

## Doctrine of the New Covenant

1. A serious debate rages in Christendom over the doctrine of the New Covenant.
2. On one side of the controversy are those such as Dispensationalist who contend the New Covenant is to be fulfilled in the future during a millennial reign with the nation of Israel.
3. On the other side of the controversy are those within Reformed theology who insist the New Covenant is fulfilled in the church.
4. The discussion can begin with a simple question: “What does the New Testament teach about the New Covenant with particular reference to its fulfillment?”
5. Seven passages of *Scripture* reveal the answer.
  - First, the communion cup is the outward symbol of the New Covenant. *Luke 22:20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.* By drinking from the communion cup, the apostles, who are the foundation of the New Testament expression of the Church with Christ as per Ephesians 2:20, have a part in the blood of Christ and the blessings which flow from that union. “*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*”
  - Second, every Christian who follows the apostolic example in keeping with the Lord’s command and drinks from the union cup by faith has a part in the New Covenant with its blessings and rules. *1 Corinthians 11:25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*
  - Third, the apostle Paul identifies himself as a minister or servant of a new testament or covenant. *2 Corinthians 3:6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.* Paul could not have written this with honesty if the New Covenant is not fulfilled in the church but is still future.

### ***Special Note.***

The historical Scriptural basis for this passage is Jeremiah 31:31-34. “*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not 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 an husband unto them, saith the Lord: 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*”

*34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*

- Fifth, in Hebrews 8:1 and Hebrews 8:6-13 the resurrected and ascended Christ continues to serve as the Great High Priest for the church in fulfillment of the promise made to Israel in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Hebrews 8:1 and Hebrews 8:6-13 says: *“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;...6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8 For finding fault with them, he saith, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” 13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”*

It is obvious that the New Covenant promised in Jeremiah was inaugurated by Christ and is presently being fulfilled in the Church.

### ***Special Note.***

Dispensational teachers are still not convinced that Jeremiah 31:31-34 is fulfilled in the church as quoted in Hebrews 8. They contend that the language of Hebrews 8 merely teaches the old covenant was temporary and ineffectual and anticipates a new covenant that would be permanent and effectual in its outworking.

**A Biblical Response.** It is true that the author of Hebrews teaches from Jeremiah 31 that the old covenant was ineffectual and would be replaced. It is also true that the author of Hebrews presents Christ as the present and eternal Mediator of the New Covenant which has now replaced the old covenant as the Lord bestows permanent and effectual blessings on *“they which are called”*. Hebrews 9:14-15 *14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.* My own heart pleads with all Christians to see what Christ has done and what the Church now possesses, the new covenant in Christ.

- Sixth, God promised in Hebrews 10:10-19 that He would remember our sins and iniquities no more. This covenantal language is said to be fulfilled through the sacrifice of Christ. Because of that promise and its fulfillment in Christ every Christian has bold confidence to enter into the holy place. Every member of the Church, Jew or Gentile comes to the Father because he or she is a partaker of the New Covenant and its blessings. *Hebrews 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, “sat down on the right hand of God”; 13 From henceforth expecting “till his enemies be made his footstool”. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. 15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; 17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more”. 18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. 19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.*

***Special Note.***

Conclusion. Every passage in the *New Testament* presents the language of Jeremiah 31:31-34 as being a present reality in the church. This is what the *New Testament* teaches about the New Covenant.

6. The difficulty for some to accept the concept the promise of Jeremiah 31:31-34 applies to the church is because of a pre-suppositional commitment to a theological construct that makes a dramatic distinction between Israel and the church. The mantra seems to be that “*Israel is Israel and the Church is the Church and never the two shall meet.*”
7. There is a simple solution to the difficulty some have in uniting Israel and the Church and it is found in two points.
  - First, let the *New Testament* interpret the *Old Testament* no matter how surprising the interpretation might seem.
  - Second, when the *New Testament* explains the *Old Testament*, accept the progressive revelation.
8. There is much Biblical evidence to support the fact the *New Testament* teaches the Church is the New Israel, in a more spiritual way. A critical passage in uniting the Church with the true spiritual Israel of old is found in Romans 11.
  - *Romans 11:16 For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; 18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. 19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.*

*20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: 21 For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. 22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. 23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. 24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?*

9. As the New Israel, the Church inherits the *Old Testament* promises, privileges and blessings associated with its New Covenant in Christ.
- The New Covenant belongs to the Church as we have seen by comparing Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 8-10.
  - The Davidic Covenant belongs to the Church according to the following passages.
    - ❖ *Luke 1:69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;*
    - ❖ *Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: 23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: 24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. 25 For David speaketh concerning him, “I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: 26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: 27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.” 29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool”. 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

- ❖ *Acts 15:12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. 13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: 14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. 15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: 17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. 18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.*
  - The Abrahamic Covenant belongs to the Church because of Christ.
    - ❖ *Luke 1:54-55 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; 55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*
    - ❖ *Luke 1:72-73 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; 73 The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,*
    - ❖ *Galatians 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*
  - The promise of being a special nation once given to national Israel now belongs to the Church.
    - ❖ *Exodus 19:6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*
    - ❖ *1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*
10. How is it possible for the Church to be spiritual Israel thereby receiving the status of being children of Abraham and inheriting the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants while being the object of the New Covenant and recognized as an holy nation? The answer is found in Romans 9:6. *“For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.”*
11. In the divine economy it is not the person who is a racial Jew that makes a person a true *“Israelite”* nor is it the person who is a religious Jew like the Pharisees who is a true *“Israelite”* because *“they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.”* Only those who have the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the true Israel of God.
12. Every person today, every Jew or Gentile who believes in God and receives Jesus Christ as Savior and the promised Messiah can claim the blessings associated with spiritual Israel according to Old Testament predictions and New Testament or New Covenant fulfillment.

13. The teaching does not stand which says “*Israel is Israel and the Church is the Church and never the two shall meet.*”
14. Dispensational teaching denies for the Church what the New Testament affirms, and affirms for Israel what the New Covenant denies.