

Berean's Emphasis on the New Covenant

The longer you are part of Berean, the more you will realize how often we emphasize the importance of the New Covenant (NC). Because Christians use the term "covenant" in different ways, we need to clarify our understanding of biblical covenants. We affirm that the NC, rather than the covenant of grace, is the covenant under which believers live today. We do not understand the New Covenant to be merely another administration or dispensation of a covenant of grace (Westminster Confession of Faith 7.6).

In Jeremiah 31, the prophet announced that a New Covenant was coming: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (v. 31). For all who have been born again, Christ is their Lord and Savior, and this is their covenant. Paul calls believers "ministers of the new covenant" (2Co 3:6). When we observe the Lord's Supper, we celebrate our inclusion in the NC through Christ our Lord (1Co 11:25; see also Eph 2:12–22).

While fully acknowledging the continuity of a single story of redemption that begins in the Garden of Eden and culminates in Christ and His church, we do not use the language of "a covenant of grace." This in no way diminishes our understanding of God's grace from the beginning, but the term "covenant of grace" means different things to different people. We believe the covenant of grace is a theological construct rather than a covenant explicitly stated or written in Scripture.

At Berean, we want to be faithful to the Bible's narrative by honoring both its continuity and its discontinuity. Continuity refers to the unchanging truths and promises that run throughout the story of redemption. Examples include one God, one plan of redemption, salvation by grace through faith, God's unchanging character, and the promised Messiah fulfilled in Christ. Discontinuity refers to the genuine changes God introduces as His revelation unfolds through the biblical covenants. For example, in Exodus 19, Israel came under the Law of Moses, inaugurated at Mount Sinai. Later, Christ's once-for-all sacrifice brought the Mosaic Covenant system to its intended fulfillment and inaugurated the NC. We seek to teach both continuity and discontinuity. Our emphasis on the New Covenant enables us to compare and contrast the biblical covenants, showing how each contributes to the unfolding story of redemption and finds its fulfillment in Christ.

When Jesus instituted the "new" covenant (Luke 22:20), we understand that He inaugurated something genuinely new—not merely another dispensation of the covenant of grace. While everyone will tacitly affirm the NC's newness, we believe some perspectives diminish its radical newness. When Christ died, the veil was torn in two, the old covenant ended, and the NC began (Heb 8:13, 9:15–17). The NC, and it alone, is the final, eternal covenant (Heb 13:20). Consequently, we do not believe Scripture teaches separate New Covenants for Israel and the church (Gal. 3:28–29).

The New Covenant is "new" because it shifts the relationship between God and humanity from an external legal system to an internal transformation of the heart (Eze 36:27). Consider three examples:

1. Circumcision is no longer external and physical. Instead, it is internal and spiritual (Rom 2:28–29).
2. The law is written on the hearts of God's people, not on stone tablets (Jer 31:33).
3. The temple is no longer a building to visit; instead, the believer is the temple of the living God (1Co 3:16).

These are only a few examples of the profound transformation brought by Christ. For this reason, we understand the New Covenant not as part of a larger covenant but as the climactic fulfillment of God's covenant promises beginning in Gen 3:15. Christ Jesus is the mediator of only the New Covenant—that alone makes it radically different and substantially better in every regard (Heb 9:15).

Our emphasis on the NC is ultimately an emphasis on Christ and His gospel. This is not meant to suggest that others are not doing so, nor is it intended as a criticism of believers who hold different theological convictions. Rather, it explains why Berean does not use “covenant of grace” or dispensational language and why we emphasize the NC. At the same time, we gladly affirm the indispensable role of the Old Testament as the foundation that prepares the way for Christ and the New Testament.