

Now Concerning Spiritual Things
an historical account of one man's walk with God

4305 Bretton Bay Lane
Dallas, Texas 75287-6712

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Jim Ash No. 69

V-972.267.7187 F-972.267.7399
email: jimashsr@juno.com

**A BREAKTHROUGH
WORTH WRITING ABOUT
Part Two**

Please read last month's *letter* (November 10) to lend understanding and continuity to this one.

In my last *letter* I suggested these two basic essentials in one's walk with God: (1) "For you have magnified Your word above all Your name"¹ and (2) "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven."² These two basic principles emphasize the supreme importance of His word over His name and settles forever that His word will not change. A third basic fundamental in scripture is "covenant."

The meaning of covenant.

The word *covenant* in the Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew word **beriyth** (ber - eeth). The definition from Strong's Concordance (#1285) is "in the sense of cutting, a compact (because made by passing between pieces of flesh) confederacy, confederate, covenant, league." Cutting covenant was probably the first formal enforceable agreement (contract) between two men. In the small amount of research I have done, I have not read of women being involved in cutting covenant. This undoubtedly derives from the original position of man as the protector of his household.

Steps in cutting covenant.

Cutting covenant was widely known and practiced prior to the writing of the Bible. Confirmation of such activity may be found in The Blood Covenant, written by H. Clay Trumbull. In his book, Trumbull presents well researched evidence of cutting covenant between two men as practiced in many nations of the world both prior to and during "bible times,"³ meaning the time during which both the Old and the New Testaments were written. While the ancient specifics of cutting covenant may have varied from one country to another, here in brief are seven steps that were practiced in many parts of the world.

1. Counting the cost. Not done in haste. The

prospective partners privately and extensively examine each other in detail with regard to their response to responsibility, to authority, to prosperity and to adversity. Their reputation, assets and liabilities (debts) are carefully examined. Every consideration was given to this examination, since once this decision was made in the affirmative, there was no turning back. During the investigation, if either party discovered reason to discontinue the discussion, the parties would part without any obligation or responsibility to each other. See Luke 14:25-33 for the teaching of Jesus on this step.

2. Exchange of outer garments. This is a symbol of giving oneself totally and unreservedly to fulfill the needs of his partner upon request while receiving the same from the other partner. No *need*, however small or insignificant, was to be ignored. This ceremony was usually done publicly at the gates of the city before authorities such as ruling elders, as well as family, friends and other witnesses. Romans 10:9 is symbolic of this step. See also Philippians 2:5-8; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; 1 Samuel 18:1-4.

3. Exchange of belts. The belt was a symbol of strength and was the holder of weapons. At the exchange each partner might proclaim something similar to, "I give you my strength. Call on me any time you are in need." This was important both prior to and during *bible times* in the absence of certain laws and law enforcement agencies and facilities we now consider as common place. See 2 Corinthians 4:7; 12:9.

4. Exchange of weapons. This signifies the exchange of enemies by both partners. If either partner was attacked, the other partner would covenant to come to his defense at whatever the cost, or whatever the consequence, even to the point of death. See Romans 12:17-20; 1 John 3:8; Matthew 16:8; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-18.

5. The walk of death. At this point in the ceremony, an animal is cut in half right down the middle from the head to the tail. The two pieces of bleeding flesh are placed about eighteen inches apart and the covenant partners walk the figure-eight walk of death between and around the pieces of the cut animal. As this is done each partner pronounces blessings and curses on the other partner for the fulfilling of and for failing to

¹Psalm 138:2 (b).

²Psalm 119:89.

³Published by Impact Christian Books, Inc. Kirkwood, MO 63122.

fulfill the covenant. Included in the pronouncement of curses would be a statement, referring to the slain bleeding animal, similar to “May God do this to you if you fail to provide my needs and may He also do the same to me if I fail to provide yours.” See Jeremiah 34:18; 18:20; Genesis 15:1-17; Revelation 13:8; Hebrews 2:2; Deuteronomy 11:26-29; Chapter 28; Joshua 8:33-35.

6. The covenant mark. Both partners superficially cut their hand, wrist or arm and catch a small amount of blood in a common cup which is set aside for later use. A dark substance (gun powder after its invention was often used) is rubbed in the wound so as to leave a prominent, permanent mark when healed. Several western customs have derived from this: (a) The handshake to expose any covenant mark. (b) Raising the right hand in a court of law. (c) Israelites would raise their hands to remind God of their covenant relationship with Him. The partners then exchange names as in marriage – implying that I take on your identity and you take on mine. This was not universally practiced but when done was another step in binding the two partners as one. See Isaiah 65:2.

7. The covenant meal. This step, as the first one, is done in private. During the meal bread is taken and broken saying, “This is my body broken for you. Even when my body is destroyed in death, the covenant we have made lives on.” The bread is then eaten. At the end of the meal wine is mixed with the blood in the cup and offered saying, “This is my blood, the blood of the covenant. Even when my blood is spilled in death, our covenant remains.” The contents of the cup is then drunk by both parties. See John 6:53, 66. Since Jews were forbidden to drink blood, wine was substituted. One important characteristic of cutting covenant was that a man of strength, wealth and power could cut covenant with a man weak in each of these areas. Both stood to gain in such an agreement. A man of great strength might cut covenant with several men of lesser strength to double his capabilities and multiply the strength of the weaker partners. This acted as an insurance policy against both financial and economic hardships as well as against bands of robbers, thieves and marauders.

An Old Testament covenant.

Abraham is used as our role model of faith. He is called the father of us all [who believe by faith].⁴ When God said to Abram (before his name was changed to Abraham by God), “To your descendants I will give this

land [of Canaan]” and later said, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land,” Abram said, “Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?”⁵ God then instructed Abram to slay a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon. Abram killed the animals, slit them down the middle from head to tail and placed each two pieces of the three animals opposite each other in preparation for the figure eight walk of death. Prior to sundown vultures came down on the carcasses and Abram drove them away. The vultures were symbolic of Satan and his evil hordes who came to eat the slain animals to prevent God from cutting covenant with Abram which portended Satan’s downfall. Then at sundown God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Abram and God then prophesied (1) that Abram’s descendants would be strangers in a land not theirs, (2) that they would suffer affliction as slaves for four hundred years, (3) that they would come out of slavery with great possessions, (4) that Abram would die at a good old age and (5) that his descendants would return to Canaan.⁶

Scripture reveals that God then came down in the form of a smoking oven and a burning torch and walked the figure walk of death for Himself and Abram because He knew that Abram couldn’t keep the covenant. The same day the Lord confirmed the *content of the covenant* to Abram and his descendants by giving him a deed to the largest piece of land ever covered by a real estate contract, the boundaries of which God Himself described.⁷ This covenant between God and Abram portended another one in the future.

A New Testament covenant.

When I was in the process of writing my *letter* dated June 25, 2003 entitled A Brief Treatise on THE LORD’S SUPPER, the Lord spoke to me one day and said, “*The reason Jesus came to earth as the son of man and as the son of God was so that His blood would be the co-mingled blood of man and the blood of God and He therefore could legally cut covenant for both man and God, which Abram couldn’t do.*” Therefore, on the cross, Jesus legally cut covenant with man and with God. Then after His resurrection, He entered the Most Holy Place as the Mediator of the New Covenant and placed his own

⁵See Genesis 12:7; 15:7, 8.

⁶See Genesis 15:8-16.

⁷See Genesis 15:17-21.

⁴See Romans 4:16.

blood on the Mercy Seat.⁸ Then is when the sin nature of the first Adam was forever negated through faith in Jesus as the Christ, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.⁹ Then is when the shed blood of Jesus Christ legally established Him forever as our High Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant.¹⁰ Then is when He sat down at the right hand of God and was given all power in heaven and on earth.¹¹ Then is when He had the legal right to say, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.”¹²

The reason He said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father [for salvation] except through Me”¹³ is because, through the cross, He had obtained the legal right to do so as our High Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant.

The apostle Paul wrote these words to the Church in Rome: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus [that Jesus is Lord of your life] and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”¹⁴ These two verses of scripture explain how to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. When you confess Him as Lord *you become His covenant partner*. He went to His death to cut covenant with you. You, therefore, must be willing to likewise give your life, *if called on*, in support of His Lordship. That is the real meaning of confessing Him as Lord. In many parts of the world, Christians are being persecuted because of their faith. During the coming Great Tribulation,¹⁵ many believers will be slain for the

word of God and for their testimony.

Here is the definition of the covenant Jesus cut on the cross for all believers today: “An agreement whereby each partner agrees to provide the needs of the other when the request is made according to covenant language, which is the bible.” That means when you and I are walking holy before God in covenant relationship with Him, He is *obligated* to meet our needs when the request is presented according to covenant language! Think that one over for a moment. When God is *obligated* to meet our needs, that’s pretty exciting! That is the truth and that is the blessing of walking in covenant relationship with our Lord!

The “flip side” of the word *obligated* is *delighted*. God exists to bless believers. It is more blessed for Him to give than to receive.¹⁶ *He is the original giver! He delights to give!* Jesus came that we might have a more abundant life.¹⁷ God “is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, *according to the power that works in us.*”¹⁸ “For all the promises of God in Him [Christ] are yes, and in Him, Amen, to the glory of God through us.”¹⁹ Where we believers falter is in understanding how to walk in that abundance and experience God’s bounty. Could it be that difficult? Let’s talk about it and begin with some things Jesus said.

In the early part of his earthly ministry Jesus said, “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”²⁰ The real problem about these words is that we may believe them and love to quote these verses but somehow have not been able to acquire the abundance promised by God. Many of us have great faith but for lack of knowledge, have been unable to acquire the

⁸See Hebrews 9:11-14.

⁹See Hebrews 9:22.

¹⁰See Hebrews 4:14; 6:20; 12:24.

¹¹See Matthew 28:18.

¹²Matthew 28:18-20.

¹³John 14:6.

¹⁴Romans 10:9, 10.

¹⁵The Tribulation, which begins at the Rapture of the Church, is seven years in length. The Great Tribulation is a three and one-half year period of time which begins at the mid-point of the Tribulation. At that point in time a charismatic figure, who will be given unprecedented authority to govern, will then demand allegiance to himself rather than Jehovah God under the penalty of death for the dissenters. Then is when many Christians will be slain for not recanting their faith in Jesus

Christ as the Messiah

¹⁶See Acts 20:35. This verse is almost always understood as applying to our giving to others, but this is originally descriptive of God and His willingness – His desire to give to us bountifully from His storehouse of treasures. Believers often miss this. It is worth its weight in gold when understood how it is activated!

¹⁷See John 10:10 (b).

¹⁸See Ephesians 3:20.

¹⁹2 Corinthians 1:20.

²⁰Matthew 6:31-34.

promised abundance which belongs to every believer. Here is another way to describe a similar situation:

The three stages through which the Israelites traveled are symbolic of a Christian's walk with God today. Four hundred years in Egypt symbolizes *not enough*. Forty years in the wilderness symbolizes *just enough*. Canaan symbolizes *more than enough*. The problem here is the same. We believers love to teach these truths to others while not experiencing that which we teach. For years I was out front leading the way in discovering God's awesome promises while not understanding how to access His abundance.

By faith the Israelites crossed the Jordan river to reach Canaan. It is crossed the same way today – by faith. Many dedicated, sincere, born again, Spirit filled believers have spiritually crossed the Jordan and reside in Canaan – the land of *more than enough* surrounded with abundance while living a life of *never enough spiritually, physically, financially and emotionally*. Charismatics are no different than other believers. We have discovered the promises but fail in the knowledge of how to obtain them. Therein lies what appears to be a dichotomy, that is, two positions in opposition to each other. Many believers who live in Canaan, the land of abundance, are poor and needy. But this is not a dichotomy. It is a case of believers who are entitled to God's miraculously provided inheritance, who have not yet learned *how to claim the abundance for themselves*.

Claiming the abundance for yourself all starts with commitment – something you have heard time and again, but nevertheless is essential. God has no part time servants. God has no partially committed servants. Jesus either is, or is not, Lord of your life. Lord of your life means Controller – a total commitment on the order of, “Lord I give myself to you unequivocally. I will do what you say, go where you tell me to go. Here am I, use me to glorify your Name.” Unless you are willing to do that, you will never taste of His abundance.

After you have passed that mile-post, I suggest that you ask for the baptism of the Holy Spirit with fire. This is neither necessary for salvation, nor for dedicated service to God, but the experience will lift you into a spiritual realm which will greatly facilitate your walk with God. When this experience occurred in my life thirty-nine years ago, it changed my life forever. Jesus became real to me and that relationship recently began to grow exponentially. All four of the Gospels record that this is a unique part of the ministry of Jesus today. Holy Spirit baptism is recorded by Mark and John; baptism

with the Holy Spirit and fire is recorded by Matthew and Luke.²¹ Within the past year the Lord spoke to me and said that “the fire” had been neglected but should be included. The Holy Spirit is the source of *power*; the fire is the source of *cleansing, refining or purging* that the vessel might be cleansed and purified for the Lord's use.

When maturity starts to set in and you begin to hunger and thirst for the awesome promises of Jesus that have somehow escaped you, then is the time to go treasure hunting. Here is one I discovered. I began to pray boldly for a Holy Spirit anointing in my life, greater than any other man had ever experienced on the face of the earth since Adam, *to glorify the Name of the Lord* in that which He has called me to do. Then is when unusual things began to happen in my life. Then is when I discovered the power of these words James wrote, “You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend on your pleasures.”²² Then is when I discovered the meaning of “But seek first the kingdom of God *and His righteousness*; and all these things (necessities of life) will be added to you.”

When you pray boldly for spiritual blessings to glorify God, that is what pleases Him. It is a law of God that Spiritual blessings precede and open the door to His abundance. You cannot pray too bold a prayer for God to bless you spiritually in order that *He may be glorified*. His glory – *His righteousness* – must come first. That is the way it begins. But that is only the beginning. These steps I have outlined give God the legal right to begin a work in your life that will open the door to His abundance. And His abundance has no limits. More about this next time.

Holiday Greetings

May God's abundance arrest you – overtake you²³ in the coming Holiday Season. He promises that to believers who walk holy before Him in covenant relationship. I'll be writing about that in a future letter.

Blessings to you and your family
Merry Christmas
From Jim & Dale Ash

²¹Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33.

²²See James 4: 2 (a), 3, NAS.

²³See Deuteronomy 28:2.