

Pentwater Bible Church

Easter Service 2017

April 16, 2017

The New Covenant



The Covenant by James Seward

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

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Easter Message
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Today, on this Easter Sunday, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus the Christ from the dead. In the resurrection, we see that Jehovah God sent Himself, a suffering servant, in the body of a man to atone for the sins of the world (Isaiah 49-57). The New Covenant is spoken of first in the book of Jeremiah, and is found in Jeremiah 31: 33-34, Ezekiel 36: 24-28, and Hebrews 8:8. This is one of the most difficult covenants to understand because of its timing and its relationship to the Church and Israel. It is announced by the prophet Jeremiah, launched at the death of Christ on the cross, but does not become operational until a later date when the Jews accept Him as their Messiah at the end of the Great Tribulation. Therefore, there are three stages to this Covenant:

- The Announcement
- The Launching, or Ratification
- The Inauguration, or Enactment

Before we can fully realize the uniqueness of this Covenant, we must first review the Abrahamic Covenant.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

The New Covenant is an outcome of God's initial covenant to Abraham, who was a Gentile, when this covenant was first made. The first reference to this contract is found in the Abrahamic promises of Genesis 12:1-3. These promises were subsequently referred to and amplified throughout the book of Genesis (Genesis 13:14-17; 17:1-8). The Abrahamic promises were codified into covenant form in Genesis 15. In the Abrahamic Covenant, God essentially promised Abraham that He would do seven items for Abraham's physical descendants delineated in Genesis 12:2-3:

1. And I will make of thee a great nation,
2. and I will bless thee,
3. and make thy name great;
4. and thou shalt be a blessing:
5. And I will bless them that bless thee,
6. and curse him that curseth thee:
7. and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

From these seven "I Wills" flows God's entire plan for all of mankind. All other covenants between God and man are build on this one. For example, items 5 & 6 are the basis for the "Sheep and Goat Judgment" of the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat at the

46). God also foreknew Satan's anti-Semitism, and history is patterned after Satan attempting to bring about this reality (Zechariah 2:8). The Abrahamic Covenant was affirmed to Abraham's progeny, Isaac, Jacob, and his twelve sons.

Because the Abrahamic Covenant is the foundation of God's further covenant promises, the New Covenant should not be understood by separating it from God's other covenant activity. Rather, it should be viewed as the natural out working of the Abrahamic Covenant. The New Covenant expands the promise to Abraham of blessing to "all the families of the earth", which is the seventh "I Will" statement, and reveals the means by which man can have his sins forgiven in order to enjoy eternal fellowship with God. The chart below lines up the remaining covenants with the timeline of the Nation Israel:

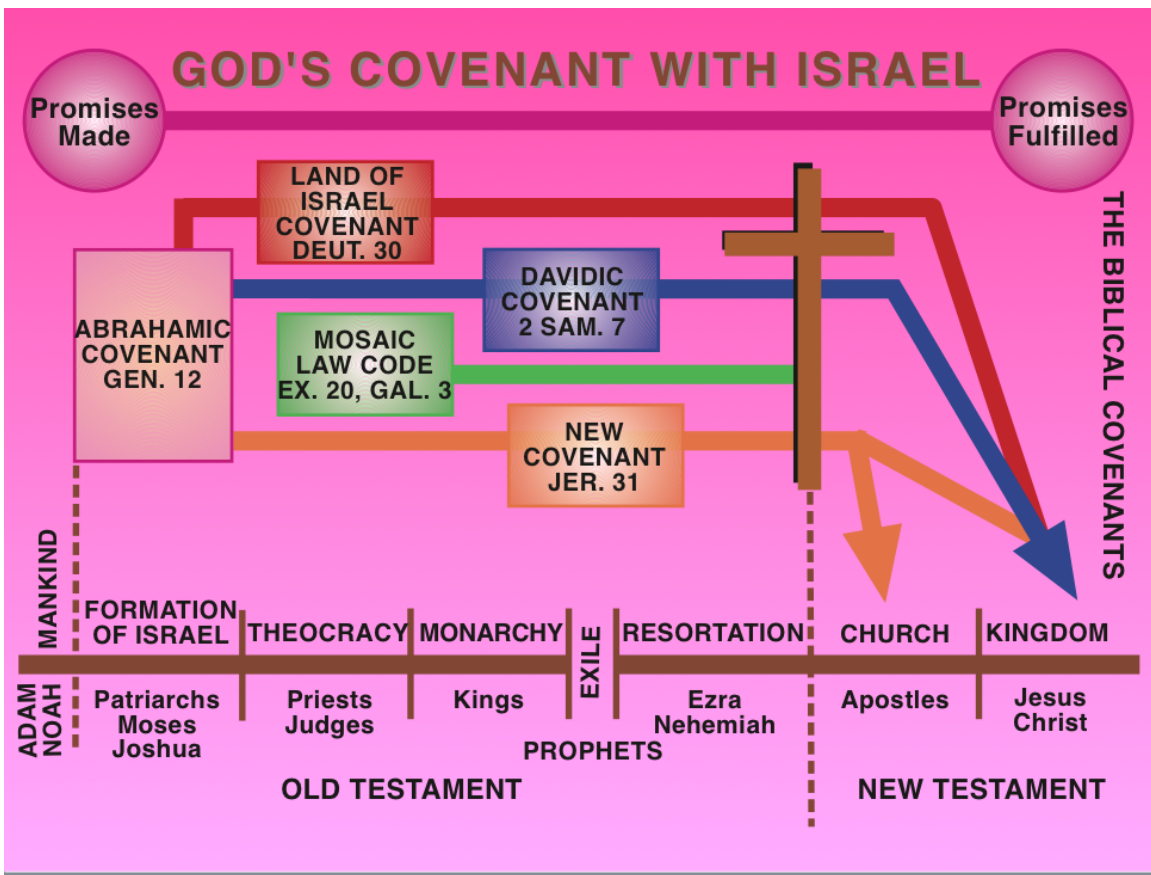


Chart by Randall Price

STAGE 1-THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEW COVENANT

The Old Testament Mosaic Law was the old covenant that God had established with His people, and it required their obedience to uphold what they had agreed to do when they had accepted God's communication with them through Moses, during their 40 years in the wilderness (Exodus20). The Mosaic Law required that the people perform rituals and sacrifices to atone for their sins. In order to please God, and remain in His grace, this was

necessary because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). These sacrifices by God's people had to be given in the spirit of earnest acknowledgement of their sins. God also told His people there was a New Covenant coming that He would make with them, and first announced this in the book of Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³²not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more (ASV, 1901).

God through, the prophet Jeremiah, said that there would be a time when He would make a New Covenant with the nation of Israel. “ ‘The day will come,’ says the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on *that day*,” says the Lord. I will put my law in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31, 33).

Although God had been faithful in keeping His terms of the conditional Mosaic Law (also called the Mosaic Covenant), Israel had not been faithful to uphold their part of the covenant, thus resulting in Israel breaking the Mosaic Covenant. While the Mosaic Covenant described the standard of righteousness, which the Mosaic Law demanded, God did not provide the power to the people to keep it. But that problem will be rectified in the New Covenant as stated in verse 33 above through regeneration of the people's heart, and this will provide the internal power necessary to meet and keep the righteous standards of God. The result of the New Covenant will be a total national regeneration of Israel, as described in verse 34 with the New Covenant in their hearts, “*they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.*” This will not happen until the end of the Great Tribulation when the remaining Jews all become believers in Jesus the Messiah.

HOW THE NEW COVENANT APPLIES THE CHURCH

It is also important to determine what this covenant means to the Church at the announcement stage, because it seems to the casual reader, that the New Covenant applies to the Church. It is quite clear that the passage God gave to Jeremiah announcing

the New Covenant is strictly meant to apply to the Nation Israel in Jeremiah 31:31. For God said, “*I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.*” Some commentators blur the clear distinction between Israel and the Church, and use this as the basis for applying the New Covenant to the Church. But the text here is quite clear, it is written to Israel. God is not “finished” with Israel because they rejected Jesus as their Messiah, and to those who say that He is finished with them, the apostle Paul counters their assertion saying that God has “hardened” them against the acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah for only a specific amount of time:

Romans 11:25-31

²⁵ For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, lest you be wise in your own estimation, for a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will remove ungodliness from Jacob”; ²⁷ “for this is My covenant with them, when I shall take away their sins.” ²⁸ As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake, but as regarding the election, they are beloved for the sake of the patriarchs. ²⁹ For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For just as you once were disobedient to God, but have now received mercy through their disobedience, ³¹ so these also have now been disobedient, that they also may receive mercy by the mercy shown to you. (MEV, underlining added)

The apostle Paul makes it clear that God has not cast off His people. In fact, in answering this rhetorical question, Paul responds with *God forbid!*:

Romans 11:11

¹¹ I say then, have they [the Jews] stumbled that they should fall? God forbid! But through their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. (MEV, brackets and underlining added)

So, one of the reasons for establishing the Church is to make the Jews jealous so that they will want what the Church has, and that will lead them to belief in their Messiah.

STAGE TWO- LAUNCHING THE NEW COVENANT

Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17) and to *launch* the New Covenant between God, and His people the Jews. The Old Covenant was written in stone, but the New Covenant will be written on their hearts, and that is made possible only by faith in Christ, who shed His own blood to atone for the sins of the world. Luke 22:20 says, Jesus took another cup of wine and said, “*This wine is the token of God's new covenant to save you – an agreement sealed with the blood I will pour out for you.*” Since the Church had not yet been formed, He was speaking to His apostles, who were Jews, at the last supper.

What the Lord Himself told His Jewish disciples at the Last Supper is key to understanding what the New Covenant means to us. Christ made two statements about the New Covenant:

- This is My blood of the new covenant (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24).
- This is the new covenant in My blood (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25)

The blood of the New Covenant is not itself the New Covenant, nor is the New Covenant His blood. What Scripture teaches on this matter is to recognize that the Old Testament promise of the New Covenant contained both *spiritual* and *material benefits*. The Church indeed is enjoying the spiritual benefits, such as salvation and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but the Church is not experiencing the material benefits, which remain unfulfilled. The material benefits will remain unfulfilled until the entire nation of Israel is regenerated at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, which ends the Great Tribulation. At that time, the New Covenant will be inaugurated to provide both its spiritual and physical benefits to all believers in Christ, and these benefits will continue throughout the Messianic Kingdom (Romans 15:27). The New Testament does not violate Old Testament statements when it includes more than was revealed in the Old Testament.

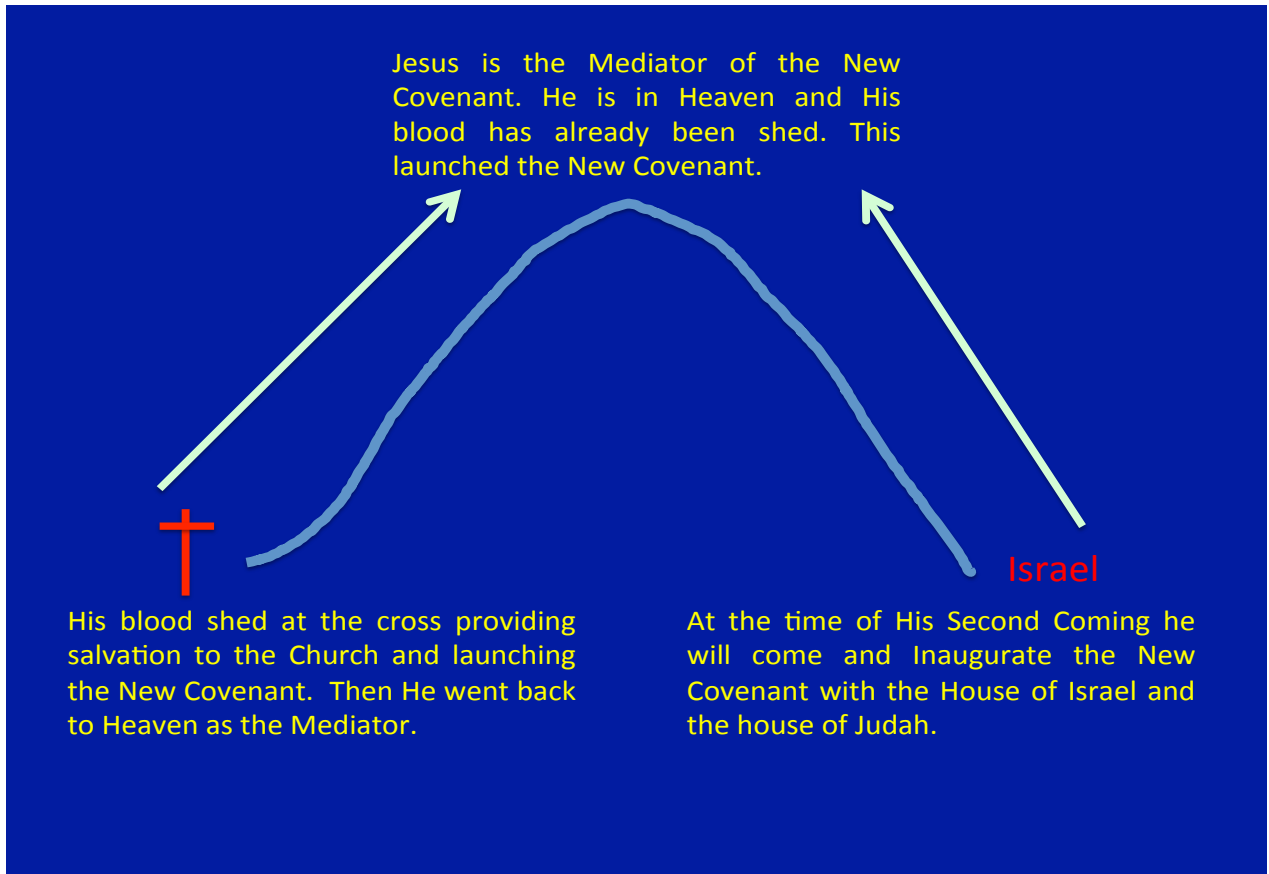
STAGE THREE – THE INAUGURATION OF THE NEW COVENANT

The book of Hebrews was written to second, and third generation Hebrew Christian believers in the Church Age. In Hebrews 8:6-23, the author describes that the *inauguration* or *enactment* of the New Covenant for the Jews will be in the future (Hebrews 8:6–13). The writer states in Hebrews 8:13b: “*Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away*”, which literally means, “Now that, the Mosaic Covenant, which is growing old and aging, is near to disappearing.” For the Jews, the Old Covenant has not yet disappeared because the New Covenant has not come to them, yet. Nowhere does the Scripture say the New Covenant has already come into existence so that they benefit from its spiritual and material blessing before the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah by the Jews. The writer of Hebrews continues:

Hebrews 9:15

¹⁵ For this reason He [Jesus] is the Mediator of a new covenant, since a death has occurred for the redemption of the sins that were committed under the first covenant, so that those who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. (MEV)

Another way to understand this is illustrated in the following chart:



Title: How Christ is Launching and Inaugurating the New Covenant
 Source: Daniel Woodhead

The New Covenant, prophesied in the Old Testament was made with the two segments of Israel that it had divided itself into, that is, the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Church, though not a formal partner of the New Covenant, participates in the New Covenant both as a subject of living a new life based on redemption in Christ, and as a recipient of God's promises to Abraham in the Abrahamic Covenant. The promise that effects the Church has come through the Seed of Abraham who is Jesus Christ, as first presented as the seventh "I Will" of the Abrahamic Covenant. The Church does not "fulfill" the New Covenant, that is strictly for the Nation Israel in the future Messianic Kingdom.

The New Covenant was inaugurated at Christ's death (Matthew 26:27-28; Luke 22:20), and the Church, by her union with Christ, is sharing in many of the spiritual blessings promised to Israel the New Covenant (Romans 11:11-27; Ephesians 2:11-22; II Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:6-13; 9:15; 12:22-24). For we are told:

Ephesians 1:7

⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins

according to the riches of His grace. (MEV)

But, though the Church's participation in the New Covenant is strictly as a participant, it is not the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise. The fact that believers today enjoy the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant, such as forgiveness of sins, and the indwelling Holy Spirit, does *not* mean that spiritual *and* physical blessings will not be realized by Israel. That still awaits the day when Israel will acknowledge her sin, and turn to the Messiah for forgiveness (Zechariah 12:10–13:1)

One way to illustrate the Church's participation in the New Covenant is to view the New Covenant as an airplane that takes off. Let's view the plane as the Covenant and its load of missiles as the Church. The Church (Missiles) gets dropped off in the Church Age and the plane (New Covenant) continues on until it lands in the Messianic Kingdom.



Please Call or e-mail with any questions or comments.

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