

Divine Covenants...the New Covenant
A Series on Divine Covenants: Part 5

1. The New Covenant is mentioned by 3 prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Why are the promises of the New Covenant spread over these different prophets?

One reason becomes apparent with a historical perspective:

722 B.C. - The Northern Kingdom Israel falls to Assyria. Deported into captivity, the Northern Kingdom Israel ceases to exist. Witnessing this, the prophet **Isaiah** foretells of the fall of Jerusalem.

605 B.C. – Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar defeats Assyria and Egypt and makes the Southern Kingdom Judah a vassal state. A limited vassal state deportation takes place, and among them, Daniel is taken.

597 B.C. – Judite king Jehoakim / Jehoiachin rebels and is defeated. 10,000 are deported, and among them, **Ezekiel** is taken.

586 B.C. – Judite king Zedekiah rebels and Jerusalem is destroyed. Massive deportations take place and the Southern Kingdom of Judah no longer exists. The prophet **Jeremiah** stays behind.

The prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah all witness the nation's loss of the promise of land. While they all prophesize of God's judgment, God, with the promises of the New Covenant, will bring Israel back home.

2. Study all of the verses pertaining to the New Covenant: Isaiah 59:21; 61:8-9; Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:40; Ezekiel 34:25-31, 36:25-28; 37:26-28. What does God promise in the New Covenant?

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,..." (Jer 31:31)

God's specific mention of both Northern and Southern Kingdoms indicates that He is making a new covenant with the whole Jewish nation.

"...not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,..." (Jer 31:32)

The New Covenant is different and separate from the Mosaic Covenant. In addition, because of the Mosaic Covenant, this unconditional covenant was made with the literal nation of Israel. The covenant is spoken as an everlasting covenant of peace (Isa 61:8; Jer 32:40; Ezek 34:25; 37:26).

"As for Me, this is My covenant with them,...My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth,..." (Isa 59:21)

"I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Jer 31:33)

"I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me." (Jer 32:40)

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"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God." (Ezek 36:25-28)

The New Covenant will bestow something within the descendant of Abraham: the Holy Spirit. God's law will be "written" on their heart.

"My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring." (Isa 59:21)

"They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," (Jer 31:34)

Once the regeneration of the descendant of Abraham begins, each successive generation will be regenerated. Because this promise refers to everyone being a Believer, it is a reference to the future.

"for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jer 31:34)

God will forgive past, present, and future sin! This is a big departure from the Mosaic Covenant, which only forgave the Old Testament Believer's past sin. The New Covenant could do something that the Mosaic could not: complete forgiveness of sin.

"I will faithfully give them their recompense and make an everlasting covenant with them." (Isa 61:8)

"They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid. I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore." (Ezek 34:28-29)

God will bless the descendants of Abraham with a secure nation and a bountiful land. This promise, historically impossible today, is a reference to the future.

"I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever." (Ezek 37:26-28)

When God builds a Sanctuary within the nation of Israel, the whole world will know that God sanctified the nation of Israel. This promise, speaking of the sanctuary of God being in the midst of God's people forever, is in the future.

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3. Why did God make the New Covenant?

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Lord God says: **“It is not for your sake, house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,”** declares the Lord God, “when I show Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the lands; and I will bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.” (Ezek 36:22-25)

4. Read Ezekiel 37:21-28 and note that the New Covenant is associated with God’s servant David, a holy King and Shepherd of God’s people. Isaiah makes several prophecies of a suffering Servant (Isa 42:1-4; 53:4, 7-8). Jesus Christ unites the two people (Matt 12:17-21; 8:14-17; Acts 8:32-35). What do you notice?

The New Covenant is associated with justice and atonement.

Isaiah 42:1-4 | Matthew 12:17-21. When Jesus conducts His ministry of healing, He does not come as the Son of Man Lord of the Sabbath; instead, He comes as a fulfillment of Isaiah’s God chosen Servant on whom God has poured out His Spirit. Jesus comes in humility and gentleness (i.e. He will not quarrel nor cry out) and with compassion for the weary and burdened (i.e. battered reed and smoldering wick).

Matthew 12:17-21 indicates that Jesus was more than a suffering righteous Servant. Jesus came to establish justice. But Jesus did not come asserting His power; with His message of salvation, Jesus must be embraced as Savior or be faced as Judge.

Isaiah 53:4 | Matthew 8:14-17. In one of His earliest large healing events, Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law and others who visited “to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: ‘He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases’” (Matt 8:14-17). Matthew’s quotation of Isaiah 53:4 revealed that Jesus’ physical healing metaphorically represented the spiritual healing of salvation that results from His atonement.

Isaiah 53:7-8 | Acts 8:32-35. After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Messianic prophecies place a greater emphasis on Jesus as the unblemished sacrificial lamb.

5. Within the context of the New Covenant, Isaiah speaks of God’s love for justice (Isa 61:8-9). In Luke 22:20, Jesus speaks at the Last Supper, “This cup, which is poured out for you, is the New Covenant in My blood.” How is God’s justice achieved?

When Jesus states at the Sermon at the Mount, “Do not presume that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke of a letter shall pass from the Law, until all is accomplished” (Matt 5:17-18), He indicates that both concepts are encapsulated within the Mosaic Law. The question is how does Jesus inaugurate the New Covenant while fulfilling the Law?

Justice for God: payment for the penalty of sin

Jesus introduces the idea of His life being a “ransom” for the purpose of redeeming people (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; 1 Tim 2:3-6; 2 Pet 2:1). Here Jesus presents the idea of substitution.

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For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
(Mark 10:45)

Of the Mosaic Covenant, this concept is consistent with Day of Atonement.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the sins of the nation of Israel were expiated. The sacrificial ritual required two male goats that were physically perfect in age and condition. One goat was slain and its blood and flesh were offered as a substitute payment of the nation's sin. The other goat (scapegoat) received the sins of the nation and was released to the wild to signify that sin left the Hebrew nation (Lev 16:1-34).

Only the high priest can enter the Holy of Holies to make atonement for himself and the nation of Israel for all their sins once every year (Lev 16:34). To atone for the sins of the nation (Lev 16:2-19), a male goat is sacrificed, and its blood is applied on the Mercy Seat to expiate (cover) the sins of himself and the nation to propitiate (appease) God (Lev 16:2-22; Isa 53:1-12; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22-24; 3:18).

The prophet Isaiah portrays the Messiah's sacrifice within the context of Levitical sacrificial laws (Isa 53:1-12). The Suffering Servant died for iniquity, transgression and sin (Isa 53:5-12). He was a guilt offering and in substitute for human beings (Isa 53:5-12).

The apostles Paul and Peter understood the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Jesus was unblemished and sinless and took the place of the sinner to make atonement for sin (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22-24; 3:18).

Jesus Christ was the high priest (Heb 2:17; 5:5-6). He was holy and without sin (Heb 7:26-27). Because He knew His Father's will, Jesus was effectively the Urim Thummin, which enabled the High Priest to determine God's will (Ex 28:15-30; 1 Sam 3:6). He was the only one who could make the sacrifice for the sins of the world (Heb 9:11-12).

Jesus Christ was the unblemished sacrifice suitable for atonement and in substitute for sinners. He paid the redemption price for the forfeited lives of sinners.

Jesus Christ was the Mercy Seat – the place of propitiation (Rom 3:25; Heb 9:12-14; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). His blood removed the reasons for God's judgment and, at the same time, appeased the total wrath of God. He simultaneously provided the blood at the place of propitiation (Rom 3:25; Heb 9:12-14) and was Himself the place of propitiation (1 John 2:2; 4:10).

God will give a new heart and put a new spirit within the Believer: freedom from the penalty of sin

John the Baptist prophetically sees Jesus as the link between Passover and the Day of Atonement, the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" (John 1:29), and by divine appointment (Acts 2:23), Jesus' crucifixion takes place during the sacrifice of the Passover lamb (John 13:1; 18:28; 19:14-18; Rev 5:6).

Paul states, "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7).

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Peter sees Jesus as having the characteristics of the paschal lamb with an emphasis on His blood: unblemished and spotless (1 Pet 1:19).

Of the Mosaic Covenant, Passover is stipulated as a day to celebrate and memorialize (Lev 23:5-8; Ex 12:1-13, 42-51).

This event, the last plague that struck the first born of Egypt but spared those Israelites who smeared the blood of a sacrificed unblemished lamb on their doorposts, would represent the Exodus.

In similar manner, the blood of Jesus Christ spares the Believer spares each and every person from the judicial penalty of their sins.

Jesus was the High Priest, who was Himself the supreme once and for all sacrifice (Heb 9:24-26) that accomplished complete atonement for sin and appeased God's wrath towards human beings; Jesus fulfilled the purpose and function of the Mosaic Covenant and became the mediator of the New Covenant.

Hebrews refers to Jesus as "the mediator of a new covenant" (Heb 9:20-22; 2 Cor 5:18-20). "And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22).

This distinction is the basis for the division of the Bible into the Old and New Testaments (Covenants).

6. Given that the New Covenant was made with the Jews, how is it that Gentiles are spiritually blessed as well? Survey the New Testament with references to the New Covenant: Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:14-20; Romans 11:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:2-6; Ephesians 1:7; 2:11-16; 3:5-6; 4:32; Colossians 1:14; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 7:22; 8:6-13; 9:11-22; 10:16-18; 12:24; 13:20.

In review, God made the Abrahamic (and its subsets Land, King, and New) and Mosaic Covenants with Abraham and his physical descendants who received his inheritance; it would be these people who later formed the nation of Israel. Gentiles were "*excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world* (Eph 2:12)."

Jesus Christ introduced the communion cup saying, "*This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood* (Luke 22:20, 1 Cor 11:25)." His reference to the "*new covenant*" to the Jewish apostles referred to the only "new covenant" in the Old Testament.

Regarding the Jew and Gentile, the apostle Paul, former eminent Pharisee, tells the Ephesians that Christ brought "*both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall* (Eph 2:14)." The "dividing wall" between Jew and Gentile was the Mosaic Covenant, which prevented Gentiles from receiving spiritual forgiveness and blessing from God.

The spiritual blessings of the New Covenant are:

- a) regeneration,
- b) indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and

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c) the forgiveness of sins. The apostle Paul, in his ministry to the Gentiles, states that Believers are regenerated (Tit 3:5), indwelt with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19, 2 Cor 3:3), and forgiven of our sins (Eph 1:7, Eph 4:32, Col 1:14).

7. What is the significance of the New Covenant?

The New Covenant elaborates the universal blessings God promised in the Abrahamic Covenant and provides Gentiles the means for salvation; Gentiles can be forgiven of their sins by faith in Jesus Christ.

Despite Israel's efforts of obedience or lack of, the New Covenant was unconditional; God said that it would be fulfilled because of Israel's disobedience, and that it would cause Israel's obedience (Jer 32:39-40, Ezek 36:21-22, 27; 37:23-24)!

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