

UNDERSTANDING COVENANT THEOLOGY

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The New Covenant

A Promised New Covenant

“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...” (Jer. 31:31).

- **When:** At the collapse of the Old Covenant
- **Why:** “my covenant that they broke” (Jer. 31:32).
- **What:**
 - Law written on heart:** “I will put my law within them... write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31:33)
 - Personal knowledge of God:** “They will all know me” (Jer. 31:34).
 - Final forgiveness of sin:** “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34).
- **Purpose:** “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:33) – same aim as Old Covenant

Promised King, Promised Covenant

- God's promise to David:

“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” (2 Sam. 7:12-13).
- So why did God end the Davidic kingship?

“But now you have cast off and rejected; . . . You have renounced the covenant with your servant; you have defiled his crown in the dust” (Ps. 89:38).
- God's promise of a new Davidic King

“The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: ‘One of the sons of your own body I will set on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit on your throne’” (Ps. 132:11-12).
- Jesus: “The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk. 1:15); “This is my blood of the the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt. 26:28).

The New Covenant: Forgiveness

“For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34).

OT sacrifices not able truly to atone for sin:

“For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Heb. 10:1-4).

- OT contained shadows, not the true form.
- Repetition of sacrifices proves that sacrifices not effectual.
- A true atonement removes “consciousness of sin.”
- Blood of bulls and goats unable to atone for human sin.

The New Covenant: Forgiveness

Sufficiency of the Blood of Christ:

“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Lk. 22:20).

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt. 26:28).

- Christ’s blood the true blood of the covenant.
- New Covenant salvation is grounded in the final achievement of atonement and the value of Christ’s blood.

The New Covenant: Inward Transformation

“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31:33).

- The Problem with the Old Covenant:
 - Not the absence of grace: *“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... I was their husband”* (Jer. 31:32).
 - Failure to keep the Old Covenant: *“For they did not continue in my covenant”* (Heb. 8:9).
 - Inability to keep the Old Covenant: *“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do”* (Rom. 8:3).

The New Covenant: Inward Transformation

- Inward Spiritual Transformation in the New Covenant:
 - Ezekiel: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 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. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Eze. 36:25-27).
 - Paul: “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” (2 Cor. 3:3).

The New Covenant: Inward Transformation

- Ability to Keep God's Law
 - “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, 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” (Rom. 8:2-4).
 - 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” (2 Cor. 3:18).

The New Covenant: Knowing God

“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” (Jer. 31:34).

- What was only true of the prophets:

Moses: “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them” (Num. 11:29).

Peter: “This is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ‘And in the last days... I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams... in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy’” (Acts 2:16-18).

The New Covenant: Knowing God

- What was only true of the priests:

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:19-22).

- What was only true of the kings:

“I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son” (2 Sam. 7:13-14).

“All who are led by the Spirit are sons of God... heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:14, 17).

From Old Covenant to New Covenant

- What is anticipated in the Old is accomplished in the New.
- What was provisional in the Old is finished in the new.
- What the Old Testament mediators could not accomplish, Jesus does.

From Old Covenant to New Covenant

- A New Mediator

“The Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up... The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai” (Ex. 19:20, 23).

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God... and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant” (Heb. 12:22-24).

- The eternal covenant aim of God is accomplished: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:33).

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God... Blessed are they who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates” (Rev. 21:3; 22:14).