

COVENANT – an established and binding agreement (an expressed and explicit promise), both relational and legal in nature, wherein the parties work together toward a common purpose

“Testament” is a synonym for “covenant”, which is why the Bible is split into Old and New *Testaments*; they are the Old and New Covenants

“Promises give us the confidence to trust and to move forward” – Pastor John

“A stunning blend of law *and* love. It’s a personal relationship made *more* intimate and *more* personal *because* it’s legally binding” – Tim Keller

Why talk about this at Christmas?

In Jesus, God fulfilled the promised new covenant mentioned in Jeremiah 31. Just as we celebrate Jesus’ birth not just because He is Immanuel, God with us, but *because* of His eventual death and resurrection; so it is this same death and resurrection that established the new covenant we now experience.

(2 Corinthians 1:20) For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through Him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.

Covenantal components

- Testator – the creator/initiator
- Mediator – one guiding and guaranteeing the employment
- Heir/beneficiary – those receiving/benefiting
- Implementation – how it will be carried out
- Qualifiers/conditions – terms to be met before or throughout
- Result/inheritance – that which is received

Covenantal elements/representations: temple, law, priest, sacrifice

All of these appear in the creation account, throughout the Old Testament, in Jesus’ birth, life and death, in the epistles, and in Revelation

Element	Genesis	OT	Jesus’ birth	Jesus’ life	Jesus’ death	NT	Revelation
Temple	Gen 2:9	Ex 26 1 Kings 6	Luke 2:41-52	John 2:19	Matthew 27:51	1 Cor. 6:19 1 Peter 2:4-5	Rev 21:22
Law	Gen 2:15-17	Ex 20 Lev 11-19	Luke 2:22-24	Matthew 5:17 John 5:39-47	Luke 22:20 John 13:34-35	Rom 2:28-29 2 Cor 3:3	Rev 14:12
Priest	Gen 1:28 & 2:8	Gen 14:18-20 Ex 28-30	Luke 1:5-6	Matthew 21:12-17	Hebrews 10:12	Hebrews 7	Rev 20:6
Sacrifice	Gen 3:21	Gen 22:1-14 Ex 12:3-7	Luke 2:7	John 1:29	Isaiah 53:7 Mark 15:3-5	Hebrews 9:11-14	Rev 5:6

Every element is a shadow or copy of the realities

- Temple (Hebrews 8:5a)
- Law (Hebrews 10:1a)
- Priests (Hebrews 7:23-24)
- Sacrifices (Hebrews 7:27)

Covenants in the Bible (Romans 9:4)

- Noahic – Genesis 8:20-9:17
- Abrahamic – Genesis 12, 15 & 17
- Mosaic – Exodus 19-24
- Davidic – 2 Samuel 7:1-17
- New – Jeremiah 31:31-34, Luke 22:17-22, Hebrews 8:1-10:18

Key phrase: “I will be their God, and they will be My people”

Genesis 17:7-8, Exodus 6:7, 19:5-6, 29:45-46, Leviticus 26:11-12, Deuteronomy 4:20, 7:6, 14:2, 26:18, 29:13, 2 Samuel 7:24, 1 Chronicles 17:22, Jeremiah 7:23, 11:4, 24:7, 30:22, 32:38, Ezekiel 11:20, 14:11, 34:24, 36:27-28, 37:27, Hosea 2:23, Zechariah 8:8 and 13:9, 2 Corinthians 6:16-17, 1 Peter 2:9-10, Revelation 21:3

New Testament clarity/revelation on the old covenants and their representative elements

Galatians 3:7-4:7

Key verses (3:17-18): What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in His grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

Romans 7:1-8:16

Key verses:

(7:7a): What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law.

(8:3a): For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.

Hebrews 7:23-10:25

Key verses:

(7:23-24) Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood.

(7:27) Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered Himself.

(8:6) But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which He is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

(8:13) By calling this covenant “new,” He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

(10:1a) The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves.

2 Corinthians 3

Key verse (3:6): He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Jesus clearly instated the New Covenant

(Luke 22:20) In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the *new covenant* in My blood, which is poured out for you.”

This clearly rendered the Old Covenant obsolete

(Hebrews 8:13) By calling this covenant “new,” He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

The New Covenant

The term “new covenant” is used only once in the Old Testament, in Jeremiah 31. The writer of Hebrews makes the ultimate and exhaustive case, culminating in Hebrews 8, where you will find the longest consecutive quote of any Old Testament passage, Jeremiah 31:31-34. The author clearly states that the new covenant is better

(Hebrew 7:22) Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant

- Jesus is better than the Temple – John 2:18-21
- Jesus brings a better Law – 2 Corinthians 3:3
- Jesus is a better Priest – Hebrews 7:23-28
- Jesus is a better Sacrifice – Hebrews 9:12-14

The promises are better

(Hebrews 8:6) But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which He is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

- Fresh hearts – Ezekiel 36:26, Hebrews 8:10 and Galatians 4:6-7
- Fellowship with God – Hebrews 8:10-11 and 1 Corinthians 1:7-9
- Forgiveness of sins (not just covering) – Hebrews 8:12 and Ephesians 1:7-10
- Future, eternal inheritance – Hebrews 9:15 and 1 Peter 1:3-4

The final culmination: Perfection and Participation

There’s still more to come to those of the new covenant. Hebrews, 2 Peter, Revelation and many other New Testament books talk a lot about that. But we’ll be exploring those in the next couple messages after today’s.