

The New Covenant

The concept of the New Covenant has caused many misunderstandings within Christianity. Conservative Christianity has two theological viewpoints that differ radically when it comes to time, or perhaps philosophy of history is a better term. Covenant theologians see history governed by covenants or contracts. For them, the covenants govern how they see God working out His plan. Another group, the Dispensational theologians see time divided by dispensations. Dispensations are the rules that govern how God is working out His plan. As a result each theological position understands and applies the New Covenant differently. This lesson is based upon dispensational theology. One of the tenants of that theology is that the Church and Israel are separate. The Church is not an extension of Israel. As a result, covenants that God made with Israel do not apply to the Church.

Introductory Concepts on the New Covenant

The following introductory points are taken from Robby Dean's lessons on Hebrews chapter 8. As I have gone over this lesson adding to it, I find that most of the lesson is based on quotes from Robby Dean's lessons on Hebrews, lessons 111-113. I have tailored his wording (reworded them) in some cases to fit in the format for this class. In other cases, I quote directly.

“What the Word of God does is God informs us how He is going to function in relation to man, what the basis is for his relationship to man, and what the conditions are for what He will do and what He will not do. It is God who has told us what the restrictions are. God has willingly restricted Himself and told us what those restrictions are. We're not putting God in a box. God has put Himself in a box in order to let us know exactly what we can expect of Him so that as you go through the

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different dispensations from the dispensation of perfect environment or innocence in the garden to conscience to human government to the calling out of Abraham and the Age of the Patriarchs and then Age of Israel then the Messianic Era and then the Church Age and Tribulation, all the way through, when God is going to change the way He deals with people. He articulates it in a legal document called the covenant. So this is how He does things.”

Viewed from a different perspective, man, in his frail and finite state could not survive seeing the full glory of God. That is stated implicitly in the Old Testament when people think they have “seen” God and survived. They realized that to see God in His full glory would instantly kill a human being. God is infinite. Our frail finite bodies can not withstand that much energy. So God has to tailor how he presents Himself to man in order to communicate to us in a way that is both meaningful, yet in a way that will not overwhelm man.

As Robby Dean said, in the Old Testament He communicated by using a covenant or in today’s parlance, a contract.

So what is a covenant in relationship to God? Robby Dean explains:

1. “A covenant is a legally binding obligation of God to man. God is committing Himself to something. One of the reasons we use that term unconditional is because He's not putting a condition on man to fulfill the obligation of the covenant. God is binding Himself to fulfill the obligation of the covenant.”

“...everything that God does in history is based on some kind of legal structure. He has...theologians use the word condescended. What that basically means is that God has willingly limited and restricted Himself, lowered Himself in a sense to work within

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certain structures which man can understand in order to carry on His relationship with man.”

“For instance, in the Abrahamic Covenant, God promises Abraham that He is going to give Abraham land. He is going to give Abraham descendants that would be as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore. Yet there is still a condition in there that Abraham can never lose that title deed, but his descendants won't fully realize it and appreciate its blessing unless they are obedient. It is a permanent unconditional covenant in that God has sworn that He will never forsake that covenant. He is not going to go back on it. There will be a time when it is fulfilled and Israel has that land.”

2. “A covenant is God's solemn pledge. God swore an oath. So this indicates that this is something that has a legal basis to it. A covenant is God's solemn pledge to fulfill His promises to those included in the covenant.”
3. “A covenant is a word for a legal contract or covenant or compact. It is a legal document. So you are going to have two parties, the party of the first part and the party of the second part.”
4. “A contract can be between two parties of equal stature or of one person who is superior and the other is inferior. What we have in the biblical covenants is that God is the party of the first part and He is superior and He willingly binds Himself. He doesn't have to. As the Creator He doesn't have to do it that way at all. But He set up this whole legal thing. It is integral and integrated into every aspect of creation, every aspect of God's dealing with man - our salvation, our sin, our eternal punishment. Everything is stated in legal terms. So these contracts, the biblical covenants, are always between a God who is superior and man who is inferior.”

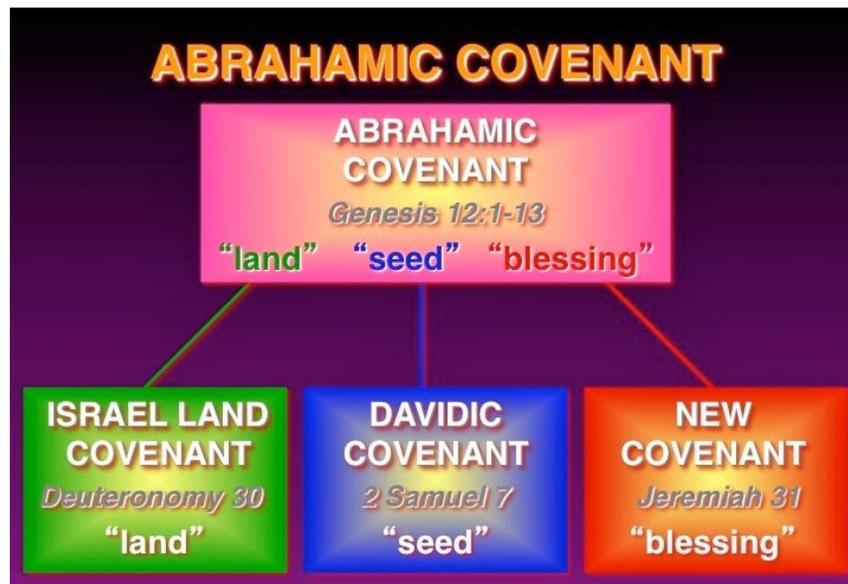
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5. “Now the Old Testament word for covenant is *berit*. That means a contract or a covenant. When you get into the Greek there are a couple of different words. The most common Greek word for a covenant was *suntheke*. The word that we have in the New Testament is *diatheke*. *Suntheke* had the idea communicated that it was equal partners. That “*sun*” is "with" and has the idea of equality. The rabbis who translated the Old Testament into Greek didn't like that word so they used the word *diatheke* because it has more of the idea of a unilateral enactment where a superior was giving something or dedicating something or willing something. That's the idea of a will or testament to an inferior person. It's even used for a covenant by classical authors such as Aristophanes going back to classical Greek. So it has a rich heritage and that's the point. They chose a word that specifically emphasized the kind of covenant where superior entered into a legal contract with an inferior.”

6. “Though covenants have often been categorized as unconditional and conditional (and that's how you've heard it for most of your life and how I have heard it for most of my life), this leads us into some traps because there are some conditions in unconditional covenants. As I have stated already, Abraham's descendants don't get to enjoy the full breadth and depth of the land and the blessing of the covenant if they're disobedient. But, God's not going to renege on the covenant with Abraham and the generation that does enjoy that will be a generation that is 100 % obedient. How does that happen? Because of the New Covenant. So when the New Covenant is enacted it's going to bring about a radical change with Israel as we will see.”

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7. “The New Covenant is the third permanent covenant with Israel that's based on the Abrahamic Covenant. The three parts of the Abrahamic Covenant are land, seed, and blessing.”
- a. “The **land** part is expanded in the Land Covenant, Deuteronomy 30.”
 - b. “The **seed** portion is expanded in the Davidic Covenant, II Samuel 7.”
 - c. “And, the **blessing** aspect is expanded in the New Covenant.”
- “The blessing was that God commanded Abraham, "Be a blessing to everyone. Those who bless you I will bless. Those who curse you I will curse.””



<https://www.bibleprophecyblog.com/2011/03/covenants-and-dispensations-part-2.html>

“So what God is doing is He is saying, "I am party of the first part. Abraham, you're party of the second part. As a result of this legally binding contract that I am restricting Myself to and granting to you —because it fits the format of a royal grant in the Old Testament—

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on the basis of this legal document, I am going to bless the gentile folks over here that don't deserve anything. But if they are good to you, I will bless them. If they are not, I won't. If they treat you well..."

"How has this worked out in history? If they have respect for Abraham and his descendants, they will trust Christ as their savior and also have respect for Israel. If they don't... literally that curse clause says, "Those who treat you lightly." There are two different words there. In the English it says, "Those who curse you I will curse." In English you have the same word. In Hebrew, you have two different words. The first word has more the idea of treating lightly, despising, just treating casually."

"If they treat you lightly or despise you I will curse them harshly."

"That comes down to someone who just treats Christianity and Jesus Christ in a somewhat frivolous manner. God says that He will curse them in a harsh manner, eternal condemnation."

"So the New Covenant is on that model. I will say this again and again because you have heard it the wrong way for a long time. That is that when God enters into this covenant, it is with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. You can't come in and say that really means the Church. It's with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, just like He made the Abrahamic Covenant with Abraham. But what he is saying is that on the basis of this covenant (this legal contract that I am making with Israel and Judah), I will bless soteriologically all the Gentiles. That's where the Church comes in. So, you don't have two New Covenants."

8. "The New Covenant is an unconditional covenant, meaning that the fulfillment of its promises does not depend on the obedience or the

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will of Israel although in time, that is eventually, the covenant will be the new covenant will be the cause of their obedience.”

“What I am saying here is that God promises to give them a new heart and to put the Word of God in their soul and under the New Covenant there are principles there that no one will need to teach their neighbor the Word. No one will need to give the gospel because everyone will know it. I mean it's different. God is not only going [to send His Son] to die for them, He is going to put it in their soul for them. He will regenerate them. There are some issues there that we have to discuss that I think some people aren't real clear on. We will work our way through some of those things. But again, the emphasis is God is the one who is going to do the work for them. It's not based on their own native ability.”

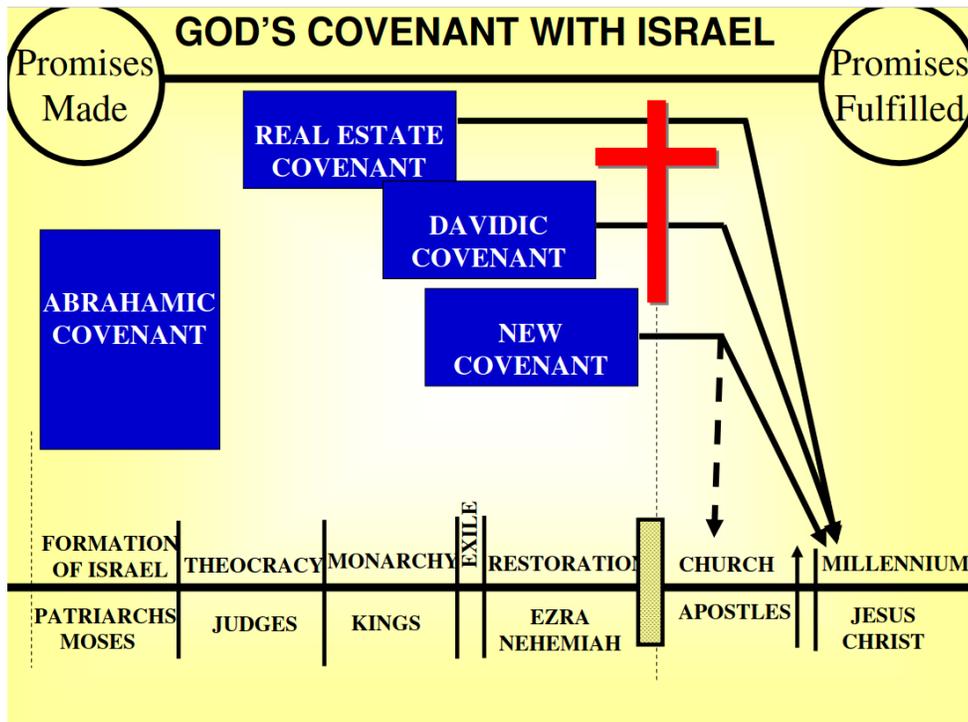
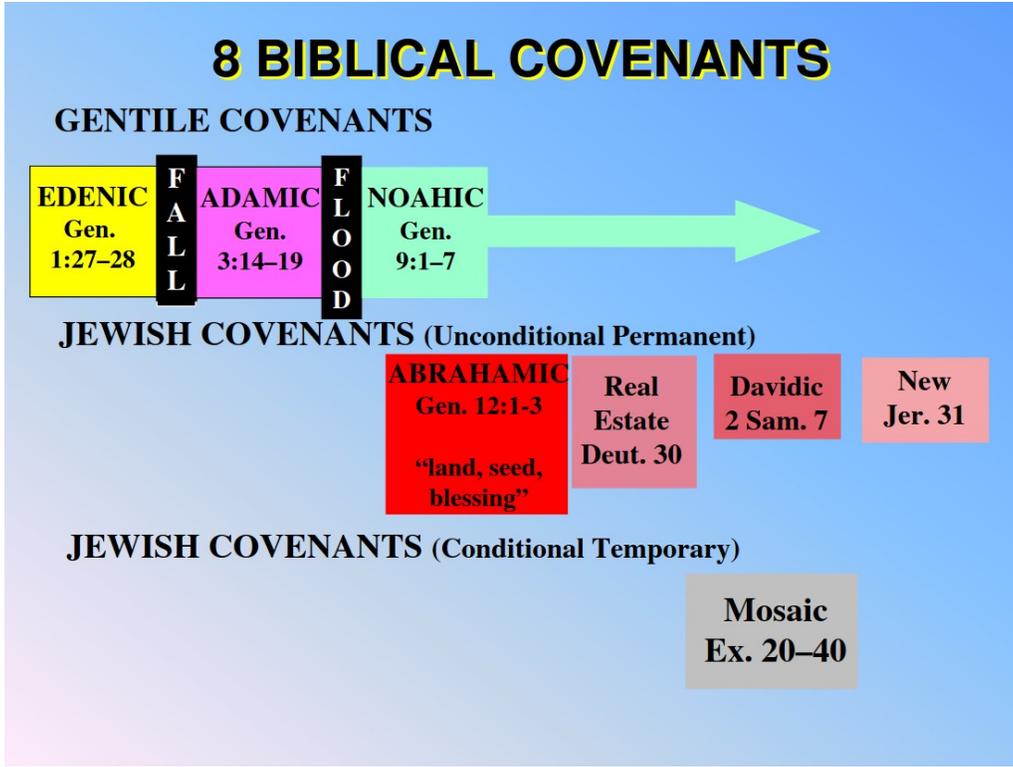
9. “Whereas most of the other covenants are material and national in nature—I have talked about that before how they are very physical in their blessings. It's a land covenant—very, very physical. It's the seed. It's the descendants.”

“The New Covenant is primarily spiritual. "I will give them a new heart. I will put the Word in them. I will give them the Spirit. I will sprinkle water on them and they will be cleansed." It is a spiritual factor.”

10. “The New Covenant is everlasting in nature. It is a permanent covenant especially in contrast to the old covenant which is a temporary covenant.”

So where does the New Covenant fit among the other covenants?

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<https://deanbible.org/dbmfiles/slides/2005-Hebrews-112.pdf>

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Some key points on the New Covenant

1. Scriptures

“Jeremiah 31:31-34 That's not the first time chronologically that there is an indication that God is going to give Israel a better covenant. It is referenced in a number of other passages in the prophets. But this is the only place in the Old Testament where it is called “New” Covenant.”

Isaiah 49:8

Isaiah 54:10

Isaiah 55:3

Isaiah 59:21

Isaiah 61:8-9

Jeremiah 32:37-41

Jeremiah 32:39-40

Ezekiel 11:19

Ezekiel 16:60-63

Ezekiel 18:31

Ezekiel 34:25

Ezekiel 36:25-28

Ezekiel 37:21-28

Hosea 2:17-20

Amos 9:13-15

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I am fairly certain that the New Covenant is referenced obliquely in other passages as well. As in Isaiah 42:6, for instance.

2. Persons

“Who are the persons involved? What is very clear in the Jeremiah passage and the Hebrews passage (It doesn't change the wording at all.) God says:”

Jeremiah 31:31 (KJV) 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:

“I didn't hear "with the church" in there. I didn't hear Peter. I didn't hear Paul. I didn't hear John. It's with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah.”

Summary: The parties to the New Covenant are God and the houses of Israel and Judah.

3. Importance

“The importance is that this New Covenant provides for the regeneration of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom, and the fulfillment of all other covenants and promises to them. Part of the New Covenant secures them in the land so it's not just isolated to that spiritual regeneration. So it's going to provide for all these things. It's the culmination of everything that has been going on from the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12. It all points to that and when that New Covenant is enacted at the return of Christ at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom that's when all these promises, all these prophecies, everything finally comes to fulfillment in relationship to Israel.”

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4. Provisions

“There are ten provisions in the New Covenant – ten provisions which reinforce a unique state of salvation to the nation in the Israel in the Millennial Kingdom. Some of these provisions sound a little odd to us because we are in a different dispensation. So, things are going to change. We just have to deal...we may not understand all of it or why it works the way it does but this is how God is bringing about the conclusion to His promises to Israel. To start off:”

“The covenant is made with the nation of Israel, according to Jeremiah 50:4-5. It is not with anybody else. I keep hitting on that because even among dispensationalists in earlier generations, they thought, "Well, we have got to figure out the way the church fits in so they proposed a second new covenant called New Covenant to the church. But we have to deal with the text and what the Scriptures say and there is no place where the Scripture says there is a new covenant with the church. That was a theological speculation to try to figure out how to resolve the problem. It just didn't work. There are a lot of things that we can do. Every now and then I run into people that start over thinking doctrine. They start getting into what sounds very logical and very consistent but somehow they sort of slip their anchor to the text. You always have to...no matter how far up you go in developing your inferences and your conclusions and your deductions from Scripture, you always have to be able to trace that line back down to where it anchors in the text. If you can't do that then you need to avoid...God has clearly revealed everything He wants us to know. But, there are some things He has not thought necessary for us to know. Now I think that God wants us to know a lot more than most people think God wants us to know because they sort of scratch the surface and God wants us to think profoundly about what the text says and what its implications are. A lot of people are really afraid to do that. They want to stay at obvious conclusions. We need to put things

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together. We have done that in church history. We have put together passages that talk about Jesus as God, that Jesus is eternal and that the Father is eternal and that Jesus and the Father are one. Then the Holy Spirit is fully divine and the Holy Spirit is eternal. So the conclusion must be that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are co-equal and co-eternal and we have a multiple person trinity (a triune God) with the same essence, the same nature. But you don't have the word trinity anywhere in the Bible. You don't have the doctrine of the trinity laid out that specifically anywhere in the Bible, but it's a deduction from propositions that are clearly stated in the Scripture. If one proposition is true and another proposition is true, and you can draw a deduction from those two propositions, a deduction will be true. That's logic. But there are some people who are skittish about that. If you have proposition A and proposition B and you reach conclusion C; and then you have proposition D and proposition E and you reach conclusion F and A and B and D and E are all true and C and F are true then if proposition C is true and proposition F is true that leads you to conclusion G it's still true. You can trace that line all the way back to the Scripture. You can get three feet off the Word of God going from deduction to deduction, but you had better make sure that you don't...Once you start inserting some sort of speculative guesswork into that chain, you are hosed. So, you have to make sure everything is clear and true all the way back down to the text. That's what theology is and why it's so much fun. It's why we like to go to conferences and argue about stuff. It sharpens our thinking and helps us get into the Word and really figure out what the Bible is saying. So we have a covenant that's made with the nation Israel.”

The covenant is in contrast to the Mosaic Covenant which depended on the obedience of Israel for its fulfillment. Jeremiah 31:32.

Jeremiah 31:32 (NKJ) "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the

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day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.”

“If they were not completely obedient to the Mosaic Covenant, they wouldn't enjoy the land. They weren't and they didn't. They never had complete control of the land.”

“The New Covenant will take the place of Mosaic Covenant and will be written in their hearts instead of on tablets of stone. That's one of the differences between the old covenant and the New Covenant. It says God will write it on the hearts of every Jew. He doesn't say every Jew that accepts Christ as Messiah, because guess what. There is not a single Jew that enters into the Millennial Kingdom that isn't saved. That is where it starts. They are going to have children and their children are going to have sin natures and that's going to be a different issue.”

“The New Covenant will feature great spiritual blessings for the people of Israel. They will be head and shoulders above every other nation in the world and all people, all nations according to Isaiah 2 are going to go to the temple and look to the temple and Israel and go to the Temple Mount for worship.”

“The New Covenant will reveal the glory of God so that it will no longer be necessary to witness to others. Pastor-teachers will be unemployed. No one will need to teach their neighbor. That's related to Israel. Now does that mean that out there are among the gentile nations you are going to have to have pastors? Possibly.”

“The New Covenant will feature forgiveness, grace and blessing. See there are some things that are very similar to today, very similar to the Old Testament. Every dispensation has certain things that are in common

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—forgiveness, grace and blessing. Salvation is always by faith alone in the object of faith for that dispensation.”

“In the covenant God promised the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Now this is where I think people get in trouble because there is going to be the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant and there is indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Church Age. They conclude that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Church Age must be part of the New Covenant because after all Jesus said, "This is the New Covenant of My blood is given for you." and Paul said, "I am a minister of the New Covenant." That's what some folks conclude. We have some New Covenant blessings today, but the operation of the Holy Spirit even though He indwells in both dispensations some of the operations of the Holy Spirit in the Millennial Kingdom are going to be different because you are going to have revelatory things happen. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions and that's part of the New Covenant. But, that's not today and that's linked to the Holy Spirit so we have to make these kinds of distinctions.”

“There will be a universal knowledge of Yahweh among the people of Israel. Everyone will know Him. Jeremiah 31:34.”

“The covenant includes a promise that Israel will obey God and have a right attitude toward Him forever.”

Summary of those 10 provisions:

1. The covenant was made with the nation of Israel (Jer. 50:4-5)
2. The covenant is in contrast to the Mosaic Covenant, which depended on the obedience of Israel for its fulfillment (Jer. 31:32)
3. The major portion of the covenant will be fulfilled after the Great Tribulation (Jer. 30:7)

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4. The New Covenant will take the place of the Mosaic Covenant and will be written "in their hearts" instead of on tablets of stone (Jer. 31:33).
5. The New Covenant will feature great spiritual blessings for the people of Israel (Ezek. 36:26-30)
6. The New Covenant will reveal the glory of God so that it will no longer be necessary to witness to others (Ps. 72:19; Jer 31:34)
7. The New Covenant will feature forgiveness, grace, and blessings (Jer. 31:34).
8. In the covenant God promised the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:27; Joel 2:28-29)
9. There will be universal knowledge of Jehovah among the people of Israel (Jer. 31:34).
10. The covenant includes a promise that Israel will obey God and have a right attitude toward Him forever (Jer. 32:39-40).

5. Confirmation

Joel 2:28-32

This is a convenient stopping point.