

A Covenant with God



35th Annual
Biblical Viewpoints Lectureship
November 1–5, 2015

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Jeremiah 31:33

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What Is A Covenant?	Tim Haywood	1
God's Covenant With Man	Roby Ellis	4
God's Covenant With Israel	Eddy Craft	11
The Covenant's Consecration	Blaine Kelly	14
The Seal of God's Covenant	David Pharr	15
An Everlasting Covenant	Wayne Miller	18

What is a covenant?

Tim Haywood

Thesis: A covenant is a mutual promise of faithfulness

In any kind of contractual agreement, two parties make pledges to the other in order that both parties may benefit.

When you go to the grocery store you enter an implied contractual agreement. The grocery store is agreeing to provide safe, quality goods at an advertised price. You are agreeing to pay the price they have set for the goods on the shelf.

When one party breaks their end of the covenant, there are usually consequences.

Some covenants like emails from a long lost relative who has included you in their will seem a little too good to be true, and we need to be cautious of these opportunities.

But one covenant we can always have faith in is God's covenant with mankind. Using the thesis definition of covenant, today we are going to use God's Word to see how this applies to us today.

- I. A covenant is a *mutual* promise of faithfulness
 - a. God's desires
 - i. No man should perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16-17)
 - ii. Reconciliation with His children (Luke 15:11-32)
 - b. Desires of God's children
 - i. A home not of this world (Philippians 3:20)
 - ii. A family (Ephesians 1:5, Galatians 4:7-9)
 - iii. Hope (Revelation 21:4, I Corinthians 2:9)
 - iv. Reconciliation with the father
- II. A covenant is a mutual *promise* of faithfulness
 - a. God's promises – b. Man's Promise
 - i. God's Promise - Never again to destroy the earth with water (Genesis 9)
 - ii. God's Promise - Eternal life (I John 2:25)

- iii. Man's Promise – Abiding in the Son and the Father (I John 2:24)
- iv. God's promise - Forgiveness (I John 1:9)
- v. Man's promise – confessing our sin (I John 1:9)
- vi. God's promise - To remove us from our sins (Psalm 103:12)
- vii. Man's promise – To fear God (Psalm 103:13)
- viii. God's promise - To take care of us (Matthew 6:25-32)
- ix. Man's promise – To seek Him first (Matthew 6:33)
- x. God's promise - To take away worry (Philippians 4:6)
- xi. Man's promise – To talk with God about what worries us (Philippians 4:6)

III. A covenant is a mutual promise of *faithfulness*

- a. God is faithful (Psalm 119:90, Lamentations 3:22-23, II Peter 3:9)
 - i. Noah
 - ii. Abraham
 - iii. Caleb (Joshua 14:12)
 - iv. Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19)

- b. Do God's children always keep their promise of faithfulness?

Conclusion:

As Christians God has given us an offer that almost sounds too good to be true; adoption as His child and an inheritance in His Kingdom!

It is important to remember that God is always faithful to His covenant with man, even when man is not (II Timothy 2:12). While God's promise of reward is bountiful, His promise of punishment is grave. God wants to be near us, but His nature cannot allow Him to be near us when we are sinning (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Let us all vow to be faithful in our covenant relationship to the One who is steadfast in love, mercy and blessings!

God's Covenants with Man

Roby Ellis

35th Annual Biblical Viewpoints Lectureship
Sunday AM, November 1, 2015

Scripture Reading: Exodus 19:1–9

In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. ² For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain. ³ And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ⁴ 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." ⁷ So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. ⁸ Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. ⁹ And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever." So Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

Introduction

- A. Our Bibles are divided into two distinct parts—the Old and New Testaments.
 - 1. To find the origin of the term New Testament, one might read Luke's account of the institution of the Lord's Supper in which Jesus said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20, KJV).
 - 2. Paul speaks of the veil that shrouds the hearts of unbelieving Jews "in the reading of the old testament" until they turn to Christ (2 Cor. 3:14, KJV).
 - 3. While the KJV translates the word διαθήκη (*diatheke*) as "testament" (like a living will), in these cases it is better translated as "covenant" (ASV, NKJV).
- B. Whereas a testament expresses a person's will, a covenant refers to an agreement between two (or more) parties, an agreement which becomes void in the event that any of the conditions of the agreement are violated.

1. The Bible speaks of covenants made between individuals like Abraham and Abimelech (Gen. 21:27), between nations like Israel and the deceitful Gibeonites (Jsh. 9:6–16), and between God and men like Abraham (Gen. 12:1–7).
 2. In the case of Israel, we have read that God stated the terms of His contract as well as the benefits they would receive provided that they meet the conditions, and Israel responded, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do” (Ex. 19:8).
 3. In so doing they entered a covenant with God that would pay rich dividends but would also carry great responsibilities.
- C. In our study today we will look at the covenants that God has made with man and notice that He has never failed to live up to His end of the agreement.
- D. We shall also consider the covenant God has offered to each of us as well as the terms, benefits, and consequences that He has placed within this divine contract.

Discussion

- I. God has never failed to keep His covenants with man.
 - A. God kept His covenant with Adam and Eve.
 1. God placed man in the garden and blessed him there until he violated the single prohibition that God had given (Gen. 2:16–17; 3:23–24).
 2. Even after this, God made a covenant with the family of Adam, as evidence from the text bears out in God’s conversation with Cain: “If you do well, will you not be accepted?” (Gen. 4:7).
 - B. God kept His covenant with Noah.
 1. When God told Noah of the destruction He was about to bring upon the earth, He said, “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you” (Gen. 6:18).
 2. Noah’s part of this covenant was that he build an ark according to God’s pattern, while God brought the animals (Gen. 7:15), shut the door (v 16), and sent the rain that saved Noah’s family (1 Pet. 3:20).
 3. God did not forget Noah (Gen. 8:1), and after the waters abated He said, “I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” (v 11).

4. God then gave Noah a “sign” of this covenant (“token” in the KJV) in the rainbow that He hanged in the cloud (Gen. 9:12–17).
 5. The word translated “sign” (תּוֹטָה, *ōt*) designates a proof of authenticity.
 - i. Such were the signs that God gave to Moses when He sent him to Egypt: “if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign” (Ex. 4:8).
 - ii. God commanded that Aaron’s budding rod be brought before the ark of the covenant “to be kept as a sign against the rebels” (Num. 17:10).
 - iii. Signs would also be given to authenticate the Messiah: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign...” (Isa. 7:14).
 - iv. We will see that God gave a token for each covenant He made with man.
 6. For some 4500 years, God has kept the covenant that He made with Noah and with all of the creatures of the earth that survived His wrath in the flood.
- C. God kept His covenant with Abraham.
1. Moses tells of the promises that God made to Abram when He first commanded him to leave his father’s house (Gen. 12:1–3).
 2. Later, God told Abram to divide several animals in half, and when darkness fell, there appeared “a burning lamp torch that between those pieces” (Gen. 15:17).
 3. The Record then says, “On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates’” (v 18).
 - i. The word “covenant” is translated from the Hebrew בְּרִית (*berith*), possibly from בָּרַח (*barah*), which means “to eat,” as in a covenant meal.
 - ii. In Hebrew the expression “made a covenant” is literally “cut [כָּרַת] a covenant,” referring to the Eastern ritual employed here.
 4. Just as God gave “the sign of the covenant” in the bow that He set in the sky, God gave Abraham a sign of the covenant He had made with him.
 - i. When Abraham was 99, God confirmed His covenant again to him and gave him the “sign of the covenant”—circumcision (Gen. 17:1–13).

Note: Stephen spoke of this as “the covenant of circumcision” (Acts 7:8).
 - ii. God then told him, “The uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant” (v 14).

5. Of all the good that God promised to Abraham, all came to pass.

D. God kept His covenant with Israel.

1. This covenant was made with the consent of all Israel at Sinai (Ex. 19:1–8).

2. God never forgot this covenant even though Israel often did.

i. When God delivered Israel from Egypt, the Bible says He “remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob” (Ex. 2:24).

ii. Even if Israel should forget their covenant with Him and then turn back to serve Him, God assured that He would remember His covenant with them and have mercy upon them in their distress (Lev. 26:42–45).

3. Israel was often surprised when God did what He had promised that He would do when they violated the terms of His covenant.

i. God told Israel that He would bless them abundantly if they would walk in his statutes and keep His commandments (Lev. 26:3–13).

ii. God also warned that He would punish them if they would not hearken to Him or do His commandments (vv 14–20).

iii. Israel enjoyed their greatest prosperity when they served God, and when they turned from Him, they found affliction and bondage.

4. Again God gave signs of His covenant with Israel.

i. He gave them the Passover and the blood of the lamb:

The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt (Ex. 12:13).

ii. God also gave them the Sabbath as a sign of His covenant with them:

Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you (Ex. 31:13; cf. Ezk. 20:12).

5. Israel ignored these signs and forgot the covenant that they had made with God, but God never forgot His promises for good or for evil.

E. Because of His great consistency, God should have perfect credibility with us.

1. Lenders will look at your credit score when you seek to borrow any amount of money in order to determine if they can trust you to pay back the debt.

2. A perfect credit score of 850 is nearly impossible to achieve.
 3. Considering the perfect consistency with which God has honored His covenants, why should we doubt that God will do what He has promised?
- F. God has never failed to keep His covenants with man, and we may be certain that He will never fail to keep the covenant that He has made with us.

II. With whom has God made His covenant today?

- A. There are some who are outside of a covenant relationship with God.
1. Paul reminded the converts of Ephesus of the fact that they had once been dead in sin, walking according to the lusts of the flesh (Eph. 2:1–3).
 2. At this time they were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope” (vv 11–12).
 3. Like these Gentiles, we are “brought near by the blood of Christ” (v 13).
- B. God makes a covenant with a penitent believer when he is baptized.
1. The Ephesians were “made alive together with Christ” by the grace of God (Eph. 2:4–5) at the point of baptism (Col. 2:12–13).
 2. Paul compares this action with OT circumcision—the seal of God’s covenant with Abraham (Col. 2:11; Rom. 4:11).
 3. To say that baptism is not essential for salvation is to say that circumcision was not essential for the Jews, but God told Abraham, “The uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant” (Gen. 17:13).
 4. We enter a covenant with God when we are baptized into Jesus’ death and contact the sanctifying “blood of the covenant” (Heb. 10:29).
 5. If you have never been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, you are not in a covenant relationship with God!
- C. The Lord’s Supper is a token of our covenant with God.
1. We have noticed already that tokens of the OT covenant included the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13) and the Passover (Ex. 12:13).
 2. We have also observed that the Hebrew word for “covenant” (בְּרִית) is closely related to a word for “eat” (אָכַל); this is true because a meal was often eaten by parties entering a covenant as a token of fellowship.
 - i. Abimelech and Isaac ate when they made a covenant (Gen. 26:28–30).

ii. Laban and Jacob ate together on a heap of stones which they set up as a witness to the covenant they made with each other (Gen. 31:44–46).

iii. The priests ate the holy things in the holy place as a reminder of the covenant that existed between Israel and God (Lev. 24:8–9).

3. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20).

4. In place of the blood of the pascal lamb, we partake of the blood of the pure Lamb of God and commemorate the sacred covenant we have made with Him.

D. God's new covenant is better than the old one.

1. It is not written "on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart" (2 Cor. 3:3). Furthermore it is "not of the letter but of the Spirit" (v 6).

2. This "better covenant" is established upon "better promises" (Heb. 8:6–13).

E. We have the opportunity to be in a greater covenant than any man ever enjoyed with God before Jesus came to earth; have you entered this covenant with God?

III. God has promised both good and bad to those in a covenant relationship with Him.

A. God has promised eternal life to the obedient, but death to the forward.

1. Paul pointed out to the Jews that they also must be righteous or that they would share the condemnation of wicked Gentiles (Rom. 2:1–13).

2. It is not enough to be in a covenant relationship with God: we must keep the covenant agreement that we have made with Him!

B. This is exactly what God did with Israel.

1. This is what God had promised from the beginning.

i. God promised to give Israel a long list of blessings if they would keep His covenant, but He also promised many curses if they should forget (Deut. 28).

ii. When Israel entered the Promised Land, God ordered that these blessings and curses be read in the hearing of all Israel (Jsh. 8:30–35).

iii. Still they "rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit" (Isa. 63:10), not believing that God would take vengeance (Jer. 7), but God kept His word and "turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them."

2. We should learn a valuable lesson when we see that when Israel (the people of God's covenant) went astray, they fell in the wilderness, "were destroyed by serpents," and "were destroyed by the destroyer" (1 Cor. 10:6–12)
 3. A generation of these covenanted people failed to enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief, and Christians can also fail to enter heaven if they refuse to be obedient to God's Word (Heb. 3:19–4:12).
- C. Judgment does not end with the house of God; it begins there!
1. Peter writes,

The time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:17–18).
 2. We who are in a covenant relationship with God are not exempt from the judgment of God: we too must give an account on that day (2 Cor. 5:10).
- D. Because of His perfect consistency we can be certain that God will keep His promises of both good and evil to those in a covenant relationship with Him!

Conclusion and Invitation

- A. If you are not yet in a covenant relationship with God, you cannot expect to receive the benefits of the blood that He shed for the sins of the world, and you cannot enter a covenant relationship without application of the blood in baptism.
- B. God will keep His promises: both of mercy and of judgment.
 1. Israel virtually dared God to keep His promise of judgment. Are we so foolish?
 2. God wants to bless us as His children, and He will bless us more abundantly than we can imagine if we will honor our commitment to Him.

THE COVENANT GOD MADE WITH ISRAEL
BIBLICAL VIEWPOINTS LECTURESHIP
EDDY CRAFT

INTRODUCTION:

- A. A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties.
- B. The covenant we are talking about in this lesson is between God and Israel.
- C. This is the covenant that God made with Israel Genesis 1:18; 17:4,7; Exodus 6:4.
- D. In this lesson we want to notice some of the particulars of this covenant.

I. GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL WAS RACE ORIENTED:

- A. *"For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day" (DEUTERONOMY 4:7-8).*
- B. This was a covenant made with the Jews alone.
"And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day" (Deuteronomy 5:1-3).
- C. As we shall see later the new covenant would be different.
- D. The Old Testament was never given to the Gentiles but to the Jews. The Gentiles lived under the Patriarchal system. Abraham lived under the Patriarchal law.

II. GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL WAS TO BE REMEMBERED:

- A. Psalms 103:18; Deuteronomy 8:18.

- B. God knew how forgetful His people were and gave them a reminder.
- C. If they forget God He will forget them (Amos 4:6).

III. GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL INVOLVES A RANSOM:

- A. A ransom is the means of deliverance or rescue from punishment for sin, especially the payment of a redemptive fine.
- B. Christ was our ransom (Isaiah 53; Matthew 20:28).
- C. The Old Testament pointed to Christ! Under the Old Testament there was no forgiveness of sins. Once you broke the Law of Moses there was no mechanism in it that would remit sin.

IV. GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL WAS TO BE REPLACED:

- A. The Old Testament pointed to the New Testament (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
- B. Hebrews 8:6-13; 10:16-17; 2 Corinthians 3:6-8; Matthew 26:28.
- C. We do not live under the Old Testament but the New Testament.
Some think that the Old Testament is still binding today but such is not the case. You cannot live under two laws at the same time. Paul calls this spiritual adultery (Romans 7:1-7).

V. GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL WAS TO INVOLVE A RENEWING OF THE MIND:

- A. The children of Israel had the mindset, that if they worship God in the Temple the way he prescribed, that they could live any way they wanted the rest of the time. Their heart was not in it.
- B. For our worship to be acceptable it must be done from the heart
(Deuteronomy 6:5; Psalm 119:2,10,34,58,69,145; Proverbs 4:23; 23:7)

VI. GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL WAS REBELLED AGAINST:

- A. Israel was commanded to keep God's covenant (Exodus 19:5).

B. Israel did not keep it. This kept Israel from entering into their rest and it will do the same for us (Hebrews 4:1-2).

CONCLUSION:

- A. There are many other things that could be discussed about God's Covenant with Israel but this will surpass for now.
- B. How much easier things would have been if Israel would have just obeyed Gods covenant in the first place.

Consecration: Living the Covenant Life
Hebrews 10:19-24
Blaine Kelly

A person's "last will and testament" provides him/her with one last opportunity to make an impression on those left behind. Countless fortunes have been squandered by heirs who gave little thought to the gravity of the gifts they received. That's because a will is not a contract – it is unilateral, not bilateral. Some covenants – marriage, for example – are more contractual than testamental. That is, both a husband and a wife vow to uphold their mutual commitments to one another. A will is a different kind of covenant. The testator lays out the conditions of his/her will without having to consult with the recipients of their final testament. How the recipients respond to that will does not change or invalidate its conditions. It forever remains in effect out of the sheer force of one person's death.

The book of Hebrews spends considerable time talking about such an arrangement, one in which the ultimate testator died to bring about the most gracious inheritance for all mankind – open access to God both now and for all eternity. The who (Jesus), what (His perfect sacrifice), when (once for all time), where (the most Holy place of heaven), and why (because the Old Covenant was insufficient) of the New Covenant are thoroughly addressed prior to Hebrews 10:19. Out of the graciousness of the Father, the obedience of the Son, and the testimony of the Spirit, the last will and testament of Jesus Christ has taken effect.

How we respond to that will is the focus of the conclusion of Hebrews, beginning in 10:19 with the words "Therefore, brethren . . ." The inspired writer communicates to his initial audience and us, "If this is everything that has been put in place to validate this covenant, how should we respond?" Will we be spoiled by the abundance of the family's inheritance and take it for granted? Or will we be humbled by the generosity bequeathed us in a way that transforms both us and the lives of those we touch? These two potential responses are clearly laid out in Hebrews 10, but only one response allows the recipient to experience the blessings of the covenant of Christ.

In Hebrews 10, the blessings found in Christ's covenant are found in a series of three directives that all begin with "let us" – "Let us draw near" (10:22), "let us hold fast" (10:23), and "let us . . . stir up" (10:24). These tripartite instructions summarize what living the covenant of Christ looks like. It is a consecrated life, and the details of that life serve as the focus of this passage and our lecture.

THE COVENANT SEALED

David R. Pharr

1. The general or ordinary meaning of "covenant" is a solemn binding agreement between two parties, a contract. The New Testament word is sometimes rendered "testament," and can refer to one's "last will and testament," which would be a contract between a person and his heirs. In Galatians 3:15 Paul refers to ordinary human covenants as an illustration of God's covenant with Abraham. "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto." A covenant has to be confirmed and once it is confirmed neither side has a right to alter it. So also with God's covenant. Cf. Revelation 22:18f; Deuteronomy 4:2.
2. The KJV says, "if it be confirmed"; others, "ratified." The ancient custom was for men who made a solemn covenant to seal (ratify, confirm) it by cutting a sacrifice in half and for both to walk between the parts. Thus it was sealed with blood. Of course we know that the New Covenant was dedicated with the blood of Christ, but first let us consider that:
 - I. The God of the Bible is a covenant keeping God.
 - A. The gods of the world are uncertain, fickle, arbitrary, but our God is unchangeable and always true to his word. "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). With Him "is no variableness, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (James 1:17).
 - B. His covenants come from God's own grace and power. Unlike human covenants there is no negotiation. Sometimes people will speak foolishly in saying, "If God will do such and such, I will do what He wants me to do." Divine covenants are altogether by His own design. Only a fool thinks he can by negotiations make a better deal with God.
 - C. Divine covenants provide both promises and conditions. Enjoying the promises is predicated on acceptance of the conditions. Nehemiah spoke of our great God who keeps "covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments" (Nehemiah 1:5).
 - D. As the revelation of His favor (love, grace) God's covenants focus on His promises. For example, the covenant with Noah and humanity (Gen. 8:20-22; 9:8-17).
 - E. Our covenant keeping God always keeps his promises and always carries out his threats (i.e., Mark 16:16; Matthew 25:46). Our certainty regarding His promises is in His ability and His dependability.
 1. His ability (Matthew 3:9; Romans 4:21; Philippians 3:21; Ephesians 3:20).
 2. His dependability (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; Romans 3:4).

(There are numerous Bible references to covenants. Some are between individuals, some between nations, some between God and specific persons, but most attention is given to the covenants we call the Old Testament and the New. It is important to understand, therefore, that:)

- II. God's covenant with Israel was sealed with the blood of bulls and goats (Hebrews 9:19-22).
 - A. We cannot miss the emphasis of blood (death) in the sealing of covenants.
 1. It was when animals had been sacrificed that God gave the covenant of the

- rainbow (Gen. 8 & 9).
2. Animals had been cut when God gave the promise of the land for Abraham's descendants (Gen. 15).
 3. A ram had been offered when Isaac had been saved at which time God reaffirmed the covenant promise that in his seed all nations would be blessed (Gen. 22). Genesis 22:18 is what is known as "the promise." "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Various New Testament references to "the promise" can be found in the New Testament, such as: Galatians 3:29; Hebrews 11:39.
 4. So also the emphasis in Hebrews 9 on the sealing of the Old Covenant with blood. "Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you" (18-20).
- B. This one point powerfully affirms the abrogation of the Old Covenant which was never an adequate system for redemption.
1. Blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:1-4). The sins of the faithful under the law were never removed except in eventual shedding of Christ's blood (Hebrews 9:15; Romans. 3:25).
 2. When one seeks authority under the Old, he has left the blood of Christ and gone back to the blood of bulls and goats, which could never take away sin.

(The promise of a new and better covenant included the promise that sins and iniquities would be remembered no more. Therefore:)

- III. The New Covenant of Christ was sealed with His own blood (Hebrews 9:11-17).
- A. This is why in the Lord's Supper Jesus said, "This is the blood of the New Testament . . ." (Matthew 26:28). His blood would seal the covenant.
 - B. Every line of the text in Hebrews points to the significance of His blood.
 1. It was his own blood, not the blood of another (12).
 2. It was offered in the heavenly Holy of Holies (11).
 3. It only had to be offered once (12; cf. 10:12).
 4. It cleanses the conscience (14).
 5. It is the means by which He is the mediator of the New Testament (15). It is the only means by which there could be fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy of a

- covenant by which sins would be remembered no more (Hebrews 8:12).
6. It is by his blood which means “by means of his death” (15).
 7. It was necessary before his new covenant could be in place, and when it is in place “no man disannuleth or addeth thereto” (16-17).
- C. We cannot miss the emphasis on the blood (Revelation 1:5; I Peter 1:18f; Revelation 7:14). One comes into covenant relationship with God by being baptized into Christ’s death (Romans 6:3-4).
 - D. We continue to be cleansed by the blood as we walk according to the covenant (I John 1:7).
 - E. To turn aside from the covenant—sin willfully—is to count the blood as something unholy (Hebrews 10:26ff).

Conclusion

Under the promises and authority of a blood sealed covenant, we are blood cleansed people, in a blood bought church.

[drpharr@msn.com]

THE BETTER COVENANT
HEBREWS 8:6-13
Wayne Miller

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Chapter 8 in the book of Hebrews is a transitional chapter.
 - 1. In chapters 5 through 7, the writer discussed the Personnel of Christianity's High Priesthood—Jesus.
 - 2. In chapters 9 and 10, he discussed the Purpose—Service!
 - 3. So, c. 8 looks back and wraps up the first segment and also looks forward by introducing the second.
 - 4. In c. 7 the author, looking backward, gave a series of arguments explaining why Jesus is a better High Priest.
 - 5. In the beginning of c.8, the writer climaxed his arguments—v. 1.
- B. For us, the most significant word in v. 1 is probably 'have.'
 - 1. "We *have* such a high priest."
 - 2. The Jews *had* high priests—a succession of high priests until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70—but we have (present tense) a High Priest.
 - 3. We will always have a High Priest, therefore, we will always have access to God.
- C. Since Jesus is a better High Priest, He must have a better sacrifice—and He does: Himself; since He is a better High Priest, He must have a better place to serve—and He does: the true tabernacle in heaven; since Jesus is a better High Priest, He must have a better covenant—and He does.
- D. The idea of a better covenant is developed in last part of c. 8.
 - 1. The Old Testament and New Testament are terms of common use. Most of us know the OT was for the Jews while the NT is for Christians.
 - 2. Instead of OT and NT, the Bible uses phrases like old covenant and new covenant.
 - 3. When we think of a covenant, we usually think of an agreement between two parties.
 - 4. In a sense, the new covenant is this: We agree to do God's will and God promises to bless us.
 - 5. Hebrews 8:6-13 brings before us the primary characteristics of the new covenant.
 - 6. What are they? Why did the author say the covenant of Jesus is better?

DISCUSSION:

I. IT'S A COVENANT WITH A BETTER PURPOSE—v. 7.

- A. The book of Hebrews insists the new covenant is better than the old.
 - 1. Did God give a covenant that was defective?
 - 2. The new is better than the old because it relates to the heart, whereas the old was concerned primarily with ritual and outward form.
 - 3. The new offers real pardon of sin, while the old was concerned with ritual cleansing.
 - 4. If the old covenant had been 'faultless', we would not have needed a new and better one. It could not make sinful man perfect (Hebrews 7:19a).
 - 5. How was it faulty? Its laws were not faulty, but its sacrifices could not truly take away sins.
- B. From God's perspective, it was perfect for the purpose for which He made it.
 - 1. Through the Law, God gave a standard that showed man what sin is and the sinful nature of mankind (Romans 3:20).
 - 2. The law was given as a standard to be a deterrent to sin. "It was added because of transgressions" (Galatians 3:19).
 - 3. Through it, all people were confined under sin (Galatians 3:22) until mankind could be released from such a condemnation through God's planned Savior.
- C. The Law was given and enforced to keep us in custody as a tutor, or custodian (Galatians 3:23, 24), until the seed, Jesus should come (Galatians 3:19).
- D. Now that Jesus has come, the Law has served its purpose. We are no longer under a tutor, or a custodian (Galatians 3:25).
- E. The purpose of the Law might be explained in this way:
 - 1. A man who lived in Florida visited a friend in Canada one summer. He liked the area so well that he told his friend he would like to move to Canada to raise groves of pineapple.
 - 2. His friend could not persuade him that such a venture would be unsuccessful. So, he encouraged him to plant his grove on the southernmost slope in the warmest area of Canada. The first winter, the frost came early; snow fell before the pineapple plants could bear any fruit.
 - 3. The man shrugged and thought the frost came early that year but would come later the next year. He tried again the next year, with the same results.

4. Finally after trying for ten years, the man admitted the climate of Canada would not let pineapple plants produce fruit.
- F. By giving Israel an adequate number of years to learn that one cannot earn salvation under the Law, God has shown that all people are sinners and all are in need of the Savior, Jesus Christ!

II. IT'S A COVENANT WITH BETTER PROMISES—V. 6.

- A. The ministry of Christ pertains to 'heavenly things' (v. 5), including a new covenant.
- B. God did not promise the Israelites that obedience would be rewarded with eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9) in heaven (I Peter 1:3, 4).
 1. The old covenant had much to say about sin, but it provided no full or real remission of sins.
 2. Under the Law, sins that were committed flagrantly were to be punished with death (Numbers 15:30, 31).
 3. We read, "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses (Hebrews 10:28).
 4. Through the death of Jesus, God showed that He was just to forgive past sins (Romans 3:25).
 - a. The death of Jesus not only forgives those under the new covenant, but it was also the basis of forgiveness for those under the first or old covenant.
 - b. Thus, the Israelites could also receive the eternal inheritance, a blessing the Law did not promise (Hebrews 9:15).
 6. God forgave Israel's sins, not based on personal merit or on sacrifices alone, but on the basis of Jesus' blood that was shed for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2).
 7. Forgiveness of sins in all ages is based on the blood of Jesus!
 8. I took my family out to eat and when the bill came, I gave them a credit card, signed a piece of paper.
 - a. Did I pay for the meal? The restaurant thought so, I didn't have to wash dishes.
 - b. But, did I really pay for the meal? No! I won't pay for that meal until the end of the month when I receive the bill.

- c. So also, the sacrifices of the old covenant paid for people's sins...but the bill came due at the cross.
 - d. If Jesus had not died on the cross for sin, all the sacrifices under the old covenant would have been worthless.
- C. Perhaps the most important element that makes the new covenant better is the sacrifice.
- 1. Hebrews 9:13, 14 says the sacrifice of animals accomplished the sanctification of the flesh—in other words, ritual cleansing.
 - 2. A tremendous blessing now is—'I will be merciful to their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more' (v. 12).
- D. No mention is made in the old covenant of a changed, resurrected body which will have God's likeness (Philippians 3:21; I John 3:2).

III. IT'S A COVENANT OF PERMANENCE—V. 13.

- A. This new covenant will never become obsolete.
- 1. When God instituted a "new covenant", He made the first obsolete.
 - 2. The very words 'new covenant' revealed the first one to be old and out of date.
- B. To make the first covenant 'obsolete' meant that it was no longer necessary, which would be evident to all when it vanished away.
- 1. This *vanishing* (disappearing) was about to occur; the old covenant was expiring of old age.
 - 2. The word for disappearing is from the same word used in James 4:14, speaking of a vapor that appears and then is suddenly gone.
 - 3. The phrase 'becoming obsolete' indicates the old system was still in effect at the time when Hebrews was written but it was already 'obsolete.'
 - 4. How could it be both?
 - a. Christ was already as the High Priest under the new covenant.
 - b. But, the temple, with its fading services, had not yet vanished.
- C. As a religious system given and approved by God, Judaism was vanishing with the death of Christ.
- 1. The old covenant has been nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

2. However, as a system centered in the temple, Judaism was allowed to last another 40 years. From the human standpoint, it would finally vanish in A.D. 70, when the Roman army left no stone on another (Matthew 24:2).
- D. Today, the new covenant is actually older than the old covenant was at the time the Book of Hebrews was written.
1. It has been in existence longer, but it remains *new*.
 2. It is God's wonderfully new covenant for today and for tomorrow, until the Lord comes again!
- E. Heard about a minister making a visit to one of the elderly ladies. When she did not answer the door, he decided to leave his calling card. Wanting to be Biblical, he decided to write a Bible verse on the back of it. As a source of comfort to her, he intended to write Hebrews 13:8—Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever!
- However, what he wrote was Hebrews 8:13—'what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear!

CONCLUSION:

- A. Truth is, all of us are aging and moving quickly toward judgment day.
- B. We refer to Matthew through Revelation as the new covenant. But, we must understand, it is not really the new covenant for us until we accept its terms and enter into a covenant relationship with the Lord.
- C. The Law of Moses inspired its adherents to great dedication and devotion.
- D. If an inferior law could inspire that kind of dedication, how much greater devotion should the new, better covenant under which we live inspire in us an obedient spirit and life!!