

Kenyon, E. W.The Blood Covenant

7. The Covenant in Africa

This chapter uses a story from the explorer Stanley to show what a blood covenant really is. While searching for Livingstone, Stanley 'cut' a blood covenant with a war-like African chief, and the author walks through the ceremony step by step to reveal how binding and sacred such a bond was. The point is to help us understand the kind of covenant God enters into with people.

Key takeaways

- A blood covenant made two strangers permanent 'blood brothers' — an unbreakable bond, not a mere treaty.
- The ceremony had set steps: a parley to test each other, an exchange of the most treasured gifts, mingling of blood (through substitutes), and a shared cup.
- It brought total sharing: everything one owned was now at the other's disposal if needed, though a true brother would only ask in real need.
- It came with solemn curses on anyone who broke it, and blessings on those who kept it.
- A lasting memorial was set up — planted 'covenant trees' or a pile of stones — so descendants would remember the bond.

- Once cut, the covenant gave protection and honor: stealing from a blood brother meant death, so Stanley could leave his goods unguarded.

Passages worth keeping

“Everything the chieftain has will be yours if you need it.”

Captures the total, self-giving nature of a blood covenant.

“Come, buy and sell with Stanley, for he is our blood brother.”

Shows how the covenant instantly transformed Stanley's standing and safety.

How it connects

The African ceremony mirrors the biblical covenant pattern — mingled life, curses and blessings, and a lasting memorial — preparing us to grasp the covenant God makes with His people.

Scripture referenced

- **Deuteronomy 11 & 27** -- The curses and blessings of the Old Covenant, pronounced from the mounts of cursing and blessing.
- **Genesis 21** -- Abraham gives Abimelech ewe lambs as a memorial of their covenant.