all of the Old Testament is pointing to the New Testament. The New Testament is not hidden in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is always pointing to a Messiah. The Old Testament is always pointing to the Savior. And so in Jesus' lineage, he goes all the way back to David and to whom? But it doesn't say Adam. Why? Because God entered into the covenant with who? Abraham. And that's where Jesus' lineage goes back to.

Back into the Old Testament: Genesis chapter 25. I want you to read the Old Testament with the understanding that Abraham and his descendants were blood covenant partners with God. And understanding what this circumcision means and meant was not a small thing: it was a matter of life and death. That's why the word "covenant" is seen throughout.

Genesis 25, verse 19:

And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebecca, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Pandan-aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian, and Isaac prayed much to the Lord for his wife because she was unable to bear children. And the Lord granted his prayer and Rebecca his wife became pregnant. Two children struggled together within her and she said if it be so why am I like this? And she went to inquire of the Lord. The Lord said to her, two nations are in your woman and the separation of two peoples has begun in your body. The one people shall be stronger than the other and the he elder shall serve the younger. When her days to be delivered were fulfilled behold there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red all over like a hairy garment and they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came out and his hand grasped Esau's heels. He was named Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when she gave birth to them.

When the boys grew up Esau was cunning and a skilled hunter, a man of the outdoors. But Jacob was a plain and quiet man dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of Esau's game. But Rebecca loved Jacob. Jacob was boiling pottage one day when Esau came from the field and was faint with hunger. Esau said to Jacob I beg of you let me have some of that red stew to eat for I am faint and famished. That is why his name was called Edom, red. Jacob answered, Sell me today your birth

right — the rights of the first born. Esau said, see here, I'm at the point of the death. What good can this birthright be to me? Jacob said, Swear to me today that you are selling it to me. And he swore to Jacob and sold him his birthright. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and stew and lentils and he ate and drank and rose up and went his way. Thus, Esau scorned his birthright as beneath his notice.

The birthright was a very important thing. The eldest son was always given the authority and the responsibility to carry on the heritage, the right of the family name. If the father was to die, the eldest son was responsible, and he expected to inherit all of the land, all the responsibility the father had for the family. And here is Esau with that right - the privilege of that responsibility, as the eldest son. Now that is not only a physical, natural responsibility, it's also a spiritual responsibility.

All the family also knew that it was the father's responsibility to circumcise the children to make sure that the family was directed towards a faith in God in their family. And Esau was to take that sort of role and responsibility. And now he has in a situation where he has a physical desire or need and he gives up his birthright. It says that he scorned his birthright. Now that doesn't mean that he just traded it in like a bar of soap for a piece of candy or like 20 dollars for a bicycle. I mean he was giving up his inheritance: He was giving up his heritage. He was giving up that responsibility. He was not a man who had spiritual concern. He was not a man who was concerned for the things of God. He was not a man who was a responsible person. A responsible man would never give up such precious family heritage and responsibility for food.

Many times when we read the Old Testament in particular if we don't stay on God's side we get a wrong perception of God. We get a wrong image of God. And this is one of those situations that if you don't read the Bible carefully you will have a wrong image of Jacob. Jacob of course later on became Israel. His name was changed to Israel, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. And for many times I've heard people preach against him as though he was a usurper: He was bad. He was a wicked man. He didn't do well. He stole the birthright. He stole the blessing from Isaac. But did he really do that? If you read and look a little more in depth, you will see that Jacob was the one who was spiritually hungry for more of God. Jacob was the one who was seeking after the things of God and Esau gave no place and no credence to it. It's same thing today. If you give no place to the things of God you can have all the natural luxuries of life, you can have all natural niceties of life, but if you don't care for your spiritual birth right, the privileges which are available to us through the birth and death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you will suffer just like Esau did in life.

Chapter 27:

When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau, his elder son, and said, My son. He answered, Here am I. He said, I am old. I do not know when I may die. So now, I pray you, take your weapons and a quiver and your bow and go out in the open and hunt game for me and prepare me meat such as I love and bring it to me that I may eat of it and to give you my blessing before I die. But Rebecca heard what Isaac said to Esau, his son, and when Esau had gone to the open

country to hunt for game that he might bring it, Rebecca said to Jacob her younger son [who said to Jacob?], I heard your father say to Esau your brother bring me game and make me an appetizing meat so I may eat and declare my blessing upon you before the Lord, before my death. So now my son, do exactly as I command you. [As she commanded him.] Go now to the flock and from it bring me two good and suitable animals. I will make them appetizing meat for your father such as he loves. And you shall bring it to your father that he may eat and declare his blessing upon you before his death. But Jacob said to his mother Rebecca, Listen, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I'm a smooth man. Suppose my father feels me. I will seem to be a cheat and an impostor and I will bring a cursing upon me and not a blessing. His mother said unto him, On me be the curse, my son. Obey my word and go and fetch them to me.

Why and how could she do something like that? Just as we had read back in Genesis chapter 25. The Lord had said to her in verse 23, "the elder shall serve the younger." In verse 34, Esau had scorned his birthright. He no longer had right and privilege to that blessing that Isaac was going to pass on. A spiritual blessing. It's the same thing today. If you're not hungry and thirsty for the things of God, don't expect God's spiritual blessings upon your life. It's not good enough that you got born again, baptized in the Holy Spirit. You were excited by the things of God at one time. You must keep pressing onto the things of God.

So Jacob went and got the animals and brought them to his mother. And his mother prepared meat with a delightful odor such as his father loved. Then Rebecca took her elder son Esau's best clothes, which were in the house and put them on Jacob. And she put the skins of the animals on his hands and on the smooth part on his neck and she gave the meat and the bread, which she had prepared in the hand of Jacob. He went to his father he said, Father, here am I. Who are you my son? And Jacob said, I am Esau, your first born.

Now he was saying that. Some people say that he lied that he was a liar. But he was saying it in context of his birthright, of his inheritance of the spiritual blessing. And in that regard he was standing in the place of Esau, the first born, because Esau had legally transferred that right and that privilege to Jacob when he gave away his birthright.

I've done when you told me to do. Now sit up and eat of my game that you may proceed to bless me. And Isaac said to his son, How is it that you found the game so quickly? He said, Because the Lord your God caused it to come to me [— and he did that through Rebecca, his mother]. But Isaac said to Jacob, Come close to me, I beg of you, that I may feel you, my son, and know whether you really are my son Esau or not. So Jacob went near to Isaac and his father felt him and said, The voice is Jacob's but the hands are the hands of Esau. He could not identify him because his hands were hairy like his brother's hands. So he blessed him. But he said, Are you really my son Esau? And he said, I am. Isaac said, Bring it to me and I will eat of my son's game that I may bless you. He brought it, he ate it, he

drank. Then his father Isaac said, Come near and kiss me my son. So he came near and kissed him. He smelled his clothing and he blessed him. And said, See, the scent of my son is the odor of the field, which the Lord has blessed. And may God give you of the dew of the heavens and of the fatness of the earth and the abundance of the grain and new wine. Let people serve you and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brothers and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Let everyone be cursed who curses you and favored with blessings who blesses you.

That was the blessing that was promised from God for Israel for the 12 tribes. The nations would serve them. That was not a blessing that was to be passed onto Esau. Verse 30.

As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob and Jacob was scarcely gone from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting. Esau also prepared the food and brought it to his father. He said, Let my father rise and eat of his son's game that you may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who are you? He replied, Your son, your first born, Esau. Then Isaac trembled and shook violently and said, Who? Where is he who has hunted game and brought it to me? I ate of it before you came and I blessed him. Yes he shall be blessed. When Esau heard the words of his father he cried out with a great and bitter cry. And said to his father, Bless me, even me also, my father. Isaac said, Your brother came with cunning and treacherous deceit and he has taken your blessing.

Now remember Jacob came there under whose direction? Rebecca's. Rebecca came there at direction from God and Isaac was the one that was being carnal. Isaac was passing the blessing on because he liked Esau's game, because he liked the outdoorsman. Because he liked his appearance. But in reality God is looking at the heart of people. You can be the first born of the family. You can have the best education, you can give the best appearance of being most qualified, but that's not what qualifies you for spiritual inheritance. That comes out of a hunger, out of a thirst, out of a desire to see the kingdom of God advance, and then it doesn't matter whether you're a man or a woman. Then it doesn't matter if you're tall or short, if you're educated or uneducated. If you are pressing into God from your heart, if you're pressing into the inheritance, if you're pressing into the birthright that we have through Jesus Christ to receive the miracle power of God, to receive the word of God, to change this world, you will see that God's blessing will be upon you. Hallelujah.

But Esau wasn't that way. He scorned his birthright. Those things were not important to him. He was carnal. He was concerned more about earthly things, and Isaac was giving place to the carnal as well. Rebecca and Jacob were really the ones doing what was God's plan.

Esau heard his father's words and he cried out with a bitter cry. He said, Bless me father. Isaac said, Your brother has come and taken your blessing. Esau replied, Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birth right. [— He didn't

take it away. Esau didn't care for it. He didn't give importance to it. —] And now he's taken away my blessing. Don't you still have a blessing for me? And Isaac answered Esau: Behold, I have made Jacob your master. I've given all his brethren to him for servants, and with corn and new wine have I sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son? Esau said to his father, Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau wept out loud. And Isaac answered, Your blessing and dwelling shall all come from the fruitfulness of the earth and from the dew of the heavens. By your sword you shall live and serve your brother. But the time shall come when you shall grow restless and break loose, and you shall tare his yolk from off your neck. And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him.

He was jealous. There are people in the ministry that get jealous. There are Christians that get jealous of other Christians. There are people who want all the blessings everybody else has. People whose motives are many times not right. And they act and they do things that are really out of character of the ways of God. God has a way and God wants us to serve him. God wants us to seek his face. God wants us to bring spiritual things into other people's lives. But when we get so carnal and so concerned about natural things and we scorn and shun them, and we are not concerned about spiritual things, our minds get warped and we see things wrongly through the wrong glasses. Through tinted glasses, through glasses that don't show things as they really are. Instead of seeing things through spiritual eyes, we see things through natural eyes. That's what Esau was doing here at this time.

And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing, and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are very near. When he is gone I will kill my brother Jacob. The words of Esau, her elder son, were repeated to Rebecca. [— Who repeated those to Rebecca? I personally believe the Spirit of God did. Esau had said them in his heart. I believe that God spoke those things to Rebecca.—] She sent for Jacob her younger son and said to him, See here, your brother Esau is planning to kill you. So now my son, do what I tell you. Arise. Flee to my brother Laban in Haran. Linger and dwell with him for a while until your brother's fury is spent. When your brother's anger is diverted from you, he will forget what has happened and I will send and bring you back from there. Why should I be deprived of both of you in one day? Then Rebecca said to Isaac, I'm weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth....

Who were the daughters of Heth? They were the wives of Esau. You see Esau not only despised his birthright, he despised his inheritance, he despised his heritage, he despised even his parents. It had been passed onto him by his parents that they were not supposed to marry people outside of their tribe and that was passed down from God. But Esau did not care. He would take his wives out of the tribes that they were not supposed to interrelate with, not supposed to interbreed with. Not supposed to have relationship. Why? Because they were serving heathen gods. They were devil worshippers. They didn't serve the true and living God. They wanted nothing to do with him. And here was Esau brought up under the heritage of Isaac who was the son of

Abraham. The blessing of God was supposed to be passed down from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to all of Israel, and Esau was unwilling to do things God's way.

For years many people have read this and said, "Oh, Jacob was so bad and Esau was so good." No, no, no. Jacob was pressing after God. It's the same thing for you and me. If you want the blood covenant, if you want the contract, if you want the agreement, if you want the vision of God, you must keep seeking after God from your heart. Seeking after God from your Spirit. You can't back off and just become carnal. You can be following after God for one year, three-years, five-years and be so blessed, but when you back off and forsake the birthright, you forsake the inheritance. When you forsake God's provision and start becoming carnal or you start pursuing the things of the flesh, the things of the natural, you will be sitting on the wayside accomplishing nothing for God. You will be sitting on the sidelines not doing anything in the game of life. You'll be sitting on the sidelines making no difference for the cause of Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter how sincere you were at one time. You must stay sincere. You must press in to what God has for you.

Rebecca says "If Jacob takes wives of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?" Well he did not. He got his wife out of the tribe that he was supposed to, a tribe uncorrupted by the Canaanite practices through which the lineage could be passed down. You know the story about how Jacob went on and got his wife through his uncle Laban and how blessed they were in their marriage. Hallelujah. And we thank God for his obedience and faithfulness. It's so easy for people to start off on the right track and then get off to the other side. You cannot divert. You cannot play with the things of God. We must stay in tune. We must stay on fire.

But this is an important point for us: when we read the Old Testament, stay on God's side. There are many things in the Old Testament that we don't see properly when we're looking at them through shallow glasses. When we're looking at them through carnal glasses. We should not be so quick to be judgmental about what's going on, like judging Jacob as a thief or supplanter, stealing the birthright and blessing from poor innocent Esau. Throughout the Old Testament you see where God destroyed nations, where he destroyed tribes, where he destroyed the animals. It's because these people were not serving God. They were Satan worshippers. They were polluting the earth and God had to keep the tribes of Israel pure. Why? So that Jesus Christ could come through them to bring salvation for mankind.

And that's what we see happening in the old covenant when we see the children of Israel going from country to country, situation to situation where these people were Satan worshipers. The wickedness of all the different nations was stealing people away from God. They would destroy babies and slaughter innocent people, and they would worship statues and give spiritual adoration unto these gods.

In the midst of all that, Esau was fraternizing and interbreeding with these people. You and I must keep pure. We must keep clean. We must keep honoring the covenant that God has established with us through Jesus. So as you read the Old Testament stay on God's side. Don't be reading it through carnal eyes. And as we step over from the old covenant into the new covenant you will see that God was just and

God's plan was perfect. Aren't you glad that God kept them pure? Aren't you glad that sin didn't defile Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob down into the tribes? Aren't you glad that Jesus Christ could come forth out of the lineage of the covenant established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

Chapter 3, The New Covenant

The new covenant did not abolish the old covenant. What did it do? It fulfilled it. Completed it. The new covenant is the spirit of the old covenant. The old covenant was outward rules and regulations: Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not commit adultery. What is the new covenant? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self. Love — more the focus of the new covenant — is the spirit of the old. If you're walking in love you won't steal from your neighbor. If you're walking in love you won't commit adultery with your neighbor's wife. It is the spirit of it.

Isaiah 7:14. Jesus was not an accident. He was not hidden in the old covenant. He was revealed in the old covenant. "Therefore the Lord, himself, shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive. And bear a son and shall call his name Emanuel." Prophecy speaking forth about who? Jesus. This was written into the old covenant. The old covenant is always pointing ahead to the new covenant, to Jesus Christ.

Exodus 12. This is just prior to the children of Israel leaving Egypt and it was the time of Passover. Actually this is when Passover was instituted.

And the Lord spoke unto Moses ... This month shall be unto you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year. Speak unto the congregation of Israel saying, On the tenth day of this month they shall take to them a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house. And if the household be too small for the lamb let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish. A male of the first year. Ye shall take it out from the sheep or from the goats and ye shall keep it up until the 14th day of the same month. And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening and they shall take of the blood and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door of the house and they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in the night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water but roast with fire; his head with his legs and with the pertinence thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning, and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet and your staff in your hand, and ye shall eat it in haste. For it is the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night and I will smite all the first born in the lands of Egypt, both man and beast.

So God came into Egypt. He was passing over it. He was killing the first born of the beast and of the people of Egypt. But if the Israelites were obedient to God and put the blood on the door posts — the blood of what? The spotless lamb — then he would pass over them.

Now why was God killing these people? In the Old Testament, again, what are you supposed to do? Stay on God's side. A lot of people read this and they think all

kinds of funny things about God. I'll show you why he was doing this. He says, "I will smite all the first born in the land of Egypt both man and beast and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am the Lord." This was a judgment from God against the false gods of Egypt. Somebody said, "Well, he just did that to release the people of Israel." No, He did it as a judgment against those gods.

Verse 26. "And it shall come to pass when your children say unto you, What mean ye by this service?" What service? The Passover service. "... Ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped." In the future they would talk about the Lord's Passover — it is still practiced today. And what is it that brought deliverance to the people? The blood of the lamb did. Their obedience to do what God said, and God instituted the blood of the lamb.

The Heart Of The Christian Message

Now we're going to make the transition, showing you that Jesus was the lamb. Some of the issues we're going to bring out are going to help you minister, especially to Muslims. These issues in the new covenant are most of the objections Muslims give about Jesus not being the son of God and Jesus not dying on the cross. We're going to prove both of those to you and show how you can prove it to them. We're also going to show you the very heart or essence of what our Christianity is all about. What is it that we proclaim our Christianity is all about? The sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Right? Calvary. That's what it's all about. But why? And the better you understand it, the greater depth you get of this, will strengthen you in your Christianity. So that you will know that you know that you know that you know what and why you believe it.

The children of Israel coming from Egypt was an example of people coming out of bondage, out of slavery, into freedom and into liberty. They came out of slavery and bondage into freedom and liberty. Let's link it to the new covenant:

John chapter 1 verse 29. "And the next day John the Baptist saw Jesus coming unto him. And John said, Behold the lamb of God which taketh away sins of the world." He's called the lamb of God. Verse 35. "And again, the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked John said, Behold the lamb of God!" Now at that time if they're making reference to the lamb of God they knew what they were talking about. In our terminology talking about a lamb means one thing but with their cultural understanding and knowledge of the old covenant they knew very well what this meant.

First Corinthians chapter 5 verse 7. "Purge out therefore the old leaven that you may be a new loaf, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast." What feast? The Passover feast. "But not with old leaven ... [and the things that come with that] but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Notice he said Christ is ... what? Our Passover. The Passover sacrifice is the reference he's making. Just as the feast is not kept with the old leaven, it is no longer kept for believers with the blood of a natural lamb.

Hebrews chapter 9 verse 25. "Nor yet that he, Jesus, should offer himself often,

as the high priest entered into the holy place every year with the blood of others." The reference being to the old covenant practice of the high priest coming in year after year into the holy of holies bringing the sin offerings. Jesus did not have to do that "often". He entered in once. Let's look at it. Verse 26. "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he — Jesus — appeared to put away sin." How? "By the sacrifice of himself." You see the linking from the old to the new is hinged on the word "sacrifice". "By the sacrifice of himself. As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. So Christ was offered once to ... what? ... bear the sins of many."

Revelation chapter 5 verse 5. "And one of the elders said unto me" — John is the writer of this — "weep not." Why was he weeping? Because nobody was worthy to come and open the book of life. He said, "Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah. The root of David hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld and, lo, in the midst of the throne and the four beasts and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb." Hallelujah! "As it had been slain."

Revelation chapter 12. The first part of verse 9. "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil and Satan which deceived the whole world. He was cast out into the earth and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength in the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down which has accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him, — Satan. How? — by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony." By the blood of the Lamb....

Do you see the transition from the old to the new? Do you see the step we're taking from the old covenant to the new covenant? What is that bridge, that link between the two? It is called "The Passover for all mankind." Jesus' blood now becomes that which will give God reason to pass over you if that blood is applied to you personally.

The Deliberate Plan Of God

Jesus isn't physically here today. So how do I get his blood to touch me? By faith. The sacrifice died: the lamb, spotless and sinless. This was God's plan from the beginning. It was no accident; it was not some unfortunate event that ended the life of just a great prophet. Most Muslims tell us Jesus didn't die. Most of them will say it was a mistake or it was something that wasn't supposed to happen. Matthew chapter 17 and I'm going to show you Jesus knew he was going to die — it was his plan to die. It wasn't a mistake. It wasn't something hidden. They will try to portray it that way. Verse 22. "And while they abode in Galilee Jesus said unto them, The son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again." Matthew chapter 20 verse 17: "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the 12 disciples apart and away and he said, Behold we go to Jerusalem and the son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes and they shall condemn him to death. And they shall deliver him to the gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify him. And then the third day he shall rise again." Matthew chapter 26. "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover and the son of

man is to be betrayed and crucified."

Mark chapter 10, verse 32: "And they are on their way going to Jerusalem and Jesus went before them and they were amazed, and as they followed, they were afraid. He took again the 12 and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, saying, Behold we go to Jerusalem the son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and to the scribes and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the gentiles. And they shall mock him, scourge him, spit upon him and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall rise again."

Mark chapter 9 verse 30. "And they departed and passed through Galilee, and they would not that any man should know it. He taught his disciples and said, The son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him."

Jesus knew he was the lamb. He knew he was the Passover sacrifice of the new covenant. He knew he was to die. But he said, "after he is killed, he shall rise again on the third day." It's important to understand that Jesus did die, and that it was deliberate; it was the plan.

Luke chapter 18, verse 31. "And then he took unto him the 12, and he said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the son of man shall be accomplished." What things written by the prophets? He elaborates. Verse 32. "For he shall be delivered the gentiles, and shall be mocked, spitefully entreated, spit upon. And they shall scourge him and put him to death, and on the third day he shall rise again."

People say it was an accident. Nothing happened. He didn't die for any real purpose. They don't understand the Bible. John chapter 12 verse 23. "And Jesus answered them saying, The hour has come that the son of man shall be glorified. Verily, verily I say unto you" — now Jesus is talking about his own death — "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abides by itself. But if it die, it brings forth much fruit." — Now does this mean Jesus wants you and me to die? Yes. But not die in our body. He died that way. He wants you and me to die to self. Dying to our own selfish interests. Dying to our own selfish desires. Dying to our own selfish aspirations. Dying to our own selfish recognition. Dying to our own selfish patting on the back. Die. Yes. He wants us to die. But not in the way he died. He is the only one that paid the price in that way. — "But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it. He that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

Do you know that I hate this world's type of life? Don't you hate the world system? Don't you hate the selfish aspiration, the evil, the wickedness and the corruption that this world has? I hate it. I'm dealing with the world and situations; I'm trying to get several containers cleared at the port right now. We have two containers of Bibles that have been in the port for three weeks and we're having a lot of trouble. I hate the world's system. I hate the wickedness of bribery and corruption. I hate the way they work. It makes me sick.

Continuing.... "If any man serve me, let him follow me and where I am there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honor. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But" — "for this cause

came I unto this hour."

Jesus says "this is the very reason I have come is to die on this cross. This is the very reason I am here." He said, "No, I don't want to go through it, but this is my purpose and reason for being here. Father, glorify your name. Then came a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it and I will glorify it again." Hallelujah. He continues on in verse 32, "And if I be lifted up from the earth I will draw all men unto me." This is said signifying what? By what death he should die.

You know in Matthew chapter 16 is a discourse between Jesus and Peter. And he's asking who the people say he is. Peter said, "you are the Christ. Son of the Most High." He said, "Peter, God has shown this to you. You didn't get this yourself, but God has shown this to you." And right after this tremendous insight about Jesus being the son of God and the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, Peter turns around and he rebukes Jesus: You're not supposed to die. You're not supposed to go be harmed in Jerusalem. And what did Jesus say to Peter? "Get thee behind me Satan." Jesus knew that that's the very issue and reason he had come to earth.

Matthew chapter 26, verse 26: the account of the last supper. "And as they were eating Jesus took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is my body." Now was this Jesus' physical body? No it was a token. "He took the cup and gave thanks and said to them, Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new covenant." Jesus was telling them about the establishing of the new covenant, the new contract, the New Testament ... in his what? Is that a serious covenant? Is that a strong covenant? Is that an eternal covenant? Yes. And here Jesus is affirming that. Was this his actual blood that they were drinking? No. It was a token, a symbol, a representation for us to celebrate, and to participate in the covenant that he was about to establish through the sacrifice of his physical body and blood.

So Jesus gave us tokens for the covenant: bread and wine. Why? Because God is a spirit. And they that worship him must worship him how? Spirit and truth. God does not want you to worship him with physical emblems. Jesus instituted the last supper as a spiritual memorial of him. We partake of it as a token. The reason for this is that since there is no power in these natural items, you must operate by faith. God is spirit. The only way to access God is through faith. Just like when you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior. Did you see him with your physical eyes? No. You were saved through faith. We continue to keep our relationship with God through Jesus Christ by faith. Faith - it's a spiritual principle. Hear this: partaking of the Lord's Supper, eating those elements, doesn't do a thing for you — it has no power — of or by itself. It must be participated in by faith. We enter the covenant, we participate in the benefits that came through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ — but we do it not through the actual physical bread and wine, but by faith in him and in his sacrifice.

Jesus gave us communion as a token of him. And when you realize it is a token you will be forced — if you love God — to enter into an intimacy with him through faith. God is spirit. He's spirit and that's what he desires. God is a spirit and he's seeking for people to worship him in spirit and in truth.

The Uniqueness Of Jesus' Blood

Jesus said, "This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." What was the uniqueness of Jesus' blood? Even to this day how can it forgive our sins?

Jesus was the sacrifice — we've already seen this through the scriptures we read. You see it through the Old Testament and New Testament. He was the lamb. You share that with Muslims and then you say this, "do you know of any sacrifice?" They will say yes. They know about sacrifices. Say to them, "do you know of any sacrifice where the animal did not die?" They say no. The animal always dies. Jesus was the lamb. He was the sacrifice. He went on the cross and died — but it didn't end there. Ask them if they know of any sacrifice that did not die. All the sacrifices die. The very word sacrifice means to die. Jesus died and rose again proving he was the son of God. Now this is the issue that comes up— whether or not he was the son of God.

Matthew chapter 1 verse 18. This is the heart of our Christianity. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was this way. When his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph..." Now I'm going to put my interpretation into this: before they had sex together. I want you to understand this. Sometimes in our King James wording it's a little vague. "When his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they had come together" — to consummate their marriage through sex: that's how you consummate a marriage — "she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Ghost." Now there's no other religion in the world that makes this claim. That their leader was born of a virgin. And again this is the uniqueness of our Christianity.

"Then Joseph, her husband..." Now, in the Jewish tradition a fiancé was the same as a husband in terminology. If you were engaged it was just as though the marriage was an accomplished fact except you had not completed it through the wedding celebration and the act of consummation. So, they make reference to him being husband. "Joseph, her husband, being the honest man not willing to make a public example of her, was going to put her away privately." In their culture this was a disgrace. She was to be a virgin at their marriage. He did not know how it happened. He assumed that she had relationship with some man on the side that he did not know about. But instead of making her a public disgrace he was going to put her away privately. Quietly. Not to have her killed, as would have been his right in that culture. He was just going to have her put away.

"But while he thought about these things the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream saying, Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary your wife, for that which is conceived of her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son and ye shall call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all of this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the prophet saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child." Where is that? Isaiah. We read that earlier: And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.

"Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him and took unto his wife and knew her not." He did not have relations with her until she brought forth her first-born son and called his name Jesus. Jesus conceived by the Holy Spirit to save the sins of the people.

Luke 1:30: "And the angel said unto Mary, Fear not, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a son and shall call his name Jesus, and he shall be great, and shall be called Son of the Highest." You should circle that in your Bible. Son of the highest. "And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father, David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How can this be? I don't know a man" — I've not had sexual relations with a man — "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon you and the power of the highest shall overshadow you. Therefore that thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." The Son of God.

I share this with Muslims all the time. I say to them "tell me who was Jesus' mother?" They will say Mary. I say "was she a virgin?" They will say yes. I say "now who was it that came upon Mary to conceive Jesus?" The Holy Spirit. Do they believe that? Yes they do. Then I will say to them, "who sent the Holy Spirit?" God. I'll say, "who was his mother?" Mary. "Who was his father?" God. If you will say that, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit all they need are the eyes of their understanding to be opened. I have shared this with many Muslims and had them see this again and again and again. Because this is what their Koran teaches. She was a virgin. She conceived by the Holy Ghost. She was his mother. Who sent the Holy Ghost? God did. Then you say to them, "we're not talking about God having sexual relations with a woman. No. Christians don't believe that." They portray that we do, but we don't. Who was his mother? Who conceived Jesus in her? God through the Holy Spirit. And then you say to them, "this is the reason why we say Jesus was the Son of God."

But let's go a step further and explain a little bit more about that. Jesus was born of a virgin. Does that make him so much different? The blood system of a human being is always passed down from the seed of the male. Doctors will tell you that it's medically so. If a woman was raped and five men were in question when she had the baby, they will take blood from the baby and blood from each of the men and they can tell you who the father was. Why? Because genetically the blood of the child is always passed through the seed of the man. Now when a baby is in a mother's womb — conception. Life always happens when the seed of a male and the egg of a female come together. Mary supplied the egg. But the Holy Spirit brought the seed. And that's why he's called the Son of God.

But what difference does this now make in relation to Matthew 26:26 where Jesus said, "Here is my blood of the new covenant"? It's always the blood of Jesus that we talk about. We sing about washing our sins, healing our body, through the blood. Jesus, born of a virgin. When a baby is in a mother's womb the baby's blood never touches its mother's blood. But the blood system never develops until conception. If you take a chicken egg and you hold a chicken egg up to the light you won't see very much but after the chicken egg has been impregnated you hold it up to the light and you'll see a blood system and red veins in the chicken egg as the blood is being developed. The blood of the baby in the womb never touches the mother's blood. The mother's blood passes and over the placenta. It's the part in the mother, which her blood passes over, and through a process called osmosis the nutrients from the mother's blood are passed into the placenta and it feeds the baby in the womb. That's why many times they will say

the pregnant woman is eating for two. She eats and she eats and she eats and the nutrients pass over to the baby through osmosis. But the blood of the mother never touches the baby's blood. They never interact. The entire blood system of the baby always comes through the seed of the male.

Where did Jesus' blood come from? Jesus was born of a virgin. Jesus' blood was different. He had holy blood. Yes, he lived a sinless life but that's why Jesus could say in John chapter 10, "No man takes my life. I could call upon 12 legions of angels if I wanted. But I choose to lay down my life." That holy blood that was pumping through Jesus' veins, that's why he could say, "Nobody can take my life; I'm the Lamb. I'm the Passover. I'm spotless. I'm the one who is going to be dying for their sins." Why? Because life is in the blood. Sin brings death. There had to be blood. But not yours or my blood, not chicken blood, not animal blood, but holy blood. It came from whom? It came from God. God is the one that initiated the blood covenant through the holy blood of Jesus Christ.

Meditate upon that. Ponder it. Think about it. And when you get the greater revelation of it you'll sing about the blood in a much greater way.

First Peter 1:18. "For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold from your vain conversation" — that means your old way of life — "received by tradition from your fathers. But you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." What does he call the blood? Precious. Precious blood.

First John chapter 1 verse 7. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin."

Revelation chapter 1 verse 5. "And from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth: unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hast made us kings and priests unto God and his father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever and ever. Amen."

Go on and explain to the Muslims about this holy blood. You explain that's why Jesus had the miracle power. That's why he could raise the dead. Because he was God in this earth.

Revelation chapter 7 verse 9. John is speaking. He said:

After this I beheld and lo, a great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindred and people and tongues stood before the throne and before the lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands and cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces and worshipped God saying, Amen: Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered saying unto me, Who are these people who are in white robes and where have they

come from? And I said unto him, Sir, you know. He said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more. They shall thirst no more. Neither shall the sunlight on them, nor any heat — Why? — For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away the tears from their eyes.

Meditate on these truths. This is what your Christianity is all about. This is what our faith is all about. The blood of Jesus Christ is upon you. By faith spiritually you have reached up and grabbed it and applied it to your life. Get it alive in your heart. Get the revelation of it and share it with others.

Chapter 4, What Happened When Jesus Died?

Let's take a look at three things that happened when Jesus died: the Cross, the temple, and the Throne — all continuing on in the transition from the old covenant to the new covenant.

We have already looked at Jesus' birth. We looked at Jesus' declaration about his blood, "This is my blood of the new covenant." So from the time of his birth to the time of his death was thirty-three and a half years. The time of his birth to his ministry was 30 years. His time of ministry was 3 and a half years. And through the course of his ministry he came to the place where it was time for his death. Jesus' death was not an accident. It was not a mistake. Jesus was the sacrifice. The sacrifice had to die so that his blood would be shed, and his blood was holy — in the strongest sense of the word. It came from his heavenly Father, God. His whole life was pointing to his death. His whole purpose in life was to come to that point of death. This was God's plan. And so we've come to that place where Jesus has gone through his earthly ministry — all the miracles, all the signs, all the wonders — to the place of his death.

What Happened On The Cross

What exactly happened on Calvary at the time of his death? John chapter 19, gives an account of Jesus' death by crucifixion. Jesus is on the cross at Golgotha, the place of the skull. And he's been crucified, paying a terrible price when he was innocent. Verse 28: "And after this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished that the scripture might be fulfilled..." — notice: all things were now accomplished — "... said, I thirst. Now there was sent a vessel full of vinegar and they filled a sponge with vinegar and they put it upon hyssop and put it to his mouth. And when Jesus therefore had received the vinegar he said, It is finished. And he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." Gave up his spirit. He died.

When you read the gospels you realize those are four different writers' perspective of the same events. If I were to have a group of people stand up and tell their perspective of what happened at some event, each one would tell it a little bit different. They'd tell it from their different personalities. But if I would read every one of their perspectives and take all of them together, I probably would get an accurate picture of what happened. That's what we're doing. The perspectives from the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John about the same events: you read all of them and then you get the full picture of what happened.

So let's look at Luke's perspective in chapter 23 verse 44. "And it was about the sixth hour and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour." Now the 6th hour in Hebrew time — their hours start from 6 a.m. in the morning, basically sunrise. So when it says the 6th hour that would be around 12 o'clock noon. And it says it was dark until the ninth hour, which would be 3 p.m. So that means it was dark over all the earth. The sun was darkened from 12 noon to 3 in the afternoon. And verse 45 tells us that the veil of the temple was ripped in half. "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father into your hands I commend my spirit. And having said this he gave up the ghost and he died. Now when the Centurion saw what was done, he declared, Certainly this was a righteous man."

Let's see what he saw. I'm going to try to paint a picture and show you what the Centurion soldier saw that caused him to believe. Mark chapter 15 verse 37, Mark's picture version of what happened. "And Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was ripped in half from the top to the bottom. And when the Centurion who stood against him saw the way he cried out and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God."

I want us to look at the picture of what he saw that brought him to the place of believing. Jesus was at Calvary. He was on the cross. He was dying. The scripture says that he cried out — "It is finished." In the Greek there's an interesting word for finished. And one of the versions of the word is "tetelestai". Now "tetelestai" is a word that was used about battles. And in the Greek and Roman culture when they would have great battles they would fight in the bottom of a valley, because that was a place where they could have great numbers of soldiers. Armies in these large battles did not have guns and tanks and airplanes. They needed to have a large area to fight hand to hand. It was not uncommon for 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000, even a 100,000 soldiers to be fighting in these battles. They would be fighting with spears and with swords and with bows and arrows.

When they would fight these battles the general's staff would be up on the top of the hills looking down. The Roman generals would be on one side, and the opposing generals might be on the other side with their commanders, watching the battle. When you're battling like that you would not know what the rest of your soldiers or your allies were doing. You wouldn't know how well the battle was going. You would be fighting and fighting and you would not know how the rest of your army was doing. So the commanders on top would send runners down with orders to move reinforcements over to this section, or they would send swordsmen over into this area. They would move their soldiers by watching from atop. They had a different view. They could see things that the rest of those in the battle could not see. And when the battle was coming to a place where they had victory, they would have the messengers call out with large megaphones in a loud voice "TETELESTAI," meaning "it is finished: we have won the victory." They were telling their soldiers that they had won. Even though they were still fighting, they didn't know, and when that word would be called out, a great confidence would come upon their soldiers and they would usually finish off the enemy and start routing them. This is the way they fought battles. "Tetelestai" was the word that they used to call the victory for the battle they were in. And the general could do that because he had a different perspective than all the soldiers fighting. He had a vantage point no one else had.

A Centurion is a commander who's in charge of a hundred Roman soldiers. And this Centurion was standing there observing the death of Jesus. The different gospel versions said he cried out with a loud voice. What did Jesus cry out? Jesus was up on the cross. To the world Jesus was suffering a vicious death, being defeated. But Jesus saw things differently from the way you and I see them. He was seeing things from a different perspective. He was seeing things from the view or through the eyes of the heavenly general. And when Jesus was on the cross he cried out with a loud voice the word "tetelestai." He cried out, "It is finished. We have the victory." He had a different view than man has. Man saw it as defeat. Jesus saw it as victory. And in the middle of

that, the Centurion soldier says what? "This man was the Son of God." No normal man dies crying "we have won the victory." The Centurion thinks, "This should be a defeat. But this man sees from a different perspective than we see." What could he see? Jesus could see you and me. Jesus could see the defeat of sickness and sin and death and evil and corruption. He could see into the future and he said, "I have paid the price. My holy blood has been sacrificed."

The cross was not a place of defeat. Even the people around could see it was not a place of defeat. Jesus was a warrior. He was the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The devil thought he'd brought defeat at Calvary. Jesus was there crying out, saying, "We have won the victory." That's what happened at Calvary.

I want you to see the picture. Jesus was not some weakling. Jesus did not just die. "Oh, I give up the ghost." It says he cried out with a loud voice. Such that even the Roman soldiers believed when he cried out. What did he cry out? "It is finished." Such that the Centurion said, "Truly this man was the Son of God." This was an unregenerate, dead, sinful soldier. Even from his perspective: "Truly this man was the Son of God." Hallelujah. Defeating the enemy — he knew that he had done it. All things were done. Jesus fulfilled his assignment. He completed his task. "It is finished."

What Happened In The Temple

Let's look at a second place in Mark chapter 15. Verse 38. "And the veil of the temple was ripped in half from the top to the bottom." What significance does that scripture have to us? You have to remember the sun was dark. In the temple at the very time Jesus was dying people didn't know what was going on. The temple was the place where they worshipped God; it was very elaborate and had different parts. You had the outer court, the inner court, and the holy of holies. This is where they brought their sacrifices. The Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat, and the cherubim were in the holy of holies. What resided in the holy of holies? God's presence. Once a year the high priest would go through an elaborate ritual of cleansing himself, and he would take in a sacrifice for the sins of the people. And if the high priest did not follow the ritual perfectly when he would walk in he would die. As soon as he came into God's presence he would die. If any other Israelite would just wander in there by accident or be curious or try to go in to steal something he would die instantly. Why? Because God is holy and he cannot tolerate sinfulness, and as soon as sin touches God's holiness ... boom. You will die.

Now when the high priest used to go into the holy of holies they would put a rope around his waist so that if the man died they would pull him out. Nobody could go in and retrieve him or he would die. And the high priest used to have bells around the bottom of his robe so that when he would be walking in the holy of holies they would hear that he was still alive. The bells would be ringing. That's how holy God is and what would happen when sinful, uncovered man entered his presence.

The holy of holies was divided from the rest of the temple by something that was called the veil. It was a very elaborate, beautifully made curtain. And the curtain was 40 feet in width, 20 feet in height, 6 inches in thickness. It was a single piece. It was not multiple pieces of cloth sewn together. Historians tell us that if you took three horses on one end and three horses on the other end and had them pull in opposite directions

they could not rip that veil. Can you imagine the strength that would be in that one single piece of cloth 6 inches in thickness?

The veil was very real, but it was symbolic of a very important principle. The veil separated God's presence from man. Sinful man was separated from God's holy presence by this veil. Let's go back and look at verse 38: "And the veil of the temple was ripped in half from top to bottom." Notice it says "from top to bottom." What does that mean? That means it was God's plan, not man's plan. It started from the top. It was God who initiated it. If it said it was ripped from the bottom I could see a bunch of men trying to rip it. But it says it was ripped from the top.

What happened at that moment? God was speaking something to the people of the world. God was saying, "I am going to change the way things are done. You're moving from the old covenant to the new covenant." Look over at Second Corinthians 6:16. He says, "And what agreement hath the temple of God..." Now that building we read about was the temple in the Old Testament, under the old covenant. What's the temple now? We are. We are the temple of God. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God." We are the temple of the living God. "As God hath said" — Who said it? — "As God hath said, I will dwell in them. I will walk in them. I will be their God and they shall be my people." Hallelujah. He is my God. I am one of his own. He walks in me, he talks with me, he is inside of me. I am a temple of the Holy Ghost. That's what God was saying when he ripped the veil. He was telling the whole world, "No longer is it going to be God in here and sinful man out there." He says, "I'm removing the thing that divides us, and I'm going to move out into the earth and I'm going to dwell in my creation — mankind. I'm going to walk in them. I'm going to live in them, and they will be my abiding place. They will be my temples. Not just one building in Jerusalem." When we accept Jesus Christ, when we make that commitment, the veil has been torn on our behalf. And when you embrace Jesus Christ he comes and enters within and dwells within you through the Holy Spirit.

There's a song we sing about "he walks with me and he talks with me." Really we should say "he walks in me." He said, "I will dwell in them and I will walk in them." He is with us.

You know there's a very easy cure for sin. Just remember that Jesus is with you, and that any place you go he goes. Anything you do, he does. Do you want to drag him into adultery and fornication? Do you want to drag him into witchcraft and Jujus and secret society business? That's what you're doing. Do you think Jesus would enjoy the lodge meeting? Do you think Jesus would enjoy the places where we sacrifice the different things? But that's what you do as temples of the Holy Ghost. Jesus dwells within you and you take him along with you wherever you go.

The veil in the temple was ripped from top to bottom. Three horses on each end could not rip the veil. For a moment let's imagine what we could have seen in the spirit on that day. Everybody was busy working in the temple and they were saying, "Jesus is being crucified." "Yeah, I heard that he's down there. You know, it's real dark today. How come the sun is so dark? Something must be a little bit strange..." And all of a sudden... Rip. Rip. And they start to look up and ask what's going on. And I think if they could have seen in the realm of the spirit, about the middle of the veil they would see

Gabriel and Michael sitting at the top going, "Father, whenever you tell us to, we're going to tear this old curtain and it's going to be done. You're going to move out. Okay, we got the command. Let's do it now..." And all of a sudden - rip. And you can see Gabriel and Michael ripping that curtain in half from top to bottom as God is moving out into the earth through Jesus Christ as his sacrifice. That happened at the time of the crucifixion.

What Happened At The Throne

Much more happened at Calvary than you and I are even aware of. Let's take a look at what happened in the throne room in heaven when Jesus died. The scriptures give us a picture — if we can read the Bible through spiritual eyes. Go to John chapter 20. This is after the crucifixion, on the third day when Jesus rose from the dead.

The first day of the week Mary Magdalene cometh early when it was yet dark unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together, and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooped down and saw the linen clothes lying, yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, seeth the linen clothes lying, and the napkin that was about his head not lying with the linen clothes but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also the other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed.

John came in, he saw and believed. But look at the next line: "For as yet they knew not the scripture that he must rise again from the dead." It says that they did not have revelation knowledge from the scripture about Jesus' resurrection, even though Jesus talked about it. It said that when he came into the tomb he believed. He believed why? Verse eight: because of what he saw. What did he see that caused him to believe?

They buried Jesus in a tomb. It's a cave sealed with a stone. This was for the wealthier people. And this is what they did to Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had come and asked for permission to take Jesus' body down and to put grave clothes upon him. They wrapped him with linen clothes and they put ointment and spices on it so that the body would not decay. It's almost like a mummifying process. And this is what they did and they put Jesus in the tomb. Now when they wrap the clothes, they wrap them all around and around like a mummy. So John and Peter came running into the cave, into the tomb and looked within. And it says something they saw caused John to believe. What did he see? Not just an empty tomb because if it was just an empty tomb he could have thought that somebody had just stolen the body. But they saw the grave clothes. Now if you were coming to steal a body, would you take the time to unwrap all the cloth? That still could be a possibility. So that's probably not what John saw that caused him to believe. What could he have seen that would have caused him to believe? Not just the grave clothes but yes, the grave clothes.

Here's what I believe he saw. It says he saw the grave clothes and he saw the napkin folded up neatly in the corner. So what were the grave clothes looking like? I don't believe they were all unwrapped and thrown in a corner. I believe that when they came in, they looked and saw the grave clothes laying on that slab of rock where Jesus had been laid, in perfect form just as they had been wrapped around his body — but Jesus' body was gone. You see, if the body and the grave clothes were gone you would say they were stolen. If the grave clothes were just unwrapped and thrown down you would say that perhaps they took the clothes off him to confuse us. But the text says John saw and believed, and what did he see? He saw grave clothes laying there just the way they had been put on Jesus' body, but no body inside them.

Why was the napkin taken off and folded in the corner? In their culture they believed that the life force of a human being illuminated through the eyes. You could see life in the eyes. And when a person was dead there was no life in the eyes. And that was very important in their culture. That's why when they would wrap him they would not cover the eyes. They would put a special napkin over the eyes, over the face. So why was that neatly folded and put in the corner? Because God wanted them to know that he had done this. Someone stealing the body would have taken this or left it crumples on the floor. He wouldn't have folded it up and been concerned at all. But God was showing that he does all things perfectly. He does all things well.

Let's take a look at what happened in heaven. Verse 11. "Mary stood outside of the sepulcher weeping. And she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher. And seeing two angels in white sitting one at the head and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain, they said unto her, Woman, why are you crying? She said, Because they've taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've put him."

Now in a tomb like this, in a sepulcher, there are two levels. There is a first entry level then there's the second area much smaller where they actually have laid the body. Mary did not go into the second area. So that when she came she looked and of course had heard from Peter and John, and all she knew was that the body was gone. But Peter and John had gone in all the way. They had seen the clothing in there but Mary had not. And that's why she was crying. All she knew was that they said the body was gone. So she was out there crying.

"And they said unto her; Woman why weepest thou? She said, Because they have taken away my Lord and I don't know where they've laid him." She didn't think of him as resurrected. She thought of him still as dead. "And when she had said this she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing." But she didn't know it was Jesus. In his resurrected body her earthly mind couldn't fathom it, couldn't grasp it. "Jesus said, Woman why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She supposed him to be the gardener. And said unto him, Sir, if you've carried him, tell me where you've laid him and I will take him away. And Jesus said unto her, Mary." — You see, if you get a personal word where Jesus calls your name, you will change. — "She turned herself and said, Master, it's you. Jesus said, Don't touch Me." — Why didn't He want to be touched? — "... for I am not yet ascended to my father."

What happened? Jesus had died - he spent three days in the grave. He spent three days in hell, and then he arose from the dead. The tomb was empty. His grave

clothes were there along with the angels. And he was on his way to his father. He said "Mary, don't touch me. I'm on my way to the father and I have a very important task before you can be handling me." How do we know that? Because later in the scripture Jesus says, "Thomas, touch me." He had all of the disciples touch him to prove who he was. But here he said not to. There was a task. What was it, why didn't Jesus want to be touched? What was the task that stood before him? He says, "but go unto my brethren and say unto them I ascend unto my father and your father and to my God and your God."

Let's look at the task that he had to accomplish first. Hebrews chapter eight, verse 1. "Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the total. We have a high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices wherefore it is of necessity" — it was necessary — "that this man have something also to offer. For if he were on earth" — talking about Jesus as a high priest — "he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things..." It is saying that what they were doing on earth was an example or a shadow of what was done in heaven. "... As Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle. For you see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee on the mount." Moses was given a pattern of the tabernacle to build it. But he was given a pattern of what? Of a tabernacle in heaven. That's what he was building.

"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry" — talking about Jesus — "by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if the first covenant had been faultless then there would be no need for a second. But finding fault with them he said, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."

Hebrews chapter nine, verse 11. "But Christ becoming a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands." He says the tabernacle was not made with hands. What was it made by? "Not made with hands, that is to say not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and of calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Verse 22. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood. And without the shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the pattern of things in the heaven should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." He's making contrast to the two tabernacles. He said it was necessary for the priests to serve the blood sacrifice on earth for the purification of man, but also there's a tabernacle in heaven and there's a better purification process that would happen in heaven through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Verse 24. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands which are the figures or the examples of the true, but Christ entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often" — it should not be sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice like the high priests did — "as the

high priest entered into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then he would have needed to have suffered since the foundation of the world" — again and again and again and again. "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Hebrews chapter 12 verse 23. "To the general assembly and the church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of the sprinkling that speaketh..." — The blood speaks! — "...better things than that of Abel's blood." Remember the scripture says that Abel's blood crying out to God ... what? Vengeance. Able was slain by Cain and it says that his blood was spilled on the earth, and his blood was crying out to God for vengeance. But the scripture here says that Jesus' blood speaks better things than Abel's blood.

I want to paint a picture for you in light of what we just read to show you what happened in heaven. Jesus said, "Don't touch me. I must go unto my father," and Jesus ascended into heaven. Imagine heaven as the Book of Revelation describes it. God is seated high in heaven upon this tremendous throne and all around him are angels and elders bowing down and worshipping him. You can see lightning flashing in the background. Thunder is pounding. People are singing "Hallelujah" unto the father, worshipping him in his glory and in his splendor. That is an accurate picture of heaven. And all of a sudden, into heaven steps Jesus.

All the angels stop. The lightning stops. The thunder stops. Everybody stops. And heaven becomes silent, and Jesus comes to his Father and says, "I have returned. I am back from my assignment. Father, the assignment has been completed. It is finished. I have done my part. You know I have brought my blood, and I must take it into the holy of holies here in the tabernacle in heaven as the one final sacrifice for all mankind." And everyone is silent. Father God says, "Go." Jesus turns with his blood and he goes into the tabernacle, and then he steps into the holy of holies. He kneels and he places the blood in the basin at the mercy seat. In the midst of all this, the Accuser of the Brethren says to Father God, "No, there must be vengeance." Vengeance on these people. Your creation has sinned against you. You are a holy God. They must be punished. I want justice." But as Jesus is kneeling in the holy of holies, all of a sudden his blood starts to speak and says, "No, I call for mercy. Mercy, forgiveness, redemption, restoration. This sacrifice is sufficient." And those words come out of the holy of holies and start ringing through heaven. "Mercy! Mercy! Forgive them! Forgive them! Redeem them back!" (See Heb. 12:24.)

Suddenly, the voice of the Accuser of the Brethren can't be heard anymore. And instead of there being punishment, all that is heard ringing in heaven now is mercy. Mercy. Mercy, because of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Jesus defeated the powers of darkness completely at Calvary — "it is finished". He defeated the devil. He saw through eyes what we couldn't see. He looked beyond the temporal, beyond what was going on at the earthly, visible level. He finished it; he satisfied God's requirements of justice, and he initiated the new and better covenant. What happened in the temple showed that God is now moving in a different way in the earth, moving into men and women. In heaven the perfect sacrifice paid the perfect

price to satisfy the justice of a holy righteous God, so that when we die, our spirits could come into the presence of God. And when God asks, "Why should I permit you in?", you can say, "Because I am covered by the blood of Jesus Christ." That's the only thing that will take you into his presence: the blood covenant with Jesus Christ.

Chapter 5, Misconceptions In The Church Today

If there's one thing you should understand as a Christian, especially as a minister, it is about the blood of Jesus, about what happened on the cross. That's important for your faith. It grounds you, establishes you in who you are in Jesus Christ and in the authority and power of what was done. And in this chapter we are going to help you to understand the blood covenant from the inside. We are going to deal with some very sensitive issues in the body of Christ, like holy oil, holy water, holy clothing, and other questionable practices going on in the Christian church. We're going to address them from the scripture, particularly in light of the blood covenant, so that you will understand them and then be able to address these issues for others.

In Isaiah 55 verse 8, God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Now what God is saying is that his ways are not man's ways. Man has a way of doing things, but God's ways are different. Does God reveal to us his ways or his thoughts? Certainly he does. If I teach you a lesson, my thoughts come out in my words. My thoughts are reflected in my words. The same is true with God. God's thoughts are reflected where? In his Word. God's ways are not our ways — they are higher. But how would you describe God's ways? What are God's ways? God's ways are the ways of the Holy Spirit. God ways may contradict your ways. So you have to make a decision of whose ways you're going to follow.

Sacrifice In The Church

We talked about Jesus going into the holy of holies, and presenting his blood as the final sacrifice there. Let's focus on the transition from the old covenant to the new covenant. Hebrews 9, verse 24 says:

For Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often as the high priest entering into the holy place every year with the blood of others, for then he must often have suffered since the foundation of the world. But now once in the end of the world — in this context the word "world" doesn't mean "world," but "age." — ... in the end of the age hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bare the sins of many. And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

How many times was Jesus sacrificed? One time. Look over at Hebrews chapter 10, verse eight. "Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wanted not, neither had pleasure therein which are offered by the law." He's saying that old covenant sacrifices were not pleasing to God. They were not fulfilling. "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first that he may establish the second." The first what? Covenant. And he established the second, the new covenant. "By the which we are sanctified through the offering of the body of

Jesus Christ once and for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering often times the same sacrifices which can never take away sins." He is making reference from the old covenant to the new covenant, going back and forth describing and explaining it. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice" — notice, one sacrifice — "for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God. From henceforth expecting until his enemies be made his foot stool. For by one offering" — sacrifice — "he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us, for after that he said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them."

See how this is different. Before the law was carved out on stones. Now he says he will put it on the inside of us. Continuing on, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Now look at verse 18. "Now where remission of these is there is no more offering for sin." In the new covenant the final, last, single offering for sin was Jesus Christ. And as we just read in verse 18, if he is the final sacrifice, there is no more sacrifice.

This answers one of the first issues. Should we sacrifice animals in the church today? No, because Jesus Christ was the final sacrifice. There is no more offering or sacrifice for sin through animals or through any of these old covenant practices. Many people will take scriptures and justify their practices, practices found in the old covenant. They're very biblical. But with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ according to the blood covenant, as we have been teaching, there is no more offering or sacrifice other than Jesus Christ. He was offered once, and then it was finished. So they are Biblical, but living under old covenant conditions. We have a better way in the new covenant through Jesus.

For many people, there is still a great controversy over this issue. A lot of people still want to make sacrifices. But the consequences of this are not small. In Matthew chapter 5 verse 17 Jesus said, "Think not that I've come to destroy the law or the prophets. I'm not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, until heaven and earth shall pass not one jot or tittle" — not one line — "shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled." In other words, Jesus says, "I have not come to wipe it out. I've come to fulfill it."

What does that mean? How did Jesus fulfill it? What does that mean for you and me today? Let's look at Matthew 22 verse 35. "Then one of them who was a lawyer asked Jesus a question, tempting him and saying, Master which is the greatest Commandment of the law?" He was talking about the Ten Commandments of Moses' law. Of course there were many more than just the Ten Commandments. All through the old covenant God had given many more requirements than just the Ten Commandments. But the Ten Commandments were the corner stones; they were the major premise of the old covenant. And so this lawyer asks which is the greatest Commandment in the law. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

Jesus was bringing out a different principle. We touched on it in the book of Isaiah where God said, "I will put my word, I will put my love, I will put my ways in their

heart." Jesus answered that it's not a matter of trying to live by the old law. He says, "I want you to have your heart in love, your mind in love, your body in love with God." Jesus at another point said that their words were saying the right things but their hearts were so far away from God. It's the same thing today. A lot of people go to church, going through the motions and saying the right things, but their heart is not even close to God.

He says, "This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two Commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The new covenant is the spirit of the old covenant. The old covenant was based on laws: Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery, etc. But the spirit or the essence of that is loving God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength, and loving your neighbor as yourself. If you love your neighbor as yourself you'll not steal his property. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you'll not sleep with his wife. If you love God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength, you'll not serve other gods.

So Jesus says, "I've not come to destroy. I've come to fulfill." You have the law but the New Testament and Jesus represent the spirit, the essence, the heart of the old, and that's what he was bringing out here.

Turn over to John chapter 13. In verse 34 Jesus says, "A new Commandment I give unto you" — he's giving new Commandments for the new covenant — "that ye love one another. As I have loved you, ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples." How? By our love. The scripture says that no man hath greater love than to lay down his life for another. And Jesus was the example of God's love by laying down his life in that final sacrifice, taking us into the new covenant.

Circumcision

In the old covenant, the establishing of God's covenant with individuals was handled through a process called circumcision. In Genesis 17 verse 10 we read, "This is my covenant which ye shall keep between you and me and your seed after thee. Every man child among you shall be circumcised, and ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and thee." So in the old covenant there was a practice of circumcising the male children. They did not circumcise the female children. Some people try to give biblical reasons or even spiritual reasons for female circumcision, but there are no biblical examples of this. And from a medical viewpoint, it's not a good practice either.

In the old covenant circumcising the flesh of the male acknowledged the blood covenant with God. But we see a different story in the New Testament, the new covenant in which Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the old. Colossians chapter 2, verse 10 reads, "And ye are complete in him" — talking about Jesus — "which is the head of all principality and power. In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."

Look over at chapter 3, verse 10. "And [ye] have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, where there is neither

Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision" — he's talking about physical circumcision — "Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free: but Christ is all in all."

First Corinthians chapter 7 verse 18. "Is any man called being circumcised let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing [under the new covenant] and uncircumcision is nothing. But what is important? The keeping of the Commandments of God." In the old covenant you had circumcision of the flesh. In the new covenant you have circumcision of the heart.

Circumcision is a symbol of cutting away the old, replacing with the new. When you accept Jesus Christ, as we read in Colossians chapter two, the circumcision involves your heart; it's a cutting away and a changing on the inside that will bring a new life into you, removing of the old life. It's a circumcision of the heart.

Animal Sacrifice

Another practice in the old covenant I want us to look at is animal sacrifices. First notice that animal sacrifices are biblical. Leviticus 16, and Exodus 30 will give you specific details about these sacrifices and how they were handled. But it's obvious that it was definitely an old covenant practice. It's a common practice here in Africa. Where do they get it? From the old covenant. Is it biblical? Yes. In the old covenant. But are we living in the old covenant? Where are we living? In the new covenant. So let us take a look at what our sacrifice should be.

In the book of Hebrews we gain great insight into the new covenant, especially in chapters 8 through 10. If you want to understand this you should read and take time with those chapters. Hebrews chapter 13 verse 15, talking about Jesus, says, "Therefore let us offer a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." The offering that we're to make in the new covenant is an offering of praise, and an offering of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving for what? For Jesus. Thank God Jesus went to the cross and Russ Tatro did not have to. Thank God he paid the price for my sin and for my sickness. Thank God he took the beating that I deserved so I didn't have to take it. Thank God for that.

If you notice in my own personality and in my own ministry the way I operate as a minister I continually say, "Let's just stand up and give thanks for Jesus." We can give thanks for our cars. We can give thanks for our houses. That's all good. But the real thanksgiving and the praise should be for what Jesus did for us. That's what God wants from us. He doesn't want you to sacrifice chickens. He doesn't want you to sacrifice goats and rams. That means nothing now. He wants a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to a loving God.

First Peter chapter 2, verse 5. "Ye also as lively stones are built up as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood" — to do what? — "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." We're supposed to give spiritual sacrifices unto God. Not animal sacrifice. Not blood sacrifice. Why? We are a spiritual house. When you are dealing with physical sacrifices you are dealing with the physical realm. God is a spirit. They that worship him must worship him in spirit. God wants you worshipping him from your spirit. That means spiritual sacrifices not physical sacrifices.

No man on earth has been given the power to lay his hands on a little piece of bread and turn it into the physical body of Jesus Christ. No man has been given power to lay his hands on wine and decree that this now is the physical blood of Jesus. No man has been given that power. When Jesus was sacrificed he was the final sacrifice. God desired for us to worship him in spirit. No longer are we abiding under the old covenant. No longer are we supposed to be sacrificing animals and blood. No longer should that be happening in the churches of Jesus Christ.

The key to entrance into the spirit realm is blood. This is a crucial point. What is it that will take me into the entrance with God? The blood of Jesus Christ. What is it that will take me into the operation of the realm of evil spirits? Blood. Why? Because life is in blood. Anybody that's ever dealt with witchcraft, anybody that's ever dealt with Juju, anybody that's ever dealt with black magic, anybody that's ever dealt with those powers — tells me there is always a sacrifice of blood involved. And that is the key that will take you into the realm of the spirit to the good side or the bad side.

In the new covenant we make the sacrifice of what? Praise. Thanksgiving. Spiritual sacrifice is what God wants. It's what is acceptable. You can make all the animal sacrifices you want. You can fill up a room with animals and butcher them and do it under the cross and in the church. God does not accept even one of them. He does not accept those sacrifices any longer. You can sacrifice, you can pay, you can have blood, you can wear a cloth, you can wear a robe, you can act like you're priest. It doesn't matter. God does not accept any one of them. And you're deceiving people if you're trying to get them to think that he does. You may say, "When we do these things, things happen in the spirit realm." Yes they do. Why? Because blood will take you into the spirit realm. So where are you getting your response from. Other spirits, not God's Holy Spirit.

Holy Water

Here's another common practice in the Church. Holy water. Is holy water biblical? Absolutely. It's not something that somebody made up out of thin air. Look at Numbers chapter 19, verse 17.

And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin. And running water shall be put thereto in a vessel. And a clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water. And sprinkle it upon the tent and upon all the vessels and upon the persons that were there and upon him that touched a bone or one slain or one dead or grayed. And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day and on the 7th day; and on the 7th day he shall purify himself and wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and shall be clean. But the man that shall be unclean and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation because he hath defiled sanctuary of the Lord: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him. He is unclean. And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them that he that sprinkle the water of separation shall wash his clothes and he that touchest the water of separation shall be unclean until evening, and whatsoever the unclean person touches shall be unclean and the soul that touches it shall

be unclean until evening.

There are numerous references about water in the book of Exodus, particularly referring to sprinkling with water. A cleansing of water where priests had to wash in a laver with special water. Many churches pick up these practices because they have a laver, a special bowl, and they will say that the water it holds is sanctified or holy, and they use it in the practice or symbolic of the practice. They will touch the water and touch other people or things, and say that the holiness is transferred by it. Much of this comes from the practice described in the Old Testament. Is it biblical? Certainly. So it isn't like somebody just picked it up out in the jungle. They got it from the word of God. But is it valid under the new covenant?

In the new covenant we have something even better than holy water. It's called living water. John chapter 7, verse 37 says, "In the last day, the great day of the feast Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst let him come onto me and drink, and he that believeth on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

"Rivers of living water" refers to the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus talked with the woman at the well and said, "Woman, if you know who talked to you, you'd be drinking of eternal water. You'd never thirst again." She asks how that could be. She was looking at physical water. Jesus was talking about spiritual water.

In Titus chapter 3, verse 5, it says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us: by the washing of regeneration." What is that? Spiritual. The new birth. We've been washed by spiritual water and we've been changed spiritually in the new covenant. Like Ephesians chapter 5, verse 26, says: "... that he might sanctify and cleanse it [the Church] with the washing of water by the word." The word of God is referred to as water that will wash and cleanse our lives.

Remember we're talking about practices that are going on in Church today. These are issues that are very relevant to today.

Revelation chapter 1 verse 5. "And from Jesus Christ, who was the faithful witness and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins" — in what? — "in his own blood."

Revelation chapter 7, verse 14. "And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb."

Revelation chapter 22, verse 12. "And, behold, I come quickly. And my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be. I am the Alpha and Omega. The Beginning and the End. The First and the Last." Verse 17: "And the spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Today under the new covenant our water is living water. It is spiritual.

Notice that all these scripture references point to Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Word, the Living Water. Let me explain why this is a crucial point. I touched on this when I said that no man has power to create something of holiness in this earth the

blood or the body of Jesus Christ. Why? God is a holy God. When you take attributes of deity and you try to impart them onto a physical item, you get into what is called witchcraft. They do this all over the world. If I bow down to this chair and worship this chair, if I offer sacrifice to it and give of myself spiritually, and call this thing my God, and worship it as my God, if I ascribe attributes of holiness and deity to this chair, something will happen. A spirit will accommodate me. It will not be the spirit of God, it will be the spirit of evil, of Satan, one of his spirits.

When I ascribe attributes of holiness, attributes of deity to a physical item, it's witchcraft. Let me give you an example. All over in India, they have little statues and they worship them. They will tell you that they are gods. And because they give attributes of deity to them and worship them, evil spirits accommodate them and come into these statues. They may shake them. They may make a noise. They may do something spiritual that will give the impression that they are gods. And they are "gods," but it's an evil god: his name is Satan, the god of this world.

So when you project divine characteristics onto a physical object, you will get a response. But it's not from God. God is holy. The Holy Spirit is holy. We cannot do that with water. When you start saying, "This water is holy; I prayed over it, I sanctified it, I blessed it, it's holy", you start putting attributes of deity into the water. You are playing with witchcraft. Why? Because you are putting people's eyes on the water instead of putting people's eyes on Jesus. That's what the devil wants. The devil wants people to take their eyes off Jesus. The devil wants people to attribute power, deity, and holiness to anything but God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit. You're pointing people to a man or an object instead of to Jesus Christ. Even if you have a cross in the background it still doesn't matter. You are taking away from the holiness of Jesus Christ. He was the final sacrifice, not you or it. He was the final sacrifice, not this water.

I once talked to a businessman in Liberia. And I had been witnessing to him for a number of months. And he was an Indian and he had all these gods. I'd go into his shop and incense would be burning and there would be all these little statues around. I talked to him for months, and I'd say "Johnny, what is this?" It was a little man with a fat belly and smoke was coming out of him. And I asked, "Johnny, why do you have all this money around him? Why do you have all these little gifts here? Is this your god?" He answered, "Yes, he's one of my gods." I said, "This little statue here?" He said yes. I asked to look at it, and I picked it up and said, "It says 'made in Taiwan.'" He was shocked that I would even pick it up, but I picked it up and asked him, "your god is made in Taiwan?" I said, "Johnny don't you know that this statue was made by the hands of man, so that means man made your god?" "No, no, no, no," he said, "he's just one of many gods." I said, "So then this other statue over here, let me see where this one is made." "No, no, no, no, don't touch them." It was his god because he was giving worship to it. He was attributing deity and holiness to it. He was sacrificing himself unto it, and something was happening.

Holy Oil

How about holy oil? You say, "Brother Russ, you're making fun." Well sometimes we almost need to. Let me give you an Old Testament reference: Exodus chapter 30 verse 25, Exodus chapter 37 verse 29. These are all scriptural references about holy oil.

Is holy oil biblical? Yes — in the old covenant. But let's look at the new covenant: James chapter 5, verse 14. "Is any sick among you? Let him call to the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." Look at it. Does your Bible say holy oil? Anointing him with what? Oil. It doesn't say holy oil. The oil has no holiness in it. Does the oil heal him? Let me show you the oil doesn't heal him. The text says, "anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." What is it that healed him, the oil or the name? Verse 15 tells us, "... and the prayer of faith shall save the sick," and who shall raise him up? The Lord. So the text tells us that we are to have faith in Jesus, praying in faith in the Lord's name, and it says the Lord will raise him up. Your oil doesn't heal him.

Why do we use oil? Why do we have sacraments? Why do we have communion? Because we are in physical bodies. They are symbols, tangible representations that will help us, hopefully putting us in remembrance of the spiritual reality. That's why we use oil. Oil is a symbol of what? The Holy Spirit. And sometimes that will help our faith. But it isn't the oil that will heal you. It's the name of Jesus Christ. It's faith in that name, faith in what he has done, that will heal you. And as soon as you start assigning attributes of holiness to oil, then you're taking away from Jesus Christ who was the final sacrifice. He was the final sacrifice. But so often we point to other things, and so often it becomes manipulated to where people are saying "I blessed the oil so it will heal you. It's holy because I blessed it." This is simply foolishness.

Holy Clothing

Let's look at another misconception common in the Church today. Holy clothing. Is that in the Bible? Yes. Leviticus chapter 16, verses 3-4; Exodus 28, verses 2 and 3; Exodus 31, verse 10; Leviticus 16, verses 3 and 4.

It is biblical, but let's look how it's viewed in the new covenant. Turn to Revelation chapter 6, verse 11. "And white robes were given unto everyone of them and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season until their fellow servants and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." White robes were given to these martyrs in heaven.

Revelation chapter 7, verse 9. "After this I beheld a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands." Verse 13: "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and where do they come from? And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white, in the blood of the lamb."

The Bible says that we put on garments of praise. The Bible says that we put on robes of righteousness. But we're talking about spiritual robes, spiritual clothing. In the old covenant there was a practice of holy clothing, yes. But in the new covenant there is not. It does not matter whether I wear white, brown, blue or green. White clothing does not give you holiness. We wear spiritual robes, but it isn't manifested or apparent on the outside. Otherwise we start looking at clothing and we start exalting some people and pushing other people down, and we make our judgements based upon their outward presentation of piety. There is no holiness in clothing. You cannot give those attributes

to clothing. It doesn't matter what color clothing you wear; what matters is the heart of men and women in this day.

If you choose to wear white clothing, that's fine. But if you don't want to wear white clothing, that's fine also. This is there is no holiness in the clothing. There is no holiness in the oil. There is no holiness in the water. Or in candles. Or in incense. Were they biblical? Yes. But that was in the old covenant. We're not living under the old covenant.

Some of your people might say, "I put the candles in a certain pattern and then I do certain things, and if one blows out, or such and such happens, then this thing will happen." True, there are spirits involved there, but not the Holy Spirit

Consequences Of Living Under Old Covenant Practices

There are consequences of living in the old covenant, of trying to practice old covenant principles even though we're in the new covenant. You need to have it in your heart because there's so much controversy about this in the body of Christ. You need to have a proper answer.

Jesus made the final sacrifice. If he made the final offering, there is no other offering; there is no other sacrifice. In fact, it's an abomination unto God when men and women portray themselves as religious people, and they portray that they have power to transform the sacraments, or have power over oil, or have power over water. Jesus Christ is the final sacrifice. He paid the price. All glory, all honor belongs to him. No man, no woman has the right to put on like they're God and detract from what's due him.

I was talking with a fellow recently and he was telling me about his friend. This friend was with the Moonies, the Unification Church, and they believed that Reverend Moon is the savior. I suggested it would be really easy to find out. He wanted to know how we would know? I said, "Real easy. You watch, one day he will die. Then we'll see if he comes back. If this man thinks he's God, let me see. I want to see him get on the cross. I want to see him crucified, and then we'll see if he comes back from the grave. Then we'll see." All these people are taking credit away from Jesus Christ. All these people are trying to elevate and deify other things — animals or statues, or physical items — and God, the true God, does not accept even one of their sacrifices. Not even one. God does not accept even one of those prostrations made by that Indian man. The other man that is trying to effect spiritual favor through candles and incense — God doesn't accept those. The Muslim that is bowing multiple times a day towards Mecca — God doesn't accept one of those. Because there was a final sacrifice. His name was Jesus Christ. He paid the price once for all. God accepts no other sacrifice.

I talk to Muslims all the time and I'm learning how to deal with them better. I say to them before they can get talking too much, "Wait a minute, if this was Allah's plan, who are you to reject it? If this is the way Allah did it with the sacrifice, who are you to try to make other sacrifices?" They may argue that they've been taught differently, but if this is Allah's way, God's way, who are they to try to go a different way? It's the same thing in the Church of Jesus Christ. If this is God's way, who are you and I to try to do things a different way?

We began this topic from Isaiah 55: God's ways are higher. God's ways are different. Regardless of how my pastor or my church has been practicing things for a long time, I'm going to do things God's way. I'm going to keep my eyes on Jesus Christ. I'm going to follow him all the way. I'm going to do things to glorify him.

Acceptable Sacrifices

According to the scriptures — First Peter 2:5 — we are living stones, built up as a spiritual house. We are a holy priesthood who offer up spiritual sacrifices. So God still wants us to make sacrifices — spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

What are those spiritual sacrifices? Hebrews 13:15 reads, "By him, Jesus Christ, therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." So one sacrifice, a spiritual sacrifice, is praise. Do you know that if you're not happy it's a sacrifice to praise God? When things aren't going the way you expect them to it's a genuine sacrifice. That is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. So we're supposed to be giving the spiritual sacrifice of our lips, praising his name and giving thanks for what Jesus Christ has done for us.

Food, The Sabbath Day, And Other Errors

Another issue I want to examine is food. Under the old covenant there were specific laws given about food (see Leviticus chapter 11). For example, the Israelites — those in God's covenant community — were not to eat pork, and other types of food. Under the old covenant you had to be careful about the type of food you put into your mouth. There is also a lot of controversy in the Body of Christ about which day of the week is the Sabbath day. I know one particular group that says it is Saturday and if you don't worship on that day, you're missing it, and everyone worshipping on Sunday is worshipping incorrectly. But under the new covenant, God has changed things

First Timothy chapter 4, verse 1. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of the devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding people to marry." So the Apostle Paul says if you are a part of a religious group and you are forbidding people to marry, that is what? Doctrines of devils. A person's right or privilege to marriage is their own. It's not your denominational prerogative to mandate that to people. The Apostle Paul says it's better not to be married so you'll be consumed with the things of God and not be consumed with your mate. But he says that if lust or passion within you will cause you to burn then you should be married. And the phrase used here, "let a man purpose in his heart" shows that it's a choice. But there are some groups that say: "No, no, no. We forbid some of our people to be married."

Others make rulings about abstaining from meat. They say that when God created the garden, he gave us all the vegetables and the fruits and that was to be our meat. And that is biblical. At the time of Adam, man was given the herbs to eat: the fruits and the vegetables. But at the time of Noah when the covenant of Noah was established with God through the rainbow, God said "I now give you the animals to eat just like I gave you the plants." And then in the old covenant he differentiated even further and showed them which animals to eat.

Back to our text in verse 3, "... commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good" — he's talking about eating — "and nothing is to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."

God doesn't care what you put in your mouth for food as long as your heart is right when you receive it. If your heart is right you'll give thanksgiving to God for it. That's more important than what the food is you're putting in your mouth. Thanksgiving to God is more important.

This shows us the key point in all this. God is more concerned about the spiritual aspect of man than he is the natural aspect. Jesus said it isn't the food that you put within that pollutes you, it's the attitude of the heart. It isn't the clothing you put on that makes you holy. There is no holy clothing. There is no clothing that carries attributes of God in it — even if it is white. If you want to wear white, wear white. If you want to wear blue, wear blue. But don't judge your brother in it. Don't judge by mere outward appearances.

This same theme is brought out in Romans chapter 14. Verse 1: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations or arguments. For one believes he may eat all things, another who is weak only eats herbs. Let not him that eats despise him that doesn't eat. And let not him, which eats not judge him that eats. For God hath received him. Who art thou, that thou judgest another man's servant. To his own master he stands or falls. Yea, he shall be held up, for God is able to make him stand."

In the area of food we do not have the right to judge our brother. If it's in his conscience to eat vegetables and fruits and no meat, let it be so. If it's okay for you to eat any meat as long as you give thanksgiving and prayer unto God for it, let it be so. Let you not judge your brother; let your brother not judge you.

This is the fundamental principle that is missed by these groups that try to put constraints on believers. They claim to possess the "only truth," and insist that you conform to their doctrines — doctrines of man, certainly not the doctrines of God under the new covenant.

Bringing in the issue of the Sabbath as well, verse 5 continues, "For one man esteems one day above another. Another man esteems every day the same. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regards the day regards it unto the Lord. And he that regards not the day to the Lord he does not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he gives God thanks, and he that eateth not to the Lord, he eateth not and giveth God thanks. For none of us lives unto himself and no man dies to himself."

Go to verse 14. "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there's nothing unclean of itself. But to him this esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with your meat now walkest thou not in love. Destroy not him with your meat for whom Christ died. Let not your good be evil spoken of, for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink..." — The kingdom of God is clothing, right? The

kingdom of God is the church building? The kingdom of God is what? "... is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." That's what the kingdom of God is. It's peace, joy, and righteousness in the Holy Ghost. "For he that in these things serves Christ, is acceptable to God and approved of men." So you are acceptable to God if you do what? Serve Christ.

So if your focus is not on serving Christ, then you're missing it. I know a lot of people that are in religion that don't serve Christ. They serve themselves. They serve their organization. But has their heart genuinely been touched with the kingdom of God?

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things where with one may edify another. For meat destroys not the work of God. All things are indeed pure, but it is evil for that man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine or anything whereby thy brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat because he eateth not in faith, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." This doesn't mean, "damned" in the sense of going to hell. It really means condemned. It means he's going to be convicted in his heart.

In Galatians chapter 4 verse 9, the Apostle Paul speaks to the church of Galatia about these things. "But now after you have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements where unto you desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days and months and times and years." Now what were they doing? They were giving special acknowledgments to certain days, certain month and certain seasons. They were going back to the Jewish practice of having holy days. They were going back to the Jewish practice of the time and seasons where they would have festivals according to the Jewish calendar. He says, "I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."

God has created food. We can eat of all food as long as we give prayer and thanksgiving unto God. If you choose not to eat meat then that's your choice. We will respect that. But you have no right to judge your brother and he has no right to judge you. In Romans 14, Paul talks about days, meaning Sabbath days. If one man esteems a particular day and another man esteems another day, as long as he does it unto the Lord it's acceptable. It isn't important if Sunday is your Sabbath. According to what the Apostle Paul is saying here in the book of Romans and in the book of Galatians, it isn't the day that is important, it is the attitude of the heart that is important. Those who would teach that it's only Saturday, that if you don't go to church on Saturday you're all wrong — they're putting you back under the old covenant. In the New Testament it is important that you do have a reverence for the Sabbath, but it doesn't have to be Sunday. It doesn't have to be Saturday.

Let me illustrate this. Something funny happened to me. I committed my life to Jesus Christ in 1978 and after the time I committed my life to Christ there were two times of year that were special in my heart and in my life. Christmas and Easter. And every Christmas I would get excited in my heart. Now I was born again but I wasn't living for God. I wasn't a terrible sinner then — I was before, but I wasn't then — but I wasn't living for God. When Christmas time would come around, I would be a nice guy. I

would be extra nice. I was going to be real nice because Jesus was born at this time, and the same thing would happen at Easter time. During the week of Good Friday and Easter, I would go to church extra that time. Through the rest of the year I would miss a lot of church. I would go every so often, but at Easter time I'd be especially "holy." Many people are like this. The churches are full on Christmas. They're full on Easter. But between Christmas and Easter, the rest of year they're almost empty. So I would be really "holy": it was a special time and I was acting real good and I was doing special things. But then in 1982 I got baptized in the Holy Spirit. And suddenly, when it came to Christmas I never got overly excited. When it came to Easter I never got overly excited or was extra nice.

I thought about that. I'd pray, "Lord, it used to be at Christmas and at Easter I would be extra special because these were special days." And then the Lord guided me back into my memory, and I reflected on my life since the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Every single day since that time seemed like Christmas to me. Every single day seemed like resurrection day to me. It wasn't one special time of the year. Every day I wanted to be telling people about Jesus, about his birth, his death, his resurrection. And so it no longer was just two times a year that I esteemed something special. Now I purposed in my heart that all 365 days out of the year are something special for me and Jesus Christ. I purposed that in my heart, and I see the change in my life because of it. Now I may not act as "holy" at Easter and Christmas, but I'm much holier between Easter and Christmas.

And that's what the Apostle Paul is saying. He gets very stern in Romans chapter 14 verse 13. And I think we need to hear some of this in our own situations. "Let us therefore not judge one another." If the Apostle Paul were here as our guest preacher today this is what he would say: "Let us therefore not judge one another. But judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in front of his brother." In other words, he is saying, "don't judge your brother, judge yourself." A whole lot of people want to judge everybody else. But Paul instructs us to judge ourselves. He said, Look to see if you are causing others to stumble. He takes your judging finger and turns it back on yourself. He said, "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself. But to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with your meat, now walkest thou not in love. Destroy not him with your meat for whom Christ died. Let not your good be evil spoken of."

Clothes, Jewelry, And The Married Woman

So many today are judging over Old Testament legalities. It's happening all over. In the Old Testament there were requirements given about the type of clothing that you should wear and also dealing with jewelry. Some people have taken some of those scriptures and have developed doctrines out of them that I want us just to touch on briefly.

First Peter chapter 3 verse 1. "Likewise you wives be in subjection to your own husbands." But some read this as, "Likewise you wives be in subjection to all men." Is that what it says? The women are in subjection to the men? He says, "you wives be in subjection to your own husband." Woman, you are in subjection to your husband but not

to everybody else. What happens so frequently is that you start thinking those things, and men are always dominating all the women, so that must be what this verse is saying; that must be how God intended it. But that's not the way God meant it to be. It says, "Be in subjection to your own husbands that if any obey not the word they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives." Actually in the Greek that word means "life-style." Unsaved husbands shall be won by the life-style of believing wives. "While they [the husbands] behold your chaste" — your conservative, modest, godly — "conversation coupled with fear."

How many of our women today are like that? We're very moderate in our conversation. We have a fear and a reverence of God. Even if you're married to an ungodly man that should be your attitude in the home. You are a humble servant. This is what the scripture's showing us.

Verse 3. "[The wife's] adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plating the hair, of wearing of gold or putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart." He's saying, don't be so concerned with making yourself up on the outside. That is the way of the world. Some people misapply this and say you cannot braid your hair. They say that a woman who does is in sin. They're taking this scripture and they're being what we call legalists. They're not taking the spirit of this scripture; they're taking the letter of the scripture. Jesus says the letter kills. The Spirit brings life. Peter here is talking to women who are married to men who are not born again. He is saying, "Woman, don't you try to put on all your outward clothes and please him externally. It isn't how much gold you wear and how beautiful your hair is, or how fancy your clothes are. That's not what's going to win him to Christ." He says, "But..." That means he's going to tell us the right thing now: "But let it be the hidden one of the heart, that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

That's what God wants from the ladies towards their husbands. Especially if he's not born again, he doesn't want you fussing with him: "Oh, man, you need to go to church, you need to get your life straight." It isn't a matter of how fancy you look on the outside if you have a meek and gentle spirit, and you walk in a reverence and a fear unto God. That is what will touch his life at some time.

But some people like to take these scriptures and say that nobody should wear gold. Nobody should wear rings. Nobody should wear a bracelet. And some will not even let you in their church if you do. Recently at the Bible Training Center, a girl came up to me and said, "My brother, I have a problem." What's that? I asked her. She said, "about wearing jewelry. We believe it's wrong." I asked her why, and she gave me some Old Testament scriptures referring to jewelry and then using this scripture from Peter. I said, "my sister, so you mean if I wear this ring I might go to hell?" "Well no," she said, "Not just a ring but I mean jewelry." I said, "So I can wear this one ring but not another ring?" "Well no." I said, "You have a watch on. Is that not jewelry?" "Well yeah," she said, "but I use it for telling time." My point is that if you get caught up in legalism, it can become a snare, and you'll end up having to define every single detail of the law to keep you from becoming a sinner: "this much, but not this much."

So what is Peter talking about here? Is it wrong to wear jewelry? No. Peter is not trying to impose law on believing women. He is referring to an excessive concern with it:

women trying so hard to look attractive, becoming so wrapped up in outward appearances — becoming so worldly minded. And in doing that, they not only ensnare themselves in worldly concerns, but they actually end up becoming sources of temptation to other men, stumbling blocks for other believers. How do I know that? Because I see that all through the spirit of the New Testament. Paul says, "don't cause your brother to stumble." He says to walk in love to your neighbors and to your friends. He says, "don't put others into sin and temptation."

Ladies, do you know that when you wear mini skirts you put men into temptation? God doesn't want you to do that, but is God going to be vexed with you because you wear an earring? Is God going to send you to hell because you wear a bracelet? No. That's legalism. That's taking the letter of the law and twisting it. Where? Let's get back into the old covenant. We don't live in the old covenant. We live under the new covenant.

The Law Versus Grace

And there are serious consequences when you try to move back to the old covenant. Many of the practices we dealt with are old covenant. But many churches today are forcing these old covenant practices upon their people.

In Galatians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul is writing to the church of Galatia, and these are born again, spirit filled Christians, many of who used to be Jews. They were Jews and they got born again, spirit filled. And the Apostle Paul is addressing them about this very issue: people trying to take them from the new covenant and put them back into old covenant practices. And he's very stern about it. He says: "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?" He says, "You have been tricked." "Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has evidently been set forth crucified among you. This only would I learn of you: Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law?" No. In other words, he is asking them, "Did you receive the Spirit of God because you were obedient to the letter of the law? You can follow these practices every day all your life and you would still never receive the spirit of God." He says, "or did you receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith?" It was through preaching the name of Jesus. It was through faith that arose in your heart when you heard the preaching of the new covenant, the gospel about the grace and salvation of Jesus Christ. That's what he's says. "Are you so foolish? You began in the spirit" — you got born again, you got spirit filled. "Are you now going to be perfected by the flesh or by following old laws?"

He continues on in Galatians chapter 3 to give an expose on the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant, about faith coming through Jesus Christ, about how Abraham had to have faith and it was counted unto him as righteousness. Go to verse 13.

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree, that the blessings of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the spirit [— how? —] through faith. Brethren, I speak not after the manner of men, though it be but a man's covenant, yet it be if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth it or addeth

thereto.

He continues talking about Abraham and Jesus. Then in verse 19:

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions till the seed [— talking about Jesus —] should come to whom the promise was made, and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one but God is one. Is the law then against the promise of God? God forbid. [— Jesus said, "I've not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it." —] For if there had been a law given which could give life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all are under sin and that the promise of faith by Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Paul goes on and talks about the law being a teacher. But in verse 25 he says, now that faith has come, we're no longer under the teacher, the law. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Now there are some groups that teach you that you have to be baptized in water to be saved. It's not true. Your baptism is a baptism into ... what? Verse 26 says the baptism was a baptism into Christ. Baptism means immersion. When you accept Jesus Christ you get baptized or immersed into him. Your baptism is a baptism into Christ, not just a baptism into water. Now don't get me wrong: baptism in water is definitely a biblical church doctrine. But let me show you where some people have made mistake. In Mark chapter 16 verse 15 Jesus said to his disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Some people have said, "See you have to be baptized or you're not saved." There are some churches all over the world, in Latin America and even here in Africa, that believe that if you just get them baptized in the name of Jesus they'd be saved. And they went and took a lot of heathen people and got them baptized. But they didn't get saved. The second part of verse 16 clearly shows their error: "He that believeth not shall be damned." No mention of baptism is made here. The damning is not based on whether you're baptized or not. The damning is based on whether you believe or not, whether you're a believer in Jesus Christ.

I can take you as a sinner and put you in the water. You go in a dry sinner, you come out a wet sinner, and I baptize you in the name of Jesus Christ. But if you don't believe in your heart, you've not had a change in your heart; you're still a sinner. How do you get saved? Romans chapter 10, verses 8, 9, and 10: "If you believe with your heart..." If you don't believe with the heart nothing happens.

Back to Galatians 3, Verse 27: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Now when you do that there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or slave or free. There is neither male nor female." Does that mean God doesn't see the difference in us? God doesn't see the difference between two people as a man and a woman, or as an American and an African, a Ghanaian and a Sierra Leonean. Why doesn't he see any difference? Where is he looking? He is looking on the inside. On the inside we're all the same color. On the inside it doesn't matter whether you're American or Jew or Greek, a man or a woman. That's where God is looking. "If ye be Christ's then

are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."

Turn over to Galatians chapter 5. Now this is not talking about giving us liberty to be sinners or back sliders. This is not about not taking on old covenant laws so we can just be free in this world. God wants us free, yes. He wants you to be free from the old covenant, because we're in the new covenant. God is a spirit, and God loves his creation. But his creation has sinned and separated themselves from God spiritually. So God wants to redeem mankind to him. But in order for it to be true love, there has to exist a condition called freedom of choice.

I have two daughters and I love them very much. But there's only one thing I really want out of my two children. I mean I will supply them with money. I will take care of their needs. I'll give them education. But there's only one thing I want. I want them to love me freely of their own will. I want them to love God freely of their own will. What if I would force my children to love me? And my daughter says daddy I have to love you because you make me. Is that true love? True love must have choice. They must be able to choose to love me, and that means the option must exist that they can choose not to love me. That's the same thing with mankind. God wants us to love him, so he has given us choice. You can choose to love God or you can choose to reject God. There must be choice. Why? Because God wants true love from his creation.

So why does God not want us living under these old restrictions, under legalism? Because these are the things that put you into bondage. They put you in a position where you're just going through the motions. You come to church on Sunday morning you sit through the agony of two-hours. You're words may be saying the right things but your hearts are far from God. And you're going through the motions, playing with the spiritual things, and thinking you're all right. But your heart is not there. You are not loving God, you're living in bondage. And God says that kind of sacrifice is not acceptable unto him. He says, "The only sacrifice I accept is the fruit of your lips giving thanks and praise for Jesus Christ." The only people I know that give thanks and praise for Jesus Christ are born again Christians. Unsaved people don't. They curse his name. But born again Christians love him so much they would give praise, they would give thanks, they're giving their glory and their adoration unto him. They are lifting him higher.

We're not in bondage to jewelry. We're not in bondage to food. We're not in bondage to clothing. We're not in bondage to oil or water. Our eyes are focused on Jesus Christ. Otherwise people get bound under the old covenant.

Serious Consequences For Living Under The Old Covenant

It's even more serious than bondage. When you get bound you won't be loving God. Period. And God doesn't accept that sacrifice. In Galatians chapter 5, the Apostle Paul says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." What is the yolk of bondage he's talking about? The stipulations of the old covenant. He says don't get entangled with that. "Behold, I Paul say unto you that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you." That's serious.

Paul was talking to spirit filled Christians, and they were going back to old covenant practices. Judaizers — Jewish believers who wanted to impose the Law on Gentile believers — had come into the church and they told them, "yes, you are born again but you have to come under the old covenant. And you must be circumcised." So after they were born again, they were going back to the old covenant practices. And the Apostle Paul warns that if you go backwards, Christ has become of no effect unto you. He says, "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace". That is a serious consequence. "... For we, through the spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith, for in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love."

In verse 7 he says "You ran well. Who hindered you that you should not obey the truth? This persuasion comes not of him that calls you. A little bit of leaven leavens the whole lump [of dough]." Notice that he says this kind of thinking is not from God, it is not from him that calls you. He also says that a little bit of error is going to spoil the whole thing. So if you're still involving yourself in these practices, thinking they make you holy or righteous, that little bit of leaven will start to spoil the whole thing, and your faith will be ruined. He says you started well but somebody not from God has changed your mind on this, and gotten you turned around and going in the wrong direction.

But in verse 10 he expresses his hope in their willingness to get in line again with the truth. "But I have confidence in you through the Lord that you will not be otherwise minded, and that he that troubles you shall bear his judgment, whosoever it be." There is judgment for those living under the old ways, and especially for those trying to bring others into that bondage.

Let's get down to the real heart of the problem of people going back into the old covenant. Turn to Hebrews chapter 6, verse 4. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, Jesus Christ, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost and have tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come..." Notice he's talking about born again, spirit filled Christians who have knowledge of the word. When you are ignorant, God forgives. God overlooks much out of your ignorance. But once you have become aware, once you understand, once you are knowledgeable, once you have tasted of the things of God, once you have partaken of the word of God and the gifts of the spirit — the powers of the world to come — "if they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

When you go back into these practices you take people's eyes off of Jesus. You put people into bondage. When you practice these things you tell people that they have to do these things in order to achieve heaven. Heaven is not achieved according to these things you are doing. Heaven is achieved through Jesus Christ. Jesus was the final sacrifice. Jesus died for your and my sins. Jesus died for the sins of the world. Holy oil will not get them saved. Holy clothing will not get them saved. Circumcision will not get them saved. None of those practices will get them saved. But when we as Christians go back into those practices we go back into bondage. We go back into the ways of the old covenant. We take our eyes — and other people's eyes — off of Jesus and we start crucifying him afresh, and bring shame to him.

Let me say it another way. When you do these practices, you trample on the blood of Jesus Christ. You trample on his precious holy blood. You give people other criteria, other rules and regulations, to be accepted by God. What is it that gets us accepted by God? The blood of Jesus Christ applied into our lives personally, when we believe from our heart.

Many churches in Africa still use Old Testament practices like holy oil and holy water. When we do that, we trample on the blood of Jesus Christ. We crucify him afresh, shaming him. The Apostle Paul was very strong in Galatians 3, Galatians 5, Romans 14. He says, "Who bewitched you? You've been deceived. You're going back there when God's plan is for us to be over here." A little bit of leaven spoils the whole thing. When we start giving power to men who say that I can pray over this wafer and it becomes the body of Jesus, or I can pray over this oil or water and it's going to have healing power in it now, who's eyes are the people looking at? You. We are nothing but humble servants of God. Even in our salvation we still have the weak flesh. And in the midst of that, whom should we keep lifting up? Who should we keep pointing people to? Who is it that died for us? Who is the final sacrifice? What sacrifice does God accept today? Jesus. And the fruit of our lips giving thanks and praising him for whom? Jesus.

Some of these things have to be applied in the new covenant. We have to wear clothing don't we? But don't give holiness and attributes of holiness and Godliness to clothing. Is there a place for oil? Do we anoint people with oil? Is it holy oil? No. What is it that heals the people? Faith. The prayer of faith. Faith in the name of who? Jesus. Who does the glory go back to then? It doesn't go to the oil. It doesn't go to the water. It doesn't go to the preacher. It goes to Jesus. That's where it should be. He deserves it. You and I don't deserve any of it. We don't deserve any of the praise. We don't deserve any of the glory. It all goes to our Lord Jesus Christ. He died on the cross. He paid the price. He is the blood covenant between God and man.

Chapter 6, Conclusion

What does all this mean for you and I? It means that God went to extraordinary lengths to redeem mankind. His plan was perfect; all the requirements of justice have been met. God has done his part in establishing the covenant. He is doing his part in upholding the blood covenant and now it's up to us. We have to fulfill our part in the covenant.

What is our part? We must be willing to do whatever it takes to get the Gospel of Jesus Christ into all the world.

People ask me, "Must we die like Jesus?" No, but we must be willing to die: die to our own desires, lusts, interests, etc. In 1 Cor. 15:31 the Apostle Paul says, "I die daily." I believe this is the reason why many Christians don't operate in 100% covenant blessings. They operate the formulas but don't meet the covenant condition of partnership to die to our own desires. If there is not 100% covenant commitment, there will not be 100% covenant benefits and privileges.

God has been faithful. God is faithful. And God will always be faithful — because of the covenant. The Blood Covenant.