

The New Covenant A Covenant of Fulfillment, Fullness, and Finality

1. The New Covenant in the Unity of Redemptive History: One Covenant of Grace, multiple administrations (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6-18; Hebrews 8-10)

1.1 Reformed theology does not treat the New Covenant as a replacement of God's saving plan, but as its culmination. There is one covenant of grace running from Genesis 3:15 onward.

1.2 The Old Covenant (especially Mosaic) is a promissory administration

1.3 The New Covenant is the realized administration in Christ

Classic formulation: John Calvin: "The covenant made with all the fathers is so far from differing from ours in reality and substance, that it is altogether one and the same."

Herman Bavinck: The New Covenant is the covenant of grace in its "mature form."

1.4 Summary: Not two ways of salvation, but one unfolding drama, now reaching its climax.

2. Christ as the Mediator and Substance of the New Covenant: What was promised is now fulfilled.

2.1. The New Covenant is not merely new in time, but new in clarity, power, and fulfillment because of Christ.

2.2 Jesus is the mediator (Hebrews 8:6)

- His blood is the blood of the covenant (Luke 22:20)
- His work accomplishes what the Old Covenant could not: the Old Covenant revealed sin; the New Covenant removes it.

For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. ²¹ And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. 2 Cor 1:20-22

2.3 Three dimensions of fulfillment:

Q. 42 Why was our Mediator called Christ? A. Our Mediator was called Christ, because he was anointed with the Holy Ghost above measure; and so set apart, and fully furnished with all authority and ability, to execute the offices of prophet, priest,

and king of his Church, in the estate both of his humiliation and exaltation. (WLC 1:42)

- Prophet fulfilled: Christ is the final Word;
- Priest fulfilled: once-for-all sacrifice;
- King fulfilled: reign over a renewed people

3. The New Covenant Promises (Jeremiah 31:31–34): center of the book (“Book of Consolation” 30:1-33:26; contra LXX which places Oracles against Nations in the center of the book)

³¹ **"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.**

³³ **But 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. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

³⁴ **And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."**

(Jer 31:31-34)

- a) Promise of Deuteronomy 30; see Psalm 19, 51, 119; See also Jer 32:39
- b) Like “old covenant”: established by divine initiative and authority (“I will make”);
- c) Unlike covenant at Sinai which was broken, therefore “faulty” (Heb 8:7-8), though the fault is not in God (marriage metaphor, Eph 5:25-27; Rev 21:2, 9)
- d) *tôrâ* will be written on the hearts of his people, not externalized on stone. Promise of no disobedience: fulfillment is partial (1 John 3:3-9). “Know the Lord” rubric of the law. See the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7).

- e) New covenant community under new administration “They will be my people” from the least to the greatest (merism)
- f) Based in forgiveness of sins

The new covenant that provides a future hope for Israel as a nation totters on the brink of devastation involves points of continuity with past covenantal dealings as well as points of radical newness. The torah of the Lord shall be in effect, but now this law shall be inscribed on the hearts of God’s people rather than on cold stone tablets. Sins shall be removed, but apart from the repetitious offering of sacrifices. Knowledge of the Lord shall be the essence of the new covenant relation, but no teachers shall be needed to inculcate this knowledge.

O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 217.

I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. (Jer 32:39)

4. The Role of the Holy Spirit: The New Covenant is a Spirit-powered covenant

4.1 The Spirit unites believers to the risen Christ

4.2 Applies redemption

4.3 Writes the law on the heart

4.4 Guarantees perseverance This fulfills: Ezekiel 36:26–27, “I will put my Spirit within you...”

Important distinction: The Spirit was present in the Old Covenant but now poured out in greater fullness and universality (Pentecost)

5. The Church as the New Covenant Community: One people of God, expanded and clarified

5.1 The church is not a replacement of Israel, but its expansion and fulfillment (organically related in Christ, the culmination of Israel)

5.2 Gentiles are grafted in (Romans 11)

5.3 The dividing wall is broken down (Ephesians 2)

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5.4 Continuity: Same people of God Same promises. Discontinuity: No longer primarily defined by ethnicity, land, or ceremonial law, but now defined by union with Christ (see sojourners in the Old Covenant)

6. Sacraments of the New Covenant: signs and seals of fulfillment

6.1 Two sacraments replace the Old Covenant signs:

- Baptism replaces circumcision as sign and seal of covenant inclusion. Marks entry into the visible church
- The Lord's Supper replaces Passover. In it the believer commemorates and feeds upon in Christ, benefitting from his finished work. Remembrance and anticipation: "proclaim his death until he comes again."

7. The "Already and Not Yet" Nature of the New Covenant: Inaugurated, but not consummated.

7.1 The New Covenant is: Already: inaugurated in Christ's first coming. Continuing: through the work of his (Spirit-regenerated) body the church. Not yet: perfected at His return

7.2 This explains:

- Why sin still remains
- Why knowledge of God grows progressively
- Why the church still struggles

8. Key Theological Tensions in Reformed Thought: Where discussions often occur within the tradition

8.1 Who are the members of the New Covenant? Classic Reformed (Westminster): Visible and invisible distinction remains. Covenant includes believers and their children. (Reformed Baptist: New Covenant includes only the regenerate); Matt 13:24-30; Heb 6:1-8.

Relation to the Mosaic Law: Moral law continues (summarized in Ten Commandments). Ceremonial and civil laws fulfilled in New Covenant.

9. Summary: The Glory of the New Covenant

The New Covenant is: Better in mediator, Christ himself. Better in sacrifice, once for all. Better in power, the indwelling Spirit. Better in scope, all nations. Better in clarity, no more shadows. Or in classic Reformed cadence: Promised in the prophets. Purchased by the Son. Applied by the Spirit Proclaimed by the church. Perfected in glory.