

The Covenantal Backbone

Understanding the Nature of Our Relationships

(The New Covenant, cont.)

1. What is the Abrahamic Covenant, and how does it fit?
 - a. An outgrowth of the Covenant of Creation.
 - b. An application of the Covenant of Grace.
 - c. A gospel message and forerunner of the New Covenant.
2. What is the Old Covenant, and how does it fit?
 - a. We cannot understand this covenant apart from God's greater purposes of redemption—it too has purpose in God's greater plans.
 - b. It is related to and a reminder of the Covenant of Creation.
 - c. It's primary focus is national/ethnic and legal/external.
 - d. It is not contrary to the Covenant of Grace but is a key help to illustrate and instruct toward the redemption promised.
 - e. It is the Custodian or Guardian in anticipation of the New Covenant.

3. What is the New Covenant, and how does it fit?

Jeremiah 31:31-34

- a. With whom is this covenant made?
 - i. With "the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31).
 - ii. Jesus is the new Israel and He is of the house of Judah; the covenant is made with Jesus' "house," with Jesus' body.
 - iii. All believers are united to Christ as members of His body and are of His house. They are the New Covenant community (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; Hebrews 9:15, etc.).
- b. What makes it "new"?
 - i. It is no longer made with a national people (a tribal people) but with all people across all lines that serve to group or divide peoples (e.g. ethnicity, language, culture, etc.).
 - ii. It is no longer mediated by prophets, priests, and rulers but is mediated by Christ the perfect Prophet, Priest, and King .
 - iii. The Holy Spirit is no longer only poured out on anointed leaders but would be poured out on all (Ezekiel 11:19-20; Joel 2:28-29).
 - iv. It is no longer entered by physical birth but by spiritual birth (regeneration).
 - v. It no longer provides for a temporary cleansing but for full forgiveness through the accomplished work of Christ (Hebrews 7:26-28).

- vi. It is no longer for a “mixed” people (believer and unbeliever alike) who are externally united to it by birth or external signs but is for those whose hearts have been circumcised, who have been born spiritually and have been made new (Jeremiah 31:32).

What about the visible/invisible church?

There **are** two vantage points of the church, God’s and ours; but there are **not** two churches.

On the one hand, God alone sees and knows for certain those who are His, those with whom He has formed His New Covenant by new birth. As Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:19,

“Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal,

‘The Lord knows those who are His.’”

In light of this passage, consider also Matthew 7:22-23,

“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’

And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you.’”

On the other hand, we gather with a people we see and know and who profess Christ and whom we baptize and bring into membership and who partake of the good things of the Lord; yet some do walk away.

But even here listen to what the Apostle John said in 1 John 2:19,

*“They went out from us, but **they were not really of us**; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”*

- c. The New Covenant is a New Creation covenant and is the fulfillment of all previous covenants.
 - i. The Church is the new creation people and is the newly created Israel and will live in the new heavens and new earth (Galatians 6:15-16; cf. 3:29; Philippians 3:3; etc.).
 - ii. Israel and the Church are not two entirely distinct groups with two different plans for redemption and two different futures—the two have been made into one “new man” (Ephesians 2:15).