

# The New Covenant

Who is it with? When is it for?

Michael Penny

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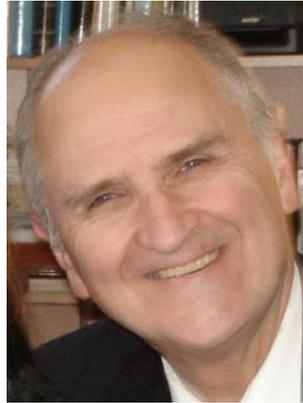
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## Preface

*The New Covenant 2*

“What is a covenant?” is, perhaps, the first question we should ask. It is an arrangement between two parties. Usually there is a mutual agreement between the two sides, an agreement such that each side is to do something, or not do something. Sometimes there are conditions attached to the covenant. That is, one party has to do something, or must not do something, for the second party to act. Thus in a covenant there are two sides, and there is an agreement between them. We could almost use the word *contract*.

If we move in certain Christian circles we hear a lot about “The New Covenant”, but familiarity does not always mean understanding. Because an expression is used a lot, we may *think* we know what it means, but that may not be the case. So ...

What is the New Covenant?  
Who is the New Covenant between?  
Is the New Covenant operating today?  
If not, when did it operate, or when is it to operate?

These are some of the issues which are to be considered in the next pages, and it is important that we consider each of them if we are to have a better understanding of “The New Covenant”.

# The New Covenant! Who? When?

## The New Covenant in the Old Testament

It comes as a surprise to some people to find that the New Covenant is mentioned only once in the Old Testament, although it is alluded to in Ezekiel and Isaiah, and elsewhere, as we shall see. The New Covenant is fully explained only in the prophecy of Jeremiah. There we read:

“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. 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 broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

When we consider the people who are to be part of this covenant we find that they are

- (1) the Lord, Himself, on the one hand, and
- (2) the house of Israel and the house of Judah, on the other.

In other words, the New Covenant is an agreement between the Jews (the people of Israel) and God. This, again, comes as a surprise to some Christians, but these verses make it clear by stating this fact *twice*.

“I will make a new covenant with the *house of Israel* and with the *house of Judah*.” (v 31)

“This is the covenant that I will make with *the house of Israel*.” (v 33)

It is further emphasized by referring to a previous covenant that the Lord made with the same people. We read:

“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.” (v 32)

Thus in the first three verses – in verse 31, verse 32 and verse 33 – we see it made very clear that the New Covenant is to be made with the people God brought out of Egypt, the house of Israel and the house of Judah; that is, the people of Israel, the Jews.

To understand better the New Covenant, and the people with whom it was made (Israel), we need to look at the previous covenant, often called the Old Covenant. We read of this in Exodus 19:1-8.

In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt - on the very day - they came to the Desert of Sinai. After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.

Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, “This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, “We will do everything the Lord has said.” So Moses brought their answer back to the Lord.

Here, once more, we read of the Israelites (vs 1 & 6), who are again referred to as the “house of Jacob” and the “people of Israel” in verse 3. There can be no doubt that this first covenant, the Old Covenant, was made with the people of Israel. Similarly, there can be no doubt that the New Covenant was made with the same people, the people of Israel.

Now the terms of the Old Covenant are quite clear. It is an agreement between God and the people of Israel. The core of it is:

“Now if you [Israelites] obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the

whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Exodus 19:5-6)

If the people of Israel fully obeyed the terms of the covenant, that is, kept their side of the bargain, then the Lord would make them:

His treasured possession,  
a kingdom of priests, and  
a holy nation.

Israel’s side of the bargain was to “obey me [the Lord] fully and keep my [the Lord’s] covenant.” What the Lord wanted Israel to do was to keep the Law He was to give them through Moses. This Law is summarized in *The Ten Commandments* of Exodus 20:1-17 and further requirements are given in Exodus chapters 21 to 31. Even more conditions are added later in Exodus and into Leviticus, and much is repeated in Deuteronomy.

However, Israel did not keep their side of the bargain. They had agreed to keep their part of the covenant with the words “We will do everything the Lord has said” (Exodus 19:8). However, within a few short weeks of making that agreement, they lapsed into idolatry, worshiping the golden calf and indulging in revelry (Exodus 32).

But that was not their only lapse. There were many, many more. It seems hardly any generation was able to keep to the agreement and keep their side of the Old Covenant. The book of Judges is full of the failures of successive generations, and the Old Testament is full of the failing of not only the people in general, but also their priests and their kings. Under the terms of the Old Covenant Israel would never ever become:

The Lord’s treasured possession,  
a kingdom of priests, and  
a holy nation.

If Israel were left to their own devices, they were doomed to failure; they would never fulfil God’s expectations. They would never become what God wanted them to be. In saying this we cast no stones at them for we all know that left to our own devices we would lapse and fail just as they did. So what was God going to do about this? What could He

do? What did He do? The opening words of Jeremiah 31:31-32 tell us exactly what God had planned to do for the people of Israel.

“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. 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 broke my covenant.”

The Lord said He was going to change the conditions. He was going to scrap the Old Covenant, and He was going to bring in a New Covenant. The Old Covenant was a *conditional* covenant; in other words, the people of Israel had to do certain things, and not to do others, for the Lord to do what He had promised. That is, they had to fulfil certain conditions in order to obtain God’s blessings. This can be seen in the little words ‘if’ and ‘then’.

“Now **IF** you obey me fully and keep my covenant, **THEN** out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.” (Exodus 19:5)

However, we will search in vain for the word “if” in the New Covenant. We can scour the words of Jeremiah 31:31-34 for any conditions that the people of Israel have to fulfil, and we will find none. Under the terms of the New Covenant, the people of Israel do not have to “obey fully” and “keep” the Law. Under the terms of the New Covenant we read:

“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 31:33b-34a)

The definitive ‘will’ occurs five times in this passage.

I **will** put my law in their minds.  
I **will** write my law on their hearts.  
I **will** be their God.  
They **will** be my people.  
They **will** all know me.

When the New Covenant comes in, God is to put His Law in their minds and write it on their hearts. There will be no idolatry, no atheism, and no agnosticism in Israel. He will be their God and they shall be His people. There will be no need for any evangelism to Israel, for “they will all know” the Lord, “from the least of them to the greatest”. This is the time when all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26). Isaiah may be referring to this time when he asks, “Can a country be born in a day or a nation brought forth in a moment?” (Isaiah 66:8). This may seem impossible to us, but this is what the New Covenant is referring to, the time when *all* Israel will be saved. And the reason why God is able to save *all* Israel is because of the last clause in the New Covenant.

“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:34)

In other words, the New Covenant is based upon forgiveness, it is built upon grace, its foundation is ....

Before completing that statement, we must tackle the third of our three questions. We have discussed *who* is party to the New Covenant (the people of Israel and God), and have seen the details (the *what*) of the New Covenant. It is *not* a conditional covenant, like the Old Covenant. There are no preconditions on Israel; there is no “if”. It is an unconditional covenant. God *will* do certain things for and to Israel, but *when*? That is the third question we must consider. The opening words in Jeremiah simply say:

“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. (Jeremiah 31:31)

“The time is coming.” That is all it says. But when is that time? Jeremiah 31:31-34 gives the details of the New Covenant, but does not tell us specifically when that time is. However, before passing on to the New Testament, we need to consider three of the passages in the Old Testament which allude to the New Covenant: one is in Isaiah and two are in Ezekiel. In Isaiah 59:20-21 we read:

“The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the Lord. “As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord. “My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I

have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever,” says the Lord.

This amplifies what we have read in Jeremiah, and tells us what will happen when the Lord puts His law in their minds and writes it on their heart: they will speak His words. However, the passage says nothing as to *when* this covenant is to come in.

Ezekiel was written later, at a time when the Jews had strayed again from the Old Covenant, been conquered by the Babylonians and were exiled in Babylon.

“You will bear the consequences of your lewdness and your detestable practices”, declares the Lord. This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “I will deal with you as you deserve, because you have despised my oath by breaking the [old] covenant. Yet I will remember the [old] covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting [new] covenant with you. Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both those who are older than you and those who are younger. I will give them to you as daughters, but not on the basis of my [new] covenant with you. So I will establish my [new] covenant with you, and you will know that I am the Lord. Then, when I make atonement for you for all you have done, you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation,” declares the Sovereign Lord. (Ezekiel 16:58-63)

Here the people were reminded of their past failures and were being promised that an *everlasting covenant* was to be established with them. However, again, there is no clear indication as to *when* that was to be. There are just two references to the “then”, indicating some vague time in the future. Later Ezekiel wrote:

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms. They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offences, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God. My servant David will be king

over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. I will make a [new] covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting [new] covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever." (Ezekiel 37:21-28)

Here Ezekiel 37:27 expands Jeremiah 31:33, and we read, again, of an *everlasting covenant*. Although there are many allusions to the future, we search in vain for any clear and specific indication of *when* in the future this covenant is to come in.

We can read through the rest of Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel. We can pour over the pages of Daniel and all of the Minor Prophets, and we will find not one mention of the term "New Covenant", although there are a number of allusions to it where it is simply called the "covenant" or the "everlasting covenant". However, none make it clear when it was to come about, and it becomes obvious that the New Covenant did not come into operation at any time during the days of the Old Testament. Thus we will have to turn to the New Testament, and when we do, what do we find there? Was the New Covenant in operation at that time, during the days when our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth?

## **The New Covenant in the Gospels**

Because our Bible is divided into *The Old Testament* and *The New Testament*, some people believe that the subject of the Old Testament is the "Old Covenant" and the subject of the New Testament is the "New Covenant". However, we can read through all of the pages of John's Gospel and we will not read anything about the New Covenant; in fact the word 'covenant' is not even mentioned by John. And when we open the pages of the other three Gospels we read nothing about the New Covenant until we get to their final chapters. When we do, this is what we read:

### **Matthew 26:19-29**

So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?" Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you." While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

### **Mark 14:16-25**

The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me - one who is eating with me." They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?" "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."

### **Luke 22:13-20**

They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the kingdom of God." After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

In Matthew 26 and Mark 14 we read simply of “the covenant”, but in case any are in doubt, Luke uses the full name, “the *new* covenant”. So first of all it is clear that the New Covenant has not been in operation during the period of time covered by the Gospels: it not being even mentioned until their closing chapters, although Zechariah stated that “The Lord, the God of Israel” was “to remember his holy covenant” (Luke 1:68-72).

Secondly, we see again that the context is all very Jewish. Here we have the Passover meal, the occasion when the Jews remembered their time in Egypt and how the Lord had brought them out of that land. It was on the journey out of that land that He had given them the Old Covenant, as we have seen. Thus it is fitting that the Lord Jesus should remind them of the New Covenant on such an occasion as the Passover, for the very words of Jeremiah 31:31-34 also mention the exodus from Egypt and the Old Covenant.

We should note that the people at the Passover meal, when the New Covenant was first mentioned by our Lord Jesus Christ, were all Jews. There was our Lord Himself, of the House of David. There were the Twelve Disciples, who were all Jews, and who, according to Matthew 19:28, are to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Nothing could be more Jewish than the setting we have before us. There in Jerusalem, in the shadow of the temple, twelve Jews met with their Jewish leader to celebrate the Jewish Passover. During that meal He took one of the cups of wine and He said:

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” (Luke 22:20)

And Matthew adds an important statement.

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28)

Here we see how it is that God can replace the Old Covenant with the New. He can only do that by forgiving their wickedness and remembering their sins no more (see Jeremiah 31:34). However, being absolutely righteous and just, He can only forgive and forget if the penalty for those sins has been paid. Thus there was absolutely no way the New Covenant could be brought in *before* Christ’s sacrificial offering for sin. To sum up:

The New Covenant is with the people of Israel  
It is a time when God's Law is to be written  
in their hearts and minds.  
It is a time when all the people of Israel will be saved,  
and all their sins forgiven.

An essential prerequisite for this was our Lord's sacrifice for sins. Thus it is certain that the New Covenant was not in operation at any time during the period covered by the Gospels. Remember the people of Israel, shortly after that Passover supper recorded at the end of the Gospels, rejected and crucified Jesus Christ. They would not have done that if the Law had been written on their hearts and minds. That being the case, when did the New Covenant come in? Indeed, has it come in even today? Matthew concludes his account, and so does Mark, by referring to a future time.

“Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom.” (Matthew 26:27-29)

Could it be that the New Covenant does not come in until the kingdom comes in? Or maybe it is the implementation of the New Covenant which brings in the kingdom? If the New Covenant, which is based on forgiveness, could not come in until after Christ had offered Himself as the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, did it come in immediately after His resurrection? That is a possibility that we need to look into. Thus let us turn to the time covered by the Acts of the Apostles.

## **The New Covenant in the Acts Period**

At the Passover meal the Lord had mentioned the kingdom, and the Acts of the Apostles opens with the disciples putting a question about the kingdom to the Lord. They asked:

“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”  
(Acts 1:6)

To which He replied:

“It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.” (Acts 1:7)

This was neither a “Yes!” nor a “No!” However, one thing is certain, the kingdom that they wanted was not there at the very start of Acts, and neither was the kingdom Christ wanted (if there was any difference), the one in which He would again “drink of this fruit of the vine”.

But if we understand anything about the New Covenant, it is obvious that it had not come in at the start of the Acts of the Apostles. Not only that, if we read the Acts of the Apostles, it becomes clear that it did not come in at any time during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. This comes as a surprise to some Christians, but it should not. The New Covenant is the time when God is going to write His Law on the hearts and put it in the minds of the people of Israel. It is a time when all the people of Israel shall know the Lord; they shall be His people and He shall be their God. Yet what do we find in the Acts of the Apostles?

We have Peter and John jailed and threatened by the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 4). We have Stephen stoned to death in Jerusalem by Jews (Acts 7). We have great persecution against the Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 8). There is Saul of Tarsus, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, breathing murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples (Acts 9). There was tremendous persecution of Christian Jews from non-Christian Jews! Thus it is obvious that the New Covenant did not come in at that time. We can state this categorically quite simply because not all of the people of Israel were saved. And it was the same after the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

This new Apostle Paul met great persecution from Jews in Antioch in Pisidia, and Iconium, and was stoned by them (Acts 13:45; 14:2,5,19). In Thessalonica the Jews there made life hazardous for Paul and the other Christians (Acts 17:5,13). And when back in Jerusalem, Paul was seized in the temple by Jews from Asia (Acts 21:27). And even in the very last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we read:

Three days later he [Paul] called together the leaders of the Jews ... they arranged to meet Paul on a certain day ... From morning to evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from

the Prophets. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. They disagreed among themselves ... (Acts 28:17,23-25)

Some of the Jews believed in Jesus and some did not! The Jews disagreed amongst themselves!

All this shows clearly that the New Covenant was not in operation at any time during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. If it had been, all of these Jews would have been saved. Not only that, there would have been no need for Paul to meet with them and to try and convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. What was it Jeremiah said?

“No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 31:34)

Thus if the New Covenant were in operation during the time covered by the Acts of the Apostles, then there would have been no opposition and there would have been no need for Peter, Paul and others to teach their fellow-Jews.

## **The New Covenant in the Earlier Letters - Hebrews**

Now, during the time covered by the Acts of the Apostles a number of letters were written. Some of these were written to Jewish Christians – Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1,2 & 3 John, Jude and Revelation. Others were written to both Jewish and Gentile Christians – Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians and Romans. Do any of these mention the New Covenant? Again, it comes as a surprise to some to find that only four of these fifteen documents have any reference to the New Covenant. The one that says the most about it is Hebrews, which should not surprise us as “Hebrews” are Jews. There are six references or allusions to the New Covenant in this letter.

But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the [new] covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

For if there had been nothing wrong with that first [old] covenant, no place would have been sought for another. 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. 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 [old] covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the [new] 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. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear. (Hebrews 8:6-13)

This passage opens by referring to both the Old and New Covenants. It states quite clearly that the New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant. The reason for this is that the New Covenant is founded upon better promises. As we have seen, the Old Covenant promises were conditional upon Israel fully obeying God and keeping the terms of that covenant, whereas the New Covenant was unconditional. There was no "if". As such it was, indeed, a better promise.

However, Hebrews is keen to point out that there was no fault in the Old Covenant. The fault lay with the people of Israel. They did not keep their side of the bargain. There was no failure in the Old Covenant; the failings lay with the people of Israel.

Hebrews then repeats, almost verbatim, the words of Jeremiah 31:31-34, emphasising again that the New Covenant is to do with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It has nothing to do with the Gentile Christians of that time. It has to do with the people of Israel, but again, at some future time, for it opens with "The time is coming" and so, it seems, even when Hebrews was written, the New Covenant was still future. And this is echoed and emphasised by the closing words of Hebrews 8:13. There we read that the New Covenant has made the Old Covenant obsolete and, at that time, the Old Covenant was aging and "will soon disappear". Thus at that time, the Old Covenant was still in operation. It was aging and, according to the writer of Hebrews, it was soon to disappear. All this supports what we said above about the Acts of the Apostles. From our cursory summary of that book it is clear that the New Covenant was not in operation, and we shall see later why it was not.

However, if the Old Covenant was aging and was soon to disappear, did it do so and what replaced it? The New Covenant? Or something else? Before answering those questions, let us look at the other references in Hebrews to the New Covenant.

For it is declared: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” The former regulation [old covenant] is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever.’” Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better [new] covenant. (Hebrews 7:17-22)

Here, again, we see a reference to the Law, the Old Covenant, the former regulation, and to it being set aside. The ideal was for it to be replaced by “a better hope” which had its basis in a “better covenant”, which could be guaranteed because it was underwritten by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. However, there is nothing in this passage which makes it clear when this is to be.

One of the references in Hebrews 10 again quotes directly from Jeremiah 31, but first it refers to the sacrifices of the Law of Moses and the duties of the priests.

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest [Jesus] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: “This is the [new] covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. (Hebrews 10:11-18)

Here part of Jeremiah 31 is quoted but, again, there is no clear indication as to when this shall come about.

The next reference in Hebrews 10 deals with those Jews who, at that time, were rejecting the Lord Jesus as their Messiah, and His death on the Cross-as the sacrifice for sin, which underscored the New Covenant.

Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the [new] covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:28-29)

In giving His life, the Lord Jesus Christ not only underwrote the New Covenant, He also became its mediator. However, we have jumped over one passage which refers to the New Covenant.

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance - now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first [old] covenant.

In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. This is why even the first [old] covenant was not put into effect without blood. When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, "This is the blood of the [old] covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." (Hebrews 9:11-20)

Again, we need to remind ourselves that the letter to the Hebrews was written to Jews and, as we wrote earlier, the cup of wine that Christ took on that last Passover meal, symbolised the New Covenant. It was the blood of the New Covenant for, as Hebrews says, Christ is the mediator of the New Covenant because the “blood of Christ .... set them free from the sins committed under the first [old] covenant”. Only after His sacrificial sin offering could God forgive Israel’s wickedness and remember their sins no more. His sacrifice also cleansed their consciences “from acts that lead to death” so that they would be able to serve the living God. It was impossible for the New Covenant to come in *before* Christ’s sacrifice. However, for the next 30 or more years, the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles, during which time Hebrews was written, it had still not come into operation.

There is one remaining reference to the New Covenant in Hebrews.

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24)

Here we read about the New Covenant and we read about the heavenly Jerusalem. Now we know that the heavenly Jerusalem is also called the New Jerusalem in Revelation 3:12 and 21:2. There we read that it is to come down from heaven and be upon this earth. However, that is not to happen until God has created a new heavens and a new earth, which comes after the millennium, the thousand year reign of Christ upon this earth (Revelation 20:1-6).

Peter says of this new creation that it is “the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13) and John says “the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:4). Thus it is pretty certain that the New Covenant will be in operation at that time. Does it, therefore, come in when God makes “everything new” (Revelation 21:5) or is there a possibility it comes in *before* that time, before the creation of the new heavens and new earth?

## **The New Covenant in the Earlier Letters – Corinthians and Romans**

1 Corinthians was also written during the time covered by the Acts of the Apostles. Maybe a few years before or after Hebrews was written. What does it say about the New Covenant?

In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. (1 Corinthians 11:18-31)

The wider context of this passage is interesting. As mentioned earlier, 1 Corinthians was one of the letters that was written to both Jewish and Gentile Christians, as there were both Jewish and Gentile Christians in the church at Corinth. In such letters, some of what was written was written to *both* parties; i.e. to both Jewish and Gentile Christians. However, other portions were addressed to, or dealt with problems that were of concern to, just one of those parties. For example, 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 are addressed to the Jewish members of the Church of

Corinth. We see that from the opening words of 1 Corinthians 10, which show clearly that Paul is addressing Jewish Christians and goes on to deal with issues that affect them.

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses ... (1 Corinthians 10:1-2)

Paul could not have written such words to Gentile Christians, this passage identifying his prospective readers with the Exodus, Moses, and crossing the Red Sea. However, we can see him turn his attention to the Gentile believers at the start of chapter 12.

You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. (1 Corinthians 12:2)

The Jews at Corinth were never pagans. However, the *KJV* makes it even clearer.

Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

And in what follows Paul deals with certain issues that were a problem amongst the Gentile Christians, but before that, in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 Paul deals with particular issues which were of interest to Jewish Christians, and it is chapter 11 which refers to the New Covenant. It should not surprise us that any mention of the New Covenant is in a section addressed to the Jewish Christians, for, as we have seen, the Gentiles literally had no place in the New Covenant. It had been made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It concerns a time when all the people of Israel are to be saved and when God is to write His law in their hearts and minds.

The situation we have here, in 1 Corinthians 11, is rather sad, to put it mildly. As we have seen, the association of a cup of wine with Christ's death and the New Covenant was part of the Passover meal, which the Jews celebrated once a year. During this meal several cups of wine were drunk and for a full description and explanation of this meal please read *The Lord's Table*, chapter 5 of *Think on These Things* by Ernest Streets (published by the Open Bible Trust).

It would seem then, that either at the annual Passover Meal, or at what some people called a 'love feast' which was held more

frequently, some of the Jewish Christians were over-indulging in alcohol, and getting drunk. Because of this, some of the Jewish Christians were “weak and sick” and some had “fallen asleep”; i.e. died (1 Corinthians 11:30). These were judgments (see verses 31-32) upon the Jewish Christians for sinning in this way. (For more on how the miracle of judgment affected Jewish Christians during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles, but not Gentile Christians, see chapter 14 of *The Miracles of the Apostles* and passage 36, “The sin that leads to death” of *40 Problem Passages*, both of which I wrote for the Open Bible Trust.)

However, without getting too far off the track of our subject, we can see here that the New Covenant is, in some way, associated with the Lord’s second coming. We have read:

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death *until he comes*. (1 Corinthians 11:25-26)

It would seem, then, that at each annual Passover Meal the Jewish Christians were expected to remember that one of the cups of wine was to be linked to the New Covenant, and that they were expected to do this until Christ returned. That being the case, will it be, then, at Christ’s return to the Mount of Olives that all Israel are to be saved, that the Lord will write His law on their hearts and minds, and all their sins will be forgiven and forgotten? Is that when they will become a peculiar treasure, a special people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation?

There is another reference to the New Covenant in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians. It is in 2 Corinthians 3:3-6.

You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Here we read that Paul, and the other apostles, were “ministers of a new covenant”. Because of this statement, and the fact that Paul mentions that his ministry was written on the “tablets of human hearts”, some people believe that the New Covenant was in operation at that time. However, as we have been at pains to show, it is abundantly clear that the New Covenant was *not* in operation during the period of time covered by the Acts of the Apostles for clearly *not all* of the people of Israel were saved and knew the Lord. What Paul and the others were doing, as ministers (teachers) of the New Covenant, were telling the people of Israel about Jesus, that He was the Christ, the Son of God, and that what they needed to do was to repent, which if the nation did, the New Covenant would come in. But not only that, if they did repent, what else would happen? This was made very clear early on in Acts. Addressing the Jews in Jerusalem, Peter said:

“Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you - even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. (Acts 3:17-21)

Here we see that if the Jews repented, especially of their sin of rejecting Jesus as their Christ and Son of God, then ...

Their sins would be wiped out,  
the times of refreshing would come,  
Christ would return, and  
everything would be restored (including the kingdom, Acts 1:6).

Thus it all depended upon the people of Israel. The Old Covenant was aging and was ready to pass away, but did it? This was the primary ministry of Paul and the others during the period of time covered by the Acts of the Apostles. They encouraged the people of Israel to accept that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God. They urged the Jews to repent, but did the Nation repent? Many individual Jews did, but many did not, and what about the leadership? What did happen in the end? We shall see in a moment.

Another reference to the New Covenant in the earlier letters comes in Romans 11:26-27 where we read:

And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my [new] covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

Here again we see not only a reference to the New Covenant but also to the fact that *all* Israel are to be saved and their sins taken away.

## **The New Covenant in the Earlier Letters – Galatians**

There is a reference to both the Old and the New Covenants in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. It is an allegorical passage.

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: “Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.” Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. (Galatians 4:21-28)

Galatians was also written during the Acts period and at that time some of the Christian Jews, the Judaisers as they are called, were insisting that the Gentile converts to Christ had to be circumcised to be saved and also needed to obey the Law of Moses; e.g. see Acts 15:1-5. That is, they needed to follow the terms of the Old Covenant. However, there was no need for the Gentiles to do that, as the Council of Jerusalem confirmed (Acts 15:19-21). And the Jewish Christians who took such a line were wrong and they needed to be reminded that the New Covenant was on offer, so why promote the Old? If the Jewish nation repented

and accepted Jesus as the Son of God and as their Christ (Messiah), then He would return and the New Covenant would come in. As such, as Galatians 4:28 puts it, they were the “children of promise”.

## **The New Covenant in the Later Letters**

There were seven letters written after the Acts of the Apostles – Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. However, there is not one mention of the New Covenant in them, and there is only one allusion to it which is in Ephesians 2:12. There we read that the Gentiles were “foreigners to the covenants of promise”, and that would include the New Covenant. From what we have seen, this should not surprise us. However, when we read through the last seven letters, what do we find? Before answering that, we need to return to the very end of the Acts of the Apostles to set the scene.

We have already considered some of the activities recorded in the last chapter of Acts. There Paul called together the leaders of the Jews who arranged to meet him on a certain day. On that occasion he tried to convince them about Jesus (that He was the Christ, the Son of God) from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. As elsewhere, some believed and some did not. However, on this occasion something rather different happened. As the Jews were about to leave, Paul quoted to them the following words from Isaiah 6.

They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

‘Go to this people and say,

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;  
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”

For this people’s heart has become calloused;  
they hardly hear with their ears,  
and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts  
and turn, and I would heal them.’

Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!”

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without

hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 28:25-31)

This is the final pronouncement of this judgmental prophecy in the New Testament. Earlier (e.g. Matthew 13:14-15; John 12:39-41; Romans 11:8) it had been quoted as a warning. Now it was fully enacted. Israel were blind and deaf because of their calloused heart. Under the terms of the Old Covenant they were to be judged, to be set aside, to be sent into exile, which happened a few years later when the Romans came in, conquered Judea, destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and took the people of Israel into exile, scattering them all over their empire.

However, now, at the end of Acts, God was going to work with the Gentiles, but what was He going to do with them? Put them under the New Covenant? No! He could not! That covenant, that agreement, that contract, had been made with the people of Israel and it could not be transferred, no more than the Old Covenant could have been transferred.

But what about those Jews who did believe in Jesus? What was God going to do with them? The answer to these questions come from the letters which Paul wrote during those two years in prison, mentioned in Acts 28:30, especially Ephesians and Colossians. There we read first about the Gentile position as it was.

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. But now in Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:12-13)

Notice that this states clearly that the Gentiles were “foreigners to the covenants”, and that includes the New Covenant. This is repeating what Paul had written earlier in Romans 9:3-5. Talking of “the people of Israel”, he wrote:

Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

So we see from this passage that the covenants, including the New Covenant, belonged to Israel. Thus there were significant differences

not only between the people of Israel and the Gentile nations, but also between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians of the Acts period. However, that all changed at the end of Acts, as Ephesians and Colossians makes clear.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two [Jewish and Gentile Christians] one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 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 [Jewish and Gentile Christians], thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away [Gentiles] and peace to those who were near [Jews]. For through him we both [Jewish and Gentile Christians] have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:13-22)

When we read through the Acts of the Apostles we see that the Jewish Christians continued to obey the Law of Moses, the Old Covenant. This was right and proper for if those Jews who believed in Jesus wanted to witness to the Jews who did not, their witness had to be credible. If the Jewish Christians had given up circumcision or Sabbath keeping, or if they failed to keep certain dietary requirements of the Law of Moses, then the other Jews would simply have had nothing to do with them. On the other hand the Gentile Christians were expected to obey just four rules (Acts 15:19-21), none of which referred to circumcision or Sabbath keeping. Neither was there included amongst the four necessary things for the Gentiles the keeping of the Lord's Supper to remember the New Covenant. Thus there was a big difference between Jewish and Gentile Christians at that time.

However, once the final pronouncement of Isaiah's judgmental prophecy had been given at the end of Acts and Israel, as a nation, lost its special place in God's purposes for the time being, then the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians were brought together, They were made one. This was accomplished by freeing the Jewish Christians from

the Law of Moses; i.e. they were released from their obligation to keep the Old Covenant. This is emphasized further in Colossians.

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (Colossians 2:13-17)

Thus the Jewish Christians were now not to worry about the written code with its regulations. They were not to worry about what they ate or drank, nor were they to be concerned about their religious festivals and Sabbaths. They were free.

However, if they were no longer under the Old Covenant, and the New Covenant clearly had not come in, as not all Israel were saved, what were the Jewish Christians under? And what about the Gentile Christians? What were they under? Quite simply, they were both under *grace*.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Thus the Jewish and Gentile Christians of that time, and of today, are not under the New Covenant. Rather all Christians are under grace. However, there are some things that are an integral part of both the New Covenant and grace. For example, part of the New Covenant is:

For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. (Jeremiah 31:34)

For Jewish and Gentile Christians after Acts and today, the same is true. Because of our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice for sin, He

forgives us our wickedness and He remembers our sins no more. Thus Christ's sacrificial death is the foundation for both the New Covenant, which is still future, and for the age of grace, which is present and which started after the events described in Acts 28:25-27.

However, apart from such common truths as these, the administration in the age of grace is quite different from that of the New Covenant. Not everyone is saved, and God has certainly not written His law on our hearts and minds. Neither are we under the Old Covenant. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Also, as we have said, Gentiles are not under the Law of the Old Covenant, and never were. However, God does expect us to live lives worthy of the name Christian. He expects us to do the good works which He has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:9-10). We will find lists of those good works in such places as Ephesians chapters 4,5 and 6, and Colossians chapters 3 and 4, and in the letters to Timothy and Titus. However, we do these good works, and live our lives based on them, even though we are not under any covenant to do so. We do them simply because we want to. Christ Jesus has died for us. He has forgiven us. He has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). God has given us His Son. He has given us every spiritual blessing and, in eternity, we are to be seated in the heavenly realms where He is now. There He is to show us the incomparable riches of His grace (Ephesians 2:6-7). If we have such a Saviour, if we have such blessings, and if we are to have so much in eternity, we will naturally, out of the goodness of our hearts, want to please the One who has done so much for us and given so much to us.

## **Conclusion**

We have seen that the New Covenant was made with the same people with whom the Lord contracted the Old Covenant; namely the people of Israel. We have seen that it will operate at a time when all Israel will be saved; when no Jew will need to witness to his neighbour. At that time God is to write His Law in their hearts and minds. They will be His people and He will be their God. They will become a special treasure to Him, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

The New Covenant could not have come in until *after* the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, we found it did not come in at that time and neither did it come in during the time covered by the

Acts of the Apostles, although it could have if the people of Israel had repented of their sin of rejecting Jesus as their Messiah and the Son of God. In the end, through a continual hardness of heart, the nation of Israel lost its privileged position before God (Acts 28:25-28). He freed individual Jewish Christians from their obligation to the Law under the terms of the Old Covenant, but the New Covenant still did not come in. The Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians of that time were brought together under grace, as seen in the later letters of Paul, and such is the situation today. Sometime in the future the Lord will again work with the people of Israel, and, at Christ's return to the Mount of Olives, it seems that the nation of Israel will be "born in a day", all Israel will be saved, and the New Covenant will be in force. What a day that will be!

## Application

Christians in this age are not under the New Covenant, but we have some wonderful blessings from the Lord. We read that we are "holy and blameless in his sight" (Ephesians 1:4); that we are "holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation" (Colossians 1:22). As such it is equally true of us that God has forgiven our wickedness and remembers our sins no more (cp. Jeremiah 31:34).

The basis of the New Covenant is grace, available to Israel because of Christ's sacrifice for their sin. However, Christ was the Lamb of God Who took away the sin of the world. As such, grace and His death are the basis of our salvation too. As we read in Ephesians 2:8, "by grace you have been saved, through faith."

However, when the New Covenant comes in, *all* Israel will be saved and there will be no need for a Jew "to teach his neighbour or his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord'" for they will *all* know Him. That is most definitely *not* the situation today, and Paul's instruction to Timothy, to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5), is equally necessary for us living in this age of grace.

# Appendix

## The Covenants

Some Christians, perhaps through not understanding fully the age of grace in which we live, feel it is wrong that we are not under some covenant with God. However, apart from the covenant made with Noah in Genesis 9, every other covenant God has made, has been made with the people of Israel. This is what Paul wrote concerning this matter.

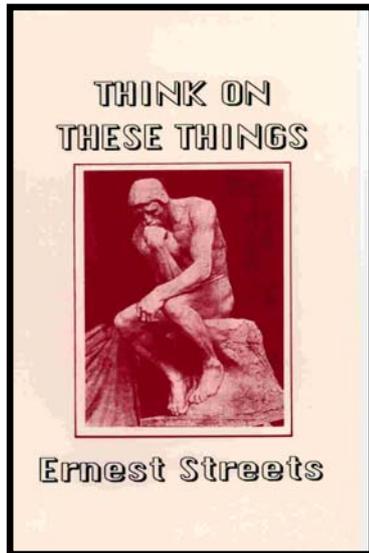
I speak the truth in Christ - I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit - I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, *the covenants*, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. (Romans 9:1-5)

The covenants belong to Israel, just as much as the Law and temple worship. And the New Covenant belongs to Israel, just as much as the Old Covenant does. For more on this subject, please see chapter 4, *The Covenants*, in *Think on These Things* written by Ernest Streets and published by the Open Bible Trust; see next page for more details of this book.

## Further reading on this subject

### ***Think on these things***

by Ernest Streets (£6:00; \$12.00)



*Think on these things* deals with a number of well-known subjects, including *The Covenants* and *The Lord's Supper*, subjects directly related to *The New Covenant*.

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Other subjects covered include .....

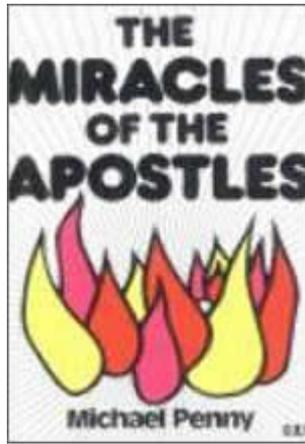
Paul's ministry,  
The believer's hope,  
The Gospel of Salvation,  
The Gospel of John,  
Understanding the Bible,  
The Body of Christ,  
Mark 16:17,  
The last 12 verses of Mark's Gospel,  
The churches and the Church,  
The mystery of the gospel,  
God's eternal purpose ..... and more.

### ***Think on these things* by Ernest Streets**

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*The New Covenant* 32



## *The Miracles of the Apostles*

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