

# 18

## THE NEW COVENANT

*Hebrews 8:6-13*

### Introduction: "Till death do us part"

#### I. Understanding Covenants

- A. Definition of "Covenant" (διαθήκη)
  - o Covenants are like a contract or treaty between two parties (God and his people)
  - o Covenants have terms and conditions, blessings/curses, and covenant signs
- B. The History of the Bible is a History of God's Covenants
  - o Ever since the fall, God has saved his people through the *Covenant of Grace*
    - People are always saved in the same way: by faith in the coming redeemer
    - OT saints were saved by believing in Jesus! (e.g., Abraham)
  - o The *Covenant of Grace* has various stages
    - Abrahamic Covenant: promises of salvation made to Abraham
    - Old (Mosaic) Covenant: promises to Abraham partially fulfilled in nation of Israel
    - New Covenant: promises to Abraham fully realized in Jesus

Key point: God does not reveal his plan of salvation all at once, but in stages. And you are in the final stage!

#### II. Understanding the Glories of the New Covenant

- A. The New Covenant was promised long ago by God (v.8)
  - o The author quotes Jeremiah 31:31: "Behold the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah"
  - o For generations, Israel had been waiting for God to do something new and special
  - o Notice the promise of the New Covenant is made with Israel/Judah: Followers of Jesus are the true Israel!



B. What was wrong with the Old Covenant? (v. 7, 9)

- o Problem #1: The Old Covenant itself was faulty (v.7)
  - This doesn't mean old covenant was bad, sinful, or wrong
  - It just means the old covenant could not accomplish what it promised
- o Problem #2: The Old Covenant people were faulty (v. 8-9)
  - "They did not continue in my covenant" (v.9); Also: "For he finds fault with them" (v.8).
  - The Israelites broke their "wedding vows" to God and ran off with idols
  - God knows what is like to be a rejected spouse!

C. What's new about the New Covenant? (v.10-12)

- o New Power: The new covenant focuses on the heart by the power of the Spirit (v.10)
  - Old Covenant was marked by external rites and a focus on commands, causing many Israelites to only participate outwardly
  - But in the New, God "writes them [his laws] on their hearts" (v.10)
  - \*\*God still cares about law-keeping, but now we are empowered to do it by the pouring forth of the Spirit in greater measure (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Acts 2:1-4)
  - Real change must begin internally!
- o New People: The New Covenant renews and unifies the people of God (v.11)
  - In the OT, large portions of Israel did not have a personal relationship with God
  - But under the new covenant, there is a revival among God's people so that "all know me" (v.11)
- o New Priest: Jesus provides real/final forgiveness of sins (v.12)
  - The Old Covenant looked forward to the forgiveness of sins, but never actually accomplished it because animals can't take away sins
  - Through Christ, true/full forgiveness is realized: "I will remember their sins no more" (v.12)

### III. Key Implication: The New Covenant is Better than the Old

- A. "The covenant he [Christ] mediates is better" (v.6)!
- B. The old covenant is "obsolete" (v.13)
  - o Don't need to go back to the old covenant! Example: Blue prints vs. the real house
  - o Does this mean the OT is irrelevant? No! It is an important stage in God's redemptive plan, just not the ultimate stage



## Discussion Groups

1. In what ways do you still struggle with keeping God's law only on an external basis? How does this passage help you?

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2. How does the new covenant actually make us (perhaps unexpectedly) better law-keepers! What does that say about the role of grace in our lives?

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3. How does the rejection of God by Israel help you handle rejections in your own life? How does God's persistent pursuit of his wayward people encourage you today?

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