



# Lesson Four

## What is the New Covenant?

### Covenants Defined

**Imagine** a young man is moving out of his parent's house for the first time. So he can save money for his first home without the responsibilities – and costs – of homeownership, the man decides to rent an apartment rather than buy. Before he can move into his new living quarters, however, he must sign a lease. A lease is a contractual agreement that both the tenant and the landlord sign that establishes

certain conditions for the man to move in. The man agrees to pay a certain amount each month for the right to live in the property while the landlord agrees that, if the man is paying his rent each month, he can live on the landlord's property. The lease is a legally binding document that if either party breaks, the other may be entitled to damages.

Like this renter in his new

home, God forms contracts with humanity. These contracts, known as “covenants”, establish an official and binding relationship between God and humankind.



Like a landlord and a new tenant, a covenant is a lease agreement between two or more individuals

A covenant is a lease agreement between two or more parties, with promises that each party agrees to keep. The difference between a covenant and a lease, such as in our example, was that a lease contract is a legally binding document while a covenant is a spiritual promise. Today, contracts are

made legal through signatures of each involved party. In ancient times, a covenant was usually sealed with a sacrifice, and was kept with an everlasting reminder of the promises that were made. Together, these two things help define a covenant: the *sacrificial seal* and an *everlasting symbol* of the promise.

Covenants come in two forms: promissory covenants, where one party makes a pledge to another with no expectation of repayment, or obligatory covenants, where both parties make promises of obligation to the other. You can think of a lease for an apartment as an obligatory covenant; both the landlord and the tenant are making promises to the other (the landlord promises the tenant they can live in the apartment while the tenant promises the

landlord monetary compensation).

There are many examples of covenants found in the bible. That is because God has used covenants to build lasting relationships with mankind. However, not all of these covenants remain in tact. Why is that?

Even though God is perfect, mankind is not. A covenant agreement is done away with whenever either party breaks the promises they made. God has never broken His promises to mankind. Yet the same can NOT be applied in reverse. Mankind has broken every covenant we have made with God. Let's look at a few examples of covenants found in the bible.

The Edenic Covenant was a promise between God and Adam in the Garden of Eden. God made certain promises

to Adam: that he would live in paradise and prosper (Genesis 1:28-31). His only condition was that Adam was to refrain from eating the fruit of one specific tree (Genesis 2:16-17). We all know how that story ended. Adam broke his covenantal promise, and was justifiably ousted from Eden.

An example of a promisory covenant can be found in the story of Noah. In this narrative, Yahweh was angered by the mixing of angels and humans to form dangerous half-breeds. He flooded the earth, wiping out most of mankind save the family of Noah. Afterwards, Yahweh regretted the destruction He'd caused, and promised to never destroy the earth by a flood again. We can see the everlasting symbol of this promise to this day in the form of a rainbow.



The rainbow serves as an everlasting reminder of God's covenant with Noah

Another important covenant found in the bible is that of the Covenant of Moses, or the Covenant of Law. When Moses lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, he helped them mediate a covenant between Yahweh God and the people of Israel. Yahweh vowed He would be their God, that He would guide them, and help them fight their battles on earth. He would protect them and look out for them all their days. In return, the people were to serve Yahweh, to worship

Him and only Him. They were to honor Him by obeying His commands, which is a form of love towards God (1 John 5:3).

For centuries, this covenant lasted between Israel and Yahweh God. Yet, eventually, this covenant, too, would be broken. Yahweh got fed up with the Israelites stringent disobedience. Something had to be done.

**Discussion:** Why do you think Yahweh uses covenants?

# The New Covenant Promises



For a long time, God's active contract with humanity was the Covenant of Law, which we now call the *Old Covenant*. When ancient Israel did not keep their end of the promises, they broke the covenant in their hearts. Recognizing that there was no fixing the relationship that had been broken, Yahweh Himself declared His intention to make a **new covenant** (Jeremiah 31:31). Yahweh first used this to save the people of Israel, but eventually, it would be used to save to all of humankind (John 10:16, Acts 15:7-9).

**Discussion:** Read Ezekiel 17:19 and discuss the following:

Why did Yahweh do away

the Old Covenant?

This covenant would be made more special than the former covenants. Why? The bible says that the New Covenant was built on "better promises" than former covenants (Hebrews 8:6). God also establishes that unlike previous covenants, this covenant would last forever (Hebrews 13:20). When we examine the New Covenant, we need to remember that, rather than replace the former covenants, the New Covenant is designed to *fulfill* old covenants.

When God made His Covenant with Abraham, He promised, "And I will establish my covenant

between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.” (Genesis 17:17, ESV). At first, the Israelites assumed that those words were in reference to the covenant Yahweh made with them. However, the Apostle Paul clarifies that Yahweh was referring to the *New Covenant* when He said those words (Read: Galatians 3:16).

**Discussion:** Go over our Read scripture and discuss the following:

What was Yahweh referring to when He promised Abraham to make a covenant with his offspring?

To see how the New Covenant is better than the covenants that came before,

we need to know what promises Yahweh makes in the New Covenant, and what His expectations are for us. We can find this information in the book of Jeremiah. It says, “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: *I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for *they shall all know me*, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will *forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*” (Jeremiah 31:33-34, ESV). There’s a lot to digest from that. Let’s break it down.

Yahweh says that He will put the Law in our hearts. What does that mean? Yahweh

knows that we are incapable of fulfilling the Law because of our imperfection. By “putting the Law in our hearts”, Yahweh is saying that He will give us the inclination to do what is right by His standards. The scripture goes as far as to say, “they shall all know me”. Through His active power, or His holy spirit, Yahweh grants us some of His divine wisdom, strength, and courage to follow the Law in spirit (Romans 8:26). No longer are we bound by the letter of the Law; instead, we are to follow the *spirit* of the law.



Like a dove descending from heaven, Yahweh grants His holy spirit to give us the strength and heart to keep His law.

Although we are imperfect and will fail at keeping the Law, Yahweh has made a special arrangement for us in the promises He makes. Notice where it says, “I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” This is very important. The bible says we all have sin (Romans 3:23). The bible also confirms that the punishment of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

*By forgiving our sins, God gives us the chance to live forever.* Yet Yahweh goes a step further. He not only forgives our sins, but *forgets* them, making us essentially blameless! Of course, we still sin and die. Does that mean that Yahweh is not upholding His end of the covenant? Absolutely not! God is not promising us that we will be sin-free, rather that He will choose to overlook our sins on account of our faith.

# Jesus and the New Covenant



Like most covenants, the New Covenant was sealed with a sacrifice. This wasn't just any sacrifice, however. Yahweh chose to signify the importance of this sacrifice by sacrificing *His own son*. Why?

When Adam brought sin and death into the world, he was a perfect, or sinless, man. Only the death of a perfect life could pay for the sin that Adam lost (Hebrews 10:14, Read: Romans 5:18-19). Forgiveness for sin could only come from a perfect sacrifice. Because Jesus was born by way of holy spirit, he did not inherit the sin of Adam. Jesus was perfect, or sinless, by birth.

Jesus' ransom sacrifice was a

means for Yahweh God to heal us all from sin. Remember, Jesus didn't just die for our sins. In written scripture it says, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24, ESV). In his sacrifice, Jesus took the rightful punishment for our sins. More than that, when Jesus was on the cross, *he bore our own sins in place of us*, enabling us to be justified. Our sins became his sins in that moment.

**Discussion:** Why did Yahweh choose Jesus to serve as the sacrifice of the New Covenant?

Jesus confirmed that his

sacrifice was the seal of the New Covenant (Luke 22:20). To join the New Covenant, we are required to partake in that sacrifice. Thankfully, that doesn't mean we need to be washed in Jesus' actual blood. God allows us to partake in Jesus's sacrifice through a new method. Started by John the Baptist, the method by which one enters the New Covenant today is baptism. Jesus himself was baptized before the start of his ministry, which serves as a signal to us today that baptism is the seal of the New Covenant (1 Peter 3:21). You cannot enter the New Covenant without being baptized (Read: John 3:5).



Baptism is the only way into the New Covenant

Like most covenants, the New Covenant has a symbol that serves as an everlasting reminder of the promises we made in the covenant, and the promises made to us. In the New Covenant, the *Passover Memorial* serves as the everlasting symbol.

Jesus commanded us to remember his death by eating unleavened bread and drinking wine, or grape juice (Luke 22:19). This annual tradition of eating the bread and drinking the wine (or grape juice) not only reminds us of the blessings in store for us but proclaims our faith to the world (1 Corinthians 11:26). This is a command, and every baptized believer should take part.

**Discussion:** What is the seal and what is the everlasting symbol of the New Covenant?

Yahweh God heavily rewarded Jesus for his role in bringing about the New Covenant. Jesus obeyed his Father unto his own death. That kind of loyalty is cherished by Yahweh. Three days after his death, Yahweh resurrected Jesus back to life (Luke 24). After appearing to his disciples, Jesus ascended back into heaven, from which he'd come.

**Discussion:** Read Luke 24 and discuss the following:

How did Yahweh reward Jesus for his obedience?

Once he had ascended to his Father's right hand, Yahweh granted Jesus further reward. Jesus was named King of Kings, meaning he was granted authority over the Christian assembly. To this day, Jesus serves as the assembly head in heaven. No

man on earth can be called "head of the congregation". We do have "head" pastors, but instead of being granted authority over their brothers, head pastors act merely as a moderator in council meetings. It is their responsibility to make sure that everyone in the council has a voice, and to make sure things run smoothly.

This earthly arrangement reflects the role of Jesus as the head of the assembly. As our head, Jesus serves as a mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5). Whenever we are baptized into the New Covenant, Jesus reconciles us with our heavenly Father. Further, when we commit sin, Jesus intercedes on our behalf, offering us a way of forgiveness we could not attain on our own.

# Make it Personal



From the beginning of time, Yahweh has allowed us the right to choose whether we want a relationship with Him or not. Some, like Adam, have failed to uphold their covenants with God.

Meanwhile others, such as Abraham or Moses, built a strong, personal friendship with Yahweh.

When we enter the New Covenant, we form a strong, unbreakable bond with our God. We become one of His elected people. In our choices, we choose to be friends with our Creator, the best friend we could possibly have! He will shield us from spiritual harm, guide our footsteps in our daily lives, and make way for us to enter into Paradise so we can live

with Him forever in peace.

Perhaps you are considering joining the New Covenant. It would be of great benefit for you to do so. When you join the New Covenant, you get many rewards, such as a personal relationship with Yahweh. It can not be stated how important this precious gift is to those who accept it.

Yet joining the New Covenant comes with its responsibilities, as well. The New Covenant is an *obligatory* covenant. While you receive great promises from Yahweh God by joining, you also make promises to God in matters of behavior and spirituality. In Lesson 7 of this course, we will go over the Law of Christ and its

relevance to Christians. At the very least, those considering baptism should first get through these lessons so that they can build a strong foundation of biblical understanding. Those who commit when they are not ready, or not fully prepared, put their spirituality at great risk.

**Discussion:** Why is it important for Christians to be prepared to enter the New Covenant?

Do you feel a call to be baptized? Many people describe a strong urge or yearning for baptism before they are. That is a sign that Yahweh God is calling you, personally, to partake in His New Covenant promises. You may be part of a special class chosen beforehand by Yahweh for salvation, who are referred to as *the Elect*.

In short, the Elect are anyone whom God chooses to redeem and save. Sometimes referred to as the “little flock”, the Elect are all of those who worshipped the true God in this lifetime and followed His Word (Luke 12:32). The Elect receive special promises and rewards that the rest of mankind cannot expect.

For a long time, the Elect were the people of Israel, because they had an active covenant with God (Isaiah 45:1). However, once that covenant was broken, Yahweh no longer counted election to those in the Old Covenant. Now, only those in the New Covenant can be called the Elect.

**Discussion:** Read Hebrews 8:13 and discuss the following:

How can we know that Yahweh has made the Elect those of the New Covenant?

When Jesus was on earth, Yahweh referred to him as elect (1 Peter 2:6). Before he came to earth, Yahweh selected Jesus to be the one to bring about the New Covenant (1 Peter 1:20). Why did God choose Jesus? Were there not other perfect spirit beings, the angels for instance, who could have gone to earth and fulfilled this mission? Yahweh chose Jesus to go to earth because He knew that Jesus would perfectly obey His command. Yahweh knew before He sent Jesus down that His son was loyal and obedient. In other words, He foresaw that Jesus would do His will.

It is not hard to imagine that Yahweh, whose wisdom and power far surpasses our own,

knows whose heart is right for election. He calls those who are rightly disposed for everlasting life (Read: Romans 2:6-8). God chooses those who choose Him (Ephesians 2:19). Those who would heed this call and enter in the New Covenant, become a part of the Elect.

**Discussion:** How do we know if we are part of the Elect?



When a person feels a calling from God and is baptized, they become one of the Elect

It is important for us to understand that even though

God chooses us when we choose Him, we do not *cause* God to choose us. God is a God of righteousness, and we are sinner. These many promises and wonderful blessing that come with New Covenant election are not because we *deserve* them. There is nothing we can do to earn God's favor as sinners (Ephesians 2:8). Anyone at any time can be called by God.

Not everyone will choose to accept God's blessings. There are a variety of reasons one might not choose to partake. Perhaps they do not feel ready to accept the responsibilities of serving God. Many have been misled about Yahweh God. Some people don't believe in the bible at all! The bible says that those of the Elect are called, but very few people who hear the call follow

it (Matthew 22:14). It is an unfortunate reality of this world that Satan the devil has taken such strong root. The bible says Satan is the "God of this world" (1 John 5:19). While Yahweh God offers us free will, Satan has made no such promises. He seeks to devour anyone he can in his quest for power, even the Elect (Matthew 24:24)! That is why it is of utmost importance that those who feel a calling protect themselves from spiritual decay. We must maintain our zeal for God and continue on the righteous path!

**Discussion:** Read 1 Peter 5:8 and discuss the following:

Why is it important that Christians guard themselves against Satan?