

A QUICK OVERVIEW OF THE NEW COVENANT AS RETOLD IN HEBREWS 8

Hebrews 8:8–12 — *"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: 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. 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: 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. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."*

This is about the middle of this epistle, and it is a central subject.

The words quoted here are from Jeremiah 31, quoting them. There is an overall point to this quote, and that is the truth that there is precedent in the prophetic Scriptures that the Old Covenant, the one from Mt. Sinai, which we refer to often as the Mosaic covenant, or now, the Old Covenant, will be replaced with a new one.

Paul quotes from verses 31-34 in Jeremiah 31. He probably makes an extended quote so that he doesn't get the accusation that he is using the Scriptures out of context.

We saw in 7:18 that "there is verily a disannulling of the commandment", and in verse 19 that "the law made nothing perfect". We also saw the bringing in of a better hope, which will make the recipients of that hope perfect, by implication. He says, but the bringing in of a better hope did.

In 7:22, we see Jesus, made a surety of a better testament. In 8:6, we see Him as the mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises.

We then come to this quote, where the whole point is that God had promised a new covenant a long time ago, and now, Jesus, the Mediator of it, has come to make it a reality.

He starts by saying that there is a fault in the first covenant. "First", not as in the very first covenant ever, but in first of the two that he is going to discuss. The fault is not with the covenant itself, but with the people under it. *"For finding fault with them..."*

"The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good" are the words from Paul to the Romans. This is in the middle of the whole section declaring the Christian to be not under the law, but under grace, Romans 6:14. In Romans 8, we have

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh", Romans 8:3.

The law made man guilty. The law gave the people under it rules to live by, but no power to do so. The gift of righteousness in Jesus Christ is what we need. In "the second" we find that. Do notice that this is not explicit in the declaration in Jeremiah. It says what God will do, but does not say how He will do it.

We learn later and see it much more clearly. We have the completed revelation.

Some important things to notice: *“I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”*. This is very explicit who this is being made with. The people who claim a single covenant, only with Israel have a point, and have this scripture which is explicit to back it up. The problem is a too narrow focus. Another is that the dispensational²⁶ theological lens that sees the primary dispensational distinction to be Israel and the Church is the starting point, which would say that if it refers to Israel, it can have nothing to do with us, the Church, because that is a divide that cannot be crossed.

On the other side of this, is the claim that Israel is the Old Covenant people, while Christians are the New Covenant people. This one is difficult because, again, it is very explicit who this is made with, and it is with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. This is familial, national, ethnic. The problem with this one is that it sees the present outcome, but dismisses the clear national aspect of it, which God promised, and will deliver. We saw that in Romans 11.

We also saw in Romans 11 how that God grafted Gentiles into the tree of His blessing, which is ultimately the blessings found in Jesus Christ. Israel is the natural recipient of it, which is explicit in the prophecy. That others can become part of it is God’s sovereign prerogative, and does not take away from all that He will accomplish for Israel, the original recipients of the promise.

Hebrews 8:10 again makes it explicit that the covenant will be made with the house of Israel. It speaks of the laws put into their minds, and written on their hearts. It speaks that Jehovah will be their God, and that they will be His people. It is hard not to see this in 2 Corinthians 3 when Paul speaks of himself and those with him as able ministers of the new testament. The new testament that he speaks of is not of the letter, but of the Spirit. From the other various passages relating to the new covenant, we see that it is of the spirit. The promise is always related to a new Spirit, as in Ezekiel 11, 16, 36, and Joel 2. Acts 2 shows a beginning of this happening, and everything from God’s side was ready. Only Israel was not ready because of unbelief.

What we see in Acts is that God would not allow the unbelief of His covenant people to hinder the gospel of Christ from reaching the whole world. He would reach the world without them, and we see from the many prophets that they will turn in repentance one day and the whole world will be blessed through them. That is the *“life from the dead”* that Paul speaks of in Romans 11:15. That will be the world under Jesus Christ the King of kings and Lord of lords. All of the prophets point to that time. There will be inner knowledge of God and His Word, and knowledge of God from the least to the greatest. Remember that reference in Luke 7:29 about John the Baptist — *“but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than [John]”*. That is because in Christ’s kingdom, all will know the Lord.

Sins will be forgiven, and now we know how they will be forgiven — By the New Testament in the Blood of Christ!

²⁶ I do not disparage dispensational theology. It is a good framework and one that was very much needed when it was formed and took shape. I only say this because the framework should not drive theology to make us unable to see the forest for the trees. In the previous few pages, I addressed Gentile inclusion in the New Covenant for this reason. I am a dispensationalist and don’t run from the label. It just should not be the primary driver. The Bible should be.