

The Church of the Servant King

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Prophecy Series

(Proph16B_Eschatological Passages in Jeremiah_The New Covenant)

Introduction

It is especially interesting when more than one writer expresses a similar if not identical view of a future event since all writers of Scripture were inspired by the Holy Spirit to record the words of the Bible. A commonality of prophesy between different writers should only serve to emphasize the certainty of that prophecy's fulfillment. Such is the case with the new covenant as prophesied by Jeremiah in Chapter 31, verses 31-34.

Other passages expressing a similar if not identical prophecy include Isaiah 59:20-21 and 61:8-9, Jeremiah 32:37-41, and Ezekiel 16:60-63; 37:21-28. In each of these passages, a new covenant relationship between God and the Jewish nation of Israel is prophesied. The new covenant relationship is necessary because God's chosen people (and nation) failed in their responsibility to adhere to the stipulations of the Mosaic covenant so "...that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise, and for glory..." (Jer. 13:11) and "...a name of joy, praise, and glory before all the nations of the earth..." (Jer. 33:9). However, God's conveyance of the new covenant to Judah recognized the fact that all of Jeremiah's pronouncements of judgment were about to culminate in the final overthrow of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. There was no need to further remind the nation of their sin and judgment. The nation now needed a reason to go on living. That reason was to be found in the new covenant.¹

The Provisions of the New Covenant

In Jeremiah 31:31ff, the following provisions of the new covenant can be found:²

- ✓ It is an unilateral covenant, the ultimate fulfillment of which depends upon the faithfulness of God (see the seven "I will's" stated by God in verses 31-34).
- ✓ It is an everlasting covenant (Jer. 31:35-37).
- ✓ It is accompanied by a renewed mind and a renewed heart (Jer. 31:33).
- ✓ It provides for restoration to the favor and blessing of God (Jer. 31:33).
- ✓ It includes forgiveness of sin (Jer. 31:34).
- ✓ The recipients of the new covenant will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Jer. 31:33 cf. Ezekiel 36:27).
- ✓ The will of God will be known by those obedient to God through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit (Jer. 31:34).

From other passages such as Isaiah 61:8-9, Jeremiah 32:41, Ezekiel 34:25-27 and 37:21-28, and Hosea 2:18, we can observe some additional provisions of the new covenant which are implied in Jeremiah 31 including the following:³

- ✓ Israel is regathered in the land and will be blessed materially.
- ✓ The sanctuary will be rebuilt in Jerusalem
- ✓ No more war.
- ✓ Israel no longer practices idolatry.

¹ Fettke, Steven M., *Messages to a Nation in Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1982), 49.

² Pentecost, J. Dwight, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 117-118.

³ *Ibid.*, 118.

- ✓ God will be present with the Jews in a visible manner, i.e. through the reign of Jesus Christ.
- ✓ Israel will finally be known among the Gentiles as a nation blessed of God.

***The Relationship Between the New Covenant
And the Other Covenants Between God and Israel***

It is intuitively obvious from the above summary that the provisions of the new covenant overlap with the provisions of each of the three other unilateral covenants, i.e. the *Abrahamic* covenant which established the Jewish race and guaranteed that others would be blessed by association with Israel (Gen. 12:1-3); the *Palestinian* covenant which defined the real estate that was to be the land of God's chosen people (Gen. 13:14-15); and the *Davidic* covenant which guaranteed that one of David's progeny would reign forever over an eternal kingdom (2 Sam. 7:8-16; 22:51; Psa. 89:20-37).⁴ Seven features are more or less common to the four unilateral covenants to the Jewish race and the nation Israel:

- 1) The nation of Israel will one day be preserved as such forever, even beyond the thousand-year kingdom of the Millennium. "As their covenants respecting the land are everlasting, it follows, also, that this people as a nation must inherit and inhabit the new earth that is to be (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Heb. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 3:4-14; Rev. 20:11; 21:1)."⁵
- 2) The Jewish race is promised a land of their own in which their nation can dwell forever. Israel has been dispossessed of their land on three occasions in fulfillment of prophecy (Gen. 15:13-14, 16; Jer. 25:11-12; Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-3). She has also reinhabited the land on two of these three occasions in fulfillment of prophecy (Gen. 15:14 cf. Josh. 1:2-7; Dan. 9:2 cf. Jer. 25:11-12; Deut. 30:3; Jer. 23:5-8; Ezek. 37:21-25; Acts 15:14-17). The final restoration is yet future and will be accompanied by the return of the Messiah (Deut. 30:3-6; Acts 15:16-17), Israel's conversion as a nation (Deut. 30:4-8; Psa. 80:3, 7, 17-19; Isa. 66:8; Jer. 23:5-6; Ezek. 11:19-20; Matt. 5:1-7:29; Rom. 11:26-27), the judgment of Israel's oppressors (Isa. 14:2-3; Matt. 25:41), and blessing by God (Psa. 72:1-20; Isa. 60:1-22; 62:1-12; Ezek. 37:21-28).⁶
- 3) A king who reigns forever (2 Sam. 7:16; Psa. 89:36; Jer. 33:17).⁷
- 4) An eternal throne (Psa. 89:36-37; Isa 9:6-7; Luke 1:31-32).
- 5) An eternal kingdom which consists of regathered and converted Israel which will also include Gentiles (Deut. 30:3-6; Psa. 72:11, 17; 86:9; Isa. 7:14; 11:1-5, 11-12). It will be heavenly in character manifesting the rule of heaven over the earth with heavenly demands (Isa. 2:4; 11:4-5), but also on the earth (Psa. 2:8; Isa. 11:9; 42:4; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 14:9) and centered in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:1-3; Luke 21:24).⁸
- 6) The ultimate fulfillment of the unilateral Abrahamic, Palestinian, and Davidic Covenants will only occur in conjunction with the execution of the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 which replaces the one conditional, bilateral covenant, i.e. the Mosaic covenant that Israel broke.⁹
- 7) Each covenant promises blessings that includes unbroken fellowship with God once it is ultimately fulfilled (Isa. 35:5-10; Ezek. 37:27; Zech. 8:8; Rev. 21:3).¹⁰

⁴ Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *Systematic Theology*, Volume 4 (Dallas, Texas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 313-314.

⁵ Ibid., 315.

⁶ Ibid., 317-323.

⁷ Ibid., 323.

⁸ Ibid., 324.

⁹ Ibid., 325.

¹⁰ Ibid., 325-326.

The New Covenant Distinguished from Other Covenants Between God and Israel

The unilateral new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 completely supersedes the bilateral, conditional Mosaic covenant of Exodus chapters 20-31 which was related to the daily life and conduct of Israel. This fact is supported by the phrase "...I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers..." (Jer. 31:31b-32a). "The kingdom expectation is based on the *Abrahamic* covenant, the *Davidic* covenant, and the *Palestinian* covenant, but is in no way based on the *Mosaic* covenant."¹¹

The implications of this statement are far beyond the scope of this study. However, it is sufficient to note that while there are certainly great similarities between the requirements of the Mosaic law in the Age of Israel and the Millennial system, there are differences just as great. The theme which seems to underlie the differences relates to the matter of relative historical perspective from the viewpoint of the worshipper. Whereas the sacrifices and ordinances of the Mosaic system looked forward to the coming Messiah/Savior, the sacrifices and ordinances of the Millennial system will serve as a memorial for that age in much the same manner that the Lord's Supper does now.¹²

In this manner, the provisions of the new covenant are inextricably associated with and will completely replace the provisions of the Mosaic covenant. Since the Millennium will begin with only believers and since the Millennium will be characterized by a perfect environment and the most perfect form of government with the Messiah ruling and reigning, the dramatic impact of the sacrificial death of an animal will be required to jolt people to an awareness of the pain and anguish that Jesus had to endure to pay the penalty of sin.

The Fulfillment of the New Covenant

The fulfillment of the new covenant is yet future following the return of Christ. It is to be realized in the Millennium and is between Yahweh and the physical seed of Abraham. The following paragraphs will elaborate upon each of these aspects of the new covenant's fulfillment.

The fact that the new covenant is yet future is supported by the fact that the provisions of the covenant can not be realized by Israel until God has brought about her salvation and restoration to the land. This was viewed as a future event by Old Testament writers (e.g. Hos 2:18-20, Isa 55:3, Ezek 16:60, 62; 20:37; 34:25-26) and by New Testament writers (Rom. 11:26-27). At no time in history has Israel been regathered as a nation to experience the blessings of the new covenant following their spiritual rebirth and the return of Christ.¹³

The fulfillment of the new covenant must follow the return of Christ at His second advent. The only covenant which expressly has to do with the removal of sins is the new covenant and in Romans 11:26-27, the salvation of all Israel follows the coming of the Deliverer.¹⁴

¹¹ Pentecost, J. Dwight, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 518.

¹² *Ibid.*, 517-527.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

The blessings associated with the new covenant will not be realized until the Millennium. This is supported by passages which reference events to occur in the Millennium, e.g. Isaiah 11:6-9, Jeremiah 31:34, and Ezekiel 31:34. After all, one would be hard pressed to testify that they have ever observed a lion and a fattened calf lie down together (Isaiah 11:6) without one of them not rising back up.

The new covenant is exclusively made with the physical seed of Abraham as evidenced by Jeremiah 31:31 which uses the qualifying phraseology that the new covenant will be made with "...the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." Other passages which support this idea include Isaiah 59:20-21; 61:8-9; Jeremiah 32:37-40; 50:4-5; Ezekiel 16:60-63; 34:25-26; 37:21-28. In addition, the term "new" as used in Jeremiah 31:31 implies a replacement of the "old" Mosaic covenant which was made with the nation of Israel only (i.e. Romans 2:14; 6:14; 2 Corinthians 3:7-11; Galatians 3:24-25). The perpetuation of the nation Israel and her restoration to the land is vitally linked with the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:35-40).¹⁵

Distinguishing Between the New Covenant to Israel and the New Covenant to the Church

Since there are New Testament passages which refer to the new covenant (e.g. Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Romans 11:27; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:8, 10-13; 9:15; 12:24), a question arises as to the relationship of the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 to believers of the Church Age. If the Church is now fulfilling these Old Testament prophecies, then there is no need for an earthly Millennium.¹⁶ It is my opinion that there is only one reference among these New Testament passages that clearly relates the provisions of the new covenant to the Church, i.e. 2 Corinthians 3:6.

Who made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Cor 3:6)

This passage does not specifically state that there is a separate new covenant with the church. If anything, it serves to establish a linkage between the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and the ministry of the Holy Spirit to Church Age believers, i.e. the phrase "...new covenant not of the letter..." in 2 Corinthians 3:6 alludes to the replacement of the law covenant with the new covenant in a similar manner as Jeremiah 31:31-34. The remainder of the passages cited do not specifically relate the new covenant to the Church. They either reference the fact that the new covenant replaces the covenant of the law or they indicate that Christ's work on the Cross is the basis for the provisions of the new covenant without specifying who the recipients of the new covenant were to be.

It is my present opinion that the Church was inserted or "intercalated"¹⁷ into human history to be the recipient of many of the spiritual realities of the coming Millennial age as "...a grand exception to all other ages both for Jews and Gentiles."¹⁸ If human history serves as a panoramic object lesson to fallen angelic creation as implied by such passages as Job 1:6-12; 2:1-5; Zechariah 3:1-2; Luke 15:7, 10; 1 Corinthians 4:9; 11:10; Ephesians 3:10; and 1 Timothy 3:16, then each dispensation of human history has a unique role to serve in the accomplishment of that purpose.

¹⁵ Ibid., 119-120.

¹⁶ Ibid., 121.

¹⁷ Ryrie, Charles C., *Dispensationalism* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1995), p. 134.

¹⁸ Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *Systematic Theology*, Volume 4 (Dallas, Texas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), p. 321.

Since God's offer of the Millennial kingdom through the Messiah in His first advent was rejected by the Jewish people,¹⁹ God inserted a previously unknown dispensation into human history which is characterized by the impartation of many of the spiritual blessings of the new covenant to God's "chosen" people, i.e. anyone of any race who believes in the saving work of Jesus Christ on the Cross (e.g. Acts 11:17). "Since the church receives blessings of the Abrahamic covenant (Gal. 3:14; 4:22-31) by faith without being under or fulfilling that covenant, so the church may receive blessings from the new covenant without being under or fulfilling that new covenant."²⁰

Examples of the blessings of the new covenant common to both Israel and the Church include the regeneration of believers (Jer. 31:33; Isa. 59:21; John 3:5) and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit with its attendant ministries, e.g. teaching (Jer. 31:33; Ezekiel 36:27; Jer. 31:34; 1 Cor. 12:1-13). However, certain blessings remain distinct and will not be received by Israel until the second advent. "While the church, like Israel, is promised salvation, the forgiveness of sin, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, yet the church is never promised inheritance in a land, material blessings on the earth, and rest from oppression, which were parts of the promise to Israel."²¹ In the sense that this position distinguishes between the extent of the provisions of the new covenant to Israel and the extent of the provisions of the new covenant to the Church, it may be considered a two covenant position.

¹⁹ Pentecost, J. Dwight, *Thy Kingdom Come* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1990), p. 212.

²⁰ Pentecost, J. Dwight, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 127.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.