

## The Biblical Covenants (5) The New Covenant

### 1. Introduction

At the Last Supper, Jesus announced that the New Covenant would be inaugurated by His death. He said, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood” (Luke 22:20). I Corinthians 3 and Hebrews 8-9 proclaim the wonderful truth that Christians are not under the Old Covenant, that is, the Mosaic Covenant, which I have been calling the National Covenant. We are under the New Covenant.

### 2. Israel and the New Covenant

**Jeremiah 31:31-34.** This is the section quoted in Hebrews 8. Notice that God makes this covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. There is no mention of other nations.

**Jeremiah 31:35-37.** The prophecy of the New Covenant continues with a promise that Israel will be a nation as long as the present creation continues. The Old Testament predicts that God will change this present creation as a man changes his worn-out clothes (Psalm 102:25-26). The book of Revelation ends with a new heaven and a new earth. Until that time comes, Israel will endure as a nation.

**Jeremiah 32:40-41.** Here the New Covenant is called “an everlasting covenant.” It includes new hearts so that Israel “will not turn away from Me” and that God will “faithfully plant them in this land.” A remnant of Israel did return to the land after the Babylonian captivity, but their hearts quickly turned from God, so this prophecy has not yet been fulfilled.

**Ezekiel 37:24-28.** The Messiah, whom Ezekiel calls “David,” will be king over a reunited Israel and Judah (vv.15-23). They will live on the land forever under the conditions of a “covenant of peace... an everlasting covenant.”

Jeremiah (a pre-exilic prophet) and Ezekiel (an exilic prophet) predict a new covenant, an everlasting covenant, which will secure a new heart for Israel and Judah, and they will live on the promised land perpetually.

**Zechariah 12-14.** Zechariah, a post-exilic prophet, predicts a national conversion of Israel in connection with the return of Christ in glory. “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication” (12:10). God “will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to battle.... Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations” (14:2-3). Afterward, “the LORD will be king over all the earth” (14:9). His reign will be marked by swift punishment for the nations that will not “go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts” (14:17). So this is a kingdom before the eternal state.

**Isaiah 65** also predicts a kingdom in which life spans are greatly extended. “The one who dies not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed” (v. 20).

**Romans 11.** Paul confirms the New Covenant promise of a future national conversion for Israel. “A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved” (vv. 25-26). The reason for this future conversion is that “The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” (v. 29).

The future conversion of national Israel predicted by Moses and the prophets is confirmed in the New Testament. This suggests that the land/kingdom promises made to that nation will also be fulfilled in the millennial reign of Christ.

### 3. The Church and the New Covenant

Some suggest that by rejecting Christ, the nation of Israel forfeited all the land/kingdom promises. Those promises have been spiritually transferred to the Church. A better approach: The land/kingdom promises will be literally fulfilled, but the Church receives the spiritual benefits of the New Covenant now. Israel is not the church; the church is not Israel. The church began on the day of Pentecost because the church is the body of Christ created by baptism in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

#### A. Why do we receive the spiritual benefits of the New Covenant

One constant theme of the OT prophets is that the Gentiles will come to know God through Israel.

**Isaiah 42:6** The covenant is for us as well as the Jews

**Isaiah 49:6** The nations are included in Messiah's redeeming work

**Romans 1:16** The gospel belongs to the Jew first and also to the Greek

#### B. Spiritual benefits of the New Covenant

- A better priest & a better covenant (7:18-25)
- Better promises (Hebrews 8:6)
- A better sacrifice (Hebrews 9:13-14)
- A new heart & forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 10:16-18)
- Bold access to God (Hebrews 20:19-25)

### 4. The Sign of the New Covenant

#### A. Baptism or the Lord's Supper?

Under the National Covenant, the covenant meal was not the covenant sign. The covenant sign was the Sabbath. The covenant supper was celebrated for the first time when the elders of Israel ate peace offerings on Mt. Sinai. Whenever the people offered and ate their peace offerings, they were eating a covenant meal. The Lord's Supper is our covenant meal, a celebration of the peace we have with God through the body and blood of Christ. It is also a Passover supper and a church supper.

**Colossians 2:11-12** implies that baptism is the covenant sign corresponding to circumcision, which is the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant.

#### B. For infants or believers?

Boys entered the physical covenant family of Abraham at physical birth. All Christians enter the spiritual covenant family through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:26-29).

Therefore, the covenant sign should be administered when people enter the covenant family. Believers only should be baptized.

### 5. Applying New Covenant Principles

- Obligation to holiness based on redemption (1 Peter 1:14-19)
- Commission to service based on priesthood (1 Peter 2:9-10)
- Ability for holiness and service based on indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- Security of relationship based on election (Deuteronomy 7:7-9; Ephesians 1:3-6)