



## Post Tenebras Lux Covenant Theology...

### The New Covenant Pt. 2...

### Hebrews 8:1-13

<sup>NIV</sup> **Hebrews 8:1...**The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, <sup>2</sup> and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man. <sup>3</sup> Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. <sup>4</sup> If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. <sup>5</sup> They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: **"See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."** <sup>6</sup> But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. <sup>7</sup> For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. <sup>8</sup> But God found fault with the people and said: **"The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. <sup>9</sup> It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. <sup>10</sup> This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. <sup>11</sup> No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. <sup>12</sup> For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."** <sup>13</sup> By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

Last week I promised to answer the question, **“Is the ‘new covenant’ new in the sense that it is completely different from the other covenants that went before or is it new in some other sense?”**

**“Is it the culmination of all that was promised to Adam, Noah, Moses and David, or is it completely separated from them by intention and design?”**

It is a worthy question. In fact, it is **“the question”** because it affects deeply how a person looks at almost every important theological issue. I pointed out last week that the manner in which one views the covenantal promises of God affects directly how one views things like end time events.

Some who view the covenants of God as disconnected from each other are looking for a full reinstatement of the religious nation Israel. Such people are usually dispensationalists. That does not mean that they are the enemy or that they are to be pilloried but it does mean that they have a much different interpretation of important theological issues and that their different viewpoint eventually impacts the way they understand certain passages of Scripture and possibly even how they understand the work of Christ. I think that the pointing out of those differences is good thing if it is done with a spirit of humility and meekness. I am freely willing to add that my own views are polluted by my spiritual pride and ignorance so that you should not take my words as authoritative but should search to see if these things are so yourselves. Nevertheless, the questions are still the same questions even if the messenger is less than admirable.

So the question before us is, **“Is the ‘new covenant’ new in the sense that it is completely different** from the other covenants that went before or is it new in some other sense?” The answer is, **“Yes and no. Mostly no.”** To answer the question completely honestly, I think the best way is to describe the new covenant is that it is new like in new and improved Crest or new and improved Head and Shoulders. It is not new in the sense of being a completely new and never before heard of idea. It is certainly new in the sense of being better or being the culmination of all that went before.

There are three reasons why I view it that way. The first is logical, the second is historical, and the third and most important is Scriptural. Let’s start with logic. The question I am compelled to ask is, **“Where are the Old Testament covenantal promises fulfilled?”** The answer is, **“the Old Testament covenantal promises are fulfilled in Christ in the new covenant.”**

Let me if I can prove that.

I have been arguing from the start of our study that each of the Old Testament covenants build upon one another. I have argued that they are like stepping stones building toward their great culmination in Christ. I think that is particularly easy to see in the fulfillment of the promises attached to each covenant. Let’s start with Adam.

The promise made to Adam and Eve was this:

**<sup>NIV</sup> Genesis 3:15...And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”**

Now, I ask you where was that promise fulfilled? Where was Satan ultimately defeated? Where was the wound to representative man great and the resulting wound to Satan massive? Was it not in Christ and His atoning work?

Here, too, the great fact of the sufferings of Christ is clearly foretold — “Thou shalt bruise his heel.” Within the compass of those words we find the whole story of our Lord’s sorrows from Bethlehem to Calvary. **“It shall bruise thy head”**: there is the breaking of Satan’s regal power, there is the clearing away of sin, there is the destruction of death by resurrection, there is the leading of captivity captive in the ascension, there is the victory of truth in the world through the descent of the Spirit, and there is the latter-day glory in which Satan shall be bound, and there is, lastly, the casting of the evil one and all his followers into the lake of fire. The conflict and the conquest are both in the compass of these few fruitful words. They may not have been fully understood by those who first heard them, but to us they are now full of light. The text at first looks like a flint, hard and cold; but sparks fly from it plentifully, for hidden fires of infinite love and grace lie concealed within. Over this promise of a gracious God we ought to rejoice exceedingly<sup>1</sup>.

Now, that was not written by a Presbyterian. That was written by the prince of Baptist preachers, Charles Spurgeon. His point was that the promise made to Adam was fulfilled in Christ. And we see that promised fulfilled in the very words of Christ.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Matthew 12:25**...Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. <sup>26</sup> If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup> And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. <sup>28</sup> But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. <sup>29</sup> "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

**<sup>NIV</sup> Luke 10:17...**The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "**Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.**" <sup>18</sup> He replied, "**I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.**" <sup>19</sup> **I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.** <sup>20</sup> **However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.**"

**<sup>NIV</sup> Ephesians 1:19...**and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, <sup>20</sup> which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Now, here is a really interesting thing. Spurgeon saw the covenant with Adam and the one with Noah as being connected. From the same sermon listen to what he says:

The torch which flamed within the gates of Eden just before man was driven forth lit up the world to all believers until the Lord was pleased to give more light, and to renew and enlarge the revelation of his covenant, when he spake to his servant Noah. (Metropolitan tabernacle Pulpit, Vol. 22. pp. 834-5)

Spurgeon thought the two covenants were connected. He thought that the promises God made to Adam were enlarged and expanded to Noah. And what were those promises. Let us see. What did God promise Noah?

**<sup>NIV</sup> Genesis 9:12...**And God said, "**This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come:**" <sup>13</sup> **I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the**

sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup> Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, <sup>15</sup> I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. <sup>16</sup> Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth." <sup>17</sup> So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."

Now, if I were to ask you, **"Where was God's wrath and anger finally abated?"**

What would be your answer? Where did God finally hang up His bow? He hung up His bow in the atoning work of Christ.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Romans 5:1**...Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 2:14**...For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Even the description of Christ in heaven recalls to us the Noahic covenant. Listen to what John writes:

<sup>NIV</sup> **Revelation 4:1**...After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." <sup>2</sup> At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with

someone sitting on it. <sup>3</sup> And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.

And it is the same with the Abrahamic covenant. What were the promises made to Him?

**<sup>NIV</sup> Genesis 17:6...I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. <sup>7</sup> I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. <sup>8</sup> The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."**

Now where were those promises ultimately fulfilled? They were fulfilled in Christ. How do I know that? Paul tells us that.

**<sup>NIV</sup> Galatians 3:26...You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup> for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**

Now, as for the land promises, they too were fulfilled in Christ.

**<sup>NIV</sup> Romans 4:13...It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.**

The Scripture makes two points about the land. First, in one sense the real estate that comprised Palestine was too small. Christ has been given dominion over the

entire world and Christians are not to be bound by the borders of Israel but are to take the gospel into the entire world.

Secondly, the people of God will never be satisfied with the world alone but are still sojourners waiting for a city, a country whose builder and maker is God. And God has prepared just such a city.

<sup>NIV</sup> **Hebrews 11:13**...All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. <sup>14</sup> People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> Instead, they were longing for a better country-- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

But returning to my original point the promises made under the various covenants are fulfilled in the new covenant under Christ. Where was the promise made to Moses concerning a great and future prophet that the people would listen to fulfilled? It was fulfilled in Christ and in the new covenant. Even during the earthly ministry of Christ people thought:

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 6:14**...After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "**Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.**"

And where was the promise of future circumcised hearts fulfilled?

<sup>NIV</sup> **Deuteronomy 30:6**...The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

That is the principle promise of the new covenant and it was fulfilled in Christ. And so were all the promises made to David concerning a future descendent upon his throne forever. Now, the point I am trying to make is this. The new covenant is the place where all the promises of God find their fruition. It is the place where all of the promises find their yes and their amen.

<sup>NIV</sup> **2 Corinthians 1:20**...For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

Historically, the fact that the promise of the previous covenants is fulfilled in the new covenant has been the view of most of God's great servants.

The covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same. Yet they differ in the mode of dispensation.(Calvin's Institutes, Book 2, Chapter 10.2 page 194)

That was the view of Calvin, Knox, Tyndale, the Westminster divines, Edwards, Whitefield and others. And though that doesn't prove anything in and of itself, it still cannot be lightly dismissed.

For it is also the clear teaching of Scripture. Just a couple of verses will do. First, Ephesians 2:11:

<sup>NIV</sup> **Ephesians 2:11**...Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "**uncircumcised**" by those who call themselves "**the circumcision**" (that done in the body by the hands of men)-- <sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the

world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

Finally, there is Galatians 3:

<sup>NIV</sup> **Galatians 3:15**...Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. <sup>16</sup> The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "**and to seeds**," meaning many people, but "**and to your seed**," meaning one person, who is Christ. <sup>17</sup> What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.

Now, the principle point there is that the promise made to Abraham was not laid aside just because of the giving of the law. In fact, the promise made to Abraham and the promises made to Adam, Noah, Moses and David were all fulfilled in Christ.

Finally, I received a question by email this week regarding one of the phrases from our first passage, Hebrews 8.

The question went something like this:

What does it mean when it says?

**<sup>NIV</sup> Hebrews 8:11...No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.**

The short answer is that it means that we have a new mediator and that mediator is Christ. We no longer have to look to a human mediator like Moses to explain God to us or to meet God for us. Now, we have the God-man Christ Jesus to make God known to us. Secondly, the indwelling work of the Spirit makes known to us the truth of God. We are no longer under a course of priests and representatives, who were shadows of what was to come, but we are a kingdom of priests, filled with the Spirit of God, under the mediator Christ Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Spurgeon, (Metropolitan tabernacle Pulpit, Vol. 22. pp. 834-5)