

New Covenant Theology

An Introduction

Updated Contents

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT COVENANTS.....	1
THE NOAHIC COVENANT	5
THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT	9
THE DAVIDIC COVENANT.....	21
THE MOSAIC COVENANT.....	27
THE NEW COVENANT	41
NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY DISTINCTIVES.....	51

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The Mosaic Covenant

Our understanding of the Mosaic Covenant, commonly referred to as the Old Covenant, is a critical element of New Covenant Theology. At the heart of the difference with most other systems is our understanding of the giving, nature, fulfillment and relationship of the New Testament believer to the so called, Ten Commandments.

As Given in the Old Testament

The Giving of the Law (Exodus 19-24)

Covenant (Exodus 19)

Constitution (Exodus 20-23)

The Ten Words

The Civil Law

Confirmation (Exodus 24:1-8)

Communion (Exodus 24:9-16)

⁹ Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, ¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. ¹¹ And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

¹² The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." ¹³ So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. ¹⁴ And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them."

Levitical System (Exodus 25 - 31)

God speaks the Levitical system to Moses

The Tabernacle

The Priests

The Sacrifices

The Festivals

The Skilled Craftsmen

The Highlight of the Sabbath as the sign of the Covenant (31:12-17)

¹² And the Lord said to Moses, ¹³ "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. ¹⁴ You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵ Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. ¹⁶ Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. ¹⁷ It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.' "

The Two Tablets written by God's Finger (v. 18)

¹⁸ And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

Corruption (Exodus 32)

The Law is Broken

Correction (Exodus 33-34)

The Threatening Word (v. 1-6)

God says, "Go but I will not go with you..."

¹ The Lord said to Moses, "Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your offspring I will give it.' ² I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ³ Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people."

⁴ When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. ⁵ For the Lord had said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.' " ⁶ Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.

The Meeting Place (v. 7-11)

⁷ Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. ⁸ Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. ⁹ When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. ¹⁰ And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. ¹¹ Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

The Interceded Guarantee (v. 12-17)

¹² Moses said to the Lord, "See, you say to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' ¹³ Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." ¹⁴ And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." ¹⁵ And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?" ¹⁷ And the Lord said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name."

The Hidden Glory (v. 18-23)

¹⁸ Moses said, "Please show me your glory." ¹⁹ And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. ²⁰ But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." ²¹ And the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, ²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I

have passed by. ²³ Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”

The Law has been broken so:

Covenantal Renewal (Exodus 34)

The Nature of the Law

The Purpose of the Law

¹⁹ Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. ²⁰ Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

²¹ Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. ²² But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

1 Timothy 1:3–11

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. ⁵ The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

Thinking it Through...

The Mosaic Law is one Law system. It is clearly interconnected. The Bible does identify the Ten Commandments and Tables of Stone, but never ever as separate from the whole. So, you can distinguish the Ten Commandments, the Levitical Code, the Civil Code, but even in the recording of them in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, they are deeply intertwined.

The Law demanded total and complete obedience. It promised death to those who disobeyed and life to those who did obey. Of course, no one but the Lord Jesus was able to keep the Law perfectly.

The Law provided for grace and mercy through the sacrificial system. Through a faith-offered sacrifice, the Old Testament person could have their sins covered and forgiven.

The Law was a national constitution that formed the nation of Israel. Without complete adherence to the Mosaic Law, there is no Biblically recognized nation of Israel. Just because Jews form together to create a nation, does not mean they are the people of God. They form a nation in rebellion against God, not in submission to God.

Do not misuse the Law. As we will see in our next session, the Law, has a very limited application to believers. We are not under law, we are under grace.

As Interpreted by the New Testament

One of the most difficult debates among Bible students going back to the times of the apostles is the question: what is the NT Christian's relationship to the Law? Is the NT Christian under the Ten Commandments?

The New Testament is very clear:

The debate *has always existed* in the church:

It was a major issue in the church at Jerusalem.

Paul had to deal with it in the church in Corinth, Galatia, Colossae and Rome.

The whole book of Hebrews is a long call to the church to see the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant.

The reason the debate has always existed:

The Law has been fulfilled by Jesus (Matthew 5:17–20)

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

The Past Purpose of the Law (Galatians 3:10–4:7)

We are not justified because of keeping the Law. (v. 10-14)

¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” ¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” ¹² But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— ¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

The Law does not nullify the promise of the Spirit (v. 15-18)

¹⁵ To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. ¹⁶ Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. ¹⁷ This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

The Law was added because of sin until Jesus came (v. 19-20)

¹⁹ Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. ²⁰ Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

The Law cannot give life which was our fundamental need (v. 21-22)

²¹ Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. ²² But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

The Law served as a guardian and teacher until faith came (v. 23-29)

²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as

were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Now we are no longer under the Law because we have received the promised Spirit (4:1-7)

¹ I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

The Present Purpose of the Law (1 Timothy 1:3-11)

The Problem: They were teaching believers to be under the Law (v. 3-7)

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, ⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. ⁵ The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶ Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

The Solution: *The Law is not for believers but for unbelievers (v. 8-11)*

⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

The Law includes the Ten Commandments written on stone tablets. (2 Corinthians 3:1-18)

Not with ink, but with the Spirit

Not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of the heart. (v. 1-3)

¹ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? ² You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. ³ And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Not of the letter which kills, but of the Spirit who gives life. (v. 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 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.

A lesser glory because it came to an END

A greater glory because it is permanent. (v. 7-11)

⁷ Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? ⁹ For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. ¹⁰ Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. ¹¹ For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

**Not the restriction of the Law which cannot transform.
But the freedom of the Spirit who transforms us as we behold Christ (v. 12-18)**

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

We have died to the Law through union with Christ Romans 7:1–8:8

The Illustration: laws are binding only on the living (v. 1-3)

¹ Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? ² For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. ³ Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

We are released from the Law to serve in the new way of the Spirit. (v. 4-6)

⁴ Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

The real problem is the limitation of the Law and the problem of sin (v. 7-12)

⁷ What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” ⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. ⁹ I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. ¹⁰ The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹ For sin, seizing an

opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹² So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

If we try to live by Law, we set up an impossible struggle. (v. 13-20)

¹³ Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. ¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

We cannot live by Law because it cannot resolve the tension between the law of sin in our flesh and the law of God in our minds. (v. 21-25)

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law [legislation] of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another [kind of] law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

What the Law cannot do, Jesus through the Spirit does (8:1-8)

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Thinking it Through...

The Law has accomplished all it was intended to.

The Law has been fulfilled.

The Law is not for believers, but for unbelievers.

The Law has been brought to an end for believers.

Believers are not under the Law. We have died to the Law. We have been released from the Law. We have been moved from the realm where law (as legislation) rules to the realm of the Spirit where we are under grace and the law of Christ as life.

The Law includes the Ten Commandments, the Civil Code and the Levitical System. You cannot separate them. Period.

We have been given the life, the Word, the Spirit - what more could we want?

Brothers and sisters. Do not go back under the bondage of the Law or law king od living. Live in the freedom of the Spirit.

Live holy lives under the Law of Christ, the principles and precepts of the New Testament.

Notes

The New Covenant

Promise and Perfection

The Promise of the New Covenant

Jeremiah 31:31-34

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, 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

It is New

It is Unconditional

It is Royal

Its Difference

(v.32)

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

Not a Breakable Covenant

Not a Disregarded Relationship

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

Guarantees the Relationship

Secures the People

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

In Forgetfulness

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

The Person of the New Covenant

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 Practice in the New Covenant 2 Corinthians 3:7-4:6

The New Covenant is the framework of our ministry today. Paul locates all ministry in the church as a ministry of the New Covenant. The following key features show the heart-orientation embedded in that ministry.

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 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.

A ministry of the Spirit, not the letter of the Old (v.6)

⁶ 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.

A ministry full of greater glory than the Old (v.7-11)

⁷ Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? ⁹ For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. ¹⁰ Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. ¹¹ For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

A ministry that unveils the fading glory of the Old (v.12-16)

¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

A ministry that transforms in a Christ-centered way (v.17-18)

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

A ministry that gives freedom from the slavery of the old (v.17-18)

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

A ministry that is exercised with godly integrity (4:1-6)

¹ Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Conduct of our Ministry (v.2)

² But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

There will be *no deception* in life and ministry.

There will be *no distortion* of truth in ministry.

In contrast, there will be *a full and complete disclosure* of truth that commends itself to in others conscience and before the face of God.

Why do these things become a temptation to us? Because of...

The Challenge in our Ministry

(v.3-4)

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

One of the great struggles in each sphere of the church's purpose is that people don't get it.

We must understand that the god of this world, Satan, is actively blinding unbelievers so that they cannot see the light.

And what a gospel it is that we have to proclaim. It is "the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (v.4b).

So how do these truths affect Paul's understanding of ministry? It shapes...

The Concepts for our Ministry

(v.5-6)

⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

I see two powerfully important ideas that are central to not losing heart in the glorious ministry of the gospel to a blinded and dead world.

There is the centrality of *the supremacy of Christ* (v.5).

There is the centrality of *the sovereignty of God* (v.6).

So here it is. The glory is great. The blindness is perverse and pervasive. But Jesus is supreme and God is sovereign and the good news is glorious.

Thinking It Through...

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.

How does my understanding of this text affect my worship and my walk?

Your thoughts...

Your struggles...

Your questions...

Your changes...

A Brief Summary of New Covenant Theology

By Russ Kennedy

I am a New Covenant theologian committed to a grammatical, literary, redemptive historical method of interpretation. I believe that the Old Testament is to be read and understood in the light of the New. The death, resurrection and ascension of Christ and His exaltation as King over all are New Testament controls on our understanding of the Old Testament. I do not believe in a future blessing for the nation of Israel – I believe the Bible teaches that the promises to Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon are fulfilled in Christ. Every person, Jew and Gentile, who is placed into Christ, receives the fulfillment of those promises as ultimately intended. God has established His kingdom in heaven and in the future. The glories of the future kingdom age, primarily spoken of as eternal life and the new creation, have broken into this age through the incarnation, resurrection and regeneration. The kingdom is expanding through the preaching of the gospel, the granting of eternal life through the Spirit in the new birth with the gifts of faith and repentance. At the end of days, there will be a great falling away accompanied by a final intrusion of the powers of darkness and Satan into this age through a Satan incarnating messianic figure who will attempt to rule the world. The Lord Himself will return from the heavens, reward His saints, crush His enemies, judge the unbelieving living and the dead casting them into hell. Just as the world was destroyed by water in Noah's day, the present world will be destroyed by fire with the new heavens and earth emerging when the final regeneration and glorification take place by the Word and Spirit filling all the universe with life eternal, and thus, righteousness.