

10. The New Covenant (2Q 2021—The Promise: God’s Everlasting Covenant)

Biblical Material: Jer. 31:31–34; Matt. 5:17–28; Hos. 2:18–20; Isa. 56:6, 7; Heb. 8:7, 8; Heb. 10:4; Matt. 27:51.

Quotes

- One may preach a covenant of grace more clearly than another... But when they preach a covenant of works for salvation, that is not truth. *Anne Hutchinson*
- The whole covenant is a bundle of promises. *Thomas Brooks*
- *God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God.* If you have never thought of Him in these terms, then you have not yet begun to think about Him in the way he wants you to. God’s Word describes those covenants, proclaiming Him to be a covenanting God. In a sense, the Bible is the book of His covenant. We even call it that – the Old and the New Covenants (Testaments)! *Sinclair Ferguson*
- He does not love us *if* we love him. He loves us with an unconditional love; *therefore*, we should love him. The message of the covenant is one of God’s totally free grace to his people. Of course, it calls for a response of total commitment. But notice the order: God’s covenant love is not the *result* of our commitment; it is the *cause* of it. The pattern is, ‘I will, *therefore* you should;’ *not* ‘I will, *but only* if you will first.’ *Sinclair Ferguson*
- As the gospels present it to us, the mission of Jesus of Nazareth is about the way in which the community of God’s people - historically, the Jewish people who had first received the law and the covenant—is being re-created in relation to Jesus himself. *Rowan Williams*

Questions

In what way is the covenant Jesus speaks of “new”? Why was it necessary? How does Paul contrast the two covenants in Galatians? How do we understand the place of law in a covenant?? What is the basis for this “new covenant”? Who is the covenant for? How does this fit into the whole great controversy scheme?

Bible summary

“Look! The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and Judah... This is the agreement I’m going to make with the people of Israel at that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws inside them and write them in their minds. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” Jeremiah 31:31, 33 FBV. Matt. 5:17–28 is part of the Sermon on the Mount and shows how Jesus reinterprets the real meaning of the law. In Hos. 2:18–20 God describes the covenant in terms of marriage vows. The “foreigners” are to be included in God’s covenant (Isa. 56:6, 7). Heb. 8:7, 8 speaks of a new and better covenant, while on Heb. 10:4 makes it clear that the sanctuary system did not actually remove sins. The tearing of the Temple veil in Matt. 27:51 indicates the end of the old system.

Comment

A new kind of covenant is described by Jesus, and the same terminology is found in Hebrews 8. Here the quote is from Jeremiah 31:31-34—which in itself is interesting, for it shows that the “new” covenant is not so new after all! And what is the intent of this new covenant? It is clearly defined as *not* being like the previous covenant. It is to be based not on legal formulations

and prescriptions, but on laws in minds and hearts—in other words, a relational covenant based on doing right because it is right, and is so recognized and accepted by thinking people. The intent, says God, is “that they will all know me.” This is not some ceremonial relationship, but one of individual, personal trust.

The way to live right is to stay close to God—to spend time with your heavenly Father, to think about the implications of the truth about God in your own personal life. If your thoughts about God and his loving grace do not make a difference in the way you live, what is the point? As the apostle John wrote, “Everyone who does what is right has been born of God.” (1 John 2:29 FBV.)

The more you read of the kind of person God truly is, the less you have to be fearful of Him. In the Bible, God comes to human beings, and the first words are, “Don’t be afraid!” Why not? Because this returning God is not a stranger. “This same Jesus shall return...” the angels told the amazed disciples who watched Jesus leave earth for heaven. This same Jesus is defined in the gospels, and is the proof of God as He really is—the God of love and truth and right, who will save all who come to Him. Ultimately, perfect love casts out fear...

What kind of God makes the promise, and do you trust him? Like everything else in life, it depends on your relationship, and the person’s record. Take a look back through the Bible and you’ll find example upon example of how God deals with people just like us. More than that, the Bible records God’s intentions which history shows came true. Prophecy as it fulfils is another guarantee that God is “working his purpose out,” and that He can be trusted. So when Jesus says “I will come again,” (John 14:3), you’re certainty is based on all the proof of God through history.

So, “this hope is our spiritual anchor—it’s both certain and reliable, and it takes us past the curtain to the presence of God.” Hebrews 6:19 FBV. “Since we have such a confident hope, we are truly bold!” 2 Corinthians 3:12 FBV. The assurance is not based in the covenant, but in the one who promises—for God who promised is trustworthy.” (Hebrews 10:23 FBV).

Ellen White comments

In this last act of Christ in partaking with His disciples of the bread and wine, He pledged Himself to them as their Redeemer by a new covenant, in which it was written and sealed that upon all who will receive Christ by faith will be bestowed all the blessings that heaven can supply, both in this life and in the future immortal life. {Ev 276}

Nothing but the righteousness of Christ can entitle us to one of the blessings of the covenant of grace. There are many who have long desired and tried to obtain these blessings, but have not received them, because they have cherished the idea that they could do something to make themselves worthy of them. They have not looked away from self, believing that Jesus is an all-sufficient Saviour. We must not think that our own merits will save us; Christ is our only hope of salvation. {PP 431}

The covenant of grace is not a new truth, for it existed in the mind of God from all eternity. This is why it is called the everlasting covenant. There is hope for us only as we come under the Abrahamic covenant, which is the covenant of grace by faith in Christ Jesus. {FLB 77}

We have God’s pledge that He will bind men closely to His great heart of infinite love in the bonds of the new covenant of grace. All who will give up their hope of paying for their salvation, or earning it, and will come to Jesus just as they are, unworthy, sinful, and fall upon His merits, holding in their plea the pledged word of God to pardon the transgressor of His law, confessing their sins and seeking pardon, will find full and free salvation. {7ABC 468}