
The Promise of the New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31-34²

Russ Kennedy

Do you live in the old or the new?

Starting at the end?

Open your Bibles to Hebrews 8:6-13. Here is the fulfillment of promise we study today.

But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

⁸ 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, ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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. ¹² For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

¹³ 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.

And now, our text that the author of Hebrews was quoting:

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, 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. ³³ But 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,

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and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ 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."

Its Declaration

(v.31)

The Lord declares His intention to enter into a New Covenant.

It is Future

The New Covenant would be in future days. Jeremiah is writing around the time of the exile and the fall of Jerusalem. Out of the devastation and destruction will arise a new people of God bound by a New Covenant with God.

It is New

This is a new in time and new in kind covenant. This is not an administration of some covenant of grace. It is something new and different. All attempts to reduce the importance of its newness need to be resisted.

It is Unconditional

God will simply make the covenant with the people He chooses. It is not conditional on anything we do. We know from other texts that it does flow out of the righteousness and the redemption provided by Christ. But we are simply recipients of a promise that we participate in.

It is Royal

The reference to the "house of Israel and house of Judah" is a reference to the royal house of Israel. In other words, God will make this covenant with the king of Israel. From many other texts, we know that this is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the fulfillment of the house of Israel and its great reality. He is the new Israel. All who are in Him will participate in the New Covenant. So the New Covenant will be for all God's people in that day.

The fact that Paul in the New Testament taught that Gentiles were included in the New Covenant was a great problem for Jews. It is a problem for those who teach that the New Covenant is with the nation of Israel. We have to understand this text *in the light of how the New Testament uses it*. Paul includes Jews and Gentiles as members and ministers of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6).

Its Difference

(v.32)

God is emphatic that this covenant will be different from the old covenant that went before and under which the Jews had miserably failed.

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.

Not a National Deliverance

The New Covenant will not be like the national deliverance from Egypt. Then, every person who walked out under Moses' leadership were delivered regardless of their faith. While the New Covenant is corporate, it is not national.

Not a Breakable Covenant

It will not be a breakable covenant. There are no conditions for those who are given faith to believe. The covenant is guaranteed for it is secured solely by the cross; that is, the life, death, resurrection and rule of Christ.

Not a Disregarded Relationship

Those who enter into the New Covenant will not disregard the relationship. Over and over again, the people of Israel simply turned their back on their glorious husband and went whoring after other gods. Those who by faith participate in the New Covenant will grow in their love for God and their espoused husband, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Its Details

(v.33-34)

God describes some foundational details of the New Covenant. This is not an exhaustive list of its features, provisions and blessings. But it is critical in announcing the New Covenant for this is the essence of its newness.

.³³ But 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. ³⁴ 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.

Transforms the Heart

The Law or the Word of God will be placed into the hearts of New Covenant people. It will be written in their hearts. In other words, the heart of New Covenant people will be inwardly transformed by the infusion of the Word of God.

This is effected by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:24-32; Joel 2:28-32). It is the presence of the Spirit who brings the power of the Word. Never ever can you disconnect the two. The indwelling of the Spirit is a new and glorious reality in the New Covenant.

Guarantees the Relationship

God simply asserts that He will be our God and we will be His people. In the Old Covenant this was usually conditioned by an "If you..., then I will..." God's own word and power guarantees the relationship.

Secures the People

All of those in the New Covenant will be believers. No longer will there be a mixed multitude as in Israel. All through Israel's history, a small number of Jews were actually believers with "evangelism" within the nation a constant need. But in the New Covenant, everyone will know the Lord, will believe His Word.

This is a radical change in the New Covenant. Do we have a mixed group in our public gatherings and ministering – yes we do. But only true believers are a part of the New Covenant. This becomes the warnings all through the New Testament and particularly in Hebrews.

Its Design

(v.34b)

The New Covenant grounded in its marvelous design to effectively deal with our sins.

For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more

In Forgiveness

Our sins' charges are no longer held against us. This is the judicial aspect of the New Covenant.

Our sins' guilt is no longer held within us. We no longer experience the guilt of our forgiven sins.

In Forgetfulness

Our sins' actions are no longer between us and God. This is the relational aspect of the New Covenant.

God's forgiveness and forgetfulness leave a pattern for New Covenant people.

Thinking Forward

So how does the New Covenant unfold?

First, it is inaugurated by the Lord Jesus Christ at the last Passover and Lord's Table.

Luke 22:14-20

¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 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.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant since He has died and raised again and so that we will receive the inheritance promised us. Consider Hebrews 9:15.

¹⁵ Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

The New Covenant was in-force so that the old covenant was obsolete and ready to vanish. And remember Hebrews 8:13.

¹³ 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.

The New Covenant is the framework of our ministry today. Consider 2 Corinthians 3:4-6

⁴ Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Reflect and Respond

That we come to God through the New Covenant is a great delight. But it is also a solemn and serious responsibility. In closing, listen to Hebrews 12:18-25.

¹⁸ For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. ²⁰ For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." ²¹ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

²⁵ See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.

Rejoice in our great privileges in the New Covenant as we unfold them in our studies of God's Word and in future sermons and series.

Live in the person and power of the Spirit who indwells us because of the inward writing of the Word on our hearts in the New Covenant.

Minister in the confidence and competency granted by the Spirit's work through us as servants in the New Covenant.

With solemn joy, come to Mt. Zion in all the glorious array there. But take heed to hear Him who is speaking. His voice is your life.