**Prep for The New Covenant**

Hebrews 10:11–20 (CSB)

**11**Every priest stands day after day ministering and offering the same sacrifices time after time, which can never take away sins. **12**But this man, after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God., **13**He is now waiting until his enemies are made his footstool. **14**For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified. **15**The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. For after he says:

**16This is the covenant I will make with them**

**after those days,**

**the Lord says,**

**I will put my laws on their hearts**

**and write them on their minds,**

**17**and **I will never again remember**

**their sins and their lawless acts.**,

**18**Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

Ezekiel 37:20–28 (CSB)

**20**“When the sticks you have written on are in your hand and in full view of the people, **21**tell them, ‘This is what the Lord God says: I am going to take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them into their own land. **22**I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel, and one king will rule over all of them. They will no longer be two nations and will no longer be divided into two kingdoms. **23**They will not defile themselves anymore with their idols, their abhorrent things, and all their transgressions. I will save them from all their apostasies by which they sinned, and I will cleanse them. Then they will be my people, and I will be their God. **24**My servant David will be king over them, and there will be one shepherd for all of them. They will follow my ordinances, and keep my statutes and obey them.

**25**“ ‘They will live in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your ancestors lived. They will live in it forever with their children and grandchildren, and my servant David will be their prince forever. **26**I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be a permanent covenant with them. I will establish and multiply them and will set my sanctuary among them forever. **27**My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. **28**When my sanctuary is among them forever, the nations will know that I, the Lord, sanctify Israel.’ ”

**19**Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus—**20**he has inaugurated for us a new and living way through the curtain (that is, through his flesh)—

Jeremiah 31:31–34 (CSB)

**31**“Look, the days are coming”—this is the Lord’s declaration—“when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. **32**This one will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt—my covenant that they broke even though I am their master”,—the Lord’s declaration. **33**“Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—the Lord’s declaration. “I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. **34**No longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest of them”—this is the Lord’s declaration. “For I will forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will summon the grain and make it plentiful, and I will not bring famine on you. (Ezek 36:26-27)

New Testament writers pick up on this theme as well. Hebrews quotes the new-covenant prophecy of Jeremiah twice (8:8–12; 10:16–18). Paul contrasts the new covenant with the old in 2 Corinthians 3, and he clearly alludes to both Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 (2 Cor. 3:3, 6).[[1]](#footnote-1)

Here we see one of the most profound differences between the covenants. The covenant with Israel and the covenant with Abraham had a genealogical principle[[2]](#footnote-2)

(Isa 54:1-3, 13)

“Rejoice, childless one, who did not give birth; burst into song and shout, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of the married woman,” says the Lord. “Enlarge the site of your tent, and let your tent curtains be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your ropes, and drive your pegs deep. For you will spread out to the right and to the left, and your descendants will dispossess nations and inhabit the desolate cities.

Then all your children will be taught by the Lord, their prosperity will be great,

This prophecy is inserted in a context in which the Lord promises that Israel’s offspring will flourish, which fulfills the promise of offspring made to Abraham.[[3]](#footnote-3)

A frequent word in Hebrews is *better*, and this fits with the superiority of the new covenant over the old. In Jesus there are “a better hope” (7:19), “a better covenant” (7:22; 8:6), “better promises” (8:6), “better sacrifices” (9:23), “a better possession” (10:34), “a better country” (11:16), “a better resurrection” (11:35 HCSB), and “a better word” (12:24). All of these better things are obtained by virtue of Jesus’s sacrifice, which demonstrates that he is a better priest than any priest in the old covenant.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The new-covenant promise is found in Jeremiah 31:31–34, as we have seen, but that promise must be linked with the whole of what is sometimes called Jeremiah’s “book of comfort.” In Jeremiah the new covenant is inextricably tied to return from exile, as we can see from the following texts.[[5]](#footnote-5)

At the same time, the new covenant is linked with the coming of a new David. When the day of liberation comes, Israel will “serve the Lord their God and David their king” (Jer. 30:9). The return from exile is accompanied by a new leader: “I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David” (Jer. 33:15).[[6]](#footnote-6)

(Jer 23:5-6)

“Look, the days are coming”—this is the Lord’s declaration— “when I will raise up a Righteous Branch for David. He will reign wisely as king and administer justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. This is the name he will be called: The Lord Is Our Righteousness.

(Isa 51:10-11)

Wasn’t it you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the sea-bed into a road for the redeemed to pass over? And the ransomed of the Lord will return and come to Zion with singing, crowned with unending joy. Joy and gladness will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee.

Another blessing of the new covenant is the reunification of the people of God. Israel was divided into two kingdoms (Judah and Israel) around 930 BC after Solomon’s reign. The division occurred because of Solomon’s sin and idolatry. The northern kingdom of Israel suffered exile at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 BC, and the southern kingdom of Judah went into exile at the impetus of the Babylonians in 586 BC.[[7]](#footnote-7)

New Testament writers see this prophecy fulfilled in Jesus. Clearly, he is the new David noted by Ezekiel. The reconciliation of the northern and southern kingdoms is found in Acts 8. The Samaritans were separated from Israel and lived in Samaria. They had built their own temple on Mount Gerizim (John 4:20–21), though it was burned down by John Hyrcanus about 110 BC. The Samaritans didn’t fellowship with Jews who worshiped in the Jerusalem temple (John 4:9).[[8]](#footnote-8)

Philip, one of the seven (Acts 6:1–6), proclaimed the gospel in Samaria after the death of Stephen (Acts 8:4–25).[[9]](#footnote-9)

The Spirit was bequeathed only through the apostles. What we see, then, is the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy. The two sticks of the north and the south, Samaria and Judea, are now united in Jesus Christ. The unity of north and south is signaled by the summary statement found in Acts 9:31: “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

but how can promises made to Israel be fulfilled in the church of Jesus Christ, which is made up of both Jews and Gentiles? The answer of the New Testament is that the church of Jesus Christ is restored Israel. A number of lines of argument make this case.

In Galatians 3:6–9 and Romans 4:9–22 we see that those who believe in Jesus Christ are the children of Abraham. Gentile[[11]](#footnote-11)

The Gentiles during the old covenant administration were “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise” (2:12). They didn’t have the promise of the Christ, had no hope, and were without God (2:12). But through the death of Jesus Christ, Gentiles have been brought near to God (2:13).[[12]](#footnote-12)

The law with its commandments has been abolished (2:15), which means that the covenant made with Israel at Sinai is no longer in force. In the old covenant ethnic Israel constituted the people of God, but now there is “one new man” in Christ Jesus (2:15).[[13]](#footnote-13)

Jesus is the true Israel, and the restored Israel is marked out by those who belong to him.[[14]](#footnote-14)

We see the same thought in Galatians 3:16. Jesus is the true offspring of Abraham, and thus all those who are Abraham’s offspring (vv. 14, 29) belong to Jesus Christ by faith.[[15]](#footnote-15)

In “the covenants of promise” (Eph. 2:12), which include the covenants with Abraham, Israel, and David, it wasn’t clear what the status of Gentiles would be when the promises were fulfilled. The mystery, which was previously hidden but has now been eschatologically revealed, is that Gentiles are equally and fully members of the same body and fellow heirs with the Jews.[[16]](#footnote-16)

It is further substantiated by 1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.” Peter applies the term given to Israel in Exodus 19:6 to his Gentile readers. The Gentiles are no longer Gentiles! They are Israel, at least spiritually speaking. Clearly, the church of Jesus Christ is the restored Israel or the new Israel in the sense that it fulfills the new-covenant promises made about Israel. The promise of the multiplication of offspring made to Abraham is fulfilled in the church of Jesus Christ, which consists of both Jewish and Gentile believers.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The new covenant fulfills the covenant with creation, for now the last Adam, Jesus Christ, has obeyed where Adam failed (Rom. 5:12–19; 1 Cor. 15:21–22).[[18]](#footnote-18)

Adam was God’s priest-king in the garden, and now Jesus is God’s priest-king in the new creation, the new universe, the new temple. Adam was God’s son, but Jesus is God’s obedient son. Hence, Jesus, as the God-man, is crowned as Lord over all creation. All those who are united to Jesus Christ by faith rule over the new creation with him, for he is the true Son of Man in whom the saints enjoy the rule first promised to Adam (Dan. 7:13–27). The command to be fruitful and multiply is fulfilled in the many sons and daughters that belong to Jesus (Heb. 2:10–18). We see here how profoundly the covenants are interrelated, for the promise of land, offspring, and blessing given to Abraham are also elements of the covenant at creation. The land for Adam was the garden-temple, but the garden points to and is fulfilled in the new creation. The offspring promised to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15) is Jesus Christ; he is the offspring of the woman who triumphs over the Devil by his death and resurrection, and those who are united to Jesus Christ by faith and obedience also enjoy the promise that God will be their God and they will be his people. The blessing is not restricted to the garden, nor is it restricted to Israel’s return from exile in Canaan, but now it embraces the entire creation. The entire world is a garden-temple over which God reigns.[[19]](#footnote-19)

How does the new covenant relate to the Noahic covenant? The primary purpose of the Noahic covenant was to preserve the world so that God’s saving promises would be realized. We saw many continuities between the covenant at creation and the Noahic covenant, which suggests that the covenant with Noah was a resumption of sorts of the covenant at creation.[[20]](#footnote-20)

So how does the covenant with Noah relate to the new covenant? The call to be fruitful and multiply, which is reiterated in the Noahic covenant, along with the call to exercise dominion over the world, is fulfilled in the new covenant in Jesus Christ. Also, in Isaiah 54:9–10, Isaiah says the promise of future peace is as certain as the fulfillment of the promises made in the Noahic covenant.[[21]](#footnote-21)

The fundamental elements of the covenant with Abraham are offspring, land, and blessing. The promise of offspring is fulfilled in the new covenant in Jesus Christ.[[22]](#footnote-22)

The land promised to Abraham was Canaan, but in the new creation the land promise is realized in Jesus Christ. His resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:1–28) signals the arrival of the new creation in an already but not yet way. The new creation arrives in its fullness when those who trust in Jesus are raised from the dead because of their union with Christ. The land promise, the new creation, is then widened to the entire universe, which will become God’s city and temple (Rev. 21:1–22:5).[[23]](#footnote-23)

God and the Lamb will reign over all creation, and the universal blessing promised to Abraham will be achieved. Everything in the universe will be reconciled to God (Col. 1:20). Rebellion will no longer be allowed in the universe. Universal reconciliation doesn’t mean all will be saved. The book of Revelation and many other passages make clear that many will experience the second death, the lake of fire. Universal reconciliation means that all God’s enemies will be pacified, domesticated, and put in their place. The entire world will enjoy the beneficent rule of the true son of Abraham, the Son of God and Son of Man—the rule of Jesus Christ the Lord.[[24]](#footnote-24)

In that day I will restore the fallen shelter of David: I will repair its gaps, restore its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name— this is the declaration of the Lord; he will do this. (Amos 9:11-12)

On that day I will raise up the tent of David that has fallen, and I will rebuild its things that have fallen, and I will raise up its things that have been destroyed, and I will rebuild it just as the days of eternity, so that the remnant of the people, and all the nations upon whom my name was invoked upon them, will search for me,” says the Lord who is making these things. (Amos 9:11-12, LXX).

After they stopped speaking, James responded, “Brothers, listen to me. Simeon has reported how God first intervened to take from the Gentiles a people for his name. And the words of the prophets agree with this, as it is written: After these things I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. I will rebuild its ruins and set it up again, so that the rest of humanity may seek the Lord— even all the Gentiles who are called by my name— declares the Lord who makes these things known from long ago. (Acts 15:13-18)

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