

July 23, 2023

The New Covenant (#TryObedience)

Jeff Rogers / Empty Nesters Bible Study
Jeremiah 31

Contracts are part of our everyday life. We accept so many it is mostly thoughtless as we do it (Think about hitting “accept” on your car’s GPS to the paragraph of legal jargon). They guide our behavior, set expectations of the parties to contracts (Covenants), and are the subject of many courtroom dramas. Contracts are a way of life for citizens of the US and around the world.

- When you hit the “agree” or “accept” button on the “terms and conditions” of your phone or apps, you have entered a contract that is binding. If you have a car payment, house payment, credit card, debit card, or membership to a gym, you have entered contractual and covenantal relationships. If you are married, you have entered a covenant, an agreement; it is a binding legal document.

Similarly, covenants were a way of life in the near-Eastern culture. They also form the backbone of the Bible’s narrative. They are a skeletal structure to Scripture and must be understood rightly. Covenants explain a lot about our relationship with God and what our expectations should be. They speak to our relationship to God today.

Covenant VS. Contract

- **Contracts:**
 - Either party is free not to sign a contract.
 - Terms & conditions can be negotiated items.
 - The parties are usually “*equal*.”
- **Covenants:**
 - While contracts are usually made between equal parties, parties to covenants are not typically equal.
 - Often, in Covenants, one party has no option but to agree to the terms of the covenant.
 - Covenants in the Bible typically follow the form of the near-east tradition of Suzerain-Vassal Covenants made between a conquering king and the conquered. There was no negotiation between the parties.
 - In the case of God’s Covenant(s) with Israel:
 - The authority of each covenant rests in God.
 - Each covenant was given in a period of crisis.
 - No covenant nullifies a previous covenant (Some contend it is one covenant to Israel that is further developed each successive time (Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic).
 - Salvation from sin is not obtained by keeping any covenant.
 - Significant negative events followed the instigation of each covenant.
- **Elements of a Covenant** (by way of the Covenant with the nation of Israel (Elements are Adam, Noah, and Abraham as well))
 - **The Preamble** (which lists the respective parties to the covenant).
 - **Exodus 19:1**, *On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.*
 - **Exodus 19:3–6**, *While Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: 4 ‘You yourselves 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, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, 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 that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”*
 - **The Parties.**
 - **Exodus 20:2**, *“I am the Lord your God,”* (The Lord is the Suzerain and Israel is the Vassal)
 - **The Historical Prologue.** **Exodus 20:2**, *“who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”*
 - This delineates what the suzerain (or Lord) has done to deserve such loyalty.

- In theological terms, this is the section of grace. The section answers the question of why the “Suzerain” deserves such loyalty.
- **The Requirements (Terms)**
 - (Exodus 20), in this case, were the 10 Commandments. These were considered morally binding on the covenant community.
- **The Blessing and Cursing** (Reward and Punishment – Ex 20:4-12; Deuteronomy 27 & 28) For Israel, the zenith of God’s blessing was seen in the Davidic Kingdom and into the beginning of Solomon’s reign. However, Judah is now exiled to Babylon. Jeremiah’s message has turned from judgment and wrath to hope and the future. During this prophecy, Jeremiah reminds them of their failure of the Covenant of Moses and directs their attention to a future New Covenant. This is the only specific mention of the New Covenant in the Old Testament.

I. The Certainty of the New (Jeremiah 31:31)

- A. The Newness of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 1-28 details the failure of Israel under the Old Covenant)
- B. The Gracious Promise of the New Covenant
 - 1. **Jeremiah 23:5**, *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.*
 - 2. **Jeremiah 30:3**, *For behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the Lord, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it.”*
 - 3. **Jeremiah 33:14–16**, *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. **15** In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. **16** In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’”*

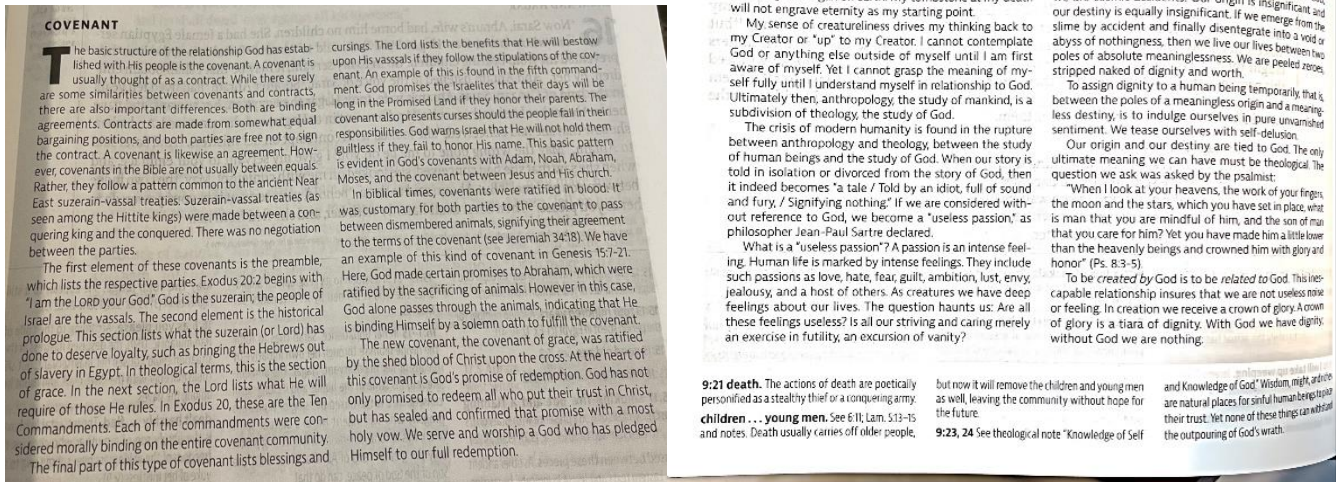
II. The Problem of the Old (31:32)

- A. The Old Covenant was broken before it could be ratified (**Exodus 32:19**, *And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses’ anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.*)
- B. The broken Covenant (compared to marriage infidelity v. 32, Jeremiah 2, Romans 7:7-13, esp v. 13)
 - 1. **Romans 7:12-13**, *So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. **13** Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good. . . .*

III. The Power of the New

- A. The new covenant promises RECONCILIATION.
 - 1. **Jeremiah 3:17–18**, *At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart. **18** In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage. Repeated **Jeremiah 50:4–5***
 - 2. **Galatians 3:28**, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*
- B. The new covenant promises REGENERATION
 - 1. **Jeremiah 31:33** *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.*
 - 2. Compared to the old **Jeremiah 17:1**, *“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with a point of diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars,*
- C. The new covenant promised RELATIONSHIP.
 - 1. **Jeremiah 31:33b**, *And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*
- D. The new Covenant promised SATISFACTION **Jeremiah 31:34**, *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*

- a) In his notes on this verse Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) wrote, “I think the difference here pointed out between these two covenants, lies plainly here, that in the old covenant, God promised to be their God upon the condition of hearty obedience; obedience was stipulated as a condition, but not promised. But in the new covenant, this hearty obedience is promised.”



Pain hurts and we want it to stop.

Fear of the unknown outcomes.

Jealousy, we want what God has not ordained for us.

Fairness, life is not fair, and we want fairness.

Love, if God is so loving; the pain would not be present.

God does not coddle our fears with false promises...

- The Word of the Lord in the Old Testament was/is perhaps more than we could ever imagine. The Word of the Lord was meant to be seen with the eyes and heard with the ears, and there are several examples of this in Scripture:
 - Abraham and the word of the Lord (Gen 15:1,17)
 - Samuel and the word of the Lord (1 Samuel 3:1, 4, 21)
 - Jeremiah and the word of the Lord (Jeremiah 1:4-5, 9)
 - **John 1:1–2, 14**, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

E.

F. What verdict would God give on your life?

1. Do we forget God in our daily life?
2. Do we establish our own righteousness rather than pursuing Christ's righteousness?

-
3. Do we rebel against the Lordship of Christ when given clear instructions & commands?
 4. Do we add any other “gods” in our life (money, positions, fame, stuff)?
 5. Do you love God like a newly married bride?