

## 9. Blessings in Jesus — Answers Jeremiah 31, Luke 22, Hebrews 9

**Review:** This is the seventh lesson in a series on an overview of the Bible. We have already learned that the new covenant is the fulfillment of promises God originally made to Abraham, the man of faith, way back in the book of Genesis.

**What three things did God promise Abraham, the man of faith?** God promised him land, seed (offspring) and a blessing.

**What were the physical fulfillments of these promises?** The land was Canaan, the seed was the Hebrew race and the blessing was physical prosperity in the Promised Land.

**What were the spiritual fulfillments of these promises?**

- The Promised Land was symbolic of heaven.
- The ultimate seed was Jesus the Messiah. The Hebrew race was symbolic of Abraham's true descendants: anyone from any race who has the faith of Abraham.
- The physical blessing was a down payment on the fuller promise to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham: the blessing of justification by faith that was made possible by Seed Jesus.

**Introduction:** We are all familiar with the fact that at the Last Supper, Jesus described His coming death on the cross as the start of the new covenant. Yet it is important to understand that the new covenant is not merely “a” new covenant or yet another covenant, it is “the” new covenant. Jesus deliberately called it the new covenant because He understood it to be the fulfillment of prophecy made by Jeremiah the prophet.

### A New Covenant Predicted

**\*\*\*\*What did the LORD declare that He would make (Jeremiah 31:31-34)?** He declared that He would make a “new” covenant, 31:31.

**With whom would this new covenant be made (Jer 31:31)?** The text states that it will be with Israel and Judah, 31:31b (whoever that is; more below).

**1. At the time of Jeremiah's prophecy, to what did Israel and Judah (Jer 31:31) refer?** See *2 Chronicles 10 & 11*. This was a reference to the northern (Israel — ten tribes) and southern (Judah — two tribes) Hebrew kingdoms. When Jeremiah wrote this (around 550 B.C.), the northern kingdom of Israel was no longer in existence. It had long ago been destroyed by the Assyrians (in 722 B.C.). In New Testament times the geographical area that comprised former Israel was known as Samaria (the name of Israel's destroyed capitol city). Also, it is likely that by the time Jeremiah wrote chapter 31 Judah had already been defeated by the Babylonians (Jer 29:1-2). Thus, Jeremiah's use of these terms would seem to be an idealized way of referring to God's people in general, since both nations had ceased to exist as national entities.

**Insight:** On the surface, this sounds as if the new covenant would be yet another Hebrew centric affair (with no involvement of Gentiles). However, God's expressed purpose had always been to eventually include Gentiles in His family. Thus, God promised Abraham:

ESV **Genesis 12:3** ... in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

The New Covenant started out with Hebrew believers, but quickly spread to include the Gentile believers.

ESV **Romans 1:16** ... I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

**2. According to Jeremiah 31:32, what will this new covenant *not* be like? See Exodus 19:1-6.** It will not be like the covenant made at Mount Sinai.

**According to 31:32, what had the people done to the covenant?** They had broken it.

**3. What does the name "new" (31:31) imply about the broken covenant (31:32)?** The adjective "new" implies discontinuity. Jeremiah specifically stated that the new covenant is "not like" the broken covenant. This is a new deal. It is radically different.

**What's in a Name?** The Sinai covenant is old in contrast to the new one predicted by Jeremiah. Hence the name, "old" covenant (as in Old Testament). Scripture goes on to repeatedly refer to the things of the Sinai covenant as the "old." For example, when speaking of unbelieving Jews reading the Law of Moses, Paul wrote:

ESV **2 Corinthians 3:14** ... they read the old covenant ...

Thus, it is quite biblical to state that the Bible is in two big sections: The Old Testament and the New Testament.

**4. Based on Jeremiah 31:33, what is one thing that would be different about the new covenant?** God's law would be written on their hearts. We know this as the law of Christ (1Co 9:21, Ga 6:2).

**Where had the old covenant's law been written (Jer 31:33)? See Exodus 24:12.** God's law had previously been engraved on tablets of stone, where it had often been ignored by the Hebrews.

**Based on Jeremiah 31:34, what else that would be different about the new covenant?** Everyone in the New Covenant would **1)** know the Lord and **2)** his sins would be forgiven.

**5. How was it possible to be involved with the old covenant and yet not know the Lord (31:34)?** The Sinai covenant was a national covenant made with the whole nation. A person could be a citizen of the nation and subject to its laws, without actually knowing the Lord, just like a person can be a citizen of the United States without believing in capitalism or the private ownership of property.

Unlike the old covenant, the new covenant would be made with individual believers rather than an entire nation. It is not possible to be party to the new covenant without knowing the Lord.

**Review: In Jeremiah 31:34b, what other blessing does the new covenant offer that the old one never did?** Unlike the old covenant, the new covenant will offer the forgiveness of sins.

ESV **Romans 3:20** ... by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

ESV **Acts 13:38-39** ... through this man [Jesus] forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

**Summary: What did we learn about the prophesied “new” covenant (Jer 31:31-34)?**

- Made with Israel and Judah (descendants of Abraham?)
- “Not like” the old covenant (“new” implies discontinuity)
- Law of New Covenant written on hearts, not stone
- Everyone in covenant will know the LORD (individual, not national)
- Promises the forgiveness of sins

### The New Covenant Fulfilled

**\*\*\*\*6. At the Last Supper, what did Jesus say the bread and the wine represent (Luke 22:19-20)?** Jesus said the bread represents His body and the wine represents the “new” covenant in His blood.

The covenant Jesus made on the cross was the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the New Covenant is to make the forgiveness of sins possible.

ESV **Matthew 26:28** ... this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

**How can you become party to the New Covenant? How can you get your name on the contract?** Good News: You don't have to be Jewish (it has nothing to do with your ethnic heritage)! All you have to do is have the same faith that Abraham had.

ESV **Genesis 15:6** [Abraham] believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

ESV **Romans 1:16** ... I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes ...

ESV **John 3:16** ... God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

**7. Each biblical covenant had a sign to remind people of their covenant obligations (rainbow, circumcision, Saturday Sabbath). What in Luke 22:19 indicates that the Lord's Supper is the sign of the new covenant?** The purpose of a covenantal sign is to cause a remembrance of the covenant, as in Genesis 9:16. Thus, since the eating of the Lord's Supper is to serve as a "remembrance," the Lord's Supper is the sign of the new covenant. (Water baptism is an initiation rite into the new covenant community).

**In common English usage, what does the word "remembrance" (Lk 22:19) mean?** In English usage, a remembrance is like a memorial, as in "the flowers were given in remembrance of the late Mrs. Smith." It brings to mind something from the past. Partaking of the cup and the loaf remind us of Jesus' death on the cross

**Word Study:** The Greek for "remembrance" is *anamnesis* (364); *an* means "not" and *amnesia* (basis for "amnesia") means "forget." To remember is "not amnesia"! More significantly, although *anamnesis* can indeed be translated "remembrance," it can also and equally be translated "reminder."<sup>1</sup>

**8. In English, what is the difference between a "remembrance" (Lk 22:19) and a "reminder"?** A **remembrance** is a memorial or even a keepsake, like a souvenir bought in remembrance of a vacation. It is backward looking. In contrast, although a **reminder** can be backward looking, it can also look forward. An example of this is a string tied around one's finger as a "reminder" to do something in the *future* (like to buy milk on the way home).

**The Point:** *anamnesis* can mean both "remembrance" and "reminder." It could be that the reminder of the Lord's Supper not only looks backward but also looks forward (more on this below).

**9. The literal Greek in Luke 22:19 reads, "unto my reminder" (see an interlinear). Is this "reminder" designed to remind us about something? Could it remind Jesus about something? To whom could this "reminder" belong? Why?**

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<sup>1</sup> Bauer, *Lexicon*, 58.

**Example:** Suppose you heard me suddenly exclaim, “That’s my picture!” What could I have meant? If I were pointing to a painting of water lilies, I would mean that the picture belongs to me. Conversely, if I were pointing to a picture in which I was the subject, I would mean that the picture was about me, but not necessarily that I owned it. Similarly, the reminder can BELONG to Jesus (it is His reminder) or it can be ABOUT Jesus. Actually, we would argue that it is *both*!

**Word Study:** The standard Greek word for “my” is *mou*, which is grammatically ambiguous. If the Greek in Luke 22:19 were *mou*, then the reminder could in theory be about Jesus or it could belong to Jesus. However, the word *mou* is not used here.

Instead, the more emphatic Greek word *emos* is used in Luke 22:19, not the more common *mou*. The possessive pronoun (*emos*) was used when emphasis was desired (as any basic Greek grammar will confirm<sup>2</sup>). Moreover, *emos* more specifically denotes possession. Jesus said *emos*, not *mou*. This strongly suggests that the reminder belongs to Jesus. He owns it. The reminder is for Jesus.

The word *emos* in the Greek is possessive, suggesting that the reminder is not just about Jesus, but that it belongs to Jesus. If *mou* had been used, there would be more ambiguity of meaning. The phrase might then have been translated, “do this to that you (the church) might remember me.” The word *emos*, however, always denotes possession. Christ’s memory, not the church’s, is in view. Thus, the bread of the Lord’s Supper is specifically designed to be a reminder for Jesus.

J. Jeremias (Professor of Theology, University of Leipzig) understood Jesus to use *anamnesis* in the sense of a reminder for God, “The Lord’s Supper would thus be an enacted prayer.”<sup>3</sup>

**What could it be that this bread (3:19) might remind Jesus Himself to do?** Jesus’ death on the cross made it possible for us to join Jesus in the kingdom of God. Without His past sacrifice, we would not be included in the future banquet. The bread thus reminds us of Jesus death on the cross. However, the bread also serves to remind Jesus that He has not yet finished (“eat it again,” 22:16 and “not drink of the fruit of the vine until,” 22:18) what He started (“body given,” 22:19). He still needs to return with His kingdom and commence the Wedding Banquet of the Lamb. The bread points forward as an object-lesson prophecy/prayer designed to remind Jesus to fulfill (22:16) His promise to return so as to eat and drink “again” (22:16,18) of the Passover (i.e., “do this so as to remind me”). It was to remind Him of His dinner reservation!

<sup>2</sup> David Alan Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 158.

<sup>3</sup> Colin Brown, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 244.

## The New Covenant: A Last Will & Testament

**\*\*\*\*\*According to Hebrews 9:15-22, what did Christ do that qualified him to be the mediator of a new covenant?** The old covenant was inaugurated by Moses with blood and almost every Levitical purification ceremony required a blood sacrifice. So too a blood sacrifice was necessary to inaugurate the new covenant; that sacrifice was Christ Himself.

**Review: In general, what is a covenant (Heb 9:15)?** Generally speaking, it is a contract between two more or less equal parties. The contract reflects each party's will. For instance, if you draw up a sales contract for a house, it basically says that if I give you my money you will in exchange give me your house. The regular Greek word for this is *sunthéké*. However, that is not the word used here. Instead, it is *diathéké*, which was used by the Hebrew community of a contract between someone in a superior position and someone in a lesser position. It is a settlement. An example would be a suzerainty treaty (like the Sinai covenant).

**10. According to Hebrews 9:15, what was it that Christ's death redeemed the Hebrew Christians from?** It set them free from the penalty of sins committed under the old covenant. (Remember that the new covenant began in a Hebrew context). This is in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.

ESV **Matthew 26:28** ... this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

**What does the word "inheritance" (Heb 9:15) mean?** An inheritance is something that is left to you when someone else dies. The person named in the will usually has no say in what someone else's will says. The new covenant is like a will in that it has an "inheritance."

**Based on Hebrews 9:15, who is qualified to receive the promised eternal inheritance?** Only those who have been called may receive the inheritance. You have to be named in the will.

The Arminian view is that your faith causes you to be named; you determine if you are named or not. The Calvinist view is that you will not believe unless you are named; God determines who is named.

**11. According to Hebrews 9:15, what made it possible for people to be redeemed?** A death occurred (Christ's death). Had Jesus not died on the cross, there would be no redemption.

**How is a "will" (Heb 9:16) different from a "covenant" (9:15)?** Both "will" and "covenant" are from the same Greek word, *diathéké*. A will is an extreme version of a *diathéké*. This word (*diathéké*) was used commonly throughout the Roman Empire to refer to a person's last will and testament.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bruce, *Hebrews*, 211.

Suppose a person wants to plan ahead for the distribution of his assets upon his demise. To do this, he would see a lawyer and have him draw up a will. Notice that the word “will” is in the singular; it is not wills (plural) but rather will (singular). A last will and testament is the expression of a single person’s desire or will. That’s why it is called a will. A last will and testament is unilateral.<sup>5</sup> It is a legal document representing one person’s will; it is not dependent of the consent of the heirs.

**Insight:** The new covenant is really a unilateral last will and testament. Its terms are the reflection of only one person’s will: *That of Jesus*. Upon his death, He left the promised eternal inheritance (9:15) to those who are called (that is, His heirs). Jesus alone determines who is and who is not named in the will. And, unlike a contract or covenant between two parties, the New Testament is one-sided. The terms of the will are going to be fulfilled without any requirement on the part of those named as heirs.

**Contrast:** The problem with the old covenant is that it was two sided. It was conditional. It had an “if ... then” sequence. It was based on obedience to **law**. The New Testament is not like that. It is based on **promise**. It is based on one person’s will (that of Jesus). Its benefits are inherited (you don’t have to work for an inheritance). Thus, the new covenant is rightly called the new “testament.”

**12. What is true of a will, according to Hebrews 9:16-17?** A “will” requires the death of the testator to make it operative. The New Testament really is a testament in the sense that it is the Last Will and Testament of Jesus. It did not go into effect until He died. In the will, Jesus named His heirs and left to them the inheritance of redemption.

**13. According to Hebrews 9:18-22, what was an integral part of the first covenant?** The shedding of blood was an integral part of the first covenant. The covenant was inaugurated with blood and under the law almost everything was purified by blood.

**How did Moses inaugurate the first covenant with blood (Heb 9:19-21)?** Moses took blood and sprinkled it on the book of the covenant and on the people.

**14. What unavoidable fact about blood was brought out in Hebrews 9:22?** See *Romans 5:9, Ephesians 1:7, 1 Peter 1:18-19, 1 John 1:7*. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

ESV **Romans 5:9** ... we have now been justified by his blood ...

ESV **Ephesians 1:7** ... we have redemption through his blood ....

ESV **1 John 1:7** ... the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin ...

### So What?

**15. What is the promise/purpose of the new covenant?** The promise of the new covenant is the forgiveness of sins. It has nothing to do with physical property, physical posterity or physical prosperity.

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<sup>5</sup> Bauer, *Lexicon*, 183. Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, 240.

**16. Who are the parties to the new covenant?** The testator is Jesus and anyone He has called as an heir of salvation (anyone who has the faith of Abraham). The new covenant is thus individualistic, not nationalistic.

**17. Is the new covenant conditional or unconditional? Why?** It is a covenant of grace and is totally unconditional. It is based on promise not law. If there is any condition, it is that of faith. However, depending on your view of predestination, it could be seen as totally unconditional if even faith is the result of grace. (**The issue is simple:** Does a person receive grace because he has faith or does he have faith because he received grace?)

**18. What is the sign of the covenant?** Arguably it is the Lord's Supper because the Supper is to serve as a reminder.

**19. What is the duration of the new covenant?** It is eternal (eternal life is offered, not ten-year life, not fifty-year life).

**2. In what sense was the new covenant made with Israel and Judah (Jer 31:31)?** See *Matthew 15:24, Romans 1:16, 4:9-12, Galatians 3:7, 28-29*. The new covenant has distinctive ethnic Hebrew roots. Jesus Himself was, of course, Jewish; the twelve apostles were Jewish, for decades the early church was composed almost totally of Jewish believers; the readers of the letter to the Hebrews were Jewish. Jesus said:

ESV **Matthew 15:24** I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Paul said:

ESV **Romans 1:16** ... the gospel ... is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Even though almost all the initial converts to Christianity were Jewish, when writing to Gentile Christians, the apostle Paul clarified that any person, from any ethnic background, who had the same faith as Abraham was his true descendant (**Ro 4:9-12, Ga 3:7, 28-29**). When it comes to the new covenant, what matters is your faith lineage, not your biological lineage. The new covenant is made with spiritual Israel and spiritual Judah, which ultimately has nothing to do with literal genealogy.

ESV **Romans 4:11** (Abraham is) the father of all who believe without being circumcised ...

ESV **Galatians 3:7** ... it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

ESV **Galatians 3:28-29** There is neither Jew nor Greek ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring ...



**Next week:** Inquiring minds want to know ...

- *Is there continuity or discontinuity between the Old Covenant and the New Testament?*
- *Are Israel and the church the same? (Jeremiah 31 states that the New Covenant is between God and Israel).*
- *What effect did the start of the new covenant have on the old covenant?*
- *Is the new covenant believer under the law of Moses?*

\*\*\*\* = ask the class this question before having the text read aloud.

**Advance Study Questions:** If you send out the study questions in advance, then those exact same questions should be covered when you teach to give the brethren feedback and to encourage them to study the Scriptures at home during the week.

**Teacher's Note:** These lessons were designed for a 45-minute session.

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