

God's Eternal Faithfulness

Part 4: The New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31-34

I. Introduction

A. Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12, 15, 17)

Genesis 12:1-3 - Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 22:18 – in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. . .

Genesis 26:4 – in your offspring all the families of the earth shall be blessed,

Genesis 28:14 – in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 49:10 - The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

B. The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19, portions of Exodus-Deuteronomy).

Exodus 19:5-6 - Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

Leviticus 26:3-5 - “If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely.

Leviticus 26:14-17 - “But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you.

C. The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7)

1 Samuel 17:12 - Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years.

1 Samuel 16:12 - And the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him, for this is he.” Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

C. The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7)

2 Samuel 7:12-16 - When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”

Genesis 49:10 - The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Provisions of the Davidic Covenant:

1. David's **name** would be made great.

2 Samuel 7:9 - And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

2. A **place** will be given to the people of Israel.

2 Samuel 7:10 - And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more.

3. A **kingdom** will be given to David **forever**.

Psalms 89:35-37 - Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.”

Isaiah 9:7 - Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

“To Abraham, the Lord had said, 'I will make you a great nation . . . and make your name great' (Gen. 12:2). The promise of the great name has now passed specifically to the Davidic king. His name will be great. And since he is the king, the ruler of the nation, the greatness of his name translates into the greatness of the nation. Consequently, we see how under his rule the Abrahamic promise of the great nation and the great name come together.” (Paul Benware)

II. The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Jeremiah 31:31-34 - “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

"Jeremiah's announcement of the new covenant was made during a very dark period for Israel. The northern kingdom had already been overthrown and its citizens led captive by the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:5- 6)...The southern kingdom was likewise in dire straits. The prophet had begun his ministry in the days of Josiah and lived to see the Babylonian captivity begin. It was during those momentous days that God gave him the prophecy of the new covenant that offered better things for the suffering nation." (Homer Kent, "The New Covenant and the Church")

Not like the Mosaic Covenant!

Jeremiah 31:32 - **not like the covenant** that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

An unconditional covenant

Jeremiah 31:33 - **I will** put my law within them, and **I will** write it on their hearts. And **I will** be their God, and they shall be my people.

Verse 34 - For **I will** forgive their iniquity, and **I will** remember their sin no more.”

An everlasting covenant

Jeremiah 32:40- I will make with them an **everlasting covenant**, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

Ezekiel 16:60 - yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an **everlasting covenant**.

"The Mosaic Covenant depended on the ability of the people to keep their part of the contract . . . But the New Covenant, like the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants made with Israel, was declared everlasting and irrevocable, based on the promise of the sovereign, faithful God of the universe. **Thus the nation would possess the promises of the covenants forever.**" (Larry Pettegrew)

III. Answering Basic Questions about the New Covenant

A. Question #1: Who are the parties of the covenant?

Jeremiah 31:31 - “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,

"[this language] indicates God's determined purpose to see the divided nation of Israel once again reunited as a single people. Israel and Judah are bound under one new covenant with their God and hence bound together as his united people. . . ." (Bruce Ware)

B. Question #2: What makes this covenant “**new**”?

“What is important is that there is no attempt here—as there was, for example, in Deuteronomy—to re-establish Israel on the old bases. The new covenant is **entirely new**, and in one essential feature it is to surpass the old that is that Yahweh is to give his people a heart to know Him (Jer. 24:7)” (Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, vol. 2, 105).

“But Jeremiah’s oracle cannot be understood as reactualization of the past sacred history. He speaks of a new covenant, not a covenant renewal, and thereby assumes a radical break with the Mosaic tradition.” (Bernhard Anderson)

"Whereas the Old Covenant administered promises through law, the New Covenant does so through the Holy Spirit. . . [the] **New Covenant then supersedes the Mosaic Covenant, and administers the promises in a new way.**" (Larry Pettegrew)

C. Question #3: What are the provisions of the New Covenant?

Provision #1: God will give His people “a new heart”.

Ezekiel 11:19 - And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

Ezekiel 36:26 - And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

"What, then, is the novelty in the future covenant? [What is so new about this covenant? He answers,] The principal novelty is, I believe. . . that the covenant is not written on stone but on their hearts. . .

While it may be an overstatement to call the internalization of the law the principal novelty of the new covenant, certainly it is one of the key elements contributing to its newness. For although, under the old covenant, the people were to endeavor to know the law and make it part of their minds and hearts (Deut. 6:6; 10:16), still the placing of the law on their hearts was done at best partially, and that with only a small portion of Israelites (1 Cor. 10:5). The location of the law in Israel was identified most prominently with tablets of stone (Ex. 24:12; 32:15–16; 34:27–28) or with the book of the law (Deut. 17:18; 30:10; 2 Kings 23:2), not with tablets of human hearts." (Bruce Ware)

Jeremiah 24:7 - I will give them a **heart** to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their **whole heart**.

Jeremiah 32:37-40 - Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them **one heart** and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their **hearts**, that they may not turn from me.

Jeremiah 31:33 - **I will** put my law within them, and **I will** write it on their hearts.

Provision #2: God will grant permanent forgiveness of the sins of His people.

Jeremiah 33:8 - I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.

Jeremiah 31:34 - For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Old Testament Sacrificial System:

Leviticus 4:27-29 - "If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering.

Leviticus 4:32-34 - "If he brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring a female without blemish and lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill it for a sin offering in the place where they kill the burnt offering. Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar.

"Whereas the old covenant clearly expected and required holiness on the part of God's people, it also assumed their failure to keep the law, for an elaborate mechanism (the sacrificial system) was placed within this former covenant to deal with various instances of disobedience. But amazingly, when one looks to the new covenant for a parallel mechanism for the ongoing removal of continuing sin, one finds no such mechanism. Why is this so? How can this be? It can only be due to the fact that God will base his new covenant not simply on the forgiveness of past sin and its guilt but rather on the removal of all sin in all its respects, ensuring then, by his Spirit, that there will be no further need for forgiveness once sin is fully and finally abolished. . . The New Covenant would deal with sins in such a way that no continued remembrance by repeated sacrifices would occur." (Homer Kent)

Provision #3: God will grant the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel 36:27 - And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

"Although it is not always linked to covenant language, the enduement of the Holy Spirit is one of the chief characteristics of the prophetic hope that would signal the eschatological days of the Messiah (cf. Isa 42:1; 44:3; 59:21; Eze 39:29; Joel 2:28)" (Saucy, p. 117)

Larry Pettegrew:

- 1) Instead of the law on tablets of stone that was before them, God promised to put his law "in their minds [literally 'their inward parts'] and write it on their hearts.

"The new covenant therefore looks to the time when the law of God would be a part of the mind and will of the people 'so that they obey God, not because they are supposed to but because they want to'" (Saucy, p. 116-117).

- 2) The interior law is no doubt akin to **the indwelling Holy Spirit**

Carl Hoch: "The new covenant comes with 'batteries included.' . . .The Spirit internalizes the New Covenant so that people of God are motivated to do God's will. By contrast, the old covenant stood over the people of Israel like a judge, demanding obedience, but providing no enablement" (All Things New, 116).

Provision #4. God will grant physical blessings on Israel.

Willem VanGemeren, "The New Covenant Before Christ?" (Book of Jeremiah):

- 1) Gathering of people to land--31:8-11; 32:15,37,41;
- 2) Rebuilding of cities--30:18; 31:38-40;
- 3) Cultivation and productivity of the land-- 31:5, 12-14;
- 4) Increase in herds and flocks--33:12-13;
- 5) Population explosion--30:20; 31:17;
- 6) Expressions of joy--31:4,7,13; 33:11;
- 7) State of blessing, rest, and peace--31:23- 25, 27-28; 32:42-44; 33:6).

Summary Statement:

"This covenant, then, has to do with the regeneration, forgiveness, and justification of Israel, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with His subsequent ministries, Israel's regathering and restoration to the place of blessing, all founded on the blood of Christ" (Pentecost, Things to Come, p. 118).

IV. The Church's Relation to the New Covenant

Luke 22:20 - And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 - Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a **new covenant**, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Hebrews 8:8-13 - For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Ephesians 3:4-6 - When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

"The Church is the New Covenant Community of God as it exists in this dispensation between the events of Acts 2 (Day of Pentecost) through the rapture of the Church prior to the Day of the Lord." (Dr. Michael Vlach, Theology IV Notes)

"The participation of the church in the promises is seen especially in the blessings of the new covenant which are applied to it . . . The enlargement of the new covenant to those outside of Israel is indicated in the words of Christ Himself when at the inauguration of the Lord's supper He gave His disciples the cup, saying, 'This is my blood of the new covenant, . . .'" (Robert Saucy, The Church in God's Program)

“As the revelation of God and his ways progressively unfolds in the Old Testament, three themes become more pronounced. First, the Mosaic Covenant is a failure (because of the people of Israel’s sin) and will one day become obsolete. Second, the old covenant will be replaced by a new covenant. Third, this new covenant will be associated with a fresh, new unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit.” (Greg R. Allison, Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church)

The New Covenant and Israel:

Romans 11:25-27 - Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; “and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

"Israel will be saved and Israel will be blessed and the whole world through them will be blessed... they're going to enjoy the benefits of the Abrahamic fulfillment and Davidic fulfillment through the whole of the Millennial Kingdom. And we'll all be there enjoying our part in the Davidic promise, the rule of Christ over the universe . . . the unlimited blessing of God and goodness of God poured out on His people during that period of time." (John MacArthur)

Summary¹:

- If all we had was the Noahic Covenant, all we would know was that we might perish, but it wouldn't be by drowning.
- If all we had was the Mosaic Covenant, we should know that there were laws to obey but we couldn't obey them.
- We thank God for the Abrahamic Covenant, which promises blessing to the entire world.
- We thank God for the Davidic Covenant that promises final righteousness and peace over the world of those ruled by the Messiah.
- We thank God for the New Covenant, which provides the forgiveness of sin and a new heart and the implanting of the Holy Spirit through the mighty work of the Messiah who died on the cross and rose again.
- It is the salvation promised in the New Covenant that opens the door to the Davidic and Abrahamic fulfillment and the comprehensive character of our glorious, eternal redemption.
- Even though we who are outside the nation Israel cannot claim to be children of Abraham or David, we can by the New Covenant become sons of Abraham by faith and subjects to the glorious kingdom of Messiah through the grace of salvation.

Romans 11:33-36 - Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

¹ Adapted from a prayer by John MacArthur