

A NEW STRATEGY

The New Covenant

INTRODUCTION

One day a fella walked into a hardware store and asked the clerk about saws. Seems this guy had a bunch of trees he wanted to cut up for firewood. The clerk recommended a good quality chain saw and assured his customer that it could cut up to six cords of wood a day. The gentleman was impressed, purchased the chain saw and headed home to cut some wood.

The next day he comes back to the hardware store just worn out and complains to the clerk. "This chainsaw is worthless! I cut and cut all day and I only cut ½ a cord. You said it would cut six cords a day."

The salesman took the chainsaw, looked it over and then started it up. The fella jumped back and said, "What's that noise?"

A lack of power makes even the best chainsaw a burden.

A lack of power made the perfect law of God a burden that ancient Israel could not obey.

TRANSITION

As we have been studying the war between God and Satan, we've discovered that God's strategy eventually focused on establishing a base of operations on the earth in Israel.

Choosing Abraham, God made a covenant with Abraham in which He promised to give Abraham and Abraham's descendants a land, the seed and the blessing.

God's purpose in the Abrahamic Covenant was to establish Abraham's descendants in the land of Canaan to be His Kingdom of Light in the midst of Satan's Kingdom of Darkness. God made a second covenant with Israel called the Mosaic Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant contained what we call the law of Moses. Through the law of Moses God intended to shape Abraham's descendants into a good and wise kingdom that would attract the other kingdoms of the earth to Israel's God.

But as we have surveyed Israel's history, for the most part the nation failed time again to obey God's law. Finally, by 586 B.C., the nation of Israel had been conquered and deported out of the Promised Land by the Babylonian Empire. They were driven out of the land for 70 years because of their disobedience to God's law.

What was evident from their history was that both the Mosaic Covenant and the people lacked the power to obey God's Law. What we discover in the prophets is that God revealed His plan to make a new covenant with Israel that would supply the power they need to obey Him in order to experience His blessings and become His witness to the world.

This new covenant was revealed by the prophet Jeremiah in 605-604 B.C. after many Israelites had been violently exiled from Israel in the first wave of the Babylonian

conquest. Here, in Jeremiah 31, Jeremiah comforts his defeated countryman with this promise from God:

GOD PROMISED TO MAKE A NEW COVENANT WITH THE NATION OF ISRAEL

³¹“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Jeremiah 31:31-34

There are several other Old Testament passages that reveal the New Covenant God promised to make with the nation of Israel. When we put them all together here is what the New Covenant promises:

The New Covenant is an...

✓ **Unconditional covenant made with the nation of Israel.**

The New Covenant...

✓ **Will replace the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Hebrews 8:1-13).**

The New Covenant promises the...

✓ **Salvation of national Israel (cf. Isaiah 59:20-21; Romans 11:25-29).**

The New Covenant promises the...

✓ **Salvation of each individual Jew from the moment of national salvation through the generations that follow (cf. Isaiah 61:9; Romans 11:26).**

The New Covenant promises the...

✓ **Forgiveness of Israel's sins (cf. Ezekiel 36:25, 33).**

The New Covenant promises that...

✓ **The Holy Spirit will indwell the people of Israel (cf. Ezekiel 36:27; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2).**

The New Covenant promises that God will pour out...

✓ **Material blessings for national Israel (cf. Ezekiel 34:25-31, 36:29-38).**

The New Covenant promises that God will dwell in the midst of Israel and that...

✓ **The Temple will be rebuilt (Ezekiel 37:26-28).**

Through the New Covenant, God promised two things that the Mosaic Covenant could not accomplish. First, through the New Covenant, God promised that He would permanently forgive the sins of the nation of Israel. In the Mosaic Covenant, the animal sacrifices only provided a temporary covering of sin. Second, the Mosaic Covenant spelled out God's law, the law of Moses, to obey, but did not supply the power to obey. In the New Covenant, God will provide not only His law, the law of Messiah, to obey, but through the New Covenant God will supply the power of His indwelling Holy Spirit to obey.

The New Covenant was God's new strategy to accomplish His purpose for Israel. Unfortunately, the nation of Israel has not yet entered into the New Covenant.

THE NATION OF ISRAEL WILL ENTER THE NEW COVENANT AT THE END OF THE TRIBULATION

We must be clear that national Israel has not yet entered into the New Covenant with God. I use the phrase national Israel deliberately. The nation of Israel will not come into the New Covenant until the spiritual leaders of Israel accept that Jesus is their promised Messiah. Just as the spiritual leaders rejected Jesus' claim to be their Messiah in Matthew 12 and brought down God's judgment on that generation of the nation of Israel. So also, the spiritual leaders of Israel must accept Jesus as their Messiah in future in order to bring the nation of Israel into the blessings of the New Covenant.

The Scriptures teach that one of the purposes of the seven year tribulation period is to break the will of the Jewish people. When their stubbornness is broken, the Bible makes clear that the leaders of Israel will...

10 "...look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child..."

1 "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

Zechariah 12:10, 13:1

All who love God and love Israel long for the day when she will receive her Messiah and be saved through the New Covenant.

Though the nation of Israel will not enter the New Covenant until the end of the tribulation period, you and I can enter the New Covenant now!

YOU AND I CAN ENTER THE NEW COVENANT NOW!

Though national Israel will not enter the New Covenant until the end of the tribulation period, the New Covenant has been in force for almost two thousand years. And during the last two thousand years, what we call the Church Age, God has invited individual Jews and Gentiles to enter the New Covenant and receive the spiritual blessings of salvation and the indwelling Holy Spirit.

¹²remember that you (gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances (the law of Moses), that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Ephesians 2:12-18

Through the blood sacrifice of Christ on the cross our sins have been paid for. When we put our faith in Jesus' blood sacrifice as the payment for our sin, God the Father forgives our sin – we receive New Covenant salvation. When we receive New Covenant salvation the Holy Spirit simultaneously comes to live in our lives – we receive the New Covenant indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps you've been wondering throughout this part of our series, "OK I understand God made these covenants with Abraham and the Jews; that's all very interesting history. But what does that have to do with me and my relationship with God? What do all these covenants have to do with me now?"

Here is what this has to do with you now – if you are a born again follower of Jesus Christ it means that you are in a covenant relationship with God. You are part of the New Covenant. It is an unconditional covenant God has made with you in Christ. In other words, when you trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior, God included you in the New Covenant. God has made a covenant with you. Your covenant with God is the New Covenant.

The fact that we gentiles have been included in the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant does not alter the New Covenant for the nation of Israel. There are provisions in the New Covenant with the nation of Israel that do not pertain to us. When the nation of Israel enters the New Covenant she will receive not only the spiritual blessings of salvation and Spirit indwelling but she will receive all of the material blessings of life in the promised land and the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Our inclusion in the New Covenant does not exclude Israel's future entry into the New Covenant.

Why did God come up with a new strategy in His war with Satan? What were the two primary reasons for the New Covenant?

THE NEW COVENANT PROVIDES US FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Have you taken God seriously when He tells us in the Bible that...

²³...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
Romans 3:23

And that...

²³...the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 6:23

God is asking you to keep the Ten Commandments or vow to be a better person; God is inviting you to receive His gift of love and forgiveness. The Bible says...

⁸...God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8

The way we receive His gift of love and forgiveness is through faith. The Bible assures us that...

²⁴(Righteousness) will be counted to us who believe in him (God the Father) who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, ²⁵who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.
Romans 4:24-25

Put your faith in Jesus Christ today and your sins will be forgiven and you will enter the New Covenant with God.

Not only does the New Covenant provide us forgiveness of our sins, it also provides us the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

THE NEW COVENANT PROVIDES US THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit supplies the power we need to live the Christian life.

The Apostle Paul describes the challenge we all experience in our Christian lives

¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

²¹So I find it to be a law (principle) that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.

²²For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³but I see in my members (physical body) another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Romans 7:19, 21-23

We all can relate to this war within our own lives to walk with God by faith and obedience. What is the solution?

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:1-4

First, we stand firm in our salvation – there is no condemnation for sin for those whose sins have been forgiven in Christ.

Second, we develop the skill of walking according to the Holy Spirit Who now dwells with us. We do this by letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly. We do this by surrendering our will to the Holy Spirit. We do this by learning to recognize the Holy Spirit's leading in our lives. Our feelings and the leading of the Holy Spirit are not one and the same thing. The leading of the Holy Spirit is discerned first through a right interpretation and application of Scripture. The Holy Spirit is actively involved in helping us understand God's Word and in the renewing of our minds to think like Jesus thinks. When we saturate our minds with God's Word, our conscience is reformed through which the Holy Spirit guides us on the one hand to resist wrongdoing and on the other hand to do the good works which God has prepared for us to do.

The leading of the Holy Spirit is discerned second through an honest process of self evaluation to identify pride, fear, resentment or selfish motives that might be skewing our ability to honestly sense the Spirit's leading. Many times the Holy Spirit becomes our excuse to avoid doing what we don't want to do. Christians flit from church to church because they are afraid of resolving conflict or they refuse to humble themselves and admit wrong and so we hear them say that God was telling them it was time for them to go to such and such church.

Finally, involving godly counselors can help us confirm the Spirit's leading in our lives. I'm not suggesting this for walking in the Spirit in the every day flow of life. But when it comes to major decisions, it is wise for us to have some healthy self doubt and seek the counsel of godly men and women we can trust to help us discern the Spirit's leading in our lives. If we're open, they can really help us see things we're missing or identify issues in our lives about which we are not being honest. Personally I have been greatly blessed to seek counsel and have come away with the confidence that I was following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

Folks, through the blood of Jesus Christ we have entered into the New Covenant and received not only salvation, but the power to live the Christian life. We have a privilege that the nation of Israel has not yet experienced. Let us learn to live by the power of the Holy Spirit and serve God well.