

# **The New Covenant**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The following is an endeavor to set forth as simply as possible what are the prominent features of the New Covenant. In doing this, the subject has been treated as though it had not been previously considered.

Several scriptures, the testimony of which are most important, have been frequently quoted to the extent of repetition, but we do not feel that a complaint will be made by any sincere seeker for truth.

We trust that these pages may be used to lead, not only to a clearer understanding of the New Covenant, but also to the apprehension of the truth of the Mystery which, during this present dispensation, God is desiring to make known to His saints.

# The New Covenant

## PART I

### THE NEW COVENANT PROMISED

For this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28).

In saying "this is," the Lord Jesus explained that the blood He was about to shed was the blood of the New Covenant, but He did not define what the New Covenant was. To do that was not necessary, for the disciples had the New Covenant promised and described in the words of Jeremiah:

*"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Judah; 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: 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" (Jer. Xxxi. 31-33).*

This New Covenant was new in contrast to the Covenant made on the day of the exodus. There had been other covenants made with Noah, Abraham and David, but these were unconditional and enduring, and will not become old or be supplanted by any other covenant. The New Covenant is only new in relation to God's covenant given to the nation of Israel when He, for the first time, began to deal with them as a nation.

To appreciate what the New Covenant is, we must endeavour to understand, first of all, what the Old Covenant was. While the Old Covenant was made on the day that Israel came out of Egypt, yet it is not until Sinai is reached that we read anything of what the covenant was. At the first ascent of Sinai the Lord spake to Moses:

*"Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bare you on eagle's wings and brought you unto Myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me, above all people, for all the earth is mine; 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" (Ex. Xix. 3-6).*

The covenant was conditional "if . . . then," and though made at the Passover, the conditions were not given until Sinai. The requirement was that Israel should "obey My voice and keep My covenant," This Israel agreed to do:

*"And all the people answered together and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex. xix. 8).*

The promise was that Israel should be the Lord's peculiar treasure and a kingdom of priests in the earth.

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At the second and third ascents of Sinai, Moses received the details of the covenant that Israel had agreed to keep; he received the law. Coming again to Israel after the third ascent:

*"Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord. . . all the words which the Lord hath said we will do. And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. . . And he took the book of the covenant and read it in the audience of the people, and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient. And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words" (Ex. xxiv. 3-8).*

On hearing the words of the law which was to be the conditions of the covenant, Israel further agreed to abide by it by a double repetition of "we will do." The written law was called "the book of the covenant," and the blood sprinkled was "the blood of the covenant."

During the next three ascents, Moses received instructions concerning the tabernacle and its service, and the special privilege of Israel if they kept the covenant. At the sixth and last ascent, a further promise is given that was to make Israel an object lesson and a witness to all the people among whom they should go:

*"Behold I make a covenant before all they people; I will do marvels . . . observe thou that which I command thee this day" (Ex. xxxiv. 10-11).*

But this covenant was made with a people who had only been typically redeemed: they had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt, but not from the bondage of sin. Before ever the Lord had ceased speaking to Moses in the Mount Israel broke the first commandment of all:

*"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make any graven image" (Ex. xx. 3, 4).*

*"They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made a molten calf and have worshipped it" (Ex. xxxii. 7, 8).*

The failure of Israel under this covenant necessitated a change, as it was not possible for God's purpose in Israel to be realized on these grounds. Thus it is that a New Covenant is promised:

*"I will make a New Covenant. . . not according to the covenant that I made . . . in the day that I took them out of . . . Egypt . . . which My covenant they brake . . . but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel . . . they shall be My people" (Jer. xxxi. 31-33).*

Under this New Covenant Israel shall be the Lord's people. We make no apology for giving a second quotation of Jer. xxxi., nor, indeed, for frequent further references to these verses; unless this promise is understood, we shall not be able to enter very far into the significance of the words of the Lord Jesus at the Passover supper.

*"Which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord" (Jer. xxxi. 32).*

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The comparison of the broken covenant with a broken marriage vow, is enlarged upon in Ezek. xvi. Here, again, we have the promise of another covenant that should replace the first covenant agreed upon by Israel:

*"Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant in the days of they youth, and I will establish with thee an everlasting covenant . . . but not by the covenant . . . I will establish My covenant with thee and thou shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezek. xvi. 60-62).*

Together with the promise of a New Covenant, Israel received the promise of a coming Messiah. In the last written prophecy given to Israel, the two promises are linked together:

*"The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant" (Mal. iii. 1).*

Thus when the Lord Jesus came, He came:

*"To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant" (Lk. i. 72).*

The New Covenant is not mentioned until the last Supper (Matt. xxvi. 28). Not only did Israel fail to keep the covenant during the O.T., but they also failed to receive their Messiah while under the administration of the Old Covenant. It was not until Israel had gone to the fullest lengths in rejecting the Lord Jesus, that He first made mention of Israel's only hope--the New Covenant.

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## PART II

### ISRAEL'S HEAVENLY BLESSINGS

The blessings in view under the Old Covenant were only earthly in sphere. Israel's deliverance was from an earthly dominion, Egypt. Sinai and Jerusalem were but earthly places; the blood of the Old Covenant was the blood of bulls and of goats. The tabernacle was the building of men's hands, and the priesthood was drawn from among the people.

The New Covenant embraces not only Israel's earthly blessings, but also Israel's heavenly blessings, of which all that pertained to the Old Covenant was but a type and shadow. Comparing the New Covenant with the Old Covenant in the order by which the Old Covenant was unfolded, as already traced, the following affinity can be seen.

The Old Covenant was made on the day of the Passover (Heb. viii. 9); the New Covenant was made when Christ became the true Passover (Matt. xxvi. 28).

The Old Covenant was connected with Sinai and Jerusalem (Ex. xix. 1-8); the New Covenant is connected with their heavenly counterpart:

*"Abraham had two sons, the one by a bond maid, the other by a free woman . . . which things are an allegory, for these are the two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar; for this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem, which now is and is in bondage with her children, but Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all" (Gal. iv. 21-26).*

Here the two covenants are linked with the spheres of their operation. The first covenant gendered to bondage, and the earthly Jerusalem was in bondage under it. The New Covenant brought liberty, and opened the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem to the children of promise.

At the ascent of Sinai, Moses received the terms of the Old Covenant, and Israel sought to keep them: thus this mountain is connected with the inauguration of that covenant (Ex. xix). The New Covenant is connected with an heavenly mountain:

*"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched and that burned with fire . . . and so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake; but ye are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, . . . and to Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant" (Heb. xii. 18-24).*

After Moses had given Israel the book of the covenant, he sprinkled both it and the people with the blood of the covenant (Ex. xxiv. 3-8):

*"Whereupon neither the first covenant was dedicated without blood, for when Moses had spoken every precept . . . he took the blood of calves and of goats . . . saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you . . . and almost all things are by the law purged with blood . . . but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Heb. ix. 18-23).*

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After receiving the Old Covenant, Moses was instructed to build a tabernacle.

*" Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service and a worldly sanctuary, for there was a tabernacle made . . . this signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing . . . But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands . . . but by His own blood He entered . . . for this cause He is the mediator of the New Covenant" (Heb. ix. 1-15).*

Here the first covenant is linked with what is spoken of as the "first tabernacle;" the Lord Jesus as the mediator of the New Covenant entered that greater and more perfect tabernacle that was not made by hands, but was in the heavens, and of which the first tabernacle was but a copy (Heb. viii. 5; ix. 23, 24).

The first tabernacle had a priesthood, so also has the heavenly tabernacle:

*"For those priests were made without an oath, but this with an oath by Him that said unto him, 'The Lord swear and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec;' by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant" (Heb. vii. 20-22).*

The superiority of the Lord's priesthood of this New or better Covenant over that of the priesthood of the Old Covenant, is gauged by the fact that He was appointed with an oath by Him that will not repent. The covenant with Abraham concerning the land was made with an oath (Gen. xxiv. 7; xxvi. 3; Deut. iv.31), as was also the covenant with David concerning the throne (Psa. lxxxix. 3-49), but the promises of the Old Covenant were not thus confirmed; they were conditional and depended on the flesh; any confirmation of the promises on these terms was therefore impossible. The New Covenant supplants the old, and when the Lord Jesus became the surety of the covenant, He was appointed with an oath. Thus the promises of the New Covenant are placed on the same secure footing as the covenants to Abraham and David, all confirmed by the irrevocable oath of God, all made possible through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen."

The Old Covenant, its priesthood and its promises were therefore but the shadows of the New Covenant and its enduring promises:

*"We have such an High Priest . . . a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man . . . there are priests . . . who serve unto the example of heavenly things . . . 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" (Heb. viii. 1-6).*

This better covenant, with its better promises and better priesthood, is associated with:

*"A better country, that is, an heavenly" (Heb. xi. 16).*

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## PART III

### THE NEW COVENANT NECESSARY

*"For if that first covenant had been faultless, there should no place have been sought for the second; for finding fault with them He said, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant" (Heb. viii. 7, 8).*

The fault was two-fold: (1) The covenant itself; and (2) "with them," i.e., Israel. The fault of the Old Covenant was that sin could only be passed over. The fault with Israel was that they were unable to fulfil the terms of the covenant.

The purpose of the Old Covenant and its terms embodied in the law of Sinai was to make manifest to Israel their faults and lead them to Christ. The covenant of promise made with Abraham concerning his seed and their land was received by faith and confirmed by an oath. The Old Covenant made at the exodus concerning Israel as a kingdom of priests depended on their works; this introduced a conflicting principle, but only for the times then present:

*"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made . . . and this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect . . . wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions . . . wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. iii. 16-24).*

It is necessary to read the whole of Galatians iii. The Old Covenant was given a long and thorough trial, yet while perfect and just in God's sight, it but made manifest Israel's inability to receive God's promises, or to accomplish God's purposes, by their own efforts. If these promises or purposes were to be realized at all, it must be on some other terms:

*"A New Covenant . . . not according to the (old) covenant . . . this is the covenant . . . they shall be to me a people . . . their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. viii. 8-12).*

The Old Covenant prepared Israel for the New Covenant by showing them their weakness; it led them to Christ, the mediator of the New Covenant, through Whom alone sins could be done away:

*"For this is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28).*

Previously we considered the parallel between the Old and New Covenants, but now, in examining their respective principles, we discover the contrast.

Under the Old Covenant, "there was a remembrance again made of sins every year" (Heb. x. 3). Under the New Covenant, God has said, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 17). The Old Covenant said "come not," the New gives "boldness to enter" (Heb. xii). The Old Covenant could make nothing perfect, but the coming of a better covenant does.

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The promises were to be received by works under the Old Covenant, but by faith under the New. The Old was made without an oath, but the mediator of the New Covenant was appointed with an oath.

Under the Old Covenant the inheritance could never have been received:

*"For this cause He is the mediator of the New Covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called **might receive the promise of eternal inheritance**" (Heb. ix. 15).*



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## PART IV

### ISRAEL UNDER THE NEW COVENANT

Although the precious blood of the New Covenant was shed by the Lord Jesus, yet it is obvious that the New Covenant has not yet been established with Israel. The Old Covenant was made on the day of the exodus, the first Passover (Heb. viii. 9), but the giving of the law and the agreement of Israel to keep it did not occur until after sixty days (Ex. xix. 1). A similar interval now obtains in the case of the New Covenant. The New Covenant was made in the day when Christ became the true Passover (Matt. xxvi. 28), but the day when the law shall be written on the hearts of Israel, and they become truly the Lord's people, is still future (Heb. viii. 8-11).

*"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. X. 4).*

The work of the Lord Jesus rendered the terms of the Old Covenant a dead letter to those that believed. Romans i.--viii. prove the impossibility of attaining to God's righteousness by the law, and explains how it is now made possible to receive that righteousness by faith. Romans ix.--xi. pursues a question that arises out of this. If the righteousness of the law can now be attained by faith, how is it that Israel has not received the promises?

*"Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone" (Rom. ix. 31, 32).*

Although righteousness was to be received by faith, Israel, as a nation, continued to seek it by the law; they *"have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God"* (Rom. x. 3). Thus, although the blood of the New Covenant was shed, Israel did not submit to the terms of the New Covenant; they did not seek the promises by faith. The root of the failure was that they stumbled at that stumbling-stone, the Lord from heaven:

*"Their minds were blinded, for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old covenant, which veil is done away in Christ" (2 Cor. iii. 14).*

At the time of writing Romans, a few only were enlightened:

*"Even so, then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace, and if by grace, then, it is no more of works . . . What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Rom. xi. 7).*

The blindness of Israel at that present time became more complete, until finally a pronouncement of their blindness was made at Acts xxviii, 23-29, after which we find that Israel and the New Covenant ceased to be in the forefront of God's purposes, and another distinct purpose took its place. The quotation of Isa. vi. 9, 10, on this occasion was a direct negation of the promise of the New Covenant in Jer. xxxi. 31-34; compare the reference to "hearts" in both passages. The probability of the New Covenant being realized was consequently deferred until Israel is again dealt with as a nation.

The duration of this blindness is connected with the times of the Gentiles:

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*"For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery . . . that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (Rom. xi. 25-27).*

Until the Deliverer does come to Jacob, Israel will remain without the New Covenant, even though that covenant is already made possible through the blood of the New Covenant. Within this present interval is the dispensation of the Mystery wherein our hope is found, a hope distinct and entirely different from that of Israel. It remains then, that Israel is not yet under the New Covenant, that time being still future.

*"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" (Heb. viii. 8).*

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## PART V

### THE MINISTRATION OF THE NEW COVENANT

We have noticed that, as a result of the New Covenant having been ratified, Israel were given the opportunity to receive their blessings on the terms of the New Covenant, but because they refused, and resolutely rejected, the Lord Jesus, Paul was caused to repeat for the last time those words from Isaiah vi., which indicated that the attitude of Israel's heart was entirely opposite to that necessary for the New Covenant to be realized. The period between Matt. xxvi. 28 and Acts xxviii. 28 must, therefore, have been occupied with the proclamation of the New Covenant; this is just what we find.

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, reviews the nature of the collective ministry of the Apostles at that time:

*"Our sufficiency is of God, Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Covenant" (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6).*

*"We have received this ministry . . . our gospel" (2 Cor. iv. 3).*

The *us*, *we*, and *our*, makes it evident that this ministry of the New Covenant was committed to others beside Paul. When Paul makes claims of independence and speaks of "*My gospel*" during the same period of the Acts, it is because of the special aspect of the ministry that was his as being the Apostle of the uncircumcision; so far as hope was concerned, the "hope of Israel" remained in view till the end of Acts xxviii. 20; not until after the dispensational boundary of Acts xxviii. 28, was Paul given another ministry (Col.i. 25, 26), the stewardship of which was his peculiar privilege.

The ministry of the New Covenant that was shared among many during the Acts is, in 2 Cor. iii., set in contrast with the ministry of the Old Covenant:

#### 2 Corinthians iii

<u>Old Covenant</u>	<u>New Covenant</u>
The ministration of death. 7	The ministration of the Spirit. 8
The ministration of condemnation. 8	The ministration of righteousness. 9
The letter killeth. 6	Not of the letter . . . Spirit . . . giveth life. 6
Made glorious. 10.	The glory that excelleth. 10
Is done away. 11	Remaineth. 11
Vail in reading the O.T. 14	Which vail is done away in Christ. 14
Could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses. 7	But we all with open face beholding the glory of the Lord. 18

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The difference between the ministry of the Old and New Covenants was the difference between death and life, condemnation and glory. Those addressed in this passage were the fruits of this New covenant ministry, and constituted a sort of first-fruits of those who are to receive New Covenant blessings. Notice how that the attitude of heart of these who believe is the same as will be that of all Israel in the day when the New Covenant is made:

*"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Cor. iii. 3).*

*"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 in their mind, and write them in their hearts" (Heb. viii. 10).*

The vail had been taken from the hearts of these believers, so that they could behold the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, Israel as a whole being still blinded. But though this was so, a time was anticipated when Israel as a nation, should see:

*"Nevertheless when it (i.e., Israel's heart, verse 15) shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away" (2 Cor. iii. 16).*

The ministry being the ministry of the New Covenant, the doctrine also was relevant to the New Covenant.

"Covenant" *diatheke* occurs 33 times in the N.T. Three indicates divine perfection, eleven imperfection, twelve is a number associated with Israel, eleven speaks of Israel coming short.

"Covenant" with "new" *kainos* occurs seven times. Seven, spiritual perfection (Matt. xxvi. 28; Mark xiv. 24; Luke xxii. 20; 2 Cor. iii. 6; Heb. viii. 8; ix. 15). Thus, while imperfection is suggested by the general use of "covenant," perfection is found in the New Covenant. Of these seven occurrences of "New Covenant" five have a reference to the blood in their immediate context. Five is a number associated with grace; the New Covenant is one of grace in contrast with the Old Covenant, which was by law. The gematria of "*diatheke*" is 60=5x12: the factors suggest Israel being dealt with in grace. Of the 33 occurrences of "Covenant" in the New Testament, 17 occur in Hebrews and 16 elsewhere; this makes it evident that the covenants are the special concern of the Hebrew believers.

Outside of the Gospels, Paul is the only writer who mentions the New Covenant; it was given him to show what the New Covenant meant to Israel in Hebrews; what was the dispensational place of the New Covenant in Romans; and what the ministry of the New Covenant meant in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Paul was especially the Apostle to the Gentiles. Why, then, was he chosen to expound the teaching of the New Covenant, which was essentially a Jewish hope?

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## PART VI

### THE NEW COVENANT AND THE GENTILES

Up to the present, we have only considered the covenants as they relate to Israel, but that the Gentiles find a place in these covenant blessings is now our special interest.

When the Old Covenant was made with Israel, the promise was that if the covenant was kept they should be a kingdom of priests in the earth.

*"Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed and keep My covenant, then . . . ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation" (Ex. xix. 5, 6).*

What Levi was to Israel, Israel was to be to the world. This ideal was not attainable under the Old Covenant; Israel could not keep it, and therefore Israel did not become the priestly nation to the Gentiles. The law of the Old Covenant but led Israel to Christ (Gal. iii. 24); it made manifest the need of the New Covenant. It was not possible for them to be a blessing to the nations in their own strength, but only through Christ. This is true of the individual; we cannot be a real blessing to anyone save through the Lord Jesus.

What Israel were unable to be under the Old Covenant, they are to be enabled to be under the New Covenant.

Isaiah, speaking of a future day, foresees this priesthood being exercised.

*"And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vine-dressers, but ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord, men shall call you the Ministers of our God; ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves" (Isa. lxi. 5, 6).*

*"And they shall bring all your brethren an offering unto the Lord out of all nations . . . to My holy mountain, Jerusalem . . . and I will also take them for Levites, saith the Lord" (Isa. lxvi. 20, 21).*

Israel has not yet been made a nation of priests for the blessing of the Gentiles. What, then, has been the position of the Gentiles? Have they been left altogether without a hope? Without a guide? Has the failure of Israel been permitted to deprive the Gentiles of blessing?

The position of the Gentile who sought blessing during the time Israel were under the Old Covenant is described in Isaiah lvi.:

*"Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it, that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the Lord speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from His people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs . . . also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to*

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*love the name of the Lord, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer . . . The Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, 'Yet will I gather others to him, besides, those that are gathered unto him'" (Isa. lvi. 1-8).*

Because Israel had not become the channel of blessing to the Gentiles, the provision was made that the individual Gentile might voluntarily take upon himself to observe the conditions of the covenant, and the promise was given that he should be blessed **with** Israel. Thus the failure of the Jew brought the Gentile into closer relationship with Israel's blessings; he could be blessed with Israel in contrast to being blessed only **through** Israel.

The period covered by the Gospels was also under the Old Covenant, thus Israel still held the prominent place. The Lord said:

*"I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. xv. 24).*

Any Gentiles who received blessing at that time received it only on the grounds of unclaimable--if we can use such a term--grace. The Lord was not sent to them, neither were the disciples:

*"Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans, enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and, as ye go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matt. x. 5-7).*

This kingdom would not only see David's greater Son as the acknowledged King of Israel--Israel in possession of their promised land, but, also, Israel made what God had intended them to be, a kingdom of priests amongst the nations. The proclamation, being thus restricted, was not because the Gentiles had no place, but rather with the view to the ultimate blessing of the Gentiles;

*"Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written . . ." (Rom. xv. 8, 9).*

After that the Lord Jesus had confirmed the New Covenant through His blood, the preaching was again sent first of all to Israel; this time it was the message of the New Covenant, with its good news of forgiveness of sins. The period of the Acts was under the New Covenant.

The restitution of all things that the Prophets had spoken of now depended on Israel's national repentance and acceptance of their Messiah (Acts iii. 19-21). The Lord Jesus is seen to be the One of whom:

*"Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me" (Acts iii. 22).*

In many respects, Moses' work was just the opposite to the Lord's, for Moses' life manifested the impotence of the law, but in one particular, at least, his ministry was like unto the

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Lord's. Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, as the Lord was the mediator of the New Covenant (see Heb. xii. 18-26). Moses shed the blood of the Old Covenant, and gave to Israel the Passover, as the memorial. The Lord from heaven did all this in the terms of the New Covenant. It remained now for Israel to accept the New Covenant, as they did the Old by the mouth of Moses; if this was done, the foundation had been laid by which they could have been made the kingdom of priests, as was promised. To Israel first came this message:

*"Unto you first God, having raised up His Son  
Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away  
every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts iii. 26).*

As it became apparent that Israel were not in the attitude of heart to receive the New Covenant, a similar principle with respect to the Gentiles began to operate, as had been provided under the Old Covenant. Because the Gentiles could not yet be blessed **through** Israel, they were enabled to be blessed **with** Israel.

The first Gentile to be blessed was the Ethiopian, to whom Phillip was directed; this man had evidently taken hold of the Old Covenant, as described in Isaiah lvi., so that when the New Covenant was proclaimed, he received the great privilege of being among the first to be blessed. Later, the Gentiles were brought more and more into blessing, especially under the ministry of Paul, but from the commencement to the end of Acts, the order was always *"to the Jew first."* In every city it was only after they had judged themselves unworthy of eternal life that the Apostles turned to the Gentiles.

Romans was the last epistle written during the period of the Acts. In the eleventh chapter, the position of the Gentiles blessed with Israel is illustrated by a wild olive branch grafted into the good olive tree of Israel's covenant blessings, and thereby rendered a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive (verse 17). This unnatural process was designed to provoke Israel to emulation:

*"Now if the fall of them be the riches of the  
world, and the diminishing of them the riches of  
the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?  
. . . for if the casting away of them be the  
reconciling of the world, what shall the  
receiving of them be but life from the dead?"  
(Rom. xi. 12-15).*

The inclusion of the Gentiles with Israel was only until the time when Israel were received. Thus, there was at that present time an election according to grace (verse 5), in which were included many Gentiles. These constituted the "Israel of God" (Gal. vi. 16), the firstfruits of "My people" (Jer. xxxi. 3. 1). They were counted as the "children of promise" (Gal. iii. 29; iv. 28). Israel in the flesh received the promise of the covenants (Rom. ix. 3, 4). The Gentiles in the flesh were strangers from the covenants of promise (Eph. ii. 12), but the ministration of the New Covenant was spirit (2 Cor. iii. 8), thereby enabling the disability of the Gentile flesh to be lost sight of. But, as always, those born after the flesh persecute those born after the Spirit, so it proved in those days (Gal. iv. 29). The Jews and Gentiles who had received the New Covenant suffered at the hands of the earthly Israel.

We find then, that when the New Covenant is made with Israel, they will be a kingdom of priests to the nations, but pending that time, the Gentiles have been blessed with them. This is the relation of Gentiles to Jews, the present dispensation of the mystery being excepted. In the Church which is His Body, there is no distinction, of the twain there is being made one new man (Eph. ii).

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## PART VII

### THE NEW COVENANT ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

As the New Covenant by its very name directs our attention to that covenant that has been rendered old, so also does the occasion of the institution of the memorial ordinance of the New Covenant direct us to the Passover.

The purpose of the Passover is given in Ex. xiii. It was instituted on the day when the Lord made the Old Covenant with Israel (Heb. viii. 9), not the day when Israel agreed to keep the terms of the covenant (Ex. xix).

The Passover was given in order that they might:

*"Remember this day in which ye came out of Egypt" (Ex. xiii. 3).*

What the Passover was to the Old Covenant, the Lord's Supper is to the New. It was instituted on the same night as the Lord became the antitype of the Passover, when He made provision for the New Covenant:

*"This cup is the New Covenant in my blood, this do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. xi. 25).*

Both the Passover and the Lord's Supper were continued as a remembrance, with the object of being a testimony to those who should witness them:

*"And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt, and it shall be a sign unto thee . . . thou shalt, therefore, keep this ordinance in his season from year to year" (Ex. xiii. 8-10).*

*"For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26).*

"Shew" in the latter reference is *kataggello*, to "preach" or "proclaim," as in Acts iv. 2. This was not therefore intended in the first place as a private devotion, but rather as a testimony. The subject to be thus shown was that aspect of the Lord's death that related to the New Covenant:

*"For this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi 28).*

We have observed that although this blood of the covenant has been shed, and sins have been borne away, yet the New Covenant remains to be made with Israel:

*"And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is My Covenant unto them, when I shall take away their*



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*sins) (Rom. xi. 26, 27).*

The day when the New Covenant is made is the day when the Lord shall come again to Zion to turn Israel's heart to Himself. The hope that was to be before those that remembered the Lord's death in this way was "until He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). What this coming is, is defined in the same epistle (1 Cor. xv) as the "*parousia*," various aspects of which are the hope of Israel's heavenly and earthly callings.

"Until He come" (1 Cor. xi. 16) is in the Text Rec: "*achris hou an elthe*," literally "*until He may come*," the sentence being rendered hypothetical by the presence of "**an**," "a partical expressing possibility, uncertainty or conditionality" (Green). Some of the later revisers have omitted the "an," but this is not the only instance where this partical is connected with the Lord's coming or events related thereto:

*"Till the Son of man may come" (Matt. x. 23).*

*"Until they may have seen the Son of Man coming" (Matt. xvi. 28).*

*"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away until all these things may be fulfilled" (Matt. xxiv. 34).*

In the case of the last reference we know that that generation did pass, and the things foreseen in Matthew xxiv did not receive their complete fulfilment. What was implied was that they might have been fulfilled.

*"Till He may come."* What proviso was there made with the promise of His coming?

*"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, Whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts iii. 19-21).*

The only condition was Israel's repentance. The period of the Acts was a time of expectancy and yet of uncertainty, there was the possibility of Israel's national repentance and of the immediate return of the Lord Jesus. Not only might the things of Matthew xxiv be fulfilled in their day, but also "*all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*"

This atmosphere of uncertainty entered into their very lives at that time:

*"Judge nothing before the time until the Lord may (**an**) come" (1 Cor. iv. 5).*

*"But this I say, brethren, the time is short, it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none" (1 Cor. vii. 29).*

*"Your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus*

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*Christ" (1 Thess. V. 23).*

The preaching to the Jew first was necessary that the opportunity might be afforded them of fulfilling the condition of the Lord's coming, but every fresh step Israel took along the road of rejection led away from the hope of the Lord's return. As the years of the Acts passed the probability of the immediate parousia of the Lord became increasingly remote.

We have seen that Acts xxviii. 25-28 was the direct negation of the conditions necessary for the New Covenant to be realized (Heb. viii. 10); it was also the negation of the conditions necessary for the Lord's return in those days. The New Covenant, therefore, ceased to be possible for the time being, and the ordinance of the New Covenant ceased to testify of an imminent hope. As a fact the Lord Jesus has not yet come, and Israel instead of having entered into the blessings of the New Covenant are scattered throughout the world.

The New Covenant ordinance of the Lord's Supper was given to remind believers of the blood of the New Covenant by which they were redeemed, to show forth that death, and to keep before them the hope of the Lord's return in a dispensation when it could be said He might come. Acts xxviii. 28 is the boundary line after which the hope of the New Covenant expressed in Jer. xxxi. 31-33; Heb. viii. 8-13 and Acts iii. 19-21 must be postponed until the change of 2 Cor. iii. 16.

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## PART VIII

### THE LORD'S SUPPER ADMINISTERED

While Matthew xxvi 26-29 and Mark xiv. 22-25 both record the Lord Jesus taking the bread and the cup of the Passover supper and explaining their significance in relation to the New Covenant, yet in neither is it mentioned that He instituted an ordinance. These two Gospels are especially suited for that proclamation connected with the earthly sphere of New Covenant blessings, and for the still future proclamation of that gospel (Matt. xxiv. 14; Mark xiii. 10). Luke is the only Gospel to record the fact that an ordinance was then instituted (xxii. 15-20). Luke laid the basis of Paul's ministry which, during the time of the Acts, embraced the heavenly sphere of New Covenant blessings. Paul is the only other writer who received instructions concerning this observance, and these instructions were given to those who were a sort of firstfruits of the ministry of the New Covenant, and whose blessings were in the heavenly sphere of the New Covenant. Thus it would suggest that the Lord's Supper was given to these blessed with heavenly things, while the Passover was still perpetuated by Israel after the flesh, until the day when their hearts will be turned to the Lord to receive the earthly blessings of the New Covenant.

The authority to open the testimony of the kingdom after the Lord's resurrection was given to Peter. The twelve were the first to whom the Lord gave the instructions concerning the New Covenant memorial "*This do in remembrance of me*" (Luke xxii. 19). It might have then been asserted that these should be looked to for guidance as to the manner of the Lord's Supper rather than to Paul. But what does Paul claim?

*"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread . . ."*  
(1 Cor. xi. 23).

Paul, being at that time a minister of the New Covenant especially commissioned to go to the uncircumcision, was the one chosen to write of the Lord's Supper, for there the Jew and Gentile met in a common communion and with the prospect of a mutual participation in the hope of Israel. The continual insistence on the fact that Paul's authority came from the ascended Lord was occasioned by the resentment of the Jews to his ministry as recorded in the Acts.

Paul's references to the Lord's Supper are confined to 1 Corinthians where it is dealt with twice. The context of both passages has to do with eating. First, the eating of things offered to idols (1 Cor. x. 19-21), and secondly, the propriety desirable when they gathered to eat (1 Cor. xi. 22, 33-34). The question of approval is the dominant theme of both (1 Cor. x. 5; xi 19).

The first reference is introduced by the example of the many in Israel of old who, while they were partakers with the rest, yet failed to be well pleasing to God:

*"Moreover brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ: but with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples . . . neither be ye idolators as were some of them . . . they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the age are come" (1 Cor. x. 1-11).*

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The analogy is then drawn in respect to these believers who were made partakers of the Lord's Table:

*"Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? . . . for we are all partakers of that one bread . . . the things that the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils . . . ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils" (1 Cor. x. 14-21).*

A compromise between the Lord's Table and anything else was not approved. The Gentiles who had been brought out of idolatry and made partakers of the Lord's Table had to leave all their old associations. The Jews, with the failure of their fathers brought to their notice, were warned of the things not well pleasing.

The second reference is introduced by a sad picture:

*"When ye come together, therefore, into one place, ye cannot eat the Lord's supper, for, in eating, every one taketh before another his own supper, and one is hungry and another is drunken" (1 Cor. xi 20, 21).*

To prevent this they were told, contrary to modern ritualistic practice, to eat at home before they came together:

*"When ye come together to eat, tarry one for another, and if any man hunger, let him eat at home" (1 Cor. xi 33, 34).*

The ministry of the New Covenant during Acts was accompanied by confirmatory signs and miracles; the Corinthian church, although charged with being carnal, were richly endowed with these powers. These supernatural happenings were not only used in grace but also in condemnation. With the eating of the Lord's Supper was associated the evidence of the Lord's approval or disapproval:

*"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord . . . he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep" (1 Cor. xi. 27-30).*

Sleep here is *koimaomai*, to sleep unintentionally, a word frequently used of the death of the saints, see first occurrence Matt. xxvii. 52; also Acts vii. 60; 1 Cor. xv. 6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14, 15. In eating of the Lord's Table unworthily many of the believers had fallen ill, while others had actually died.

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The Lord's Supper must not be disassociated with the New Covenant or with a dispensation when the hope of the New Covenant was still probable. When this was the testimony evidential signs were given both to confirm the truth and to judge among the saints. If this testimony is to be given today and this ordinance is to be kept, then we should expect these signs to still obtain.

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## PART IX

### THE NEW COVENANT AND THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY

The New Covenant ministry of the Apostle Paul, with its accompanying miracles, continued until Acts xxviii; there he is seen bound for the hope of Israel (verse 20), still exercising miraculous power (verses 3-9), still testifying to the Jew first (verse 17), and still basing the testimony concerning the Lord Jesus upon the law of Moses and the Prophets (verse 23). The Jews at Rome were no exception, for with the rest of their nation they rejected the testimony. They hardened their hearts lest they should be converted and the Lord should heal them. When this occurred in other cities Paul had turned to the Gentiles in order to provoke his own people to repentance, but on this last occasion he did not simply turn to the Gentiles, but his ministry henceforth was to the Gentiles first and foremost (Eph. iii. 1).

The duration of Israel's blindness had been foreseen:

*"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke xxi. 24).*

This is the condition we find Israel and Jerusalem in to this day. The end of the times of the Gentiles is also the time when the Lord shall come and the New Covenant shall be made:

*"Blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved . . . there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer . . . for this is My Covenant unto them" (Rom. xi. 25-27).*

Thus from the pronouncement of Acts xxviii until some future time the New Covenant could not be made with Israel, and consequently the probability of "*He may come*" no longer remained as an immediate hope. What then is the place of the New Covenant and its accompaniments during this present period? To discover this it is necessary to examine the scriptures written after Acts xxviii. 28, and written for the present dispensation (Eph., Phil., Col.).

In the prison epistles of Paul the New Covenant is not mentioned. "Covenants" occur but once, and that in a negative sense:

*"Wherefore remember that ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh . . . that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise" (Eph. ii. 11, 12).*

This occurs in a context where the past dispensational distance of the Gentiles is set in contrast with their present nearness in the "one new man." **No mention is made of Gentiles being blessed with Jewish blessings**, but rather that from Jew and Gentile alike there is being taken out a company that is to be blessed in the heavenly places (verse 6).

No mention is made of the hope of the *parousia* in these epistles, or of such related things as Sinai, the Heavenly Jerusalem, Mount Zion, or of things promised in the Old Testament. In their place another calling is spoken of, "*All spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*" (Eph. i. 3), and other things are revealed not promised before in the Scriptures:

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*"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ among you, the hope of glory" (Col i. 27, 28).*

With the change of Acts xxviii. 28 and the revelation of a new place of blessing and of a new hope (Eph. i. 18; Col. iii. 4) Paul also received a change of ministry. Instead of claiming to be a minister of the New Covenant as in 2 Cor. iii. 6, he now states:

*"I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you . . . even the mystery" (Col. i. 25, 26).*

Exercising this ministry Paul was given instructions as to how the believers should now walk in accordance with the revelation of the Mystery. Much that was required under the earlier ministry is restated, but those things that were peculiarly related to the New Covenant and its hope are not repeated. No mention is made of the Lord's Table, or of signs, tongues or healings.

The Gospel of John is considered to be the latest writing of the New Testament. Chapters xiii. To xvii. Were spoken at the Last Supper, but no mention of the New Covenant is made or of any memorial ordinance. This Gospel is specially fitted for the testimony of salvation at this present time, and had it been required that this ordinance should have been observed by the believers to whom it ministers, it is reasonable to expect that it would have been stated.

To those believers who were blessed under the New Covenant the observance of the Lord's Supper was a means whereby they could testify to their faith in the fact that the blood of the New Covenant had already been shed for them, and that they were keeping it with the earnest hope that the Lord might come to bring all these blessings of the New Covenant to pass. Today, the believer who by grace has been led to see the truth of the Mystery, the very non-observance of the Lord's supper is a witness to the fact that he has a calling that is unconnected with the New Covenant, and that the hope of his calling is distinct from the *parousia*. The question of the observance of the Lord's Table is not one that necessarily applies to every believer; that would savour too much of the spirit of *"What shall this man do."* It is but part of a larger subject. If the believer is enlightened into the truth of the Mystery that God desires His own to acknowledge today, and sees it to be distinct from the New Covenant, then the course that is consistent with such an acknowledgement is one that testifies of the Mystery without participating in anything that would hinder others from being enlightened into the same truth.

While the Mystery is distinct from the New Covenant, yet there are principles that are parallel. The life which the Lord Jesus laid down for the New Covenant was also laid down for the sin of the whole world. Salvation is found only in Him:

*"I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John vi. 51).*

The Lord Jesus is a mediator for us:

*"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5).*

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Not the Mediator of the New Covenant, nor the bread of the New Covenant ordinance, yet all that they could typify and much more. The goal of the New Covenant will not be reached until Israel's heart is changed (Heb. viii. 10).

The goal of the prayers of the Mystery is:

*"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend. . ."* (Eph. iii. 17, 18).

Whatever the calling may be, it ever leads to Christ. The calling of the Mystery is more glorious, because it will be realized in the place where Christ is now exalted. The hope of the New Covenant awaits the time when He leaves that place, and returns to take away ungodliness from Jacob:

*"And so, all Israel shall be saved . . . for this is My Covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins"* (Rom. xi. 26, 27).