



God's Covenant with Israel Part Six

The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34 & Ezekiel 36:22-32)

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"New lamps for old! New lamps for old!" As a youngster, you probably remember reading this cry of the deceptive sorcerer as he tricked Aladdin's unsuspecting wife into giving him the magic lamp. Many reading this article will clearly recall the story, perhaps others may not, so let me refresh your memory.

The ancient Middle Eastern folk tale (but set in China) is the most famous of a collection of stories in *One Thousand and One Nights* ("The Arabian Nights") and remains a classic amongst children today. The story centres on an impoverished young ne'er-do-well who is recruited by a scurrilous sorcerer to retrieve a wonderful oil lamp from a booby-trapped magic cave. Aladdin is successful in accomplishing the task, basically through a magic ring he'd been given by the sorcerer for his personal safety. He then escapes from his nefarious captor. Back home with the coveted oil lamp in his possession, Aladdin's fortunes abound through His mother's decision to polish the old lamp to make it look more presentable. A more powerful genie (a "jinn") appears from the lamp and is bound to do the bidding of whoever holds the magic lamp. Eventually, Aladdin marries the Emperor's daughter and they live in a magnificent palace, even more opulent than that of the fortunate young man's Father-in-law!

The sorcerer so covets the lamp that he devises a plan to get it back into his hands. Disguising himself, the scheming trickster walks by the palace and within the hearing of Aladdin's beautiful wife (who is totally unaware of the lamp's importance), cries out

his self-serving exchange deal: **"New lamps for old! New lamps for old!"**

Badroulbador is tricked, and with the lamp now in his hands the surreptitious sorcerer orders the genie to take the palace and all its contents to his home in Maghreb. Fortunately, Aladdin still has the magic ring and is able to be transported to where his wife and his palace have been taken. He recovers his beloved wife, the magic lamp



and finally defeats the sorcerer. Eventually, he succeeds to his father-in-law's throne and everyone lives happily ever after!

Let's change gears from an ancient Middle East fable and trickery to an even more ancient record of fact and truth! Our focus is "The New Covenant" and is found in the Bible in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and also Ezekiel 36:22-32. To quote Jeremiah's account:

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and 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 and led them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

Of the many salient contrasts we could draw between Aladdin's fabulous fairy tale, and God's factual prophecy of a genuine offer to Israel and Judah in terms of a new covenant, there is none greater than that of **"an exchanged heart and a new spirit"** (Cf Jer 17:9; Ezek 36:26 and Is 59:20-21; Jer 32:37-40 ; Ezek 16:60-63; 37:21-

28 and Heb 8:6-13). The deal is dependent upon their repentance and faith in Him.

For more than 40 years this "weeping prophet" (9:1; 13:7) faithfully proclaimed God's judgement on apostate Judah, and in the process faced beatings, opposition and imprisonment (11:18-23; 12:6; 18:18; 20:1-3; 26:1-24 and 37:11-38:28). His message of divine judgement also ensconced precious Messianic promises that were revealed to give God's people hope in the midst of dark days. Take Jeremiah chapter 23:5-6 for example:



*Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD,
When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;
And He will reign as King and act wisely
And do justice and righteousness in the land.
In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell securely;
And this is His name by which He will be called,
'The LORD our righteousness.'*

Yes, Judah would go into captivity for their sin and breaching the covenant requirements, yet even while they are in exile, Jeremiah's letter sent to the 3,023 Jews who had been exiled to Babylon in the second of three deportations in 597 B.C. (Cf 52:28), exhorted them to settle down and live as normal a life as possible (29:4-9), and await God's deliverance after 70 years (vss. 10-14) and also disregard false prophets such as Ahab and Zedekiah (vs 21). In short, God had a master plan for His people, as 29:11-13 stated:

'For I know the plans that I have for you', declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. 'Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 'You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart'.

The point was made very clear indeed: God's people had a "heart" problem, and only a divine "exchange transplant" would rectify the problem. With apologies to the wicked sorcerer's cry in the 'Arabian Nights' fable, it must be: **'New hearts for old! New hearts for old!'**. God's promised 'new

covenant' in Jeremiah 31:31-34 would see to it!

I. The Provisions of The New Covenant

This covenant develops the "blessing" aspect of the original Abrahamic covenant (See Chart). As such, it is again both eternal and unconditional. The text revealed that it would be "everlasting" (Jer 32:40; Ezek 16:60 and 37:26).

Look as one may for any conditions being involved, there are none in Scripture. Yet, the numerous occasions on which God says *"I will"* do such and such in regards to this new covenant is proof positive that it will be divinely fulfilled (Cf Jer 31:31-37; Ezek 34:11-31; 36:22-32; 37:14, 26-28). Salvation is of the LORD and belongs to Him (Ps 3:8; Jonah 2:9; Ps 37:39; Jn 4:22; Rev 5:13). The Scriptures are clear: all salvation is completely dependent on God. That He will fulfil this new covenant is therefore unequivocal.

The question that arises from this analysis is something that must be addressed: "To whom did Jeremiah and Ezekiel refer (in this instance)?"

II. The Participants in the New Covenant

A careful reading of the text (in its context), leads the careful student of God's Word to an unambiguous conclusion: the new covenant involves God's reunited people, "Israel and Judah", primarily.

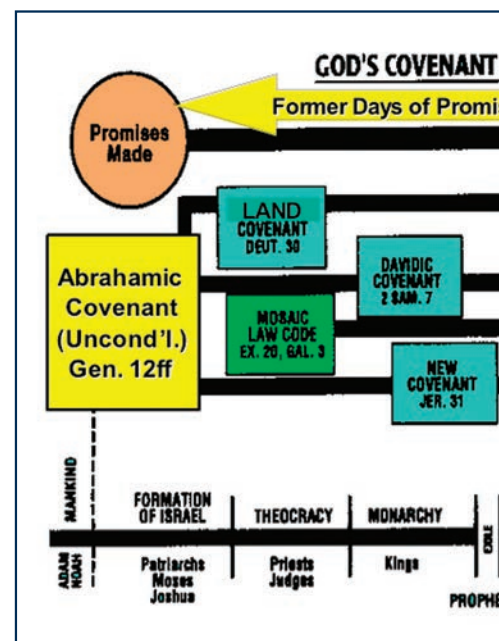
A. Israel & Judah. That Israel is the primary object of this covenant is seen in the expressed terminology of the text (Jer 31:31) and is couched in contrastive terms with the "old" (Mosaic/Sinai) covenant (Jer 31:32; Cf Ezek 34:14; 36:22; Heb 8:6-13). It will be unlike the Mosaic covenant in that it will be unconditional (Jer 31:31).

Before embarking on a survey of the new covenant's provisions, it is prudent to pause briefly at this stage and note the salient aspects of the "old" covenant God established with Moses and his people at Mt. Sinai. Due to time and space constraints, we cannot identify or discuss in detail the fact that the format of this covenant exactly parallels the suzerainty treaties of the Ancient Near East's covenants. Rather we must simply highlight the following content, characteristics and conditions:

- Unlike the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant was "conditional" –

"now therefore, ***IF*** you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you will be a special treasure to Me ... " (Ex 19:5, emphasis added)

- The "Preamble" of Exodus 19 is followed immediately by the "Ten Commandments" – the Decalogue, written by the finger of God, upon the two tablets of stone (20:1-17; 31:18).
- Chapters 21 to 23 outline specific instructions in the application of the Law's requirements in the context of



Israel's day to day religious, moral and ceremonial contexts.

- The covenant was confirmed with Israel's "acceptance" of "all the words" and ratified with the shedding of sacrificial blood. (Ex 24:1-8).
- By referring to the accompanying Chart, it will be observed that this Mosaic/Sinai covenant was fulfilled by Jesus, Israel's Messiah, in His sacrificial death for all at Calvary (Mt 5:16-17; Rom 10:4; 1 Jn. 2:1-2 etc). Thus the "new covenant" of Jeremiah 31:31-34 is "new" in respect of the "old" Sinai covenant, but is also essentially an extrapolation of the "blessing" aspect of the Abrahamic covenant. That is, it is a clarifying explanation of, a more fully "exhibit" of

what God promised Abraham relative to “His Seed” (the Messiah [Gal 3:13-14, 16]), through whom “all the nations of the world (the Gentiles) would be blessed” (Gen 12:2-3).

- Jewish and Gentile believers are no longer “under the law”, as Paul shows so distinctly in the book of Galatians.
- However, the “moral requirement” of the law is fulfilled in believers through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (See Rom 8:1, 4). This is accomplished through the “Spirit controlled life” (Cf Eph

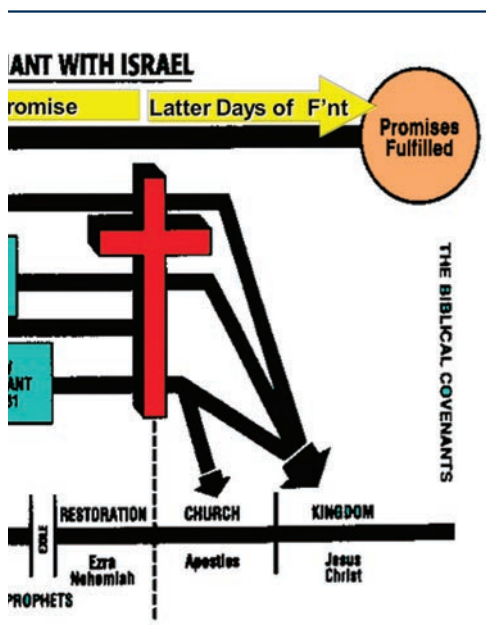
(d) Forgiveness of sins (vs 34b).

Thus, for a future, restored Israel, it will involve both *spiritual and material* blessings as they relate to the nation’s future salvation (Jer 31:31; Rom 11:25-26a) and their occupying the land that was promised them (Gen 15:18). Israel will, at the time of the millennial reign of Christ from Jerusalem (Cf Is 2:1-4), experience wonderful abundance and prosperity, the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, deliverance from all danger and marauding powers – in fact, Shalom! Shalom! (“perfect peace”; Cf Isa 26:3 – Cf Ezek 34:25-29; 36:24-26; 37:21-28).



prophecy. Neither do any of the other Old Testament prophets, for the Church began at Pentecost (Acts 2; Cf: Eph 3:5). He made this covenant with Israel, and He will fulfil it with Israel. When? Scripture reveals this will be at the Second Advent of Christ (Rom 11:25-26a, 27-28ff; Cf Lk 24:21; Mt 23:37-39; Ps 110:1; Is 62:6-7; Rev 19:11-16).

Second, provision for the “blessing” of the Gentiles was made in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:3; Cf Gal 3:13-14). With Israel now on the “back burner” in God’s prophetic programme (Cf Mt 12:1-37 – the “turning point” of Israel’s “rejection of the KING!; Acts 15:14 which states explicitly that “Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name” ... and note esp. Rom 9 & 10 – Israel “elected” in the past [9] and (temporarily) “rejected” in the present [10]), it does not mean that it may be concluded that Israel will not at some time in the future receive the same blessing (and more!). Indeed, Paul, in Romans 11, argues strongly to the contrary (note verses 15-16, 25-26a, 27-32ff, especially vs 29, “for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable”! No wonder he ended with a “doxology” (vss 32-26, ending with the memorable conclusion: for *from* Him and *through* Him and *to* Him are all things. Amen!) This incomparable God is the



B. All Believers Now: How is the ‘new covenant’ applicable to Jewish and Gentile believers today? Where does the Church fit into the new covenant? There are passages in the New Testament that indicate that the Church has some relationship to this covenant (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20; Rom 11:27; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8-13; 9:15). The answer is simple: Jewish and Gentile believers in this Church Age are the recipients of the *spiritual* aspect of the new covenant. For restored Israel, then, there will be *spiritual and material blessings* – in the land! For the present time, however, all those who invoke the name of Jesus, Israel’s promised Messiah, and his gracious offer of salvation through His substitutionary, atoning sacrifice on the Cross (Mt 26:28; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor 1:2) are “blessed with every spiritual blessing, in the heavenlies, in Him” (Eph 1:3).

III. The Proscriptions of the New Covenant

Having established that the new covenant prophecy was given primarily to Israel, and only by secondary application to Church-Age Jewish and Gentile believers based on Jesus’ words in Matthew 26:28, there is now need to identify certain “proscriptions” relative to this particular covenant. These are given at a time when many believers argue for, and espouse, Replacement Theology. That is, the Church has replaced Israel. The argument is that God has finished with Israel as a nation, forever, because they rejected their Messiah!

We note the following relevant observations, however:

First, the Church does not fulfil the new covenant given to Israel in Jeremiah’s

5:17-18; Jn. 14:26; 15:26 and 16:13). Christ-likeness occurs when believers grow in the grace and knowledge of (their) Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18).

With this backdrop on the Mosaic covenant, the relevance of the new covenant falls much more clearly into focus. The provisions of the new covenant are specifically revealed. They include:

- (a) A change (exchange in the context of this article) of heart (vs 33; Ezek 36:26);
- (b) Fellowship with God through the indwelling Holy Spirit thereby ...
- (c) ... enabling them to have an experiential, full knowledge of the LORD (vss 33b, 34a) and,

“Source”, “Sustainer” and “Sovereign” Lord of Israel, the Gentiles and the whole universe!

Third, the Church which is made up of all born again believers does partake in the new covenant’s blessings – but not all of them. Israel will experience His blessings “in the land” and related to “the land” He has promised His people specifically.

Fourth, in the remembrance of their Saviour and Lord, Jewish and Gentile believers “break bread and drink the cup” in accordance to His express command in the Communion Service (1 Cor 11:23-26), but in so doing they do not preclude the thought of that “ultimate fulfilment” relative to national Israel, as prophesied by Jeremiah (31:31-34).

Fifth, the Apostle Paul, along with all others who share the gospel are considered “ministers of the new covenant (2 Cor 3:7-4:18; Cf 5:14-21). It must be remembered that Paul was the chosen “apostle to the Gentiles” (Acts 9, 22, 26, esp. verse 17). He brought the blessings of the new covenant to them specifically, though there were also Jews who came to faith in the Messiah, as well (Cf Acts 13:43). The Church today, by and large, consists of many more Gentile believers than “completed” Jewish believers – those in whose hearts the “spiritual veil” has been lifted through the Word of the gospel (Ps 119:130), the “in part” category of Romans 11:25, formerly designated “the remnant according to the election of grace” in verse 6.

Conclusion: Whereas Aladdin’s rogue sorcerer selfishly stole the marvellous, magic lamp with his deceptive cry of “**New lamps for old! New lamps for old!**”, the Almighty’s Regal Saviour graciously offers Jews and Gentiles today a genuine promise that has eternal consequences, not only temporary ones.



The prophet ISAIAH said ...

*For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given.*

*... and his prophecy was fulfilled in Israel's
promised Messiah & King, **THE LORD JESUS,**
the 'Babe of Bethlehem', The 'Christ of the Cross'!*

BLESSED CHRISTMAS, EVERYONE!
Let's thank God for His unspeakably precious GIFT –
Jesus the Messiah and only Saviour – for the whole world!

Emmanuel – God With Us!

The FRIENDS OF ISRAEL Gospel Ministry (Australia) Inc. Representatives & Staff
wish all their
Friends, Prayer Partners & Supporters
a blessed Christmas and New Year filled with His grace and blessings!

Dear friend, if you are a physical descendant of Abraham, receive the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’s offer of salvation in ‘Yeshua’ (the promised Messiah) as you repent and receive Him (Is 53:6-7; 55:6; Jn 1:12; Rom 10:9-10). You will be blessed indeed! (Eph 1:3; Gal 3:16). He who is ‘the Light of the World’ (Is 9:1-7; Jn 8:12) will bring new spiritual meaning to the “Feast of Dedication” (Hanukkah – Jn 10:22), for He is the ‘Shamesh’ (‘servant’ – Cf Is 42:1-6; 52:13-53:12; Mk 10:45) who, by His sacrificial death, brings “the light” that illumines the darkness of an unredeemed ‘soul’ (‘nephesh’). As the Scriptures attest, it is “the blood that makes atonement for the soul” (Lev 17:11).

To our gentile friends, the message of the ‘new covenant’ is that you “repent and believe the gospel”, too, for its spiritual blessings “in Christ” are based on His atoning death at Calvary (Cf Mt 26:37-38; Rom 3:20-26; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Cor 5:21). As for believing Jews, so it is for you – you must be “born again” through coming in faith and receiving Him (Jn 3:3, 5; 1:12; 20:30-31). In so doing, all believers (whether Jew of Gentile) receive “a new heart, for the old” (Cf Rom 10:9-10; Ezek 36:26 and note 2 Cor 5:17) and you will live with the LORD forever! That’s better than Aladdin’s fabled palace, any day! Agreed?



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