

SABBATH THOUGHT 2025-11-01—IS THE NEW COVENANT REALLY NEW?

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Some have questioned whether the New Covenant began after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Their thinking is that the New Covenant will not be offered until the Millennium or beyond because of this prophecy:

JEREMIAH 31:31-33 “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 32 “not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. 33 “But this is the [new] 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.

God refers to a “New Covenant” that is “not according to the [Old] Covenant.” But the prophecy continues and here is the crux of the matter:

JEREMIAH 31:34 “No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

It is obvious that all do NOT know God, so it can be reasoned that the New Covenant is not yet offered and still an unfulfilled future prophecy. It is somewhat rational since over half of the modern world either rejects the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or has not heard of Him. But is it entirely a future fulfillment?

Start with the basics. The foundation of the Old Covenant is a vow to obey the Law of God¹, which has been around since the beginning—even before Adam and Eve. Demons could not have sinned unless there was a law that defined sin². Obedience to the Law of God, however, is also the foundation of the New Covenant³. If the Law of God has existed from the beginning, then when was the New Covenant first offered? The answer requires knowing the difference between the Old and New Covenants. While both require obedience to the same Law, the promises of the Old Covenant were limited to physical blessings. Eternal life was only promised under the New Covenant. And, as far as anyone knows, there is only what is called the New Covenant that has a promise of eternal life.

Now the question is when was eternal life first offered to mankind? Adam and Eve, of course. They were offered the Tree of Life, the fruit of which gave eternal life:

GENESIS 3:22 Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” –

¹ Exod. 19:8; 24:3.

² Gal. 3:19.

³ Matt. 19:17; John 14:15; 1 Cor. 7:19; 1 John 2:3-4; 3:22-24; 5:2-3.

The Tree of Life is a central feature of the Kingdom of God, a habitation of eternal beings: "To him who overcomes I [*Jesus Christ*] will give to eat from **the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.**" (Rev. 2: 7). Existence of the Tree of Life in Eden meant that Adam and Eve were offered eternal life in the Kingdom, a promise of the New Covenant. Both covenants require obedience to the Law of God, so the principle differences between the Old and New Covenants are physical blessings versus eternal salvation, respectively.

The Tree of Life indicates that the New Covenant existed from the beginning of mankind's existence, but how is that possible? Was the New Covenant offered but then withdrawn after Adam and Eve sinned? No, because many righteous men and women came after them and received the same promise of eternal life⁴. Among the many examples were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who lived before Christ and the apostles who continued after Christ—all will have eternal life:

MATTHEW 8:11 "And I [*Jesus Christ*] say to you that **many will** come from east and west, and **sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.**

LUKE 22:28-30 "But you are those who have continued with Me [*Jesus Christ*] in My trials. 29 "And **I bestow upon you [the twelve disciples] a kingdom,** just as My Father bestowed *one* upon Me, 30 "that you may eat and drink at My table **in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**"

It may be hard to believe, but the evidence shows that the New Covenant with the promise of eternal life is not really new in terms of TIME—it has existed since the beginning. How else could the righteous men and women down through the ages have the promise of eternal life without the existence of the New Covenant?

So, why is it called new, then, if it predates the Old Covenant? Perhaps it is new because the Old Testament focused mainly on the Old Covenant at Mount Sinai. Or maybe it is new because it is the "better" covenant (Heb. 7:22; 8:6) wherein everyone is "a **new creation.**" (2 Cor. 5:17). It is not a very significant point as long as one understands the difference is eternal life.

It is hard to deny the biblical evidence that the New Covenant promises PREDATED the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. How is that possible? The answer requires knowing the REASON Jesus Christ shed His blood for the New Covenant. Did His blood create or inaugurate the New Covenant or was there another reason? Notice what Jesus said about His blood and the New Covenant⁵:

MATTHEW 26:28 "For this is **My [*Jesus Christ's*] blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.**

Jesus said His was the blood OF the New Covenant. He did not say His blood created or inaugurated it. What does that mean? If His blood created or inaugurated the New Covenant, He could have said "My blood IS the New Covenant." Pay close attention to the last part—the reason He shed His blood is "**for the remission of sins!**" Jesus blood removes SIN, it does not create or inaugurate the New Covenant.

⁴ Heb. 11:4-39.

⁵ Also Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25.

Why this distinction? The problem of any covenant with God is that SIN prevents sinners from entering into one. Blood is NEVER required to enter into a covenant with God if the person is SINLESS. God said, "**your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.**" (Isa. 59:2). SIN is the ONLY reason blood is required for any covenant with God!

HEBREWS 9:18-23 Therefore **not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood.** 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "**This is the blood of the covenant** which God has commanded you." 21 Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. 22 And **according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission [of sin].** 23 Therefore **it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices** than these.

This is profound. It says that covenants between God and mankind require the cleansing (purification) of sin through BLOOD! Blood does not create or inaugurate any covenant; it cleanses sin so people CAN enter into a covenant. This is true of both the Old and New Covenants. The phrase "this is My blood of the new covenant" is not saying that His blood creates or inaugurates the New Covenant, it is saying that the blood that cleanses sin FOR the New Covenant is His. The blood that cleanses sin FOR the Old Covenant is that of animals. Luke and Paul⁶ said it this way:

LUKE 22:20 Likewise He [*Jesus Christ*] also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "**This cup is the new covenant in My blood,** which is shed for you.

While it is worded slightly differently, it still says that the blood used for cleansing sin for the New Covenant is the blood of Christ. Now it makes sense. Both covenants required blood cleansing sin because all have sinned⁷. Everyone under the New Covenant was cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Everyone under the Old Covenant was cleansed by the blood of animals. It might make more sense for modern readers if it was translated, "This cup is the New Covenant through My blood." Regardless, no covenant is created or inaugurated by blood and Jesus blood was simply for the remission of sin.

So, how did righteous men and women of ancient times enter into the New Covenant BEFORE the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? The Bible does not give a clear answer, but there are a couple of possibilities. The first is what might be thought of as an abstract view of time from the perspective of an almighty God who said:

- "**I am God ... declaring the end from the beginning.**" (Isa. 46:9-10).
- "**The Lamb [*Jesus Christ*] slain from the foundation of the world.**" (Rev. 13:8).
- "**The works [of God] were finished from the foundation of the world.**" (Heb. 4:3).
- "**God ... calls [forth] those things which do not exist as though they did.**" (Rom. 4:17).
- "**So shall My [*the LORD's*] word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.**" (Isa. 55:11).

⁶ Luke 22:20 and 1 Cor. 11:25 are identical.

⁷ Rom. 3:23; 5:12.

God knows and declares the end from the beginning and ensures all things come to pass so it is more than possible that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was such an absolute certainty that God concluded Jesus was, for all intents and purposes, slain from the foundation of the world. His blood could then be applied to all righteous people from the beginning. After all, “with God all things are possible.” (Matt. 19:26).

The other possibility is that those under the New Covenant before Jesus Christ relied upon animal sacrifices to substitute for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There is no question that God accepted animal sacrifices for the cleansing of sin:

HEBREWS 9:13 For if the **blood of bulls and goats** and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the **unclean, sanctifies [cleanses sins]for the purifying of the flesh,**

Perhaps it was through animal sacrifices, such as those offered by Job and Abraham⁸, that their sins were cleansed so they received the New Covenant promises of eternal life. After all, animal blood was a shadow of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ:

HEBREWS 10:1-2 For the law, having **a shadow of the good things to come,** and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.

Regardless, the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for the sins of the whole WORLD⁹, which included—wait for it—ALL who ever lived! Jesus Christ literally bore the sins of everyone—past, present, and future! His blood covers the sins of those who died BEFORE and AFTER His sacrifice! Therefore, the New Covenant existed from the very beginning because the sacrifice of Jesus Christ covered sins committed even before it. The question of *when* the blood of Jesus Christ was applied to sins is unimportant—it absolutely did, does, and will even if it is hard to explain how.

Now getting back to the prophecy of Jeremiah. He said that God would put His Law into the hearts and minds of Israel under a **“New Covenant.”** (Jer. 31:31). How would God do this?¹⁰

ISAIAH 59:21 “As for Me,” says the LORD, **“this is My covenant with them: My Spirit [that] is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth,** nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants’ descendants,” says the LORD, “from this time and forevermore.”

Those under the New Covenant promises of eternal life have the Holy Spirit within them. It begets them with the seed of eternal life, which is why David said, **“Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.”** (Ps. 51:11). The Holy Spirit is the seed of the New Covenant promise of eternal life.

Now the question about the prophecy in Jeremiah can be answered. Recall that it said, **“No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me.”** (Jer. 31:34). The mistake is likely assuming that

⁸ Job 1:5; Gen. 15:9-18.

⁹ 1 John 2:2.

¹⁰ Also Ezek. 11:19; 36:26-27.

people will be gathered before God like the ancient Israelites at Mount Sinai. But stop and consider: how does someone KNOW God without being taught by others? Obviously, they are taught by GOD! This, too, is a PROPHECY:

JOHN 6:45 “It is written in the prophets [*Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah*], ‘And **they shall all be taught by God.**’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me [*Jesus Christ*].

Jeremiah 31:34, Isaiah 54:13, and Micah 4:2 all say the same thing—all shall be taught by God. When does that happen? Every time someone receives the Holy Spirit of God! Every single person, including the prophets who had the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, is taught by God:

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-13, 16 But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man **the things which God has prepared** for those who love Him.” 10 But **God has revealed [taught] them to us through His Spirit.** For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For **what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?** Even so **no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.** 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit [which] is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.** 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which **the Holy Spirit teaches,** comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ... 16 For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” But **we have the mind of Christ.**

The prophecy also never says that all will be taught by God at ONCE. The Feasts of God portray ‘harvesting’ people into the Kingdom of God. The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) is the small harvest and the Feast of Ingathering is the large harvest. God always starts small. Everyone with the Holy Spirit throughout time is taught by God. It does not require a gathering at the end-times like there was at Mount Sinai.

God dwelt with ancient Israel at the Tabernacle and Temple, did He not? Yes, and there was always a VEIL between them and God. Even when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Covering, there was a cloud of incense that obscured the Mercy Seat. They could not be in the actual PRESENCE of God because they had sin and lacked the Holy Spirit. The veil was only torn asunder when Jesus died on the cross because His blood finally removed sin and made sinners SINLESS in the righteousness of God¹¹. THEN the Holy Spirit came upon Believers. The veil is now gone and people not only enter into the very presence of God, He LIVES in them through the Holy Spirit. The New Covenant existed at the time of Adam and Eve, it exists NOW, and all points in between. If that is not true, then what was the covenant MINISTERED by Paul?

2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-18 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you or *letters* of commendation from you? 2 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 clearly **you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.** 4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as

¹¹ Heb. 10:14; Rom. 4:6, 22.

ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 7 But if the ministry of death, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away, 8 **how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?** 9 For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, **the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.** 10 For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. 11 For if what is passing away *was* glorious, what **remains** *is* much more glorious. 12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— 13 unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. 14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because **the veil is taken away in Christ.** 15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. 16 Nevertheless **when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.** 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. 18 But **we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image [of Christ]** from glory to glory, just as **by the Spirit of the Lord.**

Now read John 6:45 again and pay particular attention to the last part:

JOHN 6:45 “It is written in the prophets [*Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah*], ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ **Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me [Jesus Christ].**

Every person is taught by God through the Holy Spirit—read 1 Corinthians 2:11 again: “**no one knows the things of God except [with or through] the Spirit of God.**” At any particular time, God’s ‘classroom’ could be one person or thousands or millions. Jeremiah 31:34 was being fulfilled long before the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, it is being fulfilled now, and it will continue to be fulfilled in the future. Being TAUGHT by God and KNOWING God is through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, not a world gathered before Him in the millennium or beyond. It is also through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ LIVES in every person. Unlike the Old Covenant, God and Jesus Christ LIVE in people and TEACH them because they are under the New Covenant promises of eternal life through the Holy Spirit¹²:

GALATIANS 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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¹² Also John 17:23.