

# THE NEW COVENANT

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In Jeremiah 31:31-34, we find a wonderful prophecy about the future establishment of the New Covenant (“I *will* make a new covenant”). Hebrews 8:6-13 quotes this prophecy and reminds us that it has now been fulfilled (“a better covenant, which *was* established”). In these passages, the Lord teaches us *why* a new covenant was needed, and also *how* the New Testament is indeed a *better* covenant.

## **The necessity of the New Covenant**

We must keep in mind that the New Covenant was the everlasting covenant that God first planned “before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:3-11; 3:9-11; 1 Pet 1:18-20). Although the Old Covenant preceded the New chronologically, it was not designed or intended by God to be permanent. In fact, it was designed as a *shadow* of the better covenant to come (Col 2:13-17; Heb 8:1-6; 9:22-10:20), and to function as a schoolmaster to bring the people to Christ and his better and everlasting covenant (Gal 3:23-25; 2 Tim 3:14-15). A new covenant was needed because Israel had not kept the first covenant. God said of the first one, “my covenant they brake” (Jer 31:32). God said, “if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second” (Heb 8:7). But the fault was not God’s. “For finding fault with *them*” (Heb 8:8), the Lord gave the promise of a new covenant. It was “because they continued not in my covenant” (Heb 8:9). God knew beforehand that this would happen. The Song of Moses was given for this very reason. In Deuteronomy 31:19-21, God told Moses, “Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swore unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear.”

## **The Superiority of the New Covenant**

Through Jeremiah, God clearly stated that the new covenant would

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(continued)

not be according to the old one (Jer 31:32; Heb 8:9). The new covenant is “a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6). These passages give three major ways in which the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant. First, the Old Covenant was “written and engraven in stones” (2 Cor 3:7; Exod 24:12; 31:18; Deut 9:10). But concerning the New Covenant, God said, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10; 10:16). The nature and purpose of the New Covenant is to purify the hearts of the believers (Acts 15:9) and perfect God’s love in them (1 John 2:5). The Old Covenant could not do that (Heb 7:19). Second, the token of the Old Covenant was circumcision (Gen 17:11-14; Acts 7:8). Males entered this covenant with God when they were only eight days old (Gen 17:12; 21:4; Lev 12:2-3). Therefore, those under the Old Covenant had to be taught to know God. But all of those under the New Covenant would have to know God even to be a part of the covenant (Mark 16:16; John 8:24; Gal 3:27) and would not have to be taught to know Him. Concerning the New Covenant, God said, “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord” (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:8-11). Finally, the Old Covenant itself did not provide for the permanent forgiveness of sins. There was forgiveness under the law of Moses (Lev 4:35; 5:11,13,16,18; 6:7; 19:22; Num 15:25-28), but the forgiveness did not come through the blood of bulls and goats every year (Heb 10:1-4). The sins could only be taken away by Christ (Heb 10:11-18). Jesus died also for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant (Heb 9:15). But concerning the New Covenant, God said, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:12; 10:17). There is complete forgiveness of sins under the New Covenant (Matt 26:28; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:38; 3:25-26; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38-39; 26:15-18; Rom 3:24-25; 11:26-27; Eph 1:7; Col 1:13-14; 1 John 1:9). We should never lose our gratitude for being able to be under the New Covenant, as “partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph 3:6).